

Initial Impressions of
Palace Walk (1956)
by Naguib Mahfouz.

Mahfouz has a very beguiling approach to developing the plot for Palace. Set in Cairo during the First World War, nationalist fervour is rising against the allied powers with mention of Australian soldiers and their abhorrent behaviour towards the Arab populace, which reverberated within what seemed to be the secure, impregnable family home. A family portrait is presented as near perfect in public but in the recesses of each character`s thoughts exist doubt, anger and bitterness. The husband al-Sayyid Ahmad is a proud vain man used to getting his own way in matters of the carnal with, a lack of interest in religious observance; all the while his wife Amina loves and diligently manages their children and home fulfilling all male societal expectations. What Naguib is shows us in the behaviour of his characters is that conceit knows no ethical or religious limits and what unfolds next was entirely predictable.

I haven`t finished the book so may well revise this Initial Impression.

Wilfred Roach.

Wilfred`s 2019 Motto: I won`t die wondering.

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