CHAPTER - II

EMINENT SHORT STORY WRITERS OF MODERN ARABIC PERIOD
# EMINENT SHORT STORY WRITERS OF MODERN ARABIC PERIOD

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Now, we would like to discuss some of the most eminent short-story writers of modern Arabic period in the following:

2.1 TAWFIQ AL-HAKIM (1898 – 1987 A.D.)

The most imaginative writer of the Arab world and its greatest playwright, Tawfiq al-Hakim, was born in a well-to-do family in Alexandria, where his father worked in the judiciary. Although his mother, a Turk, was a domineering person she fascinated her son with her repertoire of tales from the Romance of Antar of Alif Layla wa Layla.

As a child, Tawfiq al-Hakim kept to himself. Perhaps as a result of this he developed his independence of thought. His interest in drama was aroused by a play, he saw at a very tender age. He reacted it with such a zeal at home that his parents, who wanted him to be a lawyer, were alarmed at this new trend.  

His parents planned his daily schedules carefully, but Tawfiq al-Hakim could not be contained in an atmosphere of discipline. Instead of keeping himself busy with the Mu'allaqas, he would paint or read story books. He hardly allowed to miss an opportunity of seeing dance performances or hearing some visiting chanteuses.

After finishing school, al-Hakim joined the Law College in Cairo where he stayed with his uncles. Away from the watchful control of his parents, he could indulge freely in music and the theatre. Cairo artistic fascinated the young student. Georges Abied as producing classical tragedies with the expertise he had acquired at the Comedic Francaise. The famous lawyer, Abd al-Rahman Rushdi gave up law to start acting and Tawfiq al-hakim moved out of his father's aristocratic
circle to live among actors and artists. Tawfiq al-hakim formed his own troupe and staged amateur plays. Later he even improvised a theatre.

During the 1919 A.D. revolution, he joined student demonstrations and composed national rhymes and anthems. He depicted this stage of his life in his great novel Audat al-Ruh (The Return of the Spirit – 1933 A.D.)

In 1924 A.D. al-Hakim went to Paris for further studies. Neglecting his main subject ‘Law’, he made a thorough study of European literature, both classical and contemporary. Thanks to his father’s generous stipends, he could frequently visit theatres, operas and art museums. An idea of his life in Paris can be gleaned from two autobiographical accounts: Zahrat al-Umr (The Flower of Life – 1943 A.D.) and Usfur min al-Sharq (Sparrow from the East – 1938 A.D.).

On his return home the translation from Paris to the Egyptian countryside, where he was posted, was not easy for the sensitive young writer. Though the general negligence there liked him and the human suffering caused by injustice and poverty pained him, and art and harmony around him enabled to write about his experiences there in another interesting book, Yammiyit Na’ib fi’l-Aryaf (Diary of a Prosecutor in the Countryside) noted for its biting humour and sparking dialogues.

Thus began a lifetime devotion to creative writing, particularly the drama in which he specialized. About this preference he writes:

“My attempt at writing plays is like a journey in different directions...like a traveler seeking something, a man searching for his soul or an artist working on his art... or all of this and more.”
After working in the Ministries of Education and Social Welfare in Cairo, al-Hakim resigned from government service in 1943 A.D. to join the newspaper, ‘Akhbar al-Yaum’. In 1951 A.D. he was appointed Director General of Dar al-Kutub.

