CHAPTER- I
ARABIC NOVEL UPTO TAWFIQ AL- HAKIM

Novel is a fictional prose composition based on real human life in conflict living in society. The word *novel* has been derived from the Italian word *novella* which referred to a tale of love and adventure in prose that got flourished in Italy during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. For example- Giovanni Bocaccio wrote a collection of love tales in prose entitled *Decameron* in 1350. During the seventeenth century some prose narratives were produced by some English writers especially by John Bunyan, Jonathan Swift, Daniel Defoe, Thomas Nash and a few others after being inspired by the Italian *novella*. But the novel as an independent genre of literature came into being in English in the early eighteenth century. The English novel may be said to heav begun with Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740). After him some of his contemporaries as Fielding, Smollett, and Stern tried their hand in this new genre of literature and contributed much to the evolution and development of this form of prose literature. Later on England produced some unique novelists as Charles Dickens, George Eliot, Jane Austin, and Sir William Scott who brought this genre of literature into perfection. Since then onwards this branch of literature has found its way to other languages of the world in which novels have been and have been produced enormously.[5] The novel as a genre of prose literature got imported to the Arabic language in the early twentieth century and then onwards it has been produced by many Arab writers throughout the Arab world.

[5] M. H. Abrams: A Glossary of Literary Terms, Madrass, Macmillan India Press, 1992, p. no. 110-112

Literary critics have differed, over the years, as to how the modern Arabic novel first came into being. Some maintain that Arabs have written novelistic narrative literature since very early times. They cite the epic folk romances of *Antara* and of *Sayf ibn Dhi Yaqzan*, the Hilali cycles of chivalric romance, *The Alf Layla wa Layla,* al-Ma'arri's *Epistle of Forgiveness,* Ibn Tufayl's philosophical romance *Hayy ibn Yaqzan,* and a host of other works. Another group of scholars are of the opinion that the modern novel is a new literary form imported from the West in the second half of the nineteenth century. The truth of the matter is that the roots of narrative literature, as known in tales, myths, and epic romances, have existed very early in every society— Arab, European, Asian, and African. When the novel is discussed in international literary circles, English and French critics tend to agree that the novel began in the early decades of the nineteenth century. The Arabs did not write this kind of literature until the late nineteenth century in Egypt and Greater Syria. Indeed, until the early years of the nineteenth century and for several centuries earlier, literature was represented largely by unimaginative, imitative poetry lacking vitality and colour, although delighting in lexical virtuosity and flights of verbal fancy. Then entered modern education, brought into Egypt under the guidance of Muhammad Ali Pasha (1805-1848) and into Greater Syria through the schools of the Christian missions. Lebanon had already for long centuries known strong cultural ties with the West, especially with Rome and France. Contacts with the West were strengthened and consolidated in the nineteenth century with the arrival of the American Presbyterians, who in 1866 founded what is now the American University of Beirut. One result of modern education was the emergence of a new reading public who, with renaissance zeal, applied themselves to reading European literatures directly in the original languages or else in Arabic translations. The new readers were turning

away from the official literature which was expressed in the formalistic poetry. They also turned away from the traditional folk literature which no longer satisfied them, as represented by the chivalric romances of *Antara*, *the Banu Hilal*, and *Sayf ibn Dhi Yaqzan*, among many others. Yet it should be noted that this time-honored folk literature persisted in keeping a lively hold on the minds of ordinary people, as indeed it also continued to command a good measure of thoughtful appreciation among the educated.

The rule of Khedive Ismail (1863-1879) ushered in a golden age of cultural enrichment with the flowering of literary translations. Muhammad Ali's interest in translation had concentrated almost entirely on scientific works and textbooks for schools, to the extent that only one literary work was translated under his rule, Sa‘adi's *Gulistan* from the Persian. Under Ismail, Egyptian translators directed their efforts to literary works, largely casting aside their earlier principal role as translators of scientific and educational materials. During this same period they were joined by cultured Syrian and Lebanese emigres. Rifa‘a al-Tahtawi (1801-1873) translated Fenelon's novel *Telemaque* giving it a title set in *saj‘* (rhyming prose) in keeping with the prevailing tastes of the time.

By the first decades of the twentieth century, scores of novels had been translated to Arabic usually from French but occasionally also from English. In most instances, the novels translated were of minor value. The majority of then were love stories, historical and oriental tales, science fiction, and detective stories. In translation, the stories were often rearranged and even distorted. Sometimes translators would pass their translated products off for publication under their own names. At other times quite the opposite occurred. Some writers published their own works under the names of Western writers in the hope of attracting more

readers. The language used in the translations was either in *saj'* (rhyming prose) and thus rather contrived and artificial, or else in colloquial Arabic. But with the passing of time and the spread of the non-governmental press, from the 1870s onward, the language of translation developed into a clear and simple prose medium.[6]

Despite the shortcomings of the translators already mentioned to them belongs the credit for presenting to Arab readers the new literary genres, among which was the novel. The reactions of the reading public to the modern literary forms and to the ideas and opinions that were thus imported from abroad differed greatly. Some regarded these Western influences as a cultural invasion to be fought against tooth and nail. They advocated the use of indigenous heritage and culture. Others considered the cultural forms and ideas arriving from overseas as part of a universal civilization which all societies would sooner or later embrace. It would, therefore, be best to adopt them without losing further time or effort in the task of revitalizing a heritage which was otherwise suitable only in the past. Fortunately, the partisans of these two attitudes were a minority. The large majority of cultured people were receptive to the guidance of such enlightened thinkers as Imam Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905). They believed that intellect and common sense prescribed using whatever cultural resources would strengthen Arab society, whether from Western civilization or the classical Arab heritage. These varied reactions to Western culture may perhaps explain why some writers and thinkers, observing the enormous popularity of the translated novels, advocated a staunch refusal of Western influence altogether. Both Fathi Zaghlul (d. 1914) and Father Shaykhu (1859-1927) called for resistance against westernizing. Shaykhu maintained that ninety percent of books published were simply translations of frivolous and immoral trash concentrating on

[6] Ibid., P. no 17

love. Other conservative intellectuals strove to revive the *maqama* (a classical genre of elegant, highly stylized Arabic prose). Foremost among this group was al-Muwaylihi (1859-1930), who first published *Hadith isa ibn Hisham* in serialized form between 1898 and 1902, and subsequently had it printed in one volume in 1907. They believed that the novel could serve educational, moral, and social purposes, while also providing a grounding in history. Their intention was to avoid the stigma of those superficial writings which were meant principally for entertainment.[7]

