CHAPTER-IV

Ibrahim Abd al-Qadir al-Mazini: His contribution to Diwan movement

4.1. Life and works of al-Mazini

The distinguished Egyptian writer al-Mazini was famous poet, essayist, novelist, short story writer and critic of modern Arabic literature. A significant figure in the development of modern Egyptian fiction, al-Mazini was also, at different stages of his life, a teacher, journalist and translator. He was born (1890-1949) in Egypt into a relatively poor family. He attended Teacher's Training College, where he met Abdur Rahman Shukri who introduced him to a wide variety of Arabic and European literature. Al-Mazini was much influenced, as was Shukri, by the British Romantic poets and he began to write and translate poems that inflected these readings. Throughout his career al-Mazini was an inveterate borrower, both from his own work and those of others, and this led to charges of plagiarism.

During his early career as a teacher al-Mazini and Shukri joined Al-Aqqad to share their interest in poetry and its criticism. Although the contacts between the poets were fruitful of first, Shukri caused a split in the group by pointing out in print the nature of al-Mazini's borrowings in his poetry. In 1921 al-Aqqad and al-Mazini published an important and iconoclastic work of criticism in two parts called al-Diwan. The naming of the three poets as the Diwan group is the result of this publication, but since al-Mazini's savage attack on Shukri in this publication led to the disintegration of the group the level seems hardly appropriate.[257]

These works were gathering into several collections, of which the most famous are '*Sunduq al-Dunya* (1929) another is *Khuyut al-Ankabut*

[257] Encyclopedia of Arabic literature P-521

(1935). Many of these tales show al-Mazini's delight in aboard and farcical situations. In '*Hallaq al-Qarya*' a city dweller holidaying in the countryside decides that he needs a shave: when the barber arrives it emerges that he is the local sheep-shearer in '*al-lugha al-Arabiyya bi al-Mu'allim*' the narrator astonished by the claims of a language teaching manual he has bought for fun, decides to pose as a Maltese visitor and to tour Cairo using only the resources of the book. In '*Kayf Asbathu ifritan min al-jinn*; al- Mazini exploits the fact that his own home was close to a graveyard to recount a tale of scaring a tomb-visitor out of his wits.

This talent for creating scenarios and filling them with a mischievous humour is also distinctive feature of al-Mazini's longer work of fiction. The most famous among them is '*Ibrahim al-Katib*' (1931), a novel that al-Mazini began to serialize in 1925, then lost in part and reconstructed.[258] This work, which won a prize for novel writings was rightly regarded as a further major step in the development of the Arabic novel in Egypt after Haykal's *Zaynab* (1913) while it shares with the earlier work a strong element of the autobiographical-reflected, in spite of the author's protests to the contrary, in the title it differs from it in many other ways. The Egyptian countryside is no longer a stimulus for romantic reveries but now serves as the location for a rather supercilious picture of rustic values, where al-Mazini's gift for characterization and vignette is much in evidence. The story tells the course of the narrator's love affairs, with three women: Marie who nurses him through an illness, Shushu, his cousin and Layla, who through carrying his child, refuses to marry him once she learns of his affection for Shushu. The novel concentrates more on individual sense and character situations than on the development of a continuing dramatic plot, but by providing a less idealized picture of Egyptian life and customs within a portrait of the life and loves of an Egyptian narrator, al-Mazini clearly advanced the technique of the novel

[258] Mossa Matti, Origin of Modern Arabic fiction. P-328

genre and set an example that was emulated by several other Egyptian writers during the 1930s. his another novel, *Ibrahim al-Thani* (1943), return to the same character, but this story of married man and his infidelities lacks the interest and humour of the earlier work. More significant as contributions to the development of fictional genres are shorter works which show al-Mazini's humorous talents to the full: *Thalathat rijal wa- mra'a* (1943), *Midu wa Shurakauhu* (1943), and Awd ala bad (1943). The first work concerned with attempts to whom, Mahasin, the beautiful daughter of a tyrannical Circassia father. The second worked was typical Mazinian family farce, in which the author experiments to interesting effect with irony and the role of an interfering narrator. In the third works, the narrator find himself in a drum placed into a childhood role while still preserving the mentality of an adult; the resulting disjuncture allow al-Mazini to use his penchant for humour to the fullest and to produce one of his most accomplished works of fiction.[259]

Al-Mazini's works and fiction is notable for the clear and uncluttered prose style in which it is couched. In the debate over the use of colloquial Arabic in dialogue, he chose not to follow the lead of Haykal who, in the limited account of dialogue in '*Zaynab*' had used colloquial Arabic. Al-Mazini decided instead to adopt a form of the written language that managed to convey the spontaneity of speech while preserving the qualities of the written language. In this he was followed by one of his most noted admirers, Nazib Mahfuz.[260] In the context of the development of Arabic fiction in Egypt, al-Mazini's name is one that has reached into the background. At a crucial stage in that process, however, he made a major contribution to several aspects of fictional technique that provided a basic on which the next generation could build.

[259] Paul Starkey, Modern Arabic literature. P-104-105
[260] Encyclopedia of Arabic literature P-522

He also translated many Arabic books and he published journal to Arabic literature. Although the romances and other works of popular fiction continued to be translated and composed in Egypt during the 1920s and few original works of great interest or significance appeared during this period. The next Egyptian writer to produce a work of major significance in the development of what for the moment we may call the 'Non-historical' novel was the writer Ibrahim Abdul Qadir al-Mazini (1890-1949) who in 1931 published *Ibrahim al-katib*. The autobiographical basis for this work is again immediately suggested by its title, though vigorously denied by the author at the time, the work had in fact been started by al-Mazini in the mid 1920s, then lost and reconstructed. The increasing attention being given to novel writing at this time is evidenced by the institution of a novel writing competition, which was won by al-Mazini's work; interest in the novel from had probably in turn been boosted by the republication of Haykal's *Zaynab* in 1929. In the mean time, the autobiographical writing had been stimulated by the appearance in 1926-27 of the first volume of the blind author Taha Hussain (1889-1973) *al-Ayyam* an account of his early childhood in an upper Egyptian village that was itself heavily fictionalized. The work offered the reader, and other novelists not only a psychological insight into Egyptian country life but also a prose style which if slightly idiosyncratic was of exemplary clarity, the first work of modern Arabic literature to become widely known outside the Middle East, it has since been translated into several languages. The impact of the work can only have been increased by the fact that the author was at almost exactly the same time, engaged in a major controversy over a work of literary criticism, "*Fi-al-Shir-al-Jahili*", in which he questioned the authenticity of much pre-Islamic poetry. In the field of imaginative literature the author himself went on to produce a number of novels, beginning with '*Adib*' (1935) and another work in which the autobiographical element is prominent and including also "*Daw al-karwan*" (1942) and "*Sajarat al-bus*" (1944) though his importance

work recognized by the accolade 'Dean of Arabic literature' lies rather in his contribution to the intellectual and educational development of twentieth century Egypt then in his fictional work.[261]

At all events, Ibrahim Abdul Qadir al-Mazini's another work is '*Ibrahim al-Katib*' this work is represents an important development not only in novel writing through the next decade (not least, in the novels of Tawfiq al-Hakim) the plight of the contemporary Egyptian or Arab intellectual, caught between trading and modernity, or to put it in a slightly different way between East and West. In the case of *Ibrahim al-Katib*, the dilemma is played out through the narrator's relations with three women- a Syrian nurse, Marie who nurses him through an illness; his cousin Shushu; and the more westernized Layla, with whom he has a passionate affair but who leaves him after discovers that she is pregnant. Like the earlier novel Zaynab, the novel suffers both from structural fault and from inconsistent characterization, as well as an excessively egotistic outlook to the extent that it has been described by one critic as a novel of self praise. It is clearly represents an advance on its predecessors in terms of its vivid and amusing portraits however, particularly of the minor characters who provide welcome relief from the writer's generally egotistic and self centered outlook. Interestingly, al-Mazini generally rejected Haykal's adoption of colloquial Arabic for dialogue, preferring instead to use a form of straightforward standard Arabic that nonetheless attempted to preserve the vitality of everyday speech this strategy was later also to be used by the Nobel Prize winning novelist Nazib Mahfouz. Most notoriously, however, the work was criticized by al-Mazini's contemporaries for plagiarism. In a preface attached to the work, the author had taken issue with his predecessor Haykal who had maintained that the slow development of the novel in Egypt was due to lack of training in the finer emotions. Al-Mazini argued that it was incorrect to assume that the Egyptian

[261] Paul Starkey, Modern Arabic literature. P-104

novel had to be based on Western models and values, but the work belied his own argument, for it was soon noticed that he had himself inserted into his work same pages from a work by the Russian writer Artsybashev, and this combined with other instances of borrowing in his works, caused his reputation to suffer.[262]

Ibrahim Abul Qadir al-Mazini went on to write a successor to Ibrahim al-Katib entitled *Ibrahim al-Thani* (1943) the title of which itself is perhaps enough to suggest the rather unoriginal nature of the work, in which an older and more melancholy Ibrahim now married, enjoys relationships with two younger women, 'Aida and Mimi' more cerebral than the earlier work. *Ibrahim al-Thani* is largely lacking in the wit and humors of Ibrahim al-Katib and the work of little significance for the development of the Arabic novel. Instead Al-Mazini's talents as a prose writer found more successful expression in a number of shorter work, including '*Thalathat rijal wa mraa*' (1943), '*Midu wa shurakauhu*' (1943), and '*Awd ala-ba'd*' (1943), in which the talents for humour evident in parts of *Ibrahim al-katib* makes a welcome reappearance, if the account of the Arabic novel thus far has given the impression that, after the initial phases. It was an entirely Egyptian affair the impression is probably not an entirely inaccurate one a recent study by Hamdi Sakkut suggest that despite the important contributions to the Arabic literary revival (Nahda) made by writers in Syria and Lebanon in the nineteenth century. No farther, novel of value was produced in Lebanon until the publication of Tawfiq Yusuf "*Awwad's al-Raghif*" in 1934, and more in Syria until the publication of *Shakibal-jahiris naham* in 1937 in Iraq , the first novel worthy of the name '*Dhu al-Num Ayyub's al-Duktur Ibrahim*, appeared in 1934. In other parts of the Arab world development was even slower, in Palestine, for example, the first novel of literary merit arguably did not appear until 1963, when Ghassan Kanafani's novel '*Rijal fi-al-Shams*' was published;

[262] Paul Starkey, Modern Arabic literature. P-104

while in Tanis, despite the publication of forward looking works such as '*Ali al-Duajis*' and another is '*Jawla bayna hanta al-Bahr al-Mutawassit*' as early as 1935, the novel writing did not develop on a large scale until the late 1950s and maybe regarded as essentially a post –colonial phenomenon.[263]

He developed a significant figure of modern Egyptian fiction. He was famous Diwan poet and novelist in the Modern Arabic literature. During his carrier, as a teacher, Al-Mazini and Shukri Joined Al-Aqqad to Share interest in poetry and its criticism. Al - Mazini published an important work of criticism in the parts called "*Al -Diwan*".

By this time Al-Mazini had abandoned a teaching carrier in favour of Journalism and translation. He began also to write short articles vignettes and stories, in which his genius for character and humour were given free rein. Al Mazinis works were gathered into several collections, of which the most famous are "*Sundag al - Dunya*' (1929) "*Khuyut al ankabut*" ((1931) and another is "*Ibrahim al- Katib*" (1935) a novel that Al - Mazini began to serialize in 1925 than last in part and reconstructed, This work which won a prize for a novel writings. Al Mazini clearly advanced the technique of novel genre and set an example that was emulated by several other Egyptian writers during 1930.

Many of these show Al- Mazini delight in Abjured and farcical situations in "*Hallaq al- Qarya*" a city dweller holidaying in the country side decides that he needs a shave when the "barber" arrives, it emerge that he is the local sheep shearer in "*Al- Lugha al- Arabiya fi-ala Muallim*" the narrator, astonished by the claims of a language teaching manual he has bought for fun, decides to pose as a maltase visitors and to tour Cairo using only the resources of the book.