Women often occupied his thoughts but failed to influence his life seriously. His revolt against his mother’s early domination over him affected his attitude towards women in general. His encounters in Cairo, with the girl Saniya, who attracted him and the another girl at Odeon in Paris with whom he fell in love, were short lived. His attitude towards women became increasingly hostile and he considered them dispensable inconveniences to an artist’s creativity. This formed the pivotal theme of many plays: ‘al-Mar’a al-Jadida’ (The New Women), al-Khuruj min al-Jannah (Exit from Paradise), Pygmalion, etc. He became famous as ‘Aduuo al-Mar’a’ (The Enemy of Women) till his attitude towards them mellowed down following his marriage in 1946 A.D.5

From 1954 A.D., al-Hakim has been a member of the Arabic Language Academy. In 1959 A.D. he was appointed Egypt’s representative to UNESCO in Paris. He was also a member of the Board of Directors of al-Ahram. Ironically it was Tawfiq al-Hakim’s mother who, with the exciting stories she told him in childhood, turned his attention towards fiction and literature. At home by stealth and later with immunity in Cairo, al-Hakim acquired a wide knowledge of novels and short stories that formed the nucleus of his literary trend.

Cairo, in the wave of the revolution, was the first trial ground for his creative talent. Inspired by its theatrical activity, he wrote his first play, al-Daif al-Thaqil (The Unwelcome Guest), a satire on the burning topic of British occupation. In Paris a new world of music, art and
letters opened before Tawfiq al-Hakim. At times he left torn between classicism and modernism and his views about art were applicable to literature also:

"I cannot join with the rebels and cry for the old to fall for the old is itself quite new to me. 6

Nevertheless, he absorbed all the trends of European culture from ancient to modern times. The plays of Sophocles, and their modern versions presented by Andre Gide, Pirandello, Bernard Shaw and Ibsen, inspired al-Hakim to introduce abstract plays which became his first major contribution to Arab theatre.

Other important influences were those of Wilde, Moliere, Chekov, Schiller, Goethe and de Musset. Their one-act plays gave al-Hakim the idea to depict social themes but in his own individualistic style. It is not easy to recognize the influence of European literature on the works of al-Hakim because he has an amazing power to represent things in a way where his own personality stands over all and becomes dominant.

Between the two world wars, al-Hakim wrote two types of drama:

1. Social plays, dealing with situations in society or the lives of individuals, which are either criticism of life or efforts to it. Under this category al-Hakim wrote forty-five plays, from the start of his literary career (1919-1923 A.D.) till later, when he became a journalist (1943-1951 A.D.). These plays are collected in two volumes: Masrah al-Mujtama (The Theatre of Society - 1950 A.D.) and al-Kasrah al-Munaww (Varied Theatre - 1956 A.D.). The majority of them are short plays in one, two or three acts. The famous full-length plays include:
Sirr al-Muntahira (The Suicide Girl's Secret) and Rasasa fi'l Qaib (A Bullet in the Heart).

2. Abstract plays dealing with themes of universal rather than local interest, which are based on suppositions posed by mythology or religion or al-Hakim himself. Ahl al-Kahf (People of the Cave), 1933: Shaharzad, 1934 A.D.; pygmalation, 1942 A.D.; and Sulaiman al-Hakim (Solomon the Wise), 1943 A.D.; are prominent among them.⁷

Muhammad, because of its exalted subject, had necessarily to be treated differently. It is cast in the form of a dialogue and is not strictly a play. It was only the literary strategy of Tawfiq al-Hakim that enabled him to introduce drama as a form of serious literary in Arabic when it was not even considered on a par with poetry or even the newly plays, though interesting, were classified by litterateurs as good poetry and not drama.

Starting from a near vacuum, al-Hakim first developed the art of dialogue in a manner as to make its reading accepted as a part of thought-provoking literature. He then went a step further by employing dialogue in broader sense than that required by the restraints of stage-not as a dramatic means but as an end in itself, which he demonstrates with remarkable aptitudes in Muhammad, the biography of the Prophet.⁸

In the preface to Muhammad, entitled al-Eayan, he says that he tried to project events as they happened free from the interpretation of biographers and commentators... and decided upon the direct method of the dialogue so that the readers could visualize the events.
"All I did was to mould the matter as carefully as a jeweler mounts a precious stone sans embellishment and in a fine frame that is barely visible but sets off the jewel."

