

## Portrait of Social Inequality and Family Crisis in “Mirāth” by Muhammad Husayn Haykal: Literary Realism Approach

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**Abstract:** As a mimetic cultural artifact, literary conflict frequently encodes the socio-political tensions and ideological fractures of its originating society. Within the broad tradition of literary realism, this study specifically adopts sociological realism; it critically interrogates the representation of social inequality and familial disintegration in Muhammad Husayn Haykal's short story "Mirāth", which is featured in his collection *Qaṣaṣ Miṣriyya*. Departing from purely formalist readings, this research argues that Haykal's narrative conflicts serve as a diagnostic lens through which the structural asymmetries of early twentieth-century Egyptian society are laid bare. Employing a descriptive qualitative methodology, data were gathered via close reading, translation, and systematic note-taking, subsequently analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model. The findings delineate four interlocking tropes of social reality: structural inequality, gender asymmetry, domestic discord, and moral erosion. Collectively, these elements substantiate the short story's function not merely as a literary reflection, but as a critical social document. The study ultimately contends that the story's depiction of mismanagement in inheritance and waqf (endowment) systems operates as a catalytic agent of protracted communal strife, thereby contributing to broader scholarly discourses on the intersection between Arabic realist narrative and socio-economic critique.

**Keywords:** *Social Inequality, Mirāth, Realism, Arabic Literature*

### INTRODUCTION

The systematic marginalization of women in inheritance practices and the reinforcement of patriarchal authority persist as critical social phenomena across diverse contemporary societies. Inheritance decisions are frequently dictated by hegemonic power structures—whether religious or customary—often without adequate consideration of their long-term socio-economic repercussions (Habibullah, 2025). Consequently, legal manipulations within both customary and formal frameworks, particularly regarding family endowments *waqf*, frequently curtail women's inheritance rights, thereby entrenching male primogeniture (Wulandari et al., 2025). Such practices perpetuate not only economic disparities but also precipitate family conflicts, women's economic dependency, and deficient parenting patterns (Ayu & Filzah, 2023).

The social realities presented in literary works are highly complex and diverse, as literature is fundamentally a reflection of society itself (Albanjari et al., 2025). Through its characters, plot, and conflicts, literature is able to portray values, social structures, and various life problems within a particular social environment (Wellek & Warren, 2008). The function of literature as a social reflection is essential for understanding societal dynamics, including issues of injustice, gender relations, and moral deviations (Sulistyowati & Selirowangi, 2024).

Issues related to family inheritance cannot be separated from family conflicts, gender inequality, and the abuse of authority deeply rooted in societal culture. Since ancient times, in the distribution of marital property, women have generally received a smaller share of inheritance than men (Hasanah, 2025). However, the specific narrative of Muhammad Husayn Haykal's short story "Mirāth"—featured in his 1969 collection *Qaṣaṣ Miṣriyya* republished by Muassasah Handawi in 2014—depicts an intensification of this marginalization, wherein women are entirely dispossessed of their rights under the pretext that their living expenses would be covered by their husbands (Bisri & Muchtar, 2021; Haykal, 2014). Women were not only given a smaller share, but were entirely deprived of inheritance rights under the assumption that their living expenses, especially after marriage, would be covered by their husbands. This practice not only manipulated the law, but also reinforced patriarchy by placing women in weak and dependent positions (Rizky & Dauwi, 2024).

The story raises issues of inheritance and *waqf* as sources of injustice, particularly when authorities formulate and disseminate regulations concerning inheritance, especially family inheritance, which are later manipulated by society for personal interests. This narrative illustrates how the misuse of inheritance law gives rise to various social realities. In addition, the story also highlights other social aspects, such as stereotypes toward an only son, moral decline, and the role of education in shaping social character. "Mirāth" presents a complex portrait of Egyptian society while offering social criticism of the injustices that occur within it.

