CHAPTER-III

ROLE OF AL-MANFALÛTÎ IN LITERARY RENAISSANCE

Sayyid Mustafâ Lutfî al-Manfalûtî is recognized as a pivotal figure in the evolution of a modern style of Arabic prose writing at the beginning of the twentieth century. His literary contributions have occupied the transitional period that has separated the Muhammad al-Muwaylihi’s famous book ‘Hadith 'Îsâ ibn Hishâm (1907 A.D.)’ from the resurgence of the new prose style exemplified by the works of a new generation of Egyptian authors such as ‘al-Ayyâm (1926-1928 A.D.)’ of Dr. Tâhâ Husayn and ’Awdat al-Rûh (1933A.D.) of Tawfiq al-Hakim. Al-Manfalûtî’s career and works embody a number of contradictions, unlike Dr. Tâhâ Husayn and Tawfiq al-Hakim, for example who both knew French well, he knew no European language properly and indeed is never known to have travelled outside Egypt. Despite this, however, his works reveal a fascination for both European ideas and Western literature, and he translated or adapted a number of works of Western literature into Arabic. Despite al-Manfalûtî’s pivotal position in the evolution of modern Arabic prose, his ideas and outlook – like his prose style – remained for the most part essentially conservative and seem today in many respects to belong to another age. Despite their, slightly anachronistic touch, however, they have remained popular among the Arab readership.

The role of Al-Manfalûti in the development of literary renaissance is tremendous. For the first time, the Egyptians came into touch with Western civilisation, its literature, culture and technology in the last part of the eighteenth century during the occupation of Cairo in 1798 A.D. by Napoleon Bonaparte. Under the French influence, the Egyptian culture
mainly Islamic had undergone a tremendous change in all respects. Previously they were sticking to their conservative ways of life.

During this period, Sayyid Mustafā Lutfi al-Manfalūti emerged as a great writer, a reformer and a regular contributor to the journal “al-Mu’ayyid”. He was full of Arabian culture and Islamic civilization from his childhood as he was educated in al-Azhar University. At that time, al-Azhar University was a prime centre of education. This fact made Cairo a suitable place for Renaissance. This was an institute of Islamic education founded by the Fatimids. Though preoccupied with the religious sciences, later it became a centre of Arabic language and literature.¹

From this point of view, it is known that al-Manfalūti had a magnificent role in reviving the Literary Renaissance in the 19th century. His presence in the assembly of al-Imām Shaykh Muhammad ‘Abduh and Jamāluddin al-Afghāni (1838-1898A.D.) had enlightened his scope of wisdom, his deep study about numerous original Arabic books really gave him a great impetus to revive a literary renaissance. He used to read about the autobiographies of ‘Abdul Hamid al-Kātib, ‘Abdullah bin al-Muqaffā‘, Ibn Khaldūn, Ibn al-Athīr and ‘Amdī etc. Amongst the poems, he used to read the Diwāns of al-Mutanabbi, al-Buhtari, Abu Tammām, Sharīf al-Rizā etc. He also studied various European literatures and acquired knowledge of modern styles and techniques of writings. After studying all the aforementioned books, al-Manfalūti advocated for modernity in literature with the changing of time. Although this was a great challenge for him. He had to face criticisms from the traditionalists. Because it is a law of nature not to accept a new system at the initial stage. Nevertheless, he was a strong supporter of this second movement that is the Literary Renaissance in Egypt. Therefore, he insisted upon acquiring the knowledge of European literature and culture but it was not an easy task for
him to acquire knowledge of western methods and styles of literature since he didn’t know any European language. Hence, he had to take help from some of his European educated friends of Egypt in respect of study, interpretation and translation of French literature. Thus, he started to study various novels, dramas, short stories etc. of French literature and acquired deep knowledge on modern styles of writing in literature. Then he used to re-write these books in his own style in Arabic and translated some books from French into Arabic in elegant styles. Accordingly, he had translated some unique novels as “Mâjdûlin, al-Shâer, Fi Sabil al-Tâj and al-Faḍîla” from French into Arabic. Then he donated these books to the Public Library in splendid form. The people read these books and came to know about the modern styles of Arabic literature. Thus, al-Manfalûti became one of the first category writers of Literary Renaissance. His fans were increasing day by day because his writings were based on the problems of daily lives of human beings, which were published in “al-Muayyid”. It has been already mentioned that he published his popular book “al-Nazarât” in three volumes. In addition to this book, he began to write enchanting essays with splendid formation using modern styles. These essays were of two types, original and translated, and published in a book named “al-‘Abarât. Here it is mentionable that these two books undoubtedly have made al-Manfalûti immortal in the history of Arabic literature.

Al-Manfalûti was not only single author to write down the modern story-type essay during this period. Along with him some other writers also started to develop its productions, Ibrâhîm ‘Abd al-Qâdîr al-Mâzînî (1889-1949 A.D.), a follower of al-Manfalûti, composed the following essays:

(a) صندوق الدنيا (Box of the World).
(b) الريح قضى (Taking Wind)
Dr. Taha Husayn (1889-1973 A.D.) also wrote some such essays as the following:

(a) المعذبون في الأرض (The Punishment in the World)
(b) جنة الشوك (The Paradise of Interest)

Muhammad Husayn Haykal’s (1888-1956 A.D.) following essays are remarkable in this regards: (a) ثورة الأدب (Movement of Literature), (b) في اوقات الفراح (In the times of accomplishment.) Abdul Aziz al-Bashri, a critic, wrote an essay as (About the Woman.)

The aforementioned kinds of literary publication have been called the story-type essay (المقالة القصصية) in the history of Arabic literature. Al-Manfalūti along with others felt a great necessity of this type of creative writings and they found them as the most suitable literary mediums for expressing their different opinions and to bring social reformations amongst the common people. The story type essays became very popular and strongly influenced the minds of the common man.

3.1 AL-MANFALUTI’S CONTRIBUTIONS TO MODERN ARABIC LITERATURE:

The works of Mustafā Lutfī al-Manfalūti have been mentioned below:

1. Al-Nazarāt (The Views): Its numerous editions, reprints and abridgements have been done till today in three Volumes as the following:

   Volume-I, Cairo, 1910
   Volume-II, Cairo, 1912
   Volume-III, Cairo, 1921
2. Mukhtarāt al-Manfalūtī (Selections of al-Manfalūtī), Cairo, 1912.
3. Al-ʿAbarāt (The Tears), Cairo, 1915: This book's numerous editions and reprints have been done till today for its popularity.
4. Al-Qadiyyah al-Misriyyah min sanat 1921 ilā sanat 1923 (The Egyptian Question From 1921 to 1923).
7. Fi Sabil al-Tāj, Cairo- 1920 : Adaptation of Francois Coppee, Pour la Couronne.
8. Al-Shāʿir aw Sirānū di Birjarāk, Cairo, 1921: Translation of Edmond Rostand, Cyrano de Bergerac.

It is known that al-Manfalūtī, from an early age, had shown an enthusiasm for imaginative literature - an enthusiasm that had indeed led to conflict with his teachers at al-Azhar. He studied widely not only in the field of medieval Arabic literature but also in the field of European literature mainly in French in translation. It is therefore, perhaps not surprising to find that, with the exception of the political tract entitled “Al-Qadiyyah al-Misriyyah min sanat 1921 ilā sanat 1923 (The Egyptian Question From 1921 to 1923)” all his subsequent publications were of a literary nature. What is more surprising, in view of al-Manfalūtī’s well-known lack of competence in any European language, is that the majority of these works rely heavily on translation or adaptation from French except one case, which is apparently from English. This fact has inevitably led to a considerable amount of speculation about the precise processes that
al-Manfalūtī used to produce his text and although in the case of both ‘Mājdūlin’ and ‘Al-Shā‘ir’, for example, the author has offered some explanation in his introduction to the works, many questions remain unanswered. However, his works fall into two categories: “Firstly, there are those which are published under the title of ‘Al-Nazārāt & Al-‘Abarāt’ and the second category consists of four longer translations or adaptations from French works, entitled ‘Mājdūlin’, ‘Al-Shā‘ir’, Fi Sabīl al-Tāj and Al-Fadīlah aw Pūl wa Virjīnī respectively. All these works were published between 1917 and 1923 during the last few years of al-Manfalūtī’s life.

3.2 A GLANCE ON “AL-NAZARĀT” & “AL- ABARĀT”:

Mustafā Lūfī al-Manfalūtī was a celebrated story writer of early modern period. He contributed immensely to the development of story writing in modern Arabic literature. The best-known works of al-Manfalūtī are “al-Nazārāt” (The Views)-1910 and “al-Abarāt” (The Tears)-1915 which contain a number of his essays and short stories mostly depicting the social evils and prejudice. We will discuss about “al-Abarāt” in the fourth chapter in detail. Hence, we now would like to light upon “al- Nazārāt” only in this column. It is mentioned here that both these books are read throughout Arabic knowing countries enthusiastically. His writings have the power to touch the heart and mind of the readers for its excellencies. His popularity began to increase in the field of elegant artistic prose and his influences used to spread in the horizons.2

Al-Nazārāt (النظرات): The most popular book of al-Manfalūtī is “al-Nazārāt” that means views or reflections. It is written in three volumes in 1910, 1912 and 1921 chronologically. Each volume contains all his articles published in “al-Mu’ayyid” an Egyptian journal, which has highlighted the literary criticism, short stories, social, political, economical affairs of Egypt. All kinds of people used to read his book “al-Nazārāt”
with great zeal. The articles of "al-Nazarat" remain the best known and most enduring of al-Manfalûti's works and have been reprinted innumerable times. These books are best regarded as examples of journalism rather than imaginative literature, though ironically, al-Manfalûti professed not to like journalism himself, advising someone seeking his advice on the subject not to enter the profession and telling him: "You won't be able to be successful as a journalist, unless you are a lying one." According to John A. Haywood, an orientalist, "al-Nazarat" put him in the first flight of Arab authors. His writings show how deeply he had been influenced by the work on the one hand of the Syrian School, and even of Farah Antûn (for he knew no European languages) and by the religious reform movement, pan-Islamism and the rise of Egyptian nationalism on the other. He seemed to epitomize all the half-articulate and contradictory tendencies of his time and his work "al-Nazarat" and the supplements in subsequent editions in "al Mu’ayyid "have survived the furious attacks of both conservatives and modernists, and remain down to the present the most widely read work in modern Arabic literature. It is not difficult to explain the attraction of the Nazarat for the readers of Arabic literature. Nothing like these racy and sparkling essays and sermonettes had ever appeared before in Arabic Literature. The style, the subjects, the manner of presentation, all possessed an immediate appeal to an Egyptian audience. For this al-Manfalûti was indebted to no superior power of psychological insight, nor even to a carefully chosen literary art. He looked within himself and put down on paper with native Egyptian wit in the style and language of trained scholar, heedless of inconsistencies and with perfect sincerity, the contents of that microcosm of pre-war Egypt, his own mind. There is certainly little in modern Arabic writing that affords so much pleasure as the Nazarat though its brilliant qualities frequently disguise the inadequacy and lack of originality of the ideas, which it
clothes. Only when it is read in bulk does the repetition of ideas, of phrases, even of metaphors, and still more the querulous and critical tone which pervades it from cover to cover pall at length on the reader and leave him with the feeling that with the Nazarāt, al-Manfalūtī had worked himself out.5 His stories are distinguished by a deep pessimism and melancholy and they deal with social evils and the reaction against western habits in Arab society.

In the “Muqaddamah” of “al-Nazarāt”, al-Manfalūtī declared that he greatly relished ‘poetic expressions of grief and sorrow, miserable and distressing situations, and stories of suffering, fate-stricken people.’ His romantic wails, shot through with superficial criticism of what he saw as the depravity of modern man, were couched in a rhythmical language, which combined traditional rhetorical display with a certain modern smoothness. Both his style and inclination for tearful subjects were later sharply censured and ridiculed by the New School, ‘Īsā ‘Ubaid and Ibrahim ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Māzīnī and ‘Abbās Mahmūd al-‘Aqqād.6 But at the same time, al-Manfalūtī was generally admired and his work held up as an example of eloquence.

