Chapter – I

ARABIC NOVEL IN EGYPT: ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT

The Origin:

The origins of the Arabic Novel can be traced to a long process of cultural revival and assimilation, referred to in Arabic as the *Nahada*, or Renaissance. Characteristic of this period were two distinct trends. The Neoclassical movement sought to rediscover the literary traditions of the past, and was influenced by traditional literary genres such as the *Mqama* and *The Thousand and One Nights.* In contrast, the modernist movement began by translating Western works, primarily novels, into Arabic.

The birth of the Egyptian novel, however, could not take place until the modern era, when five pre-conditions 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 press rooms in the nineteenth century along with the rise of news paper production; iii) public education and the spread of literacy; iv) a gradual liberation from oppression by foreign powers, starting with the reign of Mohammed Ali in the aftermath of the Napoleonic occupation in the early 1800s; v) the emergence of an intellectual class with broad international learning.[1]

On the other hand the individual authors in Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt created original works by imitating the classical *maqáma.* The most prominent of these was al-Muwaylihi, whose book, the *Hadith Isa ibn-Hisham,* critiqued Egyptian society in the period of Mohammed Ali. This work constitutes the first stage in the development of the Arabic novel. This trend was furthered by Jurji Zaydan, a Lebanese Christian writer who immigrated with his family to Egypt following the Damascus riots of 1860. In the early 20th century, Zaydan serialized his historical novels in the Egyptian newspaper *al-Hilal.* These novels were extremely

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[1]. Devid Tresilian, *"The Origin of the modern Arabic novel"*, (article) http //encyclopedia farlex com/Arab+literature

popular especially in comparison with the works of al-Muwaylihi, because of their clarity of language, simple structure, and the author's vivid imagination. Two other important writers from this period were Khalil Gibran and Mikhail Naima, both of whom incorporated philosophical musings into their works.

Thus the Arabic renaissance finally arose; its Janus face turned as much to the past as to the future. The concept of *Nahadah* in Arabic literary 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. The Egyptian novel matured in great works by 20th century writers such as Muhammed Hussayn Hykal (1888 - 1956), Taha Hussain (1889 - 1973), Ibrahim al-Mazini (1890 - 1949), Muhammed Tahir Lahshin (1894 - 1954), and Tawfique al-Hakim (1898 - 1987).

Nevertheless, literary critics do not consider the works of these four authors to be true novels, but rather indications of the form that the Arabic novel would assume. Many of these critics point to *Zainab*, a novel by Muhammed Hussayn Haykal as the first true Arabic-language novel, while others point to *Andra Dinshwai* by Muhammad Tahir Haqqi as the first true novel. The development of the modern Egyptian novel is reflected by – and reaches a peak in – the half century of work by Naguib Mahfouz, Nobel Laureate in 1988, the first writer in Arabic who received the Nobel Prize in literature.[2]

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[2]. Anders Hallengren, *'The Arabic Renaissance and the Rise of the Egyptian Novel,"* (article) http://libraray auceegypt edu/guides/mahfuz htm

Early Development in the Arabic Novel Tradition:

Contemporary Arabic Literature is the result of a long but often accelerated process which has its basis *al-Nahdah*, the movement of cultural renaissance which began in earnest during the 19th century, although some of its roots can be traced to an earlier period. This phenomenon varied widely I its course and impact within the different regions of the Arabic-speaking –world, but in every case the particular local development was the result of a process which involved two principal forces. These are variously known as the old and the new, the traditional and the modern, the classicists and the modernists, and so on; more specifically, the encounter with the West, its science and culture, on the one hand, and on the other, the re-discovery and stimulation of the great classical heritage of Arab-Islamic culture.[3] In more literary terms, increasing contacts with Western literatures led to adaptation and works of European fiction into Arabic, followed by their adaptation and imitation, and culminating in the appearance of an indigenous tradition of modern fiction in Arabic. The search into the literary heritage of the classical era was to remind scholars of the existence of earlier model for a neo-classical revival of certain prose genres. Not for the first time in Arabic literary history, the clash between the "old and the new" became a source of fertile tension among litterateurs.

The classical tradition of Arabic narrative comprises a number of different types of narrative: anecdotes, vignettes, moral tales, stories of miraculous escape, and so on. These have been gathered under a wide variety of titles into collections for the use and entertainment of the literate (and mostly bureaucratic) classes. Such volumes and their organizing principle were not to meet the generic needs of the early pioneers of modern fiction in Arabic. From a Western prospective, what

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[3]. Peter Gran's *Islamic Roots of Capitalism*, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1979, xii (introduction)

is remarkable is that another source of possible inspiration, the world's greatest collection of narratives, a *Thousands and One Nights*, was also left out of the picture – at least, during the early stages in the development of the novel in Arabic. One may begin by nothing, as the British orientalist Edward Lane does, that copies of the collection were extremely rare, at list in **Egypt**, at the of the beginning of *al-Nahdah.*[4] This rarity of written versions and lack of interest among litterateurs can be traced to a common cause: *The Thousand and One Nights* was intended as a set of narratives for oral performance. One might surmise that any written versions that existed were intended as mnemonics for the story teller themselves rather then written versions for a wider readership (which, due to levels of literacy, did not exit any case). The society at large has traditionally regarded the stories in a Thousand and One Nights as part of popular culture. Such attitudes, coupled to a strongly felt sense of linguistic hierarchy that assigns enormous cultural value to the language of "high" culture – and especially religious and literary texts – while virtually denying any worth to expression in the colloquial dialect have left this world famous collections of tales, which has had such a profound and prolong effect on Western literatures, in a sort of cultural nether world in the Arabic-speaking countries of the Middle-East. Only contacts with Western scholarship and, more recently, the development of a tradition of folklore studies in Middle-Eastern academic institutions, have begun to stimulate a larger interest among Arab literatures and critics.[5]

There was, however, one narrative genre that did attract the attention of the earliest pioneers: the *maqamah* apparently initiated by

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[4] Adward Lane, *An Account of the Manner and customs of the Modern Egyptians*, London. Everyman, 1954, p. 420

[5]. Jabra, Ibrahim Jabra, Yanabi al-ru'ya, Beirut, al-Muassasah al Arabiyyah li al-Dirasat wa-al-nashr, 1979, p 68-71

Badi al-Zaman al-Hamdani (968 - 1008), the basic form consisted of a picaresque narrative that exploited the antics of a narrator and "rogue" (in *al-Hamdani*'s case, *Isa ibn-Hisham* and Abu *al-Fath al-Iskandari* respectively) to provide both social commentary and, mostly through inverse implication, moral enlightenment; the genre also invoked a kind of discourse found most notably in the text of the Quran itself, namely the rhymes and cadences of *saj* (usually translated as "rhyming prose"), the virtuoso use of whose provided a long-established stylistic vehicle displaced of erudition. The cultural opportunities that this particular genre provided for rhetorical display address to a wide variety of possible topics help to account for the fact that it remained in vogue through the centuries preceding *al-nahdah*. It was therefore the prose genre most readily at hand to provide early pioneers with a frame work within which to revive the glories of the first heritage, most particularly in realm of language and style, while at the same time addressing themselves to the social issues of the day.[6]

In what follows I will survey the particular circumstances within Egypt of Arab world confronted these cultural trends at the out set of ***al-nahdah***.

In many of the regions of the Arab world the encounter of the West was a gradual process that needs to be viewed over a lengthy period of change. In the case of Egypt, the situation of some what different in that the meeting of East and West was at its most brusque. When Napoleon invaded the country in 1798, Egyptians were brought face to face with European advances in technology and military science, and, in the wake of their defeat, with the wonders of European culture and scientific knowledge. The precise nature of this historical encounter between

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[6] Muhammad Rushdi Hassan, *Athar al-maqamah fi nash'at al-qissah al-Misriyyah al-hadithah*, Cairo, Al-hay'ah al-Misriyyah al-Ammah li-al-Kitab, 1974, p. 213

cultures and the almost exquisite match of dates with the turn of a century have made it a godsend for those which choose to view the narration of history as a series of conflicts between the forces of opposing authority system and of convenient chronological sequences rather then as a more subtle and allogated process involving other segments of society. Thus, while 1798 is clearly a date of major important in the history of Egypt and thus of the entire Middle-Eastern region, the model that it provides the process of cultural change is clearly sufficiently unique to make clear that it cannot serve for the entire Arab world region. While the forces involved in *al-nahdah* may have been basically the same for the area as a whole, the means, the sequence, and the place varied widely from one region to another.

With the withdrawal of France forces, Muhammed Ali, an Ottoman soldier from Albania, took over the government of the country. Impressed by the efficacy of the French army, he decided that Egypt needed to train an army along similar lines. Beginning in the 1820s, he sent mission of young Egyptian to Europe, initially to Italy but later primarily to France. Rifa'ah Rafi' al-Tahtawi (1801 - 1873) was chosen to accompany one of these early missions to Paris as *imam*. After a stay five years in France, he wrote his famous work, *Tkhlis al-ibriz fi talkhis Bariz*, a description of life in France that included accounts of dress, food, government, laws, and many other topics.[7] It serves as one of the very first examples of a whole series of narrative in which Arab visitors to Europe have recorded their impressions. The subject has serve as the frame work for a series of novel which have appeared during the course of the twentieth century by Tawfique al-Hakim, Taha Husayn, Yahya Haqqi, Suhayl Idris, al-Tayyib Salih, and Abd al-Rahman Munif.[8]

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[7]. Abd al-Muhsin Taha Badr, *Tatawwur al-riwayah al-Arabiyyah al-hadithah fi Misr*, Dar al-Ma'arif, Cairo. 1963. p 51-61.

[8]. Issa J Boullata, *"Encounter Between East and West: A Theme in Contemporary Arabic Novels,"*

While at Tahtawi's work certainly aroused the interest of the Egyptian readership concerning European society and its bases, his importance within the early development of the novel lies more in two other areas: translation and the press. In 1836 he was placed in charge of a new School of Languages in Cairo. During the following decades he and his pupils translated numerous significant works of European thought: Voltaire, Montesquieu, and Fenelon, to name just a few.[9] To these were added, slowly but inevitably, works of literature, particularly at the hands of his famous pupil and collaborator, Mohammed Uthman Jalal (1929 - 1898). Not only did he translate a large number of French literary works, such as Moliere's plays and the fables of La Fontine; he also set in motion an important facet in the development of an indigenous fictional tradition by "Egyptianizing" their plots and characters, thus paving the way first for attempts at imitations and later for the development of a incipient novel genre. With these translation activities underway, it is hardly surprising that by the 1870s and 1880 the adventure novel of Alexander Dumas pere and Jules Verne, early favourates for translation, were being rendered in Arabic. It is worth noting that these priorities in selection mirror very closely the parallel translation movement in Turkish where Fhenelon's *Telemaque* was translated in 1859, Hugo's *Les miserables* in 1862 and Dumas the Count of *Monte Cristo* 1871.[10]

Al-Tahtawi's contribution to the emergence of an Egyptian press tradition was equally significant. He served as editor of the Egyptian newspaper *al-Waqai al-Misriah* (founded by Muhammed Ali in 1823); while it may have functioned as the official gazette, it also laid the foundations for the later emergence of vigorous tradition of Egyptian

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Middle East Journal, 30, no 1, p. 44-62

9. Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought, Frederiction*, N.B., York, 1985, p 67-83

10 Ahmed Evin, *Origins and Development of the Turkish Novel*, Minneapolis, Bibliotheca, 1983, p 41

journalism. It is here that one can make one of many links with the events in Syria in the 1850s and 1860s, in that Egypt offered a heaven of safety and freedom of expression to the large number of Syria Christians who came to Egypt following the civil war in their homeland. They brought with them their research in to the classical language and its literature, as well as early experiments in fiction and drama, a numerous journals and magazines of both a scientific and cultural nature.

