

Self-Discovery in Mouloud Feraoun's Novel The Difficult Paths

اكتشاف الذات في رواية "الدروب الوعرة" لمولود فرعون

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Abstract:

Mouloud Feraoun's novel "The Son of the Poor" offers an in-depth exploration of life in the village of Ighil Nezman, clearly depicting the profound impact of harsh social conditions and a harsh environment on individuals. These conditions generate numerous crises, along with internal and external conflicts. The novel embodies the generational struggle within society: between young and old, between the first generation and the next. This struggle has become a struggle within the self and the individual. The rebellion of this younger generation is depicted as rooted in particular circumstances. For Amr Namour, this challenge is shaped by his exposure to the French educational system and his mixed heritage as the son of a French mother, Marie, and a Kabyle father, Amr Oukaci. For Dahbia, it is her conversion to Christianity and her upbringing by Christian missionaries in the village of Ait Ouaddou, and this essay will explore the parasitic self.

Keywords: Self, Mouloud Feraoun, Civilizational Conflict, Revolutionary Literature.

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ملخص:

تُقدّم رواية مولود فرعون "ابن الفقير" استكشافاً عميقاً للحياة في قرية إغيل نظامان، مجسّدةً بوضوح التأثير العميق للظروف الاجتماعية القاسية والبيئة القاسية على الأفراد. تُولّد هذه الظروف أزماتٍ عديدة، إلى جانب صراعاتٍ داخلية وخارجية، جسّدت الرواية صراع الأجيال داخل المجتمع: بين الشباب والشيخوخة، بين الجيل الأول والجيل اللاحق، هذا الصراع الذي أصبح صراعاً في ذات الإنسان والفرد.

ويُصوّر تمرد هذا الجيل الشاب على أنه متجذّر في ظروفٍ خاصة. بالنسبة لعمرو نعمور، يتشكل هذا التحدي من خلال اطلاعه على النظام التعليمي الفرنسي وتراثه المختلط كابنٍ لأمٍ فرنسية، ماري، وأب قبائلي، عمرو أوكاسي. بالنسبة لذهبية، يُشكّل اعتناقها للمسيحية وتربيتها على يد مبشرين مسيحيين في قرية آيت وادو، وسيكون مقالنا هذا عن الذات المتطفلة.

كلمات مفتاحية: الذات، مولود فرعون، الصراع الحضاري، أدب الثورة

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1. INTRODUCTION

Mouloud Feraoun's novel *The Poor Man's Son* (*Les Chemins qui Montent*) offers a profound exploration of life in the village of Ighil N'zaman, vividly illustrating the profound impact of harsh social conditions and an unforgiving environment on individuals. These circumstances generate numerous crises, along with internal and external conflicts.

The novel embodied the generational struggle within the community:

1. **The older generation**, adhering to Islamic teachings, ancestral traditions, and established customs.
2. **The younger generation**, exemplified by the protagonists Amr Naâmor and Dahbia, who strive to challenge and reject the inherited values imposed upon them.

The rebellion of this younger generation is portrayed as rooted in specific circumstances. For Amr Naâmor, this defiance is shaped by his exposure to the French educational system and his mixed heritage as the son of a French mother, Marie, and a Kabyle father, Amr Oukaci. For Dahbia, conversion to Christianity and her upbringing by Christian missionaries in the village of Aït Waddou.

Amr Naâmor is viewed as a disruptive figure within the conservative confines of the village, particularly among its elders. His overt defiance of traditional norms—eating publicly during Ramadan and engaging in flirtatious behavior—positions him as an outsider. Dahbia, in turn, symbolizes the transformative influence of Christian and Western ideologies on Algerian identity. Under the mentorship of the White Fathers in Aït Waddou, she adopts Christianity, becoming deeply influenced by Western values and ideals.

Both Amr Naâmor and Dahbia endure similar adversities, including deprivation and ostracization by a society that rejects them for their transgressions against traditional norms. Their romantic relationship further intensifies these tensions, resulting in profound personal and social complications.