The textual history of the three parts of “al-Nazarāt” (1910, 1912, 1921 A.D.) is a little complicated. The majority, though not quite all, of the essays and articles published in the collection, had originally appeared in al-Manfalūtī’s column in the magazine “al-Mu’ayyid”, but the collections also include a small amount of other material, some of which was previously unpublished. The popularity of the collection has also led to the appearance of numerous editions and reprints, not all of which contain precisely the same selections in the same order. This, however, is a theoretical rather than a real difficulty, since the essays were in any event never intended to form a unified literary work or to be read from cover to
cover. In a standard edition, the three volumes contain respectively some 49, 48, and 35 articles and essays, a total of some 132 items and as might be expected in view of the origin of most of them as magazine articles. It should be mentioned that these articles are all short, none of them extending over more than ten pages or so.

It is also found that the subject-matter of the essays themselves is extremely varied, as befits an author who needs to attract and loyalty of his readers through a regular column extending over several years. Social, political and religious themes of various sorts form the author’s staple diet, but there are also essays on purely literary themes on the Arabic language itself and several inspired by events or situations of the writer’s own life. A few essays are based on translated material. Some idea of the range covered may be gleaned from the titles of the first few essays in the second & third volumes. “Al-Ghad” (Tomorrow) is a reflective piece on the impossibility and undesirability of knowing the future; “al-Kaʿs al-Ūlā” (The first Cup), a moralistic piece on the evils of drink; and “al-Daffīn al-Saghir” (The Young Boy Buried), is a heart-rending lament for his own dead son.

It is already noted that al-Manfalūti himself expressed the view that good style had its origins in the heart rather than the tongue or the intellect. Both this view and “al-Nazarāt” itself, however, need to be assessed against the background of the developments taking place in Arabic literary expression at the turn of the century. In this context, it is salutary to recall that the first volume of “al-Nazarāt” appeared only three years after the first publication in book form of Muhammad al-Muwaylihi’s “Hadith ‘Īsā Ibn Hishām”, probably the last great work in Arabic to be written using the form of the medieval Arabic “Maqāmah” (Place of Standing), an episodic narrative genre originating in the tenth century and
involving the copious use of rhymed prose (Saj'). Despite the obvious brilliance and attraction of al-Muwaylihi’s work, however, and his success in utilizing the traditional form in a work relevant to contemporary Egypt, parts of “Hadith ‘Īsā Ibn Hishām” at least remain characterized by the over-elaborate word play that had become a feature of the genre during the previous centuries and that not infrequently threatened to elevate the form.

3.3 (a) AL-MANFALŪTĪ’S WRITING STYLE:

An essayist like al-Manfalūtī, despite certain antique elements in his style, deals with the problems he saw around him. He was a litterateur by nature bearing inborn quality and was unique in the field of fiction. He was the first storywriter of modern time and also dealt with later as a novelist and essayist. But a good many of the essays in his collections are in story form, and a few of them are adapted from Western sources. Nevertheless, they can hardly be considered short stories. Most important features of al-Manfalūtī’s writings can be stated as the following: “Events of his story are few, characterization is two dimensional, portraying types rather than individuals and moral uplift is the prime aim. Indeed his writings concentrate on social aspects in a polished form. He could perfectly depict the story against its appropriate background, which is otherwise impossible for a writer keeping away from such environments. Thus, he could prepare the ground for his story and raise its essence vividly. The new styles of al-Manfalūtī’s writings were being widely accepted by the readers of the whole Arab world. It was a period when the old literature appeared frozen on and the prospects for new literature were dominant. When al-Manfalūtī started writing the social vices and virtues, joys and sorrows, information of attractive stories with pure and simple diction in a free style and method, the published journals were the centre of attraction in the eye of the public. It is a matter of interest that his pen-
picture of the society was a correct reproduction of social life of the people and hence he got wide popularity with enthusiasm. Inspired by the reforming ideas of Muhammad ‘Abduh, he wrote on the need for social upliftment, on the rich and the poor, on the charity and righteousness and regarding the harm of the evils of drinking. Therefore, Mustafā Lutfī al-Manfalūti is reckoned as one of the outstanding short story writers amongst his contemporaries who occupied the most eminent place in the annals of modern Arabic literature. He serves as a linkman between the classical and modern Arabic prose writers, which distinguishes him specially during the 19th century. He, therefore, is admired for his fascinating, elegant and simple style. He chooses his words with very care. His love for east, his religious fervour and his strong note of pessimism are predominant in all his writings. His prose writings have a strong musical appeal. Literary critics and historians, too, now consider his literatures as best within the last 150 years.

Al-Manfalūti is the possessor of peculiar literary styles. He always begins his writing by a simple theme and then he goes ahead to write an essay, a story, novel, poetry etc. He was associated closely with an organisation namely- "مدرسَة الإحياء" that is- "The School of revival" and he produced many rare works under this organization. He uses short sentences and sometimes colloquial languages in his writings and applies phrase & idioms many more in his articles about which I would like to mention in the fourth Chapter. Moreover, he creates enchanting and beautiful words while he writes something, particularly the synonymity, depth in meaning, unique comparison, use of similes, significant discussions with different genders in all his works. Likewise al-Manfalūti tries to serve some descriptive formations marvellously as similes (التشبيه), metaphors (الإستعارة), allusions (الكتابة) etc. in his different works.
In this study, it is found that he had also formulated some new linguistic methods and styles in his writings, which were more imaginative. He has written his essays, novels, articles and short stories using such style, mostly eloquent and impressive. Thus, al-Manfalūtī struggled to achieve his goal and to get the affections of the readers penetrating into their hearts. Al-Manfalūtī called for social reformations in relation to the widows' and the orphans' grievances, the discrimination between rich and poor, the wretched people of the society through the modern style of his writings. Thus, he tried to introspect the philosophy of temporary life in this world and to apprise the people about hereafter by his arts. Moreover, he always attempts to use verbal communications of the daily life in his writings in different ways. A peculiar style of writing has been noticed in the first line of "Muqaddama" of Al-Nazarāt – Vol.-I as al-Manfalūtī introduces his preface thus:

"يسألني كثير من الناس كما يسألون غيرى من الكتاب كيف أكتب رسائلى، كأنما يريدون أن يعرفوا الطرق التي أسلكها إليها فيسلكوها معنى، وخيرا لهم ألا يفعلوا، فإني لا أحب لهم ولا لأحد من الشادين في الأدب أن يكونوا مقيدين في الكتابة بطريقتى أو طريقة أحد من الكتاب غيرى..........

Annotation: “A lot of people ask me as they ask other writers regarding me: “How do I write my ‘epistles’ ---- as if they would like to know the methodology which I am applying here, then they also use that way alongwith me. It would be better for them not to do that because I do not like them and I am not one of their admirers in the literature that they are bound to write in my way or in the way of other authors........”

Regarding the style of writing applied in the literature, al-Manfalūtī again says in the “Muqaddama” of Al-Nazarāt – Vol.-I as the following:
Annotation: “I had been reading the classical prose and poetry, God willing, constantly. Then I didn’t forget them because there was nothing remaining in my mind except the beauties of these works, the magnificent prettiness and lovely expression. I remember that I looked at everything carefully keeping in my memory. I took help from them for the modification of my description, or the construction of my language, or grabbing of multiple prime knowledges of language and literature. Rather each of my subject is a constructive approach because I love beauty and attach with it whenever I saw it in the form of mankind, or in the shape of full moon or setting sun, or in sound sleep of night or awakening in the dawn…….”

We have seen here that the style of writing of al-Manfalūtī is significant in the above mentioned passage. The first volume is preceded by an introduction by himself, which despite its rather long-winded nature, is of some interest for the light it throws on the author’s approach to the writing of literature. He begins by saying that he is often asked by people how he goes about composing his epistles who seem to want to imitate them. Al-Manfalūtī, however, regards this as the wrong approach, for despite his omnivorous reading, because he seems to like nothing better than to shut himself up alone in his room with a book, he himself, so he claims, has never tried to imitate previous writers – an attitude in which he has been assisted by his memory. The introduction, of course, of his writing is unique one. Al-Manfalūtī expresses here his willingness to refine the
styles of classical literature and to determine himself for its modification. That is why he has been studying thoroughly the classical prose & poetry and thus picks up vast knowledge on writing-style of modern Arabic literature. He again wants to state that he loves beauty, light, beauty of setting-sun and full moon of the night, sound-sleep at night, getting up in the dawn etc. Hence, we can say that these are the natural characteristics of human beings. It means that al-Manfalūti is such a writer of a peculiar quality with different attitude and wide-vision and mission. He gives utmost importance on human values. Therefore, it has been already said that al-Manfalūti occupies such a position in the hearts of the people, as no one could possess easily in the history of Arabic literature. So it is very clear from the significance of his "Muqaddama" that he is not confined to a fixed method. He does not imitate the method of his favourite writer blindly. He has given a clear message to the society that the traditional style of writing needed to be reformed.

It is found out that the influences of Holy Qur'ān, references from prophetic traditions and the statements from the classical poetry have been clearly prevalent in the works of al-Manfalūti. His essays are also written in the light of Arabian environments. On the other hand, we must confess that he was quite free from the bindings of old rhymed art and at the same time, the application of European style, the use of microscopic words with profound meaning have been noticed in his writing style. It can be noted here as for example:

1. "وأصبح جاترا كحيرة الدمع في مقلتي عاشق"
2. "وهذى يدعو عدد الظالم إلى أمه"
3. "وراج يخط خط عشواء في ليل بهيم"
4. "بطنة الغنى انتقام لجوع الفقير"

Annotation: 1. He was confused like a perplexed lover with tearful eye.
2. The enemy of the oppressor used to come back to his mother.

3. He used to proceed blindly in a dark night.

4. The indigestion of rich people is a revenge for the hungry poor.

3.3 (b) REMARKABLE ASPECTS OF HIS WRITINGS:

- It is found that there are two types of distinguished features seen in the literature of al-Manfalûti. **Firstly**, it describes some female characters whether it is in original or adaptation form. These female characters are related with the lives of wretched people who are neglected by the society. Such types of characters of al-Manfalûti's literature have similarity with the features of Abul 'Alâ al-Ma'arri and Victor Hugu. **Secondly**, he depicts the beauty of nature in his essays and stories.

- In this study, it is found that al-Manfalûti had vast knowledge about the poems of classical poets. We have seen him very frequently quoting lines from classical poetry in several of his works in order to make them more attractive, interesting, meaningful as well as impressive in the minds of readers. For example, he quotes the following couplet of Abul 'Alâ al-Ma'arri in the article 'Fi Sabil al-'Ihsân':

\[
\text{ولو أن السحاب همَّى بعقل لما أروى مع النخل القداذا}
\]

There are so many essays in which he uses such quotations as:

أبو الشمجمق، دمعة على الأدب، الغناء العربي، الإنسانية العامة، الشعر، الزهرة الدايلة etc.

- It is also known that al-Manfalûti was a good reader, a genuine researcher and an impartial critic of his readable books. These qualities can be seen very clearly, if we go through his following essays: "al-Bayân, Sihrul Bayân, al-Hayât al-Shi'riyyat,
Ruba‘iyyāt al-Khayyām, Adwar al-Shi‘r, al-Shi‘r, al-Dhād etc. As al-Manfalūti discusses the aspects of writings of poets of Pre-Islamic period in “al-Dhād” in a lucid manner thus:

"كان العرب الأولون أحرارا في لغتهم؛ يضعون لكل ما يخطر ببالهم من المعانى ما يريدون من الألفاظ، لا يتقيدون بقاعدة ولا شرط، ونحن عرب مثلهم تجري في عروقنا دماً، كما تجرى في عروقهم دماً أبياتهم من قيل، فسهمنا في الضاد سهمهم، وحقنا فيها حقهم فلم يضعون الألفاظ للفهم والتخطيط ولا نضعها مثلهم 

Annotation: “The ancient Arabs were quite free in using their own language, applied all that occurred to their minds and meaning what they wanted from the words. They were not controlled by any rules and regulations. We are Arabs like them flowing their bloods in our veins just like the bloods of their forefathers were flowing in their veins. So we have contributed their shares in ‘al-Dhād’ and have our rights here alongwith their rights. Hence, why they don’t exercise their words of understanding and communication each other and why we don’t use these words like them?”