It is hard to overestimate the important role the press has played the revival of Arab cultural awareness throughout the Arab world during the large century.[11] It came to full fruition when nationalist sentiment and opposition to foreign domination were beginning to be heard; in fact, in many cases, this causes led to the foundation of newspapers. However, in addition to providing a forum for the discussion of ideas concerning nationalism and Islamic reform, the newspapers and journals also published works of fiction; initially translation from European languages, but gradually and inevitably including early experiments composed in Arabic. There were even a few publications which were entirely devoted to the publication of such entertainment literature. The renowned Cairo newspaper Al-Ahram, for example, founded in Alexandria in 1875, provided a forum for narratives and, indeed, still does. Novels were published in serial form and drew a wide readership. One of the first published novels of this type was *Dhat al-Khidr* "Lady of the Harem" by a member of the illustrious *al-Bustani* family, Said (d. 1901). Appearing in *Al-Ahram* in 1884, it displays all the complexities of plot and plethora of coincidence that were encountered in the earlier works of *Marrash* and *Salim al-Bustani*. The press in the Arab world continues to fulfill this "previewing" role until the present day. While publishing opportunities and circumstances may differ in nature and scope from one country to

[11] Ilyas Khuri, *Tajarbat al-bahth an uqf*, Research Centre, P L O., Beirut, 1974, p 12

another, Naguib Mahfouz, the Nobel Laureate from Egypt, still avails himself of the literary pages of newspapers and journals in Cairo to introduce his new works to the public. But even this should not cause any surprise, for, as R. G. Cox notes, "a great deal of Victorian literature verse and general prose as well as novels, was first published in periodicals; they can be seen as forming a vast nursery for its production." Later he adds that "during the 19th century then, periodical performed a wide variety of functions..... They played a large part both in creating the public and in keeping it alive, active and at once receptive and critical. At a more practical level the periodical played an important part in furnishing an interring market for literary work."[12] Novel writing is not a profession by which one can earn a living in the Arab world; even Naguib Mahfouz was only able to devote himself entirely to writing following his retirement from a civil service job. For that reason, the Arabic press has continued to play a vital role in the development of the Arabic novel, firstly by making the works available to a wider public through serialization, and secondly – in the case of better known writers – by offering a variety of position as editors in cultural journals and magazines, thus providing a regular source of income in an area not too far remote from their real sphere of interest. However, that very same opportunity brings with it a negative side. It has to be admitted that the abuse of this convenient employment opportunity has occasionally and, in some counties habitually led to cronyism among the older generation of writers and to the virtual exclusion of younger generations from publication opportunities.

The expanding press tradition, with its need for a clear and precise prose style and the translation movement, which, like all such

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[12] R. G Coxe in the Pelican Guide to English Literature, vol 6, From Dickens to Hardy, London, Pelican Books, 19636, p 198.

endeavours, fostered a good deal of thought about the nature of the target language to be used, combined to encourage the development of a completely new kind of literary discourse, one that would satisfy the tests of the ever-growing public for popular fiction while at the same time fulfilling as far as possible the cultural expectations of more conservative critics. While several writers contributed to this process, none was more influential than *Mustafa Lutfi al-Manfaluti* (1876 - 1924). Using the medium of the press once again, he published a whole series of essays and vignettes o a variety of topics; they were later published in book form as *al-Nazarat* and *al-Abarat*. The latter title (Tears) demonstrates the excessively romantic and sentimental nature of the content of these works. From the first collection, "*al-Ka's al-ula*" (the first drink) tells the story of a man who allows himself to drink a single glass of wine, where upon his entire life disintegrates. Another piece, "*Sidq wa-kidhb*" (truth and falsehood) betrays through its title the way in which qualities are painted in terms of black and white, with few, if any intermediate hues of gray. But to dwell on these faults is hardly necessary, since they were attacked with characteristics vigor by *Ibrahim al-Mazini* in the famous critical work, al-Diwan that he published along with *Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad.*[13] Inspite of such vigorously expressed criticism, al-Manfaluti's works have remained popular with adolescents for many decades. Viewed in a historical perspective, it can be assumed that the most significant feature of these essays was the manner in which al-Monfaluti choose to express his ideas, a curious blend of Islamic modernism, an awareness of the classical heritage and anti Western sentiments, a blend typical of the period at the turn of the centuries in which he wrote.[14] His style was strait forward often in the form of a dignity, a letter which he had received,

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[13]. Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad and Ibrahim al-Mazini, *Al-Diwan*, Cairo, N P , 1921, p. 1-21

[14]. H A R Gibb. *Studies on the Civilisation of Islam*,ed. Staford J. Shaw and William Polk, London, Routledge, 1962, p. 258

anecdote which he had heard. These "essays" introduced a new and captivating kind of literature to the Egyptian reading public and that in a style which was immediately accessible. Thus, while the content may place them within the realm of early romanticism, the language in which they were expressed and the readership that they fostered were an important step in the development of the novel tradition in Egypt.

Jurji Zaydan and the Historical novel:

The novels of Jurji Zaydan provide us with a splendid illustration of the Egyptian environment which I have dust described. Zaydan (1861 - 1914) was a Lebanese emigrant to Egypt wherein 1892 he founded the magazine *Al-Hilal*, which is still being published in Cairo. Like Farah Antum's journal al-Jamiah, and Yaqub Sarruff's Al-Muqtataf, Zaydan's was a major conduit for information on the history and science of the West. However, beyond this varieties of information, Zaydan was apparently also eager to acquaint his readership with aspects of the history of the Arabs and Islam (as a man of encouraging and fostering a new cultural awareness), while at the same time fiction which would entertain in the same way a some of the more melodramatic historical novels from Europe which had been serialized in the press. To this end he wrote a whole series of historical novels some what in the mode of Walter Scott, which elevated this sub genre of fiction to new levels of sophistication and also popularity; in the fact they are still in print today.[15] As Sabri Hafiz notes, this resort to history was "[not] a share love for antiquity ..... But an endeavour to awaken the readers' sense of national pride.... And to provide them, by recalling past glories with an inspiration and model in their search for a national identity."[16] Avoiding some of the more spectacular coincidences and heroics to be found in the adventure novels of early years that I have mentioned above, Zaydan selected a number of incidents from Islamic history as plotlines for his novels. *Armanusah a-Misria* (1894) is concerned with the conquest of Egypt 640; *Al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf* (1902) is about the famous governor of Iraq during the period of the Umayyad Caliph's; *Shajarat al-Durr* (1914)

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[15] J Brugman, *An Introduction to the History of Modern Arabic Literature in Egypt*, Leiden, E J Brill, 1984, p 218

[16]. Sabry Hafiz, "The State of the Contemporary Arabic Novel· Some Reflections", *The Literary Review Supplement*, The Arab Cultural Scene, London, Namara, 1982, p. 17

explores the reign of the famous queen of Egypt. *Istibadad al-Mumalik* (Mamluk Tyranny, 1893) may serve as an illustration of the narrative principles used. Set in the time of Ali Bey al Kabir and his struggle with his son in law, Muhammed abu Dhahab (1769 - 73), the novel swing back and forth between Egypt and Syria (which the Egyptian army has invaded). The local colour is provided by the disasters which befall the family of Sayyid Abd al-Rahman, a wealthy merchant who finds himself prey to the exception of the Mamluks and who is forced to fight in the Egyptian army in order to save his son, Hassan from a similar fate. Against the back drops of the historical events leading to Ali Bey's defeat at the hands of Muhammed Abu Dhahab, the family goes through a series of adventures miraculous escapes from death, and disguises, in order to emerge unscathed as Abu Dhahab's celebrate his victory.

For all their combination of history contrived romantic interest, not mention the emphasis on action, these novels were far superior to many of the translated adapted, and original works which were being serialized during these decades, novels marked by a little bit of every thing: murder, intrigue, love, fight, and rapid action. The availability of such works did little who advance the development of the novel genre; indeed it seems to have given it something of a social stigma. Where one can draw an analogy with the theatrical tradition at this time, nothing that the Egyptian intelligentsia did not regard the writings of such works with any favour, as will become clear when I consider shortly the case of Haykal.

He Egyptian critic, Abd al-Muhsin Taha Badr, choose to place these novels into a category "between education and entertainment."[17] While such works may represent period pieces within the context of a retrospective on the development of fiction in Arabic, it cannot be denied

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[17]. Abd al-muhsin Taha Badr, *Tatawwar al-riwayah al-Arabiyyah al-hadith fi Misr*, Dar al-Ma'arif, Cairo, 1963 p 93

that they were to play an enormously important role in the fostering of a readership for works o modern Arabic fiction. Members of the transplanted Syrio-Lebanese community, prominently involved in the expansion of the press in Egypt, were also primary contributors to this type of fiction, much of which appeared in serial form. Through periodicals such as *al-Riwayat al-Shahriyyah,* Niqula Haddad (d. 1954) published a number of extremely popular novels with such titles as *Hawwa al-Jadidah* (Modern Eve, 1906) *Asirat al-Hubb* (Prisoner of Love n. d.) and *Fatinat al-Imperator* (Enchantress of the Emperor, 1922), works which acted as a link between an increasing popular taste for entertainment fiction and the emergence of a tradition more closely focused on present reality.[18] Yaqub Sarruf (1852-1927), the founder of the journal al-Muqtataf and Farah Antun (1872-1922), the founder of the journal Al-Jamiah and a renowned secularist, also contributed to the corpus of historical novels. Saruf's *Amir Lubnan* (1907) deals with the history of his native land during the religious struggle of the 1850s and 1860s; Antun's *Urishalim al-Jadidah aw fath al-Arab Bayt al-Maqdis* (New Jerusalem or the Conquest of the Holly City, 1904) is set during the Muslim conquest of Jerusalem in the 7th century A.D., however, in other works both Saruf and Antun focus their narratives on the present. Saruf's novels, *Fatat Misr* (1905) and *Fattat al-Fayyam* (1908) are set in his adopted country among its Christian (Coptic) community.[19] Antu's other contribution to the novel genre mirror the fictional trends era, from the somewhat philosophical, *al- Ilm wa al-din wa al-mal* (Science, religion and money, 1903), which is a discussion of the conflict of science and religion, to al-*Haubb al-hatta al-maut* (Love till Death, 1899), and al-Wahsh, al Wahsh, al- Wahsh (1903), both of which treat the problem of

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[18] Brugman, p 228
[19] Donald M Reid, *The Odyssey of Farah Antun*, Minneapolis, Bibliotheca Islamica, 1975

the Lebanese society contorted with returnees from the emigrant community in America.

The novels of Jaydan and other contributors to the historical-romantic and philosophical novel certainly fulfill the important functions of bringing fictional genres into the public awareness and at the same time using episodes from Middle-Estern history as means of rousing and fostering an emerging Arab Nationalist consciousness. It was, as Sabri Hafez notes, "natural....that the historical novel and romantic fiction with their nationalistic call for recognition and passionate adoration of the country's captivating beauty were the two fictional types during the early period of the Arabic novel."[20] However, that very Western source which had provided exemplars of the novel for translation and imitation did not allow fiction in Arabic the luxury of a prolonged period of development and experimentation in order to develop its interest in, and understanding of the novel genre. The First World War and its aftermath were to present the Arab world as a whole with some new and unpleasant realities. The same cultural traditions whence the novel had come were now be presented by the Mandate powers, whose inclusions had to be challenged and resisted through a series of local nationalisms. Thus, while this type of novel continued to enjoy a certain vogue, Arab writers found in the problems of the present aspiration for a better life of fertile ground foe their fictions. In moving towards the goal, different visions of the novel's generic purpose and newly developed skills were needed.

