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**Dr. Bahaa Abdelmegid**

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## **Women as Victims and Victimizer. The Feminisms of Dickens and Mahfouz :**

A comparative study of the representation of women in  
Some of the Works of Dickens and Mahfouz.

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### **Abstract**

This paper investigates the issue of feminism of both novelists: Charles Dickens and Naguib Mahfouz and how they reflected their human support for women in their novels. This study adopts the discipline of comparative literature where the similar themes for both writers are compared, shared and investigated. It is true that these two writers belong to different nations and different languages but they share similar views and reveal similar literary and social preoccupations. One hundred years separate between the two authors, Dickens was born in 1812 and Mahfouz in 1911 but surprisingly many social issues can still be found in the writings of both novelists. However, both writers try to depict their social milieu and reflect the social changes and suffering of their people. It is worthy to note that one of the main interests and very common among Dickens and Mahfouz is their interest in women's position and ambition in the society.

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This paper investigates the issue of feminism of both novelists: Charles Dickens and Naguib Mahfouz and how they reflected their human support for women in their novels. This study adopts the discipline of comparative literature where the similar themes for both writers are compared, shared and investigated. It is true that these two writers belong to different nations and different languages but they share similar views and reveal similar literary and social preoccupations. One hundred years separate between the two authors, Dickens was born in 1812 and Mahfouz in 1911 but surprisingly many social issues can still be found in the writings of both novelists. However, both writers try to depict their social milieu and reflect the social changes and suffering of their people. It is worthy to note that one of the main interests and very common among Dickens and Mahfouz is their interest in women's position and ambition in the society.

In relation to Charles Dickens my research investigates how Dickens represents women's characters in Victorian age, revealing his views about women's status and their roles in the society in an attempt to answer this question: Did he support women's issues and defend their rights to be equal to men or not ? The main women characters of Great Expectations, Oliver Twist, and A Tale of Two Cities are going to be investigated in trying to answer the paper's problem. The paper also tries to investigate the image of

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major women characters in Naguib Mahfouz's novels "Beginning and an End" and "The Thief and the Dogs", The Search , Madique Alley and the Trilogy .

It is not necessarily to be a woman to be a feminist or to adopt a supportive attitude towards women A man can ,also, be a feminist if he fights for the rights of women to be equal and enjoy a life of being a privilege to her society not treated as a burden or a peripheral .Reading some of their major novels , one can observe that Dickens and Mahfouz were very supportive to humanity in general and to women in particular .

Mahfouz ,like Dickens, was very prolific :"Between the mid-1940s and the mid-1960s he produced the dozen realist novels that are widely considered the main body of his work. He rarely touched directly on the big events of the times but, like the European novelists he so enjoyed, he explored historical trends as experienced by ordinary people. Through them, he described the clash between tradition and modernity, the alienation of the individual, the struggle for personal dignity amid pervasive poverty and state repression. The result was a body of work that bore comparison with Balzac and Dickens. But Mr Mahfouz also introduced his audience to a new way of seeing. He enriched an Arabic literature which, while perhaps incomparable for its poetry, was then still largely innocent of the fully formed imaginary world of the novel.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.economist.com/node/7854185>- 7-11-2017

***History and Women's Postion.***

It is well known that Queen Victoria (1819 –1901) was on the top of the throne at the nineteenth century but to what degree did she support the cause of women's rights? And women's rights to social and professional ascendency in English society?.

During the Victorian age women were living a hard life restricted to certain jobs completely unsuitable for them and most of them were not permitted to work in civil or legal jobs ; they were only allowed either to work in factories or as maids or nannies . Once they got married they were controlled by their husbands 'authority and most of their money they inherited from their parents goes directly to their husbands 'possession .Such horrible position of women led some of the them to suffer neurosis or to elope or in the worst condition to practice prostitution as their bread winning jobs . Dickens portrayed such vices and reflected the degrading position of women in most of his works. Dickens was also keen to reflect social milieu of his time and the actual position of women especially the poor class and how they were vulnerable to inhuman conditions. Though there were many attempts to improve women's lives , few laws were issued "There was also agitation for improved employment opportunities for women. Writers as diverse as Charlotte Brontë, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, and Florence Nightingale complained that middle-class women were taught trivial accomplishments to fill up days in which there was nothing important to do. Had they been aware of such complaints, women from the majority lower- class population might have found it hard to show sympathy: the working lives of poor English women had always been

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strenuous, inside and outside the house, but industrial society brought unprecedented pressure.<sup>2</sup>

Charlotte Bronte in Jane Eyre pronounces her feminist cause during the Victorian era which could fall within the context of Dickens and his views about women . She rebels against the stagnant position of women and their domestication ignoring their smart faculties. She says :

It is in vain to say human beings ought to be satisfied with tranquility: they must have action; and they will make it if they cannot find it. Millions are condemned to a stiller doom than mine, and millions are in silent revolt against their lot. Nobody knows how many rebellions besides political rebellions ferment in the masses of life which people earth. Women are supposed to be very calm generally: but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid a restraint, too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer; and it is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow-creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags. It is thoughtless to condemn them, or laugh at them, if they seek to do more or learn more than custom has pronounced necessary for their sex.<sup>3</sup>(Chapter .12)

From a deeper reading and insightful reflection on Dickens's women characters through his novels , it is obvious that he took women's position into his consideration ,he gave them a narrative space unprecedented by any other novelists giving many references to their helplessness and their valor and magnanimity. He shows their uniqueness , vividness and

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<sup>2</sup> . (Greenblatt,ed. Norton anthology ,p. 1236).

<sup>3</sup> Charlotte Bronte :Jane Eyre, Wordsworth Editions Ltd ,London:1997 first pub.1847.

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proving that they have a cause to live for . Women are not passive agent but they are struggling to show their stamina and potentialities as independent human beings . It is true that they have been stereotyped by men or themselves but they do their best to prove that they are capable of changing their reality regardless to the obstacles they meet.

Many critics especially women tried to investigate Dickens 's views about women some of them claimed that he abused them by presenting them as passive and very domesticated creatures and others believed that he represented them as fighters and exceptional ones , trying to assert their identities regardless home and patriarchal restrictions and defying man's dominance at their choices and decisions .

"Dickens has been represented (along with William Blake and D.H. Lawrence) as one who championed the life of the emotions often associated with the "feminine." Yet some of his most important heroines are totally submissive and docile.<sup>4</sup>

Dickens, like ,world thinkers and social reformers who called for the liberation women used fiction to portray the new woman who regardless of social injustice tried to achieve their own freedom , George Eliot for example tried to give a life to Maggie the heroine of The Mill On the Floss ,1860 , though Maggie is restricted to her past and her commitment to her brother Tom and her dad, Tulliver and her cousin Lucy Deane still she faced Stephen who is the fiancé of her cousin Lucy .She refused to elope with him knowing that morality comes first and then love comes second . The decision of refusing his love seems a failure from her side but it is based on good personality and common sense .Eliot as a woman writer knew her restriction

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<sup>4</sup> Holbrook, D..*Charles Dickens and the Image of Women*. New York: NYU Press, 1995.,

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as a woman but as an intellectual she was aware of her positive initiative towards the representation of the a new concept of woman in the 19th century .

