

## CHAPTER-I

### ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF ARABIC NOVEL

The beginnings of a fictional tradition in Modern Arabic literature are part of the wider process of revival and cultural assimilation. This process involved a creative fusion of two separate forces. One is the rediscovery of the treasures of the Arabic literary heritage and the emergence therefore of a ‘neo-classical’ movement. The other is the translation of works of European fiction into Arabic, their adaptation and imitation, and the eventual appearance of an indigenous tradition of modern Arabic fiction.

The Holy Quran consisted of a considerable chunk of religious and historical narratives. The literature on *Qisas al-Anbia* (Stories of the Prophets), general tales and narratives such as the Arabian Nights, love-cum-literature accounts in compendiums such as *kitab al-Aghani* by Abul Faraj al-Isfahani and other books bear ample evidence to that fact. The literary

type of a narrative in a ornate rhyming prose patronized by the eloquent literary protagonists such as al-Hamadhani (968-1008) and al-Hariri (1045-1112), the philosophic romance of *Hayy ibn Yaqzan* by Ibn Tufail, the literary narratives like *Hikayat Abi al-Qasim al-Bhagdhadi* by Muhammad ibn Wasi al-Azdi and *Risalah al-Ghufran* by Abul ‘Ala al- Ma’arri (973-1057), and the romances of Antara, Abu Zaid al- Hilali and Baybers are well-known pieces or masterpieces of such a literary craftsmanship in the history of Arabic literature .

The fascinating *Arabian Nights* had the seed of a novel in a most rudimentary form, but the infusion of artistic elements to metamorphose them into novel proper and transforming the traditional *maqama* into modern novel had to pass through several decades and to rest on the deliberate and conscious endeavors of several men of letters especially in Lebanon and Egypt.

The development of fiction, especially novel and novella, in modern Arabic literature can hardly be seen in isolation from the renaissance in the Arab world, establishment of the press and the delegations to the colonial cousins in the European capitals like Paris, London, Rome, Madrid and Bonn pioneered in the time of Muhammad Ali Pasha.<sup>1</sup> The first delegation was sent under the stewardship of Rifa‘a al-Tahtawi who himself lived in Paris between 1828-1832. The delegations were instrumental in bringing the European model to the fore of the literary pursuit. They returned with considerable baggage of European literature which was later transformed into Arabic by way of translation or assimilation or both. This warrants a historical reference to the literary translations from European languages, especially French, into Arabic, as it constitutes the core of the generic development of novel in the modern Arab World.

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1) Muhammad Ali Pasha (1769-1849) was an Albanian commander in the Ottoman army, who became Wali, and self-declared khedive of Egypt and Sudan.

With the course of time, as the readers' tastes were getting sophisticated, the bulk of the translations were of thrillers, spy stories and the like. Action novels like *Robinson Crusoe*<sup>2</sup> and some of the works of Alexander Dumas<sup>3</sup> and Sir Walter Scott also found favour. Most highly prized in the nineteenth century was Bernardin de St. Pierre's<sup>4</sup> *Paul et Virginie*, as translated by Muhammad Uthman Jalal (1828/98).

Some critics tried to link the roots of Arabic novel with the narrative writing found in classical Arabic literature. But those works cannot be considered as novel. Yet one can say that they have certain narrative elements which could have served as the basis for novelistic development for the man who sought to infuse a life into Arabic literature in the later part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

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2) One of the famous British novels written by Daniel Defoe (1660-1731)

3.) Alexander Dumas (1802-1870) was a French writer, best known for his historical novels of high adventure, *The Court of Monte Cristo*.

4) Bernardin de St. Pierre (1737-1814) was a French writer and botanist. He was best known for his 1787 novel *Paul et Virginie*.

