



# Class, Ideology and Consciousness: Revisiting Dickens' Great Expectations and Mahfouz's The Cairo Trilogy from a Marxist Perspective

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**Abstract**— This study explores the interplay between class, ideology and consciousness within the socio-political contexts of 19th-century England and 20th-century Egypt in Dickens' *Great Expectations* and Mahfouz's *The Cairo Trilogy* respectively from a Marxist perspective. It attempts to provide answers to these objectives: 1) analyze the socio-political and economic contexts of 19th-century England and 20th-century Egypt; 2) examine the ways in which class, ideology and consciousness are represented in the novels, particularly through the experiences of the protagonists; 3) explore the literary techniques used by Dickens and Mahfouz to critique the dominant power structures and social injustice; 4) assess the enduring relevance of the novels' social and political messages to contemporary society. Marxist literary theory is utilized to explore the themes of class, ideology and consciousness within the socio-political contexts of 19th-century England and 20th-century Egypt in the selected novels. The study concludes that both novels critique social hierarchies, capitalist and colonial ideologies and perpetuate the characters' consciousness and unconsciousness. The protagonists, Pip in *Great Expectations* and Kamal in *The Cairo Trilogy*, navigate between self-discovery, love and social expectations. They face moral dilemmas and highlight conflicts between personal values and societal norms, making the novels emblematic of the exploration of universal messages that remain relevant to contemporary society.



**Keywords**— bourgeoisie, class, consciousness, ideology, Marxism, mode of production, proletariat.

## I. INTRODUCTION

*Great Expectations* (1861) is Dickens' bildungsroman coming-of-age novel. It traces Pip's journey of self-discovery from childhood to maturity. The protagonist Pip goes through significant experiences that shape his individuality and identity. Through his experiences, Pip learns interesting messages about what really matters in life. For instance, his ignorance and arrogance about his family relationships teach him a moral message that lies at the heart of the novel: true happiness is not found in wealth or social status, but in the love and connection one shares with those around him. This moral

message is universal and should be reflected in contemporary society.

Mahfouz's *The Cairo Trilogy* is a realist saga that explores the current state of affairs in Egypt's most crucial history. It covers the period from 1917 to 1944. It consists of three volumes: *Palace Walk* (1956), *Palace of Desire* (1956) and *Sugar Street* (1957). The first volume deals with Islamic traditions, patriarchy and societal expectations. The second volume delves into the complexities of love, desire and dilemmas of identity. The third volume concludes the saga with messages of change, modernity and the Egypt's struggle for independence from the British colonialism.

Dickens' *Great Expectations* and Mahfouz's *The Cairo Trilogy* have been considered portraits of the socio-political status quo of 19th-century England and 20th-century Egypt respectively. Both novels are included in the canon of English and Arabic literature respectively. They reveal relevant social, moral and political messages which will be explored with the help of Marxist literary theory in the sections to come.

Today, we are witnessing major social, economic and political changes in contemporary society that make us fall back on Dickens' *Great Expectations* and Mahfouz's *The Cairo Trilogy*, their memorable characters and their universal themes. The enduring appeal of Dickens' and Mahfouz's selected novels lies in their enduring universal messages to contemporary society. Through the experiences of the protagonists, the novels explore universal contemporary themes such as political and ideological hegemony, oppression, exploitation, moral development and the influence of wealth and poverty on individuals that resonate in contemporary society. In *Great Expectations*, Pip's journey from his unconscious beginnings as a blacksmith's apprentice to his class consciousness is saturated with valuable messages that an individual should explore to reflect in contemporary society. In *The Cairo Trilogy*, the British colonial superiority, exploitation and oppression on the Egyptian society should be also explored to interact properly in contemporary society that is witnessing political and cultural hegemony of neocolonialism.

Marxism believes that the past history was gradually based on class conflict between two camps: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat (Marx and Engels, 1848; Marx, 1859). Marxist theory criticizes the capitalist system as it emphasizes a society composed of two conflicting structures: the bourgeoisie who own property and thus control the mode of production, and the proletariat, the workers who are controlled by the bourgeoisie and whose work produces their wealth (Marx, 1867). According to Marx and Engels, economic means are the sole cause of class conflict in a capitalist society (Marx, 1848). This class conflict comes from the way goods and services are produced and distributed to individuals in a capitalist society. The production and distribution of goods and services inevitably leads to class conflict between social classes because of the way economic resources are used and who benefits from them. Marxism calls this production and distribution of goods and services "the forces of production" (Dobie, 2012 p. 91).

Marxism believes that the social conflict between the two classes, bourgeoisie and proletariat, inevitably and largely leads to exploitation and subjugation of the

proletariat class (Marx, 1876). Marx and Engels believed that the powerless and exploited proletarian individuals become alienated (Marx, 1844). Through this process of alienation, the bourgeois class exploits the proletariat to produce its own interests. The workers are the ones who produce and add value to the produced items, but they receive nothing (Marx, 1876). They do not have an access to what they produce in valuable form, so the capitalist owns the productive labor and gives no credit to the labors (Marx, 1876). Marxist theory believes that exploitation and subjugation will lead to a proletarian revolution against the bourgeoisie where the proletariat will control the mode of production, and thus wealth will be distributed equally (Marx & Engels, 1848). According to Marx, the proletarian revolution becomes a demand of the proletariat for equality and a better life (Marx & Engels, 1848).

