

FEMINIST LITERARY CRITIQUE OF WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN NAGUIB MAHFOUZ'S *LAYALI ALF LAYLAH*

Palendika Alandira, Fadlil Yani Ainusyamsi, Rohanda Rohanda

Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, Indonesia

E-mail: palendika27@gmail.com

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Abstract

This research examines the portrayal of women in *Arabian Nights and Days* by Naguib Mahfouz through the lens of feminist literary criticism, focusing on the character of Dunyazad. The analysis explores her physical, psychological, and social dimensions, emphasizing how these aspects reflect broader societal perceptions and treatment of women. Employing a qualitative approach, the research utilizes feminist theory to uncover the depiction of Dunyazad and her interactions within the social context of the novel, which mirrors the condition of women in the Arab world. The formal object of this study is feminist literary criticism theory, while the material object is Mahfouz's novel. The study is confined to analyzing Dunyazad's character and her relationship with societal norms. Findings reveal that the representation of women in the novel is shaped by three main elements: physical idealization, psychological conflict, and social subordination, all of which are framed by patriarchal structures. Dunyazad's physical portrayal reinforces the objectification of women, her psychological depiction reflects the inner turmoil of women constrained by social expectations, and her social portrayal underscores the systemic subjugation of women. In conclusion, Mahfouz critiques the societal norms that restrict women's roles and exposes the persistence of gender inequality within patriarchal societies.

Keywords: *feminism; feminist theory; literary criticism theory; women's image*

1. Introduction

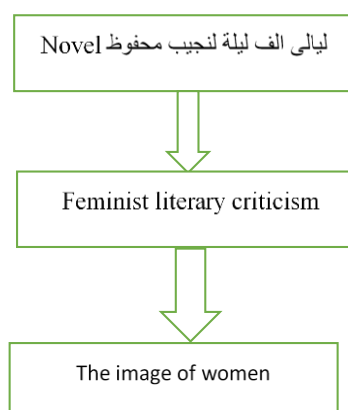
In the development of modern Arabic literature, the image of women has become a theme laden with symbolism and socio-cultural representation. Naguib Mahfouz, one of Egypt's great writers and a Nobel Laureate in Literature, captures the dynamic social reality of Egypt, particularly the lives of women. One of his famous works, *Arabian Nights and Days*, portrays women as figures living under the pressure of a dominant patriarchal culture, yet full of strength and resistance. Mahfouz's depiction of women enriches the narrative while illustrating their struggle and emancipation within a context steeped in traditional values (Ammar, 2014). However, previous studies on *Arabian Nights and Days* have tended to focus more on political aspects and social criticism, often neglecting the portrayal of women at the core of the discourse. While some studies have explored the female characters in Mahfouz's work, an in-depth feminist analysis of the novel's representation of women's identity and social position remains scarce (El-Sayed, 2016). The depiction of women in *Arabian Nights*

and Days reflects complex cultural ideologies, patriarchy, and the ongoing struggle for freedom. This gap highlights the need for further research focusing specifically on the portrayal of women through a feminist literary criticism lens (Zahra, 2017). Thus, this research aims to fill the gap in the research of women's representation in Mahfouz's works, particularly in Arabian Nights and Days. By employing a semiotic approach and feminist literary criticism, this research will reveal how women are depicted within the context of Egyptian culture and the cultural views of women in the novel. Additionally, this research will contribute to gender studies in Arabic literature, particularly in understanding women's identity and social roles in Mahfouz's works (Fahmi, 2018; Karim, 2019).

The results of research on the image of Egyptian women and feminist literary studies have been widely explored, one of which is by Abdurrosid, W. F. S. (2022) in the research titled "The Image of Egyptian Women in the Domestic and Public Domains in the Novel Al-Karnak by Naguib Mahfouz: A research of Feminist Literary Criticism," published in the Digital Library of Uin Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung. This research reveals the image of women and the oppression they experience due to patriarchal culture. Additionally, it highlights the women's movement against this injustice. This research aims to explore the depiction and position of Egyptian female characters in both domestic and public spheres in the novel Al-Karnak by Naguib Mahfouz. The method used in this research is feminist ideology literary criticism, employing a qualitative descriptive approach. Data collection techniques include reading, identifying, analyzing, and interpreting. The analysis method is based on identifying or describing the data. The research findings from Al-Karnak show several key aspects: physical, psychological, and social. First, the description of women's physical aspects, such as beauty, body shape, skin color, and height, is illustrated by 12 data points. Second, the social aspects, with 14 data points, describe women's social roles and interactions. Third, the psychological aspects, with 35 data points, highlight the psychological characteristics and experiences of female characters. Forms of gender injustice experienced by women in the novel include: marginalization (2 data points), dependency (3 data points), stereotyping (1 data point), and violence (18 data points) (Abdurrosid, 2022). The results of previous and current research share both similarities and differences.

The similarities between the studies lie in their focus on the image of Egyptian women, both utilizing feminist literary criticism, and both analyzing works by the same author, Naguib Mahfouz. However, despite these similarities, there is a significant distinction between the two studies. The material object of the previous research is the novel Al-Karnak, while the current research uses Arabian Nights and Days by Naguib Mahfouz as its material object. Given the different sources of data, it is expected that the research results will also differ.

