CONCLUSION

This thesis in its different chapters has discussed the different aspects of Arabic short storiy and the contribution of the Egyptian writer Mustafa Lutfi al-Manfaluti. The aim of this conclusion is to present a resume of the discussions in the previous chapters. The four chapters in this study are summarized below.

In tracing the development of Arabic short story and essay as new forms of Arabic literature, it was essential to go back to the beginning of the nineteenth century (and sometimes to even earlier periods) to put the development in its true perspective. The focus was on the major political events that had a direct bearing on the topic. Referring back to past events and people was also necessary to put Mustafa Lutfi al-Manfaluti's literary works and his vital contribution into context. In other words, the discovery of new forms of literature and their evolution, and the author's contribution, are inseparable from the efficacious historical factors and conditions in Egypt before, during and after the nineteenth century. These factors and influences gave impetus to the genesis of the new forms of literature and to the emergence of a writer like al-Manfaluti. Arab intellectualism was Westernized by the introduction of European culture. In fact, Arabic culture became involved in "a conscious and dynamic conflict" with Western culture, and "Out of this conflict between East and West modern Arabic literature was born"[375]. Consequently, traditionalism and modernism, instead of clashing with each other, had run parallel to each other in modern Arabic literature.

[375] Badawi, op. cit., p.13.

Since the sixteenth century, the Egyptians were living in distress and misery under the Ottoman rule. The result was that culture and science became stagnant, and intellectual and literary life grounded to a halt. It was under these circumstances that Napoleon invaded Egypt. The epoch-making introduction of the printing press and the translation of European literature (mainly French and English) into Arabic led to the Western influences in culture, politics and economics. The important part played by translators, editors and correctors cannot be exaggerated because "it was the translation of scientific works, together with journalism, that in the course of time helped to rid modern Arabic prose (and ultimately poetry) of the excessive preoccupation with *badi'* and other forms of verbal ingenuity"[376]. Through these translations, the Egyptians became familiar with not only Western technology, science and philosophy but with classical and modern Western literature (especially its themes and techniques). The viceroys of Egypt and the Syrian-Lebanese emigrators played a major role in this respect. It led, too, to the revival of the Arabic and Islamic heritage when the classical works of Arab and Muslim writers of previous centuries were restudied and re-interpreted and put into print. The classical models showed that classical Arabic was strong and capable enough to impart modern thought and ideas in literature, the natural sciences, politics, economics, and so forth. It had the vigour and precision to meet contemporary needs. Furthermore, thought and ideas could be expressed with a simple style and in a language free from rhymed prose, metaphoric style and empty formalism. The return to the Arab heritage of the past (also called neo-classicism), marked the first stage in the modern literary revival.

[376] Badawi, op. cit., p.10.

The French invasion and later the English occupation, despite their negative aspects, kindled and fostered the sentiment of nationalism. This colonialism naturally provoked resistance from the religious, political and literary fraternities in the form of revolts, public sermons, newspaper articles and literary essays. Together the introduction of the printing press, the translation of Western literature and the restoration of the classical Arab and Islamic literary heritage gave birth to a new modern Arabic literature, simpler writing styles, and (through the efforts of a group of able writers) saved classical Arabic from the degeneration and impoverishment of the previous centuries. Many of these writers tried their hand at original compositions and were so successful that their works served as models for the next generation. They experimented with the literary essay, the drama, the short story and the novel and, although mostly functional in approach, succeeded to elegantly and aesthetically relate the values of Arabic and Islamic culture to the modern world. It was stimulating literature, written for, and understood by, the great majority of Arabs. This history of the evolution of modern Arabic prose in Egypt and the factors and influences that helped to shape it enables a person to better interpret and appreciate Arabic literature, Arab intellectualism and even Islamic modernism. It helps to clarify political, intellectual and religious notions presented in Western books on Arabic and Islam. Similarly, the allusion to names, events, movements, and ideas (that puzzle the Western reader) in literature about Arabs and Muslims becomes more comprehensible. This is so because the mentioned Arabic literature touched on all aspects of Arab life and culture and faithfully reflected local political, social, intellectual, economic and cultural conditions. The prose compositions, like poetry, were a true mirror of Arabian life. Incidentally, it would be interesting to research whether literature greater in quality and quantity are presently produced in other

Arab countries because there are many young Arabs writing now in all Arab lands (and it is therefore not possible to point to any single centre), or whether Egypt or *al-Sham* (Syria) are still dominant in this respect. No less important would be to consider whether they write with lesser or greater degrees of social, religious or political engagement, and, as has been mentioned before, to what extent have they succeeded in bridging the complex problem of written Arabic and the normal spoken language.