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[20] Sabri Hafiz, *"The State of the Contemporary Arabic Novel: Some Reflections"*. University of California Press, Berleley, 1983, p 17

Muhammad al-Muwaylihi and Arabic Novel:

While Zydan culled his subject matter from the past, others writers used the columns of the press to publish serialized works which commented on and criticized contemporary society and politics. Following the 'urabi' rebellion of 1882, the British had occupied the country; Lord Cromer had been assigned the task of putting Egypt's finances in order. Opposition to occupation was almost universal but multifaceted. One of the most famous of these opponents was Jamal al-din al-Asadabadi. The influence that Jamal al-din and his famous Egyptian pupil, Muhammad 'Abduh(1849-1905), had on an entire generation of writers in Egypt was profound, among his intellectual" disciples" were some of the most famous name in the Egyptian reformist movement; Qasim Amin(1865-1907), who wrote in support of the cause of women, *Hafiz Ibrahim* (1872-1932), the "poet of the Nile", Mustafa Kamil (1874-1908), a famous figure in the growth of Egyptian Nationalism, and Muhammad al Muwaylihi(1858-1930).[21] The cultural and political tensions of the environment provided Muhammed al-Muwaylihi, an Egyptian journalist, with plenty of material for his sharp pen. The resulting episodes, initially entitled "Fatrah min al-Zaman," (A period of Time), were published over a four year period (1898 - 1902) in the columns of the family newspaper, *Misbah al-Sharq.*[22] They were narrated by young Egyptian named Isa ibn Hisham, that being precisely the name used many centuries earlier by Badi al-Zaman al-Hamdani in his *maqamat.* We are thus dealing with the deliberate revival of the past heritage and its application to the present, a fully conscious neoclassicism, something made abundantly clear by the style known as *saj* (rhyming prose) used at the beginning of each serialized episode. In

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[21] Allen Roger, *Writings of Members of the Nazli Circle,* Journal of the American Research Centre in Egypt, 8, 1970, p 79

[22] Allen Roger, "Some New al-Muwailihi Meterials," *Humaniora Islamica,* 2, 1974, p. 139

al-Muwaylihi's work, however, this stylistic device, which during the medieval period of Arabic literature had become a highly rhatoricised vehicle for verbal display, is limited to the first columns of each episode, after which he moves into a clear and polished style reminiscent of the best classical model.[23]

Hadith ibn Hisham represents a major advance over it predecessors in at least one way: it focuses on Egyptian society during the authors own life time and criticized it foibles in a bitingly sarcastic fashion. The narrator, Isa ibn Hisham, meets Ahmed Pasha al-Manikly, a Turkish Minister of War from the previous era (that of Muhammed Ali), who rises from his grave. Together they explore the many problems, inconsistencies and ironies of life in Egypt some 50 years after the Pasha's death, 50 years which have witnessed much modernization and Westernization and, above all, the British occupation of the country. During the initial episodes the Pasha is arrested for assaulting an importunate donkey-man; readers are thus even an introduction to the chaotic Egyptian legal system in which religious (*Shariah*) and secular courts (based on the French model) are endeavouring to apply the law under a British governmental administration. In late episodes, the figure of the *umdah* (village headman) and his two colleagues, the *kale* (playboy) and the *tajir* (merchant), are used to contrast life in the countryside with that in the "modern" city and to show up the differences between the traditional tests and values of the *umdah* and the Westernized fads exposed by the *khali.*[24] As the series of episodes evolved, it was already being referred to as "the story of Isa ibn Hisham". Thus, when al-Muwaylihi decided to publish his serialized episodes as a book in 1907, it

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[23] Ahmed Yussuf Ramitch. *Usrat al-Muwaylihi wa-atharuha fi al-adab al-Arabi al-hadith*, Cairo, Dar al-Ma'arif, 1980, p. 234

[24]. L. Abu-Saif, "Najib al-Raihani. From Buffoonery to Social Comedy," Journal of Arabic Literature, 4, 1973, p 1-17

is hardly surprising that one of the first monuments of modern Arabic prose should have been given the title Hadith Isa ibn Hisham. The work was an immediate success; a second addition appeared in 1912 and a third in 1923. In 1927 it was given some form of canonization by being adopted as a school text. This was also an unfortunate decision in that much of the more controversial (and therefore interesting) criticism of society which the first three edition had contained-pointed criticisms of Al-Azhar, the Royal Family, and Muhammed Ali's Turkish ways – was omitted, and in its place were inserted a number of episodes of "*Fatrah min al-Zaman*" describing a visit which Isa ibn Hisham (al-Muwaylihi) made to the Great Exhibition in Peris in 1999. These episodes now called *al-Rihlah, al-Thaniyah*, may be yet another example of the "European visit" theme, but show little of the pungent sarcasm of the Egyptian episodes.

Several critiques have endeavoured to show that Hadith ibn Hisham is the beginning of the Egyptian level, but there are a number of problems connected with such attempts. In the first place, if the work is to be considered a novel, then by any yard stick it is a thoroughly bad one. As is typical with a series of episodes written over a four year period, the narrative thread extremely contrived and often invisible. Only in certain chapters – the initial ones in which the Pasha is heavily involved in the action, and the later ones involving the rustic *umdah* – is any real effort made to maintain continuity. Further more, there is no characterization in any real sense of the word, and certainly no development of character through action.

Hadith Isa ibn Hisham thus serves an invaluable bridging function. The invocation of al-Hamdani's narrator and the brilliant use that al-Muwaylihi made of the *saj* style of the *maqamah* certainly suggest the

norms of a neoclassical prose work, one that seeks to revive an awareness of the glories of the cultural heritage of Arabic literature. But, alongside this feature, we have to acknowledge that by using contemporary Egypt and it problem as a primary focus, and analyzing both in a humorous and accurate fashion, al-Muwailihi's work represents a major shift in focus when contested with previous work. Most of which were totally detached from there authors environment in either place or time or both. When we consider the novel's great, perhaps principal, role – the depiction of the process of change and most especially societal change – it is some what ironic that one of the most "classical" texts of all, *Hadith Isa ibn Hisham*, may fulfill a particularly significant role. For it was al-Muwaylihi's work that charge at the major precedent for a work of fiction that does serve as a land mark in the **development of the novel in Egypt** as well as Arabic, one that marks the transition from a first phase – one of translation, imitation, adaptation – to a second phase of creation and experimentation, Muhammed Hussayn Hykal's *Zaynab*.

Contribution of Haykal:

There has been a good day of discussion concerning the status and contribution to the development of Arabic novel of Muhammed Hussayn Hykal's novel ***Zaynab*** ever since H.A.R. Gibb and others identified it as the **first "real novel" in Arabic.**[25] The key phrase that has been invoked to distinguish Haykal's work from those of his predecessors is "of literacy merit" or, in 'Abd al-Muhsin Taha Badr's words, a *Rewayah al-Fanniyyah* (artistic novel).[26] Some critics regard Zaynab too as one more step on the road to the emergence of a "genuine" novel, while more recently others found novelistic qualities in a still earlier work of Muhammad Tahir Haqqi entitled *Adhra Dinshwai* (1907; the Maiden of Dinshwai, 1986).[27] Haqqi's work situates real Egyptians in a contemporary Egyptian setting invoked place and time, namely the actual events which ensued when, in vengeful reprisal for the death of a British soldier who was on a pigeon shoot near an Egyptian village, the authorities were forced by the occupying power to pass sentences of execution on a number of villagers and to carry them out in public. The savagery of this verdict had remain indelibly accorded in the collective Egyptian consciousness ever since. Haqqi's work thus presents us with a contribution to fiction combining some of the elements that we have already identified: from al-Muwaylihi's book a concern with the description and analysis of present day Egypt; and from the historical-romantic novel, a local love story. As we bear in mind these examples and other categories of fiction that were emerging in Egypt at this time, it is perhaps more accurate and useful not to burden ***Zaynab*** with the designation as the first example of any particular category or quality of

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[25] J Brugman, *An Introduction to the History of Modern Arabic Literature in Egypt*, E. J Brill. Leiden, 1984, p 210

[26] Badr, *Tatawwar al-riwayah*, p 318

[27] Ali Badr Jad, Form and Technique in the Egyptian Novel, London, Ithaca, 1983, p 19

novel, but rather as an extremely important step in a continuing process. Without I any way, diminishing the place of Haykal's novel in the history of modern Arabic prose literature, we would suggest that a clear historical perspective can be obtained by placing it in a broader generic context.[28]

Zaynab was in Egypt in 1913 under the pseudonym Misri *fallah* (a peasant Egyptian) although, as Hamdi Sakkut observes the true identify or Hykal was known to literacy critics at the time.[29] A primary feature of this work is the loving attention which is devoted to the description of the Egyptian countryside. If previous attempts at novel writing had lacked a realistic backdrop, then Haykal places his reader right in the midst of Egyptian village society as he recalls it from after and precedes to elaborate on natural phenomena – the fields and crops, the sunrise and sunsets, and so on had great almost tedious, length. Not for nothing is the work subtitled Manazir wa-Akhlaq Rifiyyah (Country Scenes and Manners). One has to admit that the over all effect is more then a little sentimental, a fact attributable, no doubt, to nostalgia that the author, himself the son of a wealthy land owner, felt while studying abroad.

The plot of the novel is based on two focal points; *Zaynab* a beautiful peasant girl who works in the field owned by the father of the second focal point, Hamid, a student in Cairo who returns to his parental home during the vacations and whose views seem very much a reflection of Haykal's own. The two foci meet briefly in that *Zaynab* is one of the girls with whom Hamid flirts, but nothing comes of this dalliance, and their stories are essentially separate. To Hamid, *Zaynab* serves as consolation when he learns that his cousin, Azizah, with whom he has been carrying on a sort of epistolary lave affair, is to be married off to someone else. When he finally despairs of the prospects of finding to

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[28] Brugman, p 211

[29]. Hamdi Sakkut, *The Egyptian Novel and Its Main Trend 1913 – 1952*, Cairo, American University in Cairo Press, 1971, p 12

love, he goes back to Cairo and sends his parents a letter full of his ideas about society and its problems, ideas that are patently those of Hykal himself;

Since the day I began thinking about love and happen to .....[30]

This passage provides just one of many possible illustration of the way in which a characteristic of many early works of fiction is to refund in abundance in Haykal's work, namely homilies on social issues of an addressed in the form of letters. It is all too easy to point to the problems of psychological fallacy here, as Hamid, the student in Cairo acquainted with Western works on liberty and justice such as those of John Stuart Mill and Herbert Spencer, proceeds to discuss the question of marriage in Egyptian society on a such a lofty plane with his parents, who have always lived deep in the Egyptian countryside.

Returning to a consideration of the status of *Zaynab* as a contribution to the **development of the novel in Arabic in Egypt,** we may note that it is normally afforded a place of importance because it depicts Egyptian rural life people by Egyptian characters. However, it seems difficult to support the claim that the work presents a picture that is in any sense "realistic." The advocacy of Qasim Amin's views on the place of women in society is clear enough, but the discussion of such issues forms a moralizing overlay that sits awkward on top of an idealized and nostalgic portrait of country life conceived by an Egyptian intellectual while studying in France. The ideas advocated by the characters represent aspirations more than realities, thus making of the work something of a historical gap that separates it from the appearance of further exemplars of its genre serves to underline the essential disjuncture at this period between the actual historical moment within

[30] Muhammad Hussayn Haykal, *Zaynab*, Maktabat Nhdar Misr, Cairo, 1963, p 268

society and the generic purpose of social-realist fiction to which it aspires.

Developments in Egypt after Zaynab: 1913 – 1939

Haykal's work was noted and reviewed at the time of its appearance nut it cannot be said to have promoted an increased interest in writing works of fiction that would address themselves to the realities of the present. Indeed, apart from *Thurayya* by Isa Ubyad (d. 1923), a short work heavily focused, like Haykal's, on a story of undulfilled love,[31] one has to wait until the 1930s for the appearance of future experiment in longer fiction.