This study employs the realist approach. This literary movement emerged as a reaction to works that tended to portray life in an idealized manner and far removed from reality (Surur, 2023). Realism itself refers to an objective condition that presents things as they are, without illusion (Sari, 2020; Setyawan, 2021). From the perspective of literary realism, literary works are viewed as representations of social reality and as reflections of the social conditions in which they are produced. According to Swingewood and Laurenson (Swingewood & Laurenson, 1972), literature functions as a social document that reflects social structures, values, conflicts, and inequalities existing within a particular society. In the Arab world, particularly in Egypt, sociological realism has become a widely adopted approach among writers as a means of voicing the suffering of the lower classes and highlighting the social problems they face (Al-Amien, 2024; Jannah & Tasnimah, 2023). Therefore, this approach is considered appropriate for examining the social issues reflected through conflicts of inheritance, gender inequality, and family disputes, which not only trigger conflicts among characters but also illustrate the social and legal structures portrayed in the "Mirāth".

The researcher seeks to make comparisons in order to identify the research gap and novelty of this study. Several previous studies have been reviewed. The first is a study conducted by Nadira Nurul Fattia and Moh. Kanif Anwari entitled "Realisme Sosialis dalam Novel "Arḍun Nifāq" Karya Yūsuf As-Sibā'I" (Fattia & Anwari, 2025). The second is a study conducted by Elis Susilawati, Ismah Rahayu, Akifah Humaira Salsabila, and Ahmad Bahtiar entitled "Realisme Sosial dalam Potret Seorang Komunis Karya Sabar Anantaguna" (Susilawati et al., 2022). The third is a study conducted by Syahriel A'innur Rifan entitled "Realisme Sosial dalam Novel Bumi Manusia dan Anak Semua Bangsa Karya Pramoedya Ananta Toer" (Rifan, 2020). Finally, there is an analysis conducted by Rahmat Linur and Firminda Taufiq entitled "Realisme dan Konflik Timur Tengah dalam Kesusastran Arab" (Linur & Taufiq, 2021).

The previous studies reviewed reveal both similarities and differences with the present research. The study conducted by Nadira Nurul Fattia and Moh. Kanif Anwari (2025) shares a similarity in terms of the literary movement used to uncover social realities. However, its focus is directed toward how socialist ideology is represented in a novel, while the discussion of social reality remains limited because it does not deeply examine conflict as a space of social inequality. This research seeks to contribute by exploring social realities that are not only confined to the novel itself, but also by examining the conflicts that emerge in greater depth. Furthermore, the study conducted by Elis Susilawati et al. (2022) also shares a similarity in its use of the realism approach. This study can serve as a reference for the process of data presentation. Nevertheless,

in its presentation, the study pays insufficient attention to connecting the forms of realism that emerge with the realist literary approach itself. As a result, the research tends to merely describe the forms of realism that appear without demonstrating the theoretical contribution of realism within the analysis.

The study conducted by Syahriël A'innur Rifan (2020) discusses the forms of realism in an Indonesian novel. Although the study identifies various forms of realism, the depth of analysis has not been fully achieved. Its focus is directed more toward geopolitical representation and regional conflict rather than examining how social realities are reproduced within domestic spaces and family relations. Furthermore, the study conducted by Rahmat Linur and Firmanda Taufiq (2021) examines several Arabic literary works, resulting in a lack of focus on a specific object of study, and the abstract does not clearly mention the literary objects being analyzed. Nevertheless, the study shares a similarity with the present research in its attempt to uncover social realities, particularly those related to the Middle East. Therefore, this research seeks to refine and further develop the previous studies through a more focused and in-depth analysis.

Based on the explanation above, the researcher has not found any study that specifically analyzes the "Mirāth" by Muhammad Husayn Haykal using the literary realism approach. In fact, this approach is highly relevant, as realism is generally applied to literary works that portray social life and everyday dynamics. In Arabic literature, particularly Middle Eastern literary works, there are many narratives that strongly depict social conflicts and realities within society. Therefore, applying the perspective of realism to this short story is highly appropriate as an analytical framework, since this theory is commonly employed to examine narratives that are closely connected to social realities. Accordingly, this study offers a significant novelty through the application of the realist approach to Arabic literature that has not previously been examined from this perspective. This analysis is expected to enrich the understanding of the forms of social reality represented in Arabic literary works, while also broadening the discourse on realism studies within the context of modern Arabic literature.