Among the eminent writers of this group were Ali Mubarak (1823-1893), who published his *A'lam al-din* in 1882; the illustrious poet Ahmad Shawqi (1870-1932), who authored a number of historical novels; Mustafa Lutfi al-Manfaluti(1876-1924), who wrote with a moral mission, and Muhammad Husayn Haykal (1886-1956), who emphasized social reform and whose novel *Zaynab* came out in 1913. In the Levant, such writers as the Syrian Fransis Marrash (1836-1873) and the Lebanese Salim al-Bustani (1847-1884) were pioneers in the Arabic prose renaissance. Wholeheartedly and without reservation, they adopted the Western novel form. In 1865, Fransis Marrash wrote *Ghabat al-haqq (The Forest of Truth),* probably the very first Arabic novel ever published. Salim al-Bustani produced a series of novels in his magazine *al-Jinan (Gardens).* His first novel *al-Huyam fi Jinan al-Sham (Passionate Love in the Gardens of Damascus)* appeared in serialized episodes in 1870, followed by *Zanubiya* in 1871, and *Budur* in 1872. In all, a total of nine novels by Salim al-Bustani were printed in *al-Jinan* in the ensuing years.[8]

The most outstanding Lebanese Arabic novelist of this early period was the prolific Jurji Zaydan (1861-1914). His more than twenty

[7] Hamdi Sakkut: The Arabic Novel: Bibliography and Critical Introduction, American University Press in Cairo, 2000, P. 16-17

[8] Ibid., P. 18

historical novels outshone in literary merit the works of Salim al-Bustani and his fellow writers. They also were distinctly superior, at least in the way they were presented, to most of the translated historical romances which were being serialized in periodicals during the same years as Zaydan's novels. In many of these romances the non-historical parts rely for popular appeal on fast moving incidents, surprises, coincidences, adventures, love, and murder, all amid a remarkable array of gripping events. His delineations of character, however, by and large lack individuality and depth. Some novels, nonetheless, for example *The Ottoman Revolution* (1911), do succeed in depicting numerous situations in a more mature realism, as they also abound in deftly sketched psychological portraits, allowing insightful glimpses of moving human drama.[9]

Some literary critics claim that Muhammad al-Muwaylihl's *Hadith Isa ibn Hisham* constitutes the real beginning of the Arabic novel. Others assert that the Arabic novel really began with Mahmud Haqqi's *Adhra' Dinshaway (The Virgin of Dinshaway).* Most critics however, are of the opinion, and rightly so, that the date of the first true novel, Egyptian or Arabic, in the precise definition of this genre, is 1913 when Muhammad Husayn Haykal's *Zaynab* came off the press. Al-Muwaylihi's *Hadith isa ibn Hisham,* by contrast, cannot in fact be considered as a novel nor was it actually intended to be one. In the assessment of Roger Allen, "If the work is to be considered a novel, then by any yardstick, it is a very bad one." Indeed there is no scope here for serious discussion either of characterization or artistic structure, which are basic requirements in any novelistic work. As for Muhammad Haqqi's *The Virgin of Dinshaway,* it is actually not fiction nor technically a true novel. It is rather a

[9] Hamdi Sakkut: The Arabic Novel: Bibliography and Critical Introduction, American University Press in Cairo, 2000,, p. no 18

journalistic reportage and can best be classified as an historical account, as the late Yahya Haqqi described it. Indeed it bore no retouching or reworking of the Dinshaway incident which occurred one month before the publication of the work. *Zaynab,* on the other hand, in the words of H.A.R. Gibb, "broke away decisively in language, style, subject, and treatment from anything that had gone before." Its faults, he goes on to say, are of "little importance compared with the fact that the effort was made, and that a new, and in its setting, original kind of literary production was added to Arabic literature." The scope of this survey does not allow for a discussion of *Zaynab* or other Egyptian novels in detail. Suffice it to point out here, however, that Haykal was much more successful than his predecessors, when he based his novel on events in his own life. He thus infuses the narrative with a realism which is usually in short supply in the novels of his contemporaries. In choosing the Egyptian village as the scene for the unfolding of his plot and Egyptian villagers as his cast of characters, the author, a villager himself, was able to convey an especially life-like authenticity to the work. He had himself lived the various aspects of country life, the customs, the values, and the traditions that he criticized and was emotionally involved in from immediate experience. By drawing on the village life he had lived, Haykal conferred on this work a convincing originality not present in earlier novels. When *Zaynab* was republished in 1929, Haykal had become a well known author and a respected political leader. The novel was then greeted enthusiastically. In the same year, it was adapted for cinema and made into a motion picture. Haykal's fellow authors now woke up to the fact that they too might achieve similar success, if they wrote novels drawing on experiences and happenings based on their lives. Autobiographically inspired novels began to flourish in these times.

Interestingly, al-Mazim's *Ibrahim al-katib (Ibrahim the Writer)* appeared in 1931, only two years after the reprinting of *Zaynab.*[10]

In 1938, Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad published *Sara*. Taha Husayn's *'Adib (A Man of Letters)* first appeared in 1936. Yahya Haqqi published two novellas, *al-Bustaji (The Postman)* in 1933, and *Qandil Umm Hashim (The Lamp of Umm Hashim)* in 1944. All of these novels are to some degree or other autobiographical. The contributions of these distinguished men of letters in the sphere of Arabic novel writing conferred much added respect to the novel form. Furthermore the continuing flow of novels which they were bringing out, together with the novels of other writers such as Mahmud Taymur and Mahmud Taha Lashin firmly established the art of novel writing and guaranteed the prestige of this form from the 1930s onward. At the end of this decade in 1939 appeared Najib Mahfuz's first novel *Abath al-'aqdar (The Mockery of the Fates).* It is worth highlighting that these authors, in spite of their renown and prolific contributions to other areas of writing, only began producing novels after the success of the second edition of Haykal's *Zaynab* in 1929. Considering also that most of their novels were, like *Zaynab,* autobiographical novels, the influence of *Zaynab* is all the more striking in the development of the Arabic novel at large. It may, therefore, more correctly be said that the real birth of the Arabic novel is in 1929, namely when *Zaynab* underwent a second printing. The first publication of *Zaynab* did not enjoy the same degree of success, inasmuch as the author was not well known at that time and was not even twenty-five years old. Also because of World War I and the declaration of the protectorate over Egypt by the British, many newspapers, including *al-Jarida,* which published *Zaynab,* were closed down. During the lapse of

[10] Hamdi Sakkut: *The Arabic Novel: Bibliography and Critical Introduction*, American University Press in Cairo, 2000, P. 17-19.