[263] Paul Starkey, Modern Arabic literature. P-105

Al-Mazini and two novel "*Ibrahim al- Thani*" (1943) is an important novel more significant as contribution to the development of fictional genres are shorter work which shows Al-Mazini's humorous talents to the full; "*Thalathat rijal wa mana*" (1943) "*Midu was shurakauhu*" (1943), "*Awd ala ba'd*" (1943). Al-Mazini's fiction is notable for the clear and uncultured prose style in which it is couched, however he made a major contributions to several aspects of fictional technique that provided a basic on which the next generation would build.

4.2. Al-Mazini's contribution to Diwan Movement

He contributed too many newspapers, including *Al-Dostour*, *Al-Akhbar* and *Al- Balagh*. He wrote essays, short stories and reviews. His involvement in the press was one of the most productive and fertile periods of his carrier, where he produced a wealth of multi-sided literary work.[264]

Several factors have contributed to bring about Al Mazini's outstanding status in the realm of literature.

1. His instinct propensity and dedication to literature: Al-Mazini had an instinctive love and deep interest in literature.

2. This propensity was developed through his readings of the works of prominent Arabic classical writers, such as Al Jahez, Ibn Al Rumi, Al Sharif Al Radhi, Abul Alaa Al Ma'arri, Al-Asfahani and Ibn Al Faredh.

3. His perfect command of English enabled him to study thoroughly English literature masterpieces, especially the romantic and realistic schools.

[264] Arthur Goldschmidt, Al Mazini, Ibrahim Abd al-Qadir. Biographical Dictionary of Modern Egypt. P-126-127

4. The religious environment where he was brought up stimulated him to conduct thorough study and comparison of religions.

5. His involvement in the press and teaching obviously influenced his simple and clear style of writing.

Al Mazini as a poet

His poetry expressed a truthful and genuine nature and an outstanding ability. Moreover, he gave up poetry because of his preoccupation with the nationalist activities of the 1919 Revolution. Dr. Muhammad Mandur, a renowned Egyptian critic, believes that by God's blessing, Al Mazini was made to give up poetry for prose, for Arabic literature was rather influenced by his prose which was the best written at his time. His poetry is compiled in a collection of poems in two parts entitled "Al Mazini"[265]

Al Mazini as a prose writer

Al Mazini's personality had a clear effect on his literature in general, and his prose in particular. He had a first-hand experience of the agonies of life as his nation suffered from ignorance, disease, deprivation and colonialist domination. The focus in his literature was on his own experience and that of his nation. His prose writings covered various genres including essays, novels, short stories and translations.

Al Mazini as an essayist

Al Mazini is considered one of the early pioneers who promoted the art of essay writing. He carefully selected his topics. His essays covered several themes such as:

[265] Arthur Goldschmidt, Al Mazini, Ibrahim Abd al-Qadir. Biographical Dictionary of Modern Egypt. P-126-127

1. His autobiography
2. Surrounding environment
3. National and social topics
4. Criticism

Al Mazini as a Translator

Al Mazini is considered the most outstanding translator known in modern times. Among the members of the 'Modern school' of translation, perhaps the most famous translator was Ibrahim Abd al-Qadir al-Mazini (d.1949) he was considered by many of his contemporaries to have converted translation into a true literary art. His career was shaped by his sad childhood, his physical deformity, and the family troubles which gave him a deep-rooted inferiority complex he was never able to overcome. Al-Mazini's interest in translations from English was a natural outgrowth of his work in World War I, translating war dispatches and telegrams. In the 1920s, Al-Mazini contributed some translations of fiction to *al-Bayan*, a periodical with which he had been associated since 1907, and to such newspapers as *al-Akhabr*, *al-Ittihad*, *al-Siyassa*, and *al-balagh*.[266] He translated Oscar Wilde's Lord Arthur Savile's Crimes and other stories; H.Rider haggard's Allan Quarter main, and Richard Brinsley Sheridan's school for scandal. Then he went on to John Galsworthy's the fugitive, the Russian Artsibashev's Sanine, which he translated from an English version, entitling it *Ibn al-Tabi'a* (The son of nature), and H.G. Wells' The Time Machine.

In addition, al-Mazini produced *Mukhtarat min al-Qisas al-Ingilizi* (select English stories, Cairo, 1939), an anthology including English stories by writers such as Charles Dickens, Oscar Wilde, and H.G. Wells. In his introduction to this volume, al-Mazini explains that his sole purpose in

[266] Mossa Matti, Origin of Modern Arabic fiction. P-116

choosing and translating particular works was to project the style of the original writer, not that of the translator. He says that he adheres so strictly to the original that his translation may be considered literal, but admits that he has had to omit some phrases for lack of suitable Arabic equivalents. He uses some colloquial terms which may be incorrect but were found in Arabic lexicons and literary works. Also, he skipped translating some lines because he could not fully understand their contents.[267]

Al-Mazini's stated purpose is borne out by the testimony of his life-long friend and sometimes co author Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad, who says that he knew no one in Eastern or Western literature with a " translation genius" comparable to that of al-Mazini. He pointed out that al-Mazini translated prose in an elegant and rhetorical style likes that of al-Jahiz (d.868) or Khalid ibn Safwan (d.757), while to translate Western verse he uses the style of the Arab poets al-Buhturi (d.897) and al-Sharif al-Radi (d.1016). Moreover, claims al-Aqqad, he translated without losing so much as a letter of word and without altering the sense of the original.

This claim is hardly credible: while al-Mazini is generally considered a first –rate translator, often he appears quite careless. His version of Well's The Time Machine, for example, omits many words and terms for which suitable Arabic equivalents were readily available. Moreover, he interpolates many terms on his own initiative and uses other words and phrases whose meanings do not correspond to the original, and he leaves some terms UN translated because he apparently could not understand their proper meaning.

Most serious, however was the charge of plagiarism leveled against al-Mazini. In 1920 he had translated Mikhail Petrovich Artsibashev's sanine from an English version made by Percy Pinkerton in 1915, and he afterwards 'incorporated' parts of this work in his own novel *Ibrahim al-Katib* (Ibrahim

[267] Mossa Matti, Origin of Modern Arabic fiction. P-117

the writer), published in 1931. Some critics affirm that apparently al-Mazini had borrowed parts of the Russian novel, while others contend merely that his protagonist, Ibrahim, has some traits in common with Sanine.[268]

Al-Mazini defended himself by saying that he never intended to copy parts of the Russian novel, but that some of its scenes and incidents may have remained fixed in his mind when he wrote *Ibrahim al-katib* a decade later in short, the similarity between the two works is sheer coincidence. That he loosely used parts of Galsworthy's drama The fugitive, which he published under the Arabic title *Gharizar al-Mar'a aw hukm al-Ta'a* (woman's instinct of sentenced to Obey), was shown by Muhammad Ali Hammad in a series of articles published in *al-Balagh* and later collected in a book titled *al-Mi'wal* (Pickax). By comparing Galsworthy's text closely with that of al-Mazini, Hammad showed that al-Mazini's originality in this work consisted solely of changing the proper names into Arabic. There was some truth also in the allegation that in writing his *Rihlat al-Hijaz* (al-Hijaz's journey), al-Mazini was influenced by mark Twain's travel narrative the innocents abroad. He also used parts of other works by Twain among them Tom Sawyer, which became *al-Sighar wa al-kibar* (The young and the Old); The interview, which he titled *al-Haqaiq al-Bariza fi hayati* (prominent Realities in my life); Adam's Diary, which became *Muqtatafat min Mudhakkria hawwa fi al-janna* (select memories of Eve in Paradise). These works were incorporated with *Ba'd al-Khuruj min al-janna* (after the Expulsion from paradise) into his book *Sunduq al-dunya* (Kaleidoscope, Cairo, 1929). This volume also contains his adaptation of Washington Irving's Rip Van Winkle, with the Arabic title *al-Ghurfa al-Mashura* (The Enchanted Room). Whether, al-Mazini "Plagiarized" or a "used" part of Western literature is not important. What is important is his most exquisite from of translation which, I think, has been yet matched. He is the Arab translator Par excellence of modern times.

[268] Mossa Matti, Origin of Modern Arabic fiction. P-117

In the decade between 1920 and 1930, many translator were busy condensing novels and translating short stories which they published either in journals like *al-Siyasa al-usbuiyya* (political weekly), or in anthologies (Mukhtarat). Among these translators, working chiefly with French sources, were Muhammad kamil Hajjaj, Aziz Abd Allah Salam, Faraj Gibran, Tawfiq Abd Allah, Muhammad Abd Allah Inan, and Kamil Gaylan.

Although much of the attention of the translators was devoted to unsophisticated works of Western fiction, many qualified writers and men of letters made a sincere effort to put before the educated Arab reader artistic and substantial works. In the period between the two world wars *Lajnat al-Talif wa-al-Tarjama wa al- Nashr* (writing, translation, and publication committee) attempted to choose, translate, and publish much worthwhile Western fiction. Besides the anthology of English and American stories made by al-Mazini this committee also published Hardy's Tess of the d'Urbervilles, translated by Fakhri Abu al-Su'ud; Goethe's Hermann und Dorothea, translated by Muhammad Awad Muhammd; and Egmont, translated by Muhammad Ibrahim al-Dasuqi. *Dar al-katib al-Misri* (The Egyptian writer publishing house), under the supervision of the celebrated writer Taha Hussain (d.1973) was responsible for the publication of such works as Voltaire's Zadig and Andre Gide's Oedipus Theses, both of which were translated by Hussain Himself; H.G. Well's The food of the Gods, translated by Muhammad Bardan; Aldous Huxley's Brave New World, translated by Muhammad Mahmud; Oscar Wilde's The Picture of Dirian Gray and the Cantervile ghost, both done by Louis Awad. Franco Mauriac's the Mother, translated by Muhammad Abd al-Hamid Anbar, and Le Naud de Vipers (vipers Tangle), by Nazih al Hakim; Stendhal's Le Chartreuse De Parme, by Abd al-Hamid al-Dawakhili; and Prospe Merimee's Colomba by Muhammad Ghallab.

The works of other Western authors, including Maurice Rise, Anto Chekhov, and Ivan Turgenev, were translated by such men as Muhammad Abd al-Hamid Anbar, Abd al-Hamid Abdin, Mahud Tahir lashin Mamud abd al-Munim Murad, Abd al-Rahman Badawi and Mahmud al-Shaniti.

The influenced of these translations was certainly enormous. There is hardly a writer in the Modern Arab World who has not in some way of other been affected by Western fiction. Translations not only introduction the Arab writers of fiction to Western techniques and assisted in preparing many of them for their craft, but also changed the Arabic language by the infusion of many borrowed words which remain in the language. Through imitation and adoption and even through outright plagiarism Arab writers learned their craft well enough to create a body of fiction available so only Arabic readers.[269]

At the very least, the translations from Western authors provided entertainment for the reading public and shattered the traditional view that fiction was worthless and even detrimental to its readers. Not until the Arab world was disabused of this notion could prose fiction exist on a par with those literary genres which had traditionally enjoyed a dignified position in the Arab culture. He is also known to be most accurate in selecting phrases and vocabulary in translation. The most important works he translated included the plays: "The Fugitive Woman", "The Son of Nature" and "The School for Scandal".

Poet and critic

Ibrahim Abdul Qadir al-Mazini was famous poet and critic in modern Arabic literature. He graduates from the Teacher's Training College in Egypt. After he graduating from the Teacher's Training College in 1909, al-Mazini taught first at the Khedivial School, and then at Dar al-Ulum, from which he

[269] Mossa Matti, Origin of Modern Arabic fiction. P-119

resigned in 1914, after possibly having been reassigned (and assigned to teach a minor subject) due to one of his critiques offending Hishmat Pasha, the Minister of Education. From 1914 to 1918 he taught a series of private Schools, sometimes the same ones as al-Aqqad. During this period, his two collections of poetry were published one in 1913, and one in 1917. Though influential for the Egyptian revivalist poetry of the 1910s, his poetry was accused of being too heavily based on both European and classical influences, an accusation he didn't greatly dispute; and after 1917 he published very little additional poetry.[270]

Unsatisfied with teaching, al-Mazini became a full-time journalist in 1918, writing initially for the newspaper *Wadi al-Nil* in Alexandria and then for a series of newspapers with varying political perspectives generally united only in being opposed to the Wafd Party. He continued to publish literary criticism and in 1921 co-wrote the critical work al-Diwan with al-Aqqad, which included an attack on the conservative literary establishment represented by writers such as Mustafa Lutifi al-Manfaluti and Ahmed Shawqi. Ibrahim Abdul Qadir al-Mazini, Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad and Abdur Rahman Shukri became known as the Diwan group, which was greatly influenced by English lyric poetry and emphasized poetry that conveyed the poet's experience and emotion[271] as well as avoiding social and political commentary.