This study aims to reveal various forms of social reality reflected in the short story "Mirāth" by Muhammad Husayn Haykal, one of the stories in his collection *Qaṣaṣ Miṣriyya* (Haykal, 2014). Through an in-depth analysis of the events, characters, and conflicts presented in the text, this research seeks to identify and describe social life, particularly issues related to inheritance, power relations, and gender inequality. Furthermore, this study situates the story within the broader socio-historical context of early twentieth-century Egypt, a period in which the legitimacy of the family endowment *waqf ahli* had already become the subject of sustained public and juristic debate before its eventual abolition by Egyptian law in 1952 (Cizakca, 2000; Powers, 1999). Historically, although the *waqf ahli* could serve legitimate aims of wealth and succession planning, it was also criticized for being used to circumvent the Islamic inheritance shares, with women frequently relegated to the position of secondary beneficiaries (Powers, 1999). It is precisely this tension between the legal ideal and its social misuse that "Mirāth" dramatizes. The conflicts represented in the story illustrate tensions surrounding wealth distribution, family domination, and the marginalization of women within inheritance practices. Therefore, this study not only examines the social conflicts portrayed in the literary text but also highlights the role of literature as a social document that reflects the realities, values, and tensions of the society in which it was produced.

## METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative method (Sugiyono, 2013). The research emphasizes an in-depth understanding; therefore, the researcher seeks to present the data qualitatively while providing descriptions of the forms of conflict and social realities represented in the object of study and relating them to the applied theory. The data in this study consist of textual data taken from Muhammad Husayn Haykal's short story "Mirāth"—featured in his 1969 collection *Qaṣaṣ Miṣriyya* (republished by Muassasah Handawi in 2014). The primary data were obtained from selected parts of the story that represent conflicts of social reality. These sections were subsequently analyzed using the literary realism approach. Within the broad tradition of

literary realism, this study specifically adopts the variant known as sociological realism, as developed by Swingewood and Laurenson (1972). While literary realism as a whole is concerned with the objective depiction of everyday life without idealization, the sociological strand narrows this concern by treating the literary work primarily as a social document—that is, as a text that reflects, and offers insight into, the social realities, structures, and tensions of the society in which it was produced. Accordingly, this study does not focus on realism merely as a set of narrative techniques, but employs sociological realism as an analytical lens to examine how the short story "Mirāth" represents the social conditions, inequalities, and conflicts of early twentieth-century Egyptian society. Following this framework, the analysis reads the text as a reflection of social reality, directing attention to how patterns of inequality, family conflict, and shifting social values are represented within the narrative. Meanwhile, the secondary sources consist of books and journal articles relevant to this research. The researcher carefully selected and classified relevant sources in order to support the study, provide comprehensive perspectives, and enhance the depth and appeal of the analysis related to the topic under discussion. By combining these two types of sources, the researcher is able to construct stronger and more compelling arguments.

The data collection technique in this study was carried out through several stages. First, the researcher employed an intensive reading technique by repeatedly reading the "Mirāth" in order to gain a deeper understanding of the narrative conflicts presented in the text. Second, the translation technique was carried out manually through close reading of the Arabic text with the assistance of dictionaries and linguistic references to preserve the accuracy of meaning and the contextual nuance of the original text. Third, a note-taking technique was conducted by marking and identifying narrative sections that represent conflicts of social reality.

The researcher carried out several stages in the data analysis process. Data analysis in this study employed the model proposed by Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The first stage was data reduction, in which the researcher conducted an in-depth reading to identify forms of social reality conflicts and then coded the textual sections that corresponded to those social realities. The next stage was data presentation, where the researcher categorized the data and presented them descriptively while relating them to the sociological realism approach. The final stage involved concluding by presenting concise findings derived from the analytical process that had been conducted.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The narrative in "Mirāth" by Muhammad Husayn Haykal represents various social conflicts rooted in the realities of Egyptian society. These conflicts not only function as driving forces of the plot, but also reflect social dynamics that include power relations within the family, gender inequality, moral decline caused by improper upbringing, and inheritance practices marked by abuse and deviation from religious principles. Therefore, analyzing these conflicts is essential in order to reveal how literary works represent social realities in a meaningful and representative manner.

### Structural Inequality in the Inheritance and *Waqf* System

In "Mirāth", the social reality of Egyptian society is reflected through the practice of establishing inheritance policies and family *waqf*, which creates opportunities for deviations from the principles of justice. This section illustrates how legal policies concerning *waqf* ahli serve as representations of social realities that trigger inequality and conflict, while also demonstrating the role of authorities in shaping and reinforcing the prevailing inheritance system.