. It is apparently clear that Charles Dickens' feminist view were deeply represented in Oliver Twist through Nancy's character. But Dickens, in this sense, is a pioneer and a courageous man to challenge the status quo of Victorian men's views about women at his time which probably exposed him and made him vulnerable to criticism. In his biographical study : Charles Dickens , Michael Slater<sup>5</sup> reflected on the life and the relationship of the author towards women explaining the causes and the roots of Dickens' sympathy to his wife , lover and the sister of his wife , and how intimate is his relation to them . Slater 's biography about Dickens " rooted in deep research but written with affection, clarity, and economy, illuminates the context of each of the great novels while locating the life of the author within the imagination that created them. It highlights Dickens' boundless energy, his passion for order and fascination with disorder, his organizational genius, his deep concern for the poor and outrage at indifference towards them, his susceptibility towards young women, his love of Christmas and fairy tales, and his hatred of tyranny.<sup>6</sup> Slater was also a keen scholar to the writing of Dickens and the influence of women figures on his writing .One of his prominent book is Dickens and Women (1986) in which M. Slater tries to shed a profound light on "Dickens's treatment of women is a central aspect of his artistic achievement. Professor Slater examines the novelist's experience of women – as son, brother, lover, husband, and father, and as it

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<sup>5</sup> Michael Slater: Charles Dickens . Yale University Press, London,2009.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.amazon.com/Charles-Dickens-Michael-Slater/dp/0300112076>

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affected the deepest emotional currents in his life. His perception of female nature and his conception of women's role in the home and outside it – and the ways in which these found expression in his art - are pivotal topics. Professor Slater has sifted the mass of legends and doubtful traditions about Dickens's private life to present a close examination of his relations with women, and of his views of woman's nature and the womanly ideal. This work offers the most detailed survey of women in the novels, and the most comprehensive attempted. It has been acclaimed internationally.<sup>7</sup>

#### ***Is Dickens a Feminist or a social reformer?***

To be a feminist is to call for women's liberation, to equate women to men, to annihilate discrimination against them either on biological or social and political levels, and to help them to be empowered in all the fields of life. Was Dickens an avante garde and radical in his views about women, trying to shake the conservative and traditional views about women which claim that they are mainly house wives and delicate creatures who need guidance and

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<sup>7</sup><https://www.amazon.com/Dickens-Women-Michael-Slater>

This brilliant, classic and scholarly study provides the fullest treatment of a key subject. It is one of the essential works on Dickens's work and life. A substantial new introduction deals with more recent commentary. Dickens's treatment of women is a central aspect of his artistic achievement. Professor Slater examines the novelist's experience of women – as son, brother, lover, husband, and father, and as it affected the deepest emotional currents in his life. His perception of female nature and his conception of women's role in the home and outside it – and the ways in which these found expression in his art - are pivotal topics. Professor Slater has sifted the mass of legends and doubtful traditions about Dickens's private life to present a close examination of his relations with women, and of his views of woman's nature and the womanly ideal. This work offers the most detailed survey of women in the novels, and the most comprehensive attempted. It has been acclaimed internationally

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supervision from their protectors represented in their fathers, brothers or husbands.

In order to understand how Dickens and Mahfouz dealt with the issue of women , it is preferable to mention that their narrative presentation of women characters hint to many social and political implications . These implications are of feminist approach and themes because:"Feminism is both a political stance and a theory that focuses on gender as a subject of analysis when reading cultural practices and as a platform to demand equality, rights and justice. Feminism's key assumption is that gender roles are pre-determined and the woman is trained to fit into those roles. This means that roles like 'daughter' or 'mother' are not natural but social because the woman has to be trained to think, talk, act in particular ways that suit the role.<sup>8</sup> (Nayar ,2011.83).

Did Dickens challenge the political scene of his time by offering the readers different types of women who breaks the status quo of women as the dove of the house ? or Did he offers a flexible types which could be accepted from the side of his readers? yes and no .Dickens represents women in an ambivalent vision; sometimes weak and helpless, unable to change their social position- as if they are fated to go in this arbitrary lives -and in other context, as strong creatures capable of protest and defending their status and right to live independently .Nancy in her famous dialogue with Fagin was very furious and burst in anger using harsh language accusing Fagin of her miserable condition and dark fate . In giving her a voice to express herself , Dickens tried to empower her in such a harsh and aggressive society . It is true that she lost her life by the end of the novel but he made her cause audible for the generation to come regardless her

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<sup>8</sup> Pramod K. Nayar : Contemporary Literary and Cultural Theory : Longman ,New Delhi, 2011.

degrading status. Feminist theory sometimes explains how certain class of women are forced to be weak because of their environment and it " argues that the representation of women as weak, docile, innocent, seductive or irrational-sentimental is rooted in and influences actual social condition where she does not have power, is treated as a sex-object or a procreating machine, has fewer political and financial rights and is abused. Feminism, therefore, is a world view that refuses to delink art from existing social conditions and practices. Feminism explores the cultural dimensions of the woman's material life. Feminist literary—cultural critics assume that cultural texts such as cinema, TV soap opera, music, painting parallel and duplicate real-life power struggles between genders. Cultural texts naturalize the oppression of women through their stereotypical representation of women as weak/ vulnerable, seductress, obstacle, sexual object or a procreating device. The task of criticism, therefore, is to reveal the underlying ideologies within these texts because these ideologies are instrumental in continuing women's oppression.<sup>9</sup>(Nayar p. 83)

What Nayar says is true in the context that women as weaker sex imprisoned in the cycle of a wife and a mother restricted her to certain and limited roles in the society forbidding her from practicing all her mental and physical potentialities . Through ages women were treated as a taboo where she is either idolized or profaned . Fiction gave a false treatment for the nature of women while history gave a falsified image of their achievements, Lady Macbeth for instance .Their success either depended on conspiracy or maneuvering Cleopatra is a perfect example

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<sup>9</sup> Pramod K. Nayar : Contemporary Literary and Cultural Theory : Longman, New Delhi ,2011.

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In A Room of One's Own (1929) , Virginia Woolf had dealt with such issues defending a woman 's right to have a room of her own , to lead and independent life and to have the freedom to choose the career she wants. Being a writer is one of a woman's choices in life. And to be financially equal to man is a must. Woolf argues that "A woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction." <sup>10</sup> Woolf was very aware of the restrictions of which women faced from the beginning of the history being financially dependable on others is the way to losing her dignity and liberty as an autonomous human being. What Virginia is calling for is the same for all humanists and Dickens and Mahfouz are among these humanists.

Many writings of both Dickens and Mahfouz 's novels are very interesting for feminist in a sense that , "Feminism's key political and theoretical stance is this: the inequalities that exist between men and women are not natural but social, not pre-ordained but created by men so that they retain power. Religion, education, arts, knowledge systems are all social and cultural 'structures' that enable the perpetual reinforcement of this inequality. These structures are effective means of reinforcing male domination because they do not appear oppressive".(Nayar,p.83)

### **Women and their Representations .**

It is known that in the year 1847 both Charlotte Bronte's Jane Eyre and Emily Bronte's Wuthering Heights were published. These two novels manifested radical views about the image and the reality of women in its time and revealed so many hidden secrets about them: their relationships to

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<sup>10</sup> Virginia Woolf, A Room of One's Own Albatross Publishers .London 2015)

men, their private life, and their suffering. The first work of art for Dickens was the Pickwick Paper 1836 ignoring deep insights into women's issue but after thirteen years he started to write works which were preoccupied by women as major characters. Dickens was clever in portraying women inside and outside their house and within different fields.