Perhaps the delicate nature of the biography of the Prophet, which he thought, should best be kept out of controversy, induced him to adopt the direct method of the dialogue.

The development of this purely intellectual and objective style enabled al-Hakim to extend it to other plays and even to the short story and the novel. Audat al-Ruh, for example, begins with a dialogue which enables the author to introduce all his characters within a short space.9

Yusuf al-Sharouny observes that Arabic plays prior to al-Hakim did not depend basically on the dialogue. Plays of entertainment depended upon jokes and caricatures and on the ability of the players to demonstrate and act and the social plays upon stirring scenes and situations fundamentally melodramatic. Al-Hakim's preference for dialogue as the means of portraying events without the writer's direct intervention was further expanded when he declared that he wrote Ahl al-Kahf, Shaharzad and Pygmalion to be read and not acted.10 This brings us to his theory about plays for reading only or abstract or intellectual plays which he describes in the preface to Pygmalion.

"I have been writing for the theatre for twenty years aiming to create what is called coup de theatre all the time ignoring the existence of the printing press al-matba'a..."

Now I am presenting my plays for the intellect. I transform the actors into ideas moving in the absolute, dressed in nothing but symbols. Although I still retain the spirit of the coup de theatre, this
comes about not so much through action as by ideas. So the gap between me and the screen has widened and I do not find a way to take my works to the audience except by way of print. When I wrote Ahl al-Kahf, Shaharzad and Pygmalion, I got them printed and staged. I kept them intentionally apart from the collection of plays meant to be staged.\textsuperscript{11}

Al-Hakim explains why he was against the idea of staging his intellectual plays:

"...People are always impressed by feelings, they encounter in their actual lives like those of love, jealousy, revenge and so on. But what do they feel in front of a conflict between man versus time or man versus place or man versus his genius. Can these abstract ideas move the feelings as much as they stir the mind? So I stopped the performance of Ahl al-Kahf."

Muhammad Mandur, a great scholar, suggests that the idea of staging was, nevertheless, present in al-Hakim's mind as he divided his plays into acts and scenes and defined the time and place of each action. Al-Hakim, no doubt, was the first Arab playwright to get his plays published before staging them.\textsuperscript{12} Otherwise publishers would accept scripts of only such plays as had been successfully staged, e.g. Shawqi's Majnun Laila and Cleopatra. Al-Hakim, thus popularized the drama amongst the people independently and not necessarily linked to the stage and the precedent set in his case made it possible for dramatists to serialize or publish entire plays before their performances.\textsuperscript{13}

Moreover, when Tawfiq al-Hakim returned from France, he found that some theatrical groups like al-Akasha and Munira al-Mahdia had ceased functioning. Al-Hakim thus wrote for a theatre
that did not exist. Scheduled performances, to be staged at fixed times, were not impending factors.

As the flourishing European theatre was based on firm foundations laid by the Greeks, al-Hakim thought it was necessary to build up the Arab theatre, which had no tradition or history on Greek roots. He as especially inspired by Greek tragedies to deal with such lofty themes as the predicament of man confronted with forces he neither controls nor understands, raised by the conflict between man and time, man and place and man and art, but in the case of al-Hakim, it is man who invariable succumbs. Audat al-Shabab (Back to Youth) deals with the conflict of man versus time. An old man is given his youth, thanks to the progress in medicine. Al-Hakim discusses the problems arising from such a change till finally the hero prefers to go back to his old age retain his place in the group. In al-Rihla ila al-Ghad (Journey into Tomorrow, 1957 A.D.) two people take off in a comet to a far-off planet and return back to earth after three centuries. Meanwhile, life has changed on the earth and all is mechanical. The consequences dealt with are many such as boredom and misery.