The novel also introduces Mokrane, a significant rival to Amr Naâmor and a figure who represents the polar opposite of

his character. Mokrane, raised in a wealthy, tradition-bound family, harbors a longstanding animosity toward Amr, whose upbringing in poverty and rebellion against convention starkly contrast with his own. Mokrane's feelings toward Dahbia, whom he secretly loves, are marred by disdain; he perceives her as a Christian outsider, unworthy of respect and suitable only for fleeting amusement.

Wezza, Dahbia's only friend and rival for Amr Naâmor's affections, adds another layer of complexity to the narrative. Admired by the young men and respected by the elders for her beauty and privileged background, Wezza initially has a romantic relationship with Amr Naâmor but ultimately marries Mokrane. Her continued secret encounters with Amr Naâmor exacerbate her marital discord and deepen Mokrane's hatred for Amr.

The novel's conclusion is marked by tragedy. In an act of revenge, Mokrane assaults Dahbia's honor, seeking to avenge Amr Naâmor's relationship with Wezza. Amr Naâmor's eventual death, whether by Mokrane's hand or suicide, remains ambiguous, underscoring the destructive consequences of these entangled relationships.

At its core, the novel interrogates themes of identity and the quest for self-understanding. Amr Naâmor epitomizes the struggles of a liminal existence, caught between two disparate worlds—unable to fully integrate into either French or Kabyle society. His life is characterized by a persistent search for identity and belonging. Similarly, Dahbia, perpetually regarded as an outsider due to her Christian faith, faces rejection from the

community of Ighil N'zaman. Ultimately, Mokrane, as a symbol of authenticity and adherence to tradition, prevails.

The novel highlights the resilience of traditional rural society, which, rooted in patriarchal and tribal systems, enforces strict adherence to its norms and resists external influences. Through this lens, Feraoun underscores the tension between tradition and modernity, revealing the profound impact of cultural and social constraints on individual lives.

The Intruding Self:

Mouloud Feraoun's *The Poor Man's Son* (*Les Chemins qui Montent*) can be viewed as a thematic continuation of his earlier work, *Earth and Blood* (*La Terre et le Sang*). The protagonist, Amr Naâmor, is the son of Amr Oukaci, the central figure of *Earth and Blood*, who defied traditional norms by marrying Marie, a Frenchwoman, and bringing her to Ighil N'zaman. "This union, straddling the divide between tradition and modernity, gave rise to Amr Naâmor, whose life is characterized by a persistent internal and external conflict between these opposing realms (علجية ، دت، صفحة 183)"

From his earliest moments, Amr Naâmor faced a life of hardship. His community regarded him as an outcast and illegitimate, primarily because of his mother's French origins. This societal disdain manifested as hostility and resentment, with community members discouraging their children from associating with him and even inciting animosity toward him. As Amr recalls in his reflections:

"When I would leave the house to play with other children, the only person who protected me was my grandmother... The other

children always had encouragement and support because everyone wanted to see me defeated. And most of the time, I was indeed defeated... I knew from the outset that things would end that way because I was always an easy target for them (مولود، 1985، صفحة 185).

This alienation extended beyond the playground. To the community, Amr Naâmor's existence symbolized a blemish on his family's honor due to his lineage as the son of a "*Roman woman*"—a derogatory term used to describe Christians or Frenchwomen. The children taunted him relentlessly, as he laments in his diary:

"The children my age would call me 'the son of the Roman woman,' as if I had no proper name (مولود، 1985، p. 148)."

Such ostracism is emblematic of rigid tribal societies where collective identity outweighs individual merit. In these settings, one's worth is determined by lineage and ancestry, with those of "tainted" or ambiguous origins subjected to exclusion.

Amr Naâmor's grandmother, deeply angered by the persistence of this derogatory label, observed how even adults adopted the children's mocking behavior. Men and women alike refused to acknowledge the name of Amr Oukaci, as though erasing it would absolve the family of what they perceived as dishonor.