The 1<sup>st</sup> original long narratives of recognized merit were in fact hybrid forms that had some roots in Arabic tradition. The most important is Muhammad al- Muwaylihi's (1858-1930) discourse of *Hadith Isa ibn-Hisam* which was published serially between 1898 and 1902. It tells about the adventures of a resurrected pasha of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Al-Muwaylihi's work, *Hadith Isa Ibn Hisam*, has long been recognized as a significant contribution to the development of modern Arabic prose fiction. It was first published as a series of articles in *Misbah al-Sharq*, the newspaper of al-Muwaylihi's father Ibrahim. In 1906, al Muwaylihi put most of his series of articles into book form. The book appeared in 1907, as *Hadith Isa ibn Hisham*.<sup>5</sup> The work has, therefore, been called an extended *maqama* and indeed each episode resembles a *maqama* and start in rhymed prose but turns to a more direct style when it launches into the narrative. Far

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5). M.M. Badawi, *Modern Arabic Literature*, p-18

from being decorative, however, its purpose was social criticism and as such it was eminently successful.

Along with the increase in translation activity and in the availability of publication outlets, there came the need to refine and simplify prevalent prose styles in order to produce a medium that was palatable to the ever growing public for popular fiction. In this function Mustufa Lutfi al- Manfaluti<sup>6</sup> (1876-1924) played a central role. His work may be seen as typical of the many contrasting forces at work in Egyptain intellectual life at that time. His collection of Vignettes entitled *al-Nazarat* made him so popular at that time. In the new and powerful medium of the Press, his straightforward style and uncouple moral vision helped to develop a new genre of Arabic novel.

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6). Mustufa Lutfi al-Manfaluti (1876-1924) is a writer of eminence, essayist, novelist and short story writer, born in Manfalut in Assyut province of Egypt.

The poet Francis al-Marrash<sup>7</sup> wrote a novel named *Durr al Sadaf fi Ghara'ib al-Sudaf* in 1870. It was published in Beirut two years later. The novel illustrates the author's debt to the earlier traditions of narrative through the use of farming techniques, the formalized rhyming prose style and an abundance of moralistic sentiments. It also tells us about the collection of coincidences which are incorporated within the work experiment. So it played a vital role in the development of Arabic novel in the modern time.

The Syrian émigrés had an edge over the Egyptians in introducing western forms into Arabic, their ownership of journals like *al-Muqtataf*, *al-Hilal* and *al-Jamia* and newspapers like *al-Ahram* and *al-Muqattam* enabled them to publish their novels easily. They wrote detective or romantic stories serially

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7) Francis al-Marrash (1836-1873) was a Syrian writer and a poet of the *Nahda* movement-the Arabic renaissance.



to increase the circulation of their periodicals.<sup>8</sup> Some Syrian novelists chose historical themes for their writing. Their novels were often printed in Beirut and serialized in various magazines. Christians played a major part in writing them. In Lebanon also the novel was developing. Salim the son of Butrus wrote a series of social novels at that time in Lebanon. His first novel *al-Huyum fi Jinan al-Sham* (Passionate love in the Gardens of Damascus) appeared in serialized episodes in 1870. The historical novels of Salim's *Zanubia and Maliqatu Tadmur* were published in al-Fannan in 1871.

The pioneer of the historical novels, Jurji Zaydan (1861-1914) founded the journal *al-Hilal* in 1892. He published almost all his historical novels in this journal. These novels reached a wide public and have been translated into Persian and Urdu.

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8). Ismat Mahdi, *Modern Arabic Literature*, p. 35.

Yet Zaydan himself was ambiguous about the literary status of his novels.<sup>9</sup>

In the preface to his novel, *al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf al-Thaqafi*, Jurji Zaydan explains that the way to popularize history is to write it in the form of a novel.<sup>10</sup> He emphasized that history should pervade the novel and not take the second place. Zaydan is probably referring to Alexander Dumas and Walter Scott, who inspired him to write the historical series, but in fact he gave more attention to the romantic aspect. In Zaydan's novels 'the continuity of history' is the focal point.

Another Lebanese writer of historical novel was Farah Antun (1874-1922). His historical novels include a trilogy on the French Revolution adapted from Dumas. His *Urishalim al-Jadida* (New Jerusalem) which tells of the Arabs conquest of

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9) Pierre Cachia, *Arabic Literature: An Overview*, p. 134.

10) Abd al-Muhsin Taha Badar, *Tatawwur al-Riwaya al-Arabiya al-Arabiya al-Haditha fi Misr 1870-1938*, p. 90

Palestine enjoyed a considerable vogue at one time.<sup>11</sup> Farah Antun dealt with problems concerning the world in general and not with Arab society only, e.g. capitalism versus communism. His works are important as they present serious ideas but failed to make an immediate impact.