time between the first and second printings of *Zaynab,* no particular novels worthy of mention appeared except for one moderately good novel, *Ibnat Almamluk (The Mameluke's Daughter)* by Muhammad Farid Abi Hadid in 1926, which may be considered the first Egyptian historical novel genuinely deserving attention.[11]

Al-Mazini (1890-1949) embarked on his career as a novelist with the publication of *Ibrahim al-katib in* 1931. It met with widespread enthusiasm early on, from critics and the reading public alike, and is probably the first novel to depend primarily for its well-recognized fame on its artistic value. Unlike *Zaynab, Alam al-din,* or *Hadith isa ibn Hisham,* it is not concerned about social issues, nor is it constructed around historical situations, like the novels of Shawqi, Salim al-Bustani, Jurji Zaydan, and other writers of historical fiction. It appears that al-Mazini was loyal to the position which he and his fellow members of the *Diwan* Group, Shukri and al Aqqad, adopted—namely to avoid the tradition of composing poetry for political and social occasions. Hence, he avoided writing anything critical of the prevailing social conditions in his novels, with the exception of fleeting references. Indeed, he stands in distinct contrast to practically all of the short story writers of the modern school in the 1920s, who wrote stories full of social criticism. In spite of some artistic weaknesses in the novel, the most salient being a certain disjointedness in the structure, al-Mazini has succeeded in presenting to the reading public, in a convincing manner, a highly cultured Egyptian intellectual for the first time in an Arabic novel. At this level, which is to say in portraying a complex, witty, and refined thinker, al-Mazini has

[11] Hamdi Sakkut: The Arabic Novel: Bibliography and Critical Introduction, American University Press in Cairo, 2000, p. no. 20

considerably outdistanced his fellow authors of the pioneering generation.[12]

Clearly, Taha Husayn, and Al-Aqqad, had not created any personality measuring up to or even approaching this most striking individual, Ibrahim , the hero of al-Mazini's novel. Actually, fans of the novel had to wait thirty-odd years until another personality of such caliber came along in Mahfuz's *The Thulathiyya* . Another feature always crucial in any Arabic novel, which this survey must deal with, is the language used. In *Ibrahim al-katib* the language excels by far that in *Zaynab,* as he employs clear and powerful Arabic and uses an impressively successful style in presenting mocking, ironic, or satirical episodes. These are characteristic of his writing. Al-Mazini's language is also at times sublime. The clearest instances of exalted expression are scenes where Ibrahim contemplates the ultimate issues of life and existence. In these passages, the reader may feel something of the poetic atmosphere resonant in Mahfuz's novels of the 1960s. Al-Mazini and Mahfuz also concur in the language of their dialogue. Unlike Haykal, al-Mazini and Mahfuz cast the conversational language of their heroes and their companions in simple *fusha* (formal written Arabic) in most cases. Al-Mazini did not publish any other novels after *Ibrahim al-katib* until 1943, when his four other novels appeared at one go: *Ibrahim al-Thani (Ibrahim the Second), Thalathat rijal wa imra'a (Three Men and a Woman), Ud'ala al-bad'(Back to the Beginning),* and *Midu wa shuraka'uhu (Midu and His Associates).* The mystery behind the silence of al-Mazini's muse of novel composition seems to lie in the great uproar stirred up by al-Mazini's insertion int *Ibrahim al-katib* of some pages of a

[12] Hamdi Sakkut: The Arabic Novel: Bibliography and Critical Introduction, American University Press in Cairo, 2000, P. no. 17-20

Russian novel he had translated. The uproar seems to have inhibited him from publishing other novels until the storm had blown over.

In the mid 1940s when the realistic novels of Najib Mahfuz began to appear, one following the other in almost yearly succession, the Arabic novel entered a new era. Gone from the pages of Mahfuz's writings were the flaws which critics had noted in earlier Arab ventures into novel writing, albeit flaws which the best novelists of the pioneers' generation were skillful in avoiding. Missing in Mahfuz's prose were the prolix passages of rambling verbiage-the padding and the disjointedness in narrative structure. There were no drawn out descriptive passages, no intrusive direct personal statements by the author, no long winded digressions. Nor did readers come upon richly overblown descriptions of situations, events, and character portrayals. In Mahfuz's works, the necessary elements of good narrative are set in proper proportion, appearing spontaneously, naturally, and straightforwardly. Mastery of the Arabic language allows Mahfuz to pass smoothly and felicitously from the accents of refined poetry to the familiar conversations of lane and alley. With Mahfuz one descends, as it were, into the depths of the human soul. He casts a search light into the motives and driving forces of human behaviuor. He listens to the most intricate psychic resonances in each act and occurrence. How does a person driven to the brink of suicide feel in his final fatal moments? What does a young woman who has previously always lived honestly and respectably feel when she is about to embark on a career of prostitution? What does a pious believer go through when his doubts lead him to atheism? What does the pimp feel as he plies his trade? What truth of ecstatic exaltation awaits the Sufi mystic in his trance during the few seconds in which he leaves this world for what lies beyond? What emotions does a husband endure when he is obliged to quit his home for a couple of hours every week so as to allow his wife

undisturbed scope with her lover? What does a person with a long record of success experience when his fondest hopes for a crowning achievement are dashed just as he is within a hand's breadth of reaching them? Into microcosms such as these and into scores of others Najib Mahfuz guides his readers with worldly sophistication, total candour, unique originality, and persuasiveness; Mahfuz's work enables his public to enter the hearts and souls of the individuals he describes. He allows his readers, to an uncanny degree, to assume the a comprehensive viewof the personal philosophy of humen lif*e* of his protagonists, to view the world through their eyes and to see how drastic changes take place in the human personality. He provides an inner view of how individuals rejoice, how they panic, what their rage is like, how they grieve. Through probing the human soul thus vicariously comes an enrichment of the reader's private and limited world, as well as a deepening and broadening of his understanding of life and of lives around him. From this perspective, Najib Mahfuz has fulfilled a creative destiny no less than the great writers in England, France, Russia, America, and other lands. Najib Mahfuz has written an impressive number of novels some of which are counted among the Arabic classics of this century. A brief perusal of these works will reveal that they encompass realistic novels, naturalistic novels, family sagas, novels of the absurd, existentialist novels, and novels of magical realism. In most of these novels, one finds stream of consciousness, accounts told by multiple narrators, and intertextuality.