Thinking Framework



Literature, as a reflection of social reality, has long been a platform for writers to explore various aspects of human life, including gender issues. "Literature is a form or creative work whose object or theme is human life using language as a medium (Hafid, A., & Marzuki, I., 2021). This statement clearly shows that literature is a product of its time, reflecting the values, norms and views prevailing at that time. Najib Mahfouz's *One Thousand and One Nights*, as one of the most influential Arabic classics, has become an interesting object of research for various disciplines. The novel, whose roots can be traced to Persian and Indian oral traditions, was written in the context of a highly patriarchal pre-modern Arab society. Women, as God-given creatures with more emotional feelings than men, have different traits and temperaments. Over the years, women have also become more advanced and liberated than they were in ancient times. Women are now able to defend their rights and choose what they want according to their wishes (Dwifatma, 2021). This view, which reflects the dominant patriarchal values of the time, will certainly influence the way the author portrays female characters in the novel.

Along with the times, feminist values have also entered literary studies. Aspriyanti et al. (2022) state that "based on this, a special research is needed that focuses on female characters in literary works. Thus, feminist literary criticism emerged, which directs its focus of analysis on women in literary works." Feminist literary criticism provides a framework to examine how women are represented in literature and how these representations reflect societal power structures. By using a feminist literary criticism approach, we can analyze how the image of women in *Seribu Satu Malam* reflects the patriarchal power structure. This research will also explore how female characters in the novel challenge or reinforce existing gender norms. The second wave feminism approach will be used as the analytical framework, as it emphasizes the role of gender as a social construct that shapes women's experiences. The image of women in a novel refers to the portrayal of female characters, which is expressed through words, phrases, or sentences. Research on the depiction of women using feminist theory in literary works written by male authors is particularly interesting. Such works provide insights into how women are perceived and depicted from a male perspective. This perspective highlights that literature can serve as a subtle medium for expressing ideas about women's roles, characteristics, and identities. As Lusiana (2019) argues, literary works written by men often reflect broader societal views about women, making them valuable for feminist literary analysis.

The primary focus of this research is the portrayal of Egyptian women in Naguib Mahfouz's *Arabian Nights and Days* from a feminist literary perspective. Based on this central concern, the research question is formulated as follows: How are Egyptian women represented in *Arabian Nights and Days* by Naguib Mahfouz from a feminist literary standpoint? This research aims to analyze the depiction of Egyptian women in the novel through the lens of feminist literary criticism. Every research endeavor offers both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, this research enriches Arabic literary studies, particularly in its portrayal of women, and provides fresh insights into feminist perspectives within Arabic literature. Practically, the research aims to raise public awareness about the significance of gender equality and women's rights, while also encouraging writers and artists to create works that address issues related to women and gender.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Feminist Literary Criticism

Feminist literary criticism is a branch of literary theory that focuses on analyzing and interpreting literary works by considering gender perspectives and the role of women in them. Its main goal is to reveal and counter gender biases found in literary texts, which are often ignored or underestimated by traditional critical approaches (Barry, 2017). Historically, feminist literary criticism emerged as a response to male dominance in the field of literature and literary criticism, where women were often reduced to passive objects without agency or a strong voice in the narrative (Showalter, 2016).

The feminist literary criticism approach is rooted in the broader theory of feminism, which includes an analysis of the social, cultural, and economic structures that place women in a subordinate position. It not only critiques the portrayal of women in literature but also elevates works written by women to greater recognition in the literary canon (Beasley, 2018). For example, feminist analysis of classics such as Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* highlights how Austen presents female characters with strong agency despite being bound by the social norms of her time (Gilbert & Gubar, 2020).

Methodologically, feminist literary criticism uses various approaches, including structural, psychological, and historical analysis, to explore how texts construct and represent gender roles (Moi, 2019). These approaches often question why female characters are portrayed in certain ways and how they reflect the social ideologies of their time. In Mahfouz's works, for example, women are frequently depicted in conflict between tradition and modernity, providing important insights into gender dynamics in Egypt (El-Masry, 2021).

In the context of Arabic literature, feminist literary criticism plays a crucial role in expressing women's voices, which have often been silenced by the dominance of patriarchal narratives (Abu-Lughod, 2020). The works of writers like Naguib Mahfouz present a complex reality where women are not only victims of oppressive systems but are also portrayed as agents of change who act in subtle ways to challenge the social structures that bind them (Mahmoud, 2022). This is evident in the novel *Arabian Nights and Days*, where the role of women is full of symbolism reflecting the duality between resignation and resistance.

Feminist literary criticism not only reveals the representation of women in texts but also examines how these characters reflect broader issues of gender and power in society (Ahmed, 2023). In the case of *Arabian Nights and Days*, this approach can be used to explore how Mahfouz constructs female characters that represent the social and cultural challenges in Egypt, as well as the roles women play in a society that continues to struggle between modernity and tradition (El-Shabrawy, 2023).

2.2 Women's Image in Feminist Literary Criticism

Feminist literary criticism focuses on how women are represented in literary works, and how these depictions reflect or challenge existing social and cultural constructions. In Indonesia, this approach has evolved to explore the role of women in local narratives and how literary works highlight issues of gender injustice (Dewi, 2021). This critique aims to open space for a broader understanding of women's experiences and sensitize readers to biases that may be embedded in literary texts (Sari, 2018).

One important aspect of feminist literary criticism is the physical image of women. Physical imagery is often the first element to be considered in feminist analysis because women's bodies are often used as tools to accentuate stereotypes or serve masculine views

in texts (Rahayu, 2020). In many literary works, women's bodies are described in detail to highlight their beauty or vulnerability. For example, physical descriptions of female characters in novels often reinforce the narrative that they are objectified as symbols of visual pleasure for male characters or readers (Hidayat, 2023). However, feminist literary criticism seeks to uncover whether these representations provide deeper meanings, such as symbols of strength or resistance.