In any historical survey of the development of the novel, Muhammad Hussain Haykal's<sup>12</sup> *Zaynab* in 1913 clearly occupies an important position; some critics have gone so far as to claim it to be the first real Arabic novel. Unlike its predecessors, it depicts Arab characters in a contemporary and indigenous setting. *Zaynab* is the first major original Egyptian novel. Through this novel Haykal tried to express his strong nationalist feelings. So one can say that the novel is reflections

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11). V.P. Abdul Hameed, *An Introduction to Modern Arabic Literature*, p. 42.

12) Mohammed Hussain Haykal (1888-1956), the author of *Zaynab* was born in a little village in the Nile delta. He devoted his career to politics, journalism and literature.

of the author's nostalgia which he felt while he was abroad.

*Zaynab* is written outside the pale of the traditional *maqama*. It has no rhyme and no rhetoric. The language is simple, close to everyday speech. At the same time the influence of French literature is evident in the use of long and complex sentences. Haykal thought that the use of classical Arabic for dialogues between rural characters was highly artificial; so he resorted to easy and simple style of writing in his novel. This novel portrays Egyptian rural life.

Haykal's *Zaynab* is the 1<sup>st</sup> fully fledged novel of literary merit in Arabic which tackled the contemporary local life in its real term. It addressed various social issues and problems faced by the people at that time. Haykal basically wants to show the world that the Egyptian and the peasants are worthy of respect and social recognition. Through this Haykal raised various general problems, social political, religious and moral.

He attacks the lack of integrity in government officials who were notorious for their bribery and corruption.

Although *Zaynab* was published in 1913, and got favourable reviews, it attracted less notice than might have been expected, perhaps because the years that followed the first edition were unfavorable to the literary activity.<sup>13</sup> The first world war and the Egyptian revolution of 1919 diverted the attention of the readers and writers from literature to politics. Among other impositions of the war, restrictions were placed on publications and many newspapers had to close down including *al-Jarida* which had published *Zaynab*.

Romantic in its love themes and in its idealization of village life, *Zaynab* has also been praised as the forerunner of the realistic and the social novel because of its concern with the poor and its implied rebellion against age old customs.

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13). Hamdi Sakkut, *the Egyptian Novel and its main trends*, 1913-1952, p.18

Most of the historical novels deal with the glories of the medieval world of Islam. For example *Shar-wa Abdur Rahman* of Zaydan describes the advance of Muslim's into France and their defeat at the hands of Charles Martel, King of France at the battle of Tours in 732 AD. Another novel *al-Abbasa* tells the story of the daughter of Harun al- Rashid<sup>14</sup> and her secret marriage to his Prime Minister, Ja'far al-Barmaki. It has a nostalgic appeal to Egyptian readers.

In the realm of fiction, the need to develop and foster a sense of national identity and local pride based on a revival of the glorious past may help to explain the prevalence of historical novels in many countries of the region during the inter-war years. The Syrian novelist Ma-ruf al-Arna'ut (d. 1947) published a series of four novels tracing early Islamic history, including one each on 'Umar, the second caliph of Islam, and

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14) Harun al- Rashid, a powerful king of Baghdad.

Tariq ibn Ziyad, the hero of the conquest of Spain in the eighth century.

The tradition of the historical novel had also continued, particularly under the impetus of growing scene of national pride fostered by Arab nationalism but in more recent times, the attention of novelists has tended to be more devoted to the events of the recent past and the lessons to be gleaned from them.

A number of Arab novelists continued to write historical works of fiction which would make their readers aware of glorious episodes from the past. The rapidly developing awareness among Arab intellectuals of the need for political and societal change led, almost inevitably, to a diminution in the role of the historical novel. Faced with the realities of colonial occupation, Arab novelists could find object lessons in the more immediate past.

As historical events bring about a process of change whereby the Arab world begins to challenge the harmony of European colonialism and to play a much larger part in the course of its own destiny, the novel as reflector and even catalyst of change, assumes a more significant role. In still more recent times when history has been able to provide a regrettably rich repertoire of conflict in the Arab world, novelists have still occasionally turned to the earlier decades of this century for inspiration and historical novel has developed in this way.