One genre that clearly thrived in this period was the short story, which was well suited to the deal with smaller segments of life in society in, intense and often allusive detail. It has been suggested by some critics that it was a desire on the part of some authors to concentrate on the short story genre that accounts for the temporal gap between the publication of *Zaynab* and the appearance of a whole host of novels in the 1930s. The view that the short story can serve in such a way as a sort of training ground for incipient novelists is, needless to say, one that short story writers vigorously reject.[32] Indeed, when we come to consider those writers who did not turn their attention to the novel in the 1930s, including Ibrahim al-Mazini, Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad and Tawfiq al-Hakim, it becomes clear that the reason for paucity of novels in the 1920s is due to a whole cluster of other social and cultural factors as to the popularity of the short story. Not all authors, for example, had had available to them the opportunities that Haykal's social status afforded him: the possibility of travelling abroad; studying a foreign culture and its literary output; viewing his homeland from a fresh perspective; and, perhaps most practical of all, finding a publishing for his pioneering piece of fiction. While the emerging press tradition certainly fostered, as we

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[31] Abd al-muhsin Taha Badr, *Tatawwar al-riwayah*, p. 233

[32] H E Bates, *The Modern Short Story 1908 – 1935*, London, Robert Hale, 1988, p. 2.

have just seen, the appearance of novels of a certain kind, the ephemeral nature of the newspaper and journal medium and the amount of time needed to create a work of novel length – quite apart from the writing skills and imagination required – were formidable obstacles in the face of any young writers who would aspire to write a novel and to do so essentially as a spare-time activity (that being, incidentally, the circumstance under which Mahfouz wrote his major contributions to the genre until the time of his retirement). In this context, it is therefore extremely important to recognize one segment of the population that clearly did have such amounts of time, both as writers and readers, namely, women. The circumstances that Haykal depicts in *Zaynab* may have reflected a social situation which prevented the general public availability of all but a tiny fraction of their output, but as researchers begin to concentrate more on this hidden segment of the creative and respective side of fiction, it becomes clear that a different view of the early history of fiction in Arabic will be needed.[33]

A work that was to make a major contribution to the development of prose literature was published during the 1920s; it has become one of the most beloved of all works in modern Arabic literature: al-Ayyam, Taha Hussayn's famous autography, originally serialized in *al-Hilal* and then published as a book. Almost every commentator on the modern Arabic novel includes some reference to this work, and rightly so. The traditional narrative mode of autobiography is given a touch of gentle irony by the sense of detachment from his protagonist that the author achieves through the simple device of coaching the narrative in the third person. When we couple with these features a limpid prose style which flows with such deceptive case, the some total is a work which has

[33] Margot Badran and Mirian Cooke, *Opening the Gates: A Century of Arab Feminist Writing*, Bloomington, Indianna. Indianna University Press, 1990, p. 312

remained one of the most enduring masterpieces in a modern Arabic prose literature.[34]

In 1929, Haykal's *Zaynab* was published in a second edition. By this time Haykal was well known both as editor of a famous newspaper, *al-Siyasah* , and as a cultural figure of some renown. The publication of the work and discussion which surrounded it simulated a tremendous interest in genre which was to bear fruit in the next decade. In 1930 a competition in novel writing was announced; the eventual winner *Ibrahim al-Katib* (1931; Ibrahim the Writer, 1976) by Ibrahim al-Mazini.[35]

It has often been suggested that the process of writing novels will always introduce elements of the personal, the autobiographical, into the resultanting text; one might suggest further that the autobiographical element is particularly prevalent in many fast attempt at novel writing. The title of al-Mazini's novel thus points to a feature which seems especially prominent in the series of novels written by Egyptians in the 1930s. While al-Mazini himself consistently denied it, most critics agree that "Ibrahim the author" is in many ways precisely that. The story itself provides a rather disjoint account of the love of a man for three different women: a Syrian nurse, Marry, who helps him through his convalescence from illness; his cousin, Shushu; and Layla, whom he meets in Lexor, where he has gone to escape from the memory of his failure to marry Shushu. In this work, as in Haykal's, there is some implicit criticism of societal customs, in that Ibrahim is not allowed to marry Shushu, whom he loves, because her elder sister remains unmarried. Even so there is an inconsistency in al-Mazin's treatment of this theme, in that Shushu is

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[34] Fedwa Malti-Douglas, *Blindness and Autobiography Al-Ayyam of Taha Hussayn*, Princepton. Princeton University Press, 1988, p 301

[35] Maghdi Wahda, *Ibrahim the Writer*, General Egyptian Book Organization, Cairo, 1976, p 34

eventually married to a doctor even though her elder sister still remains unmarried. Many situations in the work - for example, the narrator's experience with Ahmed al-*Mayyit* (The Dead) at his cousin's house, the strange encounter with the man who has robbed him in Alexandria- illustrate that same, almost farcical sense of fun which typifies so many of his stories. Thus if this work is not entirely successful it makes a distinct contribution to the further development of the novel genre by providing the reader with some memorable Egyptian characters and some poignant and amusing moments.

It is no accident that the first novel which succeeds in providing a totally convincing portrait of a family within a restricted environment should have been written by Tawfiq al-Hakim, whose major interest was and remained the drama in *Awdat al-ruh* (1933; return of the spirit,1990) we are introduced to Muhsin, a young student living with his relatives in Cairo.[36] Through a dialogue of considerable subtlety and variety, we are introduced to the various members of the closely-knit family. The mail members all find themselves fascinated by the charm of the daughter of a neighbor, Saniyyah, while in contrast, Zannubah, the spinster of the family, spends large amount of money on beautifying herself in an attempt to find a husband. While the potential of this mixture of characters is well exploited in the first part of the book, the atmosphere is transformed when, in the central part of the work, Muhsin returns to his parent's country estate for the vacation. This allows al-Hakim to elaborate on the theme which provides the novel with its title: Egypt's of its ancient heritage eternal Egypt unchanging in spite of the passage of time and the succession of foreign occupiers, all this encapsulated in the so-called Pharaohnism movement, which had a considerable vogue at the time when this work is written. The application of this idea to the 1919

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[36]. William M Hutchins, *Return of the Spirit*, Washington, D. C , Three Continents, 1990, p 112

revolution in Egypt, in which the members of the family are finally involved, may be appropriate in itself, but the attempt to combine this is heavily symbolic motive with the lively and realistic portrait which forms the first part of the work is not fused together successfully, and the work loses a sense of balance. Once again, one facet of the complex process of novel writing – the dramatic role of dialogue in contributing to character portrayal-has been convincingly demonstrated, paving the way for the emergence of the Arabic novel in its full maturity.

A second work, *Usfur min al-Sharq (1938; Bird from the East,* 1967*)* take the same student, Muhsin, to Paris in order to continue his studies, suggesting again an autobiographical link between character and author.[37] The work is used to suggest a rather facile contrast between the spiritual east and the material West in a way which shows little characterization or action and which can be seen as an early precedent to the more sophisticated treatment of the same "Arab student in Europe" theme to be found in later works by Yahya Haqqi, Suhayl Idris, and al-Tayyib Salih. The same subject is to be found in Taha Hussayn's Adib (1935), but once again the subject of European education is allowed to preponderate. That topic, together with the excessive use of the letter format, produces a rather tedious work. Taha Hussayn's later novels, and particularly *Shajarat al-Bu's* (Tree of Misery, 1944), are much more successful contributions to the genre.

In yet another novel from this decade, Tawfiq al-Hakim succeeded in creating one of the most memorable works of early modern Arabic fiction, *Yawmiyyat naib fi al-aryaf* (Diary of a public prosecutor in the province, 1937; The Maza of Justice, 1947).[38] Al-Hakim makes use of a first-person participant narrator to introduce us to the customs and beliefs

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[37]. Allen Roger, *The Arabic Novel: An Historical and Critical Introduction,* Syracuse University Press, Syracuse, New York, p. 40

[38]. Ibid., p. 41

of a small community in the Egyptian provinces. The vividness of the emerging picture suggests that he has incorporated into his narrator's tale much of his own experience when he occupied the same position following his return from study in Europe. The reader thus finds the traditional way of life of this particular segment of the Egyptian populace filtered through the vision of a prosecutor who is in the almost impossible position of applying the French legal system to situations involving Egyptian peasants during a period when the country is under British occupation. Yaumiyyat na'ib shows al Hakim's talent for constructing narrative and painting lively character through dialogue in a remarkably developed fashion. The result is clearly one of the finest examples of early modern Egyptian fiction.

Another contributor to this process was the poet and critic, Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad, with ***Sarah*** (1938).[39] Al-Aqqad was to a large degree self-taught, and combine interest in literature with those in the natural sciences. It is thus hardly surprising that he became involved in the application of psychological analysis literature, as, for example, in his study of the famous classical poet Ibn al-Rumi.[40] His contribution to the novel certainly falls within this category, and in his introduction to the second edition, he himself suggests that Sarah is either "a novel of psychological analysis in a narrative form."[41]

Taha Hussayn, al-Aqqad, and al-Hakim are three of the most illustrious names in the history of modern Arabic literature and it is clearly a sign of the increasing interest in the novel genre that they wrote the works which we have just described. Alongside the developing skills which are evident in these works, however, are obvious flaws in technique. With that in mind, it is both sad and ironic that a novel written

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[39]. Eng. Trans. M. M. Badawi as Sara, General Egyptian Book Organization, 1978, Cairo
[40]. Devid Semah, Four Egyptian Literary Critics, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1974, p. 3 - 65
[41]. M. M. Badawi, p. 12 (introduction)

during this decade which does show a considerable artistic consistency, Muhammed Tahir Lahshin's *Hawwa bela Adam* (1934; Eve without Adam, 1986), has suffered from the same neglect which has affected the author's work as a whole and which seems to have contributed in no small way to his decision to stop writing altogether. What makes this work particularly noteworthy is not only that it seems to be a piece of complete fiction – in other words, without any autobiographical content allusions – but also that 'the out come appears as a natural development from the interaction of characters and their environment.'[42] Though the character of Hawwa, an orphaned girl who has been brought up by her grand mother and who works as a teacher, Lahshin provides his readers with an effective illustration of the incompatibility between the dicta of modern education (particularly with regard to the emancipation of women) and traditional values. Hawwa herself is well educated and belongs to a feminist society, before which she gives a stirring speech on education and its goals. However, her lonely and cloistered upbringing has not provided her with any experience on emotional matters, but has rather stifled them. Thus when she falls in love with the brother of the aristocratic girl whom she is tutoring, a young man considerably younger then herself, her feelings run away with her, if only in her own mind. When the young man is engaged to another girl, Hawwa's entire life collapses. After to her grandmother's suggestion that they use magic and exorcism – the very personification of the values of which she has been rejecting – she commits suicide.

This novel addresses itself forcibly to some prominent societal issues, and the statements and actions of the characters contribute to the discussion in a realistic and logical fashion. It succeed to a remarkable

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[42]. Hilary Kilatrick, *"Hawwa bila Adom: An Egyptian Novel of the 1930s,"* Journal of Arabic Literature 4, 1973, p. 48-56

degree in combining several of the different facets in novel composition into a satisfactory unity, all of which makes one regret that the next generation of writer was apparently unaware of his achievement. Lahshin himself choose to spend the rest of his working life in the department of Public Works. In the works of Hilary Kilpatrick, "his silence was Egypt's loss."[43]

In the preceding pages, we have identified some of the most significant contributors to the **development of the novel in Egypt.** It needs mentioning again that Egypt was chosen to provide a model for the earliest phases in the development of a novelistic tradition in the Arabic-speaking world because historical, geographical, and cultural factors combined to make it the Arabic-speaking society most conductive to the Achievement of the novel genre during the period under discussion. In other parts of the region analogous processes were occurring; the chronology and local features were, needless to say, varied, but the basic sequence was the same; and then indigenous creation.

The model was provided by Muhammed al-Muwaylihi's *Hadith Isa ibn Hisham* that of a classical genre being used to reflect the intellectual tensions of the era and to serve as a bridge to future developments was replicated in other examples in Egypt and else where in Arab world. The famous Egyptian poet Hafiz Ibrahim (d. 1932), a close friend of the al-Muwaylihi family, published a work of his own, *Layali Satih* (Nights of Satih, 1906).[44] Hafiz makes use of encounters between his narrator and the variety of inhabitants of Egypt to comment on a number of pressing issues of the time, including British role of Sudan, the presence of Syrian émigrés in Egypt, and the need for reform in women's rights. Among authors from elsewhere in the Arab world

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[43]. Allen Roger, p. 43

[44]. Fedwa MAlti-Douglas, "Al-Wahdah al-nassiyyah fi Satih," fusul, 3, no. 2, Jan. to March, 1983, p. 109

which works show signs of the influence of the classical or non-classical *maqamah* tradition, mention should be made of Sulayman Faydi al-Mawsili in Iraq with his *al-Riwayah al-Iqaziyyah* (The Story of Al-Iqaz – the name of Faydi's news paper, 1919), Ali al-Duaji (1909-49) in Tunis with his *Jawlah Hawla hanta al-bahr al-Abayad al-Mutawassit* (Trip around the Pubs of the Mediterranean, 1935), and in Morocco Muhammed ibn Abdullah al-Muaqqit with his *al-Rihlah al-Marakushiyyah aw Mir'at al-Masa'il al-Waqtiyyah* (Marrakesh journey or Mirror of Problems of the Time, 1920s) in which a narrator uses a Shaykh abd al-Hadi to guide him on his travels to and around the Maghrib.[45] While the dates of publication serve to illustrate the different time frames for the development of modern fiction in the separate national literatures of the Arab world, all of these works can be regarded from the perspective of the 1980s as bridges between the narrative genres of Arabic classical prose and the emergence of a new entity which was to become the modern Arabic novel.