Not only physical portrayals, but feminist literary criticism also explores the psychological aspects of female characters in literary works. These psychological images include emotions, inner conflicts, and thought processes described by the author to showcase the complexity of female characters (Nurhayati, 2022). In modern works, female characters often face dilemmas between societal expectations and personal desires. Research by Pratiwi (2019) demonstrates that in many Indonesian novels, female characters are depicted as possessing emotional strength that reflects their capacity to face life's challenges, despite often compromising with cultural pressures.

This psychic image is closely related to how women seek their identity in a demanding social environment. Feminist literary criticism reveals how women's emotions and psychology are used to explore narratives that portray them as subjects, not just objects of the story (Wulandari, 2017). For example, a female character in Mahfudz's work might portray an inner struggle that highlights the tension between traditional roles and individual freedom. This confirms that feminist analysis does not only look at the surface, but also at how narratives articulate women's voices in complex environments (Hidayat, 2023).

In addition, the image of women in social aspects highlights their position and role in the structure of society. Feminist literary criticism emphasizes the importance of exploring the social relationships experienced by female characters, such as their relationships with family, community, and the dominating patriarchal system (Dewi, 2021). In many literary works, women are portrayed as wives, mothers, or workers who have important roles but often face marginalization and subordination (Sari, 2018). Feminist research shows that these depictions can expose structural injustices that women still face in real life (Rahayu, 2020).

The depiction of physical, psychological, and social images in literary works reflects the diverse and dynamic reality of women. Feminist literary criticism helps readers understand that the representation of women in literary texts is not just a description, but also a reflection of their struggles and power in a patriarchal social context (Wulandari, 2017). In feminist analysis, women are positioned as agents who struggle to change limiting narratives and express their voices in more autonomous and empowered ways (Nurhayati, 2022).

3. Research Method

Research methodology generally includes four main aspects, namely research approaches and methods, types and sources of data, data collection techniques, and data analysis techniques (UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, 2020). Although often equated, approach and method actually have significant differences. Approach is a way of understanding or approaching the object of research, while method refers to the practical steps for collecting, analyzing, and presenting data (Rohanda, 2016). In literary research, the combination of the two becomes the basis for analyzing the meaning and context of the text

in depth. Research such as that conducted by Dira and Rohanda (2024), who used Riffatere's semiotic approach on Mahmoud Darwish's *أحبك أو لا أحبك*, shows how a structured methodology can reveal layers of explicit and implicit meaning in a text, as well as provide rich insights into its context.

This research employs a descriptive qualitative method, as it involves data in the form of words or sentences that reflect the image of women. According to Bogdan and Taylor (as cited in Meleong, 2008), qualitative research generates data in the form of written or spoken words from people or observed behaviors, which are typically descriptive in nature (Rahmawati & Kartikasari, 2023). Descriptive is the characteristic of data in qualitative research. In this research, the data source comes from the novel *Arabian Nights and Days* by Naguib Mahfouz, with the data consisting of phrases or sentences related to the image of women. Data were collected through reading and note-taking techniques, where the researcher identified and recorded sentences relevant to the image of women. The collected data were then selected, sorted, and analyzed using qualitative descriptive analysis. This method involves describing and interpreting the data based on feminist literary criticism theory, focusing on the depiction of women.

4. Results and Discussion

The portrayal of Egyptian women in Najib Mahfouz's novel *ليلة الف ليالي* is analyzed in this section, focusing on three key aspects: the physical representation of women, their psychological portrayal, and their depiction in social contexts. These dimensions encompass the roles and societal expectations placed upon women, their representation within cultural and historical frameworks, and the complexities of their identities as presented in the narrative. This analysis seeks to highlight how Mahfouz portrays the multifaceted experiences of Egyptian women, exploring themes such as empowerment, oppression, and the interplay between tradition and modernity within the context of the novel.

4.1 Image of Women in Physical Aspects

In literary analysis, women's physical images can reflect how women's bodies are positioned in certain contexts, whether as symbols of aesthetics, power, or representations of more complex experiences.

لعبت لعبة في معبد بالهند، وأين كنت أنت ؟
.. قمت برحلة فوق الجبال
: فقالت زرمباجة بإغراء
... رأيت لدى عودتي فتاة جميلة بهرني جمالها والحق يقال
أنا أيضا رأيت شابا جميلا في حي العطور لا نظير لجماله بين
البشر

"I was playing a trick in a temple in India. And where were you?" "I made a journey over the mountains." "On my return," said Zarmabaha seductively, "I saw a girl whose beauty stunned me. It must be admitted..." (محفوظ, 103:2015).

In the quote, Dunzayad's beauty takes center stage through the reactions of other characters who are stunned by her physical attractiveness. Descriptions such as "her beauty stunned me" indicate the great influence of the female body in constructing the narrative.

This representation confirms the view that women's bodies are often narrative tools that reflect certain aesthetic standards in a patriarchal society.

According to Rahayu (2020), in feminist analysis, women's bodies are often used as symbols or objects that reinforce masculine views, where beauty becomes one of the main indicators to assess the value of a woman. In Dunzayad's case, her beauty is not only a visual appreciation tool but also serves as an attraction that affects her social relationships with other characters. This shows how women's bodies are often given certain meanings in literary texts, both to reinforce social hierarchies and to represent passive power.

Furthermore, Sari (2018) highlights that the physical depiction of women in literary works often reinforces gender stereotypes, where women are reduced to aesthetic symbols that fulfill patriarchal views. In this context, Dunzayad is not only represented as an object of admiration, but her beauty is also a reflection of the aesthetic values imposed by society. However, this depiction can be seen from the other side, namely as a tool to show the power of women in attracting attention and controlling the situation around them.

