

Another Evening at the Club

Alifa Rifaat

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1930-1995



- ▣ Genre: Short story
Author of more than 100 short stories published in Arabic and English; work produced for television
- ▣ Style: Realism, feminism
- ▣ Published under the pseudonym of Alifa Rifaat

Alifa Rifaat (Fatma Abdullah Rifaat)

Biography

Fatma Abdullah Rifaat was born in Cairo to a well-to-do architect and his wife. Raised in the countryside, Rifaat was a precocious child who demonstrated early her gift for writing. By the age of nine, she had written poetry describing "the despair in our village" and for which she was punished. Rifaat attended the British Institute in Cairo from 1946 to 1949. Despite her wishes to continue her education, her father forced her to marry a mining engineer; this marriage lasted eight months. In 1952 Rifaat married a cousin, who was a police officer. Traveling with her husband for his work, Rifaat had the opportunity to observe Egyptian life in all its diversity.

Rifaat began writing again and published a short story in 1955 as Alifa Rifaat, a pseudonym she used until 1960, when her husband demanded she stop writing altogether. For more than a decade, she complied with his wishes. After a bout of illness in 1973, her husband permitted her to resume her writing. Beginning in 1974, she published a number of short stories in a literary journal, followed by a collection of short stories. She continued to publish short stories through the 1980s following the death of her husband. In 1984 Rifaat won the Excellence Award from the Modern Literature Assembly.

Historical Context

▣ Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, Great Britain maintained a presence in Egypt. After the breakup of the Ottoman empire in 1918, Great Britain became the predominant power in the Middle East, controlling Palestine, Iraq, the Persian Gulf, and Egypt. In 1952 Gamal Abdel Nasser led a military revolt that drove out the corrupt, British-backed Egyptian king. Nasser became the leading figure in a resurgence of Arab nationalism.

Commercial culture is sometimes depicted as erasing authentic non-western cultures, and in Egypt the dilution of local culture by western influence is, in fact, a common element in both artistic performance and critical opinion. But to interpret Egyptian popular culture either as a straightforward imitation of the West, or conversely, as cryptic resistance to hegemonic power, would be misleading. A concern with Egypt's relationship to the West is one of the defining characteristics of Egyptian popular culture, yet blind adoption of Western culture has never been an unambiguous or uncontested feature of modern Egypt.

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Characters

- ▣ **Samia's parents**
 - ▣ Lower middle class, want a 'good' marriage for Samia
- ▣ **Samia**
 - ▣ Beautiful, lower social background than that of husband, conscience vs. fear of husband/desire to please husband, semi-educated
- ▣ **Abboud Bey**
 - ▣ Very concerned with what other people think about him, prejudiced, bully to those with lower social status, sees people as objects, moderately successful (owns home in Alexandria)
- ▣ **Gazia**
 - ▣ Low social status, fearful of employers, honest

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Setting

▣ Home

Before marriage - Modest home with garden with huge white flowers

After marriage - Fully furnished government apartment

▣ Club

- ▣ Events at club alluded to by narrator

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Narration

- ▣ **Point of view – 3rd person omniscient**

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Symbolism

- ▣ **Loss of emerald ring**
Inner conflict of Samia as she realizes her husband's control of her and her inability to oppose him
- ▣ **Pat on Samia's cheek**
Beginning of story: Paternalism
End of story - Domination
- ▣ **Smile at end of story**
Compliance

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Themes

- ▣ **Personal autonomy**
- ▣ **Cultural and economic forces as a determining factor in one's life**
- ▣ **Rights, status, and education of women**