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| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Transformative Intellectual Journeys: Confronting Colonial Logic in *Children of the Alley*

Zakarya Aldukhayil
Department of English Language and Literature, College of Languages and Humanities, Qassim University, Buraydah, Saudi Arabia
Corresponding Author: Zakarya Aldukhayil **E-mail**: z.aldukhayil@qu.edu.sa

| ABSTRACT

Naguib Mahfouz's *Children of the Alley* (1959) has been extensively studied, often as a critique of religion. However, this analysis argues that its enduring relevance lies in its exploration of power, oppression, and intellectual resistance—issues that remain urgent in contemporary discourse. Rather than reinforcing colonial binaries of self/other, Mahfouz exposes how such divisions sustain hierarchies of gender, race, and class. This study offers a fresh perspective by examining Gabal as a prototypical organic intellectual (as defined by Antonio Gramsci) who challenges these structures. By applying postcolonial theory, particularly Gramsci's concept of organic intellectuals and Edward Said's analysis of power, this research uncovers overlooked tensions within resistance movements, including class and gender conflicts. Ultimately, the study advances debates on intellectual resistance by arguing that solidarity with all marginalized groups—not just one's own—can serve as the foundation for radical intellectual engagement.

| KEYWORDS

Comparative Study, Intellectual development, Organic Intellectuals, Politics**,** Social Change

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

More than sixty years after its initial serialization in *Al Ahram*, Naguib Mahfouz's *Children of the Alley* (1959) remains a subject of controversy. The novel, which led to Mahfouz's condemnation by conservative factions, offers a nuanced exploration of human history through five central characters—Adham, Gabal, Rifaa, Qassem, and Arafa—who allegorically represent figures from religious traditions and, ultimately, modernity. While often assumed to be an attack on religious figures, the novel's thematic depth extends beyond religious criticism to broader explorations of power, oppression, and the human condition. Its allegorical elements serve not as direct critiques of doctrine but as reflections on existential and socio-political struggles. As Menahem Milson (1970) asserts, *Children of the Alley* functions as "a symbolic parable on the human condition and the inherent tragedy of man's existence" (p. 178), employing figures like Moses and Pharaoh to examine universal dilemmas of oppression, morality, and the pursuit of liberation.

This perspective informs the present study on the representation of intellectual figures in *Children of the Alley*. Mahfouz's novel does not merely reflect its historical context but articulates paradigms of resistance that hold universal relevance. Consequently, rather than aligning with conventional critical discourse on the novel, this study posits that Mahfouz presents models of intellectual engagement that challenge the colonial binary logic of self/other, a logic foundational to exploitative systems. Furthermore, this analysis explores how colonial ideology influences the construction of gender, race, and class hierarchies within the novel. *Children of the Alley* illustrates how systems of power maintain this binary logic through violence, and how confronting these structures entails significant risk. In extreme circumstances, this confrontation can lead to dehumanization, wherein individuals may replicate the very logic of self/other imposed by colonialism. The theme of fear, therefore, emerges as central to the novel's exploration of intellectual agency, as it underscores the personal and ethical costs of resistance.

A primary focus of this study is Gabal's transformation into an organic intellectual and his rejection of colonial logic. However, the novel also presents similar intellectual awakenings for Rifaa and Qassem. To maintain analytical clarity, Gabal is examined as a prototypical figure, with references to Qassem's narrative being included where significant divergences occur. Mahfouz's engagement with intellectual figures extends beyond *Children of the Alley* and appears in several other works, including *Al Sukkaryah* (1952), the third part of *The Cairo Trilogy*, which explores the intellectual disillusionment of Kamal; *Adrift on the Nile* (1966), which examines intellectual responses to political oppression; *Miramar* (1967), which portrays young intellectuals navigating socio-political upheaval; and *Karnak Café* (1974), which delves into political discussions among educated youth. These recurring themes underscore the persistent struggle of intellectuals in Egypt as they confront shifting landscapes of power and resistance in the post-independence era.

Given the centrality of decolonization struggles in Arab history, postcolonial theory provides a valuable lens for analyzing *Children of the Alley*. Antonio Gramsci's concept of the organic intellectual, as explored in *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, offers insight into how intellectuals emerge from marginalized groups to challenge dominant ideologies. Similarly, Edward Said's *Representations of the Intellectual* (1996) illuminates the power dynamics inherent in colonial relationships. These theoretical perspectives inform an examination of various conflicts and themes within the novel, including the interplay of class and gender within resistance movements.

A crucial aspect of this study is Mahfouz's treatment of intellectuals with conflicting allegiances and ideologies. While traditional readings of Gramsci's organic intellectuals depict them as arising from marginalized communities, Gabal's trajectory offers an alternative perspective. Despite his aristocratic background—as Dulma remarks (p. 121)—Gabal demonstrates a capacity to transcend his social class, aligning himself with the struggles of the oppressed. This challenges the notion that organic intellectuals must emerge solely from marginalized ranks. Gabal's transformation underscores the possibility of intellectuals from privileged backgrounds critically engaging with power structures and advocating for the voiceless. His narrative invites a reconsideration of the role of intellectuals, not merely in terms of their origins, but in relation to their ability to confront systemic injustices and commit to social justice.

2. Literature Review

Scholarship on *Children of the Alley* has explored various thematic and philosophical dimensions, particularly in relation to historical consciousness, political philosophy, and intellectual transformation. Ayman A. El-Desouky (2011) examines the novel's engagement with historical consciousness and revolutionary action. He highlights how Mahfouz reconfigures traditional narratives by foregrounding the role of intellectuals in shaping social change. Similarly, Nathaniel Greenberg (2013) contextualizes the novel within Egyptian political history, linking it to Michel Rancière's concept of "aesthetic anticipation." Greenberg argues that Mahfouz's fusion of allegory and realism serves as a meditation on democracy and revolution, reinforcing the novel's broader political significance.

The portrayal of intellectuals in Mahfouz's other works has also been a focus of literary analysis. Robert J. Farley (2011) examines *Adrift on the Nile*, exploring how Mahfouz depicts the constrained existence of Egyptian intellectuals under Nasser's regime. Using symbolism and stream-of-consciousness techniques, Farley highlights the psychological and social dislocation of the intelligentsia. Similarly, Abdulrahman Hezam (2015) interprets *Children of the Alley* as a political allegory of oppression and revolution, illustrating Mahfouz's critique of tyranny and his advocacy for popular resistance. Both scholars underscore the cyclical nature of injustice and fleeting moments of justice within Mahfouz's narratives, reflecting his response to Egypt's socio-political climate. Another critical approach to *Children of the Alley* is found in Mohamed Abdel Tawab's (2022) study, which adopts a Sufi lens. Abdel Tawab explores the novel's spiritual symbolism, arguing that Mahfouz's characters embody both social and mystical roles in confronting oppression. He highlights how their transformative journeys intertwine individual spiritual growth with broader societal revolution.