➤ Al-Manfalūti always combines the reality with his conception without any exaggeration or triviality.
➤ His writings are free from the complexity, rhymed style and repetitions of description.
➤ While he desires to explain something, always uses similes, examples or shows comparison with other. As he depicts in his essay “al-Gad” (The morrow) mentioned below:

- ألغد شبح منهم يتراءى للناظر من مكان بعيد
- ألغد بحر خضم زاخر يعب عيابه
- كانى بالغد وهو كامن في مكمنه
- ينظر إلى آمالنا وأمانينا نظارات الهزء والسخرية
-
❖ The morrow is a confused spectre, which looms into view from afar.
❖ The morrow is a vast rolling sea, with swelling billows amid roaring waves.
❖ It is almost as if I am with the morrow, yet it is hidden in its den...
❖ It looks at our hopes and aspirations, with looks of scoffing and mockery.  

His essays are characterized with the attitudes of Holy Qur‘ân and prophetic traditions with generally known Arabian examples and the quotations of classical poetry. In this respect, we can mention the story “Al-Ghina wa al-Faqîr” in which al-Manfalûti has cited references from the prophetic tradition as:

"(The indigestion of rich people is a revenge for the hungry poor.) Since, there is a prophetic tradition (Hadith) as mentioned below:

عن عبد الله بن عمرو رضي الله عنه قال قال رسول الله صلى عليه وسلم: إرحموا من في الأرض يرحمكم من في السماء."

Annotation: “Abdullah bin ‘Amrû (R.) has narrated that Prophet (sm.) said: “Be mercy upon those that are in the world, then He who is in the paradise also grace upon you.” (Abû Dâud & al-Tirmizi)

Al-Manfalûti’s literature has been recognized internationally very important and therefore, included in the syllabus of different colleges and universities in the world. Thus, his literature achieved permanence in the hearts of the readers of the world.
Ahmad Muhammad ‘Abdul Hādi, a modern writer and critic of Egypt, therefore, opines in relation to his method of writing as in the following:

"وفي رأيي أن أسلوب المنفلوطي مناسب لعصرنا الحالي وصالح له، و حرى بالكتابة: أدبنا وصحافيين ان يرسموا طريقته، ويسلكوا منهجه حتى يقوا اللغة شر الإسفاف والمسفين؛ والابتداع والمبتدعين الذين لا غرض لهم إلا إضعاف اللغة، وإبعاد مسارها عن أصولها، بحجة التطور والتنوير والتمدين، حتى يشعروا المواطنين العربي بانه غريب عن لغته الأصلية: لغة القرآن و السنة و الشعر الرصين.

Annotation: “In my opinion, the style of al-Manfalūṭi is more suitable for our present day situation and relevant for it as well as more pertinent for the writers: ‘The authors and journalists followed his method and proceeded on his way, whereas these authors and journalists attempted to protect the language from the effect of decline and sinking. The innovators and creation have no any objective except to make the language weak and to keep away its courses from its principles by the argument of development, illumination and civilization. Even they knew about the native places of Arab.’ Its prime cause is that al-Manfalūṭi was peculiar in applying his original language: ‘That is the language of Holy Qur‘an, Prophetic Tradition and composed poetry.’

Some of his great contemporaries have commented that al-Manfalūṭi is a guiding figure of modern prose specially in creating the literary styles of essay. At that time, ‘ʿAbd al-Qādīr al-Māzīnī and Dr. Tahā Husayn played a great role in the development of modern styles. In this study, it is found that al-Manfalūṭi only developed this new style, which was unknown to him and unaware of most of the people, in a transparent formation with splendid linguistic styles. While he was writing essays, short stories and novels, he always noticed a significant
matter that is to contain the moral values and ethical issues in the writings. In its preface, "الحب العذري" (The Platonic Love), he expresses his profound resentment for spreading violence and troubles in the society. According to him, if the minds of the people in the society can be developed psychologically by eradicating their illiteracies, discriminations between rich and the poor, domination of the powerful man over the weaker one etc., then definitely peace would prevail amongst the human beings. His observation of life and society reveals to him the roots of peace and progress of the human race as a whole. He discovers that the feeling of brotherhood, love and sympathy among the people that can generate a society which is based on universal peace, tolerance and happiness. Therefore, he gave utmost importance on the human value, love, justice, kindness, happiness etc. in every aspect of his scripts. Hence, from the above discussion, we can firmly say that the position of al-Manfalūti as a prose writer, amongst his contemporaries was no doubt, unmatchable.

3.4 IMPORTANCE OF HIS LITERARY WORKS:

The works of al-Manfalūti have tremendous importance in the history of Arabic literature. The literary critics consider that his works are unique creations of 20th century's Arabic literature, which need its extensive research and the interpretations of its obscure issues. Hence, during the literary movement of 19th century, his writings certainly influenced the contemporary critics spontaneously over some significant issues. Some of such views of al-Manfalūti have been discussed in the following points:

1. Al-Manfalūti decided himself to focus those anti-social activities, which were creating disturbance in the society and needed reformations through his written commitment. He wanted to establish social justice for
the wretched, downtrodden and poor section of the people. He always stood in favour of their welfare and supported them in all situations. He himself says in the “Muqaddamah” of “al-Nazarât”, Vol-I: “I see that between my life and the life of those unfortunate, unhappy miserable people, there is a close similarity and deep-rooted relation.” Moreover, he had done a great job more than the above mentioned issues. He very boldly called for the implementation of the female education in the country. He is aggrieved extremely looking at the miserable condition of the women in the society. He says: “Definitely the Egyptian women are in abandoned and painful conditions. Their major problems are ignorance and illiteracy. Their mental powers have been declining day by day. They have no confidence upon themselves. They are unable to do anything depending upon themselves. They are unable to take out their livelihood.”

13 He also firmly called for the full protection of fundamental-rights of the people. He protested strongly against the violation of Human Rights of the common people through his writings.

2. Al-Manfalūtī calls for universal brotherhood through his writings. He stresses on national integration, peaceful living amongst all kinds of communities. He views that no man lives without love, affection and sympathy in the world. He expresses his views about love in this way: “Love is just like a food which provides nutrition and strength to the health. Only those who tastes its food, eat its fruits and drinks its cup, would gain its benefits.”

14 He observes that love is an obligatory asset to know each other in the society and the popular talk should be held on the love amongst the people. He again expresses his clear view regarding love such as: “There is no more precious discussion in the arts except love.”

15 It is a matter of surprise that a conservative man as al-Manfalūtī talked about love affairs in his writing because he studied in an orthodox
Islamic University and nourished its ideology and culture in conformity with Arabian inheritance. He wrote down on romance leaving all principles of religious radicalism.

4. Al-Manfalūṭi attempted to select those styles for his works, which were ignored by some modern scholars educated in Europe. Therefore, he tactfully introduced a method of theoretical application with a positive view. According to him, the best literature is created with the construction of suitable words affixing the rhetoric & prosody, similes and appropriate meanings. Al-Manfalūṭi expresses his views regarding this aspect in “al-Nazarāt” in the following lines: “In my view, the best poems of the poets and excellent writings of the writers, contain exquisite descriptions of the situations created by themselves and apply rhetoric & prosody, similes and appropriate meanings. Descriptions should have an attraction of the characters in the subjects. The writers should have sufficient power to describe them correctly to the readers as if they have disclosed the views of the people very transparently.” At the initial stage of his life, al-Manfalūṭi was neither a novel-writer nor a story writer. Rather he was an essay writer as well as a nice translator of novels and short stories into Arabic with the help of some of his friends. It is said that al-Manfalūṭi first began to produce Arabic novel in Egypt. At that time, writing of a novel was considered a condemnable affair in the eye of Arabian scholars. Because at the initial stage, the art of novel was always blamed for the defect of its styles and the background. In this context the name of Muhammad Husayn Haykal (1888-1956 A.D.) is highly mentionable. He was the first Arabic novel writer of modern period. While he was going to publish his first and the greatest modern novel “Zainab” in 1914 A.D., he feared to name the book as novel. He did not like to focus himself as a novelist among the people till the 2nd edition of “Zainab” in 1928 A.D. He published it with a
nickname as "An Egyptian cultivator". Therefore, no distinguished writer dared to write down on this topic. However, al-Manfalūti was able to purify the art of novel from the unfair subject matters and he had had the courage to compose novel in an Arabian style.

5. In spite of his short span of life, al-Manfalūti, who expired at the age of 48 years, had contributed immensely to the modern Arabic literature. He translated a number of novels from French into Arabic. Therefore, he had a tremendous influence on most of his contemporary outstanding writers. Especially, the novel-writers of 20th century were immensely inspired by him. He acquired such a status that he was compared with the distinguished reformers of modern time such as Najib Mahfūz (1912-2006 A.D.), ‘Abdur Rahmān al-Sharqāwī, the traditional romantist Muhammad ‘Abdul Halim ‘Abdullāh, Yūsuf al-Sibā’ī etc. He was one of the most powerful Arabian writers in respect of publications and writings. Some of his works have been re-published approximately thirty times till today. The literary products of al-Manfalūti were not only read by the people, they also memorized his literatures by their hearts. He became very popular among the writers, fans, man-woman and the young generation. The common people used to recite his undying novels “al-Fadilah”, “Tahta Zīlāl al-Zaizaftūn” and they shed tears after reciting his memorable book “al-‘Abarāt”. They were debating on his another glorious book “al-Nazarāt”. The common people attained inspiration to sacrifice their lives and properties for their motherland after reading his famous novel “Fi Sabil al-Tāj”. It is known that the most of the readers of al-Manfalūti observed his writings very minutely and reflected his teachings in their future missions of the life. It is also clear that al-Manfalūti was able to express the genuine sentiments of the general public through his writings. The literature of al-Manfalūti, therefore, has been playing a prime role in the
field of styles and the methodology of writings in Arabic Literature. He gradually began to prove his position and establish his presence strongly among the intellectual society starting almost from 1910 A.D. His essays, stories of original and translation, started to publish serially in the journals and newspapers daily. Moreover, his writings used to be published in different dailies without interruption.

In this study, it has been seen that the literary movement of al-Manfalūti was a quite natural phenomena. He acquired it by dint of some real events and arising situations. So he was involved with “al-Nahda” or Arab renaissance whose masterpieces served as models for new writers. This movement brought a drastic change in the Egyptian society. It began to create some authentic reformers of society as well as of literature in Egypt. During this period, there emerged a few new political parties in Egypt such as - al-Hizb al-Watani or the National Party, Hizb al-‘Ummah or People’s Party and Hizb al-‘islâh or Reformation’s Party on the basis of constitution of the country. Some of these parties did not survive for long time due to their inability to function in a proper way. These parties failed to attract the people through their performances and manifestos, while there were some other parties more influential and functional. The influential parties were strong supporters of the literary movement of the country and acquired popularity. After the implementation of new constitution in 1923 A.D., there appeared some new prominent parties in Egypt during the first half of 20th century. These are mentioned in the following:

(a) **Hizb al-Wafd (The Wafd Party):** This Party was first led by Sa‘d Zaghlūl Pashā. After him, it was headed by Mustafā al-Nuhās. He published a magazine named “al-Wafd” which contributed greatly to the development of literary movement.
(b) Hizb al-'Ahrār al-Dastūryyīn (The Party of Constitutional Freedom): It was initiated by ‘Adlī Yakūn. Then ‘Abdul Khālīq Tharwat and Muhammad Husayn Hykal both led the party to a great extent. Under the banner of this party, Muhammad Husayn Hykal published a widely circulated magazine in the name of “Siyāsah” or ‘The Politics’. It had an important role on the development of Arab renaissance.

Thus, the political movement was going to begin in order to bring different reformations in the field of social, political and economical context of the country during the first half of 20th century. The movement was boldly led by some renowned scholars, critics and some senior professors of Egyptian University that was established in 1908 A.D., namely, Mustafā Lutfī al-Manfalūtī, Khalīl Mūtān, ‘Abbas Māhmūd al-Uqqād, Ibrāhīm ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Māzīnī, Dr. Tahā Husayn, Muhammad Husayn Hykal, Mustafā Rāfī‘ī, Ahmad Ḥasan al-Zayyāt, Muhammad al-Muayyilī, ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Bāshrī, Muhammad Khidr Husayn, Ahmad Zāki Abū Shādī and a few others. This magnificent movement gave utmost importance on education, journalism and topography with a view to awaken the common people in different new areas. Therefore, the leadership of this movement decided to increase the numbers of political journals, literary and cultural magazines, for making publicity amongst the people. At the same time, the translation movement was also doing a tremendous job in various fields of modern literatures, sciences and new thoughts. The modern forms of Arabic literature such as essay, short story, novel, drama, poetry etc. started to increase in a new turn.

