

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

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Abstract: Literary conflict functions as a mimetic cultural artifact, frequently serving to encode the socio-political tensions and ideological fractures of the society from which it originates. This study is firmly rooted in the comprehensive tradition of literary realism, specifically adopting the sociological realism framework. It employs a critical lens to examine the depiction of social disparity and familial disintegration in Muhammad Husayn Haykal's short story "Mirāth," a narrative featured in his collection *Qaṣaṣ Miṣriyya*. Departing from a purely formalist perspective, this research argues that Haykal's narrative conflicts function as a diagnostic instrument, thereby unveiling the structural asymmetries inherent in Egyptian society during the early twentieth century. A descriptive qualitative methodology was employed to gather data. This data was gathered via close reading, translation, and systematic note-taking. The gathered data was 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. The aforementioned elements collectively substantiate the short story's function not merely as a literary reflection but as a critical social document. The study posits that the narrative's portrayal of mismanagement in inheritance and waqf (endowment) systems functions as a catalyst for 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 often influenced by hegemonic power structures, whether religious or customary, and these decisions are frequently made without sufficient 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). The aforementioned practices perpetuate not only economic disparities but also engender familial discord, women's economic reliance, and suboptimal parenting behaviours (Ayu & Filzah, 2023).

The social realities presented in literary works are characterized by their complexity and diversity. This is due to the fundamental nature of literature as a reflection of society itself (Albanjari *et al.*, 2025). Literature is a vehicle for the articulation of values, social structures, and various life problems within a particular social environment (Wellek & Warren, 2008). This articulation is achieved through the characters, plot, and conflicts that characterize literary works.

The function of literature as a social reflection is imperative for comprehending societal dynamics, encompassing issues of injustice, gender relations, and moral deviations (Sulistyowati & Selirowangi, 2024).

The issues of family inheritance is inextricably linked to a variety of social problems, including family conflicts, gender inequality, and the abuse of authority. These issues are deeply entrenched in social culture and must be addressed to create a more equitable and just society. Since time immemorial, the distribution of marital property has generally entailed the allocation of a smaller share of inheritance to women than to 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 allocated a smaller share and 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 manipulates the law, but also reinforces patriarchy by placing women in weak and dependent positions (Rizky & Dauwi, 2024).

The narrative under scrutiny in this study calls attention to the issues of inheritance and *waqf* as potential sources of social injustice. This is particularly salient when authorities formulate and disseminate regulations concerning inheritance, particularly family inheritance, which are subsequently subject to manipulation by society for personal interests. This narrative exemplifies the manner in which the improper application of inheritance law engenders a multitude of social realities. Moreover, the narrative underscores an array of social dimensions, encompassing stereotypes concerning the only son, the moral degradation that accompanies it, and the pivotal function of education in molding societal character. "Mirāth" offers a multifaceted depiction of Egyptian society, concomitantly articulating a social critique of the injustices that permeate its fabric.

The present study employs the realist approach. The literary movement under scrutiny here emerged as a reaction to works that tended to portray life in an idealized manner and far removed from reality (Surur, 2023). Realism is defined as an objective condition that presents things as they are, without illusion (Sari, 2020; Setyawan, 2021). From the perspective of literary realism, literary works are regarded as representations of social reality and as reflections of the social conditions in which they are produced. As posited by Swingewood and Laurenson (1972), literature serves as a social document, reflecting the social structures, values, conflicts, and inequalities inherent in a given 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. These conflicts not only trigger interpersonal strife among characters but also illustrate the social and legal structures portrayed in the "Mirāth."

The objective of the researcher is to establish a foundation for comparison, thereby facilitating the identification of the research gap and the novelty of the study. A comprehensive review of extant literature has been conducted, encompassing numerous studies that have preceded this investigation. The initial study was conducted by Nadira Nurul Fattia and Moh. Kanif Anwari's work, entitled "Realisme Sosialis dalam Novel 'Arḍun Nifāq' Karya Yūsuf As-Sibā'ī" (Fattia & Anwari, 2025), explores the concept of realism in the novel *Arḍun Nifāq*, a work of fiction written by Yūsuf As-Sibā'ī. 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, an analysis was conducted by

Rahmat Linur and Firmanda Taufiq. The analysis is entitled “Realisme dan Konflik Timur Tengah dalam Kesusastraan Arab” (Linur & Taufiq, 2021).