[45]. Abd al-rahman Majid al-Rubayi, *Al-Shati al-Jadid: Qirrah fi kuttab al-qissah al-Arabiyyah,* Tunis, Al-Dar al Arabiyyah li-al-kitab, 1983, p. 54

Contribution of Naguib Mahfouz:

Such is the variety of themes and the bulk of novels that make up Naguib Mahfouz's total output that is hardly surprising that his name has already been cited at several points in our discussion. In the first edition of this work, he was accorded a central position in this lengthy survey of the themes in modern Arabic novel, in that his career marks the establishment of the genre as a centrally important player in the cultural life of the Arab world. With the award of the Nobel Prize in Literature to him in 1988 it clearly becomes necessary to consider his role in the development of the novel genre in Arabic in detail.[46]

Proceeding to the discussion on the fact, we may mention here that, we will make a detail of his life and works in a particular chapter (Chapter - II). Here we will have a look to his contribution to the development in Arabic novel. Mahfouz's first Arabic novel Abath al-Aqdar (Mockery of Fates) appeared in 1939. It is the first of three which depict incidents from periods of ancient history, a subject on which Mahfouz had translated an English work by James Baikie from English into Arabic in the early 1930s. it may be considered a fortunate event in the history of the genre that is the early 1940s, under the combined inspiration of the social and political pressures of the period and his copious and systematic reading of European fiction, he changed his mind and applied himself to the issues of the contemporary period on a broader canvas, that of the realistic novel. In a series of works, the first of which was published in 1945 and the last, the *Triology,* in 1956-57, Mahfouz depicts with loving attention to detail the lives of Egyptians in various quarters of the city of Cairo.[47] Quite simply stated, these novels move the

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[46]. Particularly in the wake of the award of the Nobel Prize, the literature on Mahfouz has assumed enormous proportions. Among the most notables ar: Ghali Shukri, al-Muntmii, dirasah fi adab Najib Mahfouz, Cairo, Dar al-Ma'arif, 1969 etc.

[47]. Allen Roger, p. 112

genre in Arabic to a completely new plateau of achievement, and it is hard to over estimate the impact that they have on the development of the genre, not merely in Egypt but throughout the Arab world. Mahfouz's accomplishment combines elements of both quantity and quality from the point of view of sheer industry and dedication; he may even have set an unfortunate precedent regarding the status of creative writers in the Arab world by producing 11 novels in 13 years, essentially in his sphere time. It is to be emphasized here is the palpable development in technique that is so evident in this series of novel. The milestone that is *The Triology*, with its amazing attention to detail, its profound insight into character, and its complete authenticity to time and place can be seen as a culmination of the series of works that precede it, with *al-Qaherah al-Jadidah* (The New Cairo, 1946) and Zuqqaq al-Midaq (1947; Midaq Alley, 1966) providing microcosms of Egyptian characters trapped in historical circumstance and *Bidaya wa Nehaya* (1951; The Beginning and The End, 1985) offering a portrait of the tragedy of a single family.[48] *The Triology* is a huge work of over 1500 pages tracing the life, beliefs, tragedies, and loves of the Abd al-Jawwad family in the period between the two World Wars and into the Second World War. Like the great novelistic sagas of Tolstoy, Galsworthy, Trollope Hugo, and others, it operates on numerous levels. The setting of each volume in a different part of the city illustrates well the transformations within society, of which the fate of this family is an example. From the first volume, in which the father exerts a tyrannical hold over his family while employing a double standard with regard to his own behavior, we proceed to the second, in which the second son confronts his father's traditional beliefs with the evolutional theories which he is studying in Teacher's College.

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[48]. Somekh Sesson, "A Minute to Midnight: War and Peace in the Novels of Najib Mahfouz," Middle East Review, 20 (Winter 1987-1988), p. 7-13

In the third volume, men and women are studying together at university. Two of the grand sons of the first generation finish up in jail one as a Communist, the other as a member of the Muslim Brethren. There could hardly be a better example of the feuds and divisions in Egyptian society and the sense of alienation among intellectual which marked the period before the 1952 revolution.[49] And at the main protagonist of his work is surely Time itself. The manner in which Mahfouz holds together this survey of Egyptian society in the process of change recalls George Lukses remarks on Flaubert's *L'education centimentale.*

The manuscript of *The Triology*, Mahfouz tells us, was completed in April 1952 before the revolution. Quite apart from the problems of publishing such a voluminous work, there was also the reality of the new political order, a revolution the precise impact and course of which were fur from clear at the outset. During the initial years of the revolution Mahfouz turned his attention to another love of his, the cinema.[50]

His next fictional works, *Awlad haratina* (1956) signaled a significance change in topic. It is an allegorical work in five sections. Jabalawi/Gebelawi is a beneficent authority figure who selects his son Adham to supervise the religious endowment (*waqf)* of which he has the charge. This decision is violently opposed by another son Idris, who is therefore expelled from the house. Later the outcast Idris goes to see his brother and asked him to look in "the book" to see what Jabalawi has written in it about him. For his brother's sake, Adham agrees to do so, but he is caught by his father, Gebelawi; as punishment he, too, is thrown out of the house.

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[49]. Abdullah Laroui, The Crisis of he Arab Intellectual, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1976, p. 120

[50]. Lionel Trilling, The Liberal Imagination, New York, Scribners, 1940 and 1950, p. vii

It did not require a great deal of interpretation by readers of the newspaper *Al-Ahram*, where the work was first published in serial form, to realize what the important of this new narrative was: that Adham, a name close in sound to that of Adam, and Idris, close to Iblis represented the opening of what was to be an ambitious and controversial undertaking by Mahfouz, one which was to make use of the context of violence f human societies as a frame work within which to consider a topic which had been a concerned of his for sometime, the role of religion in modern society.

From a first section entitled "Adham," we move through "Jabal" "Rifa'ah", "Qasim", and lastly the magitian "Arafah". At the end of the work Arafah goes to Jabalawi's house and kills him. "God's will be done," he says, "after his long life Jabalawi is now dead!"[51]

This series of articles brought down on the author the wrath of the al-Azhar authorities. It was determined to be sacrilegious. A formal ban on publication in Egypt was issued, but at the time no further action was taken against Mahfouz himself. Indeed if we take into consideration the political situation in Egypt in the 1968 under president Abd al-Nassir, the relative influence of religion with the political and social life of the country at that time, and the status of Mahfouz himself, it is difficult to see what further action might have been taken. The work was published in book form in Lebanon in 1967, and copies made their way on a regular, if informal, basis to Cairo as well as to other Arab cities. It could in any case be consulted in its original form in the archives of the ***al-Ahram*** news paper. In what may be seen as a typical compromise, the religious establishment in Egypt apparently considered themselves to have defended an important principle and saw no further need to interfere. Thus the situation remained until the Nobel year of 1988 – 89,

[51]. Philip Stewart, trans, Washington, D. C. Three Continents, 1981, p. 320

when the co-incidence of Mahfouz's award with the issuing of a death sentence by Imam Khomeini against Solman Rushdie for his book, *Satanic Verses*, once again brought *Awlad Haratina* into the limelight. As newly prominent Muslim writer world renowned, Mahfouz was asked to comment on the death sentence decreed against Rushdie. His response was an unequivocal condemnation of the decree and a confirmation writer's freedom. Later he was to supplement his comments by saying that he found the contents of the book distasteful in the extreme but that was not before his earlier defense of Rushdie's rights as an author brought down upon him a death sentence from Umar Abd al-Rahman, a popular Islamic preacher in Egypt. Duly supplied by this international furor over Rushdie's novel and Mahfouz's reaction to it with a totally new context, a variety of religious commentators now went back to *Awlad Haratina* and read it in a completely new light. It would have been better if Mahfouz would have been condemned to death when the work was first published and indeed that, had Mahfouz not written *Awlad Haratina,* Roshdie's work would not have appeared. Mahfouz himself is alleged to have turned his earlier work "My Illegitimate Son."[52]

Following the original publication of Awlad Haratina in 1959, Mahfouz's novelistic writing took a new turn, concerning itself, as we noted above, with the depiction of the alienated individual in a society in which ideals and reality seemed rarely to blend. This phase in Mahfouz's career is marked most obviously by a more economical treatment of the description of place, but also evident are an increased awareness of the psychological dimensions of character through the use of internal monologue and stream of consciousness and a subtle and effective use of symbols. The characters who people these works find themselves for one reason or another out of place in Egyptian society. In *al-Liss wa al-Kilab*

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[52]. Milton Viorst, "Man of Gamalia" New Yorker, 2 July, 1990, p. 34-35

(1961) Said Mahran is the thief who feels betrayed not only by his wife who has deserted him while he was in prison, but also by Rouf Ilwan, a journalist who has abandoned his former radical prisons toward society and the rights of the poor in favour of a new life of prosperity. Mehran's attempts to kill those who have betrayed him fail, and he is hounded down by the police with their dogs. The novel ends, tellingly, in a cemetery. *Al-Summan wa al-Kharif* (1962) tells the story of Isa al-Dabbagh, a senior governmental official under the old Royal regime, who's life collapses around him in the wake of the revolution, the purges of corrupt civil servants and his own unwillingness to face up to the realities of the situation. The novel narrates not only his personal withdrawal to Alexandria after his fall but also the many ways in which life is carrying on without him. This series of novels written in the 1960s can be seen as a rising crescendo unease and disillusion at the course of the Egyptian revolution. His next works are Tharthara fawq al-Nile, and Miramar (1967) which will be discussed in the respective chapters (i.e. Chapter-II) later on.

Many litterateurs in Egypt and elsewhere in the Arab world reacted to the June War of 1967 in a variety of ways: anger, violence, silence, self imposed exiled. Few responded immediately, but Mahfouz was who did. He chose to express his reflection on the disaster in a series of extremely symbolic and often cyclical short stories which make their way into collections published in 1969 and 1971. They all reflect the sense of questioning, challenge, and recrimination which were so characteristics of this period. When he turned his attention to the longer genre again, it was in *al-Maraya* (1962), a series of alphabetized vignettes through which, in a retrospect on his own life and career, the narrator surveys the recent history of Egypt and its people in all walks of life. Needless to say, many of the subjects of these vignettes comment with extreme frankness about

politics, including the Egyptian revolution itself, international relations and the continuing dilemma regarding the fate of the Palestinian people in their struggle with Israel. *Al-Maraya* can be regarded as a symbolic transition in Mahfouz's career, one which leads into what would be called "retrospective" phase. The period of the early 1970s marked the beginning of the Sadat era, a time which involved the so called *Thawrat al-tashih* or correctional revolution. It also witnessed some sensational revolution about the Nasser era and particularly the grim days of the early 1960. It was at this stage that Tawfiq al-Hakim wrote and circulated privately his famous retrospective *Awdat al-Way.* That work infuriated a large segment of the intellectual elite of Egypt, as can be gauged from the selection included in the late Bayly Winder's translation.[53] It was into this scenario that al-Marayah appeared as a book in 1972, designated as *al-Riwayah*. This particular phase in Egypt's history was certainly one of 'looking back in anger.' In al-Karnak (1974) Mahfouz paints a particularly gruesome portrait of the lives of young people during the 1960s, including descriptions of torture and rape in prison. His works of fiction published during the late 1970s and into the 1980s make it abundantly clear that the value of Egyptian society and its leadership have given Mahfouz much to be angry about; one quote from one of the characters in *Yawm Qutila al-Zaim,* itself a significant title in view of Satat's assassination, should suffice as illustration. "He's just a lousy actor, that's all..... He goes around saying my friend Begin, my friend Kissinger. Let me tell you the uniform belongs to Hitler; the routine is sheer Charlie Chaplin."[54]

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[53]. Tawfiq al-Hakim, The Return of Consciousness, trans, R. Bayly Witder. New York University Press, New York, 1985

[54]. Naguib Mahfouz, Yawm qutila al-zaim, Maktabat Misr, Cairo, 1985, p. 47

The policy of opening up Egyptian markets (*infitah*), and the way in which the already-glaring inequities between classes and between city and provinces were aggravated and emphasized by it, became a constant theme of his fiction. To be fair, given the extreme circumstances of Egyptian society at the time and Mahfouz's own sense of priorities, it is hard to see what else might have preoccupied his attention. Couplet to all this is the fact that Mahfouz retired from his Ministry of Culture job and began to supplement his pension – yet another reference to the status of litterateurs in the Arab world today – by writing a weekly news column for *al-Ahram*, thus forging a link that was guaranteed to maintain his preoccupation of the particular problem of his own society. However, certain of Mahfouz's latest novels clearly transcend this pattern. For example Mahfouz has turned to the classical literary tradition, following perhaps the example of his young colleague and admirer, Jamal al-Ghitani, invoking the "characters" of *A Thousand and One Nights* in *Layali Alf Laylah* (1982), and, in a notable further contribution to his continuing discussion of religion, *Rihlat ibn Fatumah* (1983). His *Custumur* (1988), an affectionate portrait of childhood haunts and colleagues in Abbasiyyah where the author himself grew up, may be his final contribution to the novel genre.

