

A Study of the Psychological Decline of the Intellectual in Naguib Mahfouz's *The Beggar* from an Interdisciplinary Literary–Political Perspective (Based on Antonio Gramsci's Theory of Hegemony)

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Introduction

The crisis of the intellectual is a significant theme in the modern Arabic novel, often expressed through the loss of ideals, meaninglessness, social alienation, and withdrawal from society. Naguib Mahfouz's *Al-Shahhadh* (*The Beggar*, 1965) explores this crisis through Omar al-Hamzawi, a successful lawyer who gradually abandons his former intellectual, political, and artistic ideals and becomes integrated into existing social structures. This transformation results in boredom, loss of meaning, and increasing isolation. This study examines Omar's transformation through Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony, focusing on how the internalization of dominant values weakens his critical agency and contributes to his psychological crisis.

Methodology

The study employs a descriptive-analytical methodology within an interdisciplinary framework combining literary criticism and Gramscian theory. The analysis focuses on Omar al-Hamzawi's characterization, behavior, dialogues, relationships, and psychological transformation. The principal Gramscian concepts applied are hegemony, consent, internalization of dominant values, and accommodation to the existing social order. From this perspective, domination is not maintained exclusively through direct coercion but can also operate through the production of consent and the internalization of dominant values. The study consequently examines how Omar gradually distances himself from his former intellectual and political commitments and becomes increasingly accommodated to professional success, material security, social respectability, and stability. This approach interprets his crisis not merely as an individual psychological or existential problem but as a condition connected to broader social and ideological processes.

Results and Discussion

The findings reveal that Omar's crisis unfolds gradually through estrangement from his intellectual identity, loss of meaning, and withdrawal

from collective engagement. His encounter with Othman revives his former political commitments, highlighting the gap between his past ideals and present accommodation to the dominant order. From a Gramscian perspective, this transformation reflects the internalization of hegemony through consent, as material success and social stability gradually displace critical awareness. His attempts to regain meaning through love, marriage, poetry, and solitude ultimately fail, deepening his isolation and psychological distress. The final gunshot marks the culmination of his crisis, remaining open to interpretations of defeat, collapse, or liberation.

Conclusion

The study concludes that Omar al-Hamzawi's crisis in *Al-Shahhadh* cannot be understood solely as an individual psychological or existential experience. It is closely connected to the gradual transformation of his intellectual identity and the internalization of dominant social values. His movement from an idealistic and politically engaged intellectual to a successful lawyer characterized by professional achievement, material comfort, and social accommodation illustrates the operation of hegemony through consent and internalization. Boredom, professional disengagement, withdrawal from collective life, unsuccessful attempts at emotional fulfillment, recourse to poetry, and eventual isolation constitute interconnected manifestations of this transformation. A Gramscian reading consequently reveals that the crisis of the intellectual in *Al-Shahhadh* emerges from the interaction between individual consciousness, social structures, dominant values, and the weakening of critical agency.

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