H.A.R. Gibb, quoted by Reynold A. Nicholson[377], remarked that for many decades the partisans of the 'old' (that is, the traditionally-educated scholars of the less advanced Arabic lands) and the 'new' (that is, the Western-educated classes) have engaged in a struggle for the soul of the Arabic world. A further, more detailed study which reviews the prose literature of major writers who appeared from the mid- twentieth century up to today can perhaps reveal who has 'won' this battle or whether the struggle is still on-going. Like in any period and environment of any culture, a movement has its roots; in this instance, the literary revival commenced in the generation before al-Manfaluti– with Rifa'a al-Tahtawi, then Imam Muhammad Abduh and his teacher Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, then the students of Abduh, starting with Sa'ad Zaghlul in the field of politics, Qasim Amin in the social field, Mustafa Abd al-Razzaq in philosophy and Mustafa al-Maraghi in religion[378]. In fact, one of al-Afghani's greatest achievements was his ability to inspire writers and politicians who would achieve immortal fame in the near future, personalities like the already mentioned Abduh, Amin and Zaghlul, al-Muwailihi, Salim al-Naqqash, and Adib Ishaq and Abd Allah al-Nadim whose contributions are discussed. The works of those writers of

[377] Nicholson, op. cit., p.469.
[378] Kurayyim, Samih (2004). *Taha Hussain: Fikr Mutajaddid,* Cairo: Dar al-Misriyya al-Lubnaniyya, p.59.

substance who came after Mustafa Lutfi al-Manfaluti (for example Ibrahim Abd al- Qadir al-Mazini, Khalil Mutran, Taha Hussain and Ahmad Hasan al-Zayyat) and the generation who followed them (for example Tawfiq al-Hakim, Mahmud Taimur, Tahir Lashin, Najib Mahfuz, and Yahya Haqqi) can be a starting point. They were writers of individuality and originality. Their works are due for reappraisal and can be translated into English because, while extant works of importance are readily accessible to Arabists, comparatively few of them are available to Western scholars in reliable translations.

Mustafa Lutfi al- Manfaluti contributed towards laying the foundation for the revival of modern Arabic prose by writing literary essays and short stories with stylistic devices unknown in Egypt at that time. He helped to establish classical literary Arabic in the lofty place it occupies today in the literatures of the world. He became known as the *Amir al-Bayan*, and his writings were welcomed in the entire Arab world. His style became the ideal model for his contemporaries and for the writers of the following generation. Al-Manfaluti made his literary reputation in the Egyptian press and rekindled the enthusiasm for Arab national literature. His most distinguishing characteristic was his power to present misfortune and tragedy, and his ability to describe the sadness, grief and suffering of the self. He was especially close to the poor, and fought for justice and equality on their behalf. One cannot read any of his works without having empathy towards the victims in his stories.

Al-Manfaluti's success as a writer was partly due to the fact that his subject matter originated from the natural and sincere feelings he had towards his people and the deep consciousness he had of the miserable conditions in which his society existed. Furthermore, his writings were

popular in the Arab world because they expressed the people's feelings, hopes and dreams, and described their individual and societal lives clearly and truthfully. His apt use of words and simple stylistic devices affected his readers emotionally and in this way, they identified with him and regarded him as the protector of their society.

It was necessary to deal fairly fully with his biography and social relationships to give a fuller picture of him as a man and the type of society in which he grew up. Writing style is intertwined with personality and environment. A writer's character and his environment provide vital clues in understanding his thoughts, ideas, opinions and literary methodology. At the same time, they provide the background for the literature of the period because a writer will normally write about the issues affecting his society, and his attitude towards these issues will be reflected in these writings. A wide range of his ideas and opinions from politics to the role and status of the female sex in society, were thus discussed. Most of the social topics he wrote on have a 'universality' about them because they touched on issues, conflicts and problems which are still relevant and applicable to modern societies in all parts of the world.

Al-Manfaluti's seven most celebrated literary compositions are analysed and discussed to illustrate the topics he covered, his stylistic devices, and (as mentioned above) to determine his ideas and opinions on certain issues, to point out the role of translation in his works, and to ascertain why his essays and short stories were so successful and popular.