A review of previous studies reveals both similarities and differences with the present research. The study conducted by Nadira Nurul Fattia and Moh. Kanif Anwari (2025) identifies a congruence in the literary movements employed to expose social realities. Nevertheless, the primary focus of the text is on the manner in which socialist ideology is depicted in a novel. Conversely, the discussion of social reality remains constrained due to its failure to undertake a thorough examination of conflict as a manifestation of social inequality. The objective of this research is to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by exploring social realities that extend beyond the confines of the novel itself. It aims to examine conflicts in greater depth, offering a more comprehensive understanding of the social dynamics underlying the novel’s narrative. In addition, the study conducted by Elis Susilawati et al. (2022) also demonstrates a similarity in its utilization of the realism approach. This study can serve as a reference for the process of data presentation. Nonetheless, the study’s exposition fails to adequately elucidate the correlation between the forms of realism that emerge and the realist literary approach itself. Consequently, the research predominantly characterizes the forms of realism that emerge without substantiating the theoretical contributions of realism within the analytical framework.

The study by Syahriel A’innur Rifan (2020) explores the different types of realism in Indonesian novels. Although the study identifies various forms of realism, the analysis is not sufficiently in-depth. The focus is more on geopolitical representation and regional conflict than on examining how social realities are reproduced within domestic spaces and family relations. Furthermore, the study by Rahmat Linur and Firmanda Taufiq (2021), which examines several Arabic literary works, lacks focus on a specific object of study. The abstract does not clearly state which literary works are being analysed. 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 aims to build on previous studies by providing a more focused and in-depth analysis.

Based on the above explanation, the researcher has not found any study that specifically analyses the “Mirāth” by Muhammad Husayn Haykal using a literary realism approach. This approach is highly relevant, as realism is generally applied to literary works that portray social life and everyday dynamics. Many narratives in Arabic literature, particularly Middle Eastern literary works, strongly depict social conflicts and realities within society. Therefore, it is highly appropriate to apply the realist perspective to this short story as an analytical framework, since this theory is commonly used to examine narratives closely connected to social realities. Accordingly, this study offers significant novelty by applying the realist approach to Arabic literature, which has not previously been examined from this perspective. This analysis is expected to deepen our understanding of the forms of social reality represented in Arabic literary works and broaden the discourse on realist studies within the context of modern Arabic literature.

This study aims to reveal the various forms of social reality reflected in the short story “Mirāth” by Muhammad Husayn Haykal, which is 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, with a particular focus on issues related to inheritance, power relations, and gender inequality. Furthermore, the study contextualises the story within the socio-historical context of early twentieth-century Egypt. During this period, the legitimacy of the family endowment *waqf ahli* was the subject of sustained public and juristic debate before its eventual abolition by Egyptian law in 1952 (Cizakca, 2000; Powers, 1999). Historically, the *waqf ahli* could serve the legitimate purposes of wealth and succession planning. However, it was also criticised for being used to circumvent Islamic inheritance laws, with women often being given secondary beneficiary status (Powers, 1999). It is precisely this tension between the legal ideal and its social misuse that “Mirāth” dramatises. The conflicts represented in the story highlight the issues surrounding wealth distribution, family domination, and the marginalisation of women in inheritance practices. Therefore, this study not

only examines the social conflicts portrayed in the literary text, but also highlights literature's role as a social document reflecting the realities, values, and tensions of the society in which it was produced.

METHOD

The present study employs a descriptive qualitative method (Sugiyono, 2013). The present study is characterised by an emphasis on the attainment of an in-depth understanding of the subject matter. To this end, the primary objective of the researcher is to present the data in a qualitative manner, while providing descriptions of the forms of conflict and social realities represented in the object of study. These descriptions are to be related to the applied theory. The data presented in this study is textual in nature and have been sourced from the short story entitled "Mirāth", which is featured in the 1969 collection *Qaṣaṣ Miṣriyya* by Muhammad Husayn Haykal. This collection was republished by Muassasah Handawi in 2014. The primary data were obtained from selected parts of the story, which represent conflicts of social reality. The subsequent analysis of these sections was undertaken using a literary realism approach. The present study is firmly embedded within the extensive tradition of literary realism, adopting the specific variant known as sociological realism, as advanced by Swingewood and Laurenson (1972). Literary realism, in its entirety, is concerned with the objective depiction of quotidian life without idealisation. However, the sociological strand narrows this concern by treating the literary work primarily as a social document.—t That is to say, it is regarded as a text that reflects, and offers insight into, the social realities, structures, and tensions of the society in which it was produced. Accordingly, the present 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. Adhering to the framework outlined, the analysis interprets the text as a reflection of social reality, with a focus on the manner in which patterns of inequality, family conflict, and evolving social values are depicted within the narrative. Meanwhile, the secondary sources consist of books and journal articles relevant to this research. The researcher meticulously selected and categorised pertinent sources in order to substantiate the study, furnish exhaustive perspectives, and augment the profundity and allure of the analysis pertaining to the subject under deliberation. The combination of these two types of sources enables the researcher to construct stronger and more compelling arguments.

