

Rebellious and Self-Destructive Daughters in Naguib Mahfouz's *Midaq Alley* and Zakes Mda's *Ways of Dying*

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Abstract. Rebellion is a vice condemnable both in the holy books and in most societies among them the African society. As a form of disobedience, rebellion is a negative trait that is loathed by even God himself and it is for this reason that he condemned and rejected King Saul, with this charge: “Obedience is better than sacrifice and to hearken the fat of rams...” (The Holy Bible, KJV, 1 Samuel 15: 22-23). Moreover, in the Ten Commandments, God institutes obedience to parents as a condition for longevity, success and fulfilment (Exodus 20: 12). This is so because rebellion is willful disobedience and deliberate departure from an instruction that could emanate from one's: superior, parents, guide, mentor, counselor and so on. On the other hand, conformity to one's: parental, family, community and cultural ways remains a virtue about which parents and elders boast in African society. Conversely, rebellion against these standards attracts tragic consequences because the gods, parents, elders and the community are usually embarrassed, upset and humiliated by the actions of the rebel. In some cases, such humiliated entities lay a curse on the rebel for wounding their ego and disappointing their expectations. The potency of such curses stems from the fact that the rebel shares a spiritual affinity with these entities. This submission is graphically represented in the actions and fates of Hamida and Noria, the two female protagonists of Egypt's Naguib Mahfouz's *Midaq Alley* (1975, rpt 1996) and South Africa's Zakes Mda's *Ways of Dying* (1995) Adopting the Biblical principles that perceive rebellion and parental disobedience to be self-destructive missiles (1 Sam 15: 1-35, Exodus 20: 12), this essay argues that the tragic end of the heroines of these two novels is caused by their rebellion against their parents.

Key Words: Rebellion, self-destruction, female protagonists, curse, *Midaq Alley*, Naguib Mahfouz, *Ways of Dying*, Zakes Mda.

1. Introduction

Rebellion is a moral crime that offends both God and humanity and violates society's moral code. Moral conducts are informed by cultural values and being a culture-based society, Africans place much premium on their culture. They usually accord honour and respect to their culture as well as to those that uphold and preserve them. On the contrary, those who disrespect their culture are dismissed as holding no promise for the continent and her future. This attitude is uniquely illustrated in the Yoruba virtue of the *omoluabi* concept espoused by an erudite scholar, Ademola Dasyuva (2014). Most African writers uphold this practice by privileging African culture in their creative works. They achieve this by meting out sanctions in the form of negative fate, misfortune and tragic end for such characters as is the case in our focal texts.

In these novels, Hamida and Noria, two young women, are not only expected to be intimate with their mothers but they are also required to imbibe from them positive virtues that will help them to succeed as daughters and future wives and mothers. Regrettably, the reverse happens to be the case as these young women deliberately toe a different path from their parents' ways. They shamelessly elect to follow their sensual ways thereby turning themselves into the black sheep of their families. This rebellious attitude cause their parents much sorrow leaving them no option than to curse their recalcitrant daughters, the consequence of which is their tragic end as will be seen in the analysis.

2. The Biblical Principle of Rebellion Adopted in the Essay

As stated in the abstract, God abhors rebellion and disobedience. This is spelt out in the Ten Commandments which is meant as the standard of

relationships between man and God and between man and his fellow men. The fourth Commandment states: “Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee” (Exodus 20: 12). Clearly put, in the above statement, God provides parental honour as the pre-condition for success, fulfilment, long life and general well-being. Consequently, failure, hopelessness, truncated existence and tragic destiny come as a result of dishonouring one’s parents. In 1 Samuel 15: 1-35, God gave specific instructions to King Saul to utterly destroy the Amalekites because of their opposition to the Israelites on their way to the Promised Land. However, for reasons best known to him, Saul decided to rebel against God’s instructions, choosing rather to satisfy his lust and vanity by sparing both the king and choice items which he claimed were meant for sacrifice to God

God took exceptions to such flagrant rebellion and disobedience, retorting through Prophet Samuel his mouthpiece: “And Samuel said, hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry...” (Verse 22-23a). Consequently the Lord wrenched the kingdom of Israel from Saul and withdrew his presence from him, thus deserting him and exposing him to shame, humiliation and a tragic end (Verse 24-35).