In postcolonial studies, Mahfouz's works have been extensively analyzed, often through conventional themes like power dynamics, orientalism, and indigenous resistance. However, Neil Lazarus, in *The Postcolonial Unconscious* (2012), critiques this narrow scholarly focus, arguing that a limited set of texts and methodologies has led to a cycle of repetitive inquiries and conclusions (p. 18-19). Advocating for a broader analytical scope, he draws from Raymond Williams to encourage engagement with overlooked works and alternative methodologies (p. 19). While postcolonial studies traditionally center on East-West power struggles, this article proposes a shift toward examining the transformation of intellectuals in Mahfouz's novel as a challenge to colonial and neo-colonial hegemony. This approach foregrounds the internal conflicts intellectuals face in navigating decolonization, moving beyond conventional readings. By investigating how native intellectuals dismantle narratives of duality within colonial logic, this study seeks to uncover fresh perspectives in postcolonial discourse that remain underexplored.

3. Theoretical Framework

While in mainstream culture there isn't much controversy regarding the typical understanding of who is an intellectual, Gramsci introduces a dissident definition in this regard. For instance, most people believe that intellectuals have been bestowed the authority of knowledge by institutions such as the church, mosque, temple, school, university, media, and so on. On the other hand, Gramsci claimed that everyone is an intellectual (p. 304). With this assertion, Gramsci is issuing a huge challenge to accepted notions of the intellectual.

In framing the analysis, the researcher draws upon several key concepts from Gramsci, including the notions of the organic intellectual, the hegemony of common sense, the counterhegemony of good sense, and subaltern resistance. Gramsci delineates "common sense" as "the incoherent set of generally held assumptions and beliefs common to any given society," while "good sense" refers to "practical empirical common sense" (SPN, 323). Kate Crehan, in *Gramsci's Common Sense* (2016), further emphasizes that to construct an effective political narrative capable of resisting hegemonic discourse, the organic intellectual must "build on the good sense that exists within common sense" through dialogue with subaltern groups (p. 55). In Gramsci's framework, the organic intellectual, distinct from conventional intellectuals who often represent hegemonic religious, educational, and media institutions, aligns with subaltern interests. They employ knowledge rooted in the lived experiences of subaltern groups to generate new interpretations and foreground older meanings that challenge domination and exploitation.

While Gramsci posits that traditional intellectuals typically serve as "deputies" for the dominant group (p. 12), he also acknowledges their potential to align with groups that resist the dominant stratum. To elucidate his concept of the intellectual, it is crucial to recognize Gramsci's delineation of two distinct types of intellectuals and his advocacy for the formation of a third category: the counter-hegemonic intellectual. The first type, already in existence, is the 'organic intellectual,' which emerges from whichever social group is ascendant at a given time, thereby serving to advance its interests. As Gramsci illustrates, "Every social group, coming into existence on the original terrain of an essential function in the world of economic production, creates together with itself, organically, one or more strata of intellectuals which give it homogeneity and an awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields" (p. 5). Hence, each new emerging class must cultivate its own cadre of 'organic' intellectuals to facilitate the advancement and development of that group.

The second type, as Gramsci terms it, comprises 'Traditional intellectuals,' described as "every 'essential' social group which emerges into history out of the preceding economic structure... [having] found... categories of intellectuals already in existence" (p. 6-7). This category of intellectuals is characterized by "their uninterrupted historical continuity... [which enables them to] present themselves as autonomous and independent of the dominant social group" (p. 7). Traditional intellectuals typically encompass roles such as priests, educators, philosophers, and other intellectuals associated with institutions separate from the state. Despite their perception of themselves as autonomous from social categories, Gramsci asserts that they enjoy "state privileges," thus bolstering the power of the dominant class (p. 7).

Gramsci identifies a critical dilemma wherein "the mass of the peasantry, although it performs an essential function in the world of production, does not elaborate its own 'organic' intellectuals, nor does it 'assimilate' any stratum of 'traditional' intellectuals, although it is from the peasantry that other social groups draw many of their intellectuals and a high proportion of traditional intellectuals are of peasant origin" (p. 6). To counter this, Gramsci advocates for the creation of 'organic' intellectuals in conjunction with the working and peasantry classes, aiming to foster the development of a counter-hegemony. According to Gramsci, the essential characteristic of a group striving for power is its endeavor to "assimilate and to conquer 'ideologically' the traditional intellectuals," a process expedited by the concurrent elaboration of its own organic intellectuals (p. 10). In essence, Gramsci proposes two essential measures to cultivate the third type of intellectual—a counter-hegemonic intellectual. Firstly, akin to how an emerging class fosters a group of 'organic intellectuals' aligned with its objectives, the working class must engender its own 'organic intellectuals' to further its aims. Secondly, the working class must endeavor to sway 'Traditional intellectuals' to their cause (p. 304).

To deepen the analysis of traditional intellectuals, particularly in relation to the novel under study, it is useful to consider Plato's conceptualization of poets in *The Republic* (Plato, 2024). Plato famously relegates poets to the margins of his ideal state, arguing that their representations of reality are imitative and deceptive, shaping public perception in ways that undermine rational governance. For Plato, poets do not contribute to the moral and philosophical education of the polis; rather, they are agents of distortion, propagating emotions and illusions that hinder the pursuit of truth and justice. He warns against their ability to mislead the populace, arguing that their narratives distract from rational discourse and promote sentimentality over reason. Moreover, he critiques their role in shaping public morality, suggesting that their works, laden with exaggerated emotions and falsehoods, influence impressionable minds and erode the virtues necessary for a just society.

This Platonic suspicion of poets aligns with the broader notion of traditional intellectuals as figures who reinforce established norms rather than actively engaging in socio-political change. The poets in Plato's Republic, much like the traditional intellectuals described by Gramsci, serve to maintain the ideological status quo rather than challenge it. By introducing Plato's critique alongside Gramsci's framework, this study provides a theoretical foundation for analyzing how Mahfouz's novel presents poets as traditional intellectuals. The comparison between Plato's critique of poets and Gramsci's traditional intellectuals will serve to highlight how Mahfouz negotiates the function of intellectuals in society, questioning their complicity in perpetuating

existing power structures. However, while Mahfouz acknowledges the role of poets and intellectuals in sustaining existing power structures, his novel also traces a crucial transformation in their function. The events depicted in the narrative serve as a catalyst for intellectuals to move beyond the archetype of the 'traditional intellectual' toward that of the organic counterhegemonic intellectual. Although the conventional interpretation of Gramsci's 'organic intellectual' often focuses on their structural affiliation with a particular social group, my analysis contends that these intellectuals primarily serve to assist subaltern groups.