Sulaoman al-Hakim (1943 A.D.) shows that Sulaiman for all his wisdom and wealth cannot win the love of the Queen of Sheba, Bilqis, even though he calls the extra-terrestrial Jinn to help. Al-Malik Oudid (King Oedipus, 1949 A.D.) deals with concepts of truth and actuality. It is the story of a king wanting to kill his son out of fear and superstition, but the son eventually kills the father and marries his mother in ignorance of the relationship. Truth is overbearing and when the son finds out, he is compelled by remorse to inflict blindness upon himself, sight having failed to help him discern the truth.
The central theme of Ahl al-Kahf, al-Hakim's first abstract play, is time and man's fight against it. Also deals with death and resurrection. Al-Hakim portrays the conflict of three persons awakening to life after a three hundred years' sleep in a cave. In the darkness of the cave, Yamlikha and the two ministers Marnush and Mishliniyya, whom he had conducted there for shelter, wake up after their slumber. Yamlikha ventures fourth to buy some food and discovers that three centuries have elapsed since he and his companions had gone off to sleep. His strange attire and the unfamiliar coins that he tries to use cause suspicion and the populace follows him to the cave with torches and the scene ends in a blaze of light. The tragedy of the situation dawns on Yamlikha with the realization that though the sun is high up, it wends away from the cave and sends no light or heat within.15

The shepherd Yamlikha, in his simplicity, is more sensitive to the change than the others. He realizes that their world has been dead for centuries, and thus encompasses the tragedy.

"What we see is another world. We have no connection with this once... We should not remain here a moment longer."

The home loving Marnush is not so easily convinced. In his view, life is the dominant factor and the passage of time immaterial. Undaunted, he goes forth to learn that his son has been dead for two hundred years. Life takes on a new dimension. Devoid of the past, devoid of tie or reason, it ceases to have substance and, delinked from time and age, it fade away.

Mishliniyya resists the submission to fatality. His love for Pariksha, his own time persecutor's daughter, is now directed to her descendant, whose name and resemblance she bears – the
governor’s daughter. He now conforms to the changed way of living and is blissfully aware only of the walking moments and not of the long and weary sleep.

But Mishariyya to despairs of life when Pariska does not express her love for him prefers to get back to the cave. When Pariska finally makes up her mind that she loves him and joins him, it is too late. Mishliniyya had been without food for a month and though the heart can conquer time, the body cannot.

In dealing with this theme, al-Hakim has put to superb use the interplay of light and darkness, signifying as it were hope and futility, life and death. The dialogues are uniformly good and in certain situations, as in the wooing of Pariska by Mishliniyya, masterful.¹⁶

In Ahl al-Kahf, al-Hakim deals not merely with the ordinary changes thought about by the passage of time, but by man’s unsuccessful struggle against the most significant aspect of existence; that it is time-bound and its extinction inevitable. It also depicts man’s surrender to the seemingly vague but unassailable truth.

In Shaharzad, written in 1934 A.D., a year after Ahl al-Kahf, al-Hakim raises the question whether it is possible for man to live only for the sake of reason and intellect and dedicate his life to knowledge, away from the call of the heart and body.¹⁷

The story of Shaharzad in Alif Laila provided al-Hakim with the base to examine this problem. While many writers have dealt with this story in the light of modern psychology and culture, al-Hakim does not go into the details of the story itself but takes it as a prologue with which the readers supposed to be familiar. The play begins with the last stage of Shahriyar’s cure. The heroine Shaharzad, with her tales lasting a thousand and one nights, has wrought a miracle by waning
Shahriyar away from his obsession of flesh and blood to a suffice stance which makes him seek knowledge to unravel the secrets of the unknown. He says:

"I am fed up with bodies, fed up with them.
"I do not want to feel, I want to know.