#### Data 1

كان مُشرِّع ذلك العهد في مصر يُجيز الوقف الأهلي، وكان فقهاؤه يُقررون أن شرط الواقف كنص

الشارع (Haykal, 2014, p. 23)

“At that time, Egyptian legislation permitted *waqf ‘ahliyyah* (family endowment), and its jurists considered the stipulations of the endower to be equivalent to a legal textual ruling *naş shar‘ī*.”

The excerpt from “Mirāth” above demonstrates a social reality in Egypt in which *waqf ahli* was legalized within the state legal system. Ideally, this form of *waqf* was intended to function as a hereditary charitable endowment for the family. However, in practice, it was often exploited to secure economic interests, particularly by avoiding a fair distribution of inheritance.

From the perspective of sociological realism, law is not viewed as a neutral system; rather, it is often utilized by certain groups to secure their own interests, particularly economic ones. The “Mirath” portrays how legal and religious foundations operate in everyday practice to justify deviations from inheritance rights, especially against socially vulnerable groups such as women. Law is depicted as part of a social reality that can be manipulated by those who hold power. Authorities and religious scholars are presented not merely as guardians of social norms, but also, indirectly, as actors who legitimize deviations from inheritance rights.

In this section, “Mirāth” by Muhammad Husayn Haykal vividly records the social practices of Egyptian society as a reflection of social reality, in accordance with the sociological realism approach that emphasizes the objective portrayal of social life along with its structural conflicts. The “Mirath” does not merely present legal regulations, but also reveals how these laws are implemented and how they produce tangible effects in reinforcing social and gender inequality within society.

## Data 2

وتحدث الناس وقتئذٍ إلى أن المشرع يعتزم إلغاء الوقف الأهلي، ليمنع عبث العابثين بأحكام الشرع في

الميراث والوصية (Haykal, 2014, p. 30)

“At that time, people began to discuss that the legislator intended to abolish *waqf ahli* (family endowment) in order to prevent individuals from manipulating the provisions of Islamic law regarding inheritance and wills”

The excerpt above illustrates the social consequences arising from the misuse of *waqf ahli* (family endowment). The emergence of discourse concerning the abolition of *waqf ahli* by legislators reflects public anxiety over the manipulation of inheritance law that contradicts the principles of justice. From the perspective of sociological realism, this condition reflects the dynamic relationship between law and social reality: when the law no longer aligns with society’s sense of justice, its legitimacy is questioned and it ultimately becomes subject to abolition.

The narrative in this short story seeks to demonstrate the social reality that policies are not always inherently solution-oriented; in some cases, they may even generate new social problems. The abolition of *waqf ahli* was not merely a normative decision, but rather a response to the social damage caused by those who manipulated inheritance law. This perspective is in line with sociological realism, which views literature as an objective reflection of the real conflicts that exist between law, power, and society (Swingewood & Laurenson, 1972).

Thus, “Mirāth” strongly reflects reality by portraying how inheritance practices, shaped by patriarchal family structures and prevailing social norms, can become sources of injustice—particularly for women. The narrative presents a critical portrait of how social realities and structural inequalities are experienced and reproduced within the family.

## Gender Inequality as a Reflection of Social Reality

Gender inequality in this short story “Mirath” is clearly portrayed through the practices of inheritance distribution and the management of family *waqf*, both of which place women in subordinate positions. In this context, the narrative reflects gender inequality by presenting women as individuals who do not possess independent economic rights, but rather as parties dependent upon men.

### Data 1

وشاعت في ذلك العهد عند ذوي اليسار، وعند المتوسطين كذلك، فكرة حرمان البنات من التركة، أو

جَعَلَهُنَّ تَبَعًا لِإِخْوَتِهِنَّ الذُّكُورِ، يَنْلُنَ مِنْهُنَّ نَفَقَةً تَكْفِيَهُنَّ الْعَيْشَ الْمَتَوَاضِعَ. (Haykal, 2014, p. 23)

“At that time, among both the affluent and the middle classes, there was a widespread notion of preventing daughters from receiving inheritance or making them dependent on their brothers. In such cases, women would receive financial support from their male siblings, which was considered sufficient for them to live a modest life”

The data above suggest that the exclusion of women from inheritance functioned as a social mechanism for preserving wealth and property within male family lines. The phrase “a widespread notion” indicates that this practice was socially accepted across different social classes, reflecting a patriarchal structure in which economic authority was concentrated in the hands of men. As a result, women were not recognized as independent economic actors but were positioned as dependents whose welfare was expected to be secured through male relatives. Through this representation, “Mirath” reveals how gender inequality was sustained not only by individual attitudes but also by social norms that legitimized the unequal distribution of economic rights.