The primary topic of Mahfouz's enormous output in novel form has thus been an apt reflection of the earlier development of the Western fictional tradition, in that he has chosen to focus on the life and problems of Egypt's urban middle class and in particular the subset of that social grouping with which he himself is intimately acquainted, intellectuals and civil servants. This is not, off course to suggest that his concerns or readership were restricted to Egypt alone or to a single group within that society. His pre-1967 works in particular addressed themselves to the larger issues facing modern man with a sweep which reflects his own

broad reading in the literary traditions of the world. However, whereas other modern Arab novelists have been motivated by political and literary concerns to venture outside the environs of the modern metropolis in order to portray the harsh realities of the life among the rural peasantry, Mahfouz has consistently set his works in the city and among the class he knows best.

The characters who people his novels and the plots that are constructed to contain them are crafted with extreme care. In both these areas he demonstrates the skill of a meticulous planner and crafts man. The views of schools and Kellogg seem appropriate in assessing his skills in this area; "Of the giants of the age of the novel can we not say that the principal thing which unites them is the special care for characterization which is in inextricably bound up with the creation of character from the facets of the artist's own psyche?"[55]

In using his novels to portray this class and to reflect the values of his generation, he has honed a writing instrument of great symbolic power and nuance. During the course of his long career he has clearly taken great pains to develop a prose style which, in its clarity and directness can both describe and suggest. An important stylistic issue of debate regarding the development of the Arabic novel has revolved around the question of the language of dialogue. While other writers have sought to land an element of authenticity by introducing conversation in the colloquial dialect of their region, Mahfouz has preferred to remain within the syntactic structures of the standard language, occasionally peppering his character's comments with individual words and phrases which evoke colloquial discourse. This rich stylistic medium has served as a vehicle not only for the wide variety of atmospheres and scenarios to

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[55]. Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg, The Nature of Narrative, Oxford University Press, London, 1966, p. 192

be found in his works but also for the often sardonic witticisms which his Egyptian characters, reflecting a well-known national trait, hurl at each other. The fictional world into which the reader is thus drawn is created in a style which describes and characterizes with great subtlety.

Naguib Mahfouz is, simply and directly stated, the founder of the mature tradition of the novel in Arabic and indeed the forger of new paths in two separate phases in that development process – in terms of publication, 1945 -52 and 1959-67. That such has been ascribable in the lifetime of a single author and under the circumstances personal, professional, and political, within which Mahfouz has had to work is truly remarkable. The award of the Novel Prize is a thoroughly apt recognition of that role. In his hands the historical moments and the novel genre were ideally linked the novel in Arabic is the continuing beneficiary of that fact.[56]

[56]. Allen Roger, p. 120

Socio-political background during the maturity:

The novel, according to Philippe Sollers, is "la maniere don't cette societe se parle."[57] During the last five decades the societies within the Arab world have witnessed changes on a wide scale in both their political and economic way of life. It should come as no surprise therefore that this same period has seen a tremendous expansion within the field of the Arabic novel. It is the purpose of this chapter to trace the developments and experiments which have taken place by examining themes and technique used by novelists writing since the outset of the Second World War. However, bearing in mind the close connection noted above between novel writing and circumstances within society (however "pure" some writers and critics may wish the genre to be),[58] it seems useful to give a brief summery of some of the major events and trends in the Arab world against the background of which this outpouring of fiction will be viewed.

To the West the mention of the Arab World has traditionally invoked images of the camel and men wearing the *Kaffiyyah* and headband. To these stereotypical images has surely been added in recent decades that of the oil well. The discovery of oil in the Arab World has of course had an immense impact on the recent history of the region and has caused a radical shift in the balance of influence within the area itself and of economic power within the world as a whole. Abd al-Rahman Munif (b. 1933), the Saudi novelist whose works will be detailed in below, asserts in an interview that, "as a sphere and topic, oil may help uncover some novelistic aspects in our contemporary life in the Arab world."[59] It should be noted that Munif's academic training was a petroleum economist; he may thus be not a little *parti pris*. Indeed, during the 1980s

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[57]. Janathan Culler, *Structuralist Poetics*, Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1975, p. 189
[58]. Ibid. (pt. I.) p. 89
[59]. Al-Ma'arif 204, Feb. 1979, p. 188

he has followed up on this some what coy opinion by penning the Arab world's largest novelistic project to date, the quintet of novels, *Mudun al-milh.* In his novel *al-Bahth an Walid Masud,* (In Search of Walid Masud, 1978), Jabra Ibrahim Jabra provides us with a historical frame of reference on this point from which to view the extent of the changes which have occurred Ibrahim al-Hajj Nawfal, one of the narrators in the novel, comments on his career as a businessman in Iraq and points out to his audience that he had been writing about economics at a time when "the demand that Iraq have a twenty-percent share in the revenues of the British Petroleum Company was regarded as a nationalist demand which would prove enormously difficult to achieve and would require both perseverance and determination".[60] To a world that has become accustomed not only to a different approach towards the Middle East region, its various nations state's and their alignments, but also to the significance of oil as a commodity and an economic weapon, the changes that have occurred in the period under consideration here are indeed striking.

These current realities are part of the larger and longer process, namely the complex web of relationships between the cultures of East and West, itself the subject of a whole series of novels. A comparison of al-Tayyib Salih's novel, *Mawsim al-Hijra ila al-Shamal* (1967; Season of Migration of the North, 1969).

In an earlier we described the process whereby the Arab world "rediscovered" Europe during the 19th century. The interest of Europe in the Arab world took a rather more pragmatic from as France and Britain occupied, or otherwise participated in the governmental process of various countries in the region. A natural reaction to this was the formation of a number of nationalist movements whose aspirations,

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[60]. Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, *Al-Bahth 'an Walid Mas'ud,* Beirut, Dar al-Adab, 1978, p. 311

whether totally locally or pan-Arab, were dashed by the mandate agreements which followed the First World War. The apparent success of the "Arab Revolt", even if they were often viewed by English readers through the distorting lens of T. E. Lawrence's narrative, had raised among the Arab nations considerable hopes for independence when the fighting was over. With the publication of the Balfour Declaration of 1917, declaring that a homeland for the Jewish people was a goal of the British government, the basis was created for a continuing series of misunderstanding and deception over the future of Palestine. Hopes for the Middle East were crushed as the French and British announced their agreement to divide the former Ottoman dominions into a series of "protectorates": France undertook the administration of the Maghrib, Lebanon and Syria; the British became the mandate power in Palestine and Transjordan. These arrangements were duly rectified by the newly established League of Nations in July 1922, along with a declaration of a strictly limited independence for Egypt and Iraq. Against such a background of foiled political aspirations, it is hardly surprising there were wide scale revolts aimed at the colonial power in both Egypt (1919) and Iraq (1920), but they were soon quashed. Both these events have often been used by litterateurs writing in all genres as a symbol of resistance to foreign domination in any form and of the expression of the popular will.

Within such a scenario of political expediency and broken promises, the relationship between the Arab nations and the Western powers (most especially, the two "protecting" powers, British and Finance) during the interwar period was, not unnaturally, one of suspicion and distrust. In Palestine the British found themselves blogged down in a political quagmire largely of their own devising: what few attempts were made to reconcile the unreconcilable only succeeded in antagonizing both

the indigenous Palestinian and the increasing number of Zionist immigrants. On the political front, Egypt and Syria were granted a modicum of independence: in the Arabian Peninsula the Saudi family was allowed to consolidate its control; in 1943 an agreement between Sunnis and Marinates in Lebanon led to the foundation of a Lebanese state, one that was based on a tragically fragile balance as the events of the last decade have shown or too clearly. However, for the majority of nations in the Arab world, the limited nature of the political gains during this period was abruptly underlined by the actions of the occupying powers at the outset of the Second World War. Whatever gestures of "independence" may have been granted were now abruptly swept aside as the armies of the Axis powers and the Allies fought their way across North Africa, thus involving a large segment of the Arab world directly in the conflict and other parts through overt military occupation.

The Second World War and its consequence led to a transformation in the patterns of Western influence and hegemony in the Middle East. While the Arab nations may have shared in the international sense of relief that global conflict was at an end, their feelings were also some what more sanguine; the memory of the way expectations would so easily be dashed in such circumstances was too fresh. Along with renewed hopes for independence there as continuing resentment towards not only the colonial powers but also many of the *ancient regimes* with their entrenched and often corrupt power structures. This was a volatile political and social mixture as a number of uprising and political assassinations during the immediate post war period can demonstrate. Jacques Barque quite rightly terms the moment "a decisive juncture in contemporary Arab history..... the assassination of an Egyptian prime minister bore witness to the rise of extremism, the founding of the Bath

Party and the 'free officers' conspiracy signaled the summons to new political horizons."[61]

The conduct of the Great Power during the war had convinced even the most dogged pursuers of local national interest of the need to unite efforts and forces. The urgings of a number of advocates of Arab nationalism (such as Questantin Zurayq, Edmond Rabath, Sati al-Husri) were now to bear fruit in the establishment in Cairo of the Arab League in March 1945.[62] The choice of the Egyptian capital as the site for the league's headquarters not only acknowledge Cairo's central geographical position in the Arab world but also symbolized a role for Egypt which Abd al-Nasir was to pursue with vigor in the next decade.

Hisham Sharabi is of the opinion, in retrospect, that from the outset "the League fell far short of the hopes and aspiration of the most Arab nationalists."[63] In any case the newly created body was presented within a year or so with a major crisis, one which again involved the Western powers, namely the establishment of the state of Israel. In November 1947 a "partition plan" for Palestine was published. In April 1948 many inhabitants of the Palestinian village of Dayr Yasin were massacred by Zionists, an event which prompted many families to leave the region. In May, the state of Israel was proclaimed, marking the first of many subsequent conflicts between Arabs and Israelis. The period which we are considering is punctuated with unfortunate regularity by conflict between the Arab nations and Zionist state. The years 1948, 1956, 1967, 1973, and 1982 are important events in the history of modern Arab world. The plight of the Palestinian people continues to be one of the major focuses

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[61]. Berque, Jacques, *Cultural Expression in Arab Society Today*, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1978, p. 271

[62]. Hourani, *Albert, Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*, Oxford University Press, London, 1962, p. 223

[63]. Ibid., p. 260

of Arab nationalist; in Abd Allah Laroui's words, it is "the Arab problem *per excellence*".[64]

In the decades that followed the conclusion of the Second World War, the majority of countries within the Arab world went through a period of considerable turmoil and transformation, both political and social. With the emergence of two "super powers," the United States and the Soviet Union, alignments, both international and local, were adjusted and in many case completely transformed.[65] The 1950s witnessed a number of revolutions in the Arab world (1952 in Egypt), for example and 1958 in Iraq and the Sudan. The long-sought goal of independence was granted to several nations: Sudan, Tunisia, and Morocco in 1956, Kuwait in 1961, and, after protected vicious civil conflict beginning in 1954, Algeria in 1962, as where conflicts between different people have proved more difficult to resolve; those involving the Kurds in Iraq and the people of the Southern part of the Sudan continue to pre-occupy the rules of those countries. There were attempts at bringing the idea and ideal of Arab unity to fruition: one which was implemented between Egypt and Syria – the United Arab Republic, 1958 – 1961; and another attempt to include Iraq in the Republic which was never brought to full fruition. The Egyptian Revolution and its charismatic leader, Jamal Abd al-Nasir, took the lead in forging new alliances which directly confronted the interests of Britain, the former occupying power. The arms deal with the Czechs in 1955, the military and political fiasco surrounding the tripartite attach on Suez in 1956 followed by the withdrawal of British and French forces from the region and the nationalization of Suez Canal, the beginnings of the movement of non-aligned nations; these were heady days indeed.