Novelist and essayist

Ibrahim Abdul Qadir al-Mazini began writing prose in the mid 1920s, and he completed his first novel, *Ibrahim al-Katib* (Ibrahim the writer) in 1925-26, though it didn't receive publication until 1931. Upon its publication, it was considered a landmark in Egyptian literature, "probably the first novel

[270] Brugman.J, An introduction to the History of Modern Arabic literature in Egypt. P-138-147
[271] Paul. Starkey, Modern Egyptian culture in the Arab world. P-401-408

to depend primarily for its well-recognized fame on its artistic value" rather than for its social, political, or historical views as was common in Egyptian literature of the time.[272]

Despite the novel's positive reception al-Mazini forsook novel-writing for political and narrative essay-writing from 1931 to 1943; some of his writings from this period were published in two collections, *Khuyut al-Ankabut* (Spider Webs, 1935) and another collection is *Fi al-tariq* (On the Road, 1937). He also during that time helped found the Egyptian journalists syndicate in 1941, and served as its first vice-president. The break in his novel career may have been related to a plagiarism controversy, as *Ibrahim al-katib* contained several pages from a Russian novel al-Mazini had previously translated.

In 1943, he published a sequel to *Ibrahim al-Katib* entitled *Ibrahim al-Thani* (Ibrahim the second) as well as three additional novels in quick succession. Late in life, he was elected to both the Arab Academy of Damascus and Academy of Arabic language in Cairo.

4.3. Al-Mazini as a Diwan poet in Modern Arabic literature

Al-Mazini was distinguished Egyptian Diwan poet in modern Arabic literature. He was one of the Diwan writer and he development many poems in modern Arabic literature. He wrote various types of poems in modern Arabic language and literature. He also wrote modern Arabic novel, essays, short story, prose and poetry. The subjective element in Mazini's poetry is paramount; in the whole body of his collected poems there are no more than four poems dealings with themes of public interest his poems have an atmosphere of romantic sadness; in them the poet complains, in the manner of Shelley of the world of life and time. They are after all mostly poems of

[272] Hamid Sakkut, The Arabic Novel: Bibliography and critical introduction, 1865-1995. P-20-21

adolescence. Al-Mazini wrote about 'The faded Rose' 'Dead flowers, 'the saying poet, and 'life is bat a dream. In the second volume of his Diwan (1917) a whole section, including no less than twenty eight poems is devoted to the subject reflections on solitude.[273]

The famous poet of Diwan groups, al-Mazini's poetry deals with a number of his favorite themes ranging from unrequited love, the worship of beauty and the devotion to poetry, the lover seeking comfort in nature, especially its wilder aspects, his loneliness and despair and his welcoming of death. Al-Mazini translated or adopted a number of English poems by Shakespeare, Milton, Waller, Burns Shelley. His borrowings or plagiarism from Western writers have become notorious ever since Shukri pointed out some of them in the introduction to volume five of his collected works. Al-Mazini seems to pile up violent, grotesque, dark and terrifying images in an attempt to evoke a sublime atmosphere. The poet's feelings of despondency and despair which are expressed in many poems besides, such as- 'Meditations in the dark' and 'Desolation of life' in terms which are patently melodramatic, are partly a consciously adopted posture, in which suffering is cultivated for its own sake, and which is the result of the poet's excessively solemn self image all the more surprising in a man, who eventually proved to be one of the greatest concept of the poet, humorists and masters of the ironic style in modern Arabic literature.[274]

The concepts of al-Mazini's poet as primarily a man of sensibility who wrote about his suffering is upper most in al-Mazini's mind, perhaps even more so then in those of the rest of the Diwan groups. It was their awareness of their own suffering as poets that bond the three poets tighter as its clearly seen in the poem addressed by al-Mazini to Shukri entitled 'The vanity and futility of life' al-Mazini held that the poet, more sensitive men are, the

[273] Badawi, M.M, A critical introduction to Modern Arabic poetry. P-105
[274] Badawi, M.M, A critical introduction to Modern Arabic poetry. P-107-108

greater in their suffering. And because they suffer, Mazini says in the poet's consolation, the poets can bring comfort to the lonely and the suffering. Al-Mazini's poetry was, then an expression of the malaise of the Egyptian intellectual, at a time of insecurely hovering between Arab and Western values. In that sense it is an authentic record, despite the poets heavy and at times unacknowledged indebtedness to Abbasid poets on the one hand and to English poets on the other and despite his wavering between the European Romantic themes and Abbasid idiom, and his not very successful experimentation in form; in the use of rhyming couplet's, his experiment rhyme and even his use of blank verse in his translation of lines from Milton's paradise lost.

Similarly, in a humorous poem in the third volume of his Diwan published posthumously in 1961, entitled 'look at my face' he makes fun of himself and of his physical appearance- a theme common in his prose writings. It is in this volume that we find one or two of al-Mazini's best poems in which the tone of the poetry is less strident and the effect is much more moving. Despite some obscurities this title known poem is perhaps al-Mazini's most nature work. A much more impressive poem is 'the conflict' a work hitherto totally ignored by critics. It is a long philosophic poem of over three hundred lines written significantly enough in monometer and monorhyme. So, al-Mazini was the Diwan poet in modern Arabic literature.

4.4. Important themes of al-Mazini's poetry

Al-Mazini was considering the most outstanding poet known in modern Arabic literature. He was well-known of poetry writer in Egypt of Diwan Movement. He expressed his poetry some of importance themes in modern Arabic language and literature. The important themes of al-Mazini's poetry are paramount, in the whole body of his collected poems there are no more than four poems dealing with themes of public interest. His poems have

an atmosphere of romantic sadness. In this poem, which contain more than 200 lines and a single rhyme thought, the poet deals with a number of his favorite themes, ranging from unrequited love, the worship of beauty and the devotion of poetry, the lover seeking comfort in nature especially its wilder aspects his loneliness and despair and his welcoming death. The themes of poetry are problem, akin to that which faced the age Yeats: an old man troubled with his last and his fascination with the world of the sense, his love of beauty and beautiful young woman.[275] Al-Mazini's collection of poems, the poetry of Hafiz, 'poetry', its aims and media, Bashar bin Bord, life story, Trip to Hegaz, in vain and the Harvest of dry Stack, all this are collection of poems of al-Mazini. In his themes of poetry he tried to express internal emotions, not only their response towards external sense. He advocated the abandonment of classical themes and metaphors, diction, simile and images, and the expression of true emotion and personality or as T.S.Eliot Argued, the escape from their emotion and personality. He called for organic unity in the poem and its theme, not only in its rhyme and metre and he advocated the avoidance of exaggeration and blind imitation of classical poetry.

Al-Mazini expressed his themes of his poetry a truthful and genuine nature and outstanding ability. The revolution of this Diwan school against conventional themes in Arabic poetry can be detected in their works the strove against elegy, eulogy, panegyric and defamatory poetry, against the traditional poetic diction of embellished style hiding hackneyed and trite ideas and against the fixed rhyme of the Arabic Qasida. So, they renounced the themes and conventional poetry of Egyptian poets who represented the rich upper class, and who considered themselves the representatives of the actual welfare of Egypt and of the Egyptian people. The second collection added title to the first, al-Mazini's poetic themes creed is to be found in the poem '*al-Shair*' where he exclaims that 'poetry is nothing but a long pent up scream' the echo

[275] Badawi, M.M, A critical introduction to Modern Arabic poetry. P-105

of which resound in the secrecy of our heart. Yet al-Mazini's theme of poetry forms an integral part of modern Egyptian literature. Despite his limitation, he played a significant role in the revivalist movement in Egyptian poetry between 1910 and 1920.[276] Al-Mazini was made to give up poetry for prose, for Arabic literature was rather influenced by his prose which was the best written at his time. His theme of poetry is complied in a collection of poems in two parts entitled al-Mazini. At last, al-Mazini's theme of poetry expressed to the Diwan groups and development of modern Arabic literature.

4.5. Al-Mazini as a Novelist

The position of Ibrahim Abdul Qadir al-Mazini (1890-1945) in modern Egyptian literature remains secure. He was one of the chief literary figures of the generation of Taha Hussain and Al-Aqqad. He had already distinguished himself as a poet, critic and essayist before he became known as a novelist and short story writer. In 1921 he collaborated with al-Aqqad in publishing the two iconoclastic volumes of literary criticism known as al-Diwan, in which they mercilessly attacked the literary establishment of the time. Al-Mazini was also an accomplished translator from English. In this study, however, I intend to discuss only one aspect of al-Mazini is multifarious activity, namely his contribution to the Egyptian novel. Lately al-Mazini the novelist seems to have been undergoing a process of revolution. Conflicting claims have been made for him, ranging from the ascertain that in the fiction he has given eloquent expression to a profound existentialist experience to the denial that he wrote any novels at all since his works are no more than autobiographical accounts. It seems necessary therefore to try to reach an impartial assessment of his novels in an attempt to define the nature of his contribution to the development of the Egyptian and hence the Arab world.[277]

[276] Brugman.J, An introduction to the History of Modern Arabic literature in Egypt. P-145
[277] Badawi. M.M, Modern Arabic literature and the West. P-136

Al-Mazini wrote five novels in the entire first is *Ibrahim al-Katib* (Ibrahim the writer), was published in 1931and its significance was recognized almost immediately by professor Hamilton Gibb and others. The other four all appeared in 1943, though clearly they must have been written at different times before that date. They are *Ibrahim al-Thani*; (Ibrahim the second), *Thalathat Rijal walmara'a* (Three man and women), *Midu wa Shurakah* (Midu and co) and Awd ala-Bad, (starting all over again).

All though *Ibrahim al-Katib* came out in 1931, in the preface al-Mazini tells us that he wrote it between 1925 and 1926, and while it was in the press several years later, parts of its second half were lost and the author therefore had rewrite them. Such a long time, however, had clasped since he first wrote his novel that al-Mazini, having forgotten his original work, felt while rewriting those parts as if he were completing somebody else's unfinished work. Al-Mazini goes on to mention a number of points in the preface: first, the peculiar manner of its composition, the author began writing in the middle part then moved on to the novel and of the book, working his way back ward until he reached his initial point of departure. Later he felt that he ought to start earlier still, so he wrote what in the published version appears as part I. this peculiar made of writing is in fact in keeping with al- Mazini's eccentric and playful imagination which in many ways is reminiscent of that of Laurence stern, the author of Tristram Shandy, Al-Mazini's whimsical playfulness also reveals itself in the obviously fictitious story which he tells about narrating the substance of his book as the story of his life to an Austrian woman journalist who had told him the story of her troubled life, and to whom he felt he had to relate his own experiences, but not having any worth mentioning he deliberately intended what he thought she would be interested to hear. The point of Al-Mazini's story seems to be to show the reader that he is aware of the inconsequential ending of his novel and therefore to forestall any adverse criticism that might be leveled at him on this score. It is obviously

a naïve device for Al-Mazini knew, as well as any critic, that a novel is one thing and a story of real life is another. Despite the claims of the novena Roman School, in a novel there must be an end that is formally necessitated by the logic of events. Indeed, when he came to discuss the question of the language of the dialogue in the same preface, Al-Mazini clearly and rightly asserted that literal imitation of reality is meaningless, for literature is an art and not a mere imitation or copy.[278]

However, in a typical Maziniyan manner having suggested interestedly of course, a comparison between himself and the hero of his novel, he hastens to deny any connection what so ever between the two (in spite of the fact that the reader knows that the hero shares his first name and occupation with the author), protesting too much against the possibility of equating the two, Al-Mazini announces his complete disapproval of the character and behavior of his hero, emphasizes the points of difference between them in temperament, outlook, attitudes and general experiences. Unlike his hero, Al-Mazini states that he is indifferent, un philosophically minded, cheerful, modest, loving, tolerant and in short, a confirmed believer that this is the best of all possible words. The only resemblance between the two is, the author says, that both are short and ugly. Unlike the hero, Al-Mazini says he is lame into the bargain and wishes his hero and not himself were the lame one, readers of Al-Mazini know at once that Ibrahim is nothing but the author himself, and that the picture he draws of himself in the preface is in a way a product of wishful thinking; it is only the surface that hides the dark depths underneath.