In short, it could be said that Najib Mahfuz's novels constitute an abridged history of the world novel (which evolved over some three centuries) in just three decades. Moreover Najib Mahfuz's novels, which represent various world literary trends and schools of writing, are also on a par with leading writers representing those trends and schools internationally. Being a broad survey, this discussion obviously cannot go

into an adequate discussion of the works of any one author. Therefore two novels of Mahfuz will be discussed here, which in the opinion of this writer represent two important stages in Mahfuz's development as a novelist. First *The Thulathiyya* which is undeniably Mahfuz's masterpiece of the 1940s and 1950s, and secondly *Adrift on the Nile,* which stands out as his best work of the1960s. In my opinion, *The Thulathiyya* is Mahfuz's most important work. Indeed it can be ranked as the most significant work in the history of the Arabic novel. This rich saga brings out in brilliant relief the author's consummate ability in sustaining his creative energy without slackening throughout more than twelve hundred pages. Each paragraph, indeed each word is so placed with the utmost accuracy to further the plot, to establish the setting and background, and to present the *dramatis personae* in such a way that the Arab reader would never forget them. Following, as it were, through a broad view lens the lives of 'Ahmad Abd al-Jawad's family, in-laws, and friends, a detailed, faithful record is captured of life in Cairo during the fateful years between 1917 and 1944. It is a comprehensive, kaleidoscopic series of scenes expressing what Mahfuz wished to convey in his earlier novels. Also present here are prefigurations of Mahfuz's later technical, literary, and intellectual development, which the master novelist was destined to develop in future works. His earlier novels relate instances of political corruption, social injustice, intellectual trends, and political and sectarian movements which prevailed at that time. In The Thulathiyya he deals with these same themes with greater depth and maturity. He adds here a meticulous aesthetic representation of the social changes gradually taking place over this long span of years. He records the change in the status of women for example, the changing relationship between fathers and sons, the changes in tastes and styles. 'Plumpness plus,' which had been the *summum desideratum* in feminine beauty in *Palace Walk,* gradually gave

way to a more svelte shapeliness in *Sugar Street.* From quite another level of society emerges the character of *al-gharib* (the outsider), who has lost his faith in absolutely everything and sees no meaning in life. He deals with every situation in a mechanical fashion devoid of any enthusiasm. This personality, to an extent, calls to mind certain characters of French existentialist writer Albert Camus (1917-60). This type appears in Mahfuz for the first time in the person of Kamal cAbd al-Jawad in the beginning of his intellectual crisis in *Palace of Desire.* The personality type of Kamal, or the outsider, develops later to become clsa al-Dabbagh, for example, in *Autumn Quail* or cUmar al-Hamzawi in *The Beggar* or ' Anis Zaki in *Adrift on the Nile.* Likewise the use of the internal monologue, stream of consciousness, and a strong reliance on dialogue are prominent phenomena in the later novels of Najib Mahfuz which he used frequently and masterfully in *Al-Thulathiyya.*[13]

Through his awareness of the effect of time on 'Ahmad Abd al-Jawad's family and his striking success in creating a concrete, artistic portrayal of time's mischief, Najib Mahfuz has been able to transfer the powerful emphasis on the Egyptian locale in this work onto a broader human stage in a literary masterpiece of universal appeal. The effect of time on the family of 'Ahmad Abd al-Jawad is similar to what happens to any human family in any age or society. The family in *Bayn al-qasrayn* was bounding with lively energy, with merriment; they were immersed totally in life and in living. In the last part of *al-sukkariyya,* in stark contrast, the family members are enveloped in an atmosphere of fatigue, of hushed silence and of loneliness fraught with symptoms of disease and forebodings of mortality. At the close of the book, the chief characters,

[13] Hamdi Sakkut: The Arabic Novel: Bibliography and Critical Introduction, American University Press in Cairo, 2000. P. no, 26

varying in degrees of importance, have died. Each generation of cAbd al-Jawad's family, their in-laws, and acquaintances have suffered time's depredations: Abd al-Jawad himself, 'Amina, Fahmi, Ibrahim , and A'isha, who has become a living wreck. When the English translation of *Palace Walk* appeared, the British critic Howard Brenton commented: The Egyptian novelist Najib Mahfuz, who was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1988, comes as something of a shock to read. The shock is not because of the content of his novels, although they sing of all the twentieth-century themes - nor are Mahfuz's novels shocking because they are sensationalist, although he can write with blistering heat about love and desire and with intensity about human degradation. The shock is that Mahfuz does not seem to have heard of the sin of readability. With European and North American fiction becoming increasingly hysterical, out-of-sorts with real stories ... it is a delight to read Mahfuz's diamond clear storytelling. It is the clarity that shocks. It makes many of our 'post-modern' novels, convoluted with guilt at even trying to write a story, look decadent and—well, plain stupid. His narratives are modern, subtle, at times anguished, but written with a faith that the most complex behaviour and the most secret machinations of the psyche can be described in the simplest of prose. If something is true, however difficult, good writing can make it understood by anyone who can read. According to the article in *The Literary Review,* Brenton had proudly displayed other novels by Najib Mahfuz-*Autumn Quail, The Beggar,* and *'Afrah al-qubba* (*Wedding Song)*-on a shelf among the works of Flaubert and Proust. He ended his conversation by stating, "'Who is the greatest living novelist' may be a dubious literary game, but if we were to play it, Najib Mahfuz would get my vote."10 Although the scope of this introduction does not allow for a further discussion of *The Thulathiyya* one episode about the circumstances attending the publication of that remarkable work deserves

telling. It took Mahfuz two years to find a publisher willing to present his *magnum opus* to the public. Mahfuz relates that he had completed *The Thulathiyya* in April 1952, and laterhad happily delivered the work to the publisher Sacid al-Sahhar in one volume entitled *Bayn al-qasrayn* (Palace Walk). His satisfaction must have been mingled with relief, for at last he had finished the *chef d'oeuvre* which would become a classic of modern world literatureThe publisher, however, upon seeing the extensive manuscript, immediately exclaimed, "What kind of a monster is this?" and categorically refused to print it. Mahfuz was naturally distressed until he was assured later by the genial and magnanimous writer Yusuf al-Sibaci that the novel could be presented in serialized installments in a magazine the government was planning to put out. Thus the great work began to be published-two years after it was completed—in the periodical *al-Risala al-jadida* in April 1954. Installments appeared regularly until April 1956, when what is now known as the first volume was completed. Meanwhile, of course, the publisher Al-Sahhar recognized the success of the novel and this time approached Mahfuz. He offered to publish the work and suggested that it be printed in three volumes. Mahfuz complied and assigned the title *Bayn al-qasrayn* for the first volume only