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[64]. Abdullah Laroui, *The Crisis of the Arab Intellectual*, University of California Press, 1976, p. 171

[65]. Salma Khadra Jayyusi, *Modern Arabic Poetry An Introduction*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1987, p. 15-16

With all this movement and sense of dynamism, it is hardly surprising that this was also a period of intense discussion of the role of literature and the writer in society.[66] The decade of the 1950s witnessed the fierce argument over the issues of commitment. The foundation of the literary periodical *al-Adab* in 1953 was and has remained the most obvious symbol of the development in these decades of a movement whose base are well summarized in the quotation from Raif al-Khuri to the effect that "the Arab writer is committed, particularly in this period of Arab national revival, to producing works with a conscious and deliberate political meaning."[67] As will be shown, the novel, "as the model by which society conceives of itself, the discourse in and through which it articulates the world,"[68] has been one of the primary areas of such activity and of critical commentary on it.

And yet amid all the dynamism there was also profound doubts about the direction in which the Arab world was heading and the means which were used to get it there. Litterateurs are not slow to express their views along these lines, often at considerable cost to their own well-being. Poems were written which expressed varying degrees of dissatisfaction and disgust with the state of Arab society; one thinks of Qabbani's "Khubz wa-hashish wa qamar" (Bread, Hashish and moonlight, 1965), Aduni's "Marthiyyat al-ayyam alhadirah" (Elegy for the present days, 1958), and Khalil Hawi's "al-A'zar 'am 1962" (Lazarus 1962, 1965). In the same novel from which we have already cited an extract, Jabra Ibrahim Jabra once again provides us with a clear expression of views on this subject. Parenthetically, I might point out that Jabra's prediction for setting the multi-narrator technique serve to make

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[66]. M. M. Badawi, *A Critical Introduction to Modern Arabic Poetry*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1975 p. 207

[67]. Salma Khadri Jayyusi, *Trands and Movements in Modern Arabic Poetry*, E. J. Brill, Leiden 1977, p. 557

[68]. Culler, Jonathan, *Structuralist Poetics*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1975, p. 189

his a gold mine of views on a whole variety of subjects connected with life in the modern Arab world. In the current instance, we are dealing with the main character of this novel, Wali Mas'ud, the Palestinian who emerges from a period in an Israeli prison during which he has been tortured. In an unforgettable passage he describes the darker side of Arab society at this time:

"I saw my homeland for which I had been prepared to go through the very tortures of Hell itself applying those very same tortures to anyone who fell into the hands of the people in authority. From the Arab Gulf to the Atlantic Ocean I heard a cry, I heard weeping and the sound of sticks and plastic houses. Capitals and casbas, the valleys below; men in neat civilian suits walking to and fro like a thousand shuttles on a thousand looms, hauling off to the centers of darkness by the tens and hundreds."[69]

The most sneering use of 'Abd al-Naseer's ringing phrase of Arab unity, "from the Arab Gulf to the Atlantic Ocean," draws attention to the grim side of the life of intellectuals in many countries of the Arab world at this time. Naguib Mahfouz's novel, al-Karnak (1974), made into a high exploitative film during the heyday of President Sadat's regime, is just one of many fictional works that portray just how grim such a life could be;[70] others include Munif's *Sharq al-Mutawassit* (East of the Mediterranean, 1977; A l'est de la Mediterranee, 1985), Sanaullah Ibrahim's *Tilka al-Raihah* (1966; The Smell of it), and the quartet of a novel by the Kuwaiti writer Ismail Fahd Ismail, set in Iraq.

The 1960s emerge then as a decade when the different revolutionary regimes in the Arab world moved from the initial flush of success, which independence and its aftermath had brought, towards a

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[69]. Jabra, *Al-Bahth 'an Walid Mas'ud*, Dar al-Adab, Beirut, 1978, p. 249

[70]. Raymond William Baker, *Egypt's Uncertain Revolution under Nasser and Sadat*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass, 1978, p. 151

process of formulating some of the ideological principles in which the revolution had been or was to be based, and of putting such principles into practice. This process almost inevitably led to a number of challenges, particularly from those whose view of revolution in general and of the particular revolution in question was different from that of the authorities. The challenges which took written from were of varying degrees of frankness. As many novelists have observed. The copious use of symbolism at this time was not merely an artistic phenomenon but a matter of strict practicality. The more explicit writers could be handled with considerable severity, as Sabri Hafiz notes.[71] The attitude of intellectuals to the governmental chapter in Egypt, and their sense of alienation, is portrayed with brilliant clarity in Mahfouz's novel, *Thartharah fawq al-Nil* (Chatter on the Nile, 1966; Adrift on the Nile, 1993), a work which clearly antagonized the Egyptian authorities at the highest level and almost led to his incarceration.[72] The June War of 1967 has clearly been a defining moment in the modern history of the Arab nations. The Arabic term used to describe it is *al-naksah*, meaning, "set back" (in itself, a typically creative use of the language's own potential for verbal puns, the earlier 1948 War was termed *al-nakbah*, "the disaster"). But as a large number of anguished studies of the event and its implications were to point out, it was in fact a devastatingly terminal blow to the pretensions carefully nurtured by the political sector during the early years of independence and revolution; in the words of Faruq Abd al-Qadir, an Egyptian critic of drama, it was "a total defeat of regimes, institutions, structures, ideas, and leaders."[73] Halim Barakat is both a sociologist and novelist, and his novel, 'Awdat al-tair ila al-bahr (the return of the Flying Dutchman to the sea, 1969; Days of Dust, 1974)

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[71]. Sabri Hafez, *"The Egyptian Novel in the Sixties,"* Journal of Arabic Literature, 7, 1976, p. 77
[72]. Yusuf Idris, New York Times Review of Books, 16 March, 1980, p. 3
[73]. Faruq Abd al-Qadir, Izdihar wa-suqut al-Misr, Dar al-Fikr al-mu'asir, Cairo, 1979, p. 164

manages to identify some of the major sources of the anger and resentment that were to follow. For the Arabs this was a war with no heroes; where the battle for control of the air was concerned – and that was crucial – it was over much too quickly. What made the impact even worse and the anger more intense was that the Arab world as being told by its leader until the very last moment that it was on its way to a glorious victory. In the view of many, these events provided an all-too-graphic illustration of the kinds of problems to which intellectuals and litterateurs had been addressing themselves, in necessarily guarded and often symbolic terms, throughout the earlier years of the decade and before. Now, however, the carefully crafted images of political leaderships and the visions of a wonderful future based on notions of equality and justice were shown to be cruel distortions of the realities of the Arab world; the extent of the disease was shown to be so great that there was no longer a question of suppressing overt discussion of its many ramifications. What ensured has been characterized by Abdallah Larui as a "moral crisis" which "culminated in a period of anguished self-criticism, is a searching reappraisal of postwar Arab culture and political practice."[74]

The consequences of this conflict remain contributing factors to the course of strategic and political events in the region. In general, regimes survived. In Jordan, King Husayn found his country overwhelmed by an influx of Palestinian refugees from the West Bank. Post-1967 period witnesses a turn by Palestinian groups towards more direct means of influencing policy, most notably in the appearance of the *Fidaiyyin*. By 1970 the tensions between the political priorities of the Jordanian government and those of the Palestinians had reached a breaking point, and in a period of brutal fighting, termed "Black September" by the Palestinians, the freedom fighter were driven out of Jordan and into

[74]. Muhammad Baradi, *al-Adab*, Feb. – March, 1980, p. 3

Lebanon and Syria. In the intervening period the relationship between Jordan and the Palestinians has oscillated between enmity and co-operation, as political alliances have swung this way and that, but in 1993 Amman, Jordan's capital, teems with Palestinians; the number had been increased by a further influx resulting from the expulsion of Palestinians of Kuwait in the wake of the Gulf War of 1990. As the other nations of the Arab world face their own problems and priorities, the fate of the Palestinians-punctured with dreadful regularity by such barbaric acts as the Tell al-Zatar and Sabrah-Shatilah mass acres in Beirut – is to remain without a homeland, condemned to one or another kind of exile; in the words of the Palestinian poet, Tawfique Sayigh (1923-1971):

"Your passport?"
Without it there is no entry
And you don't carry it
Therefore no entry.[75]

In Egypt, the regime of Jamal Abd al-Naseer, for so long the admired political figure head of the Arab world, also survived, but the crushing nature of the 1967 defeat, and his attempts at reconciling differences between groups and nations in such a situation fraught with recrimination and frustration, proved overwhelming, and he died in September 1970. His successor, Anwar al-Sadat, was essentially an unknown quantity on the international seen. The Israeli capture of Sinai served as a continuing affront to Egyptian honour, a situation that led to a lengthy confrontation and stalemate at the Suez Canal during the early 1970s. Al-Sadat, however, give the appearance of concentrating much of his attention on the domestic agenda. Certain civil liberties that had been

[75]. Poem 24 from Qasidat K, trans. Issa J. Boullata in Modern Arab Poets, 1950-1975, Three Continents, Washington D. C. 1976, p. 147

generally lacking during the 1960s were restored under the most careful controlled circumstances, including the right of speaking (and writing) "absolutely frankly," all within limits of appropriateness determined by the government. The most of the books written of the time were violently anti Naseer (including Tawfiq al-Hakim's Awdat al-Way) made it clear that a change in political priorities and alignments was under way. As if to underline that direction, al-Sadat announced his policy of *infitah*, opening up Egyptian markets to both local and international capitalism. The major result of that policy has been to widen still further the gap between the wealthy and poor of the country, a theme that has not surprisingly, spawned a very large amount of fictional writing.

As these social transformations were in progress, the confrontation at the Suez Canal continued. The pressure for action mounted, and in October 1973 al-Sadat responded: the "crossing" of the Suez Canal caught the Israeli forces by surprise, and, even though the Arab Armies were eventually driven back, the cracking of the "Bar Lev Line" was a substantial psychological boost for al-Sadat, even though its impact elsewhere in the region was minimal; Berque terms the event a "semi-success."[76] In 1977 al-Sadat undertook another bold initiative when he agreed to travel to Jerusalem and addressed the Israeli Knesset. This was followed by a peace agreement between the two countries and, in March 1979, the singing of the Camp David accords in Washington. However, well these events may have played on the world stage, the assassination of al-Sadat in 1981 by members of a popular Islamic group in his own country and the almost empty streets in Cairo on the day lost touch with political realities of Egypt and the region as a whole. In 1974 Abdullah Laroui had suggested that the post–167 period was to be characterized by

[76]. Berque, Jacques, Cultural Expression in Arab Society Today, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1978, p. 93

"an increasingly pronounced polarization of forces."[77] The recent history of Egypt and its relationship with other Arab states provides just one illustration of how accurate his comment was to be.

