INTRODUCTION

INTORDUCTION

The birth of the **Egyptian novel**, however, could not take place until the modern era, when five preconditions had been fulfilled: I) the influence of European literature, where the novel developed into a major genre in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; II) the establishment of Egyptian printing works and pressrooms in the eighteenth century along with the rise of newspaper production; III) public education and the spread of literacy; IV) a gradual liberation from oppression by foreign powers, starting with the reign on Muhammad Ali in the aftermath of the Napoleonic occupation in the early 1800s; and V) the emergence of an international learning.

Thus an Arabic Renaissance finally arose; its Janus face turned as much to the past as to the future. The concept of ***nahdah*** in Arabic criticism and historiography, meaning a "rising up" or revitalization, refers in part to a period of neoclassicism, an awakening of old literary traditions following a time of decline or stagnation since the eleventh century. The term also refers to creativity, new syntheses, modernization, dynamic experiments, and progress[1]. The Egyptian novel matured in great works by twentieth century writers such as Muhammad Hussayn Haykal (1888-1956), Taha Hussayn (1889-1973), Ibrahim al-Mazini (1890-1949), Mahmud Tahir Lashin (1894-1954), and Tawfiq al-Hakim (1898-1987).

Muhammad Hussayn Haykal's novel *Zaynab*, published in 1912, is often-regarded as the first true Arabic novel, but there were many fore runners. The most important successors, however, was born about the time of the completion of Hussayn Haykal's work. **The development of the Egyptian** as well as modern

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[1]. J. Brugman. An Introduction to the History of Modern Arabic Literature in Egypt. Leiden. E.J.Brill. 1984

novel is reflected by – and half century of work by Naguib Mahfouz, Nobel Laureate in 1988, the first writer in Arabic to receive the Nobel Prize in Literature.

In 1988 an unprecedented historical event occurred: Naguib Mahfouz became the first Arab writer to receive the Noel Prize in Literature. A wave of jubilation spread among the Arabs, who were proud that one of their own had been recognized for his literary achievement like other Arab writers, including Taha Hussayn and Tawfiq al-Hakim, whose works had been translated into several European languages, Mahfouz was known in the West but only to a limited reading public. The Nobel Prize, however, brought him instant fame and worldwide recognition as a respected novelist.

Naguib Mahfouz's literary output consists of eighteen novels and six collections of short stories (till 1967). He has also written plays.

1. **Historical novels about Pharaohnic Egypt:** They are عبث الأقدار (***Abath al-Aqdar***, The Game of Fate, 1939); رادوبيس ***Radobis***, 1943, and طيبة كفاح (***Kifah Tiba***, The Struggle of Thebes, 1944.)
2. **Social realistic novels:** set in modern Egypt include القاهرة الجديدة ***(al-Qahera al-Jadida***, New Cairo, 1945), خان الخليلي ***(Khan al-Khalili***, 1946, زقاق المدق *Zuqaq al-Midaq* (The Midaq Alley, 1947), *Bidaya wa Nihaya* (The Beginning and the End, 1949), and the Trilogy: *Bayn al-Qasrayn*, 1956, *Qasr al-Shawq*, 1957, and *al-Sukriyya* (names of the street of Cairo).
3. **Post realistic Novels:** starting with ***Awlad Harithna*** (The Children of our Alley), اللص والكلاب ***(al-Liss wa al-Kilab***, Thief and Dogs, 1961), followed by six short novels including السمان والخريف *(al-Suman wa al-Kharif*, Quails and Autumn, 1967ثرثرة فوق النيل (***Tharthara fawq al-***

Nil, Chatting by the Nile, 1966) and ميرامار ***(Miramar,*** The Egyptian Alexandria Quartet, 1967).

Naguib Mahfouz's novels deal with various aspects of life such as love, faith and death and above all the meaning of life. The tussle between man and woman also forms and important aspect of his novels. Another equally important dimension-politics; is projected by the author directly or by way of symbolism. Mahfouz is preoccupied mainly with liberty, and deals with the relationship of the citizen to the state, of the child to the father and of the woman to man.