"Although the largest proportion of working women labored as servants in the homes of more affluent, the explosive growth of mechanized industries, especially in the textile trade, created new and grueling forms of paid employment. Hundreds of thousands of lower-class women worked at factory jobs under appalling conditions, while the need for coal to fuel England's industrial development brought women into the mines for the first time. A series of Factory acts (1802—78) gradually regulated the conditions of labor in mines and factories, eventually reducing the sixteen-hour day and banning women from mine work altogether; but even with such changes, the lot of the country's poorest.<sup>11</sup> (Greenblatt ,ed..p. 1236)

Bad working conditions and underemployment drove thousands of women into the abyss of prostitution, which in the nineteenth century became increasingly professionalized—and the subject of an obsessive public - concern, whose manifestations included frequent literary and artistic representation.

'For the most part, prostitution was a trade for working-class women, but there was considerable anxiety about the possible fates of what contemporary journalists called the "surplus" or "redundant" women of the middle classes that is, women who remained unmarried because of the imbalance in numbers between the sexes: Such women (of whom there were approximately half a million in mid-Victorian England) had few employment opportunities, none

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<sup>11</sup> *Norton anthology*,p. 1236

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of them attractive or profitable. Emigration was frequently proposed as a solution to the problem, but the number of single female emigrants was never high enough to significantly affect the population imbalance." .(Greenblatt ,p. 1236)

Bronte's sisters in their view about women as independent were different from Samuel Richardson's novel, Pamela ,1740, who introduced Pamela as a seductive girl who only wins the landlord heart through being virtuous and subtle away from being educated even if she keeps a diary or mentally sharp as Jane Eyre or Catherine in the Bronte's novels . Dickens went in Oliver Twist to the underworld of gangs introducing to us a prostitute with a good heart , Nancy but the way he introduced her to his readers was not traditional , he used her as a tool to say something revolutionary and reformatory about the future of the new woman . through her character he was criticizing the governmental institutions which used women as instrumental regardless her human position and intellectual capacity and merits .

"The only occupation at which an unmarried middle-class woman could earn a living and maintain some claim to gentility was that of a governess, but a governess could expect no security of employment, only minimal wages, and an ambiguous status, somewhere between servant and family member, that isolated her with a household. Perhaps because the governess so clearly indicated the precariousness of the - unmarried middle-class woman's status in Victorian England, the governess novel, of which the most famous examples are Jane Eyre .<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> ."(Ibid p.1236.)

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The studies which addressed women in the 19<sup>th</sup> century emphasized the dual vision of woman as the angel of the house versus the monster or madwoman. In their significant study "***The Madwoman in the Attic***"*pub.1979*, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar critically analyze the theme of female madness which permeated the writings of such novelists as Emily Bronte, Charlotte Bronte, George Eliot and Sylvia Plath . This study concludes that madness is an objective correlative of women's existence as a reaction to their suffering from oppression, marginalization, victimization and sexual repression which leads to extreme celibacy , isolation and a complete solitude .

Gilbert and Gubar examine the notion that women writers of the nineteenth century were confined in their writing to make their female characters either embody the "angel" or the "monster." This struggle stemmed from male writers' tendencies to categorize female characters as either pure, angelic women or rebellious, unkempt madwomen. In their argument Gilbert and Gubar point to Virginia Woolf, who says women writers must "kill the aesthetic ideal through which they themselves have been 'killed' into art. .. While it may be easy to construe that feminist writers embody the "madwoman" or "monster," Gilbert and Gubar stress the importance of killing off both figures because neither accurately represents women or women writers. Instead, Gilbert and Gubar urge female writers to strive for autonomous self-definition beyond this dichotomy, which they see as imposed by a reductionist patriarchal view of women's roles.<sup>13</sup>

Within this case studies for these writers and their heroines - the two scholars offered in their book -, Dickens sought to shape the awareness of his society at that time by offering various models and examples of women in his novels such as

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<sup>13</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Madwoman\\_in\\_the\\_Attic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Madwoman_in_the_Attic)

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the character of Lucie Manette in *Tales of Two Cities* and Madame Defarage who is so blinded by her need to take revenge for the poor martyrs of French Revolution in such a way that she cannot see the kindness of Lucie who looks like an angel on earth.

As a married man and a father of ten children, Dickens was not happy with the responsibility of domestic life. It was evident that the responsibilities were blocking his creative career, and at a later stage of his life, he surrendered to a love call from an actress, Ellen Ternan,<sup>14</sup> he met during a play called *Frozen Deep*. She infatuated him, and it seems that this love relation has influenced his relationship to his first wife and his notion about women.. Stephen Greenblatt mentions these facts about Dickens marital life saying: “But what was the position of women in the Victorian age? And to what extent they were able to express their views? And to be socially and politically represented? It is well know that

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<sup>14</sup> **Tomalin** , Claire. *The Invisible Woman: The Story of Nelly Ternan and Charles Dickens*.

London:Vintage; Reprint edition 2012

Charles Dickens and Nelly Ternan met in 1857; she was 18, a hard-working actress performing in his production of *The Frozen Deep*, and he was 45, the most lionized writer in England. Out of their meeting came a love affair that lasted thirteen years and destroyed Dickens's marriage while effacing Nelly Ternan from the public record.

In this remarkable work of biography and scholarly reconstruction, the acclaimed biographer of Mary Wollstonecraft, Thomas Hardy, Samuel Pepys and Jane Austen rescues Nelly from the shadows of history, not only returning the neglected actress to her rightful place, but also providing a compelling portrait of the great Victorian novelist himself. The result is a thrilling literary detective story and a deeply compassionate work that encompasses all those women who were exiled from the warm, well-lighted parlors of Victorian England.

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Queen Victoria was on the top of the throne at the nineteenth century but to what degree did she support the cause of women's rights? And their ascendency in their society. Dickens's views about women are sometimes sentimental and many times realistic." 15(p. 1237)

In his novels, Dickens was preoccupied with women. They are fallen into two categories: as victims and victimizers. These who were harmed and those who harm others: Stella, Nancy, Lucie Manette, are victims whereas Miss Havisham Madame Defrage are victimizers, but to generalize this dichotomy seems an oversimplification of Dickens' attitude .It is very common in literature to represent women as victims not as victimizers except in few cases such as Salome or Helen of Troy , who acted as fatal women.

