

A Critical Study of Social Stratification in Selected Novels by Abdel Rahman al-Sharqawi and Chinua Achebe

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Statement Of Originality

I hereby certify that the work embodied in the thesis is my own work, conducted under normal supervision. The thesis contains no material which has been accepted, or is being examined, for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made. I give consent to the final version of my thesis being made available worldwide when deposited in the University's Digital Repository, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968 and any approved embargo.

Ashraf Abdelbaky

1/4/2021

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my late father, **Mr Mohamed Lotfy Ibrahim Abdelbaky** (1948-2009), who made me the man I am today. A sincere teacher and school principal, he always believed in the importance of education. He struggled to raise his five children until they graduated from university—his sincere advice is still engraved in my mind. He is my role model whose way of life is – and will be – an inspirational source for me. My dear father encouraged me back in 2008 to start doing my Master hoping to get a PhD.

Ashraf Mohamed Lotfy Ibrahim Abdelbaky

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Abstract

This study examines social stratification in the Egyptian society before and after the 1952 revolution, as represented in Abdel Rahman al-Sharqawi's novels *al-Ard* (1954) and *al-Fallah* (1967). It also analyses the pre-colonial and colonial Nigerian Igbo society represented in Chinua Achebe's novels *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and *Arrow of God* (1964). In doing so, the study draws upon Max Weber's three-dimensional approach of social stratification (class, status, and party) to interrogate these societies. Through using this methodology, I am not only interpreting social stratification in these novels but also presenting how the authors try to critique their society and how they use literature to introduce their specific agendas. Both Egypt and Nigeria have unique histories, cultures, and social structures. Examining social stratification in the chosen Egyptian and Nigerian novels provides new angles of discussion on religion, culture, and postcolonialism. The colonial and postcolonial encounters of these two countries not only continue to recur today but continue to determine the destiny of millions of people. This analysis argues that social order representations in these societies show that al-Sharqawi's novels develop a new form of socialist realism (i.e., new realism) and that Achebe's novels employ ethnographic realism. This study redirects the scholar's attention to the fields of socialist realism and ethnographic realism in literature.

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