From the perspective of sociological realism, the portrayal in this short story reflects a patriarchal structure that positions men as the primary holders of power, while women are reduced to subordinate followers. The assumption that women will eventually follow their husbands and receive financial support from them functions as a cultural justification for denying their inheritance rights from the outset. In “Mirath”, the financial support provided by brothers to their sisters is portrayed as a form of “justice” considered sufficient. However, in social reality, such practices actually reinforce women’s dependency and normalize total male domination (Hardianti & Majid, 2025).

Gender inequality in this short story is portrayed not as a matter of individual morality, but rather as the result of customs, traditions, and social structures. Therefore, the sociological realism approach in this short story positions literary works as critical reflections of Egyptian society by revealing the persistence of gender injustice. The “Mirath” not only records acts of discrimination, but also exposes the social mechanisms that allow such inequality to continue and be passed down from one generation to the next.

### Data 2

أما أمها فأفزعتها هذه الوفاة، لا حزنًا على الزوج الذي مات، بل إشفافًا أن تلد ابنتها بنتًا خامسة، فلا

يكون لها تيك الصغيرات من وقف عاكف بك (Haykal, 2014, p. 25)

“As for the mother, the death shocked her not because of grief over her deceased husband, but due to her fear that her daughter would give birth to a fifth daughter, meaning that the young children would receive no share at all from the waqf of ‘Ākif Bek”

The second piece of data above demonstrates the depth of “Mirāth” by Muhammad Husayn Haykal in portraying inequality through the psychological response of the mother character. The mother’s fear does not stem from grief over her husband’s death, but rather from the possibility that her fifth grandchild would also be born female, which would mean the complete absence of economic rights from the husband’s family for the children. This anxiety reflects patriarchal values that exist not only within social structures, but are also deeply internalized within women’s own consciousness.

From the perspective of sociological realism, this condition demonstrates that gender inequality is not only sustained by men or by legal systems, but is also internalized within women themselves through fear and anxiety toward unjust social structures. The narrative in this short story clearly illustrates how women’s fate is determined by the gender of their siblings rather than

by blood relations or actual living needs. The dependence of inheritance rights on the presence of a male child places women in a vulnerable position even before they are born.

Thus, "Mirāth" by Muhammad Husayn Haykal not only records gender discrimination, but also portrays its social and psychological impacts on the family. Gender inequality within the systems of inheritance and family waqf becomes part of a systemic social reality and serves as a source of profound conflict and injustice in Egyptian society during that period.

### Family Conflict

Issues concerning inheritance rights are inseparable from family disputes. In "Mirāth" by Muhammad Husayn Haykal, several family conflicts arising from inheritance regulations are portrayed. The narrative illustrates how economic interests related to waqf and inheritance lead to the collapse of family solidarity, the emergence of slander, and even legal disputes.

#### Data 1

وزاد في فزعها وانزعاجها ما ترامى إلى سمعها من أن سلائف ابنتها يبذلن النذور لأولياء الله الصالحين أن

تلد هيفاء بنتاً ليعود الوقف إلى أزواجهن، وليستمتعوا بإيراده الوفير! (Haykal, 2014, p. 25)

"Her fear and anxiety grew even stronger when she heard that her daughter's in-laws had made vows to righteous saints, praying that Haifa' would give birth to a daughter so that the endowment would return to their husbands, allowing them to benefit from its abundant returns!"

