

Responses paper

[Art & Culture](#), [Artists](#)



number 4 March The Yacoubian Building as a Symbol of Modern Egyptian Society “ The Yacoubian Building” (2006) is an Egyptian film directed by Marwan Hamid and based on the semi-titled novel of Alaa Al Aswany. This is an extraordinary and unexpected work of fiction which addresses the modern society of Egypt with the uncomfortable socio-political issues and ugly truths such as social inequality, political corruption, religious hypocrisy, torture, sexuality, pedophilia, and homosexuality, despite the fact that it is unacceptable to bear on public display, as it is the phenomenon which can't be recognized in an official state level. The fiction in the movie or novel finds itself in the fact that all main heroes gathered by the author in The Yacoubian Building (a luxury apartment building which was built in Cairo) are invented by him. Nevertheless, the borders between reality and fiction are blurred for these people, only with different names, can be among the audience of readers or viewers right now, as they “...are people of our world...” (Hamid).

One of the outrageous themes raised in the work is the false Islamic piety. The main characters including an impoverished aristocrat and a self-proclaimed expert on women, a godly student, a newspaper editor and a corrupt politician, all of them perceive themselves as Allah-fearing citizens who honor their religion and lead a righteous way of life. Still there is a small remark that must be underlined – our heroes go on about their desires and feelings which are inconsistent with the concepts of their faith. In such a case they simply interpret the commandments of the Koran in a favorable for them light to justify their actions and not to be sinners in their own eyes as well as in the eyes of God. The strong belief of almost every Muslim is that

“...God bless him and grant him peace...” (Aswany 4) and our characters are not the exception.

Another important feature of contemporary Egyptian social life is its injustice and inequality of people of different classes. In this respect the Yacoubian Building itself serves as the symbol of the division of the poor and the rich, according to their situation in the edifice, that is, the poor are in the upper and almost unsuitable rooms and the elite is on the lower floors with large comfortable apartments.

Nevertheless men of every social class are the same in one question – relations with women. As it shown in the novel and film, different people have different love affairs with representatives of different sex. However, the place of a woman is still the central one in the lives of many Arab men, but they play somehow a secondary role for the male. The fact is that in a Muslim world women have almost no rights and no voice, they just become wives and mothers, stay at home growing up their children and waiting for their husbands to return from work and to desire intercourse with them. “ They do not love it simply as a way of quenching lust but because sex, and their husbands’ greed for it, makes them feel that despite all the misery they suffer they are still women, beautiful and desired by their menfolk” (Aswany 9).

There is a possibility of another version when a man just uses a woman for realization of his sexual wishes or when he tortures the female having benefits from his social or political status. In addition to the sexual context, the politics of Egypt is mired in abuse of power and the corruption. Again rich people rule the world and dictate the laws, the laws which bring them

benefits.

It must be said that after reading the novel and watching the film “ The Yacoubian Building” our understanding of Arabic culture has changed as many of the above mentioned peculiarities of the modern life in Egypt were not on the surface for people outside the country. It remains to hope that this work has opened people’s eyes and they will begin to improve the situation.

Works Cited

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