The challenges faced by Amr Naâmor as a product of a mixed marriage were compounded by societal prejudices against his mother, labeled a "disbeliever." This dual stigma—rooted in both religion and race—underscores how such factors profoundly influence an individual's acceptance or exclusion

within traditional communities. Through Amr's narrative, Feraoun highlights the intersection of religious and cultural biases that perpetuate social alienation and foster a broader cultural conflict between divergent worlds (مولود, 1985, p. 163).

As Amr matured, the hostility he faced only intensified. The attacks from his adversaries became increasingly ruthless, with no reprieve or empathy extended toward him. To the community, he was nothing more than "*the despicable son of the Roman woman*" (مولود, 1985, p. 152), a scapegoat upon whom they projected their collective frustrations. This unrelenting ostracism serves as a poignant illustration of the societal tensions and the profound consequences of existing between two irreconcilable cultural identities.

As the days passed and Amr Naâmor matured, he gradually shed the fears that had once plagued him. He reached a turning point where he resolved not to consider anyone's opinion any longer, fully aware of the deep-seated hatred they held for him. He made the conscious decision to remain in the village, determined to be a constant source of discomfort for those who despised him. He reflected on the fact that his mother had stayed in this village, and though he sometimes blamed her for it, he expressed his frustration:

"And you stayed in this village (...) Why did you remain here? If it weren't for you, I would have left this place and avoided all the misery. If only you had left the country (مولود, 1985, p. 54). "

When the opportunity to travel presented itself, Amr Naâmor seized it and went to France, knowing this was exactly what the villagers wanted. They celebrated, as if they had rid

themselves of him for good. He could almost hear their thoughts and the things they said:

"We've finally gotten rid of the son of the Roman woman (...) May God keep him in the land of infidels with his uncles. (مولود, 1985, p. 152)"

Amr Naâmor stayed in France for four years, driven by the hope of integrating into Western society, much like many other Algerians who had long been influenced by the idea of French friendship, shaped by what they read in newspapers and magazines. However, upon arriving, his expectations were swiftly shattered. The so-called friendship he had believed in turned out to be an illusion, a deception.

What he had once viewed as an escape into a magical world of opportunity became, within months of his arrival, a harsh reality. The charm of Western society that had captivated his imagination quickly faded, replaced by humiliation, deprivation, and insult. His life in France was no better than the hardships he had endured in Aït-Zmen. He was neither welcomed nor cared for by his uncles, who completely disregarded him. The pain of his exile was compounded by the cruel words he often heard:

"Go back to your country, Bicot." (مولود, 1985, p. 160)

In that moment, he fully understood that he was not at home. In France, he felt like a complete outsider. His decision to return to Algeria crystallized after enduring such inhumane treatment, which shattered his hopes of integrating into French society. It was then that he realized that the land to which he truly belonged, the place where he could feel at ease, was

Algeria.

When Amr Naâmor returned to his homeland, he was met with the same spirit of injustice that he had left behind. The initial welcome he received lasted no more than a week, and he quickly excused his family for their cold reception. In a moment of reflection, he thought to himself:

"Here I am, back in the country, only to find people who do not welcome me. In any case, here I can take my freedom as I please, and no one dares to tell me: 'Go back to your country, Bicot.' They do not welcome me for one reason: because I don't care for their traditions, customs, and rituals that they want me to adhere to. (مولود, 1985, p. 160) "

However, deep down, he knew the truth. He was not truly welcomed. In their eyes, he remained the rebellious young man who had challenged their beliefs, their religion, and their way of life. They viewed him as a corrupting influence on their children, someone who was bent on spreading the seed of discord. Amr Naâmor thought to himself:

"I have returned to the country, (...) only to find that people still say about me: This young man does not deviate from the norm among us (...) He will travel from time to time to France and return as others like him do, continuing his old habits of challenging, questioning our beliefs, mocking our religion, corrupting our youth, and misleading them, because he is the one who guides them toward corruption. (مولود, 1985, p. 155) "