The first three novels of Naguib Mahfouz: عبث الأقدار *(Abath al-Aqdar)*, رادوبيس ***(Radobis)***, and طيبة كفاح ***(Kifah Tiba)***, in the historical setting of Pharaohnic Egypt are relevant to the political problems of Egypt in the nineteen thirties. The author is inspired by the lesions of ancient Egypt to find a way out of these predicaments. The struggle to end foreign domination or a tyrant monarch is resolved by the people's heroism or of the leader who represents them.

عبث الأقدار ***(Abath Al-Aqdar,*** The Game of Fate) depicts a monarch who exploits his people and is finally overcome by the son of a commoner chosen by the people to rule. The novel dwells on the greatness of the Egyptian people and prescribes the deposition of the king to remedy such situations.

رادوبيس ***(Radobis)*** is the story of a playboy king who neglects the affairs of the state and devotes himself to the charms of the singing girl Radubis. The people revolt against him and kill him. The connection with the country's monarch is clear.

Radobis illustrates Mahfouz's fondness for political allegory; the story of Radopis also shows his willingness to incorporate fate as an active role player in the development of his narrative. This is what gives the historical romance of

Radobis its tragic edge. Objects falling as omens from the talons of majestic birds are a common feature of ancient tales, but the falcon choosing to drop his precious cargo in Pharaoh's lap indicates to the two lovers from the onset that players other than the physical human beings who surround them have role in their destinies. Artists, politicians, lovers, and cynics in this novel debate the nature of coincidence, and the fates and other unseen forces, magical and divine, are never far away as Radobis and her young royal lover are driven inevitably toward their untimely and unhappy ends.

كفاح طيبة ***(Thebes at War)*** is one of a small number of works by Naguib Mahfouz set in ancient Egypt that have remained little known to readers in the West. *Thebes at War* (*Kifah Tiba*, 'Thebes Struggle') was written between 1937 and 1938.[2] Between the mid-1930s and the mid 1940s, Mahfouz also wrote five stories set in the Pharaohnic period.[3]

Though Mahfouz, on completing ***Thebes at War***, abandoned his original plan to cover the whole of ancient Egyptian history in a series of forty novels and switched to writing novels with modern settings, these early works, and particularly *Thebes at War*, played an important role in the growth of his recognition as a writer.

Thebes at War treats of what Mahfouz consider "the greatest moment in all of ancient Egypt's three thousand years,"[4] namely, that at which the last pharaohs of the native Seventeenth Dynasty rose up against the domination of Hyksos, Asiatic foreigners who had dominated northern Egypt from roughly 1640 to 1532

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[2] Ali Salah, *Naguib Mahfouz – al-Tariq wa al-Sada*, Dar al-Adab, Cairo, 1990, p 36

[3] Raymond Stock, *Voices from the Other World Ancient Egyptian Tales*, The America University in Cairo Press, Cairo, 2002, p 210

[4] Raymond Stock, *A Mummy Awakens: The Pheraohnic Fiction of Naguib Mahfouz*, a doctoral dissertation submitted to the Department of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies of the University of Pennsylvania, 2003, p. 81

BC. This novel is more solidly grounded in historical fact than the two that preceded it, and the novelist bases most of his main characters on real people.

In the third novel, the national aim is clear than in the two previous ones. It depicts the period of Egypt's occupation by the Hyksos and the revolt against him leading to his banishment.

Until the 1940s little was known about Mahfouz even in his native Egypt. Originally an essayist who wrote extensively about a variety of subjects, he was overshadowed by writers like Taha Husayn, Tawfiq al-Hakim, Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad, and Ibrahim al-Mazini. But through fortitude, consistency, and industriousness, Mahfouz began to clear a steady path for himself in the field of literature. He gained some fame in the early 1940s when he published three historical novels: عبث الأقدار *(Abath al-Aqdar)*, رادوبيس *Radubis)*, and كفاح طيبة *Kifah Teba*. I shall discuss these tree novels elaborately with their significance and background in my work and try to point out, how Naguib Mahfouz could reach the zenith of success with these three novels.