Similarly, this essay addresses the notion of intellectual contestation and confrontation, often encapsulated in the concept of "speaking truth to power," through an exploration of Edward Said's conceptualization of the intellectual, in *Representations of the Intellectual*:

> [An intellectual] is an individual endowed with a faculty for representing, embodying, articulating a message, a view, an attitude, philosophy or opinion to, as well as for, a public. [One who is willing] to raise embarrassing questions, to confront orthodoxy and dogma (rather than to produce them), to be someone who cannot easily be co-opted by governments or corporations, and whose *raison d'etre* is to represent all those people and issues that are routinely forgotten or swept under the rug. (pp. 11)

Said's definition prompts numerous inquiries regarding subaltern representations. However, the focus here lies on the transition of the intellectual toward this specific stance. The pivotal concern of representation places the intellectual in a precarious position, situated between the representations mandated by "power" — whether wielded by figures embodying cultural authority or within a hegemonic class — and the intellectual's commitment to what they perceive as the "truth."

To comprehensively analyze colonial domination, it is imperative to employ Gramsci's concept of hegemony and its operational dynamics within society, particularly within colonial contexts. Gramsci contends that the hegemony of the ruling class does not solely rely on coercive power exerted upon the oppressed; rather, it is sustained through the consent and collaboration of intellectual functionaries who play a pivotal role in perpetuating and reproducing this hegemony (p. 300). Consequently, Gramsci posits that achieving equality necessitates the oppressed class to challenge and ultimately counter this hegemony by assuming a position of dominance themselves. This process involves the two distinct phases mentioned earlier: creating their own "organic intellectuals" (p. 304); in addition to swaying traditional intellectuals to their cause (p. 304). Upon accomplishing these two pivotal steps, the oppressed group can effectively engage in a concerted effort toward counter-hegemony. The examination of intellectuals within *Children of the Alley*, within the framework of postcolonial discourse, alongside the application of Gramsci's concepts pertaining to intellectuals, serves as a crucial methodological tool in framing the inquiry at hand.

Gramsci emphasizes, "All men are intellectuals, but not all men have in society the function of intellectuals" (p. 304). Central to this article is the notion of social function, which underscores the significance of intellectual engagement within society. Consequently, individuals who do not fulfill the specific role of intellectuals within their societal context forfeit the defining characteristic of intellectualism. Thus, the determining factor hinges on the functional aspect of a person's contribution, thereby encompassing literary writers and social activists within the realm of intellectual pursuits. However, alternative perspectives complicate this definition, delineating intellectuals from artists as distinct categories, each with its unique role to fulfill. To provide a comprehensive illustration, it is essential to quote Edward Said extensively:

> To this terribly important task of representing the collective suffering of your own people, testifying to its travails, reasserting its enduring presence, reinforcing its memory, there must be added something else, which only an intellectual, I believe, has the obligation to fulfill. After all, many novelists, painters, and poets, like Manzoni, Picasso, or Neruda, have embodied the historical experience of their people in aesthetic works, which in turn become recognized as great masterpieces. For the intellectual the task, I believe, is explicitly to universalize the crisis, to give greater human scope to what a particular race or nation suffered, to associate that experience with the sufferings of others. (Said, 1996, pp. 43-44)

The differentiation lies in Edward Said's perspective, wherein intellectuals are deemed better suited to bear the responsibility of universalizing the plight of their people, in contrast to artists or writers. Indeed, within the scope of this essay, the examination of Gabal in Mahfouz's *Children of the Alley* serves as a focal point for tracing the trajectories toward becoming an organic intellectual. The theoretical underpinnings delineated thus far provide a conceptual framework through which to elucidate the nuances of intellectual evolution within the narrative. By delineating the key attributes and challenges inherent to the intellectual persona, a coherent pathway is established for the analysis of Gabal as an example of this transformative process.

Gabal's journey of transformation unfolds within the intricate tapestry of Mahfouz's narrative, wherein the intellectual ethos undergoes a profound reconfiguration in response to shifting socio-political dynamics. By anchoring the discussion within the theoretical framework delineated earlier, specific instances of transformation within the narrative can be dissected and contextualized, shedding light on the complexities inherent to the intellectual's quest for ethical integrity and social responsibility.

As such, the subsequent analysis will illuminate how Gabal navigates the labyrinthine corridors of power and privilege, confronting existential dilemmas and moral quandaries along the way. By tracing his respective trajectories from complacency to conscientious engagement, a comprehensive understanding of the organic intellectual's role in effecting social change within the

narrative landscape of *Children of the Alley* will be elucidated. Through close textual analysis and contextual interpretation, this essay seeks to unveil the intricacies of intellectual transformation as a central motif within Mahfouz's influential work.

4. Analysis

Mahfouz introduces an alternative archetype of intellectuals embodied by the "poets" who frequent coffeehouses, regaling audiences with their lyrical compositions. These poets, or "intellectuals" by association, emerge as complicit in the perpetuation of societal injustices within Gamaliya. Preferring to eschew any discourse that might cast aspersions upon the ruling elite, they instead extol the virtues of the estate overseer and the entrenched power structures, exalting a semblance of justice, mercy, dignity, piety, and honesty that rings hollow to the lived experiences of the marginalized populace. The poets would avoid "public mention of anything that would embarrass the powerful. They sing the praises of the estate overseer and the gangs, of justice that we do not enjoy, of mercy we do not experience, of dignity we do not see, of piety that seems not to exist and honesty we have never heard of" (p. 95). While Mahfouz refrains from explicit delineation, Ridwan the poet, for example, emerges as an emblematic figure embodying the intellectual betrayal elucidated within the narrative.

Mahfouz's deliberate choice of the term "poets" to characterize these conformist intellectuals within *Children of the Alley* indeed carries broader symbolic significance. It extends beyond mere critique of a specific social class to encapsulate a spectrum of storytellers who wield narrative authority within society. Whether they be literary writers, religious figures delivering sermons, or any other purveyor of tales, these individuals collectively embody the traditional intellectuals who function as conduits for disseminating narratives that uphold established power structures and perpetuate social conformity. For instance, several characters question the morality of poets critiquing them: "Our poets are the biggest liars in this alley, and poets are the worst liars of all" and "a poet will say anything to please his audience," an unnamed character interrupted: "you mean he wants to please the gangs!" (p. 186). Central to Mahfouz's critique is the notion that these storytellers, irrespective of their medium or platform, function to mollify the dissenting voices of the oppressed populace by recounting heroic epics of the past. In doing so, they obscure the harsh realities of contemporary existence, reinforcing the status quo and dampening the flames of resistance.