**Dickens and Psychopathic Women In Great Expectations**  
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<sup>15</sup> Greenblatt . Norton Anthology vol. 2

<sup>16</sup> Great Expectations is Charles Dickens's thirteenth novel. It is his second novel, after David Copperfield, to be fully narrated in the first person. Great Expectations is a bildungsroman, or a coming-of-age novel, and it is a classic work of Victorian literature. It depicts the growth and personal development of an orphan named Pip. The novel was first published in serial form in Dickens's weekly periodical All the Year Round, from 1 December 1860 to August 1861. In October 1861, Chapman and Hall published the novel in three volumes. Dickens originally intended Great Expectations to be twice as long, but constraints imposed by the management of All the Year Round limited the novel's length. The novel is collected and dense, with a conciseness unusual for Dickens. According to G. K. Chesterton, Dickens penned Great Expectations in "the afternoon of [his] life and fame." It was the penultimate novel Dickens completed, preceding Our Mutual Friend. It is set among the marshes of Kent and in London in the early to mid-1800s. The novel contains some of Dickens most memorable scenes, including its opening, in a graveyard, when the young orphan Pip is accosted by the escaped convict, Abel Magwitch. Great Expectations is a graphic book, full of extreme imagery, poverty, prison ships ("the hulks"), barriers and chains, and fights to the death. Upon its release, Thomas Carlyle spoke of "All that Pip's nonsense." Later, George Bernard Shaw praised the novel as "All of one piece and consistently truthfull." Dickens felt Great Expectations was his best work, calling it "a very fine idea," and was

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Dickens's women most of the time are victims who turn to be victimizer. For instance, Miss Havishem takes her revenge of men by bringing Stella upon hating men, and becomes a heartbreaker of men especially the ones who have been attracted and deeply in love with her such as Pip . Miss Havisham adapted Stella to bring her some warm and friendly company ,but at the same time ,to teach her how to be cruel to men, how to make them, literary, kneel to their knees asking her for mutual love, at this moment, she leaves them suffering and longing for her. Pip was a victim to Stella , he loved her from one side. This exactly happened to Pip .Pip himself was tortured by the manipulative treatment from Miss Havisham and the cruel attitude from Stella towards his burning feelings of love.

Her sadist tendencies made her life a miserable one where she puts the suffering of men at the core of her life .She knew that Pip loves her nevertheless she enjoyed torturing him. This kind of machos and the tough and heartless environment in which Stella lived in made her emotionless and more seductive and cold towards men. From a psychological point of view , she is not entirely responsible for her cold responses or acting in such immoral way but

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very sensitive to compliments from his friends: "Bulwer, who has been, as I think you know, extraordinarily taken by the book." Great Expectations has a colourful cast that has entered popular culture: the capricious Miss Havisham, the cold and beautiful Estella, Joe the kind and generous blacksmith, the dry and sycophantic Uncle Pumblechook, Mr. Jaggers, Wemmick with his dual personality, and the eloquent and wise friend, Herbert Pocket. Throughout the narrative, typical Dickensian themes emerge: wealth and poverty, love and rejection, and the eventual triumph of good over evil. Great Expectations has become very popular and is now taught as a classic in many English classes. It has been translated into many languages and adapted many times in film and other media(. [https://www.amazon.com/Great-Expectations-Charles-Dickens/dp/1503275183/ref=pd\\_rhf\\_dp\\_p\\_img\\_2?\\_encoding=UTF8&psc=1&efRID=KKQHB3H56VHEX5KOT4WH](https://www.amazon.com/Great-Expectations-Charles-Dickens/dp/1503275183/ref=pd_rhf_dp_p_img_2?_encoding=UTF8&psc=1&efRID=KKQHB3H56VHEX5KOT4WH))

being like that is the result of Miss Havisham's process of bringing her up. She made her like a bait for a snare with which she can catch the hearts of men. From a psychological point of view Stella may suffered from masochism which is defined as" gratification gained from pain, deprivation, degradation, etc., inflicted or imposed on oneself, either as a result of one's own actions or the actions of others, especially the tendency to seek this form of gratification. It is also defined as the act of turning one's destructive tendencies inward or upon oneself.<sup>17</sup>

Pip himself realized the strategies Miss Havisham which she used to torture him. he knew her cruelty but he was afraid of depriving him from seeing and dating Stella he bears humiliation for his uncounterfeited love for Stella who represents everything for him."It would have been cruel in Miss Havisham, horribly cruel, to practise on the susceptibility of a poor boy, and to torture me through all these years with a vain hope and an idle pursuit, if she had reflected on the gravity of what she did. But I think she did not. I think that in the endurance of her own trial, she forgot mine, Estella."<sup>18</sup>(Chapter 44)

Stella is no longer a woman with a romantic feelings or dreamy sentiments . She has been transformed into soulless and a heartless woman unable to have reciprocal feeling with Pip:

I saw Miss Havisham put her hand to her heart and hold it there, as she sat looking by turns at Estella and at me.

"It seems," said Estella, very calmly, "that there are sentiments, fancies - I don't know how to call them - which I am not able to comprehend. When you say you love me, I

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<sup>17</sup> (<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/masochism>)

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<sup>18</sup> Charles Dickens: Great Expectations : Wordsworth Classic edition, London 2000.

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know what you mean, as a form of words; but nothing more. You address nothing in my breast, you touch nothing there. I don't care for what you say at all. I have tried to warn you of this; now, have I not?<sup>19</sup>"(Chapter:44)

Miss Havisham herself was a victim to a manipulation of a man whose name is Compeyson who left her at their wedding day and he never showed up. She started to lose confidence in men and their promises and their existence. Therefore, she fixed the moment of time on the hour her lover deserted her, wearing the same wedding dress, drawing the curtains and never changed the watch on twenty to nine. Dickens gives her a very gloomy description of her appearance and of her mental conditions ; she is very pathetic, mysterious and scary to Pip. By showing Miss Havisham in this miserable way ,Dickens reflected the degradation of her character after she was deceived by a mean person . At the same time he condemns the deception of her lover .He sometimes make cynical remarks about her personality and reactions the message of his novel imposes certain question which is ;Does Dickens want women to be strong and do not surrender to depression and isolation and to look for another chance to live her life?or live a life of submission and resignation?

Miss Havisham says to Pip once:

"Come nearer; let me look at you. Come close."

It was when I stood before her, avoiding her eyes, that I took note of the surrounding objects in detail, and saw that her watch had stopped at twenty minutes to nine, and that a clock in the room had stopped at twenty minutes to nine.<sup>20</sup> (Chapter.8).

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<sup>19</sup> ibid

<sup>20</sup> Ibid,

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### **Women as Victims and Victimizer...The Feminisms of Dickens and Mahfouz:**

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Dickens masterfully depicts Miss Havisham's great love, respect, expectations of her love has been met with ingratitude, and deception from her lover. This has led her to hate men and to direct her venom towards them.

In a conversation with Pip when he was afraid to approach her she says :

"Look at me," said Miss Havisham. "You are not afraid of a woman who has never seen the sun since you were born?"

.....

"Do you know what I touch here?" she said, laying her hands, one upon the other, on her left side.

"Yes, ma'am." (It made me think of the young man.)

"What do I touch?"

"Your heart."

"Broken!"

She uttered the word with an eager look, and with strong emphasis, and with a weird smile that had a kind of boast in it. Afterwards, she kept her hands there for a little while, and slowly took them away as if they were heavy.

