CHAPTER-I

ARABIC SHORT STORY: ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT

1.1: Development of Arabic Literature in Egypt: European Influence.

Before going to discuss about Arabic short story, the researcher discusses here the European influences on the development of Arabic literature. The historical aspects are studied to present the efficacious factors in the genesis and evaluation of the specific literary genres, so that the relationship between a writer and his environment and period can be seen. Historical facts will portray the different factors and influences which gave impetus to the development and progress of literature and the different directions it took. It is necessary to deal in some detail with this issue because its omission would present a distorted picture of modern classical Arabic literature.

1.1.1: Significant Events

1.1.1.1: Socio-Political conditions of Egypt before 1800

Egypt was one of the provinces of the Ottoman Empire, governed by a *wali* and officials of non-Arab origin. Amongst these foreigners

were the *Mamalik* (singular *Mamluk,* anglicized as *Mameluke*) which means 'owned' or 'possessed' and frequently translated as 'white slaves'. They descended from enfranchised slaves, and usurped power in Egypt, which they ruled from 1250 till the Ottoman conquest of the country in 1517.

The people of Egypt were collapsing under the pressure of the Ottoman rule since the Turks invaded and conquered them during the sixteenth century and caused them to live in misery, distress and financial straits. This was, according to the Egyptian critic Shawqi Daif, because "the Turks were conquering fighters and not a people concerned with civilization and had no proper organization in governance and politics".[28] This is, of course, a controversial point and one must point out that the Turks did care about civilization, as can be borne out by the magnificent Sulaimani Mosque and Library in Istanbul, amongst others. Some of their feats are still lauded today. Concerning this issue Nicholson wrote, "the Mamelukes were rough soldiers, who seldom indulged in any refinement, but they had a royal taste for architecture, as the visitor to Cairo may still see. Their administration, though disturbed by frequent mutinies and murders, was tolerably prosperous on the whole, and their victories over the Mongol hosts, as well as the crushing blows which they dealt to the Crusaders, gave Islam new prestige".[29] Interestingly, none other than Taha Hussain defended the Mameluke period; he regarded it as a flourishing period in Islamic history in Egypt in which many excellent collections of Arabic books appeared:

> It is naive to conclude that the Mameluke era was oppressive; rather, it was one of the most blooming Islamic periods in Cairo and the Arab

[28] Daif, op. cit., p.11.
[29] Desomogyi, Joseph, Tr (1966). *A Short History of Classical Arabic Literature*, Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verslagsbuchhandlung, p.447.

> lands. During this period the following superb books emerged: *Nihaya al-Arab* by Nuwairi, *Masalik al-Absar fi Mamilik al-Amsar* by Ibn Fadl Allah, *Subh al-A'shi fi sina'ati al-Insha'* by al-Qashqandi, the very famous *Lisan al-'Arab* by Ibn Manzur and the abridged versions of *al-Aghani* by al-Isfahani and Ibn Manzur. These books, amongst others, are regarded as monumental scientific encyclopedias, some of it reaching twenty volumes …It was thus not an age of tyranny, but a period of Arabic encyclopedias, and from an artistic and civilizational angle, one of the most brilliant periods in Islam … The actual era of oppression was the period of the Ottoman Turks in Egypt … because they did not contribute anything …they destroyed Islamic civilization, and did not replace it with anything …they took the books from the mosques and locked it up in libraries, making access to it almost impossible … the world must urge Turkey to return these books to Egypt.[30]

The Turks undeniably destroyed the Byzantine Empire during the fifteenth century when they conquered Constantinople (Istanbul). This victory, however, had its beneficial results because many of the participants, who were interested in civilization and culture, migrated to Europe and contributed to the revival of Greek and Roman civilization there.[31] But in Egypt and *Sham* (the present Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine) – which became the cradle of the Islamic civilization at the time – the Turks destroyed almost all traces of culture, literature, science and arts. Furthermore, the erudite scholars from Egypt and *Sham* had no other country to migrate to; alas, a group of them were exiled to Constantinople and the remaining ones, having lost their freedom, were unable to produce any new science and literature. Intellectual and literary life in Egypt thus came to a standstill, except for some meager efforts in *al-Azhar* (founded by the

[30] Al-Dasuqi, Dr. Muhammad, (2002). *Ayyam ma'a Taha Hussain*, Damascus: Dar al-Qalam, pp.83-84.
[31] Daif, op. cit., p.11.

Fatimids and the most famous and oldest institution of higher learning in Cairo). Oppression, poverty and misery set in.[32]

1.1.1.2: Invasion of Napoleon Bonaparte

Under these oppressive and stifling circumstances the French, with Napoleon Bonaparte at the helm, arrived in Egypt in the year 1798. He would stay there for three years, each of which would be characterized by a fierce struggle and a harsh and bitter battle between the people and the occupying agressors. They opposed his politics vehemently and resisted his campaign with successive uprisings, during which many lives and blood were sacrificed. The result of this fearless resistance resulted in the growth of nationalism and deep feelings about their legitimate rights in governing their country.[33] It will later be shown how this phenomenon of nationalism would impact on the development of literature in general and of prose in particular. When the French eventually departed and the Ottomans continued their rule, the Egyptians saw it fit to choose a new leader in the person of Muhammad Ali (whose role will be explored in greater depth later).

1.1.1.3 Effects of the French Invasion

The French campaign was the single most important reason for the revolution in the different aspects of life in Egypt during the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century.[34] The arrival of Napoleon was the greatest event in the history of Egypt since the rule of the Ottoman

[32] Daif, op. cit., p.12.
[33] Ibid., p.12.
[34] Buqari, op. cit., p.7.

Empire.[35] During the campaign the Egyptian people became aware of some aspects of European life. They noticed that the Europeans led their material life in a fashion distinctly different from theirs, whether in their eating and drinking or recreational life or in the way that they conducted their dance, singing or music parties. They observed the way the Western woman dressed, how she carried herself in public and how she rode the horse in a carefree and light-hearted manner.[36] They perceived what the Europeans had achieved with their progress in knowledge. Napoleon brought with him a group of capable specialists in history, mathematics and the natural sciences who on arrival immediately established an Egyptian Science Society according to the French model. These scientists explored all parts of Egypt. The result was the production of nine volumes of information, entitled *Wasf Misr* (A Description of Egypt) and which formed the basis of a reference work on all aspects of Egypt.[37] Besides the Science Society, he also founded a laboratory (which concerned itself with practical research – something novel in Egypt at the time), a library (also non-existent in a formal way) and a printing press (which, too, was unknown in Egypt). Witnessing and experiencing these events made the Egyptians ponder about their own insignificant knowledge, and made them realize that there was another civilization with a culture and science which was worthwhile acquiring. They could sense that it was a type of knowledge art, lifestyle and civilization largely foreign to them, but from which they could gain tremendous benefit.[38]

The French gave the Egyptians their first experience of a newspaper in the *Courier de l'Egypte* and their first glimpse of a

[35] Daif, op. cit., p.11.
[36] Ibid., pp.12-13.
[37] Ibid., p.13.
[38] Buqari, op. cit., p.7.

scientific and literary magazine *La Decade Egyptienne.*[39] They saw the printing press and how Bonaparte printed his circulars, official papers and even books with Arabic letters. All of this was new to them. The printing press would have a profound effect on the advancement of literature as will be seen later.

1.1.1.4 : Contribution of Muhammad Ali

Napoleon broke the power of the Mamelukes, and when the French left Egyptian soil and Muhammad Ali was chosen as viceroy, the people thought that they would start a new chapter in their lives as a free and striving nation. They aspired to individual freedom similar to that in France, and a democracy and constitution on the lines of Europe.[40] Muhammad Ali, however, did not go the full distance as far as their aspirations and dreams were concerned. He withdrew and recoiled from those who had chosen him. Like Napoleon, he established a series of tribunals and treasuries which, unfortunately, denied the people their rights and thereby ended their hopes and aspirations to participate with him in governing their own affairs.[41]

Imam Muhammad Abduh, in his reflections in *al-Mannar*, would later compare the rule of Muhammad Ali and his predecessors, the Mamelukes. Although both were oppressive, he preferred the latter because "their grip on the minds and freedom of the nation was not as tough and inflexible as that of Ali, and therefore did not affect the Egyptian personality with weakness as did the tyranny of Ali his only power was his army he was sly and would use his army and put

[39] Haywood, op. cit., p.30.
[40] Buqari, op. cit., p.9.
[41] Daif, op. cit., p.14.

opposite parties against each other to achieve his aims".[42]

Despite dashing the people's political ambitions, he did plant the seeds of a 'new' life, a 'new' consciousness which would grow and spread gradually, producing its flowers and fruits in the not too distant future.[43] Ali's main aim was to build a strong army for himself on the European style so that he could realize his dream of becoming a 'grand emperor'. Everything he did in the fields of acquiring and dispensing of knowledge was geared towards this objective. Further, as Le Gassick puts it "the fact that the new autocrat was Albanian by birth, Turkish by education, and illiterate in Arabic until late in his rule precluded any possibility of his becoming an active patron of Arabic literature".[44] The significant side effect was that his efforts resulted in the establishment of a strong connection between Egypt and Europe or between Egyptian intellectual life and European intellectual life.[45] To realize his aims he had to request help in applying European methods and had to employ European teachers. Many who came at his invitation founded companies and schools. European literary figures visited Egypt and made use of its old and new history in their literature works. He was, therefore, the 'stimulus from within' Egypt, because "the mere presence of Europeans for a few years could not in itself lead to a literary revival".[46]

Muhammad Ali is generally recognized as the first person to have opened the doors of Egypt to European civilization. This he did by importing European scientists, medical doctors and engineers (to assist in the training and maintenance of his army, of course) and by sending

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[42] Akawi, Dr. Rihab, (2001). *A'lam al-Fikr al-Arabi:al-Imam al-Shaikh Muhammad Abduh*, Beirut: Dar al-Fikr al-Arabi, p.75.
[43] Buqari, op. cit., p.10.
[44] Ibid., p.6.
[45] Daif, op. cit., p.14.
[46] Haywood, op. cit., p.31.