The data collection technique employed in this study was methodical and comprised several stages. Firstly, the researcher employed an intensive reading technique, repeatedly reading the "Mirāth" to gain a deeper understanding of the narrative conflicts presented in the text. Secondly, the translation technique was executed manually through meticulous examination of the Arabic text, with reference to dictionaries and linguistic references, in order to maintain the precision of meaning and the contextual nuances of the original text. Thirdly, a note-taking technique was employed that involved the marking and identification of narrative sections that represented conflicts of social reality.

The researcher conducted a series of analyses during the data analysis process. The data analysis in this study employed the model proposed by Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The initial phase of the study involved the reduction of data. To this end, the researcher conducted an exhaustive review to identify forms of social reality conflicts. Thereafter, the textual sections corresponding to those social realities were coded. The subsequent phase of the study involved the presentation of the collected data. In this stage, the researcher categorized the data and presented it in a descriptive manner, while also drawing parallels between the categories and the sociological realism approach. The final stage of the process entailed the presentation of concise findings derived from the analytical process that had been conducted.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In “Mirāth” by Muhammad Husayn Haykal, the narrative is characterized by the depiction of various social conflicts that are embedded in the realities of Egyptian society. The aforementioned conflicts function as driving forces of the plot, while also reflecting social dynamics, including, but not limited to, power relations within the family unit, gender inequality, moral decline caused by improper upbringing, and inheritance practices marked by abuse and deviation from religious principles. It is imperative to analyze these conflicts in order to ascertain how literary works represent social realities in a meaningful and representative manner.

Structural Inequality in the Inheritance and *Waqf* System

In “Mirath”, 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 demonstrates how legal policies concerning *waqf ahli* serve as representations of social realities that engender inequality and conflict. It also demonstrates the role of authorities in shaping and reinforcing the prevailing inheritance system.

Data 1

كان مُشرّع 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 the jurists of that era considered the stipulations of the endower to be equivalent to a legal textual ruling *naş shar‘ī*.”

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

From the perspective of sociological realism, the 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” concept is examined in this study, exploring the legal and religious foundations that inform its operation in everyday practice. The analysis explores how these foundations are employed to justify deviations from established inheritance rights, with a particular focus on the treatment of socially vulnerable groups, such as women. The concept of law is portrayed as a component of a social reality that is susceptible to manipulation by those who wield authority. It is evident that authorities and religious scholars are not merely regarded as guardians of social norms; they are also, in an indirect manner, considered as actors who legitimize deviations from inheritance rights.

In this section, the text “Mirāth” by Muhammad Husayn Haykal provides a vivid account of the social practices of Egyptian society, offering a reflection of social reality in accordance with the sociological realism approach. This approach emphasizes the objective portrayal of social life, including its structural conflicts. The “Mirath” is not merely a presentation of legal regulations; it is also an exposition of the implementation of these laws and their tangible effects in reinforcing social and gender inequality within society.

Data 2

وتحدث الناس وقتئذٍ إلى أن المشرّع 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 is indicative of public anxiety regarding the manipulation of inheritance law, a practice that contradicts the principles of justice. From a sociological realist standpoint, this condition is indicative of the dynamic relationship between law and social reality. When the law no longer aligns with society's sense of justice, its legitimacy is called into question, 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 dissolution of waqf ahli was not merely a matter of establishing a new norm: rather, it was a response to the social harm caused by those who manipulated inheritance law. This perspective is consistent with the sociological realism concept, which asserts that literature serves as an objective representation of the prevailing conflicts between law, power, and society (Swingewood & Laurenson, 1972).

Consequently, "Mirāth" offers a compelling reflection of reality by illustrating how inheritance practices, influenced by patriarchal family structures and prevailing social norms, have the potential to engender injustice, particularly for women. The narrative under scrutiny presents a critical portrait of the manner in which social realities and structural inequalities are experienced and reproduced within the family unit.

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 portrays gender inequality by depicting women as individuals who lack independent economic rights and are instead dependent on men.

Data 1

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

جعلهنَّ تبعًا لإخوتهنَّ الذكور، يَنَلْنَ منهم نفقةً تكفيهنَّ العيش المتواضع. (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 the process of inheritance functioned as a social mechanism for preservation of 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 acknowledged as autonomous economic actors but rather as dependents whose welfare was expected to be ensured by male relatives. Through this representation, "Mirath" shows 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 is employed as a cultural justification for denying their inheritance rights from the inception of their marital union. In the literary work known as "Mirath", the financial assistance rendered by brothers to their sisters is portrayed as a form of "justice" considered sufficient. However, in social reality, such practices have been shown to 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. It is evident that the sociological realism approach employed in this particular 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 enable such inequality to persist and be transmitted from one generation to the next.