Other points raised in the preface relate to two important aspects of the question of the Egyptian novel. The first is the language of the dialogue. He only used a colloquial word whenever the literary equivalent would sound discordant and out of place. His reason is that if all dialogue was to be given

[278] Badawi. M.M, Modern Arabic literature and the West. P-137

in the colloquial language, the best part of the novel would have to be written in that idiom since in a novel dialogue occupies such a large space. This would be undesirable because of the deficiency of the spoken language, its inability to express many things and its instability, and because the literary language is gaining in flexibility, scope and polish all the time. In this connection the comparison with western languages is not valid, because on the whole the educated speakers of Arabic do not any way the novels, as an art, should not be a photographic copy of reality.[279]

The second concerns the position and future of the Arabic novel. Unlike some of his colleagues whose opinions he respects, Al-Mazini does not believe that the nature of Egyptian life is not favorable to the development of the novel in the way the western novel has developed. In any case, it was wrong to think that all novels should follow the pattern of the western novel, for each nation has its own characteristic mode of life and even within the western novel not all novels are of the same type. Just as there is specifically Russian novelistic art, different from the English, French, German or American, there is no reason why a specifically Egyptian type of novel should not arise. Obviously, he argued, it was not necessary that all the events in a novel should take place in public places, where the Egyptian woman, who to some extent was still veiled, was unable to go. Even so the evil was not perm anent. It was found more in certain classes than in others and in towns rather than in the country. Furthermore, in the context of Egyptian life with its peculiar traditions and customs, when analyzed, love would be found to be an emotion different from the type of love produced by life in the west. But Al-Mazini asked, whoever said that the novel could only be of the western variety, or that love was the only emotion round which a novel revolved, surely love is not the sole business that occupies people's minds and lives. As

[279] Ibrahim al-Katib (Iajnat al-nashr Ii 'I jami iyyin Cairo, 1945) P-8-9

has been pointed out in this powerful argument al-Mazini was obviously replaying to the reasoning of people like Haykal. [280]

Yet strangely enough, when we turn to Al-Mazini's first novel Ibrahim al-Katib, we find that in it love does occupy a central position: the novel, infant deals with the hero's relationship with three different women.

As in Haykal's novel, *Zaynab* the action begins in the country, where the hero Ibrahim is staying for some times as a guest of his relation, the well to do landowner Sheikh Ali. Ibrahim is a twenty eight years old author who, after the loss of his wife and all his children except one, goes to live with his mother. He goes into hospital for an operation and while in hospital he meets Mary, who nurses him. Mary is pale sensitive and fragile looking woman not lacking in beauty, a Syrian by birth, she was brought up in a convent school, Marries a young Italian who unfortunately dies only three years after their marriage, leaving her a widow with a child to look after. She therefore takes up dressmaking, then nursing. Ibrahim and Mary fall in love, the similarity of their unfortunate situation draws them together and they have an affair which lasts some time after he has been discharged from hospital. Ibrahim however, realizes before long that their relationship has become something of a problem. He feels that he cannot marry her (we are not told exactly why) and at the same time that she would not be contented with the position of a mistress. Even if she wanted to remains his mistress, he thought, this would not solve his problem, as what he reality seeks is the peace and quiet of married loved, which he sets above anything else. In an attempt to put an end to what seems to him to be a pointless relationship, he decides to leave Cairo for a while and spend some time in the country with his relations.[281]

[280] Hamilton Gibb, Studies on the civilization of Islam. P-296-301
[281] Badawi. M.M, Modern Arabic literature and the West. P-139

There he meets his cousin Shushu, when he knew very well and loved as a child. But Shushu is seventeen years old now, a young attractive woman whose vitality and developed body make her look a few years older than she actually is; she has had a French education and read scores of love novels. Gradually, and without either of them realizing what is happening, her affection for him turns into a woman's love. He in his turn is both embarrassed and surprised when he discovers that his attitude towards her has changed and that he too has fallen in love with her. At first they both seems helpless in their new situation, caught in the grip of their passion, but soon Ibrahim tells Shushu that it is imperative that they should weed out their love and learn to look upon one another once more as brother and sister, since it is clear that they cannot Marry: Shushu has an older sister, Samiha who is twenty one and custom and tradition make it virtually impossible for the younger sister to Marry before the older. In the meantime, Samiha encouraged by the eldest sister, the lady of the house, the old fashioned Najiyya who, like Mrs Bennett is anxious to marry off the nubile girls, tries to arouse, Ibrahim's interest in her love. Ibrahim however, cannot bear Samiha and her chasing him has the opposite effect to what she has intended, for it drives him away from the village to Alexandria, where he stays in a house that belongs to Shaykh Ali. During his stay there a burglary occurs, which brings the whole family down to Alexandria. When he sees Shushu again his love for her gets the better of him and so he proceeds to ask for her hand. Oddly enough, Najiyya's refused to give her consent to the marriage of the younger sister comes upon him as a surprise. He is peeved and his pride is hurt. He leaves the house at once without so much as saying goodbye to his hostess, Najiyya and in an attempt to get over his love for Shushu he goes as far away as Luxor.[282]

[282] Badawi. M.M, Modern Arabic literature and the West. P-140

While in Luxor he makes the acquaintance of Layla, a twenty six year old attractive woman of great intelligence and strong personality. She is obviously much Europeanized; otherwise she would neither be in Luxor alone, nor get to know Ibrahim so easily. They fall in love and as she does not believe in marriage they have an affair which she is only too happy to continue on analyzing his feelings. Ibrahim discovers that his love for Layla has not driven away his deep attachment to Shushu: he is in love with the two women, the innocent and inexperienced Shushu as well as the mature and sophisticated Layla. At the same time his tender feeling for the fragile Mary, who brings out in him his protective impulses, has not quite died out. In fact, we are meant to understand that Ibrahim loves the three women at once, although each of them obviously appeals to a different part of himself. During his sojourn in Luxor, Ibrahim falls ill with pneumonia and is nursed by layla (here we have a certain parallelism between Marry and Layla except of course, that the later is already in love with him when she nurses him). As his condition suddenly gets worse she feels the need to know about his people, just in case he has to contact them, and she therefore gives herself the liberty of opening his letters, which he has mysteriously kept unopened in a large envelope. She finds Shushu's letter and Sheikh Ali's and learns that Shushu is deeply in love with him and that her people are against their marriage. She does not feel jealous (since she assumes that he is not in love with her) but feels great pity for the girl.

Not hearing from Ibrahim, Sheikh Ali decides to telephone him in Luxor, and learning that he is ill, he and Dr. Mahmud, a family friend and admirer of Shushu proceed at once to see him in Luxor. After a number of amusing situations in which Sheikh Ali finds himself with Layla as a result of misunderstanding, they see Ibrahim who introduces Layla to them as his wife. Sheikh Ali is shocked at the news of his marriage, but when alone with Layla the latter tells him the truth about their relationship, find out from him

about Shashu. It is not, however without a terrible inner conflict that she is able to carry out her promise to Sheikh Ali especially as she realizes that she is carrying Ibrahim's child. The movement of the agonizing decision comes when Ibrahim asks her seriously to Marry him, and in order to put him off she tells him a pack of lies about her past designed to arouse his disgust at her promiscuity. She does not let him know that she is carrying his child. The trick seems to have some effect upon him, but does not succeed in alienating him. Heartbroken, she does however, disappear one day, learning behind a latter to him in which she lets him believe that all her love for him has been mere pretence and dissimulation and that she has gone too far and that her lies may hurt him deeply, she stealthy walks into his room and retrieves she letter, unaware that he has already seen its contents. The shock overwhelms him and he is filled with disgust. Eighteen months later he hears that she is now happily a married (She, in fact, marries the doctor who arranges for her abortion) though she still seems to love Ibrahim. Ibrahim returns to Marry and learns later that Shushu has married Dr. Mahmud, even though her older sister is not married yet. He tries to convince himself that her love for him was not real love, that at her age she was ready to fall in love with any man. Unlike layla, she being more of atypical Egyptian girl, did not single him out from among many men she knew. His second affairs with Marry does not last very long, as one day he calls on her to find her asleep, and for some eccentric reason, the sight of her asleep puts him off altogether. The novel end with a poetic passage in which Ibrahim, who has taken refuge in the desert, is lost and baffled, and records his meditations on the incomprehensible mixture of joy and sorrow in human life.[283]

As ready stated *Ibrahim al-Katib* is a novel that attempts to deal primarily with love. This much it has in common with *Zaynab* but unlike that novel, it has on reformist intention. It does not attempt to deal with my social

[283] Badawi. M.M, Modern Arabic literature and the West. P-141

problem. Unless we take Ibrahim's inability to Marry Shushu and his subsequent in happiness to be designed by the author to show the evil results of the social custom of not allowing the younger sister to Marry before the older. Bur even so the author seems to defect his own purpose when he makes Shushu and marry before Samiha after all. In this respect them the absence of direct moral or social aim certainly makes *Ibrahim al-Katib* a purer work of fiction them Zaynab. Yet the novel tends to have too many passages of general meditations for instance, observations on the psychology of women philosophical remarks on the infinite Varity of God's world, on mind and matter, on the moral and spiritual shortcomings of all civilizations, Ancient Egyptian, Assyrian, Roman, British and American, on the vanity of this world etc. such observations and general remarks may indeed being keeping with the character of the hero, who after all is a writer nevertheless, they tend to impede the flow of narrative and elegy of the novel, thus making certain parts of it read more like essay writing still, on the whole, al-Mazini's works constitutes a step further than Haykal's for the former seems to have its justifications in itself and its author is not out to preach. But he is simply writing a work of the imagination.[284]

Another important difference between *Zaynab* and *Ibrahim al-Katib* is that the latter is not such a thorough going Romantic work. Indeed there are some romantic's elements in the later novel, Shushu's character is often delineated in Romantic terms, and she has a yearning for the unknown her beauty definitely belongs to a Romantic world. When falls in love, the world is transfigured in her eyes and the glowing terms in which the whole of her experience of love is described have many of the characteristic of romantic poetry.[285] There is even some sentimentality. Sheikh Ali is reduced to tears when he sees the signs of suffering on the face of the disappointed Shushu and

[284] Badawi. M.M, Modern Arabic literature and the West. P-142
[285] Ibid. , P-85

her tearful eyes. But unlike Haykal, Mazini rejects Rousseau's Romantic primitivism. Man in a state of nature is not regarded as an object of admiration, for according to Ibrahim, he can only lead a lawless life. Moreover, there is an interesting feature in Ibrahim al-Katib, which seems to recur with striking regularity, namely the juxtaposition between the Romantic and the anti-romantic, for every Romantic or pathetic seems to be deliberately followed by a comic or humorous one. This feature seems to me to be so significant, that I feel I ought to cite a few examples.