Egyptian student delegations to Europe. The individuals in these delegations were the messengers who brought Western thought and the European way of life to Egypt.[47] "he created a new environment, following the French occupation. He gave Egyptians something to write about, to feel strongly about, to feel proud of, instead of the sterile themes of the Age of Depression. A sense of purpose replaced the old torpor and sloth".[48] This 'Western' experience made indelible marks on the Egyptians' inner selves, as were seen later in their literary works.

1.1.1.5: The Beginning of the Growth of Nationalism

It was Muhammad Ali's successors, Saeed and especially Ismail, who would give the answer to the new spirit which prevailed in Egypt. At first the people were bewildered and awe-struck, in self-denial almost, but would gradually absorb the 'new life' through the efforts of Ismail, who was well-known for bringing Egypt closer to Europe.[49] He supported the ties with Europe by opening an opera house, the *Khidawi* (Khedivial) Library, increasing the number of primary and secondary schools, and opening a school for girls. Knowledge was acquired for the sake of knowledge, and teaching became an end in itself and not for the sake of an army, as was the case with Ali.[50] "Ismail wanted to make Egypt 'a piece of Europe' and to give it a stamp of Western culture"[51]

A momentous event during Ismail's time was the opening of the Suez Canal. The results were pragmatic and clear: the physical distance between the lands of the East and the West was shortened significantly,

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[47] Buqari, op. cit., p.8.
[48] Haywood, op. cit., p.34.
[49] Buqari, op. cit., p.7.
[50] Daif, op. cit., pp.15 & 24.
[51] Qasim, Dr. Riyad, (2001). *Mustafa Lutfi al-Manfaluti: Fi Sabil al-Taj,* Beirut: Mu'assasa Basasun, p.7.

as was the figurative distance between the people of the East and the West with respect to thought and culture. This was bound to happen, because physical relations and intellectual relations are, after all, inter-related and intertwined. The barriers between East and West were slowly eroding. Politically too it had far-reaching consequences, namely the occupation of Egypt by England (1882), which in turn impacted on the positive development of literature in Egypt.[52]

Ismail established a parliament and a ministers' council and introduced many laws fashioned on the European models. This resulted in the growth of 'a tendency toward nationalism'.[53] During the time of Ali and Abbas the people led a very mechanical type of life, a life which had to satisfy Ali, his family and the aristocrats of the society (Turks). Ali wasn't of Turkish descent, but an Albanian who painted himself and his family with a Turkish brush. He mostly printed books in Turkish at his Bulaq Printing House, and when he published the *al-Waqa'i al-Misriyya* (Egyptian Official Gazette – the oldest known newspaper in Egypt), he printed it in Turkish and Arabic. His administrative publications were purely in Turkish.[54] In other words, there were no nationalistic and Egyptian tendencies in Ali's deeds – in fact he buried the people's political aspirations in their infancy. But during the time of Saeed, and especially Ismail, the small sparks of nationalism which were still flickering weakly were given the opportunity to flare up. The people's aspirations started to grow when he allowed the *fallahin* (peasants and farmers) to join the army and be promoted to high positions in the civil administration, people of the calibre of Rifa'a al-Tahtawi, Ali Mubarak, and Mahmud al-Falaki.[55] As

[52] Daif, op. cit., p.15.
[53] Ibid., p.15.
[54] Ibid., p.16.
[55] Ibid., p.16.

the public opinion and nationalistic leanings grew further, and when Egyptian newspapers were published, they could, unlike before, criticize even the politics of Ismail. The slogan of the papers became 'Egypt for Egyptians'. These nationalistic calls resulted in the army under Ahmad Urabi rebelling against the Circussian Turkish forces in 1882.[56] Tawfiq was, after a period of his rule, no better than his father, Ismail, rather, he was far worse. He turned his back on the national resistance and on the leaders of the reform movement; things became worse, and the country was gripped by chaos; corruption spread in the administration, bribery was common, and subjugation and submission became the order of the day".[57]

Further the following four incidents contributed to the advancement of Arabic literature during the reign of Ismail can be identified[58]:-

1. The spread of knowledge and the mushrooming of newspapers and the concomitant conscious awareness that went with them;
2. The arrival in 1871 of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (the mentor of students like Shaikh Muammad Abduh) who called for religious *islah* (reformation), the beneficial use of Western culture and knowledge in the cause of Islam, the emancipation from the interference of foreign powers in Islamic countries, and the rebellion against powers and rulers who assisted them;
3. The announcement of the *'Uthmani* (Ottoman) constitution which focused the people's thoughts on their rights and the necessity of protecting them; and

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[56] Daif, op. cit., p.16.

[57] Qasim, Dr. Riyad, (2001). *Mustafa Lutfi al-Manfaluti: Fi Sabil al-Taj,* Beirut: Mu'assasa Basasun, p.8.

[58] Buqari, op. cit., p.10.

4. The worsening debt situation and the interference of foreign countries in the internal affairs of Egypt.

More will be said about these events in their appropriate places.

1.1.1.6: The English Occupation

With Tawfiq abetting the occupiers, Egypt became submissive to the English. The country was ruled by English advisors and the ministries were run by Egyptians, the vast majority of whom were of Turkish origin. Even these ministers in the different ministries were controlled by English advisors and administrators. "For twenty years (1884 - 1904) outwardly Egypt remained submissive to the Khedivial dynasty, but its actual ruler was the British proconsul, Sir Evelyn Baring, who was later known as Lord Cromer".[59] Although the occupation was wretched, it could not suffocate the national movement against it. This nationalism was "sometimes Arabism (Pan-Arabism would be a better term), sometimes Islamic. Frequently, however, it was more Egyptian, either specifically or by implication".[60] The national movement grew stronger, especially under the leadership of Mustafa Kamil and due to the return to Egypt of the political exiles. Kamil published the newspaper *al-Liwa'* (The Flag) in 1899 and used his fiery articles and sermons to stir up the people's feelings against the occupiers. He also founded the National Party (*al-Hizb al-Watani*) and traveled to all the European capitals, explaining the Egyptian issue and the invalidity of the English occupation. He was without fear of contradiction, recognized as the 'leader of Egyptian nationalism' in his

[59] Qasim, Dr. Riyad, (2001). *Mustafa Lutfi al-Manfaluti: Fi Sabil al-Taj,* Beirut: Mu'assasa Basasun, p.8.

[60] Haywood, op. cit., p.80.

time.[61] His political essays in his newspaper were indicative of a new style and form of literature which was developing, but more about this will be detailed later (under the development of the *maqala*).

The English continued with their aggression, oppression, arrests and jailing, and tightened the noose of freedom around the people's necks until the outbreak of the First World War. After the war, the Egyptians rose up against the cruel occupiers for three continuous years.[62] The resistance and uprisings would continued until the English were forced to exit Egypt in 1936.

It must also be pointed out that during the occupation the English tried very hard to let their culture be dominant over that of the French and other European nationalities. This was done in three ways:

1. By making English the official language of the sciences and the medium of teaching.
2. By sending student delegations exclusively to England.
3. Various English religious delegations (Protestants and especially Catholics) visited Egypt and established many schools in Cairo, Alexandria, and other major centers.

The combination of these factors definitely affected the cultural and religious life of Egypt.[63]

The English missionaries were also very active in Syria and Lebanon where concerted efforts were made to convert Arabs to Christianity. Many Syrian and Lebanese Christians migrated to Egypt for economic reasons. According to Taha Hussain, the political conditions in *al-Sham* (since the time of Ismail) resulted in many Lebanese and Syrian scientists emigrating to Egypt, making especially Cairo the hub of the Arab intellectual movement. Fleeing from

[61] Daif, op. cit., p.206.
[62] Ibid., p.17.
[63] Ibid., p.18.

oppression, they found in Cairo peace of mind and a place where they could give vent to their deepest feelings and inner thoughts literarily.[64] These *muhajirun* (emigrants) played a major role in Egyptian literature through the newspapers. Newspapers had an unprecedented effect on the people's thought and psyche and on the development of literature in general, and the *maqala* and *qissa* in particular.

The arrival of the English (1882) and their long occupation of Egypt (until 1936) did a lot of harm to the local economy, culture and history – the occupation was experienced as a 'heavy nightmare'[65] – but at the same time it also indirectly led to scientific and cultural progress and a stronger political awareness. It forced the Egyptians to find a way to vent their feelings (demanding, for example, their freedom and insisting on the occupiers to leave Egypt) against the occupation. They did this by secretly founding new newspapers and magazines.[66] The pen became a powerful weapon in the struggle: a light that expedited toil and nation building, a fuel for every uprise and revolution, and a revivor of heedless and pessimistic hearts.[67]This in turn led to the emergence new forms of literature, like the *khitaba, maqama, maqala* and *qissa*. We will examine these innovative forms in detail in their appropriate places.

1.2: New Forms of Literature and their Writers and Topics

1.2.1: The *Khitaba* (Sermon or Oratory Discourse)

In the meantime, the art of *khitaba* was growing and developing.

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[64] Shayami, Dr. Yahya, (1995). *A'lam al-Fikr al-Arabi: Taha Husain Adiban wa Naqidan*, Beirut: Dar al-Fikr al-Arabi, p.71.
[65] Buqari, op. cit., p.11.
[66] Ibid., p.11.
[67] Akawi, op. cit., p.6.

The *khitaba* was not new as Arabs vigorously engaged in this art during the *Jahiliyya* period (one hundred and fifty years or more before the dawn of Islam) and Islamic period (the dawn of Islam up to the rule of the four rightly guided Caliphs Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman and Ali). They knew the political *khitaba* as used by Ziyad bin Abihi and his contemporaries and the religious *khitaba* as presented by al-Hasan al-Basri and his contemporaries. These two types blossomed during the Umayyad period (a designation of the time when *Umawi* caliphs ruled the Islamic Empire from 661-750), but began to fade and lose their vitality and freshness during the Abbasid and subsequent periods. The Abbasid rulers oppressed their people and prohibited all political speeches. The Arab mind stagnated, the *imams* and preachers not being progressive and innovative in their speeches and lectures given on the occasion of *jumua* (Friday prayer) and the days of *Eid* (celebrations after the month of *Ramadan* and on the tenth day of the *Hajj*). They just repeated the same speeches of shaikhs like Ibn Nabata and his contemporary Saif al-Daula, making changes and substitutions here and there.