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous studies have examined Dickens' *Great Expectations* and Mahfouz's *The Cairo Trilogy* separately, but have failed to provide comparative literature to explore how people interacted and behaved in 19th and 20th centuries respectively. This study is distinguished by providing a comparative interpretation of Dickens' *Great Expectations* and Mahfouz's *The Cairo Trilogy* from a Marxist perspective. It attempts to explore the universal moral, political and social themes that maintain lasting relevance to contemporary society which previous studies have failed to do. Therefore, this study gains significance and originality and provides "a value added" contribution to the literature review.

Amada and Dr. Ahmad Naeem, Department of English Language & Literature, Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences, Gomal University, Pakistan, conducted a research titled: *The Influence of Economic Exploitation on Individual Identity: A Marxist Analysis of Dickens' Great Expectations*. The researchers aimed to explore the influence of economic exploitation on individual identity from a Marxist perspective. They concluded that the influence of economic exploitation on individual's identity emerged as a central theme in *Great Expectations*. They also concluded that *Great Expectations* was a literary masterpiece that highlighted the dehumanizing effects of economic exploitation, class conflict, and intersections with gender and race that reflected the status quo of Victorian England. However, this research presented a traditional Marxist critique of *Great Expectations* without presenting comparative literature to compare two periods and cultures that the current study explores.

Some scholars have interpreted Mahfouz *The Cairo Trilogy* from different sociological perspectives, but

not from a Marxist perspective. For instance, the MA dissertation titled: *Historical events and Political changes in Naguib Mahfouz's "The Cairo Trilogy"*, conducted by Lambraki Sofia (2017), University of Peloponnese, attempted to answer the question of how Mahfouz was able to reveal a great part of Egypt's history in the 20th century through the daily lives of his characters in the saga. It concluded that *The Cairo Trilogy* was not a narrative of political events and social upheavals, but rather the lives of characters were closely linked to the historical events of a period of great change. However, this research surveyed the saga from a historical perspective; it failed to interpret the saga from a Marxist perspective and present comparative literature to compare the Egyptian culture with other culture that the current study explores.

## 2.1 Marxist Literary Theory

Like all other theories that first emerged from the humanities and then penetrated into literature, Marxism was a political and economic theory that aimed to change the world (Dobie, p. 84). Thus, Marxist theory is a social, political, and economic theory which draws on the perspectives of Karl Heinrich Marx (1818–1883) and Friedrich Engels (1820–1895) who criticized injustice and inequality in 19th century European capitalist systems. It studies how literature portrays materialism and class conflict. Marx and Engels viewed history as a historical conflict between classes - the oppressors and the oppressed. Their books: *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1845), *The German Ideology* (1846), *The Communist Manifesto* (1848) *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859) and *Das Kapital* (1867) laid the foundation for Marxist theory and philosophy. Marxist theory combines philosophy, sociology, and economic theory to assert that society is fundamentally created in relation to its economic structure.

Marxist theory claims that capitalist society is divided into two parts: the Base and the Superstructure. The Base refers to the mode of production, and the Superstructure refers to everything else in society that develops in relation to the economic Base. The economic Base in society generates and shapes social systems called the Superstructure. The Superstructure consists of different aspects of life, such as religion, politics, philosophy, art, science, and literature. The Superstructure contributes to the formation of social ideology (Marx, 1859; Gramsci, Prison Notebooks).

In *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), Marx and Engels recognized class struggle as the driving force behind history and expected that this would lead to a revolution in which workers would overthrow the capitalists, take control of economic production, and

eliminate private property by turning it over to the government for a just distribution. However, the tenets of traditional Marxist theory were developed by other Marxist theorists later on.

The first major Marxist critic was Georg Lukács (1885–1971), a Hungarian critic, who was responsible for what became known as 'reflectionism'. He emphasized the idea of close reading, the tenet of Formalism, that a text reflects the society which produced it. Reflectionists reinterpreted literature in order to discover how characters and their relationships symbolized class conflict, the socio-economic system, or the politics of time and place. Reflectionists assumed that such an examination would eventually lead to an understanding of that system and the author's worldview. Ultimately, reflectionists attributed the fragmentation and alienation they discovered to the pathologies of capitalism (Dobie, 2012).

The Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci (1841-1934) focused heavily on hegemony, which became another central issue in Marxist literary criticism. For Gramsci, hegemony is "the whole lived social process as it is practically organized by specific and dominant meanings, values and beliefs of a kind which can be abstracted as a 'world-view' or 'class outlook'" (Gramsci, 1971).

In his book *Marxism and Literature* (1977), the Marxist Raymond Williams (1921-1988) relates hegemony to culture in general and to ideology in particular. According to Williams, hegemony is like an internal form of social control which makes certain viewpoints appear natural/invisible. Williams asserts that the critic should look at literature as a product of material/historical conditions, and as a reflection of the ideology existing in a given society. The critic also shows the relationship between the text and the people, or the subjugators and the subjugated. The critic should also examine whether the text is a critique of capitalism or any ideology in society.