This paradigm finds resonance in Plato's *The Republic* (2024), where poets are similarly castigated for their inclination to lead the populace astray from the pursuit of truth and reason. In Plato's utopian vision, poets are deemed undesirable precisely because their narratives serve to estrange individuals from the principles of truth and virtue, thereby undermining the fabric of societal harmony. In both Mahfouz's narrative and Plato's philosophical treatise, the figure of the poet emerges as a symbol of intellectual subjugation and societal complacency, wielding immense influence in shaping collective consciousness. Through their critical scrutiny of these conformist storytellers, both Mahfouz and Plato underscore the profound implications of narrative authority in shaping the contours of socio-political discourse and perpetuating systems of oppression.

Plato expresses multiple concerns about poets and their role in society. Mahfouz, in turn, is critical of traditional intellectuals who resemble the poets in Plato's republic in several ways. The poets in *Children of the Alley* "tell only of heroic eras" (p. 95) which serve as an emotional sedative for society. Similarly, one of the matters Plato finds problematic with poets is the influence of poetry on emotions discussed in Plato's *The Republic*. He expresses concern that poetry can evoke irrational emotions that disrupt the rational harmony of the soul, making individuals susceptible to irrational desires and impulses (p. 76).

Moreover, the poets in Mahfouz's text are shown spreading falsehood and deception by praising the oppressors. For example, Taza the poet "took up his rebec and began to pluck melodies from its string; after saluting Rifaat the overseer, Laitha the gangster, and Sawaris, protector of this neighborhood, he began his chant" in the coffee shop (p. 264). Paradoxically, the three individuals praised by Taza the poet were actually the main reason for misery and oppression within their society. Plato's discussion of falsehood and deception in poetry can be found in various parts of Plato's *The Republic*, but it is notably addressed in Book X. He argues that poets can deceive their audience by presenting false images and illusions, "thrice removed from the truth," that distort the truth and lead people away from wisdom and virtue (p. 317).

Plato was concerned about the negative impact of poets on the impressionable minds of youth. He warns against the uncritical acceptance of poetic works. This blind admiration, he suggests, leads to a misplaced prioritization of poetry over more substantive pursuits, resulting in a populace saturated with admiration for poetry at the expense of critical thinking. Plato highlights his concerns about the influence of poetry on society. Even "Homer and Hesiod, and the rest of the poets, who have ever been the great story-tellers of mankind," Plato argued, give false representations and thus considered them complicit in "the fault of telling a lie" which have a bad effect on the minds of the youth (Plato, p. 61). Plato's apprehension regarding the potentially harmful influence of poetry finds resonance in Mahfouz's *Children of the Alley*, where the character of Gabal emerges as an organic intellectual, challenging the prevailing cowardice exhibited by the poets. In a pivotal confrontation, when the struggle between the oppressed and the oppressor reaches a critical juncture, the poet Ridwan voices a sentiment suggesting deference to the lord of the estate, positing that justice could be established without risking confrontation. Ridwan's authoritative voice as a traditional intellectual negatively affects the people of the Al Hamdan attempting to resist the oppression of the Effendi. Gabal, however, was furious and scolded him: "Is this what poets have come to, Ridwan?... You tell the tales of heroes... but when things turn serious you slither back into your holes and spread indecision and defeat" (p. 152). Gabal's response is swift and unequivocal, rebuking Ridwan for his timidity and admonishing him for abandoning the noble ethos

traditionally associated with poets. Gabal's impassioned rebuke underscores the betrayal inherent in the poets' acquiescence, as they retreat into the safety of complacency, forsaking their role as agents of change utilizing their narrative and succumbing to the allure of personal comfort at the expense of ethical integrity. The symbolic term of the "poet" in *Children of the Alley* is used to depict and criticize the traditional intellectuals of any given society. In *Children of the Alley*, the intellectual landscape is depicted as fraught with moral ambiguities, wherein individuals endowed with the gift of eloquence and have audience opt for expediency over ethical rectitude, perpetuating a cycle of injustice and complacency.

4.1 Gabal as an organic intellectual

Intellectuals who choose to challenge the status quo and assume the role of dissident, or the 'organic intellectual', as Gramsci defined it, often must overcome tremendous obstacles, among which is their own internalized oppression, namely fear and anxiety. To address the rule of fear, intellectuals must be prepared to speak truth to power. In Mahfouz's *Children of the Alley*, we meet several main characters who come from lower and peasant classes but in this study, the focus is on Gabal.

Also, the intellectual characters come from oppressed communities which cannot do anything to whomever is oppressing them because they are in a weaker position. In accordance with Gramsci's claim that all men are intellectuals, this suggests that by the end, Gabal in this novel develops from being an oppressed figure into one who has the function of an intellectual. Gramsci argues that these kinds of lower classes must create 'organic' intellectuals of their own in order to challenge the existing power (p. 300). Gabal is thus the organic intellectual of his class and the community in which he lives.

The narrative focal point undergoes a significant pivot in the second chapter, titled "Gabal," where the titular character grapples with intellectual quandaries emblematic of broader societal fissures. This chapter serves as an allegorical reimagining of the Moses narrative, casting Gabal as the central figure navigating the labyrinthine corridors of power within the allegorical landscape. Central to this dynamic is the overarching presence of Effendi, the ruling authority governing the vast expanse of the estate. Gabal is an organic intellectual from the common working class who was adopted, raised and, educated by the higher ruling class. The story narrated in third person, begins like this:

> Gabal grew up in the overseer's house… They sent him to school, he learned to read and write, and when he came of age Effendi turned over the management of the estate to him. Wherever the estate had holdings the people called him 'Your Excellency,' and respectful and admiring looks followed him wherever he went…Gabal found that he was not one person, as he had imagined he was all his life; he was two people. One of them believed in loyalty to his [adoptive] mother and the other wondered bewilderedly, 'what about the Al Hamdan?' (p. 106)

The narrative arc takes a poignant turn with the introduction of Gabal as an orphan from the Al Hamadan community into Effendi's household. Raised amidst opulence, Gabal finds himself ensnared in a web of conflicting allegiances—torn between his ties to the adoptive family entrenched within the palace precincts and the plight of his marginalized brethren, the Al Hamdan. Gabal, thus, embodies Gramsci's paradigm of the organic intellectual, straddling the intersection between the peasant class and the ruling elite—a vantage point fraught with ideological tensions and ethical dilemmas. As Gramsci's observation mentioned earlier, it is often from the ranks of the peasantry that the ruling class derives a significant portion of their intellectual cadre (p. 6). This dichotomy underscores Gabal's existential struggle—an intellectual grappling with the multifaceted dimensions of loyalty and its attendant complexities.