When the nineteenth century dawned, the political and religious *khitaba* was, so to say, dead. It was only when the people started to demand their rights and when Western law was introduced, that the political *khitaba* was revived. A new form of *khitaba*, known to Europe, emerged: the *khitaba qada'iyya* (legal discourse in court). Lawyers and prosecutors would be trained in this new form and they would soon become proficient and adept at it. Egypt would lead the way in these two forms of *khitaba* in modern Arabic literature. The other Arab countries under the oppressive rule of the Turks were denied their freedom and the application of Western law, and thus the legal *khitaba* was not transferred to them. These oratory discourses

enabled the Egyptians to enjoy and benefit from what the lecturers would read to them of Western revolutions, principles of freedom and goodwill, and human rights.[68]

1.2.1.1: Growth and Development of the *Khitaba*

The *khitaba* (Sermon or Public Oratory Discourse) as used by *imams*, political and social speakers, played a major role in the development of Arabic literature. Three types of *khitaba* could be discerned: political, social and judiciary.

1.2.1.1.1: The Political *Khitaba*

The political *khitaba* made a comeback, blossoming in a way unknown during the previous periods, due to the influence of the above-mentioned factors. Their contents were derived from the inexhaustible sources of Western thought and its accompanying principles of freedom and political rights. They also derived their subject matter from the miserable Egyptian way of life that was characterized by an oppressive rule and a loathsome occupation. Soon politicians with great oratory skills, people like Mustafa Kamil and Sa'ad Zaghlul (who also played a major role in al-Manfaluti's life, as will be detailed later) would appear. As described before, an Egyptian parliament was installed and various political parties mushroomed. Each party had many skilful orators elucidating and propagating their political stances. In this fashion the political *khitaba* experienced growth and development in both style and quality of content. This would in turn impact on the development of the *maqala* published in

[68] Daif, op. cit., pp.185-86.

newspapers[69].

1.2.1.1.2: The Judiciary and Social *Khitaba*

Egypt also took its modern judiciary system from the West. It adopted the system of prosecution and defence in courts, and thereby the judiciary *khitaba* was initiated. The law courts became like those of the West, with the men of law arguing their points in oratory speeches. As more and more lawsuits were litigated, so did this kind of *khitaba* make progress, and many legal lawyers became famous. Alongside the political and legal *khitaba,* the social *khitaba*, which was delivered at social clubs and parties (and which covered various social and humanitarian topics) developed in essence and in prestige.

Although the *khitaba* developed greatly as a modern form of literature, it cannot be said that Egypt initiated it without a prior source. The political and social *khitaba* did exist during the *Jahiliyya* and Islamic periods, but faded and withered as the political climate changed in severity. Egypt thus inherited the *khitaba* from its past, and then revived and developed it during the nineteenth century. If the *khitaba* was not entirely new, then there were other prose forms that Egypt initiated namely the *maqala*, *qi*ss*a* and *masrahiyya*[70].

1.2.2: The *Maqama*

The *uqsusa* passed through a stage which could be regarded as the 'preparation stage' before it would take the form as was known to the Westerner. When it was written on the European style, it went

[69] Daif, op. cit., pp.203-204.
[70] Ibid., p.204.

through many experimental stages and was subjected to various general influences[71]. The *maqama* was actually the first step which Egypt took towards the *uqsusa*, and then the *maqama* itself developed into another form, very different from its former appearance, but still maintaining its main inherent characteristics of the *maqama*.

The appearance of the *maqama*, like the revival and initiation of all types of literature in Egypt can be attributed to two principal factors: The first one was the movement to research the Arabic heritage and the concomitant revival of ancient, classical works, and the return to the literary models (in both poetry and prose) of the *izdihar* (the period when Arabic literature flourished). The printing press, as was detailed before, played a major role in this research as it facilitated the provision of many books from the Arab heritage to the general public. The movement for the revival of the Arabic heritage followed closely on the heels of the establishment of these presses, as did various educational and science societies which distributed vast amounts of classical literature[72].

The appearance of the *maqama* was thus part of the Arabic research movement. It was felt that the *maqama* had "the authority of a native Arabic literary form which might be developed into drama or into an Arab novel"[73]. Some Orientalists also participated in the research and publication of the *maqama*. Thus as, for example, distributed the *maqamat* of al-Hariri in Europe and also translated them during the time of al-Tahtawi[74].

The second factor was the role of the newspapers. The modern *maqamat* in Egypt were first published by newspapers and magazines

[71] Buqari, op. cit., p.39.
[72] Ibid., p.39.
[73] Bateson, Mary Catherine. (1967). *Arabic Language Handbook.*Vol. II, Washington DC: Centre for Applied Linguistics, p.332.
[74] Buqari, op. cit., p.39.

because of the newspapers' interest in them and because of their suitability with respect to size and means to educate the populace about many issues (whether scientific, literary, or social) related to that period. In other words, the *maqama* was ideal to use as a *maqala* (newspaper article). Some newspapers mixed up the terms *maqala* and *maqama* and would call the latter *maqala*[75]. This was probably because individual *maqamat* " differ considerably, at times resembling an essay, at times a learned article, at times a short story – or an essay with an anecdotal element"[76].

Egypt was not the first to initiate the *maqama* in its present form for Lebanon, through the new works of Nasif al-Yaziji (1800-71) and Ahmad Faris al-Shidyaq (1805-87) in the field of the *maqama*, preceded Egypt to it. "(They) are famed for books antique in form and style: but by their brilliant manipulation of the Arabic language, they pointed the way to future possibilities"[77]. Al-Shidyaq, who converted to Islam, was a delegate to Egypt (as a translator for the Americans, it is believed) and influenced literary events there. He entered journalism succeeding al-Tahtawi as editor of *al-Waqai' al-Misriyya*. He had a "great sense of humour – humour often piercing and satirical. …His very name Shidyaq is so un-Arabic as to be easily remembered: it is from the Greek, and means a sub-deacon or chorister"[78]. One of his books contained *maqamat* with the peculiar title *al-Saq Ala al-Saq fima huwa al-Fariyaq* (Leg over Leg concerning what Fariyaq is) which was a brilliant autobiography (some would say a travel book). According to Le Gassick *al-Saq* is "the most brilliant and provocative work in Arabic prose of the 19th century. Both its style and subject matter are lively

[75] Buqari, op. cit., p.39.
[76] Haywood, op. cit., p.291.
[77] Ibid., p.43.
[78] Ibid., p.53.

and intriguing …this book is greatly enhanced by the author's linguistic artistry … (it) in a sense provides an attempt at bridging the different styles and form of Arabic literature. It combines some of the linguistic elegance, wit and anecdotal skill of the classical genius, Al-Jahiz with lines of poetry and rhymed prose so favoured in later Arabic literature"[79]. These *maqamat* played a major role in the moulding of the *maqama* during the second stage of its development. A study of his works gives one insight into, and understanding of, the development of the writing style (for example the gradual movement to free literature from the styles of *saj'* and *badi'*) and the topics of the *maqama*.

His book contained four *maqamat,* namely *Fi Maqama, Fi Maqama Muq'ada, Fi maqama Muqayyima*, and *Fi Maqama Mahshiyya*. Al-Shidyaq hated *saj'* severely although he sometimes used it himself. His *maqamat* were very intricate and involved because he relied on the style which was in mode at the time, but all of them bore the signs of a writer who was adept with the language and who could be highly critical of others. Haywood is of the opinion that although he was addicted to rhymed prose, there was "a tug-of-war between the ornate and the simple" and "In style, he was torn between the simplicity apt to journalism and the *maqama* style demanded in fine literature"[80].

His first *maqama* (*Fi Maqama*) was didactic in nature. His second one (*Fi Maqama Muq'ada*) was the most complicated, and its meanings and vocabulary were at times so unclear that its six pages needed about fifty pages of explanation. In *Fi Maqama Muqiyyima* he defended the woman from those who found only fault with her, and *Fi*

[79] Buqari, op. cit., p.14.
[80] Haywood, op. cit., pp.57-58.

Maqama Mahshiyya was also about women. His aim was to educate[81]. To his credit are also "philological works ranging from grammars of French and English for Arabs, to complex works on Arabic lexicography. These weighty works are important in the history of Arabic dictionary-writing Al-Shidyaq was the pioneer of modern Arabic lexicography"[82] .

As for the Egyptians who wrote the *maqama*, one finds that the magazine *Rauda al-Madaris* (first issued in 1870) was the first to take an interest in it. Many writers contributed articles to this magazine, each one with an own style, and each one finding a method to benefit from the reigning atmosphere of the *maqama* of that period to explain what needed to be explained. Once again, there was confusion between the use of the terms *maqama* and *maqala*: some writers' pieces were called *maqamat* while they were actually *maqalat*, and vice versa.

In this field the contributions of Majdi, Abd Allah (Pasha) Fikri and Ahmad Fathi Bek were significant. In short, it can be said that Majdi's *maqamat* or *maqalat* were moral and educational in scope, that the topics were determined by circumstances in his society and that he was significantly influenced by the movement to revive the Arabic heritage. The *maqamat* of Fikri differed from that of Majdi in two ways : firstly, he mentioned that he translated them and, secondly, they all revolved around man / woman as a human being and the ' inner kingdom' of man / woman (that is, the human body, where the characters, environment and props were the five senses, the heart and soul, and the good and bad which reside in the self, like beauty, purity, animal desires, jealousy, covetousness, anger, love, greed, love of position and power, forgetfulness, honor, justice, and so forth). His

[81] Buqari, op. cit., pp.40-42.
[82] Haywood, op. cit., p.56.

style was narrative but, like all other *maqamat,* contained some *saj'*[83].

Abd Allah Fikri was the first writer to 'free' Arabic prose from the shackles of *saj'* and embellished language by moving towards simple, aesthetically welcome and charming expression and style. He used two methods in his prose: the first, and most dominant, was the style which was welcoming for its expression and musicality, its choice of words, poetic imagination, and precise meanings. This was in contrast to that of al-Qadi al-Fadil, Badi al-Zaman, al-Khawarizmi or Ibn al-Amid. His second style was the easy, uncomplicated style which glided with ordinary words, the style of the press at the time[84].