The French Marxist theorist Louis Althusser (1918-1990) was largely influenced by the Marxist perspective, seeing a relationship between culture, economy and art, enjoying a degree of independence from economic forces, as economic forces are able to manipulate the proletariat and shape an ideology that society accepts, even if it is a false consciousness. Althusser defined ideology as a system of representations that has a historical existence at the heart of a given society. He believed that a literary work does not provide a complete understanding of the real world, nor does it simply express the ideology of a particular class. Rather, it makes us aware of the ideology that governs its existence and our existence in society (Althusser, 1971).

Currently, the American Fredric Jameson and the British Terry Eagleton are well-known Marxist critics. Jameson is known for his use of Freudian ideas in his contribution to Marxist criticism. While Freud discussed the notion of the repressed unconscious of the individual, Jameson spoke of the political unconscious, exploitation and oppression buried in the work. The critic, according to Jameson, seeks to uncover these buried forces and bring them to light (Dobie, 2012).

Terry Eagleton, a leading British literary theorist, points out that Marxist criticism is concerned with how class division, class conflict, oppression, and political aspects are conveyed in literary works. Marxist criticism focuses on the social and political aspects of the work rather than its aesthetic (artistic and visual) value. In his book *Marxism and Literary Criticism* (1976), Terry Eagleton states, "Marxist criticism" analyses literature in terms of the historical conditions which produce it" (Eagleton, 1976). The business of Marxist literary criticism, is 'to understand the ideologies that represent the ideas, values and feelings with which men experience their societies at various times' and 'to explain the literary work more fully; that is, to pay sensitive attention to its forms, styles and meanings (Eagleton, 1976).

### III. RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a descriptive qualitative research method where the researcher attempts to explore social issues such as class, ideology and consciousness within the socio-political contexts of 19th-century England and 20th-century Egypt in Dickens' *Great Expectations* and Mahfouz's *The Cairo Trilogy* from a Marxist perspective.

### IV. DATA AND DATA SOURCES

To conduct the study, several sources will be used in qualitative data collection. The primary sources are Dickens' *Great Expectations* and Mahfouz's *The Cairo Trilogy* which will be interpreted from a Marxist perspective. Reliable Marxist sources, other journals, books or theses that are closely related to the current study will be consulted to achieve the objectives of the study. APA style is used in the study.

### V. MARXIST INTERPRETATIONS OF GREAT EXPECTATIONS

#### 5.1 Class Conflict

The class conflict between the individual and society is firmly established and maintained in the novel.

The class conflict really begins when Pip pays a visit to Satis House and meets the bourgeois Miss Havisham and her adopted daughter Estella. At Satis House, Pip falls deeply in love with Estella. However, the bourgeois Estella rejects his love and insults him because he is a common boy, which intensifies the class conflict in the novel. (*Great Expectations*, 86). Pip feels ashamed of himself for the first time in his life because of Estella's humiliation of his behavior and appearance: "he calls the knaves, Jacks, this boy!" said Estella with disdain, and what coarse hands he has! And what thick boots!" (*Great Expectations*, 78). Her frankly insulting manner embarrasses Pip who begins to understand the bourgeois psyche and what is really happening around him.

Actually, at Satis House, Pip comes to know how the world works and functions. His social aspirations to be a gentleman increase, and thus raise the plot of the novel. At Satis House, he realizes the hierarchical structure of the bourgeois society and the necessity of social mobility towards a respectable social status. He begins to question his proletarian status and that being a gentleman is the only way to be equal to the bourgeois Estella. Therefore, he is ready to embrace bourgeois morality and standards at the end of his visit to Miss Havisham. From a Marxist perspective, the bourgeois oppression on proletarian individuals makes Pip a victim of the Victorian social structure.

The superiority of the bourgeois Miss Havisham at Satis House serves as an example of the class conflict in the novel. She wants the proletariat to be subordinate to her. She is at the top of her arrogance and superiority at Satis House. She instructs: "Estella, take him down. Let him have something to eat, and let him roam and look about him while he eats. Go, Pip" (*Great Expectations*, 85). These instructions reveal Miss Havisham's complete control over Pip at Satis House. This extreme control is an indication of the arrogance of the bourgeoisie over the proletariat. More importantly, Pip comes to know that the bourgeois Miss Havisham deceives him because he is not intended for Estella as he originally comes from the proletariat class.

The class conflict between Miss Havisham and Estella, who represent the bourgeoisie, and Pip, who represents the proletariat, is of vital importance as it has endurance relevance to contemporary society. It reveals the wealth gap between the rich and the poor which reflects the economic disparities in contemporary society. There are countries live in extravagant luxury while others live in extreme poverty in contemporary society. The rich countries exploit the poor countries to be their subordinate. This example aligns with the Marxist belief of Marx and



Engels that "the history of all the hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles" (Karl Marx, and Friedrich Engels, 1848), and that our contemporary society "as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other - the bourgeois and the proletariat (Marx, 1948 p 3).

Fortunately, a mysterious benefactor provides Pip with some money to go to London to be educated and become a gentleman. He goes to London to be educated by Mr. Mathew Pocket. Pip moves to London to get access to quality education and become a gentleman. From a Marxist perspective, Pip's education in London reveals the bourgeoisie's enjoyment of quality education and the proletariat's depravity and corruption in education.

