

**Homage to a Father: Family Tradition and Revolution(s) in *Palace Walk***  
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Western readings of *Palace Walk*, the first volume of Mahfouz's *Cairo Trilogy*, tend to interpret the novel mainly along the lines of typical opposition between patriarchy/occupation and feminism/revolution forces. Even though this analogy might be convincing to a western mind, it is based on cultural assumptions which are inconsistent with textual and contextual evidence. Taking into consideration the contextual background of the Nasser era against which the work was conceived, the paper proposes an alternative reading that observes the correspondence between family and national loyalties, an inherent feature of the Egyptian middle class society which *Palace Walk* depicts. The Egyptian middle class was responsible for the two most important revolutions in the history of the nation: The 1919 revolution led by Sa'd Zaghloul, and the 1952 revolution led by Gamal Abdel Nasser. In this novel, the paper argues, Mahfouz compares the leaders of these two incidents of national struggle, with the purpose of proposing a fictional rendering of the contradiction between the personality of Nasser as the leader and the quality of his political system. In one character, Al Sayyid Ahmed Abdel Jawad, Mahfouz embodies most of the potential vulnerability of that contradiction. The ambivalence and complex sentiments held towards the father figure, who is simultaneously feared and idolized, best reflects the duality of the people's reaction towards Nasser as a ruler. The paper concludes that while the character of the father in *Palace Walk* echoes the contradictory quality of Nasser's regime, it represents Egypt's revolution of 1919 as a model to which Mahfouz aspired and wished Nasser to emulate. [Article copies available for a fee from The Transformative Studies Institute. E-mail address: [journal@transformativestudies.org](mailto:journal@transformativestudies.org) Website: <http://www.transformativestudies.org> ©2010 by The Transformative Studies Institute. All rights reserved.]

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