There were many others who wrote on various topics like love and religion, but it would suffice to summarize the value and the importance of the *maqama* in as far as it foreshadowed the *qissa* and the *uqsusa* as follows:

1. The *maqama* was used as a means to educate and to present various types of information.
2. It became a means for moral training and a call to virtue.
3. The events in the *maqamat* were derived from the people's taste for excitement and adventure and therefore *mufajaat* (surprises) and *uqad* (singular *uqda,* 'climax' or 'twist') in the plots abounded.
4. The ending of the story was predictable since the beginning. If, for example, the title had to do with 'conquer', then one could be sure that the hero would win in the end, or if the title had 'suicide' in it, the story would end with a suicide.

The last three features would also appear in the first *aqasis*, with slight variations here and there[85].

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[83] Buqari, op. cit., pp.42-48.
[84] Al-Anwar, op. cit., pp.11-12.
[85] Buqari, op. cit., pp.47-49.

1.2.2.1: The Growth and Advancement of the *Maqama* and *Qissa*

The writers who followed would attempt to produce original works based on the Western model. The first two significant ones were *Hadith Isa ibn Hisham* which was written in the *maqama* style, and *Zainab*. Because of its pioneering effort, more will be said about al-Muwailihi's *Hadith Isa ibn Hisham* (and other similar works) in the paragraphs that follow. Muhammad Hussain Haikal's *Zainab* was the first genuine and complete attempt at writing the Arabic *qissa* according to the Western model[86]. He described the life of the Egyptian village and the peasants in a way which none of his predecessors did. His book reflected a very accurate picture of Egypt's rural way of life[87]. The theme behind the story was the danger of outworn customs – in this case, the parentally arranged marriage, which was normal in those days. Other rural abuses also came to light in the story, and the language was free from artificiality, and the dialogue of peasants used Egyptian colloquialisms[88]. Haikal steered away from the use of *saj'* and *badi',* and used the colloquial only in the dialogues of the villagers[89].Years later Muhammad Taimur would compile and publish original short stories under the name of *Ma Tarahu al-Uyun*. These stories were characterised by their realism, their precise description of emotions and their perfect short story structure. After World War I many writers, who could write stories masterfully and skillfully, appeared. One of them was Mahmud Taimur, brother of the above-mentioned Muhammad Taimur. Another was Mahmud Tahir Lashin who compiled *Sukhariyya al-Naas* (The People's Object of Ridicule)

[86] Daif, op. cit., p.209.
[87] Ibid., p.274.
[88] Haywood, op. cit., p.136.
[89] Daif, op. cit., p.277.

and *Yuhka Anna* (It is Related that). His stories excelled with their truly Egyptian spirit and their ability to accurately and realistically describe characters in serious or comical situations[90].

The *maqama* evolved according to the spirit of the times and harmonized with what was newly discovered in literature. The translation of long story narratives must get a lot of credit for this advancement. Writers especially modeled the form of their *maqamat* on that of the long narratives. This form, however, did not hide its origins and old tendencies. Books that seemed as if they were long narratives and connected from beginning to end by the same theme appeared on the scene. The most important of them were the above- mentioned *H adith Isa bin Hisham*, together with *Layali Satih* (Nights Unfolding) by Hafiz Ibrahim, and *Layali al-Ruh al-Ha'ir* (Nights of the Perplexed Soul) by Muhammad Lutfi Jumua[91].

These stories appeared to be connected episodes, but were really individual events, every event talking about a separate topic. What bound them together was one common link, namely the topic of social issues which people cared about. This was not surprising because the conditions in the society, which were briefly referred to elsewhere were in need of solutions, and new issues concerning the confusing conditions in the society, arose and had to be discussed, debated, and solved.

The above-mentioned works clearly differed from the *maqamat* which preceded them, in the following respects:

1. The type of adventure and surprises which characterized the previous *maqamat* had disappeared – especially those which were meant to admonish and guide the reader.

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[90] Daif, op. cit., p.210.
[91] Buqari, op. cit., p.49.

2. The didactic type which dealt with grammatical principles and religious law almost disappeared.

3. These *maqamat* in its narrative presentation avoided the influence of the populace's taste on the unfolding of events. The event was not given undue significance unless there was a connection between the event and the treatment of the social issue or ideas of the people.

4. The expected ending also disappeared due to its relative unimportance to the social writers who tried to solve the problems of the day[92].

These positive developments did not end there – the *maqamat* would evolve even further as will be seen in the discussion of the works of the ensuing generation with respect to the *uqsusa*. Returning to the book *Hadith Isa ibn Hisham*, the following salient remarks can be made : it was non-fiction, its aim was to educate and inform and thereby try to solve social problems, it consisted of *saj'* (rhymed prose), *tibaq* (juxtaposition of contrasting ideas) and *muqabala* (comparison and collation), it was a social *maqama* which closely resembled the *maqala* written in a narrative style, it actually did not succeed in its social and reform intentions, the events in it were not important in themselves, but they pointed to the short- comings and immoral opinions prevalent in the society, and finally, the *maqama* lost its point of climax (*uqda*) totally while the *uqda* was regarded as important in the novel by most writers, especially in the psychological thrillers which depended on analysis more than anything else. The book can be regarded as valuable, not as a work of art because it did not conform to all the fundamental requirements of the *qissa*, but for its treatment of various social problems.

Hafiz Ibrahim's book, *Layali Satih*, also discussed various

[92] Buqari, op. cit., pp.49-50.

social, political and literary issues, but, being a poet too, Ibrahim treated the topics in a poetic style. It consisted of individual events (*layali,* nights), the common thread being the social issues being discussed. Like al-Muwailihi, he also concerned himself with the social issues of the veil (*Hijab*) and whether it should be discarded, the worshipping at shrines and the building of domes on graves. He made less use of *saj'* than al-Muwailihi.

The book by Muhammad Lutfi Jumua, *Layali al-Ruh al-Ha'ir*, also, as the title indicates, consisted of episodes (*layali*) where every 'night' treated a different topic. It differed, however, from Hafiz's and al-Muwailihi's in that it contained no *saj'* whatsoever, that the stories resembled the *aqasis* much closer, and that the author's Western culture and his reading of especially French books were clearly discernable. In all the stories clear attempts to compose a novel and leanings towards Romanticism could be noticed. When the three works are compared, an almost naturally gradual decrease in the use of *saj'* can be discerned: al-Muwailihi used it a lot, Ibrahim used it occasionally, and Jumua discarded it completely[93].

Two other books related to the evolution of the *maqama* are *Nata'ij al-Ahwal fi al- Aqwal wa al-Af'al* (The Consequences of Words and Deeds) by Aisha al-Taimuriyya and *Ilm al-Din* (The Science of Religion) by Ali (Pasha) Mubarak. The former had the following characteristics:

1. It was closer to the fairy tale type of *uqsusa*
2. The people's taste and the stories which the authoress had read or heard about clearly left its mark on the run of events in the stories.
3. Maybe the authoress derived her material from 'A Thousand and One Nights' or other folk stories because the story played out in Iraq, Persia,

[93] Buqari, op. cit., pp.50-53.

China, India, Sudan and Yemen.

4. Although the book appeared to be a long story with interconnecting episodes, each section actually had a specific aim in mind, similar to those of al-Muwailihi, Ibrahim and Jumua.

Ali Mubarak's composition was, in a nutshell, a didactic and instructional book. It gathered much old as well as new information about both the Arabs and the West. When first opened, it could be thought of as a book on religion, or a book on statistics, or a book on travels. The stories showed no effects of the *maqamat* or folk stories – like previous books – but they corresponded to them in that they take the form of the long narrative story, although the stories are cultural in nature and totally independent of one another.

Although Mubarak neglected to write about his society, he did not completely forget them; he did write about the stupidity of the rich and the conditions of the country people and peasants, and the oppression, prejudices and injustices which they endured. It is interesting to remark that this book contained stories within the main story.

Returning to the famous Syrian al-Shidyaq, and his equally famous book *al-Saq ala al-Saq*, one must remember that he wrote his book before the five authors mentioned above, and one can safely say that he planted the seeds of the Arabic *uqsusa*. It was al-Shidyaq who started to write about a topic in the form of a narration (*riwaya*), steering away from the *maqama* style. This was remarkable if one remembers the literary standard his society had held at the time. Writers like the five mentioned above, would follow his example[94].

1.2.3: The *Maqala*

[94] Buqari, op. cit., pp.55-61.

Initially, the style of The *Maqala* (essay) writing was characterized by the love of *saj'* and *badi'*. Then it slowly shed these 'chains' and leaned towards simplicity in expression, the focus on ideas and its depth, its influence on the treatment of topical issues, and brevity according to the needs of the time. As for its topics, it varied from the general to politics, social relations, economic affairs, literary issues and criticism, education, and religion. It became the dominant literature form in newspapers.[95]

Not surprisingly, the writers of the late nineteenth century would naturally not adhere to the old models of their predecessors. They started to use models that related to real life and all its events and prepared them for newspaper journalism and other forms of literature. It was journalism that pushed them towards the composition of the *maqala* (short essay) which was an art unknown to their distant elders. Writers of previous centuries knew what was known as *al-risala* (epistle) which would treat some topics in quite detail. It resembled a booklet. After the introduction of newspapers, the writers innovated this short literary model to convey the concerns of the populace. They utilized the *maqala's* suitability for journalism, namely brevity, uncomplicated style, and the simplification of ideas and language, to make literature easy to read and understandable to the person in the street.

Writers began to practice this new form to express their opinions about local and international politics, social and religious reformation, and all other aspects of life. With practice and time there were, by the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century, a crop of excellent essayists, personalities like Ali Yusuf (who played a major role in al-Manfaluti's literary life as will be seen later), Mustafa

[95] Al-Bawi, op. cit., p.8.

Kamil, Fathi Zaghlul, Qasim Amin, Abd al-Aziz Muhammad, Lutfi al-Sayyid, Shaikh Muhammad Abduh, and others who struggled against the corruption and immorality in society, politics and religion.