African society aligns with the above incident in matters of child/parent relationship. Disobedience to parents, rebellion against them as well as dishonor to them are vices with harsh and negative consequences in African authored texts. A few instances will suffice. These are: Okonkwo in Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* (1958), Eugene in Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus* (2006), Oguagua in Ndibe’s *Arrows of Rain* (2000) and Zileyefa in Agary’s *Yellow Yellow* (2006), to mention just a few. Hamida and Noria, the two female protagonists in the two novels in this essay also add to this number as will be brought to light as the essay unfolds.

3. Naguib Mahfouz’s *Midaq Alley*

Midaq Alley was originally titled *Zuqaq al-Miaq* in Arabic and published in Egypt in 1947. It was later translated into English in 1975 under the current title for a wider readership. The novel was set in Gamaliya neighbourhood of Cairo during the Second World War in Midaq Alley, a small village, more like a small street where everyone is known by his/her neighbour. *Midaq Alley Study Guide Gradesaver*

(n.p), an online essay, observes that it is “Mahfouz’s known and earliest work” to explore a graphic “lower class lifestyle in Cairo” unlike many of his earlier novels that focused on middle class neighbourhood. “The novel has a loose narrative with multiple protagonists”(n.p) . However, the actions revolve more around a few characters such as: Hamida, Abbas, Faraj and a few others with more prominent and significant actions.

The novel is a narrative of the people of this dingy alley during a period of societal transition and the poverty occasioned by the war as well as the individuals’ survival attempts. Midaq Alley is introduced as a small side street in Cairo leading to Samadiqiya Street and consisting of two prominent shops, a café, a bakery, an office and some two three storey buildings where all the people of the alley live. It is an alley with a dull life where only the sweet shop operated by Uncle Kamil and the barbing shop run by Abbas remain the alley’s notable outlets. Once it is night, everywhere remains shut and Kirsha’s café remains the only place of activity.

Midaq Alley Study Guide: Critical Evaluation (2015, n.p), another online critical essay notes that the novel “paints life in two different worlds-in the alley and away from there-and at two different times, the old time that stands still, and the new time of changes”. It avers that each of the major characters of the novel is “confronted by these conflicts” and must decide for the one under which he/she can survive best. Hamida, the central protagonist whose “primary goal is to acquire material luxuries that the poverty of the alley is unable to provide” (n.p), obviously settles for the new. Sophia Akhukhukhan (2014, p.46) sees Faraj, the male protagonist as a “revolutionary” and “deviationist” “scouting for more revolutionaries” to identify with his ideals. She observes that his search yields a positive result in Hamida whom she rightly describes as: “restless, naïve, disgruntled, rebellious by instinct and, most important of all, ignorant”. This is an accurate assessment of Hamida who is irritated by the alley and by her low estate in life, and is desirous of an opportunity to escape from her claustrophobic and poverty-ridden environment.

The alley has a stifling effect that seems to entrap all the characters into penury, thus they struggle and aspire to wealth and better life. Hussain Kirsha, Hamida’s foster brother escapes to Tellel-Kebir to join the British Army post and convinces Abbas to close up his shop to join him but unfortunately, three days after Abbas joined him at the post, the war abruptly comes to an end (112). An interesting thing about these alley characters is their intimacy with one

another and a return to the alley life after their search for a greener pasture hits the rock. Hamida, is however, different from the rest. She would just have none of the alley life; she wants to marry a man of means in order to improve her lots and live comfortably. She is so determined in her status elevation mission that she leaves no stone unturned in this regard.