Najib Mahfuz has occupied, with total modesty, yet most definitively, first place among Arab novelists. At least eleven of his novels may be considered classics of modern Arabic literature. Some of these, such as *The Thulathiyya* are considered classics of world literature. By the recognition of the Nobel Prize Committee also, he is recognized among the leading world-class novelists of our time. To the eminent Salama Musa (1887-1958) goes the credit for publishing Mahfuz's first novel *The Abathal-aqdar* in 1939. After this initial good fortune, however, Mahfuz found himself with a number of new novels in manuscript piling up for which he could find no publisher, although he

had received literary prizes for some of them. At last, to rescue him from this predicament, came his friend Abd al-Hamid Judah al-Sahhar (1913-1974), who had founded *Dar al-Nashr lil-Jamicin* (The Graduates' Publishing House) in 1943. Al-Sahhar was one of a small group of writers including Mahfuz, Adil Kamil (b. 1916) and Ali 'Ahmad Bakathir (1910-1969) who began their literary careers by writing novels on themes drawn from pharaonic history, as indeed Mahfuz himself had done. Al-Sahhar then began to print the works of these three writers together with his own and that of other authors. Later on, three of the group turned to writing about current-day Egypt, while Bakathir kept on writing about historical themes. (Bakathir, incidentally, was of Hadramawtl origin, having immigrated to Egypt in 1934, where he continued to reside and write until his death).

Al-Sahhar (1913-1974) wrote a number of novels of which the most famous is probably *Fi qafilat al-zaman (In the Caravan of Time)* published in 1947. This work and *al-Sharic al-jadid (The New Street)* are novels of generation. In each of these al-Sahhar relates the lives of three generations of a family. Perhaps it was al-Sahhar that Mahfuz had in mind when he remarked that he had made a mistake in explaining to his friends his plans to write a novel of three generations similar to what Taha Husayn had done in *Shajarat al-Bus.* Not long afterwards, Mahfuz was shocked that one of his circle of writer friends had seized upon the idea and published a novel of generations. *In the Caravan of Time* was published years before Mahfuz published his *Thulathiyya* . This was a lesson to Mahfuz not to divulge the secrets about works he was planning. The novel *In the Caravan of Time* is concerned with Egyptian society, which al-Sahhar succeeds in presenting in a lively portrayal of prevailing customs and traditions in Cairo at the beginning of the twentieth century. A further aspect of the novel is that certain political events are woven into

the narrative and are bound up in the plot. A problem from which the novel suffers, however, is the lack of balance among the various parts of the book. The reader comes to realize that the love intrigue of Mustafa, a grandson of the original progenitors, practically monopolizes a whole generation's portion of the saga. Al-Sahhar's other novel, *The New Street,* suffers from a similar lack of balance on an even greater scale. Moreover, the work lacks adequate delineation of character in too many instances, to the extent that, after a lapse of time, precious few figures stand out in the reader's mind. An amazing multitude of characters enters the scene without proper attention to the portrayal of individual personalities. For instance, there were the father and mother who had two sons, one of whom got married and had six children. Then there were five daughters who all took husbands and begot a large number of babies—all of these are mentioned briefly without counting their relations, friends, and acquaintances. Although Bakathir was initially famous for his numerous plays, he wrote a good number of historical novels. The first of these, *Wa 'Islamahu (By Islam),* won the Arabic Academy prize. The same prize was also awarded to Mahfuz for his novel *The Kifah Taybah* and to Adil Kamil for his *Malik min shuca (King of Heavenly Rays).* Bakathir's most significant novel by far was *Al-Tha'ir al-Ahmar (The Red Revolutionary)* (1949), in which he endeavors to put forward the idea of an Islamic socialism. Bakathir is convinced that a socialism in harmony with Islam would be more successful, more excellent, and more suitable for Arab societies and, naturally, for non-Arab societies also, than the communism which had emerged with powerful effect on many in Egypt in the 1940s. The novel is not concerned with the lives of kings and political events. The author rather directs his attention to the social oppression endured by the hero of the novel, Hamdan Qarmat along with the masses, the *fallahin,* the labourers and artisans. It was social injustice like that

described here which sparked the revolution of the Qaramita (the Carmathians) during the ninth and tenth centuries A.D. They called for social principles similar to those of communism. Their doctrines are presented by means of a dialogue between Hamdan and a leading *faqih* (a scholar of Islamic jurisprudence) of the age. Their discourses show, as might be expected, that an Islamic socialism is superior and suited to Egyptian and Arab societies. Obviously, Bakathir uses history to treat modern problems. Hence the title *The Red Revolutionary* which, subsequently on second printing, was changed to *The Story of the Struggle Between Socialism and Communism.* On one hand, it is true that the novel deals with a great variety of events over a vast geographical expanse without going very deeply into carefully conceived character portrayals. Yet on the other hand, the novelist deserves hearty accolades, above all for his distinguished talent in bringing to life a period in Islamic history full of momentous social events hitherto seldom discussed and unfamiliar to the general reader. Nor is he interested in reviewing the lives of kings and rulers or political upheavals as was so often done in the past. Bakathir focuses on the lives of the lower classes who had been quite deprived of any social justice. Another friend of Najib Mahfuz is Adil Kamil (b. 1916), who has written three novels. The first two were published in the early 1940s. Kamil did not write another novel until almost fifty years later when *al-Hall wal-rabt* appeared in 1993. Of the earlier novels, the first, and better of the two, *King of Heavenly Rays,* won the Arab Academy Prize in 1941 as previously mentioned. This novel relates the life of the pharaoh Akhnaton, whose religious teachings and realistic attitude appealed also to Bakathir,who wrote a play entitled *Akhnatun wa Nafartiti.* It is interesting to recall here that Adil Kamil's friends Abd al-Hamid Judah al-Sahhar and Najib Mahfuz had both also written about another pharaoh. It is clear that the four young friends

including Ali ahmad Bakathir, all recent university graduates, were attracted to pharaonic history. During the very same years members of the pioneering generation, along with Muhammad Farid 'Abl Hadid (1893-1967) and his colleagues, were deriving their plots from Arab and Islamic history, as mentioned earlier. It is also accepted that in their recourse to history under the shadow of foreign occupation, the motivation of these authors was not simply to provide escape from the grievous present, but rather quite the contrary: they were intent on reinforcing a sense of belonging, to strengthen a firm grounding in national identity and to arouse hope in the hearts of the younger generation. Coming back to his novel *A King of Heavenly Rays,* it is worth noting that Adil Kamil was entirely in agreement with Najib Mahfuz when he drew from his personal experience in portraying the major part of Akhnaton's personality. Adil Kamil himself lived through crises similar to those the pharaoh endured before his spiritual crisis was resolved by a transforming enlightenment of revelation. The formative phase in the pharaoh's intellectual life was fraught with spells of perplexity, of despair, of revulsion for life, and of a sense that everything in life is futile, which indeed were like the feelings of estrangement experienced by Adil Kamil himself in the company of Najib Mahfuz in their early adulthood, as Mahfuz mentions. Hence the character of Akhnaton gains enormously in credibility and comprehensible humanity. In the later period of Akhnaton's life when he experiences revelation, Adil Kamil utilizes in his descriptions *hadith,* the collected non-Qur'anic sayings and accounts of the Prophet Muhammad, which describe the event of revelation to the Prophet. An innovation in narrative technique here was Adil Kamil's tentative use of stream of consciousness for the first time in an Arabic novel. After this novel, Adil Kamil took up realistic writing and published *Millim al- 'akbar* (*Half-penny the Great*) in 1944. He exposes the injustices which the working

classes suffer under the capitalists and feudal landowners. The author's intensely doctrinaire sympathy for the proletariat leads to an overly simplistic division of his characters into black and white. This was an approach completely alien to Najib Mahfuz, whose characterizations in describing social classes are drawn with absolute objectivity.