These intellectual writers affected Egyptian life deeply and profoundly, because it was they who carried the banner of reformation in all aspects of life. Their influence is still felt today. They made the people aware of their rights, their duties and responsibilities, and everything related to the reasons for their backwardness and decline. They taught the people how to live as free human beings in their country, and how to rise up to realize their independence and achieve a noble way of life. They stirred and aroused the people's latent elements of power.[96]

Mustafa Kamil must get the first place of honour for urging the Egyptians to struggle for their independence, the benefits of which were reaped after the revolt in 1919 under Sa'ad Zaghlul, when a national government and constitution were installed, and then later after the final revolt when the English finally exited Egypt in 1952.

Shaikh Muhammad Abduh, again, initiated a brave struggle in the sphere of religion. He is recognized as the most important religious reformer in modern Egypt. He called for the purification of the religion from erroneous beliefs and superstitions. He believed that the religion must be well researched because the door of *ijtihad* (reaching a consensus of opinion in religious matters) had not been closed. Furthermore, it was imperative that research, in the light of modern knowledge and thought, be done on a continuous basis. He would confirm in his *maqalat* and in his research that Islam was a universal religion, not contradicting modern civilization, and would strongly refute those Orientalists and colonizers who attacked the religion. He

[96] Daif, op. cit., p.183.

wrote a *tafsir* (interpretation and commentary) of the Holy Qur'an which was in agreement with the general spirit of his beliefs. He would reform the law courts during the rule of Abbas the Second as well as the teaching curricula in the University of *al-Azhar*.[97] Riyad Qasim is of the opinion that although Shaikh Abduh did not found a new type of literature like "the *qissa*, *riwaya* or *masrahiyya*, his efforts definitely assisted in the advancement of the style in Arabic writing a style of Arabic's pristine purity, dynamism and simplicity namely the style characteristic of the Arabic heritage ".[98]

Qasim Amin would again carry the banner of social reformation. He steadfastly believed that the main reason for the Muslims' decline and backwardness compared to the West was the woman's *Hijab* (veil) and her ignorance. The *Hijab* stunted her role in society and thwarted all her rights in marriage and all aspects of her life. It was "a huge barrier between woman and her elevation, and consequently a barrier between the nation and its advance".[99] He wrote *maqalat* on this issue in the paper *al-Mu'ayyad* and then in 1899 compiled them in the form of a book by the name of *Tahrir al- Mar'a* (The Liberation of Women). He wrote another book *al-Mar'a al-Jadida* (The New Woman) in which he again fervently defended the freedom of women and set out steps to achieve that aim. He eloquently reiterated that she must participate actively in general life and its various duties and responsibilities. This was revolutionary at the beginning of the twentieth century, keeping in mind the conservative atmosphere that prevailed. Before al- Tahtawi and others also wrote rather quietly on the

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[97] Daif, op. cit., p.184.
[98] Akawi, op. cit., p.13.
[99] Quoted in Armstrong, Karen (2004). *The Battle for God: Fundamentalism in Judaism, Christianity and Islam,* London: Harper Perennial, p.164.

role of women, but what amazed and shocked the Egyptians was the "stridence of Amin's moralizing tone" and "for the first time in Arabic, there was a direct attack on the very morality of the traditional role of women in Muslim society".[100] Much credit must be given to Amin that the revolution succeeded unequivocally after the first world war, for the woman regained her freedom, cast off the *Hijab*, studied and started to participate in governmental work and other public services like health.

As far as his style and argumentations are concerned, Haywood concludes that, "It is a matter of regret that Amin's style leaves much to be desired. At times it is positively gauche, and, in lawyer fashion, he apears to mistake exactitude for clarity. Here he contrasts with Abduh whose Arabic sounds well and is clear. Qasim Amin's polemics are tremendously important historically, and spring from a noble mind. But they hardly deserve the title of literature"[101].

In this way the crop of gifted writers rejuvenated the people's life and intellect, causing them to progress in leaps and bounds. Many of them mastered foreign languages and delved deeply into the works of Western philosophers of the eighteenth and nineteenth century. They would use these fresh and vibrant Western philosophical ideas in the *maqalat* they wrote for their people. This tendency was clearly illustrated in the works of Fathi Zaghlul and Ahmad Lutfi al-Sayyid. The former would translate 'The Secret of the Progress of Saxon English' and publish a series of *maqalat* in *al-Mu'ayyad* in the year 1899. Lutfi al-Sayyid would busy himself with translating some works of Aristotle. Fathi Zaghlul researched the shortcomings of his society and Lutfi was doing groundwork in Western philosophy, both ancient

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[100] Le Gassick, Trevor J (1979). *Major Themes in Modern Arabic Thought: An Anthology,* Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, p.38.
[101] Haywood, op. cit., p.125.

and modern. The significance of this was that they, and those who acquired similar profound Western cultural values, were motivated by the new prose form, the *maqala*, which became a model for vibrant ideas and philosophy, and which could be used to convey the political, ethical and social thought of the West.[102]

Egyptians, together with the previously mentioned Lebanese-Syrian *émigré* writers, thus initiated the *maqala*, political and otherwise. Here, mention must be made of Mustafa Lutfi al-Manfaluti who did not write on politics but rather on social issues. He published his *maqalat* in the paper *al-Mu'ayyad* under the title of *al-Nazarat*. He covered several social aspects in them, and compiled and published them in book form with the same title. Al-Manfaluti was greatly concerned with style and the conveyance of meaning in a clear and artistic way. He steered away completely from the use of difficult and intricate *badi'* and *saj'*. Mustafa pioneered a new style, a style in which words were chosen and used with care and deliberation, and wherein there was music which was pleasant and acceptable to the ear.

1.2.3.1: Growth and Advancement of the *Maqala*

1.2.3.1.1: The Origin of the *Maqala*

The modern *maqala* (Essay or Literary Article) was a short literary form that hardly exceeded two or three columns in a newspaper, but the Arabs did not know it in this form. What they knew was a much longer version that took the form of a book. They called it *risala,* meaning epistle or message, like the *Risala al-Jahiz* (The Epistles of

[102] Daif, op. cit., p.185.

Jahiz). During the Abbasid period it was also "known as *al-Fusul* and as *al-Amali*"[103]. The *risala,* again, was borrowed from the Greeks and the Persians who used it as a form of literature in which they addressed the upper level of their respective societies at the time. Charged heavily with *balagha* devices, the *risala* "probably arose as a medium for official letters, as written by court secretaries.[104] The first famous exponent of this genre was the Persian origin Abd al-Hamid known as al- Katib (d. 750).

The *maqala*, however, was taken from the West where it was initiated and shaped by the necessities of modern life and the demands of the press. Western writers used it to address not only the high stratum of society, but all levels, irrespective of class, creed or religion. The essay did not contain profound thought in order that the lowly educated could also understand it. Likewise, it did not consist of embellished language so that it suited the taste of the ordinary people who could not tolerate flowery language. Incidentally, for these same reasons, many writers during the middle to the third quarter of the nineteenth century would not write articles for newspapers. They only did so when they were forced to discard the chains and shackles of *saj'* and *badi*' towards the end of that century[105]. The *maqalat* that developed could be placed into three categories: political, literary and social.

1.2.3.1.1.1: The Political *Maqala*

As soon as the political *maqala* without *saj'* and *badi'* was founded, and started to address the people directly about personal and

[103] Shayami, op. cit., p.21.
[104] Haywood, op. cit., p.11.
[105] Daif, op. cit., p.205.

national issues, and began to strongly affect them, the *Urabi* revolt (mentioned earlier) broke out. When the leaders of the revolt were banned, the writing of the *maqala* was banned with them. Abd Allah Nadim, Shaikh Muhammad Abduh and Jamal al-Din al-Afghani were banished precisely because of the political *maqala* they wrote in the newspapers. The articles of especially Nadim were of a high quality and showed his natural talent for the *khitaba* written as a *maqala*. He wrote with such fervour as if it was his personal revolt, becoming one of the rebellion's most eloquent and vociferous protagonists. The topics were predominantly about social reform. The *maqalat* of Shaikh Abduh were just as effective and were characterized by the strength of expression and a dignified style. His topics were mostly about reformation in the religion and Islamic society, written with tremendous insight and circumspection, at times zealously and at other times with great scrutiny[106]. Commenting on certain writers' and poets' attempts to rescue the Arabic language from degeneration and to restore the Arabic and Islamic heritage, Gibb justifiably remarked: "Their efforts were powerfully seconded by a number of publicists educated in the religious schools, the outstanding figure among whom was Shaikh Muhammad Abduh (1849 – 1905)"[107].

In trying to assess and define the contribution and influence of al-Afghani on Arabic literature, Le Gassick mentions that "his published works are both less voluminous and less revealing than one might have expected from so active and inspiring figure only his journalistic materials and his *Urwa al-Wathqa* articles and his *Risala fi Ibtal Madhhab al-Dahriyin* were published in his lifetime"[108]. The Syrian Muhammad al-Makhzumi (1868-1930), a man who knew al-Afghani,

[106] Daif, op. cit., pp.205-206.
[107] Gibb, op. cit., p.159.
[108] Le Gassick, op. cit., p.26.

penned a book about him with the title *Khatirat Jamal al-Din al-Afghani*. There is consensus notably among Arab scholars that he is one of the greatest reformers of Islam, a leader in the struggle for Eastern independence from Western imperialism, a liberal pan-Arab as well as an Islamic nationalist.

This type of essay grew and developed as the people's intellect grew and developed. There was a great difference between the *maqalat* of the generation mentioned above and the generation that followed, namely the generation who would endure and suffer under the British occupation. Writers of the caliber of Mustafa Kamil, Shaikh Ali Yusuf and Lutfi al-Sayyid blew life and power into the political *maqala*. The *maqalat* of Mustafa Kamil in the newspaper *al-Liwa* were recognized as the most powerful tool with which the Egyptians fought the British occupation. Mustafa himself was undoubtedly the leader of Egypt's nationalist movement at the time. He was an orator of the highest degree and a political writer of the finest caliber. He woke the people up from their political slumber, inflamed their consciousness with nationalistic feelings, and shouted into their ears and the ears of the Western world the illegality of the British occupation and the birthright of the Egyptian people to live a decent and dignified life. Shaikh Ali Yusuf strongly defended Islam and the East with fiery *maqalat* in his newspaper *al-Mu'ayyad*, whipping up the people's emotions against the iniquitous occupation. Lutfi al-Sayyid again published his *maqalat* in *al- Jarida*, calling for the education of the populace so that they could regain their stolen rights from the occupying aggressors. "Lutfi al-Sayyid influenced countless of youth with his opinions, and they would become the

leaders in the fight for freedom and in the revolutions"[109]. Alongside them was Mustafa Lutfi al-Manfaluti who excelled in, and became famous for, his social *maqala*. He charmed the readers with his sensitive, unique style, propagated the meaning of mercy and virtue in society, and eloquently described the misery and suffering of the wretched.