Pip's education in London shows how wealth can influence educational opportunities. Pip would remain uneducated without the fortune he receives from Magwitch which indicates the educational inequality in Victorian society. This educational inequality finds echoes in contemporary society where the bourgeoisie enjoy quality education while the proletariat individuals remain ignorant due to financial difficulties. According to Literacy Rate by Countries 2024, there is a relationship between literacy and poverty. Poverty and literacy tend to go hand-in-hand. Education is often less available in poverty-stricken areas. Because of poverty, even when education is available, struggling families may need their children to work and earn money instead of going to school. This theme has powerful enduring relevance to contemporary society, and is Pip's fate in *Great Expectations*.

The class conflict is further developed significantly when Joe plans to visit Pip in London. When Joe meets Pip in London, Pip tells Joe that they are now people of different social classes. Pip becomes embarrassed by Joe's attitude and behavior in London because Joe is a proletarian. The significance of Joe's visit lies in its exploration of universal messages that remain pertinent and relevant to contemporary society. These messages continue to resonate with readers, making Joe's visit a timeless and thought-provoking moment in literature. Pip's rejection of Joe symbolizes the tension between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. His embarrassment of Joe's humble background reflects ongoing struggles with social class and identity. In addition, Pip's prioritization of social status over Joe's friendship resonates in contemporary concerns about superficial relationships. Pip's treatment of Joe as inferior reflects the reduction of human relations to economic transactions (Marx, 1844) which remains a lively theme of enduring importance and relevance. His adoption of bourgeois values over his proletarian origin exemplifies

the false consciousness perpetuated by capitalist ideology (Marx and Engels, 1848). Pip's assimilation into the London bourgeoisie illustrates the cultural hegemony of the bourgeoisie over proletarian individuals, (Gramsci, 1971) which remains a lively theme of enduring relevance to contemporary society.

Dickens uses different literary techniques to create powerful images in the reader's mind. He uses the imagery literary technique to show the misty and windy weather on the marshes, setting the tone for the rest of the novel. He uses the symbolism literary technique in which the marshes symbolize the unknown and the convict's presence, while also creating a sense of foreboding and danger. In addition, he uses the irony literary technique to highlight the contradictions and hypocrisies of the Victorian society. The metaphor literary technique is also used to compare Pip's life to a journey, creating a sense of uncertainty and self-discovery.

The class conflict develops dramatically as Pip certainly knows that the true benefactor is the proletarian convict Magwitch and not the bourgeois Miss Havisham. Pip comes to know that the bourgeoisie deceive him again because the real benefactor is not Miss Havisham, but the convict Magwitch who originally belongs to the proletariat class.

*Great Expectations* is saturated with lively messages that have enduring relevance to contemporary society. Pip's contempt for Magwitch symbolizes the ongoing tension between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. His acceptance of bourgeois values exemplifies the ideological hegemony perpetuated by capitalist society. Pip's treatment of Magwitch resonates with ongoing struggles against class-based discrimination (Piketty, 2014). Therefore, bourgeois contempt and dehumanization of the proletariat class reflect Marx's concept of the eternal class conflict between the two camps which finds strong echoes in both Victorian and contemporary societies. Pip's adoption of bourgeois values demonstrates how dominant ideologies shape individual perspectives (Gramsci, 1971), a theme that remains relevant to contemporary society which will be presented in the section to come.

## 5.2 Ideology

In *Great Expectations*, Pip attempts to conform to the bourgeois ideology of nobility. As a member of the proletariat class, society expects him to be a gentleman. This ideology of bourgeois individualism emphasizes individual success over collective well-being (Marx and Engels, 1848). Under the influence of bourgeois individualism, Pip's desire to study in London indicates the success of the bourgeois ideology (Gramsci, 1971) from which he finds no escape. Under the influence of the

prevailing ideology, Pip represents social oppression from his childhood onwards through his education in London to become a gentleman and through his morals in London to evaluate his environment from a bourgeois perspective. Therefore, *Great Expectations* presents oppressed and subjugated individuals who strongly conform to the established ideology. From a Marxist perspective, the proletarian characters in Dickens' novel are subservient and manipulated individuals who change their individuality and identity according to the established ideology. Their individual interests and decisions are controlled by others. From a Marxist perspective, bourgeois individuals, such as Miss Havisham and Estella, are oppressors as they force proletarian individuals into absolute submission to the imposed dominant ideology (Marx, 1848).

*Great Expectations* perpetuates education as an ideology transmitted through evaluations of individual success. The novel perpetuates the notion that social status determines worth (Bourdieu, 1986), which can be obtained through education. So, the ignorant Pip cannot escape the propagated bourgeois ideology. He can only achieve social mobility through education. Accordingly, Pip moves to London to get access to quality education to become a gentleman.