Dunzayad's physical depiction can also be analyzed through the perspective of power. Wulandari (2017) mentions that women's bodies in literature are often used as an arena to fight for power, both directly and symbolically. In this case, Dunzayad's beauty can be interpreted as a form of symbolic power, where her visual appeal becomes an important element in building power relations between male and female characters.

... إن نظرة على فتاتي ستمحو من ذاكرتك صورة فتاك
 .. هذه مغالة لا مسوغ لها
 ... تعالى وانظري بعينيك
 أين توجد فتاتك ؟
 ... في قصر السلطان نفسه
 .. في غمضة عين كانا في جناح البهاء بقصر السلطان
 تراءت فتاة آية في الجمال وكانت تنزع عباءتها المطرزة بأسلاك من ذهب لترتدي حلة نومها
 المصنوعة من الحرير الدمشقي .. قالت
 : زرمباجة
 دنيا زاد اخت شهرزاد زوجة السلطا

"I, too, saw a handsome young man in the Perfume Quarter, whose beauty has no equal among mankind." "A glance at my girl would erase from your memory the picture of your young man." "That's an unjustified exaggeration." "Come and see with your own eyes." "Where is your girl to be found?" "In the sultan's palace itself." In the twinkle of an eye the two of them were in the reception wing of the sultan's palace. A girl made her appearance: a prodigious beauty. She was taking off her cloak embroidered with threads of gold in order to put on her nightdress made of Damascene silk. "Dunyazad, the sister of Shahrzad, wife of the sultan," said Zarmabaha. (2015;103-102, محفوظ).

In this excerpt, Dunyazad's beauty is prominently highlighted through the reactions of other characters and the descriptions of her appearance. Phrases such as "her beauty was extraordinary" and visual details like "a cloak embroidered with gold thread" and "a nightgown made of Damascus silk" portray Dunyazad as an ideal woman exuding physical

beauty and luxury. This depiction not only emphasizes aesthetic aspects but also serves to reinforce her social status as Shahrzad's sister and the Sultan's wife.

From the perspective of feminist literary criticism, this portrayal can be interpreted as a reinforcement of gender stereotypes, where women are viewed through beauty standards that support patriarchal perspectives (Putri, 2021). Duniyazad's beauty is not only admired as a visual object but also positioned as an element that solidifies her role within the story's social structure. This aligns with the notion that women's bodies in narratives are often utilized as tools to reinforce power relations dominated by men (Sutrisno, 2019).

Furthermore, Duniyazad's placement in the palace, complete with symbols of luxury such as silk garments and cloaks embroidered with gold thread, illustrates how the female body is used as a representation of social status and power (Amalia, 2020). In this context, Duniyazad's body not only reflects physical beauty but also serves as a symbol of wealth and the dominance of a particular class. This portrayal underscores how women are often reduced to visual symbols that reinforce male-dominated power narratives, both literally and symbolically.

However, this description can also be interpreted as a narrative tool to indirectly highlight women's strength. As the Sultan's wife and Shahrzad's sister, Duniyazad occupies a strategic position, where her beauty becomes a significant factor influencing her role. This interpretation opens up the possibility that the female body is not merely an aesthetic object but also serves a strategic function in reinforcing women's positions within a patriarchal social structure (Sari, 2020).

Thus, Duniyazad's physical image in this excerpt reflects the complexity of the role of the female body in literature. The female body is not only represented as an admired aesthetic object but also as a symbolic tool to reinforce status, power, and social relations within the narrative.

جمالها يفوق الحياة حقاً، لم يحظ بهذا الجمال كائن سريع العطب ؟
... صدقت فهو ما يتألق إلا أياماً معدودات ثم يعبث به الزمن
لذلك تلد الشماتة بهم .
... لهم عقل ولكنهم يحيون حياة الأغبياء
لشد ما تبدو خالدة
لعلك الآن تسلم أنها أجمل من فتاك ؟

"Her beauty is in truth greater than life itself. No fragile human being is favored with such beauty." "You are right—it shines for just a few days, then time impairs it." "So you take delight in gloating over them." "They have an intellect, but they live the life of imbeciles." "How very immortal she appears!" "Perhaps you will now concede that she is more beautiful than your young man?" (103:2015, محفوظ).

Duniyazad's physical image in this text portrays a woman with extraordinary beauty that seems to surpass ordinary human capabilities. The emphasis on the remarkable nature of her beauty reinforces the role of the female body as an object of admiration in the narrative. In many literary works, women's physical beauty is often used to emphasize their social status, and in this case, Duniyazad's beauty signifies her position as a respected and revered woman.

However, a contrast emerges in this portrayal: while a woman's beauty is captivating, it is inherently transient. The depiction of beauty that "shines for a few days" and is eventually "eroded by time" reflects the impermanence of the female body. This highlights how women's bodies are often subjected to the notion of fleeting allure, tied to youth and physical appearance. Although this body radiates beauty, a woman's physical attractiveness ultimately fades, reinforcing the view that women are frequently judged solely on their external appearance.

Furthermore, the depiction of Duniyazad's body as "more than human" reflects the objectification of the female body in literature, where women are often portrayed with physical images that are more idealized or perfect than the average human. Such representations indicate how women in narratives are frequently reduced to aesthetic symbols, minimizing the complexity and depth of their characters. This is part of a social construct that views the female body as a visual object to be admired, rather than as an individual with identity or emotional complexity.