Amr Naâmor, the son of a Frenchwoman, was considered an outsider even in his own land. From birth, he had been torn between two worlds, caught in a constant cultural conflict. He

was rejected by his community because of his mixed heritage and the stigma attached to being the son of a Frenchwoman. To them, he was always the "son of the Roman woman," and as such, he could never truly belong. They treated him like a foreigner in his own village, further fueling his disdain for their narrow-mindedness and their rigid, outdated traditions. (د، علجية، ت، p. 184)

His return to Algeria, after the painful failure to adapt to French society, marked the beginning of a new phase of rebellion. Realizing that Algeria was his true homeland, Amr Naâmor began to defy the expectations of Aït-Zmen. He dressed differently, acted in ways that were considered scandalous, and openly flirted with girls, never caring about the judgment of others. He no longer acknowledged the customs, laws, or traditions that governed his village. This act of rebellion made him an even more divisive figure, as he fought against everyone who sought to impose their values on him.

"Neither one of them nor the other is willing to change at all. (البيير، دت، صفحة 98).

In his struggle to assert his identity, Amr Naâmor became a symbol of resistance, challenging both the oppressive traditions of his village and the illusory promises of integration into French society. He was caught in a no-man's land between two worlds, rejected by both, and yet resolute in his desire to carve out his own path, one that was free from the constraints of cultural expectations and societal divide pressures. (داودي، دت، صفحة 100)

The cultural and generational in Aït-Zmen ran deep, and Amer Na'mar was at the heart of it. The younger generation,

shaped by migration and the influence of the French school system, held fast to their new values—values of change, progress, and freedom from tradition. Meanwhile, the older generation remained firmly anchored in the past, clinging to customs, honor, and moral values passed down through generations. The clash between these two worlds created an atmosphere of conflict, where neither side was willing to yield. As the saying goes:

"The parents are tied to the past, and the past is about clinging to traditions and honor, while the youth are tied to the present, to anxiety, the desire for change, and rejection of certain customs."
(مولود, 1985, p. 199)

Amer Na'mar had always been rebellious, a trait that had defined him from childhood. He had never cared for the traditions and values of his community, a rebellion that started early and only grew as he got older. His rejection of societal norms and moral values led to his expulsion from high school—a moment he reflected on with disdain. He had never fit into the rigid structure of education and authority, a fact he openly admitted:

"What connection do I have with high school? I was expelled because of bad behavior, disobedience, reading forbidden newspapers, and other reasons."
(مولود, 1985, p. 288)

Amer's defiance was not limited to school. He lived a life full of indulgence and vice, engaging in behaviors that shocked and outraged the residents of Aït-Zmen. His open disregard for the sacred customs of the village—drinking alcohol, eating pork, skipping fasting during Ramadan, and eyeing girls without

shame—cemented his place as an outsider. In his mind, this was his right, and he cared little for the opinions of others:

"But I didn't care about them. You would find me walking between the café and the club, walking proudly with my head uncovered, wearing an eye-catching outfit, gazing at the girls, exchanging looks with them." (مولود, 1985, p. 165)

Upon his return from France, Amer found himself increasingly disillusioned with the narrow, confining nature of life in Aït-Zmen. The village felt like a prison to him, limiting his every action and movement. In his eyes, it was a place where even something as trivial as trimming a mustache could be seen as a disgrace. His frustration with the village's stifling atmosphere grew:

"How can one not tire of oneself in this village, where people consider trimming their mustaches a disgrace?" (مولود, 1985, p. 164)

This alienation from the community was not merely the result of his rebellion; it was deepened by a personal rivalry with Mokran, a man who had loathed Amer since childhood. Mokran's resentment was rooted in jealousy—Amer's academic success contrasted sharply with Mokran's failure in school. But the rivalry grew even more bitter when Wiza, the woman Amer had loved before leaving for France, became engaged to Mokran. Despite Wiza's lack of love for Mokran, she married him, bowing to her family's wishes. However, after Amer's return, Wiza rekindled her secret relationship with him, further inflaming Mokran's hatred.