"I am tired," said Miss Havisham. "I want diversion, and I have done with men and women. Play.<sup>21</sup>" (Chapter.8)

Through years, Miss Havisham is no longer beautiful or attractive so she brought up Stella on the culture and manners of playing with men's heart and instructing her on never surrender to anybody. Stella's first encounter with Pip in the presence of Miss Havisham can lead the reader predict how Stella 's relationship with Pip is going to be. Pip's life and his educational mission to be a gentleman are only meant for him to be equal to Stella, to win her heart and to marry her. He loves her more and more. He becomes extremely in love and in need for her, he sentimentalizes her

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid,

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existence and idolized her but Stella has no feelings for him and always goes out with other men but never she gave her heart or feelings to any of them. This reactions frustrated Pip and confused him , and nevertheless he did not lose hope in reunion with her . Though their love was not reciprocal he cherished for her love and mutual sentimentality

He once confesses his love and the irrationality of his feelings saying

“ The unqualified truth is, that when I loved Estella with the love of a man, I loved her simply because I found her irresistible. Once for all; I knew to my sorrow, often and often, if not always, that I loved her against reason, against promise, against peace, against hope, against happiness, against all discouragement that could be. Once for all; I loved her nonetheless because I knew it, and it had no more influence in restraining me, than if I had devoutly believed her to be human perfection.<sup>22</sup> (29.2)

Stella in her confrontation with Miss Havisham confesses that she has no heart and it turned into a piece of stone. It is the same phrase of which Miss Havisham always repeats during Stella's childhood where she touches here chest. She always says my heart is broken. Miss Havishim is responsible for the destruction of both Stella and Pip's feelings . She is the reason that Stella became a heartless and a seductive woman who feeds on the emotions of men. She destroyed the meaning of being happy in love with one man who she chooses and cherishes. She killed her natural instinct of believing in the benevolence of human being especially men. She made Stella a polygamous woman. If Stella became in her coming life a whore or a loose woman this because of Miss Havisham's misconception about life, love, revenge and educating a little girl. Mental sickness is

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.,

involved in this kind of way of life, if Miss Havisham was psychologically treated or was taken care by a specialist, she could recover the shock and became a normal woman again. Stella confesses that she never loved anything even jewels or people , she bitterly says :"I have not bestowed my tenderness anywhere. I have never had any such thing."<sup>23</sup> (29.75)

***Dickens' Women as angelic , activist and anarchist :***

Dickens in presenting these two women is against deceiving women and also he wants to reveal what is hidden about women's issue. The fatal woman as Stella is not because of herself but because of the abusive way she was brought up.

In A Tale of two Cities, Dickens contrasts between two women characters: Lucie Manette and Madame Defarge. Like in Great Expectations, we have two sick women :lady Havisham and Garginia Maria who was the sister of Pip. Lucie Manette is an angelic girl who represents light and hope for the French people and who stands beside her husband Mr. Darnay<sup>24</sup> and her dear melancholia and absent minded father Mr. Manette who was imprisoned for 18 years in the Bastille. Also we have Madame Defarge who represents the revengeful spirit of the French revolution who wants to take her revenge of the aristocratic class especially

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>24</sup> A Tale of Two Cities, Sydeny Carton was willing to sacrifice his life to save the husband of Lucie Manette , Charles Darnay. Carton realized that she loves her husband Charles very much though he himself fell in love with her ,but he agreed to be hanged instead of her husband for the sake of the domestic happiness for this angelic lady ..who stood beside her desperate father who was imprisoned for many years in Bastille ,for political reasons and was almost suffering from dementia .But with her tenderness and kindness she saved him from the realm of oblivion and labyrinth of madness .

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the Marquez's family class who killed her mother. She cannot feel any sympathy to Lucie Manette and her daughter, and she wants to execute Mr.Darnay as well. She is represented dramatically and caricatured by Dickens as a woman who has a scarf on her hand and all the time is knitting, chatting and cursing people.

If we want to understand the causes of representing women in Dickens's novel, we have to look at their social, personal and psychological contexts and backgrounds. It seems that Dickens's view about women is highly related to his personal and emotional views. Nevertheless , he was rebellious in his representation. He was not happy with the orthodox and conventional image of Victorian women . In most of Dickens's novel, we find the hero, may be the author or the narrator himself, always sympathetic with women representing them as victims to social and environmental factors like Stella, Nancy, and Lucie Manette,Dickens shows the bright side of women and their ability to heal the wounds of the wretched. This is a traditional view of women as healers but he stresses their ability to do it regardless the hardships they face .

Lucie Manette attracts us as angelic and kind creature , but Dickens draws another aggressive model of woman within the same novel, Madame Defarge to contrast them and to show the influence of their environments upon their reactions and responses ."The progressively developing contrast between the angelic Lucie and demonic Madame Defarge has been variously analyzed. Where it is informed by recent work on Victorian ideas of the feminine, analysis tends to collapse the opposition into the a paradoxical identity; the repressive sentimentalization which produces gentle angels, such as Lucie, leaves them – it is argued – convertible to so many Therese Defarges, as ' the angel's other worldly power translates itself imperceptibly into a

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demonism that destroys all families and houses .Dickens' love for desperate fallen women and his sympathetic attitude towards them ,perhaps, are related to his family background ,especially, his mother and her tough lifestyle after she carried the responsibility alone, to bring him up after his father 's imprisonment when he failed to pay back his debts .

The cohesion which Dickens praising his women characters for is also represented in the over protection of Miss Ross ,a forceful Englishwoman who was Lucie Manette's nursemaid. She remains Lucie's devoted servant and protector.

French revolution was calling for the equality of people regardless of their sexes or their social status. It seems that Dickens' view about women as a revolutionist and rebellious is portrayed in the character's of Madame Defarge but did he intend to represent her in an awful manner, as venomous, hateful and disgusting even if she is looking for a higher cause which is revolution and its ideal of equality, fraternity and liberty? Did she represent the new woman, who has a new role as a political activist, and as woman who is asking for her right of taking revenge of the people who killed one of her family? Madame Defarge represents the reign of terror which took place after the broke out of the French revolution. Did she represent the spirit of the new epoch or new regime where women are no longer the dove of the house who take care of her children and waiting for her husband to come from the field of the factory? Is Dickens warning us from the revolution and the life changes which is brought on women's domestic life?

It cannot be proved that Dickens is supporting women's submission but you can assume that he is calling for women to act on the high extreme of the social scale.