Al-Manfaluti's essence was determined by five factors: a) the moral training that he received from his father b) the countryside environment of Egypt, c) the correct belief doctrines implanted by al-

Azhar, d) Imam Muhammad Abduh's methodology of social reconciliation, e) taking pride in and be sincere about ones work as espoused by Sa'ad Zaghlul. These made him valuable and gave him a serious outlook on life; he was sensitive to feeling and emotion, delicate of spirit, calm of temperament, severely compassionate to the miserable and the weak, sensitive to the pain and suffering of others, earnestly concerned about the truth, and toiled for the justice for the down-trodden. These characteristics combined to affect his writing – calling for virtuous words, sincerity in speech and honesty of heart; he called for noble deeds, urged morality in behaviour, and espoused loyalty and commitment to faithfulness; in this way his works educated the youth and helped bring about a generation that was held on to mercy, goodness, co-operation, and generosity in an atmosphere of sincere love, a love free of selfishness[379].

Only brief mention was made of his attempts at poetry because the focus was on his prose works. The poetic aspect of his literary life can serve as a topic for further research. He himself admitted that his poetry was of the second degree compared to the contributions of Ahmad Shawqi and Hafiz Ibrahim, but according to critics, his poetry is worthwhile studying and analyzing because poets and poetry of the nineteenth century played no small role in the development of modern Arabic literature. His poetry may also shed more light on his ideas and the social issues of the time. After all, he was imprisoned due to one of the poems (a lampoon) which he had written. In the further researches, al-Manfaluti's works can also be examined in the light of how they and his writing style influenced the above-mentioned prominent writers who came after him, and whether the 'conservatives' (traditionally- educated)

[379] Qasim, Dr. Riyad, (2001). *Mustafa Lutfi al-Manfaluti: Fi Sabil al-Taj,* Beirut: Mu'assasa Basasun, p.19.

or the 'modernists' (Western-educated) prevailed in the ensuing years. They can further show how the later writers improved on what al-Manfaluti had initiated. The study can perhaps also illustrate how traditionalism and modernism in modern Arabic literature do not contradict each other, and that modernism does not necessarily mean a breakaway from the cherished Islamic traditions of the past. It can also open the eyes of the modern world to the rich values of the Arab and Muslim cultural traditions.

Mustafa Lutfi al-Manfaluti's themes have always had quite an impact on his readers and brought him recognition. It was the theme of *al-Abarat* (published in 1915) that proclaimed him as a serious and capable writer. When reading al-Manfaluti's stories one inevitably senses the sociality of the characters, actions and events. The reader is quickly immersed in the world of misery and reality of the characters. The reader cannot help, but share the agony and hardship which al-Manfaluti's characters endure. In short, the theme of al-Manfaluti's stories is the reality of his readers.

Al-Manfaluti cannot properly be called a genuine translator, for he himself knew no European language. He simply reworked the literal and probably unpolished translations made for him by friends and put them into his own melancholic sentimental style.

Al-Manfaluti had much greater influence on the literature of his day than his critics have given him credit for. His work, however, must not be judged in the light of permanent artistic achievement, for he did not excel in any of the literary genres which he attempted. His translations, as such, failed drastically, being but a free interpretation of the theme and mood of the translated work. The original stories which he

wrote cannot stand the test of good story writing. They are merely a pale imitation of the stories he translated. His articles on social and moral issues are now out-dated and can only appear to the modern reader as somewhat naive writings of an old fashioned *Azhari* with a limited culture. Yet he is one of the few early twentieth century writers who won great popularity in their lifetime, and whose works are still very much alive in the Arab world. Writers on the subject seem to think that his popularity was due to his fluent, easy, lucid, vivacious and highly emotional style. Yet style alone cannot be the only reason why al-Manfaluti was able to win such immediate popularity and to keep it with the successive generations.

Al-Manfaluti's great talent showed itself first of all in his instinctive realization of what was needed in literature at that time, namely, reading material of a kind that could satisfy the emotional promptings of a society newly awakened to its own handicaps and disappointments, which would forge a link with the West and at the same time, keep a grasp of the best in the old traditions both in style and ideas. This came easily to him because he did not know any western language. He had therefore to limit his fascination with the western literature to a form of indirect translation through intermediaries, which enabled him to keep to a purely Arabic style.