Hamida is the centre around whom the actions in the novel revolve. She is a beautiful, proud, hot tempered, arrogant lady full of disgust for the alley and her people whom she dismisses as poor and unprofitable potential marriage suitors. She looks down on all the alley inhabitants and conducts herself, as though she was from another world. Her arrogant attitude gets her foster mother, Umm Hamida worried leading to her imposition of a curse on Hamida on one occasion: "God will never find you a husband; what man would want to embrace a burning firebrand like you?" (24-5). Umm Hamida's reference to Hamida as "firebrand" underscores the latter's bad manners, hot temper and unapproachability. Rebuffing her mother, Hamida had openly demonstrated her hatred for the alley and her dwellers, stressing that no man there is worthy of her hand in marriage. She had once asked her mother: "Is there anyone here in Midaq Alley who is worth considering They are all nonentities" (26). She treats the inhabitants of the alley with disrespect and disdain to the chagrin of her mother who never ceases to wonder why her little daughter that is supposed to abide by their noble Islamic tenets should be this puffed up.

Hamida is the daughter of Umm Hamida's business partner. The latter had died after giving birth to Hamida and Umm Hamida had charitably adopted and raised her. She is however, surprised that Hamida turns out to become a defiant little girl with strange and exotic tastes that counter the status of her environment. She comes off as a rebellious, disrespectful and haughty young lady. Her mother cannot stop reprimanding her for her socio-moral misbehavior. She warns her on another occasion: "If only you would stop being so conceited... You eat and drink my food [sic] but you are never grateful. Do you remember all that fuss you made about a dress?" (27). Her sharp retort to this well-intended reprimand exposes her vanity, hollowness and rebellious spirit:

"And is a dress something of no importance? What's the point of living if one can't have new clothes? Don't you think it would be better for a girl to have been buried alive rather than have no nice clothes to make herself look pretty". Her voice filled with

sadness as she went on: 'If only you had seen the factory girls! You should just see those Jewish girls who go to work. They all go about in nice clothes. Well, what is the point of life then if we can't wear what we want... "Oh what a shame, Hamida. What are you doing living in this alley? And why should your mother be this woman who can't tell the difference between dust and gold dust?" (27).

From the above, Hamida's constant remonstrations about her lot in life, her dingy environment and non-availability of the good things of life, point to her lust and ostentation. As an Arab Moslem raised in a conservative environment and nurtured by elderly folks such as: Sheikh Darwish, Salim Alwan, Umm Hamida and the rest, her desire for the flamboyant garments of the Jewish factory girls leaves much to be desired. This is an unnatural desire and an early indices of a destructive life style.

After several protests of this nature, she forms the habit of sitting by the windowsill where she gets a good view of the alley's inhabitants, passers-by and the Jewish factory workers on their way to and from work, and where she equally commits her eyes to the lust of life. She stops at nothing in quest to marry a man of wealth who can take her out of the drudgery of the alley into bliss and dignity. In an effort to test her moral integrity, her mother tells her that Alwan, a married man with children and same that is old enough to be Hamida's grandfather, seeks her hand in marriage. Without scruples or consideration for Abbas, her fiance under a Quranic confirmation, she quickly jumps at the proposal much to the discomfort of her mother: "Her heart throbbed and her face flushed, her eyes glistening proudly. Here at last was the stroke of fortune she had always dreamed of". The author recounts Hamida's excitement at this news:

This at last was the man who could give her all the luxury and freedom from drudgery she prayed for. She could think of no cure for her hunger for power other than a great deal of money. She wanted the other things it would bring: dignity, beautiful clothes, jewelry, pride and a whole new world of secure and happy people. (142)

Marriage into wealth becomes the only hope that Hamida nurses through which she can navigate her freedom from poverty. Despite the fact that she does not learn any skills nor does she have professional qualifications, she is eager to escape from poverty. She pays no attention to the fact that she is already betrothed to Abbas and the possible devastation which the break of their engagement could cause him.