In resonant consonance with the narrative contours delineated by Mahfouz, Edward Said's incisive commentary illuminates the intellectual's predicament as one fraught with incessant challenges of loyalty. Said astutely observes, "the intellectual is beset and remorselessly challenged by problems of loyalty. All of us without exception belong to some sort of national, religious or ethnic community" (1996, p. 40). This observation underscores the universal resonance of Gabal's plight, as his struggle transcends temporal and spatial confines to speak to the human condition in its myriad manifestations. His predicament as an intellectual intensifies when he embraces a new affiliation rooted in resistance and solidarity, thereby jeopardizing the privileges and elite status associated with alignment with the dominant power, in his case: The Effendi.

This dilemma has been extensively deliberated by numerous intellectuals, including Said, who in *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (1983) delineates two interrelated forces that exert pressure on intellectuals: "One is the culture to which critics are bound filiatively (by birth, nationality, profession); the other is a method or system acquired affiliatively (by social and political conviction, economic and historical circumstances, voluntary effort and willed deliberation)" (p. 25). Intellectuals who succumb to the pressures of filiation risk compromising their integrity as universal intellectuals, as they may refrain from speaking truth to power, fearing they would betray their family, nation, sect, etc. On the other hand, adherence to an affiliative system offers a seemingly safer position for intellectuals; however, affiliative institutions themselves may at times become oppressive. Consequently, it falls upon the intellectual's shoulders to challenge such power dynamics, navigating the precarious balance between personal loyalties and critical engagement.

Indeed, the intellectual journey of individuals like Gabal is marked by a complex interplay between cultures of filiation and affiliation, necessitating a delicate equilibrium to navigate the divergent pulls of identity and allegiance. Gabal's dual identity exemplifies this intricate dynamic: by birth, he is inexorably linked to the Al Hamdan, thus embodying the filiative connection to

his ancestral roots. However, by virtue of his affiliative ties to the ruling class, epitomized by his association with Effendi, Gabal finds himself ensconced within the corridors of privilege and economic advantage.

This nuanced positioning engenders two main dilemmas for Gabal. First, Gabal's affiliative allegiance to the ruling class, while advantageous in terms of material prosperity, necessitates a moral compromise as he becomes complicit in the perpetuation of systemic injustices against his own people. Thus, Gabal must break away from the colonial logic of dichotomy between self/other. Second, the inherent tension between Gabal's filiative and affiliative identities underscores the paradoxical nature of his intellectual trajectory. While his filiative heritage initially serves as a bulwark against aligning himself with the oppressor, it ultimately impedes his ability to universalize the struggle for justice, constraining his advocacy to the confines of his filiative circle. In this regard, Gabal's intellectual journey serves as a poignant allegory for the complexities inherent to navigating and confronting the dilemmas that accompany his position.

4.2 Elite Status vs. Affiliative Solidarity.

In confronting the first dilemma, the intellectual is not merely challenged but compelled to make a choice between advancing their own interests and advocating for the rights of the underrepresented and oppressed. The division between personal and community interests is starkly evident under capitalist colonialism, where the colonizers deliberately fostered a class of collaborators invested in maintaining the oppressive status quo. Today, a global bourgeoisie similarly stands to lose much if systemic change were to occur, perpetuating a dichotomous logic of "self" vs. "other" reminiscent of colonial oppression. This binary paradigm, epitomized by Effendi's ultimatum, "are you with us or against us?" (p. 119) leaves no room for nuance or reconciliation. Gabal's response to Effendi encapsulates a profound moral and intellectual courage: "I would be ashamed to leave my people to their ruin while I enjoy the grace of your protection" (p. 119). In choosing solidarity over comfort, Gabal rejects the insidious allure of injustice and aligns himself with the struggle against oppression, despite the personal sacrifices it entails.

Through Gabal's narrative, Mahfouz presents a model of intellectual engagement that challenges the colonial dualistic logic of self and other, transcending the confines of an exploitative system. Gabal's defiance embodies a commitment to universal principles of justice and human dignity, transcending narrow self-interest in favor of collective liberation. In agreement with this incident, Paul Baran, contends in "The Commitment of the Intellectual" (1961) that intellectuals must "transcend their private, selfish interests and... subordinate them to the interests of society as a whole" (p. 15). Baran emphasizes that such a commitment demands "much courage, much integrity, and much ability" (p. 15). Mahfouz delves into the experiences of Gabal which to this day many intellectuals find themselves involved in; especially during a period marked by profound socio-political upheaval, wherein they grapple with this very dilemma: whether to uphold a privileged elite position or align themselves with affiliative solidarity.

Gabal's commitment and solidarity as an intellectual becomes of supreme importance when Effendi, aided by his gangster cohorts, enforces a reign of fear and poverty in the neighborhood. The system maintains this logic of class hierarchy through violence. Those who dare to speak out are met with brutal reprisals, leaving the community cowed into submission. When the residents of Al Hamdan finally muster the courage to confront Effendi collectively, hoping to evade individual punishment, they are met with further cruelty. Amidst this oppression, Gabal, torn between loyalty to his powerful adopted family and empathy for his suffering people, grapples with his divided identity. As tensions escalate, Gabal's internal struggle intensifies, forcing him to confront the harsh realities of his existence and the moral imperative to take a stand against tyranny. In this regard, Said asserts, "Feeling that your people are threatened with political and sometimes actual physical extinction commits you to its defense" (1996, p. 40).

The answer that emerges from the works of Mahfouz to the question about the role of the intellectual is complex. In *Children of the Alley*, published seven years after Egypt's 1952 revolution, we encounter a clear contrast between Adham's disengagement in chapter one and Gabal's active pursuit of social change in the following chapter. Adham's apathy reflects a potential disillusionment with intellectualism, while Gabal embodies the engaged intellectual who translates theory into action. This juxtaposition suggests Mahfouz might favor intellectuals who bridge the gap between theory and practice. However, examining Mahfouz's earlier works, such as the *Cairo Trilogy* (1952), reveals a more nuanced perspective. In this pre-revolution novel, Kamal in the last part of the trilogy, a well-educated reader of Western philosophy, "is an example that intellectual quest can turn into an escape from responsibility" (Milson, p. 183). This shift in the portrayal of the intellectual across Mahfouz's works, from potentially escapist to potentially disillusioned, underscores the complexity of his answer to the question of their role. Nevertheless, it underscores his admiration of intellectuals who have real impact with as well as for the people.