Mokran's jealousy reached new heights when Amer

approached Wiza on the street, and they continued to meet in secret. To Mokran, Amer had become the embodiment of everything he despised, and his animosity turned personal. He believed that Amer not only rejected their religion but had also dismissed him as a true Muslim. Mokran's bitterness grew as he accused Amer of erasing his name from the list of the faithful:

"I am sure that deep down he doesn't consider me a Muslim, and he erased my name from the list of the faithful... And when we formed the communist cell, he refused to join us because, in his eyes, communists are Christians." (مولود, 1985, p. 218)

In a village where every action was scrutinized, Amer's life was a constant battle against judgment and resentment. Even in his most vulnerable moments, such as the death of his mother, he found no sympathy. The villagers, having long since written him off, treated his mother's funeral with indifference, gossiping among themselves and paying little attention to his grief. Only the bearers of the coffin whispered the Shahada, but their words were barely audible, and Amer felt their presence was nothing more than a formality:

"I heard people exchanging different talks without considering my feelings, and only the bearers of the coffin murmured the Shahada ('There is no god but Allah') in a low voice, barely audible. I think they only came to stroll, as if they had gone out for a walk." (مولود, 1985, p. 135)

Through these experiences, Amer Na'mar's struggle was not just a personal rebellion against his community; it was a profound, ongoing conflict between generations, traditions, and identity. His desire for change, for freedom from the rigid

customs of his village, put him at odds with everyone around him, leaving him alienated in a world where he could never truly fit.

Dahbiya's story mirrored that of Amer Na'mar in many ways. Both were seen as outsiders in their respective communities, but for different reasons. While Amer's rebellion stemmed from his rejection of the traditions and values of Aït-Zmen, Dahbiya's outsider status was rooted in her conversion to Christianity, a faith that made her a symbol of defiance against the deeply entrenched Islamic traditions of her village. (حاجي ، د ت ، صفحة 142)

Her rejection by the community was harsh and unyielding. Dahbiya's Christian faith, which she embraced passionately, placed her in direct opposition to the collective consciousness of the people of Aït-Zmen. Religion was seen as one of the few things that bound the community together, something that defined their identity and protected their very existence. In this context, Dahbiya's conversion to Christianity was seen as a threat to the social fabric of the village (ألبيير، p. 127). The elders, in particular, viewed her faith as a challenge to their authority and values, making her the target of their scorn and exclusion. For them, she embodied everything that was foreign, unholy, and disruptive.

Her rejection was further amplified by the fact that her family had disowned her, leaving her with no support or safety net. This abandonment by her own relatives left Dahbiya with no real place to call home, and it colored every aspect of her life. As she grew up, she found herself isolated and ostracized from her peers, who shunned her because of her faith and her troubled

past. She was viewed as trouble—someone who caused conflict wherever she went.

Dahbiya's faith, however, was unwavering. Even though she was despised and rejected by almost everyone, she remained a devout Christian. She was drawn to the church, where she found solace and meaning, believing that the words of the priest were a truth no one else could understand. (مولود, 1985, p. 30) Her deep connection to her faith, combined with her upbringing by the White Fathers and the influence of Western Christianity, shaped her into a person who felt fundamentally different from the others in the village. (أمقران، دت، صفحة 27)

Despite her piety, Dahbiya was never accepted. She was the "rejected foreign girl"—a label that followed her throughout her life. Her peers and even her family rejected her, and when she reached her teenage years, her uncles went so far as to express relief at her departure. "We have given up on this illegitimate girl," they said as they abandoned her, seeing her only as a burden rather than a daughter to be cared for or loved (مولود, 1985, p. 179). The cruelty with which her family treated her left her feeling like an outsider not just in the community but in her own family.

When Dahbiya left Aït Wado, it was with her mother, Nna Malha, who understood the cruelty Dahbiya had suffered at the hands of her uncles. Nna Malha knew that her family had never loved Dahbiya, only seeing her as a servant to do their bidding. Despite their rejection, Nna Malha was the one person who cared for her, even if that care came with the harsh realities of their own marginalization in society.