Shahariyar, in his new zeal for knowledge, orders a virgin to be slain, although such slayings were practiced earlier only to satisfy his lust and pleasure. He professes disdain for the warmth and love of the human flesh and seeks knowledge and wisdom, be it though a magician or an escape from his surroundings. Unable to soar with his fancies, he remains, much to his mortification, suspended between the earth and the sky, the ethereal and the real, jealousy and tolerance, rejection and acceptance and so in a state of confusion and bewilderment. He cries out in anguish:

"Always this earth, nothing but the earth. In this prison which rotates, we do not go forward, do not progress or go back neither rise nor fall. We only go round. Everything goes round."

Does he want to achieve the wisdom that he attributes to Shaharzad, which she has acquired within the narrow confines of her domain while it eludes him in his relentless search for it; or the knowledge of the human race or the secrets of the universe that she, not yet twenty, has mastered? It is that by acquiring this wisdom, he wishes to prove his superiority over her black lover with his sensuality or his vazir Qamar, large-hearted and generous, who loves her?

Shahriyar in his own fashion answers these queries and yet his goal remains to be properly identified.

Shaharzad: Do you want to know who I am?
Shahriyar: Yes
Shaharzad: (smiling) I am a beautiful body.
Am I anything but a beautiful body?

Shahriyar: (shouting) Blast the beautiful body.

Shaharzad: I am a great heart. Am I anything but a great heart?

Shahriyar: Blast your heart.

Shaharzad: Can you deny that you loved my body once?
And loved me with your heart once, too?

Shahriyar: All that has gone. Gone! (speaking to himself)
Today I am a miserable man.

Shaharzad is the heroine of the play that bears her name and is supposed to play in it the most significant role. In a subtle manner and in accordance with the demand of the occasion the shocks, mocks, loves and tantalizes but hardly ever surrenders. She personifies to each one of her lovers a reflection of his own attributes, the sensual, the generous and the wise.

In accordance with al-Hakim's professed preferences, however, the man Shahariyar assumes the more active part. He, the unhappy one, also reflects all these aspects. Sometimes he is the pure and abstract intellect, sometimes a body wanting to caress, sometimes a heart wanting a niche, he hesitates between his ambitions and the decree of life.

"What is the use of the rest of my life?" He asks in anguish.

"I have enjoyed everything and forsaken everything."

Shahriyar's failure to forsake his human weaknesses is apparent when upon seeing Shaharzad in the arms of the black lover he wonders if she still loves him. He, however, has become wiser; he notices that the pure exterior of Shaharzad's eye is a deception and
hides a hard core. Shahriyar's mental conflict ends in the victory of life over knowledge.\textsuperscript{18}

Another intellectual play Pygmalion, portrays some of al-Hakim's inner conflicts. At the time of writing it (1942 A.D.), he was getting on in years and yet was not prepared to admit that he needed a sympathetic and understanding companion. His antagonism to woman was publicized so much that he probably preferred to continue the anti-women stance. In the name of art and the need of executing it away from the woes of marital ties, al-Hakim could not tolerate their presence to close proximately.

In the Greek legend, Pygmalion the sculpture, crate a beautiful statue of a woman-Galathea and falls in love with her beauty. He asks the Gods to breathe life into the statue. Hence, his wish is granted Pygmalion marries Galathea.

To the original characters in the Greek play, al-Hakim has added two more, Narcissus and Ismin both from Greek mythology. Narcissus is a conceited youth, forever admiring the reflection of his own beauty in the waters of the pool, eventually to be punished for his vanity by being consigned as a flower which can even now be seen by the water-sides. Ismin, the other character, is a young woman known for her virtue.

When Pygmalion marries Galathea, in al-Hakim play, the artist in him reasserts and the call to art eclipses the love for his wife. His devotion to art, to the exclusion of all else, including his wife, that may come in the way of his full realization, causes him to neglect Galathea who then falls in love with Narcissus and runs away with him.

Galathea, in her fight with Narcissus, seeks to establish that a woman loves a man and not just the artist whose only concern is his
art. She, however, returns to the artist, an adoring wife, but fails to move him. She has shed her frivolity and has come to love the artist in her husband. He symbolizes for her not merely the creator: Do the gods create unblemished and eternal beings of perfect beauty? This adulation and love bore the artist.