Gabal's journey from passive bystander to active intellectual is a complex process marked by several turning points. Witnessing the brutal assault on Daabis, a defenseless member of the community (p. 112-113), sparks a crucial trigger towards his active role. Forced to choose between inaction and intervention, Gabal's decision to defend the victim propels him onto a path of advocating for justice. However, this act also results in a self-imposed exile from the alley into Muqattam, a consequence that deepens his disillusionment with the existing power structures.

Edward Said's concept of the secular intellectual, one who operates independently of traditional institutions, provides a useful lens for understanding Gabal's exile. Said characterizes such intellectuals as "independent, autonomously functioning...not

beholden to...parties that demand loyalty" (1996, pp. 67-68), a description that closely parallels Gabal's own detachment from conventional affiliations. However, Gabal's exile is not merely geographical; it marks an intellectual departure that fosters a form of autonomy akin to what Rehnuma Sazzad, in *Edward Said's Concept of Exile* (2017), describes as an "exemplary situation for a Saidian intellectual" (p. 21). This detachment, while isolating, paradoxically grants him the ability to engage more authentically with broader struggles for justice. Yet, exile is not solely an intellectual privilege—it is also a deeply unsettling experience, one that Sazzad describes as "cold, colourless and dismal" (2017, p. 17). Gabal's time in Muqattam embodies this paradox, as he endures the alienation of exile while simultaneously undergoing intellectual transformation, critically reflecting on past injustices and contemplating new avenues for resistance. Sazzad's argument that exile can serve as a means of "reconfiguring...shattered life" (p. 18) resonates with Gabal's trajectory, as he embraces what she calls the "paradoxical blessings" of disjunction (p. 20). However, while Said's framework provides insight into Gabal's evolution, it does not entirely account for the role of cultural heritage in shaping intellectual identity. Exile alone may not be the definitive catalyst for Gabal's intellectual maturation; rather, his engagement with inherited traditions and communal struggles may be equally, if not more, significant.

During his exile, Gabal undergoes another significant internal transformation. His encounters with revered figures like his ancestor Gabalawi and father-in-law Balqiti expose him to a wealth of historical wisdom and a deeper understanding of his own lineage. These interactions force Gabal to grapple with his role within the larger struggle for social justice. Balqiti the snake charmer, a kindred spirit in his own experience of exile, serves as a cautionary tale. Expressing regret for not returning to the alley (p. 135), Balqiti emphasizes the crucial role of the intellectual: to educate and ignite a movement. But Balqiti's words carry a deeper message. He warns of the dangers of fear, stating: "fear is a terrible thing. It is the thing makes snakes strike!" (p. 134). This can be interpreted as a cautionary tale for the Al-Hamdan people. Balqiti's fear serves as a stark warning of how despair, if left unchecked, could lead the Al-Hamdan community to succumb to a nihilistic worldview, surrendering to their oppressors. Through Balqiti's words, a newfound sense of purpose is instilled in Gabal. Living alongside this exiled older man allows Gabal to mature and recognize his responsibility towards his community.

The symbolism embedded within Balqiti's profession as a snake charmer is particularly insightful. He transcends his literal role and becomes a metaphor for the organic intellectual. A skilled snake charmer possesses a deep understanding of serpent behavior, allowing him to anticipate their movements and navigate their potential danger. Similarly, the intellectual must develop a keen awareness of the complex forces of oppression. They must learn to anticipate the tactics of the oppressor and strategically navigate these challenges to dismantle unjust systems. However, the snake charmer's role goes beyond mere anticipation. Their art lies in a delicate dance of negotiation and maneuvering. Through music, movement, and an understanding of the serpent's instincts, the snake charmer coaxes the creature into a state of submission, achieving a desired outcome without resorting to violence. This skill translates perfectly into the realm of the organic intellectual. Just as the snake charmer must navigate a potentially dangerous situation to a peaceful resolution, the intellectual must negotiate and maneuver within oppressive structures, advocating for change without inciting further conflict. In this way, Gabal's training under Balqiti extends beyond practical snake charming skills. It equips him with the metaphorical tools he needs to become an effective leader in the struggle for social justice – a leader who can navigate complex situations, advocate for his community, and achieve progress without resorting to destructive violence.

His ancestor, Gabalawi, further reinforces this calling for justice. He commends Gabal's solidarity with the oppressed and underscores their inherent right to dignity and liberation. Most importantly, Gabalawi's resolute response to Gabal's query about achieving change – "By force you will all defeat injustice and achieve your rights" (p. 145) – serves as a powerful catalyst. This exchange not only unveils the systemic oppression rooted in race and class but also ignites a fire within Gabal, transforming him into an activist intellectual – a subject of history wielding agency and committed to challenging injustice.

Inspired by his ancestral legacy, Gabal embarks on a mission to empower the Al-Hamdan people. Gabal returns to the alley determined to ignite a similar spark within his community. However, his return coincides with a critical juncture where the weight of oppression threatens to crush the spirits of the Al-Hamdan people. Unlike leaders who might have dictated a course of action, Gabal avoids a top-down approach. He recognizes the importance of dialogue and shared decision-making, echoing Paulo Freire's assertion in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) that

> The correct method for a revolutionary leadership to employ in the task of liberation is, therefore, not "libertarian propaganda." Nor can the leadership merely "implant" in the oppressed a belief in freedom, thus thinking to win their trust. The correct method lies in dialogue. The conviction of the oppressed that they must fight for their liberation is not a gift bestowed by the revolutionary leadership, but the result of their own *conscientizacao*. (p. 67)

Freire argues that true liberation comes from the oppressed themselves recognizing the need for struggle. The text offers a compelling illustration of Gabal's leadership style. He doesn't simply dictate a course of action but approaches the community with a purpose: "to talk to you about something important" (p. 143). This invitation opens the door for dialogue. Gabal doesn't withhold information; he shares the promise of victory from his ancestor Gabalawi, potentially igniting a spark of hope within the community. Furthermore, the passage highlights a long dialogue where the men and women of Al-Hamdan's discussed the consequences of the struggle (p. 144-7). This extended conversation demonstrates Gabal's commitment to incorporating the

community's voice in the decision-making process. The dialogue concludes by stating that Gabal was assured of "his solidarity with the others" (p. 147), suggesting a shared ownership of the struggle fostered through dialogue.