Additionally, the competition among male characters to evaluate and admire Duniyazad's beauty reinforces the notion that the female body is often perceived as an object to be possessed or contested. In the patriarchal society reflected in this text, women's bodies are frequently placed at the center of competition among men, serving to reinforce male dominance in gender relations. The beauty of the female body becomes a tool to determine value and power within these social dynamics.

Overall, Duniyazad's physical portrayal in this work does not merely depict beauty as a visual allure but also reveals deeper social and gender dynamics. The representation of the female body as an object of admiration and even competition reflects a patriarchal social structure that places women in a subordinate position, where their value is more determined by physical appearance than by personal qualities or abilities.

نبهت عينا دنيا زاد السوداءوان .. إنه حفل زفاف سلطاني سيكون أحد أعاجيب الترف والأبهة
القصر يهجم بأضواء الشموع والقناديل ، يتلألأ بجواهر المدعوين والمدعوات، يهزج بأغاني ..
، المطربين والمطربات ..حتى السلطان شهريار باركها، أهداها جوهرة الدخلة
: قال لها
....مباركة ليلتك يا دنيا زاد
وانتظرت في المخدع آخر الليل في ثوب محلى بالذهب والمرجان والزمرد ..ودعتها أمها
وأختها شهرزاد، فانتظرت وحيدة في المخدع ، وشرذ ذهنها لا يشغلها إلا ترقبها القلق وقلبها
الخفاق ..انفتح الباب ...دخل نور الدين في أبهى حلة دمشقية وعمامة عراقية ومركوب
.. مغربي . تقدم منها كالبدن في تمامه وجلا القناع عن وجهها

"The black eyes of Duniyazad were lit up. It was the wedding party at the sultan's palace, a marvel of luxurious splendor. The palace rippled with the lights of candles and lanterns, setting aglitter the jewels of those who had been invited, and resounded with the singing of the male and female performers. The sultan Shahriyar himself bestowed his blessing by giving her as a present the jewel of the wedding night. "May your night be blessed, Duniyazad," he said to her. She waited in the bedchamber at the end of the night in a dress decorated with gold, pearls, and emeralds. Her mother bade her farewell, also her sister Shahrzad, and alone she waited in the bedchamber, lost in thought, concerned only with her anxious waiting

and beating heart. The door opened, and Nur al-Din, in all his Damascene finery, Iraqi turban, and Moroccan slippers, entered. Like the full moon, he advanced toward her and removed the veil from her face. (-104, محفوظ 105: 2015).

In this excerpt, the image of women, particularly Duniyazad, is physically depicted through various elements that emphasize luxury and extraordinary beauty. The description of Duniyazad's eyes as "black and sparkling" reflects a visual attraction to her, associating physical beauty with high social status. The emphasis on the physical appearance of women here illustrates how women's bodies are often objects of attention in narratives that focus on beauty and external allure. The physical image of women in this text suggests a portrayal of luxury, as well as the excitement and anxiety associated with the wedding night.

This image of women is also linked to the portrayal of the luxury of the palace and the wedding celebration. The addition of elements like "a gown adorned with gold, pearls, and emeralds" shows that women, in this case, Duniyazad, become symbols of beauty enhanced by high social status. This lavish clothing emphasizes how women's bodies are often viewed in many narratives as material representations or objects that must be showcased to invite admiration. Duniyazad's physical image in this attire reinforces the idea that women's bodies are frequently treated as visually consumed objects, rather than as individuals with deeper identities and roles.

However, in addition to her physical image, there is also an emphasis on Duniyazad's emotional state, as she is described as "lost in daydreams" and "anxious," which reflects the tension and worry that women often experience in situations that demand they adhere to certain social expectations. This tension provides an opportunity to understand how women are often placed in positions where they are not only judged based on their physical appearance but are also expected to fulfill emotional and social expectations.

The entrance of Nur al-Din, dressed in Damascus silk and an Iraqi turban, creates the impression that Duniyazad becomes the object of male observation, as he comes to "unveil the veil from her face." In this context, it illustrates how the female body is often seen as a domain that must be explored or possessed by men. This depiction highlights the dynamics of gender relations, where women, despite being endowed with extraordinary physical beauty, remain in subordinate positions that depend on male acceptance, in this case, her husband.

The image of women in this passage illustrates how the female body, with all its luxury and beauty, is often viewed as an object to be controlled and enjoyed by men. This is a form of objectification in literature, where women are more frequently depicted in physical terms and through their influence on men, rather than as independent individuals with agency in their own narratives.

4.2 The Image of Women in the Psychological Aspect

Psychic imagery in literary analysis highlights a character's inner life, including feelings, thoughts, and emotions. In feminist literary criticism, it focuses on how women are depicted beyond physical traits, emphasizing their complex inner world. This imagery often reveals tensions, anxieties, and conflicts shaped by societal expectations and personal desires, particularly within patriarchal settings. It reflects how external and internal pressures influence women's perceptions of themselves and their roles in society.