Marx points out, "it is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but on the contrary their social being that determines their consciousness" (Marx 1859; 1867). Louis Althusser believes that one does not choose an ideology, but rather the dominant ideology chooses him (Althusser, 1971). Thus, Pip does not choose the dominant ideology, but rather the ideology itself chooses him. He becomes a slave to the ideology generated by the bourgeois society. He becomes blind and sees only the virtues in the ideology promoted by the bourgeoisie. Although Pip blindly embraces the ideology of the bourgeoisie, he cannot escape his original material circumstances and finds himself where he was at the beginning of the novel. From a Marxist perspective, Pip ends up as a manipulated and a subjugated individual who spends his entire life struggling to conform to the established ideology of Victorian society, but in vain. His entire struggle turns out to be meaningless. Pip confronts the truth that lies at the heart of *Great Expectations*: all the claims that wealth, status and culture make a better character are completely false.

### 5.3 Consciousness vs. Unconsciousness

*Great Expectations* reinforces bourgeois and ruling-class ideologies and perpetuates false consciousness. Pip's class consciousness is truly examined when he meets his friend Joe Gargery in London. Pip feels

embarrassed by Joe's visit to London. He considers his association with an incompatible man in London to be detrimental to his social standing and reputation in his bourgeois circle. Pip is disturbed by Joe's uncomfortable behavior and actions and asserts the success of the bourgeois ideology in changing his individuality and identity while simultaneously proving that he is class unconscious.

Joe Gargery confirms Pip's false consciousness by asserting the social differences and divisions in London's society, which makes him align with the Marxist belief that there are two camps: the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. Joe confirms the false consciousness that has limitlessly captured Pip: one man's a blacksmith, and one's a whiteman, and one's a goldsmith, and one's a coppersmith. Divisions [sic] (*Great Expectations* 206-207).

Marx believed that the proletarian individuals never develop class consciousness as they are "passive purifying of the lowest layers of the old society" (Marx, 1848 p.72). Pip's class consciousness is examined again when he meets the proletarian Magwitch in London. Although Magwitch has made a significant impact on his life, Pip develops hatred for him as he is a proletarian. In a state of false consciousness, Pip perpetuates bourgeois values towards the proletariat class in the city of London. When Magwitch tells Pip that he is the true mysterious benefactor, Pip forgets that he and Magwitch share the same social class and develops hatred for him. (*Great Expectations*, 453). Therefore, Pip proves to be absolutely class unconscious.

Unlike Pip, Dickens presents Magwitch as a class-conscious individual. As a class-conscious individual, Magwitch acknowledges his oppression and exploitation as a convict and a worker, demonstrating his consciousness of class exploitation (Marx, 1844). His anger towards Compeyson and the bourgeois individuals reflects his class consciousness. So, he is fully motivated to take revenge on the bourgeois society. Through his developed class consciousness, he plans to fund Pip to be a gentleman in order to take his revenge on the bourgeois society.

Dickens presents the protagonist Pip as a class-unconscious individual, but makes him live through the actions and events to raise his class consciousness. However, Dickens presents Magwitch as a class-conscious individual who recognizes bourgeois exploitation and economic inequalities in the Victorian society. Magwitch's struggles mirror contemporary concerns about the economic inequalities that structure the contemporary world. In addition, Magwitch's experiences as a proletarian

convict resonate with current issues surrounding systematic injustice. More importantly, Magwitch's characterization underscores the importance of authentic proletarian representation in the media and politics in contemporary society. In short, by presenting conscious and unconscious proletarian individuals, Dickens conveys the message that the proletarian individuals have the potential to raise their consciousness and build a free and independent proletarian personality and individuality.

## VI. MARXIST INTERPRETATIONS OF THE CAIRO TRILOGY

### 6.1 Class Conflict

Mahfouz highlights the class conflict between the individual and society in the saga *The Cairo Trilogy*. He presents a minor story within the major story of the saga. The major saga portrays the class conflict between the Egyptians and the British colonialism. The minor story portrays the class conflict between the Egyptians themselves, the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, and shows how the Egyptian society is stratified which will be presented in the section to come.

#### 6.1.1 Egyptian Class Conflict

Mahfouz highlights the class conflict that begins with the first generation in *Palace Walk* which represents Islamic tradition. The class conflict continues directly with the second and third generations in *Palace of Desire* and *Sugar Street*, which represent cultural transformation and liberation. The division of the members of Al-Sayyid Ahmad Abdul Jawad's family from the most powerful to the least powerful is an example of the division of the Egyptian society into different social classes. The family members of Al-Sayyid Ahmad Abdul Jawad are traders, teachers, university students, school officers...etc., who represent the entire Egyptian society.

It is interesting to explore the class conflict from the economic perspective. In the first volume *Palace Walk*, we are told that Al-Sayyid Ahmad Abdul Jawad is a trader who goes to his grocery store every morning. Being essentially a trader, he represents the bourgeois individuals who own the means of production and thus reflects Marx's concept of class conflict. However, his family members are dependant and thus represent the proletarian individuals who lack the means of production and reflect Marx's concept of class conflict. According to this account, Marxism believes that the oppression and subjugation of the proletariat class by the bourgeoisie inevitably takes place (Marx, 1844).

To develop the Marxist interpretation of *Palace Walk*, let us see how Mahfouz portrays the house of Al-

Sayyid Ahmad Abdul Jawad. The house generally consists of three socially stratified floors. It is organized hierarchically, with Al-Sayyid Ahmed's quarters on the upper floor, the children on the first floor, and the maids on the ground floor (*Palace Walk*, 14-8). Although the organization of the house changes in the later chapters of the novel, this hierarchy shows the actual divisions of the Egyptian society.