Autobiography played an important role in modern Arabic literature. It paved the way for the emergence of novel in modern Arabic literature which was initially regarded morally suspected especially in the conservative societies. But with the course of time, it gained popularity and respectability in modern Arabic literature.



*Al-Ayyam* (The days) is the most celebrated autobiographical novel of the modern Arabic literature, written by Taha Hussain. In *al-Ayyam*, Taha Hussain talks about his life and studies in the village and at Al-Azhar. The book has been translated into many foreign languages including English & French. This book is considered as one of the most magnificent of modern literary works.

The book is divided into three parts. The first relates how Taha Hussain grew up in the midst of a large family of sisters and brothers supervised by the parents in a largely ignorant milieu. The opening is marked by a certain ambiguity in time and space with an emphasis on sound and world of touch and feeling.<sup>15</sup> The child does not understand the extra attention of his parents, nor their abrupt impatience, till it dawns on him that he is different from other children. The difference comes from

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15) Dr. Taha Hussain, *al-Ayyam, Part-I* p.198.

their being able to see while he is blind.<sup>16</sup>The first few pages record vague impressions of childhood as a blind boy with all his limitations of sight and confine to hearing experiences.

The second part of *al-Ayyam* describes the boy following his brother to al-Azhar with high hopes. It depicts him groping his way in Cairo, his loneliness and neglect by his brother, the stagnant and narrow grooved life at al-Azhar, the drawl of the Sheikhs together with the resulting bitterness and despair.<sup>17</sup>The style is rhythmic and unaffected, making use of rhetorical questions and appeals to the reader in a manner reminiscent of an oral narrative. In its psychological insight into the world of childhood, its treatment of the formative years of the central figure and its consistent handling of perspective; this book offers a model which novelists could profit from, in particular

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16) Ibid, p.18.

17) Dr. Taha Hussain, *al-Ayyam, Part-II* p.30-39

when embarking on a *Bildungsroman*.<sup>18</sup> The third part is related to his life in Paris.

In the field of development of Arabic novel, Ibrahim Abd-al-Qadir al-Mazini's (1890-1949)<sup>19</sup> contributions is tremendous, which made a new path to the development of Arabic novel. He made his name as a critic of poetry, but was most at home writing short stories and comic sketches. Al- Mazini wrote many novels. Among them the following are the most important.

i) *Ibrahim al-Katib* (Ibrahim the writer, 1931)

ii) *Ibrahim al-Thani* (1943) and

iii) *Thalathu Rijalin wa imratun* (Three men and a woman).

The first of these novels of apprenticeship, illustrates the teething troubles of the genre. It relates the novel affairs of the protagonist, the writer Ibrahim, with three women: Marie,

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18) *Bildungsromansn* (German pronunciation; "Formation novel") is a novel that traces the development of characters from childhood to adulthood.

19) Al Majini, famous critics of modern Arabic literature.

a young Syrian widow who nurses him after an operation; Shushu, his cousin, with whom he falls in love while visiting her and her married sister Najiyyah on their country estate, and Layla, the westernized Egyptian girl whom he meets in a hotel in Luxor. All these affairs come to nothing. Ibrahim feels that Marie is somehow beneath him, despite the fact that in many ways their situations are complementary. His proposal to Shushu is rejected by Najiyyah on the grounds that her elder sister must marry first. Layla decides to relinquish him when she learns of his love for Shushu and achieves this by representing herself as a girl of easy virtue. Disillusioned, depressed and restless, Ibrahim's thoughts turn to death, but a mysterious voice from the grave, presumably that of his late wife entreats him to remain alive if only to preserve her memory. In several respects this novel marks an advance on *Zaynab*. Haykal's measured style, with its conventional imagery, has been replaced by a far

livelier one able to convey different moods and portray a wide range of situations. Although there is still a pronounced romantic tendency to nurse, the dramatic elements is much more developed, with some lively dialogues and scenes of action.