The data above suggest that the conflict is rooted not merely in personal rivalry but in competition over economic resources embedded within family structures. The in-laws' prayers for Haifa' to give birth to a daughter reveal how family relationships become subordinated to the desire to regain control of the waqf and its financial benefits. Rather than functioning as a source of mutual support, kinship is portrayed as a site of economic contestation in which family members calculate potential gains and losses. The use of religious vows in this context further illustrates how spiritual practices are mobilized to legitimize material interests. Through this representation, Haykal criticizes a social structure in which economic power shapes family relations and weakens familial solidarity. From the sociological realism perspective, the conflict reflects broader social conditions in which wealth and property become central determinants of social status and interpersonal relations, causing family bonds to be increasingly governed by economic considerations rather than by affection or moral responsibility.

Thus, "Mirāth" by Muhammad Husayn Haykal portrays inheritance disputes not merely as personal disagreements but as manifestations of broader social structures that prioritize economic interests over familial solidarity. Through the lens of sociological realism, Haykal presents family conflict as a consequence of unequal access to economic resources and the pursuit of material advantage. The "Mirath" therefore serves as a critical reflection on how wealth and property can reshape family relationships and undermine principles of justice within the family sphere.

#### Data 2

وولدت هيفاء ولدًا ذكراً، فتصايح أقارب زوجها بأن أمها دَسَّتْ في فراش الوضع غلامًا، وذهب بعضهم إلى أن الأم الشابة لم تلد، بل لم تحمل، وأن هذا الطفل الغلام دَسَّتْهُ أمها في فراشها للاستيلاء على الوقف وريعه! ورفع هؤلاء الأقارب الأمر إلى القضاء ليحكم بأن الطفل ليس ابنًا لعبده عاكف، فلا حق

لبناته في وقف جدهن؛ إذ ليس لهن أخ يُعَصِّبُهُنَّ وَيُعَصِمُهُنَّ من فقر مُدَقِّع! (Haykal, 2014, p. 26)

"When Haifa' gave birth to a baby boy, her husband's relatives immediately became agitated and accused the baby's grandmother of smuggling a male infant into the

delivery room. Some of them even claimed that the young woman had neither given birth nor been pregnant at all, and that the baby boy had been secretly placed in the delivery room by the mother in order to seize control of the waqf and its benefits. The relatives then brought the case to court, demanding a legal ruling that the baby was not the biological son of 'Abduh 'Ākif, so that his daughters would not be entitled to their grandfather's waqf, since they had no male sibling who could serve as their 'ashabah (agnatic support) and protect them from devastating poverty!"

The second data point above illustrates the expansion of inheritance conflict from the social sphere into the legal sphere. The birth of a son, which should have resolved the inheritance dispute within the family, instead triggered accusations and slander directed at both the mother and the child. The allegation that the baby had been smuggled reflects the fragility of family solidarity when confronted with economic inequality. It also demonstrates how familial relationships can easily collapse under the pressure of material interests and economic competition.

From the perspective of sociological realism, the submission of the case to court demonstrates that legal institutions can function as instruments for strengthening economic claims rather than for upholding justice and truth. The narrative in this short story reflects the social reality in which legal mechanisms may be mobilized by more powerful parties to deprive others of their economic rights, while also revealing the vulnerability of women and children within inheritance conflicts (Wulandari et al., 2025).

The argument that daughters do not possess inheritance rights without the presence of a male agnatic heir '*ashabah*' demonstrates how socio-religious doctrines are selectively employed to serve particular interests. This reality confirms that the family conflicts portrayed in "Mirāth" by Muhammad Husayn Haykal are not merely emotional disputes, but rather reflections of a patriarchal social structure in which wealth becomes the central basis of power relations.

### Data 3

وإنه لسأدرُّ في ملاذه وأهوائه، إذ جاءته من مصر رسالة أزعجته عما هو فيه؛ فقد جاء فيها أن أمه تستدين على إيراد الوقف استدانة تكاد تستغرق هذا الإيراد لسنوات عدة مقبلة، وأن مستقبله يقتضيه أن يعود إلى مصر محافظةً على ماله. (Haykal, 2014, p. 28).