In her desire to conform, Galatha performs domestic duties. Seeing her sweeping the house, the artist in Pygmalion is enraged and his romantic concept of her shattered. He needs the perfection of the image and not the reality of a living being. In his disappointment, he beseeches the gods to make Galathea a statue again. Not content with this he has to shatter the statue and to sadistic satisfaction with the very broom that brought about his rage. Thus al-Hakim underlines the victory of art over life and the dispensability of all that distracts.¹⁹

Respect for al-Hakim transcends the Arab world. His works have been translated into a number of languages, Western and Eastern, more than the works of any other Arab writer. He is no longer just a literary giant or the greatest Arab dramatist after whom a leading theatre has been named in Cairo. He has become an institution whose literary efforts have become a legend in his lifetime.

2.2 MUHAMMAD KAMIL HUSAIN (1901-1977 A.D.)

Muhammad Kamil Husain was a distinguished surgeon and scholar, a member of the Arabic Language Academy of Cairo, a former Rector of Ein Shams University, Cairo, and former president of the Egyptian Academy of Sciences. He studied medicine and surgery in Egypt and England in the twenties and he started his professional carrier as a country doctor that he started his professional career.²⁰ He is very familiar with European thought and was one of the circle of
thinkers and artists who were especially active in the twenties in the search of new directions for Arabic literature and thought. He has produced a history of Arab medicine and written reflection on human knowledge and history: 'Wahdatul-ma'rifa' (The Unity of Knowledge). 'At-tahlilulbiuluji lit-tarikh' (A biological Analysis of History), 1955 A.D., but is best known for his novel Qarya dhalima (1954 A.D.) – which has been translated into English as City of Wrong by the Rev. Kennett Cragg and has also been translated into French and Spanish. The work consists of a set of dialogues debating the problem of conscience, and the central event around which this Muslim thinker ranges these discussions is the Crucifixion. As with the present short story, Dr. Kamil Husain's novel is a set of reflections in the grab of fiction: one would not classify Kamil Husain among the Egyptian novelists, in the usual sense of this term, but describes him as perhaps the one Egyptian writer who has achieved final intellectual depth in making use of the novel as vehicle. There is a full study of City of Wrong in the article Jesus et d'apres "La Cite Inique" du Dr. Kamil, by Fr.G. Ghehata Anawati, a member of our committee, in MIDEO (Melanges de l'Institut dominicain d'etudes orientales du Cairo), 2, 1955 A.D. (pp. 71-134). The present short story, the only one known to us to have been written by the author, appeared under the title Jarima shan'a (Atrocious Crime) in the Cairo monthly Al-Hilal for April 1961 A.D.).

2.3 YAHYA HAQQI (1905-1992 A.D.)

Yahya Haqqi is one of the most distinguished literary figures of Egypt; too meticulous a writer to have produced more than a sparse amount of publications, his short stories and critical writings are
outstanding in themselves, and have had a profound effect upon younger writers. Haqqi was born in Cairo in 1905 A.D., into a literary family: his uncle was a writer, his brother edited the magazine Sufur, in which the stories of Muhammad Taymour appeared. The family circle was familiar with English as well as Arabic literature: Yahya Haqqi himself was later influenced by Russian nineteenth-century fiction, but declares that he owes a debt to both Lytton Strachey and Virgina Woolf. Haqqi graduated in law in 1925 A.D., and has worked as a lawyer, a civil servant in the provinces, and a diplomat in the Middle East and in western Europe. He was the editor of Al-Magalla, the leading cultural monthly of Cairo. He has, since the twenties, played a prominent part in literary and cultural movements, and his help and advice to younger writers has been terminal. Some of his critical works are mentioned in the Arabic reading-list at the end of this volume. Haqqi's first story was published in 1925 A.D.. He is perhaps the best known for his long short story Qindil Ummi-Hashim (The Lamp of Sayyeda Zaynab), 1944 A.D. it is difficult to sum up the characteristic of Haqqi: but he has a genuinely sympathetic, if ironic, humanism of outlook as a thinker, which, in many of his stories, emerges in a sharply wry form. A collection of his stories Antar wa Juliette (Antar and Juliet), was published in 1960 A.D. Haqqi is an exceptionally meticulous artist, and it is not easy to show in translation the great care he shows in the choice of words.