Thus, the Egyptian society witnessed a drastic change in all aspects of public life. During the occupation by Britishers, Egyptian life turned into bitter one because no freedom of speech was provided to the common people. But, now they have a parliament, a constitution, political
parties, journals, newspapers, universities, printing machines, press, publication, right to criticize, drama, cinema, theatre, songs and radio etc. Therefore, it was seen that the literary movement was a symbol of victory of all-round development in the country. It contributed to the growth & development of modern Arabic short story and novel in which Mustafā Lutfī al-Manfalūtī stands out as most outstanding one.

3.5 AL-MANFALÛTÎ’S POSITION AS AN ESSAYIST:

There are some exceptional personalities in the history of Arabic literature, who have been occupying their eminent positions in a specific area. It is noteworthy that no one could reach that height in their concerned areas. Till today, their positions in their respective fields of excelled remain unchallenged. These figures are called “Ingenious Persons” in the history of Arabic literature and they are mentioned below:\(^{21}\)

2. Ahmad Shawqi : reputed as poet in modern period.
3. Taufiq al-Hakim : famous as a modern dramatist.
4. Tahâ Husayn : renowned as an Arabic litterateur.
5. Najib Mahfûz : prominent as a modern novelist.

Therefore, Ismat Mahdi, an Indian scholar, calls him ‘an early essayist of modern period’. She writes: “Mustafâ Lutfî al-Manfalûtî (1876-1924 A.D.) was one of the early essayists of modern period.”\(^{22}\) It is known that none before him or after him could achieve such a position in Arabic essay as he gained in respect of popularity and reputation. In real sense, some of these essays are depictions of the writer’s self-pathetic experiences. Al-Manfalûtî selected some specific areas for the writing of his essays, which were published in some significant magazines.
According to Shawqi Daif, one of the outstanding critics of Egypt, al-Manfalûti wrote most of his essays in ‘al-Mu’ayyid’ and republished them in a book “al-Nazarât”. It is an important matter that the contents of “al-‘Abarât” were quite different from the themes of “al-Nazarât”. He shows here the chief differences and distinctive characteristics between the essays and short stories. It is seen that the style of writing of the author in both of the works is very impressive.

3.6 AL-MANFALÛTI AS A NOVELIST:

Al-Manfalûti is also famous as a novelist in the initial stage of modern age. Hence, as a pioneer in the novel literature, he is comparable to none during that period in Arabic literary world. He translated four novels from French literature into Arabic. These novels are worthy enough in the history of Arabic literature and have been extensively popular amongst the people of whole Arab world. They are mentioned in the following:

1. ماجدولين، أو تحت ظلال الزيزفون (1917)
2. في سبيل التاج (1920)
3. الشاعر، أو سيرانودى برجراك (1921)
4. الفضيلة أو بول وفرجينى (1923)

MĀJDŪLĪN, AW TAHTA ZILĀL AL-ZAYJAFŪN (1917A.D.):

It is a French novel written by French author Alphonse Karr (1808 – 1890 A.D.), a journalist and author of a number of romantic and humorous novels, of which “Sous les Tilleuls”, an autobiographical romance, was published in 1832. The Arabic version of “Sous les Tilleuls” was published in 1917. Al-Manfalûti had translated it into Arabic from French with the help of his friend called Muhammad Fu‘âd Kamâl.
Because he didn’t know any foreign language. It is noted that Al-Manfalūtī’s own work was preceded in the first edition by a note explaining that the French text had been first translated for him by Fu‘ād Kamāl, and it is thus explicitly marked as a “twice removed” version of Karr’s original. This novel comprises two core issues as one of them is the necessity of love and affection and another one is the classification of society. ‘Love’ means here a struggle between the holy, real love and false love. On the other hand, the author wants to mention here that the society has been divided into two categories - the poor and rich section of the people. The author would like to express through it that the peace and happiness can’t be found in the midst of wealth, position and beauty of a man. But peace is found in the field of work, struggle, dedication and the value of sincerity.

The hero of the novel is Stephen (عستيفن), a youth who finds happiness doing his work, duty and enjoys peace in his mind by struggling of life as well as gets tranquillity in pious love. He loves Mājdūlin very much, a beautiful girl with a pious heart. She also loves him. But her father Maular in spite of knowing their deep love affair, refused her marriage with Stephen due to his poverty. At last, the girl betrayed him and married a rich boy “Edward” as desired by her father. But the destiny of this rich boy was so much tragic that all his wealth & property were ruined within a very short time. Being depressed in such a situation, one day he committed suicide. Then Mājdūlin tried to come back to her former lover in a grievous condition. At that time, her ex-lover Stephen became one of the richest men of his locality. So when she placed her proposal to him, his well-wishers advised him to decline her offer and thus, he had to refuse her proposal. So she also committed suicide. Actually, he desired to accept her appeal to
rescue her from this catastrophe. Being saddened in this tragedy, Stephen also committed suicide. Al-Manfalûti has related this event in this way:

"كذلك انتهت حياة هذا الرجل العظيم الذي قتل الحب جسده، ولكنه أحيا نفسه، وسجلها في سجل النفوس الخالدة."

**Annotation:** "In this way, the life of this great man came to an end. He killed himself for the sake of his love, but he kept alive his soul and he recorded it in the history of everlasting souls."²⁴
FĪ SABĪL AL-TĀJ (1920 A.D.)

This novel was originally a drama entitled “Pour la Couronne” which was written by the French dramatist and poet Francois Coppée (1842-1908 A.D.), first published in 1895 A.D.. It is an adaptation of a historical verse-drama published in 1920 A.D.. “Hasan Bek al-Sharif” one of the friends of al-Manfalūtī translated it into Arabic and al-Manfalūtī Arabized its characters and story. The translator “Hasan Bek al-Sharif” mentions the following lines in the preface of this popular novel:

"فَقَتِ تَعَارَضَتْ فِي نَفْسِهُ عَاطَفَائَا قوَيَّانِ: حُبُّ الأَسْرَةِ وَحُبُّ النَّارِ. فَضَحَى بِالْأَوَّلِ فَدَاءً لِّلْثَانِئَةِ،
ثَمَّ فَضَحَى بِحِيَاهِهِ فَدَاءً لِّشَفَرَ الأَسْرَةِ"

Annotation: “Two strong emotions reacted in the heart of a youth: “The love of the family and the love of the motherland.” Then he had to sacrifice himself for the first one (For the love of family) dedicating for the second cause (i.e. For the love of motherland). Afterwards, he sacrificed his whole life for the sake of the dignity of the family.25

Al-Manfalūtī would like to highlight here the patriotic qualities of his chief patron ‘Sa‘d Zaghlūl Pasha’ of Egypt. He describes circuitously in this novel about Sa‘d’s bravery in the war, firmness at the time of crisis, vigilance in the administration, sincerity in duty, dedication for the welfare of the people. We have seen these qualities present in the character of Constantine, one of the heros of the novel. Both of them became martyrs sacrificing their lives for the sake of their motherlands. Therefore, this can be termed as a novel solely dedicating to encourage Sa‘d Zaghlūl Pasha’s social activities.

The contents of the novel can be summarized as follows: “Constantine, son of the commander, Brancomir, discloses that his mother
instigated his father to betray the people of his motherland. She was sticking to her position firmly. But her son Constantine did not like mentality of betrayal of his mother. So he vehemently opposed her conspiracy. He ruled over the country while his father was a governor of state of Balqān. It is mentioned here that Constantine rescued a poor girl from the hands of Turkish and he loved her very much in spite of his vast differences with her, despite severe refusal from the side of his father and mother. Al-Manfalūtī here defends the stand of Constantine and expresses thus in his chat:

"إني لا أعرف شرفًا غير شرف النفس، ولا نسبًا غير نسب الفضيلة"

**Annotation:** “I don’t know any dignity without self-respect and not any lineage without the virtues of descendancy.”

Then, his son Constantine became ready to confront his father at the battlefield, while he was carrying out his expedition with the intention of betrayal to his motherland. At mid-night, a severe fighting took place between the patriotic son and treacherous father. The son defended the soil of his motherland and the dignity of the family. At that time, the father had been fighting for the sake of the throne to please his wife. This civil war ended while the son killed his father at the battlefield dedicating solely for the country. But the very vicious mother circulated a public notice amongst the people thus: “Her husband has been killed in the fighting, while his traitorous son was negotiating with the Turkish spy. Now an ordinance has been clamped on my son for capital punishment. So I have passed an order to execute the capital punishment on my son.” Then he accepted it bravely.

Thus, Constantine had to kill his father for his country. Then he embraced death dedicating for his father and for the prestige of his family. Here the poor faithful lover “Miltaja” appeared for a glance in front of
him. At that time, the general public also were offended against him. In such a dire situation, his lover “Miltaja” wanted to know about the real fact from him. Then he refused to say anything and he insisted on his immolation. Then she took out the dagger from her gown and killed him. Subsequently she also stabbed herself. Thus, the story comes to an end.

It is found that in the case of Alphonse Karr, there seems to be an obvious affinity of outlook between al-Manfalûti and Francois Coppée, who was known as the “Poet of the Humble”, because of his sentimental treatment towards the poor — a description that could equally and appropriately has been applied to al-Manfalûti himself. In making his Arabic version of this work, al-Manfalûti took considerable liberties, not only substituting prose for the verse of the original, but at the same time, converting the drama into a novel — a procedure which he also adopted for “al-Shâ‘ir aw Sirânû di Birjarâk, published in 1921 and to which we now turn.
AL-SHA'IR AW SIRANÛ DI BIRJARAK (1921 A.D.)

This novel also like “Fi Sabil al-Tâj” was originally a drama and the French playwright “Edmond Rostand” (1868-1918 A.D.) wrote it and entitled it “Cyrano de Bergerac” in 1898 A.D. Here, al-Manfalûti added supplementary title “al-Shâ‘ir, The Poet” and it is considerably more interesting than his first two adaptations, not only in itself but also for the reaction it provoked in Egyptian literary circles. Rostand’s play was in turn based on the colourful seventeenth century soldier and writer Cyrano de Bergerac (1619 – 1655 A.D.), whose life had subsequently acquired a legendary quality; essentially a moral tale of gallantry cast in the form of a romantic drama. Muhammad ‘Abd al-Salam al-Jundi, a close friend of al-Manfalûti, translated it into Arabic from the French original, who requested al-Manfalûti to improve and modify its styles in Arabic manner. Therefore, al-Manfalûti transformed it from the dramatic model to the story-type one so that the reader can see on the pages of the book, as the audience can look at the stage of drama.  

Al-Manfalûti wrote his patriotic novel “Fi Sabil al-Tâj” to dedicate to his patron Sa’d Zaghlûl. In a similar manner, he presents this novel to the common readers in which he would like to project the heroism of a poet towards the poets. Because he would also like to show through this book that the poetical soul is more beautiful thing in the universe and the great artist depicts its splendid shape, unique image in the surface of whole universe.

This novel was published after one year from the publication of the novel “Fi Sabil al-Tâj” and this book was accepted by the general public from one point of view and on the other hand, it discloses the incompetence of al-Manfalûti for such work. Because he desired to write down only
peaceful and holy love affairs that developed between “Cyrano de Bergerac”, a Persian poet, an ugly man and his cousin Roxanne, a very beautiful and charming girl. But it was not possible to grow love-affairs between them due to the ugly appearance of the face of the poet. His nose was a gigantic one, which diminished his facial beauty. It appeared that his nose was a cause of his misfortune in both areas. Nevertheless, Cyrano continued to support her despite her love for another man. Certainly, ugly nose became an obstacle in the growth of his love affair between him and his beloved. It was a major clue for his enemies and opponents to mock and scorn him heavily. Therefore, he was unable to bear it and endure such humiliation.²⁸ Roxanne loved an officer named “Christian”, a big opponent of “Cyrano de Bergerac”, who was enchanted by the beauty of his mouth and the charm of his appearance. But he was very weak to interpret something and stupid in his feelings. Once upon a time, he was a companion of Cyrano in the army. Hence, Cyrano came forward to resist “Christian” silently in front of Roxanne, while he remained standing there to offer his love and passionate affection to her.

The drama of love becomes excellent till the end with the celebration of marriage of “Christian” and Roxanne while Cyrano blessed her showing his brotherhood as well as love. His holy and cordial love remained towards her from the core of his heart. It is mentioned here that this marriage was held without having real love and understanding. Finally, she came to know Cyrano’s real love and nobility. So, both of them had to weep for such unfulfilled love and tragic destiny.