Immediately after the Romantic portrait of Shushu in the opening chapter, we meet the humorous figure of Ahmed al-Mayyit (dead Ahmed), who lives in a world of fantasy and drink, has his own peculiar and fixed chronology of modern Egyptian monarchs and insists that he is dead, and then we get a humorous account of the herds adventures with Shushu's ferocious looking dogs. Again he immediately chose after another Romantic passage, describing Shushu's rare beauty. We are introduced to the comic character of Shushu's eldest sister, the pot bellied Najiyya, who believes in gins and spirits and all manner of superstition and refuses to accept anything modern, insists on not using electric light and on bathing herself in an old fashioned tab and claims that food, indeed over eating is the care for diseases, from headaches to collies and fevers, has not faith in doctors, whose sole business is to shorten people's lives, and believes that hospitals are slaughter house inhabited by the ghosts and spirits of the departed victims.[286]

Likewise, after a romantic disquisition on the suffering of humanity, we get a deliberately anti-Romantic description of real life: a noisy cow has suddenly woken up at 3 am and disturbed the hero much more than all the noise of traffic and the cries of street hawkers in Cairo could do:

The peace that is supposed to be found in the

[286] Ibid. , P-27

Country is only a myth, for when nature is silent

Cows are roused. Whoever seeks calm and

Tranquility and deep sleep in the country must

Come to it armed with a supply of aspirins and pills

Sufficient both for himself and for the cows, if need be[287]

Such is the hero's or the author's advice.

A very good example of this juxtaposition occurs at the point when Ibrahim and Shushu discover that they are in love after a Romantic description of the lovers, in their separate bedrooms, unable to sleep because of their ecstatic feelings and because of their brooding on the meaning and future of the passion they have just developed for each other, we immediately get one of the most memorable comic episodes in the novel, when late at night, in order to satisfy a childish curiosity, Shushu sends Fatima, the negro maid, whom Ibrahim cannot bear, to find out whether Ibrahim is like herself, sleepless. This has unfortunate results. Fearing that the noise he hears is that of a burglar, Ibrahim arranges the bed cloths to make it look as if he was lying in bed, and in terror hides besides the door of the room in readiness to slip out the moment the intrudes comes into the room. At the last minute he changes his mind and mustering untypical courage, he swoops on the intruder only to discover it Fatima whom he has knocked down. Here the author obviously takes delight in poking fun at the lovers and the servant alike.

One final example, after we see Sheikh Ali crying is sympathy with the suffering Shushu we next find him with his huge and corpulent body out of breath and chasing a ball with his tiny child in the garden of the house.

[287] Ibid. , P-71-73

Although this feature tends to disappear toward the end of the novel, where the dark shadows close in upon the hero, it occurs, practically throughout the work with such regularity that it must be a habit of the author's mind. It is not simply a deliberate use of comic relief. And the effect of this on the reader is that whatever excess may be contained in the Romantic or pathetic scene is removed or neutralized by the humor, the anti climax or deliberate bathos of the scene or situation immediately following. These things subsequently assume their real proportions and fall into their proper perspective. Moreover, unlike the characters of the lovers in the Romantic *Zaynab*, the characters of *Ibrahim al-Katib* are not idealized. Ibrahim is not linked to the knights of mediaeval romances. He is afraid of dogs and terrified by burglars. Even the burglar who threatens him with a gun in Alexandria flat is so amused at the sight of his panic stricken face that he advises him not to be so scared in the future. And Shushu, is most realized character in the book, has the vanity and wiles of areal woman.

Of course, the presence of humour alone would be sufficient to restore balance to the one-eyed romantic vision of life. As it is clear from the foregoing examples in *Ibrahim al-katib*, humour is revealed both in situations and in characters. At the times the author cannot resist the temptations of a comic episode or situations, for instance, the hero's encounter with the burglar, who courteously offers him a cigarette while pointing a gun at him, is most amusing, but it is not strictly relevant.[288] It cannot even be justified on the grounds of revealing character, since the hero's cowardice and fear of burglars have already been amply illustrated on a previous occasion. The only purpose the burglary seems to serve is to bring the whole family down to their house in Alexandria. As for the humour of character it is perhaps best seen in the caricature like figure of Ahmad al-Mayyit, or the negro maid Fatima or the

[288] Ibrahim al-katib, P-144

False staff like Sheikh Ali with his huge body, his wit and his colourful and vehement, but good natured stream of abuse.[289]

On the whole, Ibrahim al-Katib is a novel of character of plot it has just enough to sustain the readers curiosity. In fact, and as is clearly seen in this short stories, which are often no more than character sketches, Al-Mazini's interest has always been primarily in character. Here the character of the hero dominates the novel, which it has been remarked, consists of three pictures or tableaux, each showing Ibrahim in relation to one woman. In this respect *Ibrahim al-katib* has not a tightly knit plot, since the only thing that provides a link between the three parts of the novel is the hero's character. Moreover, there are basic weaknesses in the plot: the tragic outcome of Ibrahim is relation to Shushu loses much of its poignancy as a result of two factors first, leak of inevitability for surly the lovers could have waited till elder sister was married off, instead of Ibrahim running away the moment his proposal was declined and ignoring all Shushu's letters to the extent of not even opening them. Anyway the author had weakened his point considerably by marrying Shushu off to Dr. Mahmud while her older sister was still unmarried, which is obviously a desperate attempt to tidy up her character at the end of the book. Secondly, Ibrahim does not lose much time in falling in love with Layla, and it is his disappointment in Layla. Which one feels, more than anything else, was responsible for his final disillusion in woman and, to a large extent, in life generally.

However, the weaknesses in the plot reflect in a way. Certain facts of the hero's character, the facts, which establish an interesting connection between him and the character of Hamid in *Zaynab*. We have seen that the author fails to provide Ibrahim with a conning motive far running away from Shushu and far his rigorously self imposed silence. But one under if Ibrahim

[289] Ibid. , P-118

really needs a motive for doing so. After all the absence of sufficient motivation behind his desertion of Marry twice (bath at the beginning and at the end of the novel) is just as striking and here it is not just a matter of a loose plot. He himself admits at one point that he has run away from her far no reason, although we are told how much he loves her and her and it is his subsequent sorrow at leaving her that arouses Shushu's interest in him. He even feels guilty about Mary and tries to place at his conscience by thinking that she will no doubt find herself another man much between and more attractive and can one really believe that the sight of a sleeping woman to whom. A man is attached can possibly make him run away in disgust unless of course there is some etching psychologically if not biologically wrong with him? Even the highly dubious symbolical reading of the novel, which finds in the sleeping woman an obvious symbol of death and therefore regard Ibrahim actions as an expression revulsion from and tear of death would turn Ibrahim into a pathological case the truth of the matter is that Ibrahim's in determinate destiny at the end of the novel (about which the author is obviously apologetic in his introduction) is a reflection of a much more serious in determination in his character. Like Hamid, Ibrahim is a lost man and although much more complex, he still suffers from the some inherent incapacity for happiness. He is a self distractive character and his ill adjustment to his environment is a symptom of an inner ill adjustment. Perhaps the author's quick and almost a acrobatic shifting from the pathetic to the humorous is an expression of a somewhat schizophrenic attitude, of a restless alternation between two worlds in neither of which he is completely at home, of a pathological indecision from which the hero, obviously a projection of the author suffers.

That Ibrahim is an embodiment of the author's attitudes and general state of mind is as, has already been said, a common place of Al-Mazini criticism. In fact this subjective element runs through all the works of Al-Mazini, whether they are novels, short stories or essays. Nearly all the

contents of *Sundaq al-Dunya* (1929), for instance, are reminiscences episodes, anecdotes or Sketches from the author's own life; the narrator in them is almost always the first person explicitly the author. Similarity in the collections *Khuyat al- Ankabut* (1935), Fil- Tariq (1937) *Al- mashi* (1944) and *Minal-Nafidha* (1945) the subjective and often the directly autobiographical element is dominant. The late Egyptian critic Muhammad Mandur described the whole of al-Mazini's literary output as 'personal' and believed, quite rightly, that the hero of most of his novels and short stories was none other than al-Mazini himself. He even regarded '*Ibrahim al-Katib*' as less of a novel than an autobiography. Likewise, in his admirable study of the development of the Arabic novel in Egypt, the Badr placed *Ibrahim al-Katib* in the category of the autobiographical novel there by emplacing the personal and subjective elements in it. And where the material of his works patently refers to others, Al-Mazini's individual voice, with its mixture of irony and wit its idiosyncratic use of the Arabic language is so unmistakably his own that presence of the author is hardly even lost sight of and neutral tone of narrator is never fully achieved. No doubt, the part of Al-Mazini's complete self absorption his inability to lose sight of himself in due to his almost pathological hypersensitivity of temperament, which Mandur ably describes in his booklet on the author. But it must have been reinforced by his excessive awareness of his difference from the rest of his fellow men and account of his being a writer. This was a product partly of a gross exaggeration of the importance of art and literature, a romantic notion which he imbibed from his reading in certain aspects of western romanticism partly of his genuine romantic isolation. Al-Mazini was painfully aware of the fact that he was living in a period of changes. That there was a real change and a violent upheaval in the values of his society makes his feeling more than the general adolescent romantic sense of made site in the second volume of the celebrated book of criticism, al-Diwan. He attempted to describe the time sin these words

We live in an age of deep thinking and great

Anxiety, considerable confusion and fearful

Doubt, an age which exhausts the mind with

Its perplexities and saps the energy of the heart.

Darkness pervades our political moral and

Intellectual worlds.[290]

That is what he wrote in 1921 and although towards the end of his life he seemed to accept the fact of living in an age change with some equanimity, there is no doubt that for most of his life, particularly in his younger days, it was a source of a great anxiety and worry. Commenting on the contents of the first volume of al-Mazini's verse, his friend al-Aqqad wrote.

This age is characterized by its anxiety and diffidence, its hovering between an out worm past and an uncertain future. The gap that separates what is from what should be in people's minds is so great that they have been thrown into utter confusion.[291]

Dr.Badr gives an admirably lucid account of the spirit of the times, and of the social and intellectual background of al-Mazini's generation of writers. He shows how as members of the Egyptian lower middle class they had a stake in changing the values of their society although they had a very traditional upbringing and home background, how early in their lives they were engaged in introducing western culture and literature to their readers. Keenly conscious of the backwardness of their society they were disturbed by the contradictions between their imported ideals and their tradition bound reality. They felt the conflict between the old and the new not only on the

[290] Ibid. , P-37
[291] Diwan al-Mazini, vol-I

material but also on the psychological and emotional levels. This resulted in their felling a prey to great doubt and confusion, frustration and dislocation. For while they were unable to belong to their social reality, their rejection of its values and ideals was by no means complete since they themselves were unable to free themselves completely from the effects of that reality on account of their early upbringing and education and their continuing to live in the same society. Their rejection was therefore basically intellectual and did not touch the grass roots of their personality. Dr. Badr finds in this the cause of their excessive self awareness; there is isolation, anxiety, melancholy, doubt and distrust of men as well as the artificiality inordinate intellectuality and lack of sufficient spontaneity in their works.

They looked down upon reality from above and in the light of ideas derived from their western culture. Their ides were the product of a civilization not their own and their reality was incapable of rest on ding fully to their ideas. They were incapable of living or practicing their ideas on the level of reality and sensation, and so they remained on the level of theory.[292]

Al-Mazini was well aware of the pioneering role he had to play and therefore of the limitations imposed upon him by the fact that he was born in this period of change and caught up in the clash between the old and the new. As early as Hisad al-Haslum (1924) he wrote.

It is the lot of our age to be one of preparation and its children to be busy are wing down those mountains that block the way and to pave the way for those who will come after them.