The setting moves from a country estate to a luxury hotel, with a brief visit to a fortune teller and even an abortion clinic, but it is the typically Egyptian countryside which al-Mazini is most at pains to describe. The humour for which the author is justly famous inspires some ridiculous situations and comic minor character, where Ibrahim is the butt of his wit; al-Mazini can be credited with an attack on the romantic hero. The final impression is of a bank in which the author, who in this case is his hero's alter ego, is seeking to make up for his disappointments in real life by projecting a series of self-gratifying scenes of success with women, *Ibrahim al-Katib*

(Ibrahim, the writer)<sup>20</sup> is perhaps a unique example of a novel of *fakhr* (self praise).

. The most profound and technical novel of this period is *Yawmiyyat naib fi al-aryaf* (The diary of a deputy public prosecutor in the country) written by Tawfiq al-Hakim. He occupies the pride of place as the greatest Arab writer during the first half of the twentieth century. In this novel al-Hakim uses satirical and witty language to describe rural officialdom of his time. The prosecutor begins his diary as a murder is reported and the investigation of this crime forms the plot of the work. But the investigation has to be combined with all the prosecutor's other duties, and thus a picture gradually emerges from the diary of the way in which the secular legal code is applied in the countryside. This book is more than a series of sketches of Egyptian peasant life.

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20) English Translation by Magdi Wahba, Cairo, 1976.

The central character in the novel, the diarist, begins his record when he is feeling ill. He appears to have an attack of laryngitis threatening. At the end of the book the laryngitis is forgotten, but he has so far lost control of himself as to burst out that he has had enough of the country and wants to go back to Cairo. Closing the diary, he himself characterizes his mood bitter and mocking. Although he displays no insight into the real workings of peasant life and no great sympathy for the peasants, his resistance has been worn down by what he has noted of successive instances of injustice, the petty corruption and dishonesty of almost all his fellow officials the appalling conditions of health care and hygiene prevailing in the country side. For al-Hakim's prosecutor, city intellectual that he is, was imbued with a belief in basic human dignity and natural justice beyond the justice of the courts, and some of what he has seen is a gross violation of these ideals. In this there are some

contradictions which al-Hakim seen, that the exploration of a fundamental issue of Egyptian culture, the relationship between the city based government and the peasantry, within an appropriate narrative framework and a realistic setting, and with economy and humour.

Another work of the pioneering period is *Hawwa bila Adam* (Eve without Adam) in 1934 by Mahmud Tahir Lashin.<sup>21</sup> He is a member of *al-madrasah al-hadithah*. He published three collections of stories as well as this novel. *Hawwa bila Adam* is an important novel because it points the way to certain developments of Arabic novel. It tells the story of an Egyptian middle-class woman teacher, Hawwa, who devotes all her time and energy to education and the cause of women's emancipation. The author's fondness for the grotesque leads him to include some unnecessary digressions and he is at times

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21) Mahmud Tahir Lashi (1894-1954) graduated as an engineer and was employed in the ministry of public works.



facetious. With its sense of social conflicts and its pinpointing of moments of crisis in the life of an individual, it is the best realistic novel of modern Arabic literature. This extremely interesting novel leaves the impression that it is unfinished. This is especially true of the theme of class conflict. For that, it may be said that, *Hawwa bila Adam* is the original realistic novel of Modern Arabic Literature.

Abd al-Hakim Qasim (1935-90) is one of the most innovative Egyptian novelists of his generation. He was born in Gharbiyyah province. During his life time he wrote three novels, two novellas and three short stories. Qasim's brand of innovation is not spectacular, but consists of taking material or themes already in his personal repertoire or in that of the Egyptian novel and reconsidering them, developing them further through the application of new or more appropriate techniques surely mustered.

Qasim's first technical novel, *Ayyam al-insan al-sab'ah* (The seven days of man) is the most important among his other novels. It is memorable also for its evocation of Egyptian village life. It is related to *Zaynab* or *al-Ard*. It is somewhat more conventional; he evokes with a wealth of detail, life in a lower Egyptian village as experienced by the main character, Abd al-'Aziz. But here too the dimension of time is central, for the seven days, the seven stages of preparation and performance of the pilgrimage to Tanta for the *mawlid* (festival) of al-Sayyid al-Badawi. This novel is a classic study of growing awareness, acceptance of secular urban attitudes corresponding alienation from a peasant community. The colloquial is not used for the dialogues, often poetic in their rhythmic repetition of words or phrases, and is well-suited to express the emotional significance of people, animals and objects for the main character which is a constant motif.