The first volume *Palace Walk* highlights the class society by portraying the structure of two classes: the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. For instance, Al-Sayyid Ahmed Abdul Jawad is portrayed as a trader who plays the role of supervision. Jamal Al Hamzawi is portrayed as an individual who works extremely hard day and night in Al-Sayyid's grocery store. He is portrayed as a salesperson who is responsible for all buying and selling operations in the grocery store. Although he is a hardworking individual, he hardly makes a living. From this perspective, Mahfouz reflects Marx's concept of class conflict between two opposing social classes: Al-Sayyid Ahmed Abdul Jawad who represents the bourgeoisie, and Jamal Al Hamzawi who represents the proletariat class.

The third volume *Sugar Street* develops the issue of class conflict. Although the proletarian Jamal Al Hamzawi has spent his entire life working in the grocery store of Al-Sayyid, Al-Sayyid's family rejects the engagement of Jamal Al Hamzawi's son, Fuad, to Naima Shawkat, Al-Sayyid's granddaughter, due to social class. When Fuad Jamal Al Hamzawi proposes to Naima, some members of Al-Sayyid Ahmad Abdul Jawad's family and Shawkat's family attack him and his family because he belongs to the proletariat class. Although Kamal acknowledges that "Fuad's a really excellent fellow" (*Sugar Street*, 22), Ibrahim Shawkat contemptuously declares "aren't his folks rather common?" Abdul Muni'm Shawkat replied, yes. One of his maternal uncles is a donkey driver and another's a baker." Then he adds in a reluctant concession, "but none of this detracts from the man's worth. A person should be judged for what he is, not for his family" (*Sugar Street*, 22). Khadija, Naima's mother, states frankly that the reason for this unacceptable marriage is definitely the social class barrier. She says, "But if this marriage takes place, Na'ima may find herself mixing with people who are beneath her. Family origin is everything". "Zanuba said, "you're right! Family origin is everything" (*Sugar Street*, 22).

Mahfouz successfully portrays the issues of class conflict, class consciousness and mobility limitations in the Egyptian society. He excellently reveals the evils, injustice and greed of the bourgeoisie. The individual who was born into the proletariat is considered the "other".

Therefore, the common man aspires to be a gentleman is at the cost of his individuality. The protagonist Kamal acknowledges such social evils that have circulated in the society (*Sugar Street*, 91).

Mahfouz develops the issue of class conflict through the theme of family relations in the novel. He reveals the stability of the proletarian and the bourgeois families in the Egyptian society. In the second and third volumes of *The Cairo Trilogy*, Shawkat and Shadad families are portrayed as bourgeois families. Khalil Shawkat and Ibrahim Shawkat, husbands of the sisters Aisha and Khadija respectively, are portrayed as bourgeois individuals. Khalil Shawkat and Ibrahim Shawkat do not engage in any kind of work because they are from the bourgeois class. They are rich enough and do not need work and money: Aisha said: 'nobles do not work' (*Palace of Desire*, 436). In short, Mahfouz condemns the social conflicts prevailing among the Egyptians and hints at the necessity of unity for attaining independence.

### 6.1.2 Class Conflict between Egyptians and Colonialism

It is interesting to note that the class conflict between the Egyptians and the British colonialism in *The Cairo Trilogy* is firmly established and maintained. Allegorically, in the first volume *Palace Walk*, Al-Sayyid Ahmad's tyranny and oppression undoubtedly represent that of the British colonialism on the Egyptian society. Al-Sayyid Ahmad Abdul Jawad is presented as an individual at odds with the Egyptian society. He is described as a "tyrannical, terrifying, God-fearing, reserved man who kills everyone around him with fright?" (*Palace Walk*, 248) Al-Sayyid Ahmad Abdul Jawad oppresses and subjugates all the family members who submit to prevailing unjust established social order. Consequently, individuality is subjugated by bourgeois society and the prevailing system produces subjugated individuals who totally submit to the established social order.

Mahfouz uses different literary techniques to create powerful meanings in the reader's mind. He uses the stream-of-consciousness narration to convey the thoughts and feelings of his characters in a fluid and unstructured way. He uses the symbolism literary technique in which Al-Sayyid Ahmad symbolizes the old and traditional way of life, while his son, Fahmy, symbolizes the new and modern way of life. He also uses the irony literary technique to highlight the hypocrisies of the characters and society. For instance, both Al-Sayyid Ahmad and Yasin are presented as pious and devout Muslims, but they are actually womanizers and drunkards. Mahfouz makes the allegorical literary device more apparent with the departure of Al-Sayyid Ahmad Abdul Jawad to Port Said.

When Al-Sayyid Ahmad Abdul Jawad leaves to Port Said, all family members express their happiness and pleasure and obtain freedom and liberation. Mahfouz makes Al-Sayyid Ahmad Abdul Jawad's departure from his home to Port Said similar to the departure of the British colonialism from Egypt, and the freedom and the pleasure that the Egyptians enjoy (*Palace Walk*, 164).