The same ideas is reiterated in the introduction to '(*Sundaq al-Dunya*) where he express the hope that he will 'pave the way for more solid' complete

[292] Ibid. , P-296

and fuller works. Let others build mansions, as for me, I have been exhausted by the cutting of the stones.[293]

The tragedy of the hero of *Ibrahim al-katib*, therefore, has its place in the context of the intellectual history of modern Egypt. The theme of the loss, anxiety and confusion, of the dislocation and up rootedness of the young Egyptian intellectual in the first few decades of this century is expressed here through his attitude to, and experience of women. Lately there has been a tendency among Egyptian critics to see a deeper, metaphysical significance in this work. In 1965 Dr. Mustafa Nasif published his *Ramz al-Tift: Dirasa fi Adab al-Mazini*, which contains a symbolical interpretation of the book. He regards the hero's tragedy as that of an Egyptian intellectual with a highly developed sense of individuality, who feels alienate nature, searching in vain for order in the changing flux of experience and desperately trying to the establish his link with society and with nature through love, the tragedy of Ibrahim is that of someone looking for order or reality in the context of life or changing forms. He is lost between his passion for freedom or the concept of rich and varied life and the desire for peace through ties and repetition.[294]

The multiplicity of his experience of women was adopted by him as a means of discovering the meaning of life force,[295] in his view variety is the essence of a rich consciousness more recently, and with greater eloquence the gifted short story writer Idwar al-kharrat argued, somewhat ingeniously in my view, in favour of the themes of *Ibrahim al-katib* or al-Mazini, our contemporary turning the work into an essentiality, existentialist, experience. He claims that it has two levels: one external society and realistic, on which it appears as a story of love defeated by social conventions, an escape from social responsibility, the corruption here is social and possibly moral, namely

[293] Sunduq al-Dunya, P-9
[294] Ibid. , P-34
[295] Ibid. , P-47

that the hero desires nothing but death and defeat. The other level is deeper, internal and introspective; on it the novel is one of persistent quest for fertility for the mother/mistress, for the universal feminine principle; Endeavour to become part of life. Defeat here is imposed and governed by insuperable psychological and cosmic laws, the laws of existence itself. The hero's quest is throughout for the essence of absolute love, the ideal perfect women and mother, which is impossible to attain. Hence the tension and pessimism, he is another Tantalus condemned to ever as ting thirst through surrounded by water like Nasif's *al-kharrats* interpret nation is far too arbitrary and ingenious, far too Solemn for a work written in many places in a light, comic vein charming and delightful as it is, and despite its serious implications, the novel is simply Nat of sufficient human. The Weight to stand such ponderous or profound psychological or philosophical analysis, Yet *al kharrat* no doubt is right when he draws attention to one essentially modern aspect of the novel, namely the idea of *Ibrahim al-Katib* as an anti hero. We have already referred to the fact that far from idealizing his hero, the author is often poking fun at him. This feature, however, is by no means confined to the treatment of Ibrahim, for it can be found in most of Mazini's work nor is it limited to the portrayal of fictitious characters. The image of the author himself as anti-hero is sufficient reflected in for instance, *Khuyut al-Ankabut* where the writer deliberately makes him of his own physical appearance, his short stature and his own cowardice. However, this is perhaps one of the most endearing features of *Ibrabim al- katib*. For ironically enough, in the final analysis it is the humour of the book, which is much more deeply rooted in social reality, that has proved to wear well, while much of the analysis of love and the psychology of women seems to date rather badly. For one thing the contemporary educated Arab reader is far too familiar with the commonplaces of modern psychology which is one of the fashionable sciences at present to be content with the amateurish generalizations and gambling attempts of a

literary man. Besides, the hero, with an excessively personal problem, who is solely concerned with love, or whose universe is in habited by himself and his women or women alone, the hero that is , who appears in his extreme form a few year later in Al-Aqqad's "*Sara*" (1938) has now gone out of the world of the modern serious Egyptian novel. His place has been taken by a man who is more socially involved, a man capable of more emotions than love and whose love, when it occurs, is never described in a social vacuum. Such a man is best exemplified in the novels of Nazib Mahfuz. Al-Mazini on the other hand, concentrates on the personal problem of his hero; he makes no attempt to relate him in any significant way to his environment or social setting. It is not surprising that the novels that concentrates on the parlay personal or subjective problems of the hero to the exclusion of much of social reality should be more prevalent in the inter war period, for this is the period when romanticism is at its strongest and the appearance of the subjective novel coincides with the dominance of subjective romantic poetry. After the Second World War both the sociological novel and the poetry of social realism assert themselves.[296]

Before living *Ibrahim al-Katib* a word may be said about al-Mazini's use of dialogue, a point of importance of which he is well aware in his introduction. It must be admitted that al-Mazini is one of the few Arab novelist, who have managed to deal satisfactorily with the question of dialogue. A part from a few exceptions where the colloquial is used, as in the case of children or illiterates like the fortune teller who expresses herself in her typical jargon, or the old peasant who has never lost his village all his life, the dialogue is expressed in a type of classical Arabic that has the simplicity and at times even the rhythm of the spoken language, this is no doubt one of the achievements of al-Mazini in the Arabic novel and here he has set an examples for subsequent writers like Nazib Mahfuz.

[296] Badawi. M.M, Modern Arabic literature and the West. P-150-151

When he turn to al-Mazini's second novel, *Ibrahim al-thani* (Ibrahim the second), we fell that the expectation raised in us by the earlier work are sadly disappointed. It is utterly devoid of the humour and irony which make certain parts of the earlier work such delightful reading. Again the emphasis here is on character, as in the previous work, the hero is depicted in relation to three women, and the novel is fall of analysis and generalizations on the behavior and psychology of woman.

In a brief explanatory note the author says that *Ibrahim al-Thani* is or more accurately was, *Ibrahim al-katib*, but has changed so much in the mean time, that if it were possible that the two men could meet, they could need to be introduced to one another this is indeed truer than the author could have meant, for the hero of the second work is rather cold and lifeless compared to the hero of the first.

The plan of the work is grossly improbable and it is odd to find Bishr faris praising the work for its realism. The hero, in his forties, feels that he is growing old and is obviously in need of young female admires knowing that he is not rash or unfaithful to her, his intelligent wife makes it possible for him to meet young women, whether her friends or relations in order to what his appetite and in an attempt to dispel his utterly ground less fear of being too old with two of these women he forms a close relationship which remains rather harmless. The novel is taken up with an analysis of their two women tighter with an account of his marriage and description of his relationship to his wife. The first in order of chronology, though not in the order of its occurrence in the novel is the account of his marriage to Tahiyya. As in the earlier novel the hero Ibrahim is invited by relations in the country where he meets a young woman to whom his cousin intends to be engaged. They fall in love and months later they marry. This aspect of the novel is in many ways a very pale reflection of the earlier work. It lacks it poetry and passion. After

several years of happily married life, he develops a sentimental attachment to 'Ayda' a young girl, a friend of his wife's Ayda who has been let down by a previous suitor, falls in love with Ibrahim although he is twice her age, but the latter does not allow their relationship to go farther than clandestine meeting and kissing. He does not, however, want to put an end to their relationship, because it suits him as it is and satisfies his vanity. Ayda, who is convinced that she is going to die of consumption soon, neglects her health and does not eat in spite of Ibrahim's constant advice to her and his efforts to dispel her irrational fears, and eventually her wish for death is realized, for she dies, less than two years later. Ibrahim's selfishness and lack of feeling are revealed in his reaction to the sight of his dying girl and later to the news of her death: his only response is that he cannot understand how this has happened.[297] The same self centeredness and lack of feeling are revealed in Ibrahim's relation to his wife: he attack her mercilessly for her feelings of anxiety and jealously when she knows that he goes out with other women, on the shaky grounds that such feelings are peculiar only to stupid, narrow minded women, where as an intelligent women like herself should be pleased to have a sensitive warm hearted husband, whose breadth of soul renders him susceptible to every kind of female beauty. And his wife, whom the writer or the hero wishes us to regard as intelligent, is actually taken in by this a absurd type of reasoning to the extent of humbly apologizing to her husband for her feelings.

But the hero's repellent self right cousin reaches its climax in his treatment of Mimi, a young woman teacher he meets through his wife and to whom he farms another sentimental attachment. He passes at once as her lover (although again he is satisfied with regular weekly meetings and kisses), her mother and her psychoanalyst. In the case of Ayda, Ibrahim merely tells us that she was like a book for him to read.[298] With Mimi, we see him actually

[297] Ibrahim al-Thani, P-110-111
[298] Ibid. , P-118-121

reading her character, analyzing her motives, predicting her behavior (in the manner of Paul Bourget's le disciple without however Bourget's subtlety). When it suits his purpose to terminate his relationship with her he convinces her that she is in fact in love with, and ought to marry, her spilt and rich young cousin. Sadiq, who to her disagrees has been chasing her, and has even attempted to assault her in the middle of the desert and threatened her with an unloaded gun. The novel ends with their intension to Marry and with Ibrahim and decision to take his wife Tahiyya, to whom he has felt drawn lately, on a holiday to the Lebanon. Tahiyya, too has pleasant news to tell him, far at long last she is now pregnant.[299]

Unlike *Ibrahim al-katib, Ibrahim al- Thani* his no plat what so ever it is a series of disconnected episodes, the only link between them is that most of them are somehow are at her related to the main character Ibrahim. But there is no progression no direction in which events moves an organizing plan. As a novel therefore, it is a step back from *Ibrahim al-Katib,* for formally it is in fact nearer to biography than to a novel. And even then there is very little action indeed in the work.

But the another concentrates on a description, and an analysis of the feelings of his characters almost to the exclusion of the characters, social environment the setting of the novel is very pour in social reality. There is indeed the feeling that characters move about in a social velum, a feeling tabulated in *Ibrahim al-katib* by the author's comic portraits are caricature urea from contemporary Egyptian social life, and of which there is not one in this work. As for characterization, it is rather weak: the work is dominated by the character of the hero who, however, does not develop at all. In fact, there is more of his thoughts, ideas and general philosophy, which one suspects at once, are those of his creator, rather than of his character, judging at least by

[299] Ibid. , P-111

the numbers of quotations from poets and prose writers with which he in a schoolmasterish manner, adorns his conversations with his various women. Anyway, the hero is an impossible bore, utterly selfish and conceited and what is unpardonable is that the author seems to approve of him throughout. The women's characters are far too shadowy and pale, they are not sharply focused or sufficiently individualized they are often described in vague and general terms. Mimi's is far too like a piece of chess in Ibrahim's hands to be credible. The only possible exception is the character of Ayda, whose will for death is at least one trait that distinguishes her from others and makes her relatively interesting. In view of all this it is all the more surprising to find critics treating the protagonists of these two novels as if they were the same conception, or as if they were two complementary parts of the same person. Even a perceptive critic like *al- kharrat* is to some extent guilty if this error.

In the next novel, *Thalathat Rijal wa Imra'a* (three men and a woman) one cannot accrue the author of dullness. We have suddenly much more action and more interesting characters. The action and characters belong perhaps to the more colourful and less exacting world of romance although a recent work on al-Mazini finds in the book a study, in relative degrees of maturity shown in the relationships between the two sexes. The author's sense of humour returns, although it appears more intermittently then in *Ibrahim al-katib*. This is how he begins his *Thalathat wa-Rijal:*

> It is perhaps futile to attempt to depict with the pen
>
> A portrait of a man or a picture of any being for that
>
> Matter, especially if the author is a man trying to
>
> Depict a woman. There is no one more ignorant
>
> About a woman than a man or about a man than a

Woman, even though they live together, and fall in

Love-I do not know how marry and the people

World with their off spring, scattering their progeny

Like seeds. Do not ask me how these two dissimilar

Creatures can comes together or how these human

Beings if it is true at all that both are human can

Cohabit while each of them is an insolubly mystery

To the other. I have not created them myself, nor

Have I witnessed their creation or been a

Contemporary of both their original ancestors so

That I might know the answer.

The work forms an interesting contrast to the earlier novels, for instead of creating one man in relation to three women it chiefly describes one woman, Mahasin, in relation to three men: Halim, Nasim and Hamdi. Unlike the other novels, however, it is not dominate by any one character. It starts promisingly with a vivid description of some of the main characters.