The general sentiment of the story may perhaps best be described as that of a man dying of thirst offering his cup to someone else. It is easy to see the appeal of this story to the sentimental al-Manfalūtī, not only for the theme itself, but also more speculatively because the larger than life
Cyrano seems to have about him something in common with the heroes of popular Arab tradition. However, in addition to ‘polishing’ the Arabic version of the play that had been translated from the French by Muhammad ‘Abd al-Salam, al-Manfalūtī decided, as with “Fi Sabil al-Tāţ”, to recast it in the form of a novel. This led to a heated exchange of views in the pages of “al-Ahrām”, a leading daily newspaper of Egypt, in which Mansūr Fahmi, who praised the work, clashed with Tāhā Husayn, the ‘Dean Of Modern Arabic Literature’ with whom al-Manfalūtī didn’t see eye to eye and with whom he had already embarked on a literary feud. In this context, the reprint of aforementioned pages of “al-Ahrām” in 1999 has been furnished here in the following:

Al-Ahram Weekly
12 - 18 August 1999
Issue No. 442

Two of Egypt's top intellectuals locked horns in a war of words over literary formats in 1921, using the pages of Al-Ahram as their arena. The controversy erupted after Mustafa Lutfi Al-Manfaluti, a well-known novelist, published his book The Poet. It was an adaptation in story form of Edmond Rostand's Cyrano de Bergerac, a poetic drama. Mansour Fahmi, a professor of philosophy who later became secretary of the prestigious
Arabic Language Academy, wrote an article applauding the book. Taha Hussein, who became known as the Dean of Arabic Literature, objected to the conversion of a drama written in verse into a novel. The sparring between Hussein and Fahmi in Al-Ahram lasted for two months. Dr Yunan Labib Rizq provides an almost verbatim text of the debate.

Al-Ahram rarely exceeded four pages. In spite of this limited space, in which political events knocked elbows with crimes, accidents and news from the countryside, the newspaper nevertheless made sure to print intellectual and literary articles. Indeed, sometimes the literary features would coalesce into a regular section that would last for weeks and perhaps months before being swept away by the tide of other news. In late 1901 and early 1902, for example, Al-Ahram introduced a column that lasted several weeks, entitled "Literary Praise". Later, in 1917, the column re-emerged under the title "Composition and Criticism". Once again, four years later, the newspaper ran another literary column that was given the headline: "Between the effort to explain and the fruit of the pen".

Naturally, the 20 years between the first and third literary columns left their mark. In 1901, it was dedicated primarily to introducing readers to new works in print. In 1917, an element of critique was introduced. Then, in its third evolution, the column invited the contributions of prominent intellectuals, not least among whom were Taha Hussein, Mansour Fahmi and Mohamed Hussein Heikal. Moreover, not infrequently, this forum became the arena for heated debate. This was the case in the summer of 1921 when two of Egypt's most prominent literary and intellectual luminaries of the day locked horns on the pages of Al-Ahram.

The protagonists in this battle were Mansour Fahmi and Taha Hussein. At the time, Mansour Fahmi was a professor of philosophy in the Faculty of Arts. He later became dean of that faculty, director of the Egyptian national library and secretary of the Arabic Language Academy. Taha Hussein was a professor in the same college and eventually became the Dean of Arabic Literature. The focus of their debate was the recently issued Arabic adaptation of Edmond Rostand's Cyrano de Bergerac, under the title Al-Sha'ir (The Poet), by the well-known writer of the era Mustafa Lutfi Al-Manfaluti. At issue was the controversy that preoccupied Egyptian intellectuals in the 1920s: literary renovation of which Taha Hussein was among the major proponents and traditional Arabic literature of which Al-Manfaluti was a leading symbol. Because the debate between Taha Hussein and Mansour Fahmi has appeared nowhere outside Al-Ahram -- it is not listed, for example, in the many bibliographies of Taha Hussein's
works -- we thought it appropriate to make an exception and let the two men speak for themselves in full, in the hope that this will be of value to scholars of Egyptian intellectual and social history. We have, therefore, reprinted their articles in full, as they appeared in Al-Ahram in July and August 1921, with only minor omissions that have no direct bearing on the focus of discussion.

Mansour Fahmi -- 19 July 1921:

About a month ago, there appeared in the world of Arabic publications the exquisite poetic drama, Cyrano de Bergerac, by the great contemporary French poet, Edmond Rostand, which was adapted into an exhilarating prose narrative by the Egyptian writer Mustafa Lutfi Al-Manfaluti.

Cyrano, the hero of the story, as the Arabic adapter described him, was "a French poet of the 17th century, an eccentric with a blend of qualities that could rarely be found together in one of his contemporaries. He was courageous to the point of recklessness, shy to the point of weakness. He was brutal in punishing his enemies for the slightest offence, so gentle as to be driven to tears over the miseries of his friends and colleagues. He was so generous as to be left with nothing, self-respecting and forthright in confronting people with their errors. He had very few friends who understood him well and appreciated his true value. But his predominant characteristic was pride and dignity; he guarded his honour jealously. He was a struggler and a rebel. His greatest problem and the source of all his woes was that he was ugly, with a nose so large and protruding as to draw stares and raise eyebrows. He was acutely aware of this trait which caused him great anguish because he was in love with his cousin, Roxanne, renowned for her rare beauty and uncommon intelligence. He believed that no woman, no matter how virtuous and noble-minded, could succumb to the wiles of love other than through the charm of beauty, that the only beauty women cared for was the beauty of form. As a result, he could not summon courage to declare his love because of his timidity and shame generated by his appearance.

"Cyrano's devotion to Roxanne was unmatched in the history of love. He pined for her and she was unaware of his pining. He agonised because of her and she was unsuspecting. She loved another man, but he was not jealous. On the contrary, he was her greatest ally in her pursuit of the man she had chosen to love. He befriended him and remained a loyal friend. He helped his friend keep in touch with her and ensured that his love for her remained kindled, because the thing he cared for above all else in the world was to see her happy in her life. That was how he found
happiness, and he remained that way throughout his life until he departed from his world. Roxanne never new the secret he harboured until the last moment when such knowledge would be of no avail."

Thus, Cyrano, driven by his gallantry and true to his word, works to secure the happiness of his cousin and the man she loves, while he remains grieved and heartbroken. He is like a man dying of thirst, who offers the cup around for others to drink, yet does not taste a drop himself despite the fact that the love which he brought to the two lovers was the product of his own chivalry.

This is the synopsis of the story which Lutfi Al-Manfaluti wrought from its original French dramatic version. It is my great delight that such stories are circulating in the hands of young readers. It is wonderful to see their minds exposed to the great figures they portray, the grand ideas they contain and the great meanings and morals and munificent hearts that are cast throughout their pages. Any book containing profound views and intense feelings is a suitable model that rewards the reader with the beauty and perfection it contains. It would do emerging nations well to see the dissemination in them of such examples of literary excellence... When you read such limpid prose you cannot help but say "well done" to the person who composed it and the person who published and distributed it. Al-Manfaluti excelled in his choice and exerted efforts that merit our most heartfelt gratitude.

I was in the company, one day, of two friends who were engaged in the field of literature. One was a successful translator of foreign narratives into Arabic and the other was involved in the field of press and political publication and is also a friend of Al-Manfaluti. When our conversation turned to the narrative that Al-Manfaluti rendered into Arabic, my friends said that Al-Manfaluti had taken upon himself an extremely arduous task. Such is the eloquence of the original, its verbal craftsmanship, and its distinctive particularities of French expression as to defy translation. They were both of the opinion that any translation of a work of that calibre would inevitably be flawed and distorted and that it should be better left untranslated. I agree with their view about the difficulties. However, the barriers to the translation of a work should not necessarily constitute an impediment to its adaptation into Arabic. Perhaps, too, such intrepidity in the face of the difficulties merits praise, particularly in the case of Al-Manfaluti who was blessed with an articulate pen and profuse erudition. If, in Arabicising that work he could not convey the fullest sense of the superior eloquence of the French he has certainly brought us a vivid image in lucid Arabic...
To my dear friend Mansour Fahmi,

There is an old literary feud between Al-Manfaluti and myself, in which I have formed a long-standing opinion from which I have not yet succeeded in deviating. It is this feud that has made me decide not to discuss the book, 'The Poet' whether favourably or unfavourably, although I do have an opinion on it. I held this opinion before it appeared, which is to say when I first learned that Al-Manfaluti was bent upon rendering this work in the story form in which it eventually appeared. This very feud prevented me from discussing the book, because I know that literary criticism in Egypt has not yet attained the freedom whereby we can overlook grudges and resentments. I told myself that every word I write on that subject would only be greeted by Al-Manfaluti's defenders with considerable caution and suspicion. So, I opted for silence, if against my will.

However, Mansour praised the book, admired the translation, lauded the translator and touched briefly on the difficulties that might be encountered in the process of translation. Mansour is not one to write without our taking notice. In writing these lines, I am not addressing Al-Manfaluti, nor his enemies or detractors. Rather, I write them for the sake of art, firstly, and to Mansour secondly, in the hopes that he gives them consideration. I know him to be a fair and impartial man due to his prolific readings in philosophy. Thus, without further ado, I would like to address two issues.

Firstly, the author of Cyrano de Bergerac composed a story in dramatic verse. The beauty of the story is intrinsically bound, firstly, to its poetry, secondly, to the dramatic form and, thirdly, to the personality of Edmond Rostand himself and his craftsmanship in French expression. To what degree is a translator licensed to transform a dramatic work to a purely narrative form? Is this not a distortion of the original and a crime against its author? I imagine that Egyptians do not yet truly appreciate the power of dramatic dialogue, as the art of drama is alien and the Arabic language is unacquainted with it. I imagine that if they did appreciate dramatic dialogue they would not be able to stomach the transformation of dramatic narratives into story form.

Mansour's dedication to philosophy and philosophical works may have distracted his attention from such matters, but I will cite to him an example from his very philosophical studies. What would he do if a translator rendered into Arabic a work by Plato, but omitted the dialogue
format of the discussion between Socrates and his pupils and cast it in the mould of a philosophical treatise in the style of the books of Ibn Sina (Avicenna) and Aristotle? Could Mansour read the recast version with the same admiration as when he read it in dialogue form?

I am not asking Al-Manfaluti to translate the book in verse, for that may not be feasible. In all events, poetic works are frequently translated into other languages in prose. However, I cannot condone the conversion of theatre into stories. That is an abomination acceptable only to those who do not accord art its true value. The second issue I would like to raise is that every language has its own beauty that cannot be transmitted through another language. Cyrano embraces much of that beauty and it is impossible to savour that beauty in any language but French. The translator may well accept this as he proceeds, for he cannot be expected to achieve the impossible. Still, Cyrano contains delightful turns of phrase and play on words that cannot be translated. It also contains expressions that are not French at all, but rather come from the dialect of Gascony, one of France's southern dialects. Such lexical charms are lost immediately upon translation. If Al-Manfaluti has distorted the play by contorting it into a story and was incapable of transmitting its verbal beauty, what is left of the book?

Which is better -- to translate a literary work with definite failure to convey its most intrinsic aesthetic properties or to leave it in its original language, so as to save it from distortion and disfigurement?

Mansour Fahmi -- 26 July 1921:

My dear friend Taha Hussein,

I have no doubt that you agreed with me when I said of Cyrano that "such is the eloquence of the original, its verbal craftsmanship, and its distinctive particularities of French expression as to defy translation." Similarly, I agreed with you when you said, "every language has its own beauty that cannot be transmitted through another language. Cyrano embraces much of that beauty and it is impossible to savour that beauty in any language but French." Likewise, we both agree that we cannot ask Al-Manfaluti, as you say, "to translate the verse in which the book was written into Arabic verse, for that may not be feasible." So where do we disagree?

The difference between us, I believe, lies in the two questions you asked me and to which you might like to read an answer. You asked me firstly, my friend, "to what extent can the translator take license to distort
and disfigure what he translates?" What a remarkable question and one that I would not answer were I not keen to respond to your wish for a reply.

My answer is simple. I would grant no license to the translator to distort and disfigure what he translates. But now, let me turn the question back to you in a slightly different form. To what extent do you call Al-Manfaluti's handling of the story of Cyrano de Bergerac a distortion and disfiguration and to what extent do you perceive distortion and disfiguration in the transformation of a narrative from its dramatic form to story form while preserving the original substance? The second question you asked me was, "Which is better -- to translate a literary work of art with definite failure to convey its most intrinsic aesthetic properties or to leave it in its original language, so as to save it from distortion and disfigurement?"