Among the romantic novelists, Ihsan Abd al-Quddus (b.1919) played a vital role in modern Arabic literature. He used to write serials for the periodicals from the very beginning. Mahfouz has written more than six hundred stories: both novels and short stories covering some twenty six volumes. Some of his popular novels are: *Ana Hurr* (I am free 1954), *La Anam* (I can't sleep, 1956), *Zaujat Ahmed* (Ahmed's wife, 1961) and so on. In his novels Ihsan is intimately linked with politics that forms a very real part of the life of Egyptians.

The quest for personal freedom is an important aspect of Ihsan's novels, which are generally devoted to delineating the quarrels of young girls from good families to liberate themselves, chiefly on the emotional and sexual plane. However the novels of Ihsan indicate the recognition of novel as an authentic Egyptian literary genre. His declared aim has been to break down the taboos concerning what can be mentioned in

literature, but this aim has eventually failed. He moves to a wider social plane in his most popular novel. In the novel *Fi Baytina Rajul* (there's a man in our house) he analyses the impact of political crisis on society and individuals and their psychological and emotional perspectives. His appeal, due to the strong romantic bent of his stories, and the frankness with which he treats his characters and events, have made him one of the most popular writers in Egypt.

Among representatives of revolutionary optimism Yusuf Idris,<sup>22</sup> who is better known for his short stories and plays, is a borderline case. His novels illustrate the progression of a highly gifted and original writer away from the treatment of conventional topics to the exploration of issues which preoccupy him personally. He is the most prolific writer of fiction of his generation. His first Arabic novel, *Qissat hub* (love story, 1956)

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22) Yusuf Idris (1927-91) qualified as a doctor but gave up practicing medicine early in his career to devote himself to writing and journalism.

depicts characters involved in the resistance to the British in the Canal Zone. It contains the confessions of a young doctor, a member of an underground political group, who falls in love with a married woman of European origin. The hero's soul-searching, on both the political and personal level, reveals him to be self-centered, obstinate and somewhat unstable, but also his capacity for subtle psychological analysis.

In Yusuf Iris's novels the use of free indirect discourse and interior monologue combined with a subtle movement between *fusha* (literary language) and *ammiyyah* (colloquial Egyptian) give the presentation of the characters' inner world with a remarkable intensity and vividness, and this outweighs the carelessness in construction from which his longer novels suffer.

From the late 1960s a number of younger writers, each with their own specific vision and interests began to make a name for themselves as novelists. As they admit, though not

always in so many words, they have all come out of Najib Mahfouz's overcoat, but they are independent of Mahfouz as well as of each other. The general level of technical competence is higher in their works than in that of their predecessors. Although they are aware of the innovations associated with both modernism and post- modernism, they are electric in their borrowing from abroad. They have realized more clearly the possibilities that the classical Arabic literary heritage and oral tradition offer and often make extensive use of them.

The Egyptian novelists were working within the same general frame of reference as their colleagues all over the world. They started collaborating in the world wide enterprise of the novel. By this time, the Egyptian novel reached its maturity.

One of the key contributors to the maturation of Arabic short story in Egypt is Mahmud Taymur whose contribution to Arabic novel is tremendous. His novel *Salwa fi mahabb al-Rih*

(1947) which was more than the story of a woman, who takes advantage of her physical attraction, was a significant contribution to exhibit the difference. Modern novel's reflection of the modern modes of life and thought in a deliberate bid to disassociate itself from the novels of transitional phase was mixed with to the thematic and artistic frameworks and codes which were more pertinent to the impact of Western or modern culture upon the Arab World. The establishment of various political, social, literary and ideological schools in the Arab World such as socialism, communism, realism, surrealism, nationalism and Islamism, etc., which endeavored to approach to life in their own fashion, notwithstanding the labels of treatment or maltreatment attached against each other, succeeded in bringing out a genre in a simple language free from cumbersome adornments of the conventional creative or narrative writings, graduating from the didactic *maqamat*.