It has been said by different critics that through his whole life Charles Dickens was an advocate of women, beneficent

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to them and appreciative of their great efforts, possibly attributable to his respect for his mother who took all responsibility for the family after his father was imprisoned for debt. Many are his charitable deeds that are still remembered. One of his greatest good deeds was to set up hostels for destitute women and lodges for the redemption of prostitutes to help them start a new life. In this regard, can we consider Dickens as a feminist writer concerned with women's issues and advocates for their rights? The answer is 'yes' since he gives his female characters the chance to freely express themselves, to rebel, and to accuse other of victimizing them and killing their talents as Nancy does in *Oliver Twist*. Similarly, the character of Stella in *Great Expectations* rebels against the value system of Miss Havisham who raises her to torment men and break their hearts as a weapon to achieve her own revenge on her fiancé who jilts her on the wedding day. Heartbroken, Miss Havisham severely suffers an emotional trauma in such a way that she stops time and neglects everything about her appearance to fall a victim of revenge. We find a typical character of Stella in Naguib Mahfouz's *Trilogy* particularly in *Palace of Desire*, portrayed in the character of Aida ,with whom Kamal, who I think represents Naguib Mahfouz himself, falls in love , but nevertheless she is always uninterested in him and accuses him of gossip sentimental maneuvering . Although she knows that he loves her passionately, her prejudice and culture dictate that Kamal submits himself to her. Kamal is similar to Pip who spends his entire life adoring Stella and completely fascinated by her beauty although he knows very well that she does not return his affection because she does not have the ability to love after Miss Havisham spoils her soul.

***Nancy :A Fallen Woman With a Good Heart :***

In Oliver Twist,<sup>25</sup> Nancy is a venerable character. She is very close to the heart and the mind of readers and I think to Dickens himself. She is a fallen woman with a good heart like Nefisa in Naguib Mahfouz's novel Beginning and an End. She is an orphan who was taken to theft and adultery by Fagin and Bill Sikes her boy friend. She is a victim to poverty and social domestic negligence.

“Nancy’s love for Sikes exemplifies the moral ambiguity of her character. As she herself points out to Rose, devotion to a man can be “a comfort and a pride” under the right circumstances. But for Nancy, such devotion is “a new means of violence and suffering”—indeed, her relationship with Sikes leads her to criminal acts for his sake and eventually to her own demise. The same behavior, in different circumstances, can have very different consequences and moral significance. In much of *Oliver*

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<sup>25</sup>The story of **Oliver Twist** - orphaned, and set upon by evil and adversity from his first breath - shocked readers when it was published. After running away from the workhouse and pompous beadle Mr Bumble, Oliver finds himself lured into a den of thieves peopled by vivid and memorable characters - the Artful Dodger, vicious burglar Bill Sikes, his dog Bull's Eye, and prostitute Nancy, all watched over by cunning master-thief Fagin. Combining elements of Gothic Romance, the Newgate Novel and popular melodrama, Dickens created an entirely new kind of fiction, scathing in its indictment of a cruel society, and pervaded by an unforgettable sense of threat and mystery ([https://www.amazon.com/Oliver-Penguin-Classics-Charles-Dickens/dp/0141439742/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1504838265&sr=1-1&keywords=oliver+twist](https://www.amazon.com/Oliver-Penguin-Classics-Charles-Dickens/dp/0141439742/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1504838265&sr=1-1&keywords=oliver+twist))

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*Twist*, morality and nobility are black-and-white issues, but Nancy's character suggests that the boundary between virtue and vice is not always clearly drawn.<sup>26</sup>

Through the character of Nancy, Dickens tackles women's issue such as being educated or not is she protected from street vices and being independent economically and emotionally. Dickens attacks through Nancy's misfortunate life the deteriorating conditions of women who had no education, no shelter and no social care. He supports her and brings her to the focal point of his narrative. He gives her the voice to express her agony and suffering when she confronted Fagin telling that he abused and mistreated her and taught her to be a thief and a whore if we may say. Being a street girl exposed her to all kind of vices. It is clear that Dickens, as a man of art and principles, sided with her cause and did not condemn her ,on the contrary, he was supporting her and criminalizing all social institutions whether religious or civil for the fall of Nancy in particular, representing the women, the suffering of Oliver representing childhood.

It seems that Dickens, like feminists , supports women's solidarity and cohesion especially in Oliver Twist and A Tale of Two Cities. Nancy saved Oliver and brought him back to his family especially to Rose Maylie because she promised her to do so. The significance of the handkerchief she waves at her final scene proved that she died for a cause in life. She also wanted to purify her past from guilt and crime, though she is not fully responsible for her choices. Nancy was living on the margin of the society living day by day, and has no hope to live longer because of her risky life .She tells Rose as long as you see me on

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<sup>26</sup> <http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/oliver/canalysis.html#Nancy>

London bridge I am still alive but if I disappeared for a day it means I am dead or killed .

In his portrayal of the character of Nancy, Charles Dickens displays a sympathetic vision and sensitivity which had a strong impact on society at that time since the Victorians did not accept a fallen and disgraced woman like Nancy, yet Dickens challenges this image and depicts Nancy as possessing a heart and moral responsibility towards Oliver. In addition, she is always friendly to Rose who treats her kindly and tenderly.

Nancy's sympathy with Oliver Twist shows her human sensibility and tenderness, she has a mother's tendency to save the child from the gangster and to ...save him a dignified life of which she was depressive. She saved him at the end but she had paid her life for her magnanimous act. Her lover, Bill Sikes, killed her thinking that she betrayed him. Dickens also through the character of Nancy was against the social and domestic violence towards women. He was calling for a decent life for children and women in the English society.

The representation of Nancy especially when she went to meet Rose is very significant , here women can appreciate each other appearance and kindness :"The girl's life had been squandered in the streets, and among the most noisome of the stews and dens of London, but there was something of the woman's original nature left in her still; and when she heard a light step approaching the door opposite to that by which she had entered, and thought of the wide contrast which the small room would in another moment contain, she felt burdened with the sense of her own deep shame, and shrunk as though she could scarcely bear the presence of her with whom she had sought this interview. But struggling with these better feelings was pride,- the vice of the lowest and most debased creatures no less than of the

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high, and self-assured. The miserable companion of thieves and ruffians, the fallen outcast of low haunts, the associate of the scourings of the jails and hulks, living within the shadow of the gallows itself,- even this degraded being felt too proud to betray a feeble gleam of the womanly feeling which she thought a weakness, but which alone connected her with that humanity, of which her wasting life had obliterated so many, many traces when a very child.<sup>27</sup>( chapter 40)

The contrast between the well-bred woman and a street girl is insignificant in comparison to their manners and morals. Nancy acts as a ladylike regardless her shame and shyness but she is very aware of her status and the house she is visiting. Here, there is no affectation from her side but she acts carefully but with no pretensions inside her there is the seed of nobility and femininity .Dickens' novels bring to the surface many questions and discussions about his views about women and human beings in general.

### ***Mahfouz: His Dependable and Fallen woman.***

Naguib Mahfouz was also preoccupied with social issues like Dickens before him ,but Mahfouz was more philosophical in his approach . For him novels are the route to discuss many social and existential issues ,like the fate of men and women and their struggle to find an exist from their social restraints and the narrowness of their own choices. He always believes that man's / woman's free will is always blocked with the social forces and life determination.