In a critical point of the resistance where the oppressed people almost fell into a position of nihilism, Gabal confronts his people with a stark reality: the allure of a comfortable life with his adopted family contrasts sharply with the responsibility to stand up for the rights of his oppressed kin. Despite the risks, Gabal advocates for a forceful assertion of their rights to the estate, dignity, and a life free from oppression (p. 144). His call to arms is met with fear and apprehension, particularly given the retribution they faced in prior peaceful attempts at rebellion. Then Abdoun's declaration encapsulates the prevailing sentiment of resignation and despair among the Al Hamdan: "why are we afraid?...there is nothing worse than the way we live now" (p. 144). Yet, this resignation carries perilous implications, bordering on nihilism—a surrender to the logic of colonial oppression that threatens to erode their humanity. Fear, in its extreme manifestation, has the potential to dehumanize and compel self-destructive behavior. In this fraught dynamic, the Al Hamdan teeter on the brink of succumbing to the nihilistic logic imposed by colonialism. The specter of fear looms large, threatening to undermine their agency and perpetuate a cycle of oppression. Gabal's impassioned plea serves as a rallying cry against the encroaching nihilism, urging his people to reclaim their dignity and humanity through collective action and resistance.

Despite the allure of luxury and comfort, Gabal's allegiance lies with justice and compassion, leading him to forsake his former life and join the struggle of those he once called his own. Said says that "The intellectual always has a choice either to side with the weaker, the less represented, the forgotten or ignored, or to side with the more powerful" (1996, p. 32-3). Should Gabal's loyalty remain tethered to the confines of the palace, the role of the intellectual in advocating for the marginalized would undergo a profound inversion. In such a scenario, the intellectual would effectively betray the very essence of their vocation by aligning themselves with the corridors of power, thus perpetuating the marginalization and oppression endured by the disenfranchised populace.

Having chosen the path of justice over comfort, Gabal exemplifies Said's notion of the intellectual's responsibility to side with the marginalized. However, the struggle for liberation goes beyond simply joining the fight. Colonial logic, as this study proposes, informs the construction of rigid hierarchies based on gender, race, and class. This logic not only shapes external structures but also infiltrates the minds of the oppressed, leading to the internalization of these power dynamics. This internalization presents a significant challenge in dismantling oppressive systems, as evidenced by the exchange between Gabal and Daabis. The exchange in the aftermath of their victory over the Effendi reveals a crucial challenge faced by intellectuals leading movements against colonial oppression: dismantling the ingrained structures of power, not just replacing the oppressor. Freire's concept of the "sub-oppressor" sheds light on Daabis's declaration to Gabal, "You don't want to be a gangster? I'll be the gangster!" (p. 165). This statement exemplifies Freire's observation that the oppressed, conditioned by their experiences, often internalize the oppressor's model of domination (Freire, 1993, p. 45). Daabis, having known only the world of the gangster and the oppressed, might see leadership solely through that lens. The idea of a community existing without a dominant figure is foreign to him, mirroring Freire's notion that freedom, in their minds, becomes synonymous with holding power (Freire, 1993, p. 45). Breaking this cycle requires Gabal to address the psychological impact of colonialism, helping the Al-Hamdan people unlearn the association of freedom with dominance. This involves fostering critical self-reflection and open dialogue about alternative models of leadership.

Furthermore, Gabal must work to decolonize knowledge production. Colonial logic often serves to reinforce its own authority. Gabal, as an intellectual, can help create a space for the emergence of knowledge and leadership based on the community's own values and history. This could involve reviving traditional forms of decision-making and leadership practices, as opposed to simply replicating the hierarchical structure of the colonizer. Gabal's response, "There will be no gangsters among the Al Hamdan" (p. 165), underscores his commitment to this decolonization project. While dialogue with the oppressed group is crucial for representation and building a counter-hegemonic narrative, Gramsci, as mentioned above in the theoretical section, reminds us that critical revision of their "common sense" is equally important. Gabals role exemplifies this concept. He recognizes that the Al-Hamdan people's "common sense," shaped by colonial logic, might contain reactionary elements that perpetuate oppression. Rather than accepting his people's traditions at face value, his task, then, becomes building a culture of resistance based on a critical examination of the traditions of his people. This involves extracting the "good sense" – their inherent aspirations for equality and freedom (as evidenced by their desire to escape gangster rule) – while rejecting elements like violence and hierarchical power structures. By advocating for collective action over gangster leadership, as seen in his quote above "there will be no gangsters..." (p. 165), Gabal demonstrates his commitment to this critical revision process. Through dialogue, he acts as an awakener of the people, fostering a new "common sense" based on shared power, justice, and the "good sense" embedded within their traditions. This new "common sense" becomes the foundation for a future free from colonial influence and true liberation. This necessitates empowering collective action. By addressing these challenges, Gabal can break free from the colonizer's logic. While defeating the Effendi represents a physical victory, true liberation lies in dismantling the underlying structures that perpetuate oppression. Gabal's intellectual journey signifies the ongoing struggle to move beyond the colonizer's framework of self and other, towards a future built on shared power and collective action.

4.3 Nationalism vs. Universalism.

In the second dilemma, this essay discusses the pitfalls of nativism for the organic intellectual. Prominent postcolonial thinkers like Edward Said and Frantz Fanon have grappled with the complexities of nationalism in the context of anti-colonial struggles. Said cautions against the pitfalls of "nativism," which reinforces the very divisions imposed by imperialism (1994, p. 228). Nationalism, while crucial for initial resistance, needs to be transcended towards a "universalism that is not limited or coercive" (1994, p. 229). Similarly, Fanon acknowledges the mobilizing power of nationalism as a "magnificent hymn" but emphasizes the need to evolve beyond it after independence (p. 142). He argues for a transformation "from a national consciousness to a social and political consciousness" (p. 142) to avoid the pitfalls of nationalism (p. 144). This tension between national identity and broader values is particularly relevant to the role of the intellectual in postcolonial literature. As Fanon suggests, intellectuals have an "obligation" to navigate this complex terrain, fostering a national consciousness that transcends narrow nationalisms and embraces "universalizing values" (p. 180). In *Children of the Alley*, for instance, we can see how Gabal embodies this complex negotiation between national identity and a commitment to broader social justice. Unable to fully realize his obligation as an organic intellectual, he falls into the pitfalls of nativism

While filliative or nationalist sentiments initially empowered Gabal as an organic intellectual for independence, they also risked leading him down a problematic path. Gabal's reluctance to transcend the boundaries of his filiative identity reflects a broader reluctance to embrace a more expansive and inclusive vision of justice—one that transcends narrow tribal affiliations and embraces the plight of all oppressed peoples. Indeed, Gabal's intellectual journey is fraught with the perennial tension between nationalism and universalism, encapsulating the broader struggle between the imperatives of filiative allegiance and affiliative solidarity. Within the crucible of Gabal's narrative, this tension manifests acutely in his steadfast commitment to championing the cause of his own people at the expense of embracing a more expansive and inclusive vision of justice. The struggle is reduced to an unproductive nativism. This tension is palpably evident in Gabal's refusal to extend his advocacy beyond the confines of his filiative circle, rebuffing entreaties for assistance from those outside his immediate community.