In many ways, Dahbiya's situation was symbolic of the deep divisions and struggles within Algerian society at the time—divisions between tradition and modernity, between Islam and Christianity, and between the values of the village and the forces of Western influence. She, like Amer Na'mar, was caught between two worlds, neither of which fully accepted her, and her life was marked by a constant battle for acceptance and understanding in a community that was unwilling to change or adapt.

Dahbiya and her mother's settlement in Ighil N'zman triggered an unsettling ripple through the local community, as they were perceived as outsiders who disrupted the harmony of the village. The Ait Al-Arabi family, in particular, felt the intrusion acutely, though some other families feigned indifference, hiding their disapproval behind a veil of false neutrality. Despite this pretense, the newcomers were met with no warmth or genuine hospitality.

The harshness of the villagers' disdain toward Dahbiya was evident in their treatment of her and her mother. The pair faced constant humiliation, exclusion, and verbal abuse. Dahbiya, in particular, became the target of scorn, and she was labeled as "that infidel apostate with no known origin," (مولود, 1985, p. 49) a dehumanizing description that reduced her to little more than a symbol of everything the villagers feared and rejected. Her Christian faith, which had already been a source of alienation in her previous homes, was now the primary reason for their contempt. To them, her religious beliefs made her an outsider—someone whose existence threatened the very fabric of their identity and tradition.

The village's religious leaders were particularly harsh in their judgment. They referred to Dahbiya as the "daughter of refuse," further stripping her of any dignity or humanity. This term, laden with contempt, suggested that she was not just an outsider but someone unworthy of respect, her worth measured only by her deviation from the accepted norms of the village. To these leaders, Dahbiya's Christian faith was seen as an affront to the values they held sacred, and she was cast aside as a dishonorable figure, unworthy of belonging to their community. (مولود, 1985, p. 53)

Her mother, Nna Malha, was acutely aware of how the villagers viewed them. She overheard their whispers—derogatory remarks about her status as a Christian, as well as the insinuation that she was somehow dishonorable. The villagers speculated about her departure from the village, assuming she had left for reasons shrouded in mystery. When she returned with Dahbiya, they could only speculate about her intentions, creating a sense of unease and suspicion in their minds. "She left the village one day for an unknown reason, and now she has returned with a purpose known only to God," they whispered, casting doubt on her motives and questioning her integrity (مولود, 1985, p. 53).

In the eyes of the villagers, Dahbiya and her mother had become the embodiment of everything they wished to reject—foreign, Christian, and dishonorable. Their return to Ighil N'zman did nothing to endear them to the community; instead, it deepened the sense of alienation they had already endured. As they faced rejection and isolation once again, their struggle for acceptance seemed to be a never-ending battle against a society

that refused to acknowledge their humanity and worth.

Nna Malha, though accepting her situation, harbored a deep, painful awareness of her daughter Dahbiya's place in their community. She knew that no matter how much she wished otherwise, no one in Ighil N'zman would ever accept Dahbiya as a wife for their sons. Her daughter's poverty, combined with her renunciation of Islam, rendered her untouchable. In a village where lineage, honor, and religion were paramount, Dahbiya was viewed as an outsider, and the idea of marrying her was unthinkable. In the eyes of the villagers, especially the mothers, Dahbiya's status as a Christian and an apostate made her unsuitable for marriage, a fate sealed by her beliefs and background.