Among these three novels *Radobis* brought him the Qut al-Qulub Prize and *Kifah Tiba* the Ministry of Education Prize. But won indisputed acceptance as a literary practitioner with his contemporary novels, in which he portrayed realistically many aspects of life in Cairo. The الثلاثية ***(Thulathiyya)***, published in 1956-57, was most monumental work, the crowning achievement of his recognition in literary circles outside Egypt. Today Mahfouz is known as one of the leading novelists not only in Egypt but throughout the world. Students of literature, both in the Arab world and in the West, have produced doctoral dissertations; articles, and writers and journalists have flocked from all over the world to interview him. By the time Mahfouz won the Nobel Prize, he already was

an established novelist in his own right, and the Prize was but a manifestation of the universal appeal of his work.

The portrayal of life in Egypt through fiction is not Mahfouz's exclusive province; many Egyptian writers, including Hussayn, al-Hakim, Yusuf Idris, and Adil Kamil, have done the same thing very successfully. But what distinguishes Mahfouz from them is his dedication to his craft. While others forsook their literary efforts for more lucrative mundane careers, he persisted in writing fiction, producing more than thirty novels and several anthologies of short stories and plays. Mahfouz may be considered the contemporary Arab Egyptian novelist par excellence. Moreover, he was more electic in his choice of themes, which range from social realism to psychoanalysis and metaphysics. He is some times described as the Dickens or Balzac of Egypt because social realism dominates his choice of subject and style. In essence, however, he is the Mahfouz of Egypt; his realistic style, his interest in social issues, indeed, his whole ethos are genuinely Egyptian. He should be claimed by all Arabs because most of his novels reflect Arabic and Islamic traditions.

In this work, I concentrate on the Historical Novels of Naguib Mahfouz, namely *Abath al-Aqdar*, *Radobis*, and *Kifah Tiba* analyze them, beginning with a discussion of Arabic Novel in Egypt, origin and its development along with the Life and Works of Naguib Mahfouz, especially discuss those writers of Naguib Mahfouz which shed light on the formulation of his literary career. I then deal with the other works of his contemporary novels, including السراب ***(al-Sarab,*** The Mirage), which offers a psychoanalytic view of the Oedipus complex and portrays many aspects of Egyptian social discussion on the *Thulathiyya*; with this work, actually completed in 1952, Mahfouz apparently had said all he wanted to say about his society up to the outbreak of the Egyptian revolution in that year. He

produced nothing more until 1959, when *Awlad Haratina* was serialized in *al-Ahram.*

I make short introduction on Naguib Mahfouz's works in research.The most incredible work of Naguib Mahfouz's work is الثلاثية ***(Al-Thulathiyyah)***. The trilogy reflects the cultural and political development of a society in turmoil under the pressures of the British occupation and draws a highly detailed map of Egypt's political orientations. It sets out the major social stereotypes of relationships, emotions and roles to the extent that its hero, Ahmad Abdul-Jawwad, based on Mahfouz's own father, has become the Egyptian patriarch par excellence. When the trilogy was serialized on television, both men and women throughout the Arab world viewed this archetypal patriarch with nostalgia and admiration.

خان الخليلي ***(Khan al-Khalili,*** 1994), which is one of eight novels series, in which he emerged as the master par excellence of the Egyptian realistic novel, the chronicler of twentieth-century Egypt, and it's most vocal social and political conscience, القاهرة الجديدة (***al-Qahera al-Jadidah***, (1947) it takes us back to the streets and folk of old Cairo.

In (***Khan al-Khalili)*** the author turned his attention away from the comparative sophistication of his middle-class and suburban characters to those of an area similar to that of his own birth. How he is charmed and intrigued by the richly colourful life of this people is apparent in all his major work for the next decade. However his central themes, the novels crowd with minor character depicted with keen perception and great humor.