فتحت دنيازاد عينيها وقد نصحت الستارة بالضياء.. وجدت نفسها مغموسة في ذكريات النبع المبارك.. شفتاها نديتان بالقبل، أذناها ثملتان بأعذب الكلمات، خيالها مفعم بحرارة التهديدات.. العناق لم يبرح جسدها ولا الحنان.. هذه هي الصباحية.. ولكن؟ سرعان ما هبت عليها رياح الوعي الصارمة.. أين العريس؟ ما اسمه؟ متى تمت مقدمات الزفاف؟ رياه.. لم تخطب ولم تزف ولم يجر في القصر حفل.. إنها تنتزع من الحلم كمن يساق إلى النطع.. أكان حلما حقا؟

"Dunyazad opened her eyes. The curtain was letting light through. She found herself immersed in the memories of the magic source from which she had sipped. Her lips were moist with kisses, her ears intoxicated with the sweetest words, her imagination repleted with the warmth of sighs. The sensation of being embraced had not left her body, nor the tenderness. This was now the morning, but...Only too swiftly the harsh winds of consciousness blew over her. Where was the bridegroom? What was his name? When had the formalities of the marriage been carried out? O Lord, she had not been proposed to, she had not been given in marriage, and there had been no party at the palace. She was being snatched from her dream like someone being led to the execution mat. Was it really a dream?." (105:2015, محفوظ).

In this excerpt, we see a strong portrayal of Dunyazad's psychic image, reflecting the emotional and psychological conflict she experiences. Initially, Dunyazad is in a state of happiness and satisfaction, described with phrases like "Her lips moist from kisses," "Her ears drowned in the sweetest words," and "Her fantasies filled with warm sighs." These descriptions highlight the sense of peace and pleasure she feels in her dreams, which seem to represent the peak of her psychic happiness. In this excerpt, Dunyazad's psychic image is vividly portrayed, revealing the deep emotional and psychological conflict she undergoes. At first, she is immersed in a state of happiness and satisfaction. The descriptions—"Her lips moist from kisses," "Her ears drowned in the sweetest words," and "Her fantasies filled with warm sighs"—underscore the sense of peace and pleasure that she feels in her dream. This dreamlike state represents the peak of her psychic happiness, a fleeting moment where she is at ease, her mind untouched by the harshness of reality.

However, the sharp transition from this joy to an overwhelming awareness marks a drastic shift in her psychic state. When "the gust of awareness blows too hard against her," Dunyazad is jolted awake in confusion, feeling an emptiness that undermines her former happiness. Her questions—"Where is the groom? What is his name?"—are not just about the absence of a man but reflect a deeper uncertainty about her own identity and her place in the world. This questioning reveals a psychological unraveling, where she begins to doubt the reality around her, and by extension, herself.

This escalating anxiety continues with her admission that she has never been proposed to, that no wedding has taken place, and that there has been no celebration at the palace. This reflects a feeling of being trapped in a dream or illusion that was initially pleasant but is far from reality. A sense of destruction arises as Dunyazad feels that she has been "misled" from the reality she should have had, like someone who has been "dragged from her dream" into a world that is much harsher and filled with anxiety. This moment

reveals the inner conflict, where hope and reality collide sharply, triggering deep fear and uncertainty.

When Duniyazad realizes that she is "naked and her innocence has been taken away," it reflects the loss of her sense of self and psychological integrity. This section also reveals a deep anxiety about losing control over her body and identity, which is often a significant theme in feminist literary criticism. In this narrative, the female body is not only an object of physical beauty but also a source of profound psychological loss, as the body is forced to function in ways it did not choose.

Duniyazad's reaction of "screaming in despair" and the increasing feeling expressed through statements like "This is madness!" and "This is destruction!" illustrates a decline in her mental stability. The madness she experiences is portrayed as something relentlessly chasing her, symbolizing an unending fear. In a feminist context, this can be interpreted as a depiction of how societal pressures and heavy expectations placed on women can lead to a crisis of identity and psychological turmoil, where women feel trapped within norms they cannot control or change.

لمت دنيازاد بأن سرها أثقل من أن تحمله وحدها.. هرعت إلى جناح شهرزاد عقب
ذهاب شهريار إلى مجلس الحكم

"Duniyazad resigned herself to the fact that her secret was too heavy for her to bear alone. She hastened to Shahrzad's wing of the palace just after Shahriyar had gone off to the Council of Justice"(107:2015, محفوظ).

In this quote, Duniyazad shows an important turning point in his psychological state, where he finally "surrenders" to the reality that has befallen him. This sentence reflects a deep sense of distress and mental exhaustion, where Duniyazad realizes that "the secret was too heavy to bear alone." The use of the word "surrender" indicates that he is no longer able to cope with the emotional burden he is carrying. This depicts a psychological state of hopelessness, where the character feels helpless and unable to cope with the situation at hand.

This desperation leads to Duniyazad's decision to seek support or relief from his brother, Shahrzad. The act of "rushing" to the other side of the palace reflects the confusion and urgency she feels. Duniyazad seeks comfort or relief, reflecting a deep need to share his emotional burden with someone he trusts. On the other hand, Shahriyar's going to the Judicial Council also shows the instability in Duniyazad's life, where she feels isolated from the outside world and has to deal with feelings of distress in solitude, which is an important theme in the analysis of female psychic imagery.

In the context of feminist literary criticism, Duniyazad's psychic image illustrates how women, in patriarchal narratives, are often trapped in the roles and emotional burdens demanded by society and their families. When Duniyazad feels that her secrets or feelings are too heavy to bear alone, this also reflects the social reality that requires women to always be strong, while their feelings are often ignored or not taken into account. These feelings of distress and despair are a manifestation of the gender inequality that women experience in a world that often leaves no room for their emotional expression and freedom.

قالت لابنتها بحزن

وغضب: زلت قدمك يا دنيازاد... فقالت دنيازاد باكياً: إني مسلمة أمرى لرب العالمين لن تكون العاقبة خيراً

"You did wrong, Dunyazad," she said to her daughter in sadness and anger. "I resign myself to the will of the Lord of the Worlds," said Dunyazad, weeping. "The outcome will not be good." (115:2015, محفوظ).