My answer is that I believe it is better that the story is conveyed to us with some of the beauty of the original than to have all of its beauty kept hidden from us. I believe it is better that we develop even a small notion of what good literature is than not to know that literature at all. Were this not the case, the Europeans would not have translated the Qur'an into their languages, we would not have read the Torah in our language and we would not have been able to read in Arabic the poetry of Homer and other works translated from Greek literature. I would add to this that the primary incentive to translate from one language to another may lie in the totality of the subject matter, not in the details, and in the import and not in its stylistic garb. It appears to me, my friend, that you ask for perfection and reject what does not measure up to that standard. I believe you would suffer considerably were you to apply that principle in your life's affairs. As for myself, I prefer to walk with the ordinary people in accordance with their familiar adage, "What you cannot attain in its entirety, do not forsake entirely." Having said this, I ask you one more question in the same mode as before: Would you prefer to be able to learn mankind's legacy of knowledge or to live in ignorance?

Taha Hussein -- 29 July 1921:

My dear friend Mansour Fahmi,

You asked me a question which I believed I answered in my first article. You asked me in what respect Al-Manfaluti committed distortion and disfigurement and you said that you do not understand how transforming a dramatic work into a story would constitute distortion and disfigurement. I believe I answered that in some detail in the previous article. I said that theatre has an aesthetic dimension that cannot be found in
narratives and that the source of that aesthetic dimension is in the dialogue mode. I recall that I asked you what your reaction would be were someone to translate Plato's Republic, ignoring the dialogue and rendering it in ordinary prose form in the manner of the works of Avicenna and Aristotle. You did not address this point or you did not consider it. This oversight must be attributed to the scorching summer heat, for I know how thorough a philosopher you are and that you are not satisfied in your examination of any question until you have scrutinised it from all angles. It seems that art has bequeathed to us a law that you have also overlooked. I do not believe that the history of literature has ever recorded the conversion of a theatrical play into a story before Al-Manfaluti came along. It has, however, recorded the conversion of stories into plays. The ancient Greeks at first transformed the stories of the Iliad into dramatic narratives and the Europeans continue in the same vein.

I believe you love Anatole France and Marcel Prevault and have read many of their stories and I am certain that you know that many of their stories have been cast into dramatic form. I also imagine that you, like me, admire Corneille, Racine and Molière. But, can you tell me of any French, British or German writer who has converted any of these playwrights' works into stories? It seems to me that art has rules and principles that must be recognised in Europe and ignored in Egypt.

To me, your reference to the translation of the Qur'an is not convincing. The Qur'an was not translated merely for its aesthetic value but because it is a religious book and because it had to be translated. Cyrano, on the other hand, is an artistic work and a masterpiece of literary aesthetics but no more. Still, that was not the point I stressed in my criticism. Rather, I emphasised the question of converting a play into a story. It is curious that Cyrano has been translated into Arabic in its dramatic form and that Al-Manfaluti composed his story after having read the Arabic translation which stuck to the original. Can you tell me the benefit of this distortion (story form) when the non-distorted Arabic version already exists?

I confess to you that I do not see any artistic value in that work. Perhaps I felt that the evil was compounded because it is first and foremost a distortion and because it deters people from reading the existing translation of the play. I am not able to describe to you the translation of the play because I have not read it yet. However, I can tell you that it is better than Al-Manfaluti's rendition because it remained true to the original and because it was a direct translation from the original. Al-Manfaluti's
book, on the other hand, was taken from an Arabic translation, and was thus an exercise in wasting time or simply a way to acquire repute.

I know that you have read 18th century philosophy and were influenced by its spirit of tolerance. I have read 17th century literature and Arabic literature, both of which have had a strong effect on me. Both these literatures are stringent in their adherence to the rules and principles of art. As Boileau says, "I like to call a cat a cat." It is not easy for me to call a cat a lion however fat and inflated it may be. Voltaire was a prophet of tolerance. But I know that while he was very tolerant in matters of religion and opinion, he was rigidly exacting in his literary criticism. Have you followed his example? I do not deny you the right to praise what you wish and to laud whom you please. However, for your sake and for the sake of your readers, of whom I am one, I do not want your articles to serve as encouragement to perverters of literature and impostors. I believe that the best rule of philosophy is to judge things for what they are. So, say that Al-Manfaluti was zealous in his efforts and say that he merits your praise. But do not say that he did not malign art, that he performed a useful service and that he gave the public a true article of beauty.

Mansour Fahmi — 17 August 1921:

My dear friend Taha Hussein,

Excuse my harsh words, although I do not fear that you will take offence. After all, you, too, are prone to that hazard when the frankness and severity of your criticism verges on the brutal and you abandon your customary mildness to associate Al-Manfaluti with impostors in literature. I do not find that you have cause to associate Al-Manfaluti with impostors. No matter how lenient I am with respect to the rules of art, as you perceive, I do not believe it excessive to describe Al-Manfaluti as a fine writer. You think that the recasting of the play Cyrano into a novel is a crime that should concern the defenders of the law. You find it odd and a waste of time that the drama should appear in novel form after it had already been translated into Arabic, remaining faithful to its original dramatic form. At the same time, you say that it is easier for people to read stories than plays. Can you not see that Al-Manfaluti has been faithful to the original yet has performed a service to the public, for he has made it easier for them to read and understand the beauty and substance of the work. Or do you think that making literature, art and science accessible to the masses has no place in your spirit of forgiveness? I cannot imagine that you subscribe to this. As you know, the greatest scholars and the most scrupulous advocates of the language of arts and science frequent the public universities and present the findings of their complicated research in an easy-to-follow, palatable
manner, and that they abridge their studies into simplified books in order to enable people unfamiliar with the technicalities and jargon of the sciences and arts to read them. Every language has its own grace and splendour. If the mode of dramatic dialogue suits the splendour of Greek and French, the story form is the most appropriate to Arabic. In this sense, Al-Manfaluti did not distort art. On the contrary, he safeguarded it by rendering a Western art form into a thoroughly Arabic one.

Finally, my dear friend, since you like to call a cat a cat and not a lion, permit me to call you by your name. You are modest and you are kind. You are many other good epithets. However, when I think of your criticism of Al-Manfaluti, I call you cruel and prejudiced.”

It has been seen from the pages of “al-Ahram” that Tāhā Husayn regarded al-Manfalūtī’s transformation of the play into a novel as an ‘abomination’ and a ‘crime against the author’, while Fahmi admired al-Manfalūtī’s effort and described his adaptation as useful, because it presented to Arab readers a masterpiece of Western literature. Although al-Manfalūtī didn’t produce the original exactly, Fahmi argued, he succeeded in presenting in a clear Arabic style a reasonable likeness of it; his presentation of some parts of this romance was flawless. In defending al-Manfalūtī, Fahmi contended that it would be better to have some slight notion of a new work of literature known only in translation than to avoid this literature altogether. Tāhā Husayn criticized al-Manfalūtī’s conversion of Rostand’s drama from verse to prose. He, furthermore, said that al-Manfalūtī didn’t work from the original but from someone else’s translation. He questioned whether it was worthwhile to have a deficient and distorted translation, or to argue that such work is better than no translation at all. At least, one contemporary writer Isā Ubayd, himself a pioneer in Arabic literature, does not blame him for converting Karr’s novel ‘Sous les tilleuls’ into a fantastic piece of prose fiction, or for cruelly suppressing the personality of Stephen. With great respect for him, he calls
him “Our greatest living writer”. Isā Ubayd defends al-Manfalūti’s Arabicization of Karr’s work and his modification of some of its characters by asserting that he was attempting to add fresh life into modern Arabic fiction. Isā Ubayd has commented as follows:

“Does not his distortion of this romance and modification of the characters show that he was subject to his Oriental temperament, which motivated him to portray human perfection and the highest ideas of immaculate love? Furthermore, does not al-Manfalūti’s choice of ‘Cyrano de Bergerac’ serve as proof enough that there is an inherent inclination in the Egyptian writer that motivates him to portray impeccable beauty and perfection which are as far from reality as heaven is from earth?”29
AL-FADILA OR PAUL ET VIRGINIE (1923 A.D.)

This is originally a French novel written by Jacques-Henri Bernardin de Saint-Pierre (1737-1814 A.D.), a French novelist and naturalist entitled “Paul et Virginie” (1788 A.D.). While he was writing this novel, al-Manfalûti was assisted by a translator, author, poet Muhammad Othmân Jalâl in Arabisization from French in 1872 A.D. The book was entitled originally as "الأمانة والمنة في حديث قول ورد جنة" (The Safety and blessings in the speech of acceptance and a flower of Paradise).

It is said that sometimes he also took help from second translation completed by the drama writer, Farah Antûn entitled as “Paul and Virgine”. Al-Manfalûti again retained the title of the original source, while adding an ‘alternative’ title, al-Fdilah (The Virtue). Then “Ilyâs Abû Shibkah” the third author, also published it in 1933 entitled as “Paul and Virgine”.

The theme of this novel contains self-respects and self-excellencies of man to which al-Manfalûti always gives specific importance to express such qualities in all his writings. He declares it in the preface of this novel as in the following:-

"IjJS (jjd! 4-C.l ui Q$t J UiiiVt filial! QAJ >ali (_ (£ili l g ll a "(jAS'-J* J <-U? l»*^3J LaS 4 Aluiaall Annotation:- "The bravery and courage of a youth attract me, the etiquette and shameful manner of a girl attract me. Because the bravery of a
youth is the foundation of his all-good qualities. The shame of a girl is her beauty. Without shame, she has no beauty. So I have forwarded this novel for the young boys and young girls of Egypt so that the both of the sections can be benefited by their potentialities. I like to see both of them in these characters so that they keep their future lives on the basis of good virtues just as ‘Paul and Virgine’ kept it well.”

The events of this novel take place in the island of Mauritius and this island is situated near to the island of Madagascar in Africa. This is the exact place and this is the time in which the events happened in 1825 A.D. It is found that al-Manfalūtī wrote this novel in retaining the style of the author. Its events are authentic and real in the original book of the French author. The sum & substance of the novel is as follows:

“The event of the novel starts with two widows. They met each other all of a sudden in the island. They are named Margaret and Helen. Then both of them became friends and their two children “Paul and Virgine” were brought up as brother and sister there. Then they reached to the age of maturity and adulation. They gradually loved each other. After a few days Virgine along with Paul, travelled to the house of her uncle in Paris, who was a very rich man. During their stay in Paris for three years, they found a free atmosphere there for expressing their emotional loves. Thus, the novel goes up to the conclusion, while there took place a tragedy with Virgine. When they were returning from Paris by the ship, a severe tempest jolted it near the coast of island. At this critical juncture, Virgine refused to surrender her virtue to a sailor. Suddenly she fell down into the water and died drowning in the water. After this tragic incident in front of him, Paul became extremely grief-stricken, lost his mental balance, jumped into the water and died. The two souls were as if connected together with a thread to reach in a divine destination so that life can be
transformed into death to live together hereafter. According to him, such sacrifice or holy death for a beloved is thousand times better than a life.

Al-Manfalūṭi concludes this story conferring farewell to both the martyr’s “Paul & Virgine” in moaning:

"سلام عليك أيها الولد الطيب الكريم; الذي نشأ في تربة سانجة بسيطة، فنشأ سانجا بسيطاً، لا ينال الناس بشر ولا يعتقد في الناس شرًا. ولا يضمر في نفسه إلا الوفاء والإخلاص، حتى كليته وشانه، والكون الذي يوحيه، والظل الذي يفني إليه" 

**Annotation:** “Oh the generous holy boy! Peace be upon you. Who was bringing up in a wide simple soil and then became a broad-minded simple man. He did neither dislike any man nor disbelieve any one badly. He did not keep secret anything in his heart except faith and sincerity even for his dog and his sheep, his hut in which he took shelter and shadow where he took rest.”

This tale with its overtones of the “noble savage” and its echoes not only of Daniel Defoe’s Robinson Crusoe but also of the Arabic medieval writer Ibn Tufayl’s ‘Hayy ibn Yaqzān, seems to have struck a particular chord with Arab writers of the period, for it had already been translated into Arabic by the Syrian Farah Antūn. The fact that al-Manfalūṭi should nonetheless have felt moved to produce another version is an indication of the overwhelming appeal of the theme.