زقاق المدق ***Midaq Alley,*** belongs to the earlier period of Mahfouz's work. Although written and set in early 40s, it provides glimpses of unusual intimacy into Egypt in a period of fast transition. The past 30 years have seen enormous changes

in every area of Egyptian life yet much there has remained the same. Many of the tourists in Cairo's great hotels who buy the pocket edition of E. W. Lane's famous Manners and customs of the Modern Egyptians must fail to notice, as they view the colorful scene around them, that the book was first published in 1836!

In Midaq Alley, as in Mahfouz's works, we perceive time, here personified in the ageless Alley, to the novels central focus. The aspirations and tragedies of its inhabitants are witnessed with total indifference by the Alley within which the circle of life and death is forever run again. In this it is a view in close focus of the human drama at large, selected by a literacy craftsman of impressive skills. And in Midaq Alley, as in life itself, there is much gaiety, color, and excitement to enliven the passing scene.

In Mirage السراب (***al-Sarab***, 1948) Mahfouz takes a momentary break from old Cairo with it's speedy streets to pay a visit to al-Manyal, a descent middle-class area in the South-east of the capital. "The Mirage", tells about the crucial point where maternal instincts, motherly love and mother-fixation intersect. It is a psychological novel but, as many times before and afterwards, issues of fate, destiny and free will are raised but not answered. There is shame, but there is no guilt.

A mother who cannot let her son go after her husband/his father has left her, brings up the protagonist. He is the apple of her eye, and there is no lack of love during the years when he is growing up. He is unhappy and miserable at school and at the university, however, and he gets an insignificant government post. He marries, but cannot establish a good relation with his wife, who is unfaithful; she has a love affair, and dies after an abortion. When he finally dares to revolt against

his mother and reproaches her, arguing with her for the first time, she dies of a heart attack.

The Beginning and the End بداية ونهاية (***Bidaya wa-Nihaya***, 1949) which is set in the Cairo of the mid 1930s, الباقي من الزمن ساعة ***(al-Baqi min al-Zaman Sa'a,*** There only Remains an Hour), يوم مقتل الزعيم ***(Yawm Qutil al-Zaim,*** The Day the Leader was Killed) is also discussed elsewhere in this work, ***Qustumur*** (1988), حديث الصباح والمساء ***(Hadith al-Sabah wa al Masa,*** Tales of Morning and Evenings),

اللص والكلاب ***(Al-Liss wa al-Kilab,*** The Thief and The Dogs, 1961), deals in a circumspect way with a less complex and controversial issue. And then he changed his style from realist to impressionist and used the "stream of consciousness" technique to pursue the thoughts and motivations of his central character, a convicted burglar seeking vengeance on his release from jail against the individuals and society that thinks have corrupted and destroyed him. It is a powerful and fast-moving work, a drama in which the killing of the hero is inevitable but tragic.

In الطريق ***(Al-Tariq,*** The Search) the central figure, the son of a prostitute is involved in a fruitless and tragic search for his father and his honour.

His other novels of the middle 60s were equally courageous in their frank portrayal of the distress of many intellectuals living within the tight confines of Nasser's Egypt.

In الشحاذ ***(al-Shahhadh,*** The beggar, 1965), the reader witness the trauma of a successful lawyer coming close to insanity as he grows to realize the extent to which the revolution is failing to achieve the high hopes for a new morality of

Mahfouz argued that it was the cowardice and irresponsibility of the intellectuals themselves that had led their society to its sorry state.

In the Alexandria novel ميرامار ***(Miramar,*** 1967), set in the early 1950s, a maid, Zahra, attracts the attention of a number of men in the neighbourhood. Different narrators tell different stories in this little drama, which mirrors the various current political and social views of the revolutionary years. The author shows a complex setting, but does not supply us with a key to show us how to interpret the set of narratives.