“The matter isn’t easy to decide. Have you forgotten that you are engaged? And that I confirmed it by reading the Qur’an with Abbas”, the mother reminds her. “A vicious look came into the girl’s eyes and shattered her beauty. She shouted in full, angry scorn, ‘That barber!’” (143). Her reaction is so unnatural and cruel that the mother cannot help but criticise her lack of moral rectitude. As far as Hamida is concerned, people “can say what they like” when they hear about her impending action. On her insistence on going ahead with her marriage to Mr. Alwan even after Prophet Radwan Hussainy’s counsel to the contrary, her mother further reminds her of the harsh punishment for violating the Qur’an and calls Hamida a “serpent’s child” (147) but that does not still deter her.

Determined and defiant, it takes Mr. Alwan’s fall under the attack of stroke before he is able to perfect his marital plan with her to make Hamida change her mind. His heart attack confines him to the hospital thereby stalling their marriage arrangement. Shortly after this unfortunate incident, Hamida takes to the windowsill again like before. This time, she catches a glimpse of a certain man of means evidenced in his dressing, perfume and style. The two are magically attracted to each other and instantly, Hamida starts to nurse marital ambitions to this wealthy stranger. She revels in the thoughts of how her hooking up to him, can uplift her social status: “She felt drawn like the needle of a compass to the poles. She also knew that he was not just a penniless beggar who would make her endure want and poverty: his appearance and his banknotes proved that” (184).

Their affair progresses from regular eye contacts and smiles on the window sill from where Hamida sits to overlooks the entire alley. The identity of this latest acquaintance is soon revealed as Ibrahim Faraj. From mere eye contacts, they progress to physical meetings at the alley café. With the passage of time, Faraj is unveiled as an accomplished Casanova, pimp, patron and procurer of whores. Through his alluring words coupled with Hamida’s hunger for exotic tastes, he completely wins her love, confidence and trust. Faraj succeeds in inviting her to his palatial apartment in town where she is taken aback by the grandeur of his palace. Slowly but surely, he assesses her and concludes that “she has got a natural gift for it... she’s a whore by instinct... she’s going to be a really priceless pearl” (198).

Whereas Faraj fattens Hamida for the vicious vocation of prostitution, Hamida erroneously believes she has found her perfect suitor who will formalise their marriage in a matter of days. Goaded on by

greed and vanity, after her first visit and all that she witnesses, she elopes with him bidding goodbye to the simple, rustic and monotonous alley life. Hamida strongly believes that Faraj, is the ladder to a perfect life. Finally in his full gripol, Faraj unveils his plan for her:

Say farewell now to your days of hardship! From now on nothing will cause you discomfort... why, even your breasts will be held away from you by support of silk [...] They went into the luxurious room and he said, laughing, ‘Take off your cloth and we will both burn it’ [...] ‘You’ll need nothing from the past [...] ‘Yesterday, my darling, you called me a pimp. Now allow me to present my true self to you. Your lover is the headmaster of a school, and you will learn everything when the time comes’ (206-207).

Having disappointed her marital expectations, Faraj discloses his true identity as a pimp and procurer of prostitutes to Hamida. He alters her name to Titi and tells her, “That’s your new name. Keep it and forget Hamida, for she has ceased to exist!” (216). He initiates her into sex trade and gives her the name Titi for ease of pronunciation by Englishmen and Americans who are their chief patrons (217). Hamida realises too late “that retreat was impossible and that the past was completely erased...” (219). Being considered to have learned enough, she is set off to the “taverns and hotels” which are the best schools as the lessons are “merely to clarify information which may be muddled” and also because “The only way to learn is by experience” (221).

Hamida learns so fast on the job, mastering the English language and the sexual act so perfectly. She becomes very successful as “She was a favourite of the soldiers and her savings” became a “proof of her popularity:

Hamida had never known the life of a simple respectable girl. She had no happy memories of the past and was now quite engrossed in the enjoyable present. Her case was different from that of the majority of the other girls, who had been forced by necessity or circumstances into their present life and were often tormented by remorse. Hamida’s dreams of clothes, jewelry, money, and men were now fulfilled and she enjoyed all the power and authority they gave her (255).