It is mentionable here that al-Manfalūṭi is himself influenced by the characters of his writings. We also find a couplet depicting a character at the end of the novel, which is unique one. He recites as follows:

ْيا بنى الدنيا عاطر
من بنى الدنيا عليك وثناء

**Annotation:** “Oh my beloved lifeless son! Peace be upon you, sweet-smelling and appreciation are coming from your family in the world."
3.7 EVALUATION OF HIS NOVELS:

It is seen that the novels of al-Manfalūti have a genuine value in the history of modern Arabic literature. His four translated novels can be said as a historical dimension of 20th century. Moreover, these four works were composed at the early stage of novel literature and the readers of the Arab world accepted these new creations of al-Manfalūti wholeheartedly. These novels became so much popular amongst the common people that many portions of them were memorized by the people and they used to shed tears after reading such emotional, social and patriotic tragic events that had been happening in the society. Many people were influenced by his novels for the sake of its heroic characters, they wept for them, and their hearts were throbbing for their beloved heroes. Moreover, al-Manfalūti’s novels had a deep relation with the socio-economy of the rural life of the common people. Therefore, he selected the characters, background and events very cautiously at the time of writing anything. So he attained popularity amongst the common people of whole Arabian world. He was one of the pioneers in translating novels from French literature into Arabic. Al-Manfalūti created some specific Arabian features in his novels. He always keeps relation with the social problems of the people in his writings. He mentions here about the dignity of woman, the suffering of widows, the discrimination between the rich and the poor, the condition of orphan etc. in a very good description. So the writings of al-Manfalūti acquired so much popularity at that time that no other author could achieve such position for long time during the first half of 20th century. It is known that only two authors attained very wide popular reputation in the field of two different areas during that period: “One of them was Ahmad Shawqi as a poet, who was declared as a prince of poets
It is obvious that the styles of al-Manfalūtī have similarity with the formations of Hasan al-‘Attār, Rifā‘a al-Tahtāwī, ‘Abdullāh Fikrī, ‘Alī Fahmī Rifā‘a, ‘Abdullāh al-Nadīm, Muhammad ‘Abduhu, ‘Alī Īsuf, Sa‘d Zaghlūl, Muhammad al-Muailīhī etc. Al-Manfalūtī emphasized to apply an exquisite sense of formation of flawless word in his writings. He often begins in a straightforward way, stating the problem under discussion, then gradually works up to a climax, and finally dies away to the end of the writings. The essay may be a cautionary tale, a reasoned argument, an impressionistic picture, or a poem in prose. In fact, he challenges comparison with essayists in many other languages, for the wide variety of his themes and their treatment and his command of language and form.

3.8 AL-MANFALŪTĪ AS AN INNOVATOR:

Mustafā Lutfī al-Manfalūtī (1876-1924 A.D.) has been regarded as one of the great innovators of his time as he became successful in bringing a change in the modern literary scenario. He insisted strongly through his writings that there should be no hypocrisy and surname of the people in the society. He attempted to reform the society in every aspect of its phase. His main aim was to establish social value amongst the people, to remove the social discrimination prevailing between the rich and the poor, to lead the downtrodden and wretched people in the right-direction, to fight against the exploiters and the oppressors of the weaker section of the people, to rescue the people from the immorality and corruption, to protect the dignity of women in the society, to save the woman from victimizations so that they could not fall down and slip down from the mainstream. He was also sticking to the reformations of styles of literary
writings and tried to stop the unrelated significance between the word and meaning. He opined that the method of descriptions in the prose literature has no more differences from the mode of compositions of the poetry. According to him, the conception of a writer is like the perception of a poet having no any rhyme, mitre or similes. He pointed out that there should be no rhyme, no mitre in the mind of a writer except the beauty of expression, ornamentation of words and the application of profound meaning, which discloses its themes and situation. So there is no significant relation between the styles and the contents of a writer but the writer keeps a close touch with ground reality.\footnote{31}

Al-Manfalûti, at that time, was only the person who called for social justice, equality, freedom of speech and freedom of economy in the country other than all his contemporary writers. He always defended in favour of change of social system in some areas while the ill motivators of the society opposed it tooth and nail. He thought that literature is the main instrument of a writer to create a congenial environment in the society and to bring a social change. But there are some fundamental differences in the ideological view of each writer and each writer has different attitude in his writings. These differences are based on the conservative Islamic theology movement and the philosophy of universal realistic movement such as in the following:

I. **The Salafi Islamic Movement:** It follows the ideology of Islamic theology on biological affairs and reflects the doctrine of here and here-after.

II. **The Liberal Movement on Ideology:** This movement maintains liberal views on its ideology and thought. It gives importance to revive the self-identity through its writings. It expresses the self-observations and specific experiences of the author to impress the common people.
III. **The Realistic Movement on Thought:** This movement is based on complete social issues including the illiteracy, problems of widows, orphans and poverty etc.

Mustafā Lutfī al-Manfalūtī was a strong supporter of The Salafi Islamic Movement through which he spread his ideology among the people.\(^{32}\) Definitely, he derived his ideology of Islam and its value inherited from his worthy ancestors and obeyed its principles strictly in any condition. He studied profoundly the theological subjects such as al-Qurān, Hadith, Tafsir, Fiqh, philosophy of Islam and tried to focus them through his writings. Accordingly, he was sticking to the writing of poetry, short story and the art of music also. He always sought to find out the defect in the systems of Islamic Arab society. He was a strict conservative Salafi writer and maintained its principles strictly even above the level of his literary position. Therefore, he endeavoured to create powerful characters and elements in the society. He disliked all aspects of western culture in his thinking and manners. Accordingly, al-Manfalūtī showed resentment towards the development of drama and named it as “humorous play” and also opposed vehemently the presentation of naked characters of females on the stages.\(^{33}\) So, he comments regarding the drama as in the following:

انزلت بالامة المصرية نازلة المقادر العامة التي يسمونها "الملاعيب الهزلية" وما هي في شيء من الجد والهزل. ولا علاقة لها بالتمثيل والتصوير. ولا بائى فن من الفنون الإدبية"

**Annotation:** “The dirty things have been revealed on Egyptian nation which are named as “Humorous Play”. These are things neither have good fortunes nor have real amusements. They have no relations of the showing with creations and there is no any art from the point of view of literary arts.”\(^{34}\)
We have seen the features mentioned above in almost all writings of Mustafa Lutfi al-Manfaluti and these qualities are spontaneous outbreak of his mental attitudes.

3.9 AL-MANFALÛTI'S VISION ON WRITING:

It is found that al-Manfaluti uses basically the general aspects of Arabic prose properly at the time of arranging the styles of literary essay and short story and depends too much upon the "artistic skill & technical proficiency" as well as "proper application of ornaments" in the writings, although sometimes it harms its meaning. It is already said that al-Manfaluti was a strict conservative in respects of applying his attitudes and addicted to use his self-styles in the writings. The attitudes of his subject matter were well-ordered and disciplined with elements. He was also a follower of the philosophy of biological theory, heart and soul, which was a doctrine of Salafi Movement and obeyed it with humble submission. This movement contributed to the development of Arabic literature in both prose & poetry related with ethical matters while al-Manfaluti taking shelter under this umbrella, used to write about authentic qualities of the people.

He always tries his level best to keep himself with quite normal nature, while writes something and wants to inform the readers about the real feelings of his heart and the messages on humanity. The exposition that follows, lays considerable stress on a rather vaguely defined concept of "beauty" and on the "heart" as a key value in the composition of literature. Al-Manfaluti identifies three sorts of visions of writing in the preface of 'al-Nazarat' after dividing the book into three volumes:

"وجي حديث اللسان، وحديث العقل، وحديث القلب"

Annotation: "It (The vision) is the discourse of the tongue, discussion of the intellect and speech of the heart."35
In my view, the aforementioned sentence commented by al-Manfalūti has four objectives. **Firstly,** he mentions here that he uses those events at the time of writing something, which existed in the society and those discussions largely, which are authentic in his literatures. It means that he would not like to take any burden to create something from himself, which needed proper meaning of a term in a story rather he wants to use his natural and spontaneous conceptions in his writings. **Secondly,** it is assumed that al-Manfalūti did not work hard in thinking for writing something. It is also found out that he did not seat for long time in his chair contemplating on a subject deeply. On the particular day of writing on any topic, he used to choose any topic that comes to his mind. He did not bother to think about the popularity and public acceptance of his topic at that moment. Rather he selected an issue, and then he observed it minutely and used to think over its gravity and relevance, and then began to write over it and to publish it. Sometime the common people accepted his issues wholeheartedly and sometimes they resented on him due to his style of writing, mood of expression in the issues through his publications. On the other hand, al-Manfalūti also didn’t give more importance on the resentment of public or on their satisfactions. Rather he was just going on writing freely. **Thirdly,** he wrote his topics only on genuine matter without having any artificiality in his imagination. He did never write a subject based on assumption. However, he concentrated his mind exclusively on reality. Because al-Manfalūti believed that it was only real happenings that could impress on the minds of the people. **Fourthly,** al-Manfalūti himself again says in “Muqaddamah” of al-Nazarat-Vol.-I, as in the following lines:

"إِنِّي كَانِتُ أَكْتَبُ لِلْنَاسِ لَا أَعْجَبُهُمْ، يَوْمَ لَآمِنِيَ، وَلَا أَرْسِعُ مِنْهُمْ: أَنْتُ أَحْصِنَتْ بَلْ لَأَجِدُ فِي نَفْسِهِمْ أَثَرًا مَّا كَتَبْتُ، وَلِلْنَاسِ، كَمَا قَلَّتُ فِي بَعْضِ رِسَالِي، عَامَّةٌ، أَمَا خَاصَّهُمْ فَلَا شَأْنُ لِي.
Annotation: "I am not writing my topics to attract the people (towards me) only, rather definitely I am to enjoy them and not to hear from them: 'It is well-done for you that I am able to impress in their hearts from what I am writing for the people. Likewise, I said in one of my epistles in general and in regards of the people particular that I have no matter with them as well as no relation with them, there is no any word penetrating from myself into their affairs. I am, therefore, neither delighted for the sake of their satisfactions nor sad for their discontentment, because I did not write for them as well as I did not talk with them. Moreover, I want neither to show my affairs to them nor to display my achievements in front of the people, rather I am avoiding with possible effort to hear anything from them which is related with me in the form of good or bad deed. Because, I have been writing to reveal my views and spontaneous feelings (of my mind) in the form of language. I, therefore, would not like to grieve anyone through my feelings, views and doctrine. So, I wouldn’t like to create any suspicion amongst both of them that is opinions & doctrine. Moreover, Allâh does not give me any power to know about the knowledge of human nature, I am not able to distinguish between their correct and defect ways."  

He was indifferent to the attitudes of the public. Whether they would accept his writing or not, was no concern for him. This attitude gave him complete freedom and enabled him to write freely and spontaneously.
In this sense, he may be termed as strong adherent of ‘Art for art’s sake’ doctrine as a literary artist.

3.10 HIS VIEWS ON RELIGION:

Al-Manfalūti is a strong believer on almighty Allāh in both situations whether it is hardship or happiness and difficulties or comfortness. He remains firmly stable as like as a mountain at the hour of any disaster or event. Accordingly, no people saw him any day to express sad for his tragedy. Like a strong believer in Almighty Allāh, he had deep faith in the “Divine Dispensation” of justice in the affairs of man by the creator – the common father of all creatures. Like a true pious man, he retained mental equanimity in all diverse situations of life. Success or failure, profit or loss, suffering or joy could not make any difference in his mind. So he had unending patience depending firmly upon Allāh.