Data 2

أما أمها فأفزعتها هذه الوفاة، لا حزناً على الزوج الذي مات، بل إشفافاً أن تلد ابنتها بنتاً 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 maternal figure’s trepidation does not originate from profound sorrow surrounding her spouses’ demise; rather, it stems from the possibility that her fifth grandchild being born female. Such an event would result in the complete abeyance of economic entitlements for the spouse’s family, thereby engendering a state of economic deprivation 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 a sociological realist perspective, 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 towards unjust social structures. The short story under scrutiny here employs a clear and concise narrative to illustrate how the fate of women is determined by the gender of their siblings, rather than by blood relations or actual living needs. The correlation between inheritance rights and the presence of a male child positions women in a vulnerable position even before they are born.

Consequently, “Mirāth” by Muhammad Husayn Haykal not only records gender discrimination, but also portrays a social and psychological analysis of its impacts on family structures. 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 inextricably linked to 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 suggest the conflict is rooted in competition over economic resources within family structures. The in-laws’ supplications for Haifa to deliver a female infant exemplify the

manner in which familial bonds are superseded by 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 utilization of religious vows within this paradigm offers a compelling illustration of the manner in which spiritual practices are employed to legitimize material interests. Through this representation, Haykal critiques a social structure in which economic power shapes family relations and weakens familial solidarity. From a sociological realism perspective, the conflict reflects broader social conditions in which wealth and property become central determinants of social status and interpersonal relations. This, in turn, is said to cause family bonds to be increasingly governed by economic considerations rather than by affection or moral responsibility.

It is evident that “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 ذَكَرًا، فتصايح أقارب زوجها بأن أمها دَسَتْ في فراش الوضع غلامًا، وذهب بعضهم إلى أن الأم الشابة لم تلد، بل لم تحمل، وأن هذا الطفل الغلام دَسَتْهُ أمها في فراشها للاستيلاء على الوقف وربيعه! ورفع هؤلاء الأقارب الأمر إلى القضاء ليحكم بأن الطفل ليس ابنًا لعبده عاكف، فلا حق لبناته في وقف جدتهن؛ إذ ليس لهن أخ يُعَصِّبُهُنَّ وَيُعَصِّمُهُنَّ 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. The text 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 لسائر 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, despite the passage of time and the maturation of Umar, who was pursuing his education in Europe, familial tensions persisted, giving rise to ongoing discord. 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 a variety of 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 these individuals 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 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 البر 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 towards 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, the family's response to his delinquency is characterized by a lack of firm correction. In contradistinction, Umar continues to be the recipient of special treatment and privileges.

From this perspective, the sociological realism of 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, reflects 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. Thus, 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 personal flaw; rather, it is a consequence of inadequate parenting patterns and a gender-biased family system. The moral and intellectual development of the individual is overshadowed by the social status attributed to the normalization of violence and irresponsibility within the family unit (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 realized that his position as the absolute owner of the waqf could be used to pressure his mother and sisters. The assertion that the legal system would provide support in his favor serves to underscore the manner in which the legal framework serves to perpetuate patriarchal dynamics about 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 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 رُشدِه، فلم يبطئ أن رَفَعَ الدعوى على أمه يطلب تَسْلُم 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 is indicative of a societal shift towards a disregard for traditional filial values and a concomitant diminution of respect for parents. From a perspective embracing sociological realism, the lawsuit is not merely a legal conflict, but also a symbol of moral value shifts caused by economic influence and the expansion of patriarchal foundations. In the narrative of "Mirāth", the mother figure, who had 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 employs a social irony to reveal a pertinent social issue: the improper upbringing of a male child that places him at the center of family power can ultimately result in a generation that exhibits a lack of ethics and moral responsibility.

Thus, as demonstrated by 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 degeneration has the capacity to inflict harm not only on individuals but also on 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. This, in turn, has the potential to generate broader moral crises within society.

As demonstrated in the preceding discourse, it can be posited that the conflicts depicted in "Mirāth" serve a dual function, operating not solely as narrative events, but also as representations of 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 concluding the forms of social reality represented in "Mirāth".

CONCLUSION

The results of this study demonstrate that the sociological realism approach is an effective means of revealing the social conflicts represented in "Mirāth". The analysis identifies four forms of social reality: structural inequality, gender inequality, family conflict, and moral decline. The 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, the present study is constrained by the perspective of sociological realism, and consequently, it prioritizes the analysis of social structures and conflicts. The text does not specifically examine women's subjective experiences, contemporary debates on Islamic feminism, or the relationship between Islamic inheritance law and its social implementation. It is recommended that future studies 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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