The oppression, exploitation and subjugation of the British colonialism over the Egyptians intensify the class conflict between the individual and society. Fahmy's priority is always to expel the British colonialism from his country and to see his country independent. He sacrifices his life to achieve this aim. He says: "the important thing is to rid ourselves of the nightmare of the English and for the caliphate to return to its previous grandeur. Then we will find the way prepared for us." (*Palace Walk*, 56) He believes that people ruled by foreigners have no life. Fahmy always aims to see his country independent from the British colonialism. When Fahmy's brother Yasin is in a state of false consciousness and does not understand the clear meaning of independence, Fahmy nervously responds, "I mean the expulsion of the English from Egypt." (*Palace Walk*, 323)

*The Cairo Trilogy* is saturated with universal themes that maintain enduring relevance to contemporary society. In the first volume *Palace Walk*, Kamal, in his childhood and innocence, has a good acquaintance with British soldiers. However, in the second volume *Palace of Desire*, as he gets matured and realizes the danger of colonialism on Egypt's land and people, he desires to expel colonialism from his country and longs to see his country independent. He points out: "I really loved the English when I was young. But see how I hate them now." He declares that he is in a position to fight against the British colonialism even alone. "By God, I'll detest them even if I'm the only one who does" (*Palace of Desire*, 14). Kamal's experiences reveal the danger of colonialism to the homeland and thus remain a hidden universal theme that lies at the heart of *The Cairo Trilogy*.

Mahfouz highlights the themes of transformation and change. All stages of the Egyptian society from the third generation have bloody thoughts that only fresh blood can expel the British colonialism from Egypt. The character in the novel Hilmi Izzat holds a bloody thought that only new blood can expel the British colonialism from his homeland. He is tired of colonialism and wants to see his country an independent nation sharing freedom and prosperity with the world. He assures that the new generation is not like the previous generations. The new generation is revolutionary and ready to sacrifice its souls and bodies for the sake of Egypt. He points out: "the blood



of our martyrs is not cold yet, and we have fresh blood to spill." Fifty-four years of British occupation? I'm not the only one who is miserable"(Sugar Street, 57 - 58).

*The Cairo Trilogy* highlights the contradictions between wealthy bourgeois individuals and proletarian individuals which illustrates Marx's concept of ongoing class struggle that resonates in contemporary society. Al-Sayyid Ahmad Abdul Jawad and Kamal exemplify the alienation from their true human potential due to capitalist exploitation (Marx, 1844). *The Cairo Trilogy* reveals the economic inequalities that persist in the world. This makes the economic inequalities reflected in the saga perpetuate their enduring relevance to contemporary society. In addition, Egypt's adoption of neoliberal policies has exacerbated class divisions, echoing the saga's critique of capitalist exploitation. The education system that Kamal and his father, Al-Sayyid Ahmad Abdul Jawad, discuss in the saga reinforces class divisions by limiting the social mobility of proletarian individuals and affording prestige and important careers to bourgeois individuals (Bourdieu, 1986) which resonates in contemporary society. In short, *The Cairo Trilogy* presents a literary world of conflicts between natives and colonialism which finds echoes in contemporary society.

## 6.2 Ideology

Mahfouz highlights the most important ideologies that dominated the Egyptian society in the 20th century: the Muslim Brotherhood and Communism. Kamal acknowledges the different political ideologies that dominated the Egyptian society. He confirms that the Egyptian society is at a crossroads; it is divided into different and contradictory political ideologies represented by the Muslim Brotherhood and Communism. He says "one of my nephews is a Muslim Brother and one a Communist. Sooner or later this struggle will be reflected in some form everywhere" (Sugar Street, 138).

*The Cairo Trilogy* exemplifies the ideological hegemony that provides enduring relevance to contemporary society. The saga highlights the patriarchal hegemony that provides a critique of the oppressive patriarchal norms reflected in Al Sayyid's characterizations and this in turn reflects Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony (Gramsci, 1971). The saga reveals the colonial ideological hegemony and the influence of the British colonialism on the Egyptian society. The exploitation of the proletarian individuals by the bourgeoisie is the major concern of the saga which reflects Marxist concepts of the ideological hegemony. It also explores the conflicts between traditional Islamic values and modernity, highlighting ideological conflicts and contradictions.

The ideological conflicts in the saga find an echo in contemporary society. Patriarchal hegemony resonates in contemporary society with the persistent gender-based violence and discrimination in the world. The Islamic fundamentalism and neoliberal ideologies reflected in the saga resonate widely in Egyptian and Arab society with the rise of Islamic and liberal movements that highlight the conflicts between tradition and modernity. The influence and spread of the Muslim Brotherhood movement in Egypt and the Arab world is perhaps the prime example.

*Sugar Street* ends with the arrest and imprisonment of the two political and ideological individuals, Abdul Muni'm and Ahmed Shawkat "on orders from the Ministry of the Interior." Abd al-Munim is arrested because he is a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, and Ahmed Shawkat is arrested because he is a Communist. Mahfouz delivers an important message to the reader that both ideologies fall short of achieving independence due to the strict repression of the British colonialism against the Egyptians. The two ideologies find no influence, but they are arrested and imprisoned by the official authority, the British colonialism. However, the European colonial ideology triumphs over the Egyptian one. Therefore, the charm of *The Cairo Trilogy* continues as it is saturated with enduring relevant messages that are regularly repeated in contemporary society.