Dahbiya herself was acutely aware of this harsh reality. She recognized that the men in Ighil N'zman didn't desire her for anything beyond amusement or fleeting pleasure. They treated her as an object to be taunted and humiliated, not as a woman worthy of respect or love. In her reflections, she bitterly observed, "In the eyes of those who admire me, I am just a girl for entertainment. They only think about tarnishing my reputation. I despise them all because they are no different from Makhran... they are all cowards." Her words reveal a deep sense of disgust and disillusionment with the way the men of the village treated her, reducing her to a mere spectacle to entertain their misguided desires. (مولود, 1985, p. 87)

Makhran, one of those who found himself drawn to Dahbiya, was in a constant internal struggle. He could not deny her beauty, but the deep-seated divisions of faith, class, and honor prevented him from even considering her as a potential

partner. His attraction to her was clouded by religious and cultural biases, and the mere thought of a Muslim man marrying a Christian woman was almost unthinkable. Dahbiya's lack of a respected family further complicated any consideration of marriage. Makhran, therefore, resorted to harassment, ambivalence, and disdain, torn between physical attraction and the rigid moral code he adhered to.

His actions, at times cruel and dismissive, were laced with a dangerous mixture of contempt and longing. "Is it because of the overt contempt he shows to that Christian girl? This Christian... in his eyes, she deserves nothing but having her honor violated without mercy or compassion," the text suggests. Makhran's internal conflict is rooted in his belief that Dahbiya, as an outsider, deserved nothing more than the disdain he offered. His attitude reflects a toxic sense of entitlement and dominance over her, driven by both his attraction to her and his need to uphold his perceived moral superiority. (مولود, 1985, p. 71)

Makhran himself justifies his behavior, asserting, "Praise be to God, I have been saved from that Christian girl who nearly led me astray from the straight path. My father was right; first and foremost, one must fulfill his duty... What do I have to do with that accursed infidel?" This statement underscores his belief that his religion and societal expectations should keep him from any further engagement with Dahbiya. She is framed as a threat not only to his personal moral compass but also to the religious integrity of his family and community. His words are not just about his feelings for Dahbiya but also an attempt to reinforce his adherence to a strict religious and cultural code that

condemns her for her Christian faith. (مولود, 1985, p. 95)

The complex dynamics between Dahbiya, Makhran, and the villagers reveal a society deeply entrenched in religious, social, and cultural divisions. Dahbiya, already marginalized because of her faith and background, faces the additional burden of being objectified and scorned by those around her, including the very men who are drawn to her. Despite the objectification and hatred she endures, her internal defiance and rejection of those who judge her shows her strength in the face of constant dehumanization.

Dahabiya's life in the village was marked by a relentless cycle of rejection and scorn. Like Amer Naamer, she was seen as an outsider, but her plight was even more severe due to her lack of any ties to the Islamic faith, a cornerstone of the community's identity. This distinction further deepened the isolation she and her mother faced, making their existence in Ighil N'zman one of quiet endurance amid open hostility.

For Nna Malha, there was a glimmer of hope in Amer Naamer. She viewed him as the only person who might accept Dhahabiya for who she was, sharing a similar experience of being ostracized by the community. Though their circumstances were not identical, they were united by their shared status as outsiders. Nna Malha never hesitated to suggest the possibility of a union between her daughter and Amer Naamer. Whether speaking directly to him or subtly to his mother before her passing, Nna Malha planted the idea of marriage, believing it to be Dhahabiya's only chance at stability and acceptance.

For Dhahabiya, the prospect of marrying Amer Naamer was a dream—a potential escape from the contempt that

surrounded her. Amer, too, seemed willing to consider the idea. Perhaps he saw in Dhahabiya a reflection of his own struggles, a kindred spirit who understood the weight of rejection. Their union, however, was not to be.

The community's resentment toward Amer Naamer, compounded by their deep disdain for Dhahabiya, set the stage for a tragic outcome. At the heart of this tragedy was Meqran, whose hatred for Amer Naamer burned brightly. Meqran's actions, driven by animosity and jealousy, culminated in a crime that tore apart any chance of happiness Dhahabiya and Amer might have found together. The precise nature of his actions remains unsaid, but their consequences were clear: a devastating blow to two individuals who sought only acceptance in a world that refused to give it.

Dhahabiya's story, intertwined with Amer's, serves as a poignant reminder of the destructive power of prejudice and the pain inflicted on those who dare to exist outside the confines of societal norms. In their shared suffering, they embodied the silent tragedy of being deemed "other" in a world unwilling to embrace difference.