Taht al-Mizalla (Under the [bus] Shelter) is a collection of short stories from 1969. In the title story, we are presented with a crowd of people at a bus stop, waiting, watching. The most horrifying and upsetting things happen before their eyes while they are standing there, odd occurrences and violent accidents to which they are passive witnesses. We do not know what they think, nor do we know the meaning of the scene. It is like a late surrealistic film by Luis Buñuel or an absurd drama by Eugène Ionesco.

In حضرة المحترم ***(Hadrat al-Muhtaram,*** Respected Sir (1975), Mahfouz satirically portrays a civil servant and government employee, 'Utman Bayyumi, in which he most probably also ironically portrays himself as an aspiring official, a part of the system and the class he satirises.

The author's concern with power is obvious, but his main question is the following: What have the leaders of Egypt - pharaohs, sultans, khedives, kings, presidents, fathers, invaders, occupants - done for (or done to) his country? In this comparative study of politics, focused both on the past and on the present, parallels and repetitions stand out, and the observer seems to behold an eternal return of

those who, like himself, had worked under the Egyptian monarchy for political and social reform.

I shall be concentrating on the discussion of Mahfouz's central work in the 1950s was the ***Cairo Trilogy***, an immense monumental work of 1,500 pages, which the author completed before the July Revolution. The novels were titled with the street names ***Palace Walk***, ***Palace of Desire***, and ***Sugar Street***. Mahfouz set the story in the parts of Cairo where he grew up. They depict the life of the patriarch el-Sayyed Ahmed Abdel Gawad and his family over three generations, from World War-I to the 1950s, when King Farouk I was overthrown. Mahfouz ceased to write for some years after finishing the trilogy. Disappointed in the Nasser régime, which had overthrown the monarchy in 1952, he started publishing again in 1959, now prolifically pouring out novels, short stories, journalism, memoirs, essays, and screenplays.

Another incredible work of Naguib Mahfouz is ثرثرة فوق النيل (***Tharthara Fawqa Nil,*** Chatter on the Nile, 1966), is the next novel which is full of outright ridicule of life under Nasser's regime. The total absurdity of the bureaucratic structure is revealed in the novel's opening scene, when the central character is asked by his department head the whereabouts of a requested report. Pointing to the finished report on his superior's desk, the civil servant is amazed to discover that his pen must have dried out while he was writing, after only the first few lines! Yet he fails to see any justification for his superior's anger; after all, the indentations on the paper remained, proof that he had written it as requested! In a series of brilliant scenes set on a houseboat on the Nile, the novel's characters, all important members of Cairo's intelligentsia, drown their depression in drugs and express the outmost disgust and derision for the values and structures of their society. In his novel and in ***Miramar*** (Miramar, 1960), which closely followed it,

decline and fall, nationally as well as individually. He does not hesitate to let the high and the mighty confront each other, and there are some extreme and highly controversial examples of this feature.

In ***Amam al'arsh*** (Before the Throne), published in 1983, Egyptian leaders of different eras are assembled and committed for trial at a court. The justice in this Supreme Court is the sun god Osiris, sitting on his throne. The goddess Isis and their son, falcon-headed Horus, assisting him, sits by his side. It is like a scene from the ancient Egyptian *The Book of the Dead,* written in hieroglyphs. That is the manual for the dead, a guide-book for those who are about to be tried by the eternal court, a fragmentary "book" that has been found in scrolls and mural paintings in tombs throughout the country.

Now the court of Osiris is going to judge the rulers of Egypt, from the founding father of the country, Menes (the Pharaoh Narmer, who united Upper and Lower Egypt five thousand years ago) through the Ottoman rulers down to Anwar al-Sadat, killed in 1981, shortly before the novel was written. Pre-Arabic history thus blends and intertwines with Islamic history and contemporary politics. The author perceives, or tries to establish, a deeply felt continuity. Sticking to his identity as an inhabitant of Old Cairo, مصر القديمة ***(al-Qahirah)***, he has also publicly objected to various kinds of pan-Arabic movements in the Muslim world, stressing that the Al-Azhar mosque and university in his vicinity is the centre of the teaching of *sunnah.* Being the child of two civilizations, the Egyptian civilization is as important to him as the Islamic one.