The political *maqala* developed even further in depth and scope during the third stage or with the third generation who grew up after the First World War. The independence given to Egypt by Britain after the war on 28 February 1922, and the concomitant mushrooming of political parties, doubled the activity in political essay writing. Great battles would ensue. The best representatives of this generation were Amin al-Rafa'i, Abbas al-Aqqad, Muhammad Hussain Haikal, Abd al-Qadir Hamza, Taha Hussain and Ibrahim Abd al-Qadir al-Mazini. Their political articles used to captivate the people, and they varied from author to author according to each one's personality, style and ability of clear expression[110].

1.2.3.1.1.2: The Literary and Social *Maqala*

The literary *maqala* developed simultaneously with its political sister. This type of essay dealt with literary and cultural issues. It did not take long for various magazines, weekly or monthly, to appear. They would exclusively deal with literature and culture. The most notable ones were *al-Muqtatif* (The Choice) and *al-Hilal*. Many others like *al- Siyasiyya al-Usbu'iyya*, *al-Ballagh al-Usbu'i* (The Weekly Informer), *al-Risala* and *al- Thaqafa* would follow.

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[109] Qasim, Dr Riyad, ed. (2001). *Mustafa Lutfi al-Manfaluti: Fi Sabil al-Taj*. Beirut: Mu'assasa Basasun, p.15.
[110] Daif, op. cit., pp.205-206.

This type of *maqala* had a major influence on the Egyptian and other Arab countries' literary life. It went through the same three stages of development as the political *maqala*. During the nineteenth century it grew simply and uniformly and afterwards the second generation developed it to include Western ethics, social issues and various philosophical ideas. Newspapers and magazines, for example *al-Muqtatif*, would describe European scientific and social theories to the Egyptians specifically and to the Arab world generally. The literary *maqala* would reach a state of art and great usefulness with the third generation, the generation of Haikal, al-Aqqad, Taha Hussain and al-Mazini. Their *maqalat* would touch the hearts and stir the emotions. They would extend them to intensive research on literature, critique, the arts, and to philosophical and social theories. They were guided in their works by the great ideal model of humankind, the model of goodness, truth and beauty. Many subsequent writers followed this model, for example Tawfiq al-Hakim who wrote his *maqalat* to convey the spirit of Western thought and their literary doctrines and social ideologies. The writers did not only print their articles in the papers, which could be thrown away, but also compiled and published them in the form of books so that they could remain for the generations to come. Al-Mazini's *Hissad al-Hashim* were "often reprinted and used in schools" and put him in the forefront of essayists on literary and general cultural subjects[111]. Reference must here be made to the social *maqalat* of Mustafa Sadiq al-Rafa'i and Ahmad Amin. Al-Rafa'i would excel with his profound penetrating mind, helped by the fact that he became deaf at an early age. It seemed that his deafness sharpened his mind and perceptions. Amin again excelled with his profuse contemplative and deductive abilities, helped by the extensive culture

[111] Haywood, op. cit., p.208.

he acquired. He would criticize various aspects of society, not in a severe, resentful way like a preacher, but in a calm, pleasant and interesting way[112].

1.2.4: The *Qissa*

The writers did not only limit themselves to the *maqala* and *khitaba* before the end of the First World War, but experimented with another form of literature that was new to them: the *qissa* (Short Story). "The short story and the narrative developed apace and took a form unknown to former Arab writers".[113] As mentioned before, many Western short stories were translated into Arabic. Two of the foremost ones were *Hadith Isa ibn Hisham* (The Narration of Isa bin Hisham) by Muhammad al-Muwailihi and *Zainab* (1914) by Muhammad Hussain Haikal (b.1888).

Al-Muwailihi's attempt illustrated that some writers still imitated and were infatuated with the old literary models like the *maqama*, a short story form of about two to three pages in which a narrator related a story in the *saj'* (rhymed prose) style. The *maqama* usually includes poetry to display some skill in manipulating the language or prosody. It will be considered at length under 'The Origins of the Qissa and Uqsusa'. Al-Muwailihi changed this short form into a long social story about Ahmad Pasha al-Munaikali who died during the period of Muhammad Ali and was resurrected to life at the end of the nineteenth century. Ahmad Pasha would meet Isa bin Hisham, the narrator, and relive his life in the modern Egypt of that period. He found that everything had changed and began to compare between the past and the

[112] Daif, op. cit., p.207.
[113] Al-Bawi, op. cit., p.8.

present, specifically the police and legal systems and the habits of the people, describing them extensively in a socially critical manner. This criticism was presented in the *saj' maqama* style as if he was writing a long *maqama*[114]. Taha Hussain felt that the Egyptian short story in its first stages imitated either the ancient Arabic literature or foreign literature. As an example he mentions that *Hadith Isa ibn Hisham,* which describes the Egyptian social life and its different strata, does not adhere to the fundamental principles of the short story as are known in modern times, that the author uses *saj'* and other *balagha* devices as profusely as did the writers of certain previous periods, and that al-Muwailihi included poetic verses at inappropriate places.[115]

So, although there were still writers who imitated the old models, they attempted to do so in a style which suited the modern life of that period. They tried to use it to pinpoint and criticize the prevalent social ills and to offer solutions for them, and to do it in a way that satisfied the new literary taste.

The best story to represent that new taste was *Zainab* which Haikal wrote in 1910 while in Paris and which he published in *al-Mu'ayyad*. It was an entirely new effort because it was totally void of the *maqama* style, there was no narrator, and no *saj'* or *badi'*. On the contrary, the language was simple and close to the people's daily tongue, '*ammiyya* only used when the story warranted it. *Zainab* was a truly Egyptian story, describing Egypt's country life, its rich and poor levels of society, and the social obstacles between the two. Qasim Amin's call for the liberation of woman also came across clearly in the story, as did the peasant way of life in the countryside and the beauty and charm of its natural scenery.

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[114] Daif, op. cit., pp.186-187.
[115] Al-Dasuqi, op. cit., p.20.

During this time, too, the *qissa tarikhiyya* (historical short story) was taken up with great vigour by Jurji Zaidan (1861-1914), a Lebanese who spent most of his life in Egypt. He wrote about twenty original stories, basing their events on Islamic history. In addition, Zaidan compiled a history of the Islamic civilization in five volumes, as well as a history of Arabic literature (based on Orientalists' works) in four volumes. Although the stories did not strictly follow the structure and narrative sequence of the Western short story, they were notable contributions to the development of the Arabic short story.[116] One of his admirable feats was that by making great Arabs of the past no longer seem remote, and by describing them in a modern literary form, he "performed a double service – to his fellow- Arabs' self-respect and to modern Arabic literature"[117].

Another noteworthy contribution was Taha Hussain's *Dhikra Abi al-A'la* (The Memoirs of Abu al-A'la). This is the work for which he obtained his doctorate in literature. It blew a new, fresh wind into the study of Egyptian literature and was sought after by many prominent European orientalists. In the book Taha Hussain analyzed the mind and inner life of Abu al-A'la and the role which the environment and time play in a person's life. As to why he was so enchanted by the life of Abu al-A'la (who was also blind), Taha Hussain reiterated, "I discovered my intense love for him while living in Italy for a while, and if Abu al-A'la had known the advantages of travelling, then his views about life would surely have changed and he would not have been so pessimistic; he said about himself, 'I am thrice a prisoner: a prisoner of darkness (being blind), a prisoner in my house, and my spirit is a

[116] Daif, op. cit., p.188.

[117] Haywood, op. cit., p.135.

prisoner of my body'".[118]

In this manner Egyptians, by the outbreak of World War-I, clearly progressed in their production of quality literature and in their critique of this literature. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century Egypt's sparks of thought could possibly have taken flame and spread their light into various intellectual and philosophical directions. She, however, decided to do it with patience, perseverance and after long and thorough consideration.[119]

1.2.4.1: Growth and Development of the *Qissa* and *Uqsusa*

1.2.4.1.1: The Origins of the *Qissa* and *Uqsusa*

The *qissa* (plural: *qisas* or *qasais*) was not entirely new in Arabic literature. In *Jahili* literature there were many stories about the Arabs and their battles, in the Qur'an were various tales about the Prophets and the people they were sent to, and during the Abbasid period many stories about foreign nations were translated, the most famous being *Kalila wa Dimna* (by Ibn al-Muqaffa) and *Alf Laila wa Laila* (Thousand and One Nights). Various versions of the latter crystallized from Sanskrit and Persian models in the tenth century[120].

However, the Abbasid stories and those of the Islamic peoples afterwards were predominantly in the local colloquial languages. They, therefore, did not belong to the classical Arabic literature. The *maqama* a story that related the adventures of a writer (*adib*) who captivated and fascinated his listeners with his quick-wittedness and eloquence of

[118] Al-Dasuqi, op. cit., p.106.
[119] Daif, op. cit., p.188.

[120] Bateson, op. cit., p.332.

expression, was an exception. Owing to its importance in the development of the *qissa* and *uqsusa*, a brief exposition of the *maqama* is appropriate here. *Maqama* is sometimes translated as 'assembly'. The hero of the story, an adventurous, witty, shrewd and well-versed vagabond, gained rich rewards by astounding and enlisting the sympathies of his audience with inventive narratives. In the various situations (*maqama*) of his wanderings around the world, he happened to meet the same acquaintance (also a traveller) repeatedly. The latter is always introduced as the *rawi* (narrator). Badi al-Zaman (Ahmad al-Hamadani, d. 1007), the originator of the *maqama*, and those who followed him like Abu Muhammad al-Qasim ibn Ali al-Hariri (d. 1121), did not intend to create a real story (known as an *uqsusa,* plural: *aqasis*) – their aim was rather educational, namely the compilation of groups of styles embellished with *saj'* and *badi'*[121].