We first find ourselves in the romantics' atmosphere of the garden of Ayyad's house bathed in moonlight on a summer night, and the world in the author's words is enchanted. It is a still night, dense with the aroma of true. The windows of the house are all open and from one of them are heard the sweet voice of a woman singing: it is twenty year old Mahasin, Ayyad's daughter and the heroine of the novel. In a shack in the garden sit Ayyad himself Halim a prematurely retired schoolmaster of fifty, and a friend of the family and Mahmud, a handsome young man in his twenties and the fiancé of

Mahasin: he is an engineer working in the civil service. In a few strokes the characters are delineated. Ayyad is a Circassia proud of his lineage and he well comes Mahmud as a future son in law, because, although an Egyptian he has a fair enough completion to be regarded as belonging to the superior class of the Turks and Circassia's. he is selfish and indulges in food and drink has a European mistress in Alexandria to which he makes regular trips under the pretext of business and is generally a tyrant in his household unluckily far him his daughter gets to know the true about his mysterious visits, and he has to buy her silence at the heavily price of allowing her a much greater freedom of movement than is normally accorded to a girl in her situation. The girl herself is described in a somewhat surprising manner, after telling the reader about her figure, her complexion, her lips, eyes and hair the author suddenly proceeds to talk about her breasts and even her nipples, their colour and size, like her father she is proud of her origin, vain and a little rash. She is rather bored and proud nervous and smokes heavily she has been engaged more than once before, but has had to break off the engagements. The results is that she has acquired a rather bad name among young men, but her present fine, Mahmud is fond of her although he is at times somewhat disturb at her sudden whims, like for instance, her going to the cinema sometimes with strange men she has met for the first time only half an hour before. (How the author can really believe that such reckless behavior at the time can be condoned by a young Egyptian like Mahmud seems a mystery). However, Mahmud does not remain engaged to her for long, for he is suspects, not altogether without reasons, that she is having an affair with Halim, he elderly friend of the family and his suspicion is confirmed by her obvious attempts to ignore him and show him her lack of interest in him. Mahmud's initial distrust of women is confirmed and one day he disappears never to return.

Mahmud himself, we learnt later has been engaged before to Samira, an attractive but spoilt rich heiress who has a large number of admires all

chasing her. She is so completely emancipated that she proposes to him herself. His impoverished parents, however, do not approve of such an unequal match, and make their attitude to her so clear that she decides to break off the engagement runs away to her farm, and marries the steward of her estate, Hamdi primarily to put an end to the troublesome chase of her admires but inserts a clause in the marriage contract to the effect that it is she who has the right to divorce. It is after this first disappointment in love that Mahmud proposes to Mahasin.

As for Halim, he is one of the most interesting characters in the novel. A learn man, he nevertheless declines an after of a lectureship at the university preferring a life of leisure having retired early from his post as school teacher. He suffers from an irrational fear of poverty which, despite his handsome income makes him careful in spending to the point of miserliness. As a young man he feel in love with and married a neighbor a school teacher too who turns out to be sexually frigid and who after giving birth to their only child, decides not to have any more children and to ensure that she makes up her mind once and for all never to let her husband have any sexual dealing with her. Having failed to persuade her to change her mind, Halim reconciles himself to a sexless life: he finds it inconceivable to marry another woman.[300] At the same time even if the thought of finding for himself a mistress crossed his mind, he was sure to dismiss it on the grounds that he could not afford to keep one, to satisfy his sexual impulses therefore Halim buys a powerful telescope through which he observes the women waiting for the bus or tram car outside his study window at home, and on the whole he indulge in a world of fantasy and day dreams. Later his sleep is haunted by a recurring dream in which he finds himself making love to a woman who looks to like him that she could be his twin. He is profoundly disturbed by this dream, but his modest coupled with his stinginess present him from consulting a doctor.

[300] Ibid. , P-15

Eventually he gets to know the Ayda family and is introduced to the daughter Mahasin with whom he forms a peculiar relationship not altogether dissimilar from what we have seen happening before in al-Mazini's earlier work, between a middle-aged man and a very young woman. They are thrown together a lot and in a weak moment he makes love to her, primarily motivated by his desire to test his virility. Mahasin soon becomes pregnant without her family knowing anything about it, and he takes her to a doctor to abort her. After this traumatic experience Mahasin changes completely. She becomes calmer less unbalanced and more responsible in her behavior and outlook. The strange thing is that far from harboring any ill feeling towards Halim, she continues to regard him as her mentor and her father confessor. When their financial situation at home deteriorates owing to her father's spending most of his income on his mistress, Mahasin turns for advice and help to Halim, who manages to find employment for her as a typist in a big firm. There she meets a rich and charming young man, Nasim, who takes a liking to her. When he boss unfairly dismisses her, Nasim gives her a handsome monthly allowance in return for her services as a counselor in his newly founded imaginary firm. He makes an oblique after of marriage and sends her away to Alexandria. On a fortnight's holyday to make up her mind, on the train she meets the man of her dreams, who turns out to be Hamdi. They fall in love at first sight, and each makes a clean breast of his past to the other, and is duly absolved. They spend an idyllic holyday together and decide to get married.

In the meantime, Mahmud happens to go to a charity ball where he catches sight of Samira, accompanied by a handsome young man (none other than Nasim) unable to bear the shock he makes a move to run away stumbles and fall down, almost unconscious, heaving broken his leg, Samira sees him, takes him home in her car, calls for a doctor to attend to him and is now resolved never to let him go again.

This is a very brief summary of what is obviously a complicated plot. It is clear that the different threads of the story are in the end gathered together in a manner more in keeping with artificial comedy than with a realistic novel. In fact, as far as incidents and characters are concerned we have moved even further from the world of everyday life than in al-Mazini's earlier work. We have come perilously near the world romance, with its improbable situations and facile documents. The role of the author describes to change is so exaggerated that he feels he has to apologize for it to the reader, Time and again the author claims that in this world everything seems to be due to change or coincidence. It is therefore difficult to agree with the distinguished writer Mahmud Taymur (who incidentally is well aware of the defects of the plot.) in his excessive praise of the author's powers of characterization as revealed in *Thalathat Rijal*. There are other romance like features in the novel: for example, the theme or convention of love at first sight, idealized characters like the chivalrous, witty and generous Nasim, the noble and for giving Hamdi, both of whom are too good to be true; incredible change of heart or character as in Mahasin: surely the development of Mahasin's character shows much in consistency. Mahasin after the abortion could not possibly be the same girl as before, and it is conceivable that a girl of the background and temperament of the early Mahasin could fall in love with such a dull, confused and sick man like the middle-aged Halim, however darned he may be? The novel too, has the traditional happy ending of the romance and observes the traditional poetic justice; for at the end we are told of the punishment meted out to Ratib Bey, the director of the firm how unjustly dismissed Mahasin. In one of the humorous parts of the novel the author describes how unawares, Ratib Bey turns up in his office, wearing his pajamas under his suit, how he is surprised in his office by a new female clerk, Mahasin's successor, who sees him in the act of taking off his pajamas and changing into his trousers, and to his horror refuses to leave the room and takes advantage of this embarrassing

and compromising position, moreover, the tone of the whole work is at times strongly reminiscent of that of a popular tale. This is particularly clear in the ending of the novel, a comment on Ratib Bey's punishment, which alone would make Nasif's solemn approach singularly and ridiculously inappropriate to the tone of the novel. Finally, it is interesting to note that the author does not seem to know what to be do with Halim, the character who reminds us of the heroes of *Ibrahim al-Katib* and *Ibrahim al-thani*. Halim seems to fade out of the picture altogether and the reader is not told what happens to him in the end.[301]

Humour and romance are much more satisfactorily blended in *Midu wa-Shurakah* (Midu and co.) a novel which is hardly even discussed by those who have written on al-Mazini's work but which represents an interesting development in the writers narrative technique. Here the character that is clearly the author's mouthpiece be he Ibrahim or Halim has disappeared. But because al-Mazini seems incapable of self abnegation in his novels, but will let his person introduce into the world of his fiction, masquerading either us this character or that, this has been made possibly by the abandoning of the direct approach of the orthodox novelist. Far from appearing to be giving an autonomous universes, an illusion of a slice of life or a semblance of reality with the omniscient author pretending not to exist, al-Mazini is adopting here the attitude of a raconteur who reminds his reader that he is telling him a story. He seems to go out of his way to break the illusion of reality. The method of courses has its obvious serious limitations; because it works against the reader's emotional involvement in the action and the character it would tend to be detrimental to any tragic vision of life. However, in the sphere of comedy and Midu wa- shurakah was written very much in a comic vein, some gains are thereby achieved. In the first place, the events and characters are like distanced from the reader and he loss of immediately contributes to the ironic

[301] Badawi. M. M, Modern Arabic literature and the West P-157

detachment with which the follies, scrapes, whims and idiosyncrasies of the character are viewed. Secondly, by addressing the reader directly at times, by taking him into his confidence, by telling him now and again that both of them are in the know, the author establishes a close and intimate relationship with him and as a result of the author's attitude to him, the reader is eager to listen with some enthusiasm and no small degree of affection, to the amusing story the author has to tell him. No doubt the final result of this is that the hero of this type of a novel is to be looked for outside the world of the novel altogether: he is none other than the author himself. It not so much what the raconteur says as the way in which he says it that seems to count. In this manner al-Mazini seems to have resolved the problem of structure which has obviously presented UN surmountable difficulties to him. In the final analysis, considerations of structure arise in works which claim autonomous existence independent of their author. The raconteur chooses to stop whenever he wishes or sees fit, justifying his behavior by all manner of argument, however specious as longs as he senses that he has employed the right inflection and tone of voice, consider the manner in which al-Mazini ends his novel, apologizing for leaving the fact of one character undecided on the grounds of shortage of paper (or money) during the war:

> We promise to let the reader know what will
>
> Become of her when the war is over, God be willing,
>
> If, however, he is in a hurry to find out
>
> Then let him supply us with (the necessary) paper
>
> Taking our words in any sense he likes. In the
>
> Meaning our greetings, and gratitude's to him and

Till we meet again if God allows.[302]

This is clearly the tone and manner of a tale, rather than a novel.

The events which the book describes occupy the space of no more than forty eight hours, or week end towards the end of January 1941. In the beginning we are given a description of the house in which they take place: a smart and large house with a spacious garden belonging to an upper middle class Egyptian family. Ahmed al-Badi, an eccentric and wealthy middle-aged man of letters his elder sister Hanifa an enormously fat woman of a strong personality and decided views on what constitutes a suitable match for her nubile and attractive daughter Khayriyya and her son. Mahammad,a handsome young officer in the army, known to everyone by his nickname Midu. We learn that Abdu Hanifa's nephew, a rather dull young rich landowner whom Hanifa hopes to marry to her daughter is staying with the family on a brief visit while consulting a Cairo specialist to treat his embarrassing stammer. Midu has fallen in love with a beautiful young woman and for some time has been trying to attract her attention. She turn out to be Sara, a young qualified physician who is the sister of a friend and fellow officer, Shakir by a strange coincidence Shakir too has fallen in love with Khyayriyya without knowing her relationship to Midu. He had given her a hand when she was about to stumble in a rather high class Cairo department store. In a somewhat amusing situation Midu is introduced to Sara by her brother who does not suspect that she is the object of his friends' affection. The three of them drive in Midu's expensive car to his house and Shakir and Sara are introduced to the family and are soon asked by al-Badi to stay for dinner. Hanifa does not false easily to the young couple. She suspects that Shakir, who she thinks is penniless, has designs on her daughter because of her money and that his sister is also after Midu's fortune. Hanifa gives Abdu

[302] Midu wa Shurakah, P-168

to understand that she will help him achieve his desire of marrying Khayriyya and in return she asks him to do here a favor, namely to steal a particularly precious manuscript of a famous medieval literary work (*al Agham*) from her brothers prior ate library, without explaining to him her motive. She is in fact, afraid lest his valuable collection of Mss should be lost or damaged during the war and in vain have she and his friends tried to persuade him to deposit them with the national library she think that the disappearance of such a manuscript might teach him a lesson and make him change his mind. At first and despite his weakness for Mss and valuable books which he has on previous occasions attempted to steal from his relationship, Abdu pretends to be shocked, but his aunt's dominant personality and the prospect of marrying his cousin, make him consent. This sets in motion a whole chain of complication, intrigues misunderstandings and adventures and mishaps in which most of the characters are involved and which are resolved only at the end of the book. Before, Abdu begins to carry out the operation he is suspected by al-Badi; who tells Sara what he thinks of him. Sara, disgusted at the ungentle manly behavior of al-Badi, in a fit of youthful zeal, undertakes to help Adu by prescribing a sleeping potion which Abdu agrees to put into al-Badi's glass of water at dinner. The water, however, is drunk by her instead who soon falls asleep and she has to provide an explanation for his odd behavior. This results in their spending the night at the house of their friends. Abdu, bungles another attempt to break into the library at night, and spends the night dangling precariously from the window ledge until he is rescored at down by Shakir, who having awoken from his drugged sleep, decides to take a walk in the garden while waiting for the others to get up to give him an explanation of what has happened. In the morning Abdu, decides in despair to go directly to al-Badi to ask his permission to steal his manuscript a think which convinces the later that Abdu has gone out of his mind, and he therefore, to protect himself in case he becomes violent, places between them a chair, over which