In the crowded court room where the voices of poets, khedives, Sufi women, patriarchs, kings, pharaohs, presidents, courtiers and many others are heard, examination and interrogation sometimes turn into heated accusations and debates,

since the defendants partake in the trial of the accused. From the 19th dynasty (1308-1186 BC), a period of military campaigns against Hittites and others, strong domination, and the building of great temples in Abu Simbel, الكرنك ***(Karnak)***, Luxor and Thebes, the Pharaoh Rameses II appears. After being questioned, he compliments his late successor, the revolutionary Gamal Abd al-Nasser.

Nasser seized power in 1956 after the overthrow of King Farouk in 1952 and the abolition of the monarchy in 1953, when the Republic of Egypt was proclaimed. The ancient king's admiration of the republican may in part be the author's assessment of Nasser, emphasizing parallels between the two characters. Judge Osiris furthermore points out that President Nasser was the first ruler to care for his people. But Rameses II, the ruler of an empire, blames Nasser for reducing Egypt to an insignificant state, and the founder of Egypt, the Pharaoh Menes, chimes in accusing Nasser of having let the features of majestic Egypt dissolve into the vague outlines of Arabism.

Nasser, in his turn, attacks his successor, Anwar al-Sadat, for having destroyed the country by his open door-policy, the ***infitah***, "opening up" of Egypt, leaving the door ajar for capitalism, American influence, and corruption. Sadat defends himself very ably, but Nasser's reproaches are sharp and to the point. It is almost impossible to settle the proportion of inequity between them: in the course of the dialogue, both are harshly criticized. However, Sadat gets unexpected support from one of the most controversial among the famous pharaohs - Akhenaten, the "heretical" pharaoh, Amenophis IV.

Whereas the warrior-king Rameses-II partly recognized himself in Nasser, the first president of Egypt, a peace-making predecessor of the 18th dynasty thus sides with the president's successor and heir, murdered in 1981. **Akhenaten**

meddles in the dispute, stating that Sadat aimed at peace, that he worked for peace as he, Akhenaten, had done in his day, and that they were both unjustly denounced for faithlessness. The monotheist العائش فى الحقيقة (Akhenaten) thus identifies with Sadat. But who was Akhenaten, then? The question seems to be of central importance to the author.

His latest novel الحب تحت المطر (***al-Hubb taht al-Matar,*** Love in the Rain, 1973) reflects the new sense of freedom hen briefly being enjoyed by Egyptian writers and since heavily curtailed. It subject-matter was particularly sensitive at the time; it shows and by implication criticizes the carefree and dissolute life continuing in Cairo while troops suffer and wait on the front lines for a renewal of conflict with Israel.

The other major achievement of Mahfouz is حديث الصباح والمساء (***Hadith al-Sabah wa al-Masa,*** Talk of Morning and Evening, 1987), stand out as the most significant Arabic novel of 1980s. In this novel Mahfouz proved to be the forefront of narrative innovation in his portrayal of the fragmentation of Egyptian society under the successive failures of the process of modernization. The novel is a vast undertaking in its historical scope. Encompassing a period of two centuries of Egypt's history. It starts before Napoleon's expedition to Egypt in 1798 and continues until the 1980s.

Awlad Hararina (Children of Gebelawi), created the greatest stir in Mahfouz's life, and determined his fate in a violent way. When the rich and powerful Gebelawi banishes his children he casts a spell on his family in doing so, as if he were expelling them from the Garden of Eden. Patriarchal power determines their fate in this very complex narrative, where the incomprehensible main character has withdrawn from the scene and retreated to the house that can be

seen at a distance. That is the closed core of all events, the invisible force in an expansive web of life.