1979 witnessed another transforming event in the recent history of the Middle East: the ouster of the Shah of Iran and his replacement by a conservative Shi'ite religious leadership headed by Ayatullah Khomeini. It is obviously impossible to explore here all the ramifications of the Iranian revolution, but the impetus that it has given to Shi'ite communities and to the revival of Islam as a potent political force throughout and in Iraq and the Gulf States may serve as examples. The construction for the Lebanese state, drafted in the early 1940s, had been based on a delicate balance between the different communities – Maronite Christian, Orthodox Christian, Sunny Muslim, Shi'ite Muslim, Druse, and others. This balance, insofar of factors: among them, differential birthrates, patterns of emigration, and the influx of Palestinian refugees. Outbreaks of communal strife had occurred previously, but in 1975 a full-scale civil-war erupted. Since the groupings of forces involved not only political but religious affiliations, the conflict was able to transform and renew itself throughout the 1980s, involving differing configurations and alliances both local and international. The emergence of the Shi'ite community in the south of Lebanon, the region that lies directly to the north of Israel, and the vigorous support that the community continues to receive from Iran, have been major factors in the course of recent Lebanese history. Hanan al-Shaykh's novel, *Hikayat Zahrah,* 1980 (The Story of Zahra, 1986) is set among the community, both in Beirut and in the south, and it serves as just one of a whole series of works that recount the agony of a society in the process of treating

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[77]. Laroui, Abdullah, The Crisis of the Arab Intellectual, University of California Press, Berkely, 1976, p. viii

itself apart. And yet, throughout all this, Beirut has managed to remain a major centre for book publication and intellectual life in general. It is such resilience that will be needed in large quantities as the various communities attempt to turn an uneasy peace into a new version of the open and prosperous nation that Lebanon previously presented to the outside world.

The complexities of the Gulf region reside in the small measure in the presence of significance communities of Shi'ite Muslims in Iraq and the areas of Gulf States (including Saudi Arabia) that face the Arabian Gulf. The fact that the majority of the worlds proven oil reserves lie under precisely this particular region has, of course, not been lost on the leaders of the nations of the western world as they have become ever more dependant on such sources of supply.[78] The exact size of these Shi'ite communities constitutes the kind of information that the rulers of the countries concerned prefer not to release; Iraq certainly has a Shi'ite majority. As the proselytizing activities of the Iranian revolution expanded across the Gulf, it was clearly in the interest of Saudi Arabia and the other oil-rich states of the southern Gulf and Iraq engage in a war with Iran that would help to curve the increasing amount of political agitation that was occurring within the Shi'ite communities. The Iran-Iraq war of the 1980 was immensely costly in terms of human lives and military hardware. It was when Kuwait in order to achieve a number of political goals: to fulfill Iraq's long-standing claim to the territory, to punish Kuwait for its oil-pricing policies, and – a well-tried ploy – to distract attention from his own domestic difficulties. The result of Iraq's invasion was the Gulf War, involving yet another incursion by western forces into the region, the destruction of most of Iraq's social

[78]. Abd al-rahman Munif, *Mudun al-milh* (Cities of salt), *al-mu'assasah al-Arabiyyah li-al-dirasat wa al-nashr*, Beirut, 1983, p. 111

infrastructure and the emergence in the aftermath of the conflict of a number of potentially interesting new alignments, not the least of which is the possibility of peace agreements between Israel and its various neighbours.

While these have been some of the most prominent political events in recent decades, the Arab world has also witnessed a series of apparently never-ending conflicts in regions that are less in the limelight of publicity: in the south of the Sudan, an ongoing conflict between the Muslim ruling forces of the northern part of the country and the people of the south; in former Spanish Sahara, a conflict between Polisario forces supposed by Algeria and Moroccan Army: in the state of Libya, a continuing involvement in internal affairs of Chad to the south; and in Iraq (along with Iran and Turkey) the struggle of the Kurdish peoples for independence and a separate homeland.

Conflict, then has been a continuing feature of the recent history of the Middle East region a contemporary reflection perhaps of a reality that has scored this strategically (and now economically) important area for centuries. Conflict is also a major theme of many works of modern Arabic fiction, hardly surprising in view of the events described above on the societies of the nations involved. Alongside of the international, national and communal conflicts involving weapons of destruction, there have also been conflicts of politics and ideology.[79] As noted above, the 1967 defeat led to a complete reëxamination of priorities from every point of view. Two terms occur frequently in publications of the 1973: *turath* (heritage) and *asalah* (authentically to one's historical roots). A whole series of distinguished Arab intellectuals devoted themselves to a complete revision of ideas concerning the relationship of the Arab present

[79]. Evelyne Accad, Sexuality and War: Literary Masks of the Middle East, New York University Press, New York, 1990, p. 132

to the past and the implication for the future.[80] A brief listing of such intellectuals would include Abdallah Laroui (from whom we have already quoted), Sadiq al-Azm, Hasan Hanafi, Muhammed Abid al-Jabiri, Husayn Muruwwah, and Tayyib Tizzini.[81] A further significant factor in many Arab societies has been the emergence of the women's voice, expressing the desire for profound changes in attitude, behaviour and opportunity, and doing so with particular effectiveness in the realm of fiction.[82]

While these intellectual currents have formed the backdrop to much debate about principles in the Arab world during the last two decades, it is clearly the revival of Islam as a popular religious phenomenon that continues to be a predominant feature of most of the countries of the region; indeed it would appear that the process is rapidly expanding and intensifying. Adopting to different local situations, the leaders of these movements have been extremely successful in exploiting a number of social factors to their own advantage: most importantly the availability of the Islamic heritage as a newly contemporary way of combating the general intellectual and moral malaise of the community; the diminish role of socialism as a guiding ideology and the resulting secularist tendencies; and resentments over the influence of Western values and the crass consumerism and inflation that they engender. These are, of course, just a few of the many factors governing the emergence of a powerful force in the contemporary Arab world, one that will clearly continue to play a major role in the social and intellectual life of Arab countries.

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[80]. Miriam Cooke, *War's Other Voices*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1988, p. 232
[81]. Issa J. Boullata, *Trends and Issues in Contemporary Arab Thought*, State University of New York Press, New York, Albany, 1990, p. 311
[82]. Ibid. p. 199

This brief survey of events and trends in the Middle-East since the Second World War cannot possibly do more than scratch the surface of an enormous topic to which some critics in other disciplines have devoted many times. However, this backdrop, however sketchy, will, I hope, make it possible to turn now to an analysis of the way in which literatures have chosen to create fictional worlds that will comment on and reflect some of these realities and ideas.

The Decades of Realism:

The political events and social transformation that have just been described from the backdrop to fictional writing in the Arab world during the course of the last fifty years. Bearing in mind the push towards independence and, from the 1950s, the development of national and pan-Arab identities and social contracts, it is hardly surprising that the majority of novelists chose to engage political and social realities in the most obviously available fictional mode, that of realism. Before we investigate the means by which this large-scale project was implemented and the success of Arab authors in doing so, we should pause briefly to consider two other fictional modes which had previously enjoyed much popularity.

As we noted earlier, the historical novel, with its combined pedagogical and entertainment functions, had played an important role within the general process of ***al-nahdah,*** involving a rediscover of the classical heritage and a reassertion of national identity. In Egypt, for example, the period following the 1919 revolution saw an upsurge in national pride, and the sensational discoveries in 1922 of the tomb of Tatankhamun made this sense of history even more intense. Naguib Mahfouz first published work took the form the translation of an Egyptological work by Baikie into Arabic. His initial contributions to longer fiction, **a set of three historical novels,**[83] (which will be analysed in Chapter III of this work) may perhaps be seen as part of this increasing awareness of historical roots which finds its clearest expression in the so-called "Pharaohnism" movement. As Yusuf Izz al-Din notes, the same process is evident in Iraq.[84] During the period under consideration here, writers continued to produce historical novels set in both ancient and

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[83] Sakkut, Hamdi, *The Egyptian Novel and Its Main Trends 19136 – 1952*, American University Cairo Press, Cairo, 1971, pp 46-84

[84] Izz al-din, *Al-Riwayah fi al-Iraq· Tatawwuruha wa-athar al-fikr fiha*, Cairo, 1973, p 160

medieval times. Al-Bashir Khurayyif, the Tunisian writer (1917 - 83), uses his novels, *Barq al-Layl* (Night Lightening, 1961), to portray life in his native country under Hafsid rule in the 16th century, although the inclusion of a reference to the Spanish invasion in 1535 no doubt served to remind his readers of the realities of occupation in the twentieth century.[85] In Syria, Maruf al-Arna'ut (d. 1947) wrote a series of works dealing with periods from early Islamic history.[86] However, while Arab novelists in a variety of countries continued to write historical fiction for informational and entertainment purposes, the force of rapid change led Arab writers in different directions. In his novel, al-Raghif (the loaf, 1939), for example, Tawfiq Yusuf Awwad (b. 1911) gives a vivid account of Arab resistance to the Turks during the First World War with "a good deal of focus and artistic acumen."[87] In still more recent times when, as we have noted above, history has been able to provide a regrettable rich repertoire of conflict in the Arab world, novelists have still found inspiration in the events of earlier decades of this century. The Syrian writer, Faris Zarzur, sets his novel, Lan Tasqut al-madinah (The City will not Fall), 1969, during the First World War, while Hasan Jabal (1969) is an excessively documentary account of resistance to the French occupiers during the 1920 and 1930s.[88] in Egypt, the historical novels of authors such as Adil Kamil (b. 1916), Ali al-Jarim (1881 - 1949), Muhammed Sayeed al-Iryan (1905 - 64), popular appeal well into the 1950.[89] Such treatments as these, however, have assumed a diminished importance within the **development of the novel genre** during the last half-century.

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[85]. Ghazi, Ferid, *Le roman et la novella en Tunisie*, Maison Tunisienne de Idition, Tunis, 1970, p. 62

[86]. Al-Safin, Ibrahim, *Tatawwur al-riwayah al-Arabiyyah al-hadithah fi bilad al-Sham 1970-1967*. Manshurat Wizarat al-thaqafah wa-thaqafah wa-alilam, Baghdad, 1980, p. 161

[87]. Suhayl Idris, *Al-Adab*, Feb. 1957, p. 15

[88]. Al-Safin, p. 397

[89]. Al-Nassaj, Sayyid Hamid, *Panorana al-riwayah al-Arabiyyah*, Al-Markaz al-Arabi li-al-thaqafah wa-al-ulum, Beirut, 1982, p. 71-76

In the early stages of the development of the novel in Arabic, **the historical trend** was followed by the romantic, Haykal's ***Zaynab*** being an early example. This trend has remained extremely popular. As the Egyptian critic, Abd al-Mashin Taha Badar trenchantly remarks the prevalence of the realistic genre as the favour type in the tradition of the Arabic novel has done nothing to diminish the popularity of the romantic trend: they continue to exist because of readers who do not enjoy heaving their consciousness raised; all they want is to be entertained. In every society you will find semi-literate types who are ready to pander to the taste of this readership. Many such readers have recently been enticed away from entertainment novels towards radio plays and films, and most recently all, to television.[90] The most popular of such authors is undoubtedly Ihsan Abd al-Quddus, famous son of a famous mother, the actress Rose a-Yusuf; Abd alQuddus earned a wide reputation for himself by writing a whole series of works of romantic fiction which broached the subject of the structure of the family and the position of women in a provocative way, making him perhaps in fiction the analogue of Nizar Qabbaqni in modern Arabic poetry. Examples of romantic fiction from other parts of the Arab world can serve as a useful illustration of the differing chronologies that still exist at this stage in the development of the novel genre. In Algeria, Ahmed Rida Huhu published *Ghadat umm al-qura* (the maid of the city, 1947, in which the topic is love and marriage.[91] This theme has also been particularly popular Sudanese novelists, among whom we would mention Badawi Abd al-Qadir Khalil with *Haim ala al-Ard aw rasail al-hirman* (Roaming the earth or letters of deprivation, 1954) which, as the title suggest, makes heavy use of the

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[90]. Badr, Tatawwur al-riwayah, p. 169
[91]. Al-Nassaj, p. 220

epistolary mode, and Shakir Mustafa with *Hatta taud* (Till she returns, 1959) where Mahmud And Awatif's love story is broken when he marries a foreign women; he only returns to his real beloved as she lies dying.[92]

[92]. Al-Nassaj, p. 233-35