Regarding religion, al-Manfalūti argues that Islam is such a religion that teaches tolerance, morality, ethical education, brotherhood, humanity etc. According to him, after complete understanding of Islam, man learns to bear patience at the time of critical situations, avoids enviousness towards other. Nevertheless, al-Manfalūti advocated to bring reformations in some areas of religion, sometime criticized conservatism and its sanctuary, the system of education in al-Azhar and denounced saint-type-worship. Therefore, he insulted his master Muhammad ‘Abdūh for introducing modern interpretations of the Holy Qur’ān. Islamic patriotism also has been seen in the character of al-Manfalūti and this led him, at one time, to condemn all Western cultures and to protest against Armenian massacres. But it is a matter of surprise that al-Manfalūti was entirely impressed by the influence of Rousseau and Victor Hugo. At the same time, his Islamic patriotism had to admit a growing rival in Egyptian national pride, which claimed to be the heir of Thebes (Ancient Greek city)
no less than of Baghdad, but with characteristic honesty, al-Manfalūti acknowledged the deep debt of gratitude which Egypt owes to the Syrians. Historically, he challenged the great Muslim scholars of old, who readily availed themselves of the linguistic and literary traditions of Pre-Islamic and Islamic Arabic poetry while wrestling with the primary texts of Islam. To their present successors, these venerable scholars bequeathed a rich poetic heritage, which through neglect of literary studies, contemporary Shaykhs have all but fully squandered. The reasoning thus runs as follows: “Ignorance of the additional traditions of Arabic literature vitiates religious scholarship and this, in turn, gradually erodes the very foundations of religious knowledge, thus leaving both scholarship and knowledge prey to superstition and deception.” On the causal connection between the sorry state of Muslims and Islam in the modern world and the historical agents thereof, al-Manfalūti minces no words: “If the neglect of literary studies is a major cause of the decline of Islam, the unenlightened Shaykhs of al-Azhar are the unwilling agents of that untoward development. To reverse the downward process and resurrect authentic, viable Islam, it is necessary to revive Islamic knowledge by rehabilitating Islamic scholarship. The incorporation of a substantial component of literary studies in the curriculum of al-Azhar is the first step in that direction.  

3.11 HIS VIEWS ON WESTERN CULTURE:

Al-Manfalūti expresses his views regarding Western Cultures in “al-Madaniyya al-Gharbiyya” of al-Nazarāt very clearly, which, Matti Moosa, a renowned modern scholar, criticizes as “unjustifiable.” Al-Manfalūti condemns the life-styles of Western culture, which is most evident in his essay “al-Madaniyya al-Gharbiyya” where he emphatically says:

"إِنْ خَطْوَةٌ واحِدَةٌ يَخطُوهاُ المصريُّ إلى الغرب وتدنيه تنزل إليه أجله، وتذنىه من مهوى سحق يقبل فيه قبولاً لا حياة له من بعده إلى يوم يبعثون. لا يستطيع المصري وهو ذلك الضعيف المسلم أن..."
Each step that the Egyptian takes towards the West, will bring him to his death, to an abyss where he will be buried until doomsday. The Egyptian is weak and submissive as he is when he approaches Western civilization, becomes like a sieve, which holds the bran and lets the flour out. He will be like a wine – filter that holds the residue and siphons the wine. He should flee from Western civilization just as a healthy person flees from the patient who is stricken with scabies.

During the last age of al-Manfalūtī, he opined on western cultures as mentioned below:

Certainly all the misdeeds and bad characters are coming from the imitation of western culture. I do believe that the bad characters and western civilization are two inseparable things like the two cohering pearls and can never be separated from each-other.

When the position of the litterateur solely depended on the aspects of the theme with significant contents as well as an interesting event, al-Manfalūtī did not like to import its styles directly from the western culture. In this study, it is found that there is a great similarity in his styles and methods of writing with the structure and elements of some renowned classical and modern scholars such as ‘Abd al-Hamid al-Kātib, al-Jāhij, Abū Hayyān al-Tauhīdī, Ibn al-‘Amid, al-Qādī al-Fāṭīlī, Rifā‘ah al-Tahtāwī, ‘Abdullāh Fikrī, Muhammad al-Muāllihi etc. In spite of many callings towards the reformatons of style of literary works and not to imitate the western culture, al-Manfalūtī was totally failure to influence the intellectuals of the society in this regard. He confesses his inability to
attract the people and mentions its cause that there is no excellency in his writings. He confirmed such his views by saying thus:

"لاتى استطعت الانقلت من قبود التمثال والاحتذاء وما نفعتي في ذلك شيء (مثل) ما نفعتي ضعف ذاكرتي والتواذاها على، وعجزها عن ان تمسك الاقلیة من المقولات، التي كانت تمر بي، فقد كنت اقرأ من مثثور القول مشاء الله ان اقرأ ثم لا البث ان انسام، فلا يبقى منه في ذاكرتي إلا جمال أثاره وروعة حسنها ورونة الطربه به"

**Annotation:** “Definitely I am able to free from the limitations of similarity and imitation of western culture. Nothing benefited me in this regard for social reformation just as my weak memory could not help me to keep recollection and my subject has been turned into absurdity for the common people due to myself. It became failure to attract a few readers, who passed by me. So I used to read the prose literatures. Then I did not forget the beauty of these works, the magnificence of their exquisiteness and the sound of joy with them.”

He mentions here that he has been able to set literature free from the bindings of the similarity and imitation of western culture. Accordingly, he hesitated to follow the new style of Arabic prose imported from the west but he had to concentrate his minds in creating some new splendid things such as the style of assonance, the antithesis, synonymity and the influence of some conservative rhetorical formations taking from the glorious Qur'an, prophetic tradition and poetry. Al-Manfalūṭī realized that his apparent westernization was largely a veneer. He asked himself why, despite his glorious past, his people were backward and enslaved. He wondered whether his centuries old social system, which westerners suggested was holding him back, was really Islamic and whether social reform could be reconciled with Islam. Whatever he proposed was bound to draw forth refutation from the old fashioned - the “Ulama”, (who claimed to know Islam) backwards.
3.12 AL-MANFALÛTĪ’S STATUS AMONG THE MODERN ARABIC PROSE WRITERS:

Sayyid Mustafā Lutfi al-Manfalûti was one of the brightest luminaries of 19th century who excelled in essay, short story and novel of Arabic literature. A prolific writer of outstanding merit, he concentrated all his energies, every moment of his life to the exploration, preservation and propagation of rich Arabian culture. A pioneer in modern prose of Arabic, the multidimensional life of al-Manfalûti was a perfect blend of scholarship and creativity. The extraordinary researcher, academician, story writer, novelist, a compiler, al-Manfalûti occupies a unique place in the Arabic literary world. He was a great author as well as a poet of modern Arabic literature and one of the biggest activists of modern literary movement in Egypt. Pierre Cachia, an outstanding critic and scholar, has assessed Mustafā Lutfi al-Manfalûti as the ‘Best-writer’ of the first quarter of the 20th century and commented regarding him as the following lines:

“The writer, who best articulated the taste of the first quarter of the twentieth century, was Mustafā Lutfi al-Manfalûti. Apart from ‘Arabizing’ – without any knowledge of a European language - four French romantic novels, he delighted the public of the day with short prose pieces which were always emotional, high-minded and elegantly worded and which have been published and republished in two collections appropriately titled “The Views (al-Nazarât) and The Tears (al-‘Abarât)”, for they often depicted some harrowing scene from which some lofty moral was to be derived.”

His writings had far-reaching influence on readers of the country which had awakened the minds of the common man against the social injustice and discrimination. Al-Manfalûti was great not only in Egypt but also in an outstanding prose writer of Arab world. His mastery over the
language enabled him to reach the highest position of perfection in his writings. He developed a new style which was unmatched in Arabic prose and therefore al-Manfalūtī was acclaimed “Amir al-Bayān” (Prince of eloquence) by a general consensus of eminent scholars. He was the great master of the essay, who in style falls somewhere between the old and the new. His numerous essays, first published in the newspaper al-Mu’ayyid, were published in the collection of three volumes as al-Nazarāt. His social and political views were enriched by his close relationship with Muhammad ʿAbduh and the intellectual circles in Cairo. He uses a style basically simple, yet charming. Almost all his writings are surcharged with national sentiment, which is evident on his contemporary issues, composed in the early stage of his life. Therefore, Al-Manfalūtī’s position amongst his contemporary authors is specifically notable.

Al-Manfalūtī’s articles, which were published in the newspaper, amused the hearts of youngsters and old ones. These articles contained many affaires comprising the social status of distressed one, ill characters of society, the gap between the rich and poor one, the tyranny of powerful man over weaker section of the people etc. and he thus, began a new trend of writings in literature which was overwhelmly accepted by the readers. He was not averse to translating some western fiction and gradually helped to remove the stigma attached to the reading and writing of novels. Accordingly, he equally touched the Islamic teachings in these essays inviting the people to follow strictly the tenets of Islam and stressed to return back the lost glory of Egypt. In a brief generalization it may be said that for him Islam was dynamic, its essentials were immutable eternal truth, but unessential externals could evolve to suit the changing environment. His ideas on charity and public spirit were taken over by his followers.
Generally, the position of a man is assessed by his quality, wisdom, sagacity, characters and contributions in the concerned areas. Whenever an author is established by honour, dignity and publicity in the society by dint of his literary publication, objectives of his mission and propagations, then his literary value may not be set up permanently in the hearts of the people. Besides, the social prestige, reputation, wealth & property can’t assess one’s value permanently. On the other hand, there are some authors, who have been writing continuously by their pens, but they have no significant position or remarkable dignity in the society, rather some of them are living on the donations offered by some generous people. But they are great authors in spite of their materialistic poverty and social modesty. So they are often able to win the hearts of the people permanently through their quality based writings. So it is mentioned that Mustafā Lutfī al-Manfālūtī belonged to the class of this category in respect of his outlook. Therefore, he was known as a writer of humanity at his early age. Regarding his potentiality and credibility, Ahmad Muhammad Abdul Hādi, comments as the following:

"وكان أشعر الشعراء عندي، وأكتب الكتاب. سواءً في ذلك المتقدم والمتأخر والذابه والخامل. أوصفهم لحالات نفسه، أو أثر مشاهد الكون فيها، وأقدرهم على تمثيل ذلك وتصويره للناس تصويرا صحيحا، كأنما هو يعرضه على أنظارهم عرضا، أو يضعه في أيديهم وضعا."

Annotation: “In my view, he (Al-Manfalūtī ) was the greatest poet as well as most skilled writer, equally glorious in classical and modern style, most eminent but weak man. He was most praiseworthy amongst the people in case of himself, or most effective observer of the reality, most powerful in portraying that reality, his image was quite flawless in front of the people as if he discloses their views very clearly or keeps the opinions free in their hands.”42
It is said that his writings drew attention of Sa‘d Zaghlûl (1857-1927 A.D.), a great Egyptian nationalist leader and founder of the Wafd Party, while he was a student of al-Azhar University. He came in close relationship with Sa‘d Zaghlûl Pâshâ. So Sa‘d Zaghlûl also came forward to help him and accompanied with him to any place of the country to where he had to go. Al-Manfalûti worked for him sincerely. Thus, a close relation between Sa‘d Zaghlûl and al-Manfalûti was taken place. He also appointed him as a Secretary of Compilation Department, which was the most prestigious and covetous rank of the country and it was established during the reign of ‘Abbasid dynasty and continued traditionally since its inception. Earlier, ‘Abdul Hamid al-Kâtib, a distinguished person of ‘Abbasid period worked for long time in this post. After him, some very eminent personalities like Sahal bin Hârûn, Ibn al-‘Amid, al-Sâhib bin Ibâd, al-Qâdi al-Fâdîl, Bâdi‘ al-Zamân al-Hamdânî and ‘Abdullâh Fikri etc. occupied this post. It is known that no person without extraordinary qualifications and mental alertness dared to take this post, as it required depth of knowledge in diverse fields and a capacity to interpret different languages in a unique style. Perhaps no any other publisher could take bold step to create literary arts in Arabic prose except this Department.

Al-Manfalûti is supposed to be a mediator between the conservative revival movement and modern Romantic Movement. The common people used to read his articles utmost enthusiastically and to honour him especially in comparison with other contemporary authors. They considered him as their first category writer. Even the most of the youngsters were fans of his writings and became followers of his principles. He was a powerful leader of the Romantic Movement in modern literature. At the same time, Ahmad Shawqi (1868-1932 A.D.), Abdur Rahmân al-Shukri (1886-1958 A.D.), Khalil Mutrân (1872-1948 A.D.) also
were great exponents of this movement. Al-Manfalūṭī and Ahmad Shawqi were two peculiar figures in romanticism. Al-Manfalūṭī was a topmost position holder in comparison with other romantic writers like Muhammad Husayn Hykal (1888-1956 A.D.), Ibrahim ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Māzīnī (1889-1949 A.D.), ‘Ibbas Mahmūd al-Uqqād (1889-1964 A.D.) etc. during his time. The readers also began to accept the Romantic Movement with enthusiasm. On the other hand, al-Manfalūṭī had a very important role in the revival of the conservative movement and he achieved his literary reputation in this area along with the different propagandists of the Romantic Movement during that period.44

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