"Few people will deny that Naguib Mahfouz is the leading novelist in the Arab world, or that he is the most significant figure to have arisen this century in the history of the Arabic novel. Yet, paradoxically, of all writers he is perhaps the most peculiarly Egyptian in sensibility, outlook and

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid,

background -- and that despite the underlying universality of the themes in many of his works. Other Arab novelists who produce works of literary merit appear from time to time, but few write more than one or two truly interesting novels, and certainly no one has approached in output, originality and seriousness Mahfouz's achievement.<sup>28</sup> " -

In most of his novels he dealt with many contradictory issues and his characters always met with defeat and sometimes no hope or light .For example in his novel , The Search his hero, Saber, did not reach to any truth concerning the identity of his father who did not see him in his life .His deceased mother left for him a photo which misguided him in his journey to discover his identity , he was like Oedipus blinded by his quest , he only reached truth through killing an old man , the motel's owner . The fatal femme represented in Karima, the wife of the old man , acts as a seductive figure incited Saber to kill her husband instead of giving him the chance to know who was his father . Here , in this novel , the female figure represents the dark side of life and the malicious one. On the other side Mahfouz exposes another prototype of woman who is an angelic figure ,Alham ,or as her name in a literal meaning is ,inspiration , .She always inspires and pushes him to be optimist and never to loose hope in finding his father. The end of Saber is doomed by Karima pushing him to kill her old invalid husband . The motive behind killing her husband is her lustful urge towards Saber who addicted her body ,and was eager to do anything to stay and satisfy her. Karima, here ,can be considered as a victim as well because she is a young woman married to sick impotent old man. She married him only to find a home and a roof protecting her from being a professional prostitute ,but ironically speaking

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<sup>28</sup> (M.M.Badawi, Times Literary Supplement (25/9/1981)

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she became one of this type ,living with an old husband and having illicit relation with a devious young man .

The frustration of Saber is met with sexual hunger of Karima who was seeking an affair to make her feel being a real woman .But there was also a hidden agenda for her , she pushed Saber to this criminal act to inherit her husband's properties .The perfect crime almost was discovered and similarl to Lady Macbeth ,Karima was the prime mover of this murdering . Here ,it can be said that Mahfouz condemns women but before he condemns them he gives a rational motive behind her actions, karima represented as Victim to poverty and her desire . But with Mahfouz is that you can not assume that he has one single view about women , it appears that he has an ambivalent view of his characters within the same novel and through his narrative . He offers to his readers another positive side of women ,who is Alham . Is this confusing ? no he is representing a different side of woman 's brightness and strength represented in Alham ,who is a good example.

It seems that Mahfouz in many of his novels is fascinated by showing the contradiction in human nature and this is clear in his trilogy .Though the three novels traces male characters but women's nature are also analyzed and explained in details how oriental women live in such a restricted societies and how they maneuver to defy the traditions. To western readers Mahfouz is a good writer to reflect the Arab culture through his writing especially his Trilogy because,

"The trilogy recounts, with Tolstoyan assurance, the lives, marriages and disruptive extramarital passions of a Muslim family of the middling merchant class.(...) For the American reader, Mahfouz's writing produces a simultaneous double-reading. One gets caught up in this Muslim family's

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#### **Women as Victims and Victimizer...The Feminisms of Dickens and Mahfouz:**

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concerns. Scandals produced by the sexual obsessions of father and sons (...) threaten the private stability of the patriarchal household, the public respectability all-important to its perilous social standing, indeed the stability of traditional Muslim structures themselves. Mahfouz is so absorbed in each scene, so effortlessly able to assume with the great story-tellers that the tale he is telling is the only tale worth hearing at the moment, that the reader, as it were, must become a member of the family."<sup>29</sup>

Most of the women of Mahfouz were restricted to house and unable to go for small errands unless with the permission of a father or a brother . The patriarchal power was dominating over women . According to the Arabs and Islamic traditions ,women are not allowed to move except with a guardian and he has to be one of her blood relations like a father, a brother , a husband or an uncle. In Cairo Trilogy Amina ,the wife of Mr

. Ahamed Abdelgawad was sent to her family's house because she broke the law and went out to visit the holy shroud of Hussein without having the permission from her husband and this was considered a disobedience and deviation from the marital and societal law .Mahfouz represents men as different category from women in Trilogy,especailly the father figure where Amina the mother and his wife is represented as weak and helpless

"Al-Sayyid Ahmad is a strange central figure -- tyrannical at home (before mellowing in his old age), but quite the libertine outside it. Perhaps the most unbelievable aspect of the novel is his children's unquestioning adoration of their father: Mahfouz allows practically no doubt, despite the fact that a man like that must be very difficult to always love and respect. The next generations are more realistically

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<sup>29</sup> George Kearns, *The Hudson Review*

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described, though Yasin (and Ibrahim Shawkat, Khadija's husband) is something of a caricature.

The women tend to be background figures: Khadija briefly comes to the fore in her battles with her mother-in-law, and Kamal's love-interest and Ahmad's wife are interesting figures (as are some of the pleasure-women), but for the most part Mahfouz isn't nearly as comfortable with them<sup>30</sup>.

Women in Arabia were controlled by Islamic law, family male members and social law which treat women as creatures to be protected and guarded. May be this was taken from the Harem tradition or from traditional view about women and how they should be segregated from men in early centuries of Islam .Therefore ,we can consider Naguib Mahfouz's Trilogy as representation of women during the early twentieth century and how there was inequality in looking at women in the society . The trilogy as critics perceive them attack the superiority of men over women and this because of the double standards of social law:

"Confrontations with change tend to be unpleasant: Amina does no more than venture out on the street without her husband's permission and she's almost immediately hit by a car. The family home at Palace Walk is a fortress of sorts against the outside world, but this threatening world can not be kept entirely at bay: early on the English set up camp outside it, at the end the house is searched by the police. And even in the relative safety and isolation of the house it is clear that the world is not standing still. Amina observes:

Night after night she had stood on the balcony observing the street through the wooden grille. What she could see of

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<sup>30</sup> <http://www.complete-review.com/reviews/mahfouzn/cairo.htm> 7-11-2017

the street had not altered, but change had crept through her.  
<sup>31</sup>

Mahfouz 's women's figures ranges from a very traditional and stereotyped woman to a very radical and rebellious ones. It is obvious in the novel of Mahfouz that women who are rebellious face a fatal end , in other words death and fall are their inevitable destiny .

In many of his novels , Naguib Mahfouz adopted such a good vision towards women that critics at his time coined the concept of "**Kind-hearted Prostitutes**" which is strikingly exemplified in the character of Nafisa who sacrifices herself to spend on her brother Hussein; and the character of Nour in his novel the Thief and the Dogs who exposes herself to danger for the sake of sheltering Said Mahrhan who is a fugitive of justice, whereas his ex-wife Nabaweyya betrays him and marries his friend Aliesh when he is imprisoned.

When Naguib Mahfouz started his novelistic career in the thirties and forties, Egypt was undergoing a state of political and social mobility and liberalism was at its peak. This requires such a liberal and philosophical writer as Naguib Mahfouz to write about the new image of woman with her cons and pros. Ihsan, for example, in *Cairo 30* (Cairo Modern ) sheds light on legalized prostitution and political corruption especially after she fails to join university owing to poverty and destitution. It is clear that "Mahfouz's portraits of Ihsan and other women are especially compassionate and complex. (...) Mahfouz's brilliance lies in portraying the mixture of good and evil in human character. (...) Unfortunately this central story is book-ended by

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<sup>31</sup> <http://www.complete-review.com/reviews/mahfouzn/cairo.htm>

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schematized philosophical discussions between the characters, who are made to represent different positions "<sup>32</sup>"

Nifesa in Mahfouz's novel The Beginning and The End was a victim to her lust but before she was a victim to her deprivation either on the physical level or financial one. The novel portrays in details the downfall of Nifesa after her father died and her struggle to find a husband who takes care of her but unfortunately she was deceived by her boyfriend who promised to marry her but meanly her broke his promise. She started her career as a dress maker then after she was betrayed and dishonored, she turned to prostitution to support her family and herself thinking that she is doing a great thing by providing her brother Hasanien with pocket money to spend it with his friends and on his girl friend. But Nifesa paid her life for her fall by committing suicide in the River Nile after she was caught in a brothel and her shame was revealed to her brother who was an army officer and he asked her to throw herself into the river to hide her scandal and atone for her sin.