Hamida’s is a case of one who sinks into an inglorious life of prostitution with her eyes open. Having missed her marital expectations Faraj and unable to return to the alley which she considers remote and unsuitable, she elects to commodify sex as a means of sailing to comfort. Whichever way one

assesses the situation, her main desire is an escape from poverty and simplicity, and if not by marriage, at least by any means. Her action becomes too deadly and devilish for claiming Abbas, an innocent and saintly character. She deceives Abbas and her pious community into thinking that she is a decent girl but unknown to them she hates them and nurses the plan of leaving them for good. While plying her trade in the tavern, the whole alley is thrown into hysteria with regard to her whereabouts. Amidst this confusion, Abbas returns to the alley as the World War II comes to an end. The news gets him hysterical forcing him to search for her in every nook and cranny. Unknown to him, Hamida has jettisoned the idea of getting married preferring her present status as: "Marriage would have confined her to the home, exhausting her with the duties of a wife, housekeeper, and mother, all those tasks she knew she was not created for. She now saw how farsighted he (Faraj) had been" (255).

Then on a fateful day, he chances on Hamida being borne in a carriage in the tavern and is shocked to see her in the company of a familiar patron where she satiates the sexual cravings of some English and American soldiers fighting in Hitler's World War II. "Hamida! Is it really you? Oh God, how can I believe my eyes? How could you have left your home and your mother and ended up like this" (263), he queries. Unable to convince her to abandon the trade, Abbas leaves in a maze of inexplicable anger with a promise to return another day to take her home.

He returns to the tavern another day as threatened in the company of Kirsha, Hamida's foster brother. Unfortunately, he meets her in the company of uniformed men in a compromising position. On noticing some empty beer glasses, he took one and hurled it at Hamida with all the force of anger and despair within him. She screamed and blood poured from her face and the angry men fell on Abbas from all sides like wild animals: "He was killed in all directions" (281) and the British soldiers finished it up by murdering him" (283). While Abbas dies like a dog for loving the wrong and unworthy woman, "There's no hope for Hamida" who "is lost forever" (278), and there can be no worse form of self-destruction than this. Above is the rebellious and self-destructive account of Hamida. Let us turn to the second novel:

4. Zakes Mda's *Ways of Dying*

Similarly, Mda's *Ways of Dying* also manifests instances of rebellious and self-destructive acts by the female protagonist, Noria as will be seen shortly.

Before the analysis we will examine some critical reception on the text: Chielozona Eze (2014, p.1) is concerned about the volume of violence in the work. He compares it with such other African novels as Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Mezlekia's *Notes from the Hyena's Belly*, among others. This critic notes that the level of violence in these works reflects what obtains in African societies and interprets such as having a nexus with the "people's desperate search for meaning and for solutions to the particular postcolonial dystopia to which history and various African governments have subjected" them." Johan van Wyk (2015, pp.10 & 11) perceives the repeated senseless deaths in *Ways of Dying* as acts of infanthood that point to "a society that has regressed, one in which the institutional law is illegitimate or completely absent." He notes the absence of the reality principle in the novel, ascribing this to be the reason why the "perpetrators of the crimes in this lawless society were not allowed to grow up", a situation which he notes, is evidenced in their inability to "distinguish between their fantasies (ideology) and reality", thus necessitating what he calls the "Senseless violence that permeates everything and everybody."

Richard Samin (2000, p.192) notes that Mda demonstrates that "exploring people's lives and relations generates a social knowledge that is richer, more varied and more contradictory than the spectacular writing which protest literature delivered". He concludes that this is the reason for which the character Noria is seen as a "stuck bitch" in the early part of the novel and later as "a goddess" by Toloki. The Complete Review's Review an online book review(2015, n.p) also alludes to the uneasy life that is a common situation in *Ways of Dying* and which it avers results in "heart breaking tragedy common" in every sector of the society of the novel. Rita Barnard (2004, p.2) concerns herself with the high volatility of the novel's setting and with the two characters: Toloki and Noria whose resolve to live and eke out a living "on the margins ... where nothing is given ... and violence ... is so pervasive that there are no more 'normal death'" ... confounds the imagination.