"And while he was immersed in pleasure and indulgence, a letter arrived from Egypt that disturbed him in the midst of what he was doing. It stated that his mother had incurred debts against the income of the waqf, debts that would nearly consume its revenues for several years to come, and that his future circumstances required him to return to Egypt in order to safeguard his property"

The third data excerpt from the short story "Mirāth" by Muhammad Husayn Haykal demonstrates the continuation of family conflict. After the husband's relatives accused the child of not being the biological son of the deceased father, the judge eventually ruled that Umar was indeed his legitimate son. However, the relatives continued to provoke disputes even after Umar had grown up and was pursuing his education in Europe. The letter from Egypt reporting that the income from the waqf was threatened by debt indicates that the inheritance dispute not only damaged family relationships, but also undermined the family's overall economic stability. The husband's relatives employed various strategies to reclaim the waqf ahli, including manipulating and influencing the young male heir.

From the perspective of sociological realism, structural conflict exerts a powerful influence over individuals, even when they have physically distanced themselves from the source of the problem. Umar, who is portrayed as enjoying his personal life in Europe, is ultimately drawn back to Egypt in order to defend his economic rights. Through this narrative, Muhammad Husayn Haykal demonstrates that issues of inheritance and waqf are not sudden or isolated conflicts, but

rather recurring social crises that are inherited across generations and continue to shape the life choices of individuals.

Thus, the three data excerpts above demonstrate that “Mirāth” by Muhammad Husayn Haykal successfully presents family conflict as a social reality emerging from inequality within the inheritance system and the management of waqf. These conflicts not only illustrate the breakdown of family relations, but also reveal how economic interests and legal authority create continuous social crises within Egyptian society during that period.

### Moral Decline

In “Mirāth” by Muhammad Husayn Haykal, the author demonstrates that inequality within the inheritance system not only gives rise to legal and social conflicts, but also affects the formation of individual character. Gender-biased parenting patterns, particularly the excessive indulgence of a male child from an early age as the sole heir, become a central issue in the narrative. This section discusses how improper upbringing and the social privileges attached to the status of the primary heir contribute to the moral decline of the male child, who later expresses his power through violence, neglect of education, and domination over other family members.

### Data 1

"ولم يقف عنف عمر وطيش شبابه عند القسوة بأخواته، بل بدأ هذا الطيش يصرفه عن دراسته، فيؤدي ذلك إلى رسوبه في امتحاناته، ويضيع على هيفاء أملها في أن تراه رجلاً عظيمًا. لكنها بقيت مع ذلك شديدة البرّ والعطف عليه، ترى فيه رب البيت، والوارث لاسم أبيه، ولوقف عاكف بك" (Haykal, ) (2014, p. 27)

“Umar’s violence and youthful delinquency did not stop at his harshness toward his sisters. In fact, this behavior gradually distanced him from his studies, leading to his failure in examinations and shattering Haifa’s hopes of seeing him grow into a respectable and accomplished man. Nevertheless, despite all this, she remained deeply devoted and affectionate toward him. She continued to regard Umar as the head of the household, the heir to his father’s name, and the successor to the waqf of ‘Ākif Bey”

The first data above illustrates Umar’s moral decline, which begins with juvenile delinquency, acts of violence toward his sisters, and academic failure. Such misconduct negatively affects his educational future and destroys his mother’s hopes of seeing her son become an intelligent and respectable individual. However, neither his delinquency nor his failures are met with firm correction from the family. On the contrary, Umar continues to receive special treatment and privileges.

From the perspective of sociological realism, Haifa’s attitude as Umar’s mother, continuing to indulge him and positioning him as the head of the household and heir to his father’s name, a social structure that prioritizes male status over character formation and moral responsibility. Umar’s identity as the sole male heir is valued more highly than the development of discipline, ethics, and accountability. The reality portrayed in this short story reveals how individuals may be shaped positively or, conversely, damaged by their surrounding social environment. Umar’s moral decline is not merely an individual failure or a flaw within himself, but rather a consequence of inadequate parenting patterns and a gender-biased family system. Moral and intellectual education are overshadowed by the social status attached to him from childhood, resulting in the normalization of violence and irresponsibility within the family (Artha et al., 2025). Therefore, “Mirāth” presents a portrait of how poor parenting and inequality within the family can give rise to a moral crisis.