In this excerpt, we see an image of Dunyazad's deeply shaken psyche. His despairing words, "I surrender myself to the Lord of the worlds," depict a very fragile emotional state. Dunyazad feels helpless and resigned to the fate that has befallen him. In a psychological context, this reflects a deep sense of entrapment and distress, as if there is no way out for him other than leaving everything to fate. It also shows Dunyazad's inability to control or change the situation that has befallen him, which makes him feel very vulnerable.

The mother's response of, "The outcome will definitely not be good," added a deeper layer of anxiety and uncertainty. Dunyazad's mother, despite her attempts at warning, also felt powerless to protect her daughter from what was to come. This reflects a sense of failure in protecting the next generation from larger external forces, such as social norms and patriarchal pressures that oppress women.

From a psychological perspective, this depiction emphasizes how women are often trapped in situations beyond their control, especially in the context of social structures that restrict their freedom and rights. When Dunyazad feels "resigned" and her mother expresses that "the outcome will definitely not be good," this shows the powerlessness often felt by women living in conditions where their voices are often ignored or disrespected. This feeling of powerlessness relates directly to how the psychic image of women in literature is often influenced by social and cultural conditions that limit their space to act and speak.

4.3 Women's Image in Social Aspects

The social image of women illustrates their position within the social environment, encompassing roles in family, society, and culture. In feminist literary criticism, analyzing this social image seeks to uncover how patriarchal social structures shape women's identities, roles, and experiences. Women's placement in the social hierarchy often mirrors their level of autonomy or the restrictions they face due to societal norms and expectations. These dynamics are closely linked to stereotypes—labels assigned by society to differences in male and female behavior. Such stereotypes not only limit women's mobility but also serve as a root cause of gender injustice (Arianty et al., 2020).

انتشر نبأ خطبة كرم الأصيل لدنيا زاد في الحي ساحبا وراءه ذيلا عريضا من البهجة والتطلعات والسخریات.. حلم الفقراء بمطرة منهمرة من الصدقات من رجل لم يعرف حتى حب الصدقة.. وفرح الأعيان بهذه المصاهرة بين السلطان وحيهم.. وجرت الهمسات منذرة باقتران القرد بالملاك

"The news of Karam al-Aseel's engagement to Dunyazad spread throughout the quarter, dragging in its wake a trail of joy, curiosity, and mocking remarks. The poor dreamed of a generous windfall of charity from a man who did not even know the joy of being charitable, while the people of distinction rejoiced at this relationship through marriage between the

sultan and their quarter, although warning whispers were abroad about a monkey marrying an angel.” (محفوظ, 2015: 121).

In this excerpt, we see how Dunyazad, as a woman in a highly structured society, is viewed through the lens of prevailing social norms. Dunyazad's engagement to Karam al-Aseel triggers mixed reactions in the community, showing how women's social roles are heavily influenced by others' perceptions and existing social status.

The reaction of the community, which is divided into several groups, illustrates the complex social dynamics. The poor people who expect to receive charity from this marriage show how women, especially in this context, are often seen as objects that can be used for social or economic gain. Dunyazad, as a woman in this society, is bound by the expectations of others who see her marriage as a means to gain both social and material status.

Meanwhile, the reactions of prominent people who were excited about the relationship between the sultan and their region reaffirmed how women were often used as symbols of the link between power and social control. Dunyazad not only as an individual, but also as a representation of the relationship between the sultan's family and the surrounding society. In this case, women's social status was heavily influenced by their affiliation with power and how they could strengthen the social standing of those around them.

However, the whispers of “an ape marrying an angel” are indicative of the social criticism coming from society, especially from groups who feel that the relationship does not fit the norm. In this context, Dunyazad is positioned in a role that is often faced with criticism and judgment based on her beauty or social status, where people's perceptions of her are more influenced by what they see on the outside, rather than the personal depth or autonomy that Dunyazad has as an individual.

This quote shows how women in patriarchal societies are often the object of harsh judgment and are constantly evaluated by others based on their social roles and their relationship to power. Dunyazad, although she may have the freedom to choose a life partner, is still inseparable from the influence of public opinion that often defines her value based on her social standing and relationship with men, whether in terms of status, wealth or power.

واستدعى الطبيب عبد القادر المهيبي فتولى العلاج، وسرعان ما ساورته شكوك .. كان قطننا
أريباً ذا خبرة بالنفوس لا تقل عن خبرته بالأجساد، فرجع لديه أن العروس راغبة عن القرد،
ولكنه، تغايى بلباقة، متعاطفاً مع رغبتها

“The doctor, Abdul Qadir al-Maheeni, was called and he undertook her treatment. He was very soon dubious. Being astute and resourceful, and with an experience of men's souls no less than his experience of their bodies, he thought it likely that the bride had an aversion to the monkey who was to be her husband. He nonetheless cleverly feigned ignorance in accordance with her wish,” (محفوظ, 2015: 124-123).

In this quote, we see the tension between social expectations and personal reality experienced by Dunyazad. Dunyazad's reaction to her future husband, who is likened to an “ape”, reflects her feelings of doubt and dissatisfaction with the social choices that have

been made for her. Dunyazad's social image, portrayed through her hesitation towards marriage, shows how women often feel pressured into roles imposed by society.

The statement "perhaps the princess is not pleased with the ape who will be her husband" reveals Dunyazad's internal conflict, where she feels trapped by societal expectations that are not always in line with her desires as an individual. This hesitation illustrates how women in patriarchal societies are often faced with limited choices, which makes them feel like they do not have full control over their lives. In this case, Dunyazad symbolizes the powerlessness of women who are faced with social roles governed by existing norms and hierarchies.