Another writer of the same generation who also received the Arabic language Academy Prize is Muhammad Abd al-Halim Abdallah (1913-70). He wrote a number of novels which in the beginning of his career as author were in the romantic style, and sometimes exaggeratedly sentimental. These were, and still are, quite popular. His characterizations are generally over simplistic, either thoroughly evil or paragons of virtue. The characters of the poorer classes stand out as innocent victims of an unjust oppressive society. His later works show an evolution as, for example, in *Ghusn al-zaytun (The Olive Branch)* (1955), in which he wrote about the problems of marriage in the family. In *al-Bayt al-samit (The Silent House)* (1966), he treats the nature of evil and the relation between the sexes. Abdullah published his first more realistic novel *Laqita (A Foundling Girl)* in 1948, which was precisely the same year that Yusuf al-Siba'i (1917-1987) published his first novel *Na'ib Azra'il (Azra'il's Deputy).* Al-Sibaci's next novel *Ard al-nifaq (Land of Hypocrisy)* came out in 1949. Both novels are based on imaginary situations with a pervasive humorous outlook in a manner reminiscent of the writings of Al-Mazini.[14] In subsequent years, al-Sibaci launched into romantic writing centering on love between individuals of the upper middle class, although a couple of novels are exceptions. He was joined by 'Ihsan Abd al-Quddus (1919-1990), who pursued a parallel path in style, mood, and subject material, producing an enormous number of

[14] HamdiSakkut: The Arabic Novel: Bibliography and Critical Introduction, American University Press in Cairo, 2000. P. no. 23- 26

novels and short stories. The novels by these two writers have enjoyed great popularity not only in Egypt, but in other countries in the Arab world as well. When Abd al-Quddus began publishing his novels in the early fifties, Abd al-Rahman al-Sharqawi (1920-1987), Yusuf 'Idris (1927-1991), and Fathi Ghanim (1924-1999) had also just started to publish their first realistic works of fiction. In contrast to Al-Sibaci and Abd al-Quddus, whose novels deal with the romantic lives of the upper class, al-Sharqawi was concerned with the plight of the *fallahin* in the Egyptian village. His novel *al- Ard,* was the first modern work where the *fellahin* actually speak their own language, which was of course their country dialect of the Delta. He presents the villagers in a most realistic down-to-earth manner, dramatizing to the reader the fact that they are real people whom one has to take seriously. One becomes acquainted with them as distinct human beings with crushing problems and concerns. The reader knows that they have their own values and ideals for which they will make great sacrifices. The *fallahin* are not simple buffoonish bumpkins as the cinema and television usually portray them. This novel succeeds commendably in offering a vivid, truthful, close-up view of village customs and the way of life in the rural Delta. The author has gleaned hundreds of evocative details of life in action with such skill that indeed he casts the village in the role of the heroine, and not merely the backdrop to tragedy as in Muhammad Husayn Haykal's *Zaynab* or Yusuf 'Idris's *al-Haram.*

Al-Sharqawi however, it seems, was under the influence of the principles of the Marxist critique when he wrote this novel. Hence he falls victim to some unnecessary flaws of the Marxist approach which were not particularly applicable here. For example, he sees the village as divided into two conflicting camps. The one consists of the *umda,* or village mayor, and his followers, behind whom stands the pasha. These

figures are presented only through the eyes of the *fallahin.* Consequently, the *umda* and his supporters, who are the citadel of power, are presented as evil personified. In the other camp are the *fallahin,* depicted as admirable, good folk by disposition. Even when they quarrel, have rows with each other, or cheat, they quickly snap back to their original sterling character, co-operating and getting along amiably with each other. Between the two camps stands a man of religion: the village *'imam,* alternately arousing resentment or ridicule wherever he turns up. Naturally, he hobnobs with the camp of power. The situation has changed enormously by the time we reach *al-Fallah (The Villager),* al-Sharqawi's fourth and last novel. Here the man of religion appears respected by the *fallahin* and sympathetic to them. He supports them tacitly to the extent that he is able. Al-Sharqawi reveals in *al-Fallah* that he has backed off from the communist path and radical socialist ideology. Whereas *al-Ard* is tantamount to dignity and honor, the hero of *al-Fallah* declares that he had been better off without the land which the state granted him, yet with the freedom which the revolution had robbed from him. In addition, the novel exposes the extent of corruption in the Socialist Union, the single political party which the state had adopted. Al-Sharqawi's most impressive novel from the artistic point of view is surely *al-Shawaric al-khalfiya (The Back Streets).* Like *Egyptian Earth,* it relates the struggle of the early thirties against authority, this time in the cities, which culminated in 1935 when several populist groups in Cairo and other cities waged a series of demonstrations.[15] Finally, as a result, the constitution of 1923 was restored and the National Front and the Reformed Government were formed. Al-Sharqawi lived through these events personally and took part in them as a student at the Khedival Secondary School. Hence the