Maria Lopez (2013, p.99) engages the "death, violence and pervasive inter-ethnic conflict, the marginalisation of people affected by HIV/AIDS and hatred towards foreigners coming from other African countries", which she observes are "omnipresent" in the novel and in Phaswane Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*. She concludes that such tendencies make "the project of a rainbow nation at peace with itself

and the world, as espoused by” late President Mandela “in his inaugural address” un-achievable. Thembinkosi Gladden Twalo’s (2011, p.45) interest revolves around the author’s handling of oppressive male power and the marginalisation of women in the text. The scholar opines that Mda tackles the subjugation of women, a burning issue which he avers is grossly omitted by nationalist writers and concludes: “Unlike those nationalist writers for whom the question of gender is peripheral to politics, Mda sees women and their oppression as central to his analysis of the liberation discourse”.

On her part, Sue-Ann Anita Forster (2005, p.11) exposes the atrocities of the liberation movement in South Africa under the apartheid regime which oppressive impact she asserts that Mda preoccupies himself with exposing in *Ways of Dying*. She submits that the author debunks the myth of “a utopian African” as he projects this society “... as much a site of violence and moral decadence as it is one where strong social networks and values are found.” Forster’s view is apt as the novelist does not idealise the situation in the text but paints a faithful picture of the incidents that transpire in the novel. A close reading of this novel presents instances of rebellion and parental dishonour with their negative consequences as presented in the analysis below.

Noria happens to be the only daughter/child of Xesibe and the Mountain Woman, his wife. Noria’s growing up years had nothing enviable about it because at a tender age, she had shown promiscuous tendencies just like Hamida in the foregoing text. She engaged in intimate sexual relationships and became the butt of the village herd boys who witnessed her sexual activities with her lovers in the bush. Though beautifully endowed, she negatively exploited such endowment. The authorial voice discloses: “[Noria] would emerge wearing the polka-dot dress that, That Mountain Woman (her mother) had bought her in town [...] *Her face would be pale with powder, and her lips red with lipsticks* [...] She would then catch the bus to town, where *she would give pleasure to bus drivers and conductors* [...], she would ride around in taxis [...] *dispensing pleasure to the drivers who would buy her gifts and flatter her*. In the afternoons, she would go back to the public toilet, change into her school uniform, remove her make-up, and go home” (72 & 73, emphasis added).

Such is the deviant tendencies of Noria, who at a very young age, was determined to toe a path different from that of her parents. She was too hot to handle, too headstrong to heed and too determined to be deterred from her sleazy path. Much like Hamida,

Noria, without voicing it, is dissatisfied with her lot in life and with her humble background. She commodifies sex to meet her taste. She frequents the township where she offers sex for money and gifts. Her: township journeys, heavy make ups and sexual dealings with bus drivers and conductors de-robes her of her rustic innocence and places her on a wild and exotic space ready to be devoured by predators. Though not in a tavern or in a brothel like Hamida, Noria obviously settles for the town as the location of her trade, a choice which knowledge is in the public domain. Her relationship with the opposite sex is determined by sex and pecuniary interest (72 & 73). Ashamed to practise promiscuity as a result of the closely knit nature of the village, she plies her trade in the township. She pretends before the villagers by dressing in simple attire and retaining her natural face but once she arrives the site of her trade, she alters these with make-up and change of raiment in front of the mirror. The disguise is important for her prosperity in her professional location.

This pattern continues and on attaining the adolescent age when she feels she can call anybody’s, including her parents’ bluff, she relocates her business site to the village. Moreover, in a space of time, she picks on a regular lover named Napu. With this development Noria’s parents become overwhelmed by their daughter’s wayward attitude. Against their wish and approval and deaf to their complaint, “Napu was always seen sauntering ... near Xesibe’s homestead... He would walk up the pathway past [their] house, whistling to himself ... Noria would respond to Napu’s whistling (73) which is usually his notification sign. She will suddenly come alive whenever she heard the whistle and the neighbourhood as well as the herd boys take notice because she “would put on her shoes and trip out of the house” (74).