The key contribution to the maturation of the Arabic novel in modern Arabic literature is Najib Mahfouz; he is widely recognized as the founding father of the Arabic novel. Mahfouz is the most illustrious and prolific writer of fiction in the Arab world today. He was born at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Unlike his contemporaries, Mahfouz devoted himself to the genre of the Arabic novel to such an extent that he abandoned an incipient academic career. Because of that sacrifice Mahfouz has become the most famous Egyptian novelist dominating the fictional scene for more than two decades. In the brief history of Arabic novel, which can be said to have started with Muhammad Hussain Haykal's novel *Zaynab* in 1913, Mahfouz occupied a unique position. He is one of the leading figures of the novel who has played an outstanding role in the development of Arabic novel. In spite of the fact that Mahfouz belongs to the second generation of



Egyptian novelists, after the early pioneers of the thirties, like Haykal, al-Aqqad, Mahmud Taymur and Abd al-Qudir al Mazini. When Mahfouz started writing novels, he did not find a tradition to which he could resort. He had a difficult job trying to find his way in this untraded ground.

After getting introduced to the works of different European writers and literary schools, Najib Mahfouz discovered the western novel as a much more developed form. It had its established tradition and techniques. Therefore, Mahfouz felt the need to resort to the West for a model and inspiration. However, it was mainly his works that the first sign of his fruitful contact with the western model began to appear. During the 30s Mahfouz could read the works of various writers from various nations such as France, Russia, Germany and England. This exposure led to his assimilation of various influences which helped him, in a span of time, to catch up with the latest

novelists who contributed to its development. But Arabic novel reached its zenith by the attempts of Najib Mahfouz.

Mahfouz excels in portraying the details of background and presenting of panoramic views. His characters are vivid and his plots true to life. He uses classical language though sometimes he uses colloquial idioms to make the dialogue more effective. A touch of humour prevails in his writings. He uses very ambiguous and complex sentences. His writing style and technique is panoramic and almost photographic in portraying the details of the background. His works reflected sympathy for the downtrodden. Politics is an important aspect projected by his writing either directly or by symbolism.

Mahfouz's faithfulness to the literary languages is still sometimes an obstacle to the creation of life like dialogue and prevents the differentiation of one character from another. In Mahfouz's own attitude to language, the literary language

(*fusha*) is superior to the colloquial (*anmiyyah*), both because it is common to the whole of the Arab world and it has been the vehicle of religion and culture from ancient times. This view is shared by many, inside and outside Egypt, but it has had relatively little influence on the practice of Egyptian novelists treating contemporary subjects. Mahfouz's accomplishment in stretching the literary language to convey realistic dialogue is perhaps more important in the context of the Arabic novel outside Egypt than in his own country.

Mahfouz's *al-Thulathiyyah* (The trilogy) is undoubtedly his greatest collection of novels. The trilogy covering three generations consists of three novels namely *Bayn al-Qasrajn*, *Qsar al-Shawq* and *al-Sukkariyyah*. In this family saga Mahfouz brings out the spirit of the people's struggle for freedom. Its detailed characterization & the sense of humour that pervades the dialogues and above all the account of the social and

political events as seen through the eyes of the family make the trilogy a landmark in novel writing in Arabic. Mahfouz became the most prominent novelists dominating the fictional scene in his generations. His novels are more significant outside Egyptian than his own native land.

While the Arabic language remains a hindrance for western readership, the award of the Nobel Prize of Mahfouz has led to a sudden increase in interest on the part of western readers. When Mahfouz himself has been the primary beneficiary of such interest, other novelists such as Munif and al-Sheikh, have also attracted attention. At that time the Arabic novel began to register themselves in anthologies of world literature. Mahfouz evokes all manner of styles and references Arab and western as he covers the bitter realities of daily life of the Egyptian people with a layer of importable erudition. So his fame became far & wide in the whole world.

By the attempt of Mahfouz, the Arabic novel reached its zenith. Before him there were many Arab writers who contributed to the development of Novel. But Arabic novel originally developed by the efforts of Najib Mahfouz. He is one of the leading figures of this art who have played an outstanding role in its development. He had a difficult job trying to find his way in this untraded ground. Finally, it may be said that the most significant shape in the history of Arabic novel appeared in the hand of Najib Mahfouz.