However, Dunyazad's ingenuity to feign ignorance and follow the will of others shows how women often have to conform to social expectations in order to maintain their place in society. This reflects the way women often have to pretend and suspend their personal desires in order to fulfill greater social expectations. On the other hand, this tension also shows women's adaptability and flexibility in dealing with difficult situations, even though this often comes at the cost of personal freedom and identity.

This quote reflects how strong the social pressures are on women to conform to established roles, even if it goes against their personal desires or needs. Dunyazad's social image, portrayed through her indecisiveness and resignation, is a clear example of how social structures can limit women's autonomy and put them in a position where their choices are often overtaken by societal norms and expectations.

وغيض كرم الأصيل غضبا شديداً دعاه إلى الاعتكاف بعيداً عن شماتة الشامتين وسخرية
الساخرين فلم يكن يغادر داره إلا عند انتصاف الليل. أما يوسف الطاهر - حاكم الحي - فقد تلقى
الخبر في دفقة امتزج فيها السرور بالمازن العميق .. سر بتحرر دنيا زاد من قبضة الرجل القرد
ولكنه حزن بعمق على موت الفتاة التي تمنّاها لنفسه والتي من أجلها فكر جادا في تدبير مؤامرة
لاغتيال كرم الأصيل

"Karam al-Aseel was so upset that he remained in seclusion far from those who were gloating or making fun of him, and left his house only in the middle of the night. As for Yusuf al-Tahir, the governor of the quarter, he had received the news with a mixture of deep sorrow and joy: joy at the fact that Dunyazad was released from the grip of the monkey-man and deep sorrow at the death of the young girl he had wanted for himself and for whose sake he had seriously thought of arranging a plot to assassinate Karam al-Aseel." (133-132: 2015, محفوظ).

This quote shows the impact of the social structures and norms that govern Dunyazad's life as a woman in her society. Karam al-Aseel's reaction of feeling "disturbed" and shutting herself away, as well as Governor Yusuf al-Tahir's mixed feelings of "deep sadness" and "joy", show how the role of women is often a source of tension, conflict and judgment in patriarchal societies. In this case, Dunyazad is not only the object in the marriage relationship, but also the center of feelings and actions larger than herself. This quote highlights the impact of social structures and norms on Dunyazad's life as a woman within a patriarchal society. The emotional reactions of Karam al-Aseel and Governor Yusuf al-Tahir, his "deep sadness" and "joy" demonstrate how women's roles are sources of tension, conflict, and judgment in such societies. Dunyazad is not only an object within the

marriage relationship but also the focal point of emotions and actions that transcend her personal agency.

Her social image, as depicted here, underscores how women's status is often determined by their relationship to men, rather than by personal freedom. Duniyazad is primarily defined by the way men—whether a husband or a ruler—treat and perceive her. The rejection of Karam al-Aseel and the public reaction to her highlight the objectification of women within patriarchal structures. When women are reduced to social property or marriage objects, their image is shaped by how they are viewed by others, especially men.

Governor Yusuf al-Tahir's mixed feelings and sorrow over Duniyazad's death and relief at her liberation from Karam al-Aseel illustrate how women's value is tied to their relationship with power. In this case, Duniyazad's worth is seen as dependent on her connection to a man in power. This reflects the patriarchal notion that women are valuable only when they are linked to a higher status, and the actions of Yusuf al-Tahir reveal how women, despite their lack of agency, are central to the power dynamics around them. In patriarchal societies, male emotional reactions whether anxiety, worry, or disappointment toward women are often rooted in the rigid structures that subordinate women. Duniyazad's social image here not only portrays her vulnerability but also illustrates how women's lives are shaped by social judgment and male authority. Even in emotionally charged situations, women's futures are largely dictated by the societal values imposed upon them.

However, this quote also suggests that women, despite their limited freedom, still exert influence within these social dynamics. The reactions of both the individuals directly involved and the society observing them show how women's lives can be profoundly affected by external perceptions. While Duniyazad may have little say in her marriage, her central role in the emotional and social struggles underscores her significance within the power structures of the narrative.

5. Conclusion

This research analyzes the representation of women in Naguib Mahfouz's *Arabian Nights and Days* through a feminist literary criticism approach. By examining the character of Duniyazad, the research identifies three key aspects of female representation: physical, psychological, and social. Duniyazad's physical portrayal idealizes beauty, symbolizing women's attractiveness, which is often subject to judgment by other characters. Her psychological portrayal reflects internal tension, caught between personal desires and societal expectations. The social portrayal explores how women are perceived within power structures, with societal views often shaped by their relationship with men or their social status. The analysis reveals that the portrayal of women in the novel critiques the patriarchal social structure, emphasizing women's subordination in physical, psychological, and social terms. Duniyazad's character demonstrates how women are constrained by societal roles and expectations, despite their own thoughts and emotions, which are frequently repressed. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of how literature reflects the role of women in society and enriches feminist studies in Arabic literature, particularly in modern works. It also advances discourse on the influence of social power and cultural norms on women, which is relevant to broader gender studies. However, the research is limited in scope, focusing solely on Duniyazad and applying feminist literary criticism, which may not encompass all perspectives. Future research could expand the analysis to other female

characters in Mahfouz's works or explore different representations of women in other Arabic literature. Further investigation into the relationship between literature and socio-cultural dynamics in the Arab world is also recommended. For educational and cultural institutions, it is essential to promote literary studies that consider gender and social dimensions. Encouraging critical engagement with the role of women in literature will foster a deeper understanding of how social conditions are reflected in literary works.

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