### Data 2

"وبأنه صاحب الوقف والمتصرف المطلق في إيراده، فإن لم تنزل على إرادته اليوم، فستنزل عليها بحكم القانون عما قليل، ويومئذ يفقد أخواته البنات عطفه عليهن بسببها، ويحاسبها الحساب العسير عن إدارة الوقف كل هذه السنين" (Haykal, 2014, p. 29)

"He was the owner of the waqf and the absolute administrator of its income; if his mother did not submit to his will today, she would be compelled to do so by a legal ruling in the near future. At that point, his sisters would lose their mother's care and affection, and he would harshly hold his mother accountable for the management of the waqf over the past years"

The second data excerpt from "Mirāth" illustrates the transformation of youthful delinquency into a form of economic authoritarianism within the family sphere. Umar realizes that his position as the absolute owner of the waqf can be used as a tool to pressure his mother and sisters. His threat that the law would side with him demonstrates how the legal system reinforces male dominance in the control and management of family property.

From the perspective of sociological realism, "Mirāth" portrays moral decline not merely as an individual issue, but as something institutionalized through the awareness of legal and economic power. Umar not only behaves harshly, but also begins to manipulate family relationships in order to gain complete control over the family property. The reality in this short story reveals how social structures enable certain individuals to occupy privileged positions of power. Thus, "Mirāth" presents a portrait of how economic and legal authority are interconnected in accelerating moral decline and deepening social inequality within the family.

### Data 3

"استدار العام وبلغ عمرُ زُشده، فلم يبطئ أن رَفَعَ الدعوى على أمه يطلب تَسَلُّمُ الوقف، وتقديمها الحساب عن سني إدارتها" (Haykal, 2014, p. 30)

"That year came to an end, and Umar reached adulthood. Shortly afterward, he filed a lawsuit against his mother, demanding to take over the management of the waqf and requesting that she present financial reports for the years during which she had administered it"

The third piece of data above depicts the peak of moral decline, namely when Umar formally files a lawsuit against his own mother in order to take control of the waqf management. This action reflects the collapse of filial values and respect toward parents. From the perspective of sociological realism, the lawsuit represents not merely a legal conflict, but also a symbol of moral value shifts caused by economic influence and the expansion of patriarchal foundations. In "Mirāth", the mother figure who previously indulged and protected Umar as her only son ultimately becomes a victim of the flawed parenting patterns that she herself had practiced. The narrative sharply reveals a social irony: the improper upbringing that places a male child at the center of family power eventually produces a generation that neglects ethics and moral responsibility.

Thus, through the three data excerpts above, "Mirāth" represents the social reality of moral decline as a consequence of gender-biased upbringing and inequality within the inheritance system. This moral deterioration not only damages individuals, but also destroys family relationships and humanitarian values. As a work grounded in tradition, the short story functions as a social reflection that exposes injustice within the family structure, which in turn has the potential to generate broader moral crises within society.

Based on the overall discussion above, it can be understood that the conflicts presented in "Mirāth" do not merely function as narrative events, but rather represent the complex and systemic social realities of Egyptian society. Through the sociological realism approach, the work demonstrates how structural inequality within the systems of inheritance and waqf gives rise to

gender injustice, triggers family disputes, and ultimately leads to moral crises within the domestic sphere. The relationship between law, power, and patriarchal structures is portrayed objectively and realistically, thereby reaffirming the function of literature as a social reflection that critically exposes societal problems. Thus, this analysis provides a clear foundation for drawing conclusions regarding the forms of social reality represented in "Mirāth".

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, this study demonstrates that the sociological realism approach is effective in revealing the social conflicts represented in "Mirāth". The analysis identifies four forms of social reality: structural inequality, gender inequality, family conflict, and moral decline. These findings indicate that the unequal management of inheritance and family wealth contributes to social tensions, weakens family solidarity, and reinforces patriarchal power relations. As a reflection of social conditions, "Mirāth" portrays how economic interests and social structures shape interpersonal relationships and generate various forms of injustice.

By reading "Mirāth" as a social document, this study contributes to the limited body of scholarship that applies sociological realism to modern Arabic short fiction, demonstrating how inheritance and waqf disputes operate as literary encodings of structural social inequality.

However, this study is limited to the perspective of sociological realism and therefore focuses primarily on the representation of social structures and conflicts. It does not specifically examine women's subjective experiences, contemporary debates on Islamic feminism, or the relationship between Islamic inheritance law and its social implementation. Future studies may explore these issues through feminist, legal, or socio-historical approaches to provide a more comprehensive understanding of inheritance, gender relations, and social change in Arabic literary works.

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