The *maqama* was the only connection the novel (*qissa* / *uqsusa*) had with classical Arabic. The tales of the *qissa* were mostly written in the colloquial language, as can be seen in many Egyptian folk stories like *Antara, Qissa Hilaliyya, Qissa al-Zahir Berbers wa Dhat al-Himma, Saif bin Dhu Yazan* and *Fairuz Shah*. Many other stories were 'Egyptianised' (that is, written in Egyptian colloquial and with Egyptian names), for example *Alf Laila wa Laila* and the more recent ones of that time by Ali al-Zaibiq and Ahmad al-Danaf[122].

1.2.4.1.2: The Move towards the Western *Qissa*

When Egypt's relations with Europe started (with the arrival of Napoleon) and the people became aware of the Western literature he

[121] Daif, op. cit., p.237.
[122] Ibid., p.208.

brought with him, the writers began to translate this literature. As related before, the leader of that translation movement was Rifa'a al-Tahtawi. He translated Fenelon's 'The Adventures of *Telemaque*' and called it *Mawaqi' al-Aflak fi Waqa' Tilmak* (roughly translated as 'The Position of the Stars for the Tale-bearer Telemaque'), thus becoming a pioneer of the novel in Arabic. It could be noticed from this change in title that al-Tahtawi was still chained to the use of *saj'* and *badi'*. He translated the story that was written in an easy and simple style into a difficult and intricate style. He did not stick to the original, except for its general spirit, but gave himself the liberty to change names and meanings, to add his opinions about education and system of government, and to use Egyptian folk parables and proverbs and Arabic wise sayings. But above all, his Arabic style "while not merely functional or conversational, is straight forward despite his knowledge of French with its clarity al-Tahtawi's prose is Arabic in feeling as well as language"[123].

1.2.4.1.3: The Egyptianization of the *Qissa*

Rifa'a al-Tahtawi was not only a translator, but also an Egyptianizer of the *qissa*, that is, he translated the Western story into Egyptian Arabic and substituted names of characters and settings with Egyptian equivalents. This 'Egyptianizing' would continue long after him. Subsequent writers did possess the ability and the means to move away from the *saj'* and *badi'* of al-Tahtawi and his contemporaries, but because they wanted to satisfy the tastes of their readers, they still clung to the old style and expression. In fact, some writers like Muhammad Uthman Jalal preferred to use the Egyptian colloquial in their *qissa*.

[123] Haywood, op. cit., p.34.

There were, however, those writers who 'Egyptianised' the *qissa* using classical Arabic, thereby balancing the scales. The most famous at the beginning of the twentieth century were Hafiz Ibrahim and Mustafa Lutfi al-Manfaluti.Hafiz Ibrahim translated, or more precisely 'Egyptianized', Victor Hugo's 'The Wretched'. He did not abide by the original, except to the main story line, but took the liberty of translating freely and adding passages that were not there originally. Perhaps the works of al-Manfaluti in 'Egyptianizing' Western *qissa* was more extensive than that of Hafiz Ibrahim. He did not know anything about the French language, but depended on someone to read the French stories to him, and then he would relate the stories as heard, in Arabic. He would then even change the title, for example he named *Paul et Verginie*, written by Bernardin de St. Pierre, *al-Fadila* (Virtue or Moral Excellence). The stories would bear no resemblance to the original. Likewise, they lost their short story structure. The main aim was not the story itself, but the description of the different shades of emotions of its characters, and to employ a style which was easy, relaxed and eloquent[124].

1.2.4.1.3.1: The Social *Qissa*

If one looks at the kinds of *qissa* that evolved, then two types of it can be discerned: the social *qissa* and the historical *qissa*. The long social story, which was initiated by Muhammad Hussain Haikal (*Zainab*), would develop and advance by leaps and bounds with Egypt's literary revival after the First World War. Various writers produced original works, all with their own personal style and characteristics that distinguished them from other writers. They typified the new liberal

[124] Daif, op. cit., pp.208-209

spirit in Arab thought. The most prominent were Taha Hussain (b.1889) and Ibrahim Abdul Qadir al-Mazini (1890-1949). The former excelled in his description of Egyptian life in most of his *qasas* for example *al-Ayyam* ('The Days' or sometimes translated as 'An Egyptian Childhood'), *Dua al-Karawan* (The Call of the Plover) and *Shajara al-Buwus* (The Wretched Tree). Other compositions were '*Adib*' (Man of Letters, subtitled 'A Western Adventure'), *al-Qasr al-Mashur* (The Bewitched Castle), *al-Hub al-Da'i* (Lost Love) and many other works which he co-authored[125]. His *al-Mu'adhdhibun fi al-Ard* is regarded as the "apex of biographical literature as far as beauty, effect, style, expression, simplicty and eloquence are concerned" and his *Rihla al-Rabi' wa al-Saif* as the "best literary example of travel stories"[126]. He treated the well-known story of *Shahrazad* from *Alf Laila wa Laila* in his characteristic skilful and charming style. *Al-Ayyam* records his childhood in the *kuttab* (traditional Quranic School), in the Egyptian countryside, then in Cairo, in *al-Azhar,* then in Paris, in the university. In it he describes his thoughts, trials and tribulations, pains, happiness, and his human, social and personal ordeals, making it a stirring character study and captivating social document wrapped in one. *Al-Ayyam* was later written in Arabic braille especially for the blind so that they, in the words of Taha Hussain himself, "will experience in it the life of a soul mate in his youth and in reading it, I hope my blind friends will find enjoyment and aleviation from the burdens of life as I have found succour in writing it, and that it will encourage them to face the future smilingly and so that they will benefit themselves and others, overpowering all difficulties in their way with patience, diligence,

[125] Al-Bawi, op. cit., p.62.
[126] Shayami, op. cit., pp.38-40.

forebearance and never-ending hope "[127]. The pulishers brought out this issue "in honour of Taha Hussain's great status in our intellectual, literary, social and political life, a status of a leader, pioneer and scholar"[128]. 'The Days' were so popular that the first volume was broadcast as a series over Egypt's public radio during the month of *Ramadan*[129]. It was put to Hussain that it seems that 'The Days' was the first autobiography in Arabic literature, but he replied,

> It's not the first book, for there was Ibn Khaldun who wrote about himself in his travels; and this reminds me that I wrote the two volumes … under the same circumstances: volume one I wrote after the publication of *al-Shi'r al-Jahili* and the problems and arguments that followed it … and I felt dejected and grieved about the unfolding events, so I tried to escape from my depression or to overcome it by writing the first volume. As for the second volume, I wrote it in an attempt to flee from hurtful pain following a verbal altercation with a colleague[130].

Taha Hussain's significant role in and his substantial contribution to the development of modern Arabic literature is succinctly articulated by Dr Yahya Shayami:

> We have to point out his excellent championship and patronage of the Arabic language and literature. He was a luminary, a thinker, a scholar, a man of letters, a critic, a social reformer. The cultural insight and progressive ideas he introduced into literature made him a pioneering and creative littérateur. He wrote several different types of essays and short stories, biographies, descriptive travel stories, histories, even poetry and critiques, and his criticisms did not stop at literature, but included politics, society, behaviour and religion. In short, he was a witness to and the flag bearer of the intellectual literary revival of his time. It was, therefore, no surprise

[127] Hussain, Taha, (2004), *Al-Ayyam*, Cairo: Matba al-Ahram al-Tijariyya, p.9.
[128] Ibid., p.3.
[129] Al-Dasuqi, op. cit., p.100.
[130] Ibid., pp.68-69.

that he was one of the five winners of the UNESCO prize for literature in 1973; sadly, the morning of the day that he passed away[131].

He would generally become known in the Arab literary world as *Amid al-Adab al-Arabi* "as an honour for the major role he played in the field of literary studies" and affectionately as *Wazir al-Mai wa al-Hawa* "because as minister of education he decreed that education must be free and available to everybody like water and air"[132].

Ibrahim Abd al-Qadir al-Mazini concerned himself with the psychological aspects of man and woman in his short stories. He derived his subject matter from Egyptian daily life and his own personal experience of that life. He was a fine stylist and could expertly analyze the society, its customs and habits, the relationships amongst the various people, and their temperament, emotions and sensibilities. He acquired this tendency towards psychological analysis from Western psychological writers. Like them, he would propagate the well-known Western psychological theories in his stories, for example in *Ibrahim al-Katib* (Ibrahim the Scribe, published in 1931) and *Awd 'ala Bad'* (A Return to the Beginning). Gibb, in writing about *Ibrahim al-Katib,* refers to its "defiant cynicism, subtle humour, and crisp and natural dialogue"[133].

Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad wrote a story *Sara* which resembled al-Mazini's taste for psychological analysis. Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad's story consisted of extensive analyses of the characters, and his personal attributes of eloquence in expression and clarity in style would predominate in these analyses. Besides *Sara,* which was "a novel- in

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[131] Shayami, op. cit., p.126.
[132] Ismail, Dr Mahmud and Al-Tahir, Mukhtar, (1979), *Namadhuj Min al-Adab al-Arabi li Ghair al-Arab: Mukhtarat min al-Adab al-Hadith,* Ryadh: p.2.
[133] Quoted in Haywood, op. cit., pp.136-137.

powerful and sinewy prose"[134], he wrote many political, social, literary and philosophical articles and essays as well as a number of biographies. His works runs into more than ninety volumes.

This type of *qissa* was almost confined to these two authors only. The generation after them, like Muhammad Hussain Haikal and Taha Hussain, concentrated on social analysis instead of psychological analysis. After them the foremost writers in this respect would be Tawfiq al-Hakim (b. 1898), Mahmud Taimur (b. 1894) and Najib Mahfuz (b. 1911).

Tawfiq al-Hakim (regarded by some as the finest Arabic author of the first half of the 20th century) used some events and experiences which he had witnessed in his own life as subject matter, for example in *Yaumiyyat Na'ib fi Aryaf* (The Diary of a Provincial Officer). It recounts in satirical and brilliant language the investigation of a murder by the legal officer and the police. He showed great skill in the use of dialogue, and had the ability to write vivid description in "straightforward yet witty and occasionally poetical prose"[135]. Al-Hakim tried to treat some national problems in *Auda al-Ruh* (Return of the Soul). His stories had the stamp of general humaneness on them, and simultaneously he seriously tried to describe the world of the Eastern Egyptian soul. He also excelled in intellectual drama (the drama of ideas) and social drama.