"*The Beginning and the End* is a most powerful and compassionate Dickens-like tale (.....) Here we have Mafouz's realism at its best (.....) Yet there's candour and wit, irony and humour (...), and twists and turns galore which firmly grip the reader's attention. (...) It is a superbly competent and faultless translation<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> - Dinitia Smith, The New York Times

19/6/2008

<sup>33</sup> .Nessim Dawood, The Times

31/3/1990

Nifesa by many socialist thinker is a victim to her social background and to the economical depression of the thirty moreover she was deprived of beauty which allows her to take the right husband .

Naguib Mahfouz though sympathetic towards her ,he tries to reflect a deeper aspect of Nifesa which is the strength of her sexual drive which allows her later on to enjoy sex after being cheated by her friend by allowing herself to sleep with strangers in return for money. In that sense, she is similar to Nancy in Oliver Twist , she knows that she is going to be killed by Sikes but her love for him makes her weak.

Nancy is similar to the character of Hamida in Madiq Alley another novel of Mahfouz where he introduced another woman figure who suffered under poverty and being an orphan .

.She was deprived of any kindness but she was eager to do anything to seek, money , love and happiness. Mahfouz through the character of Hamida wanted to attack the corrupted politics of Egypt during the time of the king who was weak under the dominance of the English occupation to Egypt between the two world war. Hamida was physically attractive and thirsty for sexual experience therefore she was an easy bait for Farag, a cuckold who runs a casino for pleasures and weird fantasies .Hamida has an ambition in life is to leave the Madiq and lead a rich life regardless being poor she knew that she is beautiful and that she can be accepted by any man who is eager to take her as a wife . She did not refuse Abbas Alhalwbut she knew that he is poor and can not support her with what she wants .Abbas -was similar to Pip the hero of Great Expectations wants to do anything to satisfy Hamida and to win her heart exactly as Pip did to Stella ,and to meet her demands he travels to work in The English Camp to make more money to be able to marry her . Hamida as an orphan was lacking any parental control

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besides she was seeking a different style of life . She was not happy with the people of Madiq Alley . She thinks that they are dead people and lacks ambition and expectations of good life. She led a life of prostitution and vice after Farag broke his promises of getting married to her. She meet a fatal end like Nifesa .She was shot by a bullet from a gun of English soldier . She was carried to the alley. The novels fails to give a happy end to the life of Hamida because the author knows and predicts that such type of woman has to fail because she broke the social codes of her society and she has to be punished .She is in the same trail like Nifesa , the society does not like fallen women even though if they are strong , different and ambitious. Mahfouz seems very traditional sometimes in his way to looking at women . He makes them responsible for their failure not like Dickens who made the society and family upbringing responsible for the choices and fates of his heroines. But the greatness of Mahfouz is his strong ability to portray the difficult moment of man and women and the dilemma of choices. His novels cover all types of men and women.His narrative did not marginalize any class of people .His novels are a mosaic of Egyptian society by all its variety and contradictions . Mahfouz's: " narrative world is peopled with characters from all walks of Egyptian life, from beggars to aristocrats, with a special place reserved for the intellectuals with whom Mahfouz identifies. On the literary plane, his career spans the whole process of development of the Arabic novel from the historical to the modernistic and lyrical. He earned the Arabic novel respect and popularity and lived to see it flourish in the work of numerous writers throughout the Arab world."<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> - Sabry Hafez, [The Independent \(31/8/2006\)](#)

There is obvious affinity in both form and content in many of the novels of Naguib Mahfouz and Charles Dickens. Both of them attempt to analytically and rationally portray the social reality of women and society in spite of the melodramatic aspects they employ in delineating their characters as a means to attract the attention of audience who love human issues. For example, both Nafisa's and Nancy's death could not happen in reality if they ever thought of escaping their destiny, that is, Nafisa could not commit suicide if she did not give her brother's name to the police officer; and Nancy could not be killed if she heeded the advice of Rose and went with her to start a new life. Dickens' novels were considered as a revolution since they drew the attention to the plight of the poor, the marginalized and the victimized groups of children and women. We can argue that Dickens' novels are the true beginning of women's liberation movement, advocacy of children's rights and prohibition against children's labor. Then came the 20<sup>th</sup> century with much more emphasis on women's and children's rights as being reflected in Naguib Mahfouz's view of women whom he regards as the half of society and, if cared for, they would push their society forward.

The paper tries to investigate the issue of women in some of the novels of Dickens and Mahfouz and it appears that there are many similarities between them in their look to women . Both of them where very progressive in their views about women and how they represent them . Regardless that they lived in different historical epochs, they managed to give a very vivid and radicalized view about women. Both them believed in their potential power of goodness and generosity even if they were rejected and condemned in the society .Nancy helped Oliver to unite with his family liberating him from Fagin's gang paying her life for this ,and Nifesa gave money to her brother to go on with his education in the Military Academy. From societal point of view they are

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fallen women but Dickens and Mahfouz raised them to be an icon of sacrifice and almost Saints .Dickens 'popularity sprang from his deep views in presenting people though sometimes he caricatured them but the good reader can not escape looking to the human side of these characters. Mahfouz as well is a national writer from many Arab intellectuals who appreciated his efforts in making Arabic novel an international appeal through winning Nobel Prize ,these intellectuals praised him for his ability to portray in a psychological way women's inner feelings and men's reactions to these feelings.

The only difference we can observe about Dickens and Mahfouz that Dickens was very realistic while Mahfouz was sometimes allegorical . Dickens says things directly but Mahfouz was always careful and aware of censorship so he used symbols and women were his symbols in many of his novels like Nifesa and Zuhra stood for Egyptian history as many critics have said . Even London to Dickens and its streets were realistic but Cairo with its streets and Hara( small lane) for Mahfouz were allegorical " the Hara ,lane , is unmistakably a quarter of old Cairo ,in which people suffer from dirt and poverty ,and are subject to the tyranny and organized bands of thugs . the lives of the people of the Hara(street) are lived out in a context of violence , injustice and oppression<sup>35</sup> ().What Netton says about Hara of Naguib Mahfouz is typically women are part of it . They suffer within its walls and they hit by its men . Poverty is not a vice but for women it is ,because it forces them to submit in all means to men in order to survive.

Dickens and Mahfouz were very feminists but before being feminist they were very human and kind calling for the equality of all sexes and fair treatment to women .

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<sup>35</sup> Richad Netton ,1996,p.10

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