[15] HamdiSakkut: The Arabic Novel: Bibliography and Critical Introduction, American University Press in Cairo, 2000. P. no. 23- 30

accounts gain a great deal of credibility which was not so convincingly substantiated in the struggle of the *fallahin* in *Egyptian Earth.* Actually, al-Sharqawi here has managed, as no other writer has, to convey an immediate sense of living the events of the struggle. He reviews the many steps and aspects of secret planning leading up to acts of protest, the accompanying details required to pull off an operation, the clandestine meetings and the ruses dreamt up to hoodwink the police. Al-Sharqawi also masterfully describes the intense bonding which joined the companions in struggle with a lively realism not present in any other nationalistic novel. Al-Sharqawi also successfully introduces the reader to the psychological back streets and the intimate secrets of the heroes of his novel on a level generally absent in *Egyptian Earth.* In presenting their secret lives, the author captures scenes of powerful human emotions. For example, a student beset with suspicions about his mother, who, he thinks, might be betraying his father, suddenly one day discovers his father in a scandalous situation with the chambermaid. Henceforth he is drawn much closer to his mother, and looks up to her much more than he ever had before. Later, near the end of the novel, when this same youth is shot down in a demonstration, the reader is left in perpetual doubt, not knowing whether he could have saved himself had he wished. Or instead did the student intentionally expose himself to the firing, so as to escape the cruel shock of his father's behavior and his guilt feelings towards his mother for unjustly suspecting her? Or was it courage, honor, and passionate nationalism that prevented him from fleeing to safety? The full scope of al-Sharqawi's narrative talents is most clearly displayed here in this multifaceted moral and emotional dilemma where no one knows the whole truth about the martyrdom of the hero. *Al-Shawari al-khalfiya* abounds in scenes of profoundly moving human pathos. It almost seems as though al-Sharqawi here was making up for the lack of psychological

insights and development in *al-Ard.* By contrast, in *Egyptian Earth* he had focused almost wholly on the struggle of the *fallahin,* scarcely allowing any occasion for introspective revelations. In this novel, the high art of eloquent rhetoric is applied in colloquial Arabic, to which al-Sharqawi had accustomed his readers in *al-Ard.* Al-Sharqawi displays his superb literary style in formal Arabic, at times rising to fine levels of poetic diction as he recounts moving psychological situations. One excellent example is the visit of Shawqi (who reflects al- Sharqawi himself) to the family of his best friend who has just been killed in a demonstration. One observes a friend's emotions of grief and loyalty mingling with his ideal admiring love for his friend's sister Safiya. One observes the appreciation of the mother towards the loyalty of her killed son's closest friend mingled with what she felt upon seeing him for the first time without her son beside him.

Scenes portraying complex emotions reminiscent of al-Sharqawi's art are to be found in *Qissat Hub,* published in 1956 by Yusuf 'Idris (1927-1991). Hamza, the hero of the novel, experiences nationalistic fervor simultaneously with his passionate attraction to a young school mistress. She has been soliciting contributions at her school for the Resistance and brings them to the young patriot and his companions-instruggle against the British in the Suez Canal Zone. When Hamza confesses his love to the schoolmistress, she berates him sharply for this unexpected declaration of feeling. She hurries out, leaving him because he does not seem to her sufficiently committed to the cause of resistance. Hamza feels humiliated and embarrassed. Eventually their relationship resumes and blossoms as the schoolmistress admits that she has fallen in love with him. Yusuf 'Idris's most significant novel is in fact *al-Haram (The Sinners),* published in 1959. It is the tragic story of a young peasant woman working among a group of migrant laborers, or *al-gharabwa* as

they are called in the novel. They are the poorest of the *fallahin* and the object of scorn among the employees in charge of administering the estate where the migrant workers have come to work seasonally. At the beginning of the novel one of the watchmen of the estate comes across the dead body of a newborn child beside an irrigation ditch. He immediately spreads the news among the local inhabitants who make up their minds that the wayward mother must be one of the migrant women workers. Doubts, however, soon begin to assail their minds that just possibly one of their own women might be guilty.[16] Yusuf 'Idris is at his most brilliant in describing how very little, in fact, each one knows about his neighbours or indeed how little he knows about his own household for certain. So much so that a father, in one case, even suspects his daughter simply because she feels indisposed and is keeping to her bed. After some days it is finally discovered that the mother of the infant is indeed one of the migrant laborers. She had come to work there, as she was obliged to support a sick husband and two small children. One day her foot slipped on a stone while she was digging in the field. She fell down while trying to pick up a sweet potato for her ailing husband, who had a special hankering for them. The landowner's son, suddenly appearing out of nowhere, darted over and pretended to help her up. She resisted his overenthusiastic assistance but finally succumbed, first because he had overpowered her but also because she had long been deprived of love. Thereafter the unfortunate woman could not forgive herself for her moment of weakness. The local villagers are vastly reassured as to the state of virtue in their own households and sympathize with the migrant workers after learning about the heart rending tragedy of Aziza, who dies of childbed fever. In her final feverish rantings, she reveals exactly what

[16] HamdiSakkut: The Arabic Novel: Bibliography and Critical Introduction, American University Press in Cairo, 2000. P. no. 28- 31

happened. One early dawn, when she felt birth pangs, she finally delivered the baby herself by a canal. But putting her hand over the baby's mouth to stop his screaming, for fear of scandal, she accidentally smothered him. As for the father who had suspected his daughter, his mind is set at rest about his daughter's virtue. He rewards her by allowing her to visit the *mu'adhdhin's* wife, who is in fact an adulteress and a procurer to boot. He has no idea that she is going in reality to meet the notorious young playboy of the estate who eventually runs away with her. Where then is the 'sin' in Yusuf 'Idris's novel? Is it social injustice and harsh circumstances that drive a woman like Aziza to submit to the wiles of the local playboy? Or is it the prevailing moral standard in a society which allows men to have their way with women and then smack their lips in amazement at a mistake like Aziza's? Or is it Aziza's error? Three years separate the publication of Fathi Ghanim's first novel *al-Jabal (The Mountain),* which came out in 1958, and *al-Rajul alladhi faqada zillahu,* (1961-62). Yet what an enormous difference there is between these two novels. The first novel incorporates a true story which actually happened to the author, told here approximately as it occurred. He even announces that his name is Fathi Ghanim and that he works for the Bureau of Investigation of the Ministry of Education. He had been appointed to travel to the village of al-Gurna to investigate the complaints of the Upper Egyptian inhabitants who, it had been decided, were to be moved from their traditional village near Luxor to a new village built especially for them. They had, however, turned down this arrangement to leave their old village. This is all factual information on public record. The author tries, stumblingly, to use the technique of multiple narrators in the first person singular. The narrators here are villagers who testified as witnesses in the actual interrogation which Fathi Ghanim himself conducted, it seems. This technique was utilized obviously to present the same situation