## 6.3 Consciousness vs. Unconsciousness

The themes of consciousness and unconsciousness are of vital importance in Marxist criticism. In *The Cairo Trilogy*, Mahfouz presents conscious and unconscious characters. For instance, Mahfouz presents Al-Sayyid Ahmad Abdul Jawad as unconscious individual. He practices all kinds of oppression, exploitation and dehumanization on all his family members without exception. Al-Sayyid Ahmad Abdul Jawad embodies the state of unconsciousness and perpetuates patriarchal and capitalist ideologies. He sees himself as a benevolent patriarch, oblivious to his exploitative and oppressive nature and thus reflecting the concept of Marx and Engels in the saga. He embodies colonial values and reinforces his oppression. His obsession with material possessions and social status reflect the commodification of relationships, and thus reflect Marx's concept of commodification discussed in *Das Kapital*, (1867). He proves that he is unconscious individual through his experiences and characterizations in the saga.

Mahfouz presents the family members as unconscious and conscious individuals of the social oppression, exploitation, and social hegemony that have been created around them. Through this representation,

Mahfouz wants to reveal the unconsciousness of the entire Egyptian society. For instance, Amina and Yasin are presented as unconscious, but Fahmy and Kamal are presented as conscious individuals. At the end of the volume *Palace Walk*, Mahfouz presents the previously unconscious individuals as now fully conscious of the prevailing bourgeois exploitation, oppression and social hegemony created around them.

Fahmy shows an emerging class consciousness. He challenges all patriarchal values, but ultimately submits to the family expectations. Kamal embodies class consciousness as well. He questions his father's values and seeking social change. Allegorically, all the family members become conscious of the corrupt established social order of their subjugated father who represents the British colonialism and they in turn represent the Egyptian society. They reject the strict bourgeois rules and disciplines that are established by their tyrannical father who represents the British colonialism. They wage a proletarian revolution against bourgeois oppression and exploitation in order to enjoy freedom and share prosperity and liberty with the world. From a Marxist perspective, the family members are initially unable to recognize the nature of exploitation, oppression and social hegemony created by the subjugated father. The family members are strictly controlled to conform to the oppressive social order which decreases individuality. Consequently, the family members accept social oppression in a state of false consciousness. Thus, the bourgeois father, who owns the material possessions, influences the family members and changes their behavior to serve his benefits and interests (Marx and Engels, 1848).

Although technology and literacy spread among people, the themes of consciousness and unconsciousness presented in the saga resonate in contemporary society. Mahfouz's *The Cairo Trilogy* is saturated with universal themes which make it an appealing literary work of enduring relevance. The saga explores, through the experiences of the protagonist, the states of consciousness and false consciousness of individuals towards oppression and exploitation of colonial enterprises. Thus, the charm of *The Cairo Trilogy* continues for its important universal literary messages which resonate in contemporary society. It is from these perspectives, *The Cairo Trilogy* was ranked among the top ten Arabic novels to date, and was included in the canon of Arabic literature.

## VII. CONCLUSIONS

Dickens' *Great Expectations* and Mahfouz's *The Cairo Trilogy* present a literary world of the interplay between class, ideology and consciousness within the

socio-political contexts of 19th-century England and 20th-century Egypt respectively. The study employs Marxist literary theory to explore such themes and relate their resonances to contemporary society. The study concludes that both novels critique social hierarchy and explore the class conflict between the individual and society in the Victorian and Egyptian societies. In *Great Expectations*, Pip's exploitation by the bourgeois Miss Havisham and Estella, Magwitch's exploitation by the capitalist system and Pip's transformation from the proletariat class to the bourgeoisie highlight the class conflict between the individual and society. In *The Cairo Trilogy*, the wealth and material obsessions of Al Sayyid Ahmed Abdu Jawad, who represents the British colonialism, reinforce capitalist power structures and thus highlight the class conflict between the individual and society. The novels highlight the constraints of social class mobility: Pip's failure to climb the social ladder and Kamal's complexities of social mobility through educational pursuits. The study concludes that both novels challenge dominant ideologies and expose their flaws and contradictions. *Great Expectations* critiques capitalist ideology and values. Pip's adoption of bourgeois values highlights the emptiness of material wealth. *The Cairo Trilogy* critiques patriarchal ideology, challenges patriarchal values, and demonstrates the oppression and exploitation of women in the Egyptian society. It explores nationalist ideology, highlighting conflict between tradition and modernity. Both novels address colonialist ideology; *The Cairo Trilogy* critiques the British colonialism and *Great Expectations* critiques the British colonial expansion. The study concludes that both novels highlight messages of consciousness and false consciousness. Initially, the protagonists Pip and Kamal accept societal norms in a state of false consciousness, but later become conscious of bourgeois ideologies and their impacts upon their lives. Pip and Kamal develop a class consciousness of class divisions and exploitation; Pip realizes Magwitch's injustices in the Victorian society and Kamal understands the class conflict towards independence. The study concludes that both novels reveal universal messages that are still relevant to contemporary society. More importantly, the study concludes that Marxist literary theory is found helpful for exploring class conflict, bourgeois ideology and consciousness through the experiences of the protagonists in both selected novels.

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