In his novel, Mahfouz in a way writes a history of humankind up to the 1950s, starting with the Dawn of Creation. At the same time, it is a story about children in a Cairo suburb and their difficulties. For his narrative, he has drawn on - or sometimes paraphrased - *Al-Qur'an* and the traditional Islamic *Hadith* literature for many figures and events, freely transforming them and inserting them into a new historical and completely fictional context. Leading characters in the novel were early identified as religious figures: زعبلاوي (***Gebelawi***, Jabalawi) himself has been identified as God (Allah), the Almighty Creator and Supreme Being.

When *Awlad haratina* was serialised in the Cairo newspaper Al-Ahram 1959, leaders of the Islamic university Al-Azhar, the custodian of faith and morals, called for the banishment of the 'heretical' book, and crowds of people marched on the streets to the big Al-Ahram building shouting their protests against the blasphemous book by Naguib Mahfouz. The ban was never officially sanctioned, the serialisation did not stop, but the novel was only published abroad in book form. In her well-informed dissertation, *The Limits of Freedom of Speech: Prose Literature and Prose Writers in Egypt under Nasser and Sadat* (Stockholm University, 1993), Marina Stagh showed the secret forces at work behind this public drama, and the final agreement reached between the author and the government in this affair. Today, there is no official ban on this book, and in fact, there never has been.

In السمان والخريف ***(al-Summan al-Kharif,*** Autumn Quail), Mahfouz pursues a politically sensitive themes; a bright young star of the Wafdist old regime loses his

position, self respected, and fiancée in the early purges of Naseer's revolution. His utter demoralization and the waste of his talents, for all his obvious faults, is shown as a national as well as personal tragedy. The novel expresses obvious regret intellectuals and others of such importance to Egypt.

In ملحمة الحرافيش (***Malhamat al-Harafish,*** Epic of the Harafish, 1977), Mahfouz uses the fantasy and spiritual experience, the human being of salvation and immortality. However, it must be admitted that, Mahfouz's later novels often betray clear signs of decline in creativity, originality, and fervor.

ليالي ألف ليلة (***Layali Alf Layla,*** Nights of the Thousand Nights, 1982), will probably be remembered as Mahfouz's last major novel. It represents the peak of his episodic period. It is set in the historical mythical setting of The Arabian Nights. In

رحلة ابن فطومة ***(Rihlat Ibn Fatuma,*** The Travels of Ibn Fatuma, 1983), constitutes Mahfouz's last panoramic review of human history. Although, it is a short novel of some 160 pages, the broadness of its scope puts it on a footing with works like زعبلاوي ***(Children of Gebelawi)*** and ***Harafish***. It is episodic in form, and its episodes represent progress in time. In essence, the book is nothing but a conducted tour in social history. It is a journey in the mind despite its spatio-temporal apparel; it is a bewildered itinerary among different socio-political systems rather then counties and peoples.

Besides these, I shall elaborate the most incredible works of Naguib Mahfouz and shortly discuss the rest of his selected works. My work is devoted to find out how the Arabic novel developed its shape and how Naguib Mahfouz brought it to the international level and concentrate his historical novels.

So far my research goes, Naguib Mahfouz wrote in a classical and lucid Arabic style interspersed with colloquial Egyptian and proverbs known throughout the Arab world. Some of these proverbs, which he uses to accentuate his points, utterly defy translation. He wrote not only to entertain but to treat profound social, political, and religious issues and their impact on his society. His overriding purpose is clear to give a true picture of the human condition as he sees it. If his ideas are sometimes controversial, they are nevertheless stimulating and must be understood in the context of Mahouz's effort to treat the cultural trends of his society as they affect his own life.

Because much has been written about Mahfouz and his works, it is impossible to examine all of the secondary source materials. Moreover, the ideas expressed about Mahfouz are so varied and conflict that I found it difficult to reconcile or utilize everything that has been said. Thus, I consider it more appropriate to rely on the original Arabic texts of Mahfouz's Novels to determine the ideas and intentions. Although on sometimes I have consulted authors who have offered controversial ideas about Mahfouz.