through the numerous voices of the characters in the novel. He succeeds relatively well in this tactic. There is, however, a world of difference between his experiment in using this narrative style here, which passed largely unnoticed by readers, and the later mature and fully competent use of this technique in the second novel. His felicitous use of this technique is what tempted great writers later on to apply it, as did both Najib Mahfuz and Jabra Ibrahim Jabra. Of the many novels which Fathi Ghanim has authored, his best beyond any doubt is *al-Rajul alladhi faqada zillahu.* This novel achieves in an experimental style a faithful representation, even though harsh, of the hidden recesses, secrets, and moral stances of the world of the press, which come as a rough jolt to some readers. The novel is divided into four parts, each revolving around the chief protagonist Yusuf. Each part is related by a different narrator. The first section is told by Mabruka, who worked as a maid in the home of a wealthy man related to Yusuf's father, who lives in poverty. Mabruka later marries Yusuf's father. The second part is narrated by Samiya, the ingenuous actress and Yusuf's lover. He later jilts her, thus sacrificing her as unworthy in his schemes of glory, in order to gratify his ambitions and to buttress his future. The narrator of the third part is Muhammad Naji, editor-in-chief of the newspaper for which Yusuf works. Yusuf shoved him out of his way and took over his position. Yusuf himself narrates the fourth and final part. Fathi Ghanim's very successful use of witnesses to relate the events of the novel is a first in the history of the Arabic novel. Many Arab novelists have since employed this device. While Yusuf is the hero of the novel, he is revealed to us through the testimonies of three persons closely acquainted with him either at work or in his private life, and also by his own vision of himself in the last part of the novel. Yusuf appears as an exemplar of single-minded ambition, the clever opportunistic individual who has been blinded by personal advantage to

any moral and humane criteria of behavior. He embodies the gamut of selfserving attitudes, the willingness to sacrifice any person or principle for the sake of getting what he is after. Among the other characters, there is Shuhdi Pasha, who lays out money for the newspaper from behind the scenes and controls the editors. Their morality shocks readers in varying degrees. After Yusuf, probably the most important personality is Muhammad Naji, the editor-in-chief, who appointed Yusuf to the staff of the newspaper. He adopted him from the start and opened before him all doors for advancement, unaware that Yusuf would before long be trampling over his own body. Yet in spite of all that, the reader does not instinctively feel any great sympathy for Naji, in that his moral code is hardly any better than Yusuf's. Quite patently, Fathi Ghanim was objective in drawing these personalities, whom he has taken from real life, as it seems. Besides using the narrative technique of multiple speakers, Fathi Ghanim has successfully used other devices which were new at the time: stream of consciousness narrative and the flashback, to mention but two. It is no wonder, then, that the name of Fathi Ghanim is particularly linked to this novel, despite the fact that he wrote many other novels before it and after it.

Tharwat Abaza, for example, in his early works particularly, produced prose in which he used symbolism in a mature, eloquent style in his description of the political repression of the sixties. These novels were marked by great courage and boldness, for which the author was much envied and admired.[17] Other writers who won special attention are Latifa al-Zayyat and S. Makkawi for their outstanding novels *Al-Bab almaftuh (The Open Door)* (1960) and *al-Sa'irun niyaman (Sleep Walkers)* (1965).

After some years of poring over many works of the writers,

[17] M. M. Badawi: *Modern Aeabic Literature,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992. P, no 183-190

two important trends loom into view, whether in consideration of the main concerns of individual novelists or with regard to the artistic and technical maturity of their works. A trend dominated by the reality of contemporary society or even the very current political scene. There was an emphasis on power, corruption, levels of coercion, and repression. Experimental attempts in form are prevalent. This trend included works on political questions and criticisms of power which were aimed at the human dimension behind which political situations were at times eclipsed. Also forming part of this trend are some works which focus on various aspects of human life to an extent that the political dimension recedes into the background. A trend completely devoid of criticism of power from which the political dimension has vanished. Or if it exists at all, it is mainly concealed in a generally humane atmosphere and in the framework of social change. Of course, works appeared which were outside these two trends, such as science fiction, feminist writing, and the modernist or post-modernist writings of novelists like Edwar al-Kharrat.

This study is directed, however, to the more dominant trends of longer duration in modern Arabic literature, which one who surveys the total panorama will recognize as clearly definable. As representative works of the first trend, *al-Lajna (The Committee), al- Zaym Barakat,* and *Zahr al-laymun (Lemon Blossoms)* have been selected for study, while *Ayyam al-'insan al-sabca (The Seven Days of Man)* and *Khalati Safiya wa al-dayr (My Aunt Safiya and the Monastery)* will represent the second trend. The works of these authors are characterized by a plethora of attempts at innovation and experimentation in form, so much so that one sometimes has the impression that the meaning of the book has been sacrificed for the sake of dazzling forms. Various factors contributed to this interest in form. At the time when these authors began writing, the Egyptian novel had gone beyond the realistic, socialist phase. New styles

of writing had emerged, some of which had appeared in Najib Mahfuz's *Thartharah fawqal-Nil.* The new styles had already been observed even in Mahfuz's earlier novels and in his short stories of the sixties. The productions of these writers went hand in hand with a lively critical movement, in which some of the shining lights were Muhammad Mandur, Mahmud Amin al-Alim, Ali al- Raci, Rashad Rushdi, Luwis Awad, and Abd al-Qadir al-Qutt.

Obviously as this foregoing account illustrates, Egyptian and Arab men of letters were following with keen interest the developments that were taking place in European and American literature. They were adapting what pleased them and honing their styles. The names Sartre, Camus, Beckett, O'Neil, Kafka, and others were frequently seen in the daily newspapers, not to mention the literary periodicals and the abundance of translated works.

Taha Husayn's *'Adib (A Man of Letters)* first appeared in 1936, whereas his *Shajaratal- bu's (The Tree of Misery)* came out in 1944. Yahya Haqqi published two novellas, *al-Bustaji (The Postman)* in 1933, and *Qandil 'Umm Hashim (The Lamp of Umm Hashim)* in 1944. All of these novels are to some degree or another autobiographical. The contributions of these distinguished men of letters in the sphere of Arabic novel writing conferred much added respect to the novel form.

Furthermore the continuing flow of novels which they were bringing out, together with the novels of other writers such as Mahmud Taymur and Mahmud Tahir Lashin firmly established the art of novel writing and guaranteed the prestige of this form from the 1930s onward. At the end of this decade in 1939 appeared Najib Mahfuz's first novel *Abath al-'aqdar (The Mockery of the Fates).* It is worth highlighting that these authors, in spite of their renowned and prolific contributions to

other areas of writing, only began producing novels after the success of the second publication of Haykal's *Zaynab* in 1929.

Two years later Tawfiq al-Hakim's *Awdat al-Ruh* was published in 1933, to be followed by his *Yawmiyat Na'ib fi al- Aryaf,* in 1936, *Usfur min al-Sharq (A Bird from the East)* in 1938, and *al-Ribat al-Muqaddas* in 1944. The critics' glowing evaluations of *Awdat al-Ruh* probably stem from their realization that al-Hakim had in fact advanced the Arabic novel to a higher plane. This novel had by and large got rid of certain shortcomings found in the works of both Haykal and al-Mazini.