Not long into this relationship with Napu, she gets pregnant and out of shame “had to run away ...” to live “with him in a shack in the brickyard in town” (75). Her parents become humiliated and angry. “They were angry with her and cursed her [...] Xesibe was more concerned with the shame that his family would suffer. No one from the young man’s family came to negotiate labola (pride price), and no cattle were paid to his Kraal for the hand of his only daughter. Surely, he was going to be laughing stock [...]” (75, 76).

Noria’s action is tantamount to rebellion and moral crime because not only does she bring disgrace to her parents, she also denies them their parental and pecuniary rights over her. Having invested much love, devotion and attention in a girl child from

babyhood to adulthood, it is only right that her parents are accorded the honour of giving her out in marriage. The day parents give out their daughters in marriage is usually a day of joy and honour for such parents. This is not so much because of the bride price but because it is a gesture that announces such parents as being responsible and successful. This is the tradition in most African societies. Conversely, Noria's action of getting pregnant outside wedlock and eloping with the lover is a slap on her parents and such an act can only attract public mockery to the family as it actually turns out. Just like Hamida, Noria brings shame to her parents and also attracts their curse.

Such flagrant rebellion and disappointment of parental expectations are responsible for the horrible treatment of Noria by Napu, the irresponsible object of her love who rewards her with sorrow, cruelty and infidelity. Furthermore, he punishes her by relocating with their son Vutha to a remote and unknown part of the town with all Noria's belongings except the dress she had on before leaving the house. Aware he has no means of survival, having lost his job, Napu turns Vutha to an alms-beggar for his own survival and not for Vutha's. He would sit with Vutha at a street corner and people would throw coins into a small can that Vutha held. "Most people gave money because they pitied the little body in rags, who was pitch black, with layers and layers of filth that had accumulated on his body" (137).

Unfortunately, after such a laborious exercise, Napu will collect all the proceeds from the child, leaving him with nothing (137-138). Noria's life becomes one hell of pain and regret. Besides, Vutha dies a horrifying death as a result of Napu's wickedness and irresponsibility. Napu collects all the proceeds from the alms-begging and does not deem it fit to give Vutha even a moderate meal. He suffers him with hunger, chains him to a pole to forestall his escape while he goes on his drinking spree. "Vutha would cry for Noria and for food. But Napu would only go back to unchain him and take him to the city for more begging" (137). One fateful day, he chained Vutha to a pole as usual and goes drinking for several days, forgetting all about the child until Vutha dies and "scavenging dogs were fighting over his corpse" (138-139). Such is the misery into which Noria thrusts herself. Though late and irredeemable, she regrets disobeying her parents' counsel by eloping with Napu. Like Hamida, Noria's rebellion also earns her self-destruction.

5. Conclusion

From the foregoing, it is evident that the heroines of Mahfouz's *Midaq Alley* and Mda's *Ways of Dying*,

Hamida and Noria, are rebellious, disobedient and self-willed deviants. They are both dissatisfied with the standards of existence which nurture and sustain their parents and communities, for whereas they dwell in the village, they hate its rustic innocence and crave exotic township standards. To achieve their unhealthy ambitions, they rebel against their parents and for humiliating them, the latter place a curse on them consequent upon which they become willful captives to predators, exploiters and destroyers. Their self-destruction, a direct result of their rebellion, is tragic, total and self-imposed. Hamida and Noria, against their parents' approval, abscond with men whom they perceive as dream spouses. But rather than that, while Hamida's man turns her to a professional prostitute, Noria's makes her an empty shell. In conclusion, both of them end tragically due to their disobeying the Biblical fourth Commandment which coheres with the African principle of parental honour encapsulated in the Igbo proverb: "Nwata tulie nna ya elu, ogodo nna ya ayochie ya anya" (a child who throws up his father is blinded by the father's loin cloth).

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