Abdu, Stumbles, hurts his head on the leg of the tubule and decides at once to leave this mad house and take the train back to his village. A short while later al-Badi mistress his valuable manuscript at first suspects .after Abdu, but realizing that he would not possibly have got into the locked library is at a loss to explain how it has been stolen. To add to his confusion a friend, the director of the national library, suddenly turns up and offers his help in the search for the missing manuscript. Everybody has a version of what must have happened which is at variance with everybody else's. The truth, unknown to all others is that Hanifa stole the key to the library from her brothers' pocket while asleep, helped herself to the Mss, locked the library again and put the back the key in his pocket. In the meantime the young couples had the chance to know better, and to confess their feelings to, one another. The story ends at dinner time the next day when Midu announces that he has glad news to tell them, namely that he is going to marry Sara. After being congratulated he goes out of the room, comes back with the Ms which he hands to the director of the national library, asking him to look after it, together with the other Mss and valuable books which his uncles has now agreed to deposit in the national library. Khayriyya remains undecided between her cousin Abdu and her more glamorous and polished admirer, Shakir.

Around this plot, which is obviously flimsy and somewhat farfetched, the author has woven his comic creations and funny situations. The plot, in fact serves simply as an excuse or occasion for the display of his humorous talent. The humour is that of character and situation. The characters in the novel fall into two categories: they are either caricatures, or less somewhat idealized lovable people, at whom the author, nevertheless, now and then pokes fun. As examples of the former one can mention Ahmed al-Badi, a confirmed bachelor who nevertheless is not immune to feminine charms. He takes a childish delight in sheaving the passengers in car by drinking it into his garage at top speed. His obsessive interest in physical fitness makes him keep

in the garden all manner of equipment from parallel bars to swings and heavy weights; and he reprimands his servant for his slovenly gait. He also insists upon everybody in the household, including the servant, addressing him in classical Arabic, and only in moments a great stress and loss of self control does he break into the colloquial. A distinguished man of letters, he is found of collecting precious Mss and expensive editions, which he jealously guards in his private library which he locks up and the key to which he keeps in his own pocket: to him his Mss are ultimately the only valuable things in life.

On the sketch of his sister, Hanifa, who is so huge that Shakir (and the author) always refer to her in the plural?[303] She is slow moving but quick-witted fully cognizant of the way of the world, suspicious of people's motives not allowing others to know what goes on in her mind. She has not much regard for her brother's eccentric pursuits or interests. Though tolerant of them as she is of the modern westernized ways of her children, she will not stand much nonsense she is the powerful female, figure in the middle class Egyptian household, of whom everyone to some extent stands in awe, and she masterminds and executes the plot which will lead to her brother aligning his valuable manuscript to the safety of the national library. There is also to take another example, the gauche figure of Abdu, six foot tall, rich but somewhat boorish and unsophisticated. He reads no French novels, nor does he go to the cinema. Although he hardly ever reads he is fond of collecting books and he has even stolen some from his relation, only to keep them hidden away in a chest. He suffers from a nervous stammer, which provides the author with the occasion for some hilarious senses in the novels. The specialist whom he consults advises him to sing instead of talking, if he finds singer easier, so that he might over some his shyness and to try to talk (or sing) to people, preferably strangers. This irresponsible advice of the specialists is taken seriously by Abdu, which lands him in absurd and rather hazardous situations.

[303] Ibid. , P-66-143

Equally laughable are the various unsuccessful attempts which he makes to steal the Ms, including one which involves an encounter with Sara's pet dog, called Rose, described with exquisite humour by the author. His behavior contrasts boldly with that of the polished young people around him. Despite his education, he is the man from the traditional countryside who is ill at care in the modern sophisticated society of Cairo and who deplores the passing of the old order and its traditional values which made women bashful and obedient to their parents, accepting for husbands who never they chose for them. His helpless love for Khayriyya is rendered even more helpless by his stammer and his confusion is doubly confused by the intrigues in which he is made to take a part by which remains unexplained and inexplicable to him. Because of the author's tone and technique pathos is minimized and only the rich comic potentialities of the situation are explored.

Likewise, the portraits drown of the lovers are free from deep emotion. They are all charming and attractive; they fall in love at first sight, and are on the whole successful in love just as they are successful and prosperous in life. But the author only skims the surface of their experience deliberately it seems. Even Khayriyya's inability to choose between Abdu, for whom she feels more than pity but less than love[304] and Shakir, who, obviously arouses in her vehement emotion, which if developed could have been a source of deep pathos, if not of tragic feelings is deliberately cut short by the author. Al-Mazini instead, chooses to concentrate on the comic complications produced by love. The humour however, is always good natured, with the possible exception of the case of Abdu, the author takes delight in pointing out the moderate absurdities, the safe vagaries, the harmless antis of upper middle class Egyptians, young and old alike. Even the impulsive, idealism of youth is sympathetically ridiculed.[305] There is no lesson

[304] Ibid. , P-123
[305] Ibid. , P-101

to preach, no social message (a part from a very brief defense of women's emancipation[306] and feeling remarks on the exploitation of peasants by some greedy landlords).[307] Given the date of its composition, the world of *Midu-wa-Shurakah*, despite its artificiality, is a surprisingly stable world, where bourgeois values reign supreme. It is a hierarchical society, where for instance, servants (like sayyid) know their place and as is often the case in al-Mazini's work, are treated with some condescension. Although he pocks fun at it, the author never gives the impression of not subscribing to all its values.

We have seen how the loosening of the grip of realism which is clearly discernible in *Thalathat Rijal* has resulted in *Midu wa-Shurakah* in the rejection of all attempts at giving the illusion of reality. This constitutes a logical step to the next work, which is a work of professed fantasy, technically 'Awad ala Bad' (starting all over again) in which the author firmly maintains the attitude of the reencounter already adopted in Midu, is perhaps al-Mazini's most accomplished work. Here the author himself is both the hero and the narrator.

The plan of the work is simple: the narrator and his wife drive to Tanta to play a visit to the mosque of al-Sayyid al-Badawi after the visit the husband relent tenthly agrees to takes his wife to call on a young and beautiful holy woman, called Shaykha Sabah. She offers the couple a cup of coffee and veiled reads the husband's hand to tell his fortune, using a mysterious language she says that he will be granted that for which he has not asked, given what cannot be bought or sold, and robbed of it the very same day. She also tells him that the robes of manhood will be taken off him for a while.[308] The wife listens with great amusement to what her husband is told, while is obviously skeptical, though too polite to show it. The rest of the book is taken

[306] Ibid. , P-99
[307] Ibid. , P-93
[308] Awd 'ala Bad, P-8

up with an account of the manner of the fulfillment of this prophecy and description of the factors that have contributed towards its working out.

It is all very simple, back at home while sitting at the dining table the elder of the two sons playfully tells his mother that she looks years younger after their four day holyday. The younger asks her what she would do if she suddenly found herself ten years old. At her reply that she would play with them he wondered if she would still be his father's wife. This playful conversation reminds her of a story which she read or heard as a child and which she proceeds to tell her youngest son. It is story of an old gardener in a king's orchard who, feeling hungry and finding a single apple on a tree before its season, decides to pick it and eat it. He returns to his hut and soon falls asleep, but when he is awakened by his son he finds that his son cannot recognize him for he has become much younger than his own son. The whole families listen attentively to hear the end of the story, but the mother suddenly stops and says laughingly that she has forgotten the rest. At her children's entreaties she turns to her husband and teasingly asks him to complete the story, since he always boasts of his power of imagination. But the father excuses himself saying that he cannot because he does not know, the rise and he retires to his room and soon falls asleep. He dreams that he has become a young boy again, smaller and weaker than his own sons, but unfortunately he retains the outlook and experience of a man, although his physical condition forces him at times to think feel and act like a child. The dream lasts until shortly before the end of the book.

The humour of '*Awd ala-Ba'd*' arises from the juxtaposition between the attitude of a grown up man and the childish situations in which he is forcibly placed. In his dream his wife appears as his mother without however, ceasing to look like his wife. Similarly, his two children appear as his guests who together with several others come to his birthday party, but are so fall of

mischief and devilry that they play all sorts of tricks and practical jokes upon him, making him look ridiculous, and beating him up in the garden while he is too powerless to defend himself. His doing servant, an old woman whom he inherited from his mother, appears in his dream as an adoring and adorable young and beautiful nurse; obviously she has been transfigured into the person of the attractive holy woman. He feels drown to her as a man, but whenever he opens his mouth to talk to her, he is shocked to hear his own thin piping and screeching voice and naturally she treats him like a child. He tries many times in vain to explain his predicament to her., what complicates matters is that an unpleasant and corpulent uncle of his appears from now where and has designs upon his widowed mother –wife and actually proposes to her. In a childish attempt to put him off, he secretly fills his uncle's pajamas with singing ants which the gardener has carefully collected for him and he hears with great delight the screams of his tortured uncle, while weaving a child's innocent look on his face.

The author goes on describing the various scrapes into which and out of which, his child hero gets. It is indeed a tribute to his great power of imagination, his inventiveness and skill in writing that he never allows the reader to feel bored. On the contrary, the author manages to avoid the danger of repetition, inherent in this type of situation, and seems to be able to drive his reader along with him until the end. Here there is no moralization, no direct teaching, but a delightful and fanciful tale, a work of the imagination just as free from ulterior aims as the thousand and one nights. This is beyond doubt the purest of al-Mazini's work of fiction.[309]

Yet more than any other novel by al-Mazini, this one is deeply rooted in social reality. The plot alone is fanciful but the details of the work are those of everyday life. In fact, the life of a middle class Egyptian family breathes

[309] Badawi. M.M , Modern Arabic literature and the West. P-165

through every line. The dialogue, all written in literary Arabic is a model of what dialogue in the Arabic novel should be like: here the problem of the duality of the Arabic language has virtually vanished, for while remaining faithful to the spoken idiom to the point of reflecting its minute rhythms it has the polish and elegance of literary Arabic. The characters are all alive, sketchily but sensitively drawn as in a Rembrandt etching although, as is to be expected it is the character of the narrator that is most vividly delineated. Here the author's great humanly his affection and tolerance, his irony and UN vanity of spirit are amply illustrate, original both in conception and execution, this work of fantasy which, however, is rich in Freudian overtones, ranks among the great works of humour in any literature. It provides a sensitive, though perhaps a little limited, comment on the human comedy; a comment which according to one symbolical interpretation was inspired primarily by the author's fear of death.

No doubt, *Awad al-Ba'd* is much shorter than al-Mazini's other novels and it is perhaps legitimate to argue that it is too thin to be regarded as a great novel. Indeed, despite its exciting story it has no plot in the proper sense. There is no complication of divergent threads no building up to a climax to be followed by a document. Instead, there are variations on a main theme, much elaboration of a basic situation. The work is indeed tightly organized, in the sense that all the events illustrate different facts of the same situation or that they are all written with an eye on it. But the relation between the episodes remains essentially a post hoc rather than a propter hoc relation. In this respect it is move of a tale than a novel moreover, the characters do not develop and the inter-action between them, which one expects to find in a novel is lacking: this is hardly to be expected in a work in the best part of which the hero's real identity is not known to anybody but him. Yet despite its short comings as a novel it remains one of the most delightful works of fiction in modern Arabic literature.