Mahmud Taimur, again, tackled the shortcomings of Egyptian society in his stories. Although he had his own personal style and character, his works bore a resemblance to that of Taha Hussain and al-Hakim. Some selections of his most famous and much-appreciated

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[134] Badawi, MM (1974). *A Critical Introduction to Modern Arabic Poetry*. Cambridge University Press, p.86.
[135] Haywood, op. cit., p.203.

short stories and narratives (18), and articles and studies (11) are listed by Muhammad Mahmud al-Bawi in his book *Amaliqa al-Adab al-Arabi al-Muathir*. He writes of the Cairo scene, his short stories named in each case after the title and leading characters of one story, for example *al-Hajj Shalabi* and *al-Shaikh Jumua*. A detailed study of his life and works can be found in Fathi al-Abyari's *Mahmud Taimur – Ra'id al-Uqsusa al-Arabiyya*.

Najib Mahfuz's stories were concerned with the middle and lower classes of his society. He described the various circumstances and factors at work in the societal environment that sometimes led to deviant personality traits and perverted behaviour[136]. He wrote three historical novels, novels of contemporary life, and a collection of short stories called *Hams al-Junun*. His reputation is based on his trilogy *Bain al-Qasrain*, *Qasr al-Shauq* and *al-Sukkariyya* in which he traces the history of an Egyptian middle-class Muslim family between 1917 and 1944. His attention to detail is brilliant and is skilful in his use of language, "adapting classical syntax fairly freely to suit the modern printed language, with its absence of vowelling. His dialogue is realistic, without using many coloquialisms"[137].

1.2.4.1.3.2: The Historical *Qissa*

Alongside the social *qissa*, the historical qissa also developed by the beginning of the twentieth century. Tracing the development of the new forms of Arabic literature, H.A.R. Gibb remarked, "some progress was made with the novel, particularly in the series of historical novels in the manner of Scott produced by the indefatigable journalist, essayist, and

[136] Daif, op. cit., pp.210-211.
[137] Haywood, op. cit., p.207.

historian Jurji Zaidan"[138]. Jurji Zaidan compiled some twenty odd historical short stories in which he described all the major events of the Arabs' past. Technically speaking, they were not stories, but history narrated in the form of stories. He incorporated love stories in them (historical romances), and wrote about events without any adaptation and without the analysis of human emotions and circumstances. May be this was because "Jurji Zaidan used the *qissa* as a means to teach Islamic history not as an avenue to present Western cultural thought and was therefore more a teacher than a narrator"[139]. His historical interests were diverse: he wrote separate books on the history of Arabic literature, Islamic civilization, Greece and Rome, Modern Egypt, Britain, pre-Islamic Arabia, and even Freemasonry in Egypt, prompting Gibb to retort, "it is fully open to question whether his activity was not even more effectual than Muhammad Abduh's in leading contemporary Egyptian literature along the path which it has followed"[140].

Shortly after World War One this type of *qissa* would ripen and progress. The first to produce a perfect, artistic historical *qissa* was Muhammad Farid Abu Hadid with his story *Zanobia*. He followed it up with other stories: *al-Malik al-Dalil wa al-Muhalhil* (The Misguided and Flimsy King), and then *Juha fi Janbulad* (Juha in Janbulad). In all his stories he applied the principles of the *qissa* very skilfully, and described its characters with deep penetration into their hidden, inner spiritual and psychological being. Many other capable writers, like Ali al-Jarim, Muhammad Said al-Aryan and Muhammad Awad Muhammad, would write in the same vein[141].

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[138] Gibb, op. cit., pp.160-161.
[139] Qasim, Dr. Riyad, (2001). *Mustafa Lutfi al-Manfaluti: Fi Sabil al-Taj,* Beirut: Mu'assasa Basasun, p.14.
[140]Quoted in Haywood, op. cit., p.134.
[141] Daif, op. cit., p.211.

1.2.4.1.3.3: The *Qissa* Becomes Fully Arabic

Another unexpected factor that led to the further growth and blossoming of the *qissa* is the political and economic war of words that broke out between Europe and Egypt. This was the time when Egypt was still under British occupation. The Mediterranean Sea was sealed off, some historians maintained, to choke Egypt's economic development that was booming at the time due to the trade route through the Suez Canal. Trade would go around The Cape of Good Hope instead of through the Canal. The result, besides the economic ones, was that no Western literature would come to Egypt and the Egyptian writers began to depend on themselves much more than they did previously. The *qissa* grew profoundly in content and style because the writers no longer relied upon inspiration from the West. They depended on and used their own Egyptian Arabic environment. The *qissa*, therefore, became Arabic and indigenous art in an Egyptian milieu, not an imported Western art measured by and based on Western examples and models.

The number of able writers would also increase tremendously after the final revolt of 23 July 1952 when Egypt successfully evicted the English from their soil. The last English soldier left Egypt in 1956. All of these writers found themselves after the victorious uprising and started to eloquently express Egyptian life, with its concomitant social, political and economic events, in the most beautiful and captivating *qissa* imaginable. Today there are many prominent, innovative Egyptian short story writers, the *qissa* has a distinct Egyptian flavour, and each writer has his own personal style, methodology and way.

The tendency to Egyptianize Western *qissa* before First World War had ended. It was replaced by a new taste in professional, precise

translations. Many publishing houses, societies and foundations played a major role in this respect, for example *Lajna al-Ta'lif wa al-Tarjama wa al-Nashr* (The Committee for Writing, Translation and Publishing), *Dar al- Hilal* (Crescent Publishing House), and *Dar al-Ma'arif* (Publishing House of Information and Education). Even the Ministry of Education and Teaching played a significant and meaningful role in this regard.

The consequence was that Egypt attained a huge amount of genuine, original Western *qissa* and, likewise, gained genuine, original Egyptian *qissa* that were no less beautiful and charming than their Western counterparts[142].

1.2.4.1.3.4: Topics of the Earlier *Maqalat* and *Qissa*

As previously mentioned writers derived their subject material from the society in which they were born and bred. The topics covered mostly social issues, for example the raising of the lower class's educational level. Other topics treated were the 'modern city' which was evolving (those for and those against), the place, position and status of woman - the wearing of the *Hijab* became a hot issue, as will be seen in the discussion of al-Manfaluti who was a strong defender of the wearing of *Hijab* - as well as her backwardness which was responsible for her misery and which prevented her from fully participating in the issues of the day, and the issue of forced marriages which amongst others led to suicides and extra-marital affairs, political problems, belief (*aqida*) problems (e.g. Islamic thought and nationalism) and, of course, the resistance to the English occupiers. The treatment of all these various topics led, stage by stage, to the

[142] Daif, op. cit., pp.211-212.

production of the short story in one way or another. Strangely, the occupiers indirectly also aided in the advancement of the short essay and story. Cromer believed and propagated the idea that the Muslim without a European character and morality was unsuitable to rule Egypt and that future government ministers must have a European education. Some newspapers helped him in that they tried to make the Egyptians doubt themselves, their beliefs and their ideas. The reaction was contrary to expectation: many articles appeared refuting these notions and calling loudly for personal and political freedom[143]. The Egyptian attitude to Cromer – indeed, to British influence in general – was revealed in the literature, and this led to the advancement of the essay and short story.

The remarks by Armstrong[144] about Cromwell give us some insight into why the attitude of colonialists make the subject population experience an occupation as intrusive, coercive and profoundly unsettling, and how it causes rifts in a society and leads the people to internalize the colonialists' negative views of the themselves:

Cromer was a typical colonialist. In his view, the Egyptians were an inherently backward people and needed to be colonized for their own good. He assumed that Europe had always been in the vanguard of progress. He did not realize that European countries such as Britain and France had once been as 'backward' as the Middle East, and that he was simply looking at an imperfectly modernized country. He saw 'Orientals' themselves as inherently, genetically flawed; he assumed that Europeans had always been rational, efficient, and modern, while the Orientals were naturally illogical, unreliable, and corrupt. Similarly,

[143] Buqari, op. cit., p.22.
[144] Armstrong, op. cit., p.161.

Islam 'as a social system was a complete failure,' and incapable of reform or development. It was not possible to resuscitate 'a body which is not, indeed, dead, and which may yet linger on for centuries, but which is nevertheless politically and socially moribund, and whose gradual decay cannot be arrested by any modern palliatives. He made it clear that this chronically retarded country would need direct British supervision for some time.

Abduh, for example, was devastated by the British occupation. He described the modern period as a 'torrent of science' drowning the traditional men of religion. He says:

> It is an age which has formed a bond between ourselves and the civilized nations, making us aware of their excellent conditions and our mediocre situation: thus revealing their wealth and our poverty, their pride and our degredation, their strength and our weakness, their triumphs and our defects[145].

Qasim Amin's book *Tahrir al-Mar'a*, is again an example of how an Egyptian writer had internalized and adopted a colonial prejudice[146], namely, he argued that the veil was the cause of the degraded position of women in society. Not surprisingly, this condescending and supercilious attitude of the colonialists inspired a backlash in the form of a flurry of essays and articles against the British occupation, and thus, indirectly abetted and sustained the progress of these new genres.

Other notable topics tackled by many writers were the problem of wine drinking and the hypocrisy about it. In the stories they would treat the harmful effects of alcohol on the individual person, its bad consequences, that friends would forsake him, and the fact that he would destroy his future and that of his family[147].

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[145] Quoted in Armstrong, op. cit., p.161.
[146] Ibid., p.165.
[147] Buqari, op. cit., p.23.

Another contentious issue, mentioned before but worthwhile repeating, was the use of language. The writers would argue for the use of only classical Arabic in their narratives while others would argue for the exclusive use of colloquial Arabic. Many tried to solve the issue by using classical Arabic in the dialogues; others used colloquial in the dialogues, while a third group tried to use simple classical Arabic which was familiar to the populace's taste[148]. Not surprisingly, the occupying English tried to destroy one of the strongest factors which bound the different Arab and Muslim peoples, namely classical Arabic, by encouraging the use of the colloquial languages in literature.

[148] Buqari, op. cit., p.23.