In response to a delegation from neighboring alleys seeking Gabal's assistance in their quest for justice, akin to the triumph he achieved for his own people, Gabal adamantly rebuffed their entreaties. This refusal underscores Gabal's steadfast commitment to prioritizing the interests of his own community above those of others, even in the face of parallel struggles for justice unfolding in neighboring tribes. His assertion that "My ancestor entrusted me with my own [people]" (p. 166) underscores the primacy of filiative loyalty in shaping his ethical calculus, relegating concerns for broader universalist solidarity to the periphery of his moral compass. Gabal's reluctance to engage in "new troubles for the sake of others" (p. 166) speaks to a broader reluctance to transcend the boundaries of narrow nationalism and embrace a more cosmopolitan ethos of solidarity. In his refusal to acknowledge the interconnectedness of human suffering and the imperative of collective action in pursuit of justice, Gabal exemplifies the limitations inherent in a nationalist paradigm that prioritizes parochial concerns over broader humanitarian imperatives. Gabal assures himself that these other people's poverty and shame "has nothing to do with us" (p. 166).

A fundamental question emerges in this instance: what, obligations should intellectuals embrace? Edward Said contends that the intellectual's duty lies in universalizing crises, broadening the scope of particular suffering to encompass the plight of humanity at large (1996, p. 44). Mahfouz exemplifies this ethos by portraying oppression as a universal tyranny, applicable to diverse contexts worldwide. For instance, when Tamar Henna expresses her opinions on the struggle against oppression, she is dismissed by her own people and ridiculed by the opposition. This silencing embodies the experience of marginalized groups across cultures, whose voices are often disregarded in the fight for justice because of their class and gender. Through a process of typification, Mahfouz's narrative expands upon the interconnectedness of human suffering, transcending the confines of any specific socio-political landscape. Hence, Mahfouz's deliberate omission of specific locales endows his narrative with a universality that resonates beyond Egypt, making it applicable to global contexts. The alley, confirms El-Desouky, "cannot be identified geographically, nor can we specify historical time through references to events outside it" (p. 435). This departure from naming places enhances the narrative's broader significance, reflecting Said and Gramsci's call to transcend binary dichotomies and embrace a more inclusive, universalist logic. On the other hand, Gabal, while emblematic of an intellectual, falls short of the organic prototype as he prioritizes his clan over broader solidarity, in contrast to Qassim.

Mahfouz presents a fascinating evolution of intellectual leadership through Gabal and Qassem, highlighting the shifting role of intellectuals in confronting power and marginalization. While Gabal's approach is shaped by solidarity and empathy, his inaction towards figures like Tamar Henna—ostracized for her unconventional ideas—suggests a limitation in his vision of social change. In contrast, Qassem embodies a more inclusive intellectualism, actively engaging with marginalized voices such as Sakina, the servant girl. His decision to not only listen to her perspective on liberation but also integrate her into the "mission" (p. 301) signals a significant break from hierarchical leadership structures. This shift is reinforced by his explicit stance on gender equality: "no woman," he affirms, "will be deprived, whether she be a lady or a servant… just like [us] equally" (p. 301). However, while Qassem's approach suggests a more democratic model of leadership, the novel leaves certain power dynamics within his community unexamined.

This increasing acknowledgment of marginalized voices reflects Foucault's conception of the intellectual as one who does not merely articulate truth from above but actively resists the systems of power that suppress alternative discourses. Foucault argues that knowledge is not monopolized by intellectuals but is instead present among the common people who:

> know perfectly well, without illusion; … far better than [the intellectual] and they are certainly capable of expressing themselves. But there exists a system of power which blocks, prohibits, and invalidates this discourse and this knowledge… Intellectuals are themselves agents of this system of power – the idea of their responsibility for "consciousness" and discourse forms part of the system. The intellectual's role is no longer to place himself "somewhat ahead and to the side" in order to express the stifled truth of the collectivity; rather, it is to struggle against the forms of power that transform him into its object and instrument in the sphere of "knowledge", "truth", "consciousness", and "discourse". (Foucault, 1980, p. 207–8)

Foucault's critique of intellectual authority offers a way to understand the implications of Qassem's leadership. Rather than positioning intellectuals as the sole bearers of truth, Foucault emphasizes that knowledge "exists among the common people" (pp. 207–8) but is often suppressed by systems of power that regulate discourse. Qassem's willingness to engage with figures like Sakina reflects a break from the traditional model of the intellectual as an isolated figure and moves toward a form of resistance that redistributes authority. In contrast, Gabal, despite his ideals, remains partially embedded in a structure where intellectuals observe rather than disrupt these hierarchies. This contrast highlights the challenges intellectuals face in navigating power structures—not just as critics, but as potential agents of transformation.

5. Conclusion

Naguib Mahfouz's *Children of the Alley* transcends its allegorical framework to offer a timeless exploration of intellectual development. This study has focused on Gabal's journey, demonstrating how he embodies Antonio Gramsci's concept of the organic intellectual. Through his experiences of exile and suffering, Gabal sheds the limitations of inherited knowledge from his ancestor as well as his father-in-law and embraces a critical perspective on power structures. He rejects the destructive binary of self/other imposed by colonialism, forging a path towards social change that prioritizes the voices of the marginalized.

Gabal's transformation serves as a testament to the transformative power of critical thought and the crucial role of organic intellectuals in challenging the status quo. The novel suggests that even when faced with seemingly unending cycles of oppression, intellectual figures like Gabal can ignite sparks of resistance and pave the way for a more just future. *Children of the Alley* remains a vitally relevant exploration of intellectual awakening, a reminder that the struggle for social change requires a continuous process of critical reflection, self-awareness, and solidarity with the marginalized. The voices of the alley, though echoing through history, continue to challenge us to grapple with complex issues of power, identity, and the pursuit of a more equitable world.

Study Limitations and Future Research

While focusing on Gabal provides a clear example of intellectual development, a more comprehensive understanding would require deeper examination of Rifaa and Qassem's journeys. Additionally, the cyclical nature of history, emphasized by Mahfouz's closing lines in each chapter: "forgetfulness is the plague of our alley" (p. 171), suggests that intellectual struggle is an ever-present battle. Further exploration of how intellectuals navigate this seemingly endless cycle could be a fruitful avenue for future research.

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ORCID iD https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4608-4695
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