There is another story by Yahya Haqqi which is in an exceptional position. The author refuses to include it in any volume of his collected stories. He feels that the story was written as an act of mental therapy, and that it should not be thrust upon the general public. All agree that it is one of the most striking and powerful of all
recent short stories, and that its portrayal of human degradation is a thoroughly serious one, which has produced a story that deserves to be known to a wider public abroad. The hero's surrender of this will is an illustration, in the observe, of Haqqi's recurrent stress upon the will as the source of virtue. Al-firashu-as-shaghir appeared in the first number of the review Al Kitab (April 1961 A.D.).

2.4 SUHAIR AL-QALAMAWI (1911-1982 A.D.)

Suhaier Al- Qalamawi, belongs to the first generation of Egyptian women to enter the field of university teaching. She was Professor of Modern Arabic Literature and Chairman of the Department of Arabic at the Faculty of Arts of Cairo University: she was also the Director of the Egyptian General Organization for information, publication, distribution and Printing. Her schooling was at an English school in Cairo. This was followed by studies at the American University in the same town. She then studied in Paris, and was one of the first modern Arab scholars to give serious critical attention to the Arabian Nights; her Arabic study of this collection was published in Cairo in 1939 A.D. Suhaier Al- Qalamawi's stories have appeared regularly of recent years in the monthly Al Hilal. Her first collection of stories Ahadithu-jaddati (Tales of My Grandmother), was published in 1936 A.D. It carries on the vein of family reminiscences.

2.5 NAJIB MAHFUZ (1911-2006 A.D.)

Najib Mahfuz is the outstanding novelist of the Arab world. Born in 1911 A.D., he graduated in philosophy from Cairo University in 1934 A.D. His first publication had already appeared in 1932 A.D. and he has since produced some twenty volumes of fiction. After a start in
the historical novel, he turned to realistic descriptions of Cairo life, usually setting his work a generation or so before the date of writing, and often, especially in his trilogy (Bayn ul-qasrayn Qasr-ush-shawq, As-sukkariyya, - the titles are names of districts of Cairo) showing an awareness and a skillful portrayal of the gradual changes brought into Egyptian life in the twentieth century by the passing of time. In his third and most recent phase, to which both these short stories belong, but which is best illustrated in the novel, he has turned to more subjective themes, dealing in particular with individual heroes in search for an identity. In the novels of this phase, symbolism, allegory, and a Faulknerian blend of past and present, internal and external, play a significant part. Mahfuz is at present Director of the Cinema Organization of the UAR Ministry of Culture. His novels have been adapted to the screen, television, radio and the stage, with very varying degrees of success and sensibility, by a variety of adaptors: among the successful adaptations may be mentioned the film of Biddiya wa nihaya (A Beginning and an End), in which Omar Sharif started.

Although primarily a novelist, with the novelist's need for a precious canvas and for leisurely development of themes, Mahfuz attempted the short story at the start of his career (his first collection dates from 1938 A.D.) and returned to it in 1960 A.D., having freed himself from the melodrama and surprise endings which had received the hold over him of such models as Maupassant. The collection Dunya-Ilah (The World God Created), was published in 1964 A.D. Its stories touch upon the two questions which run through Mahfuz's later work: the problem of true identity and the difficulty of coming to terms with one's environment – or, more basically, of being clear to one's
own satisfaction what the true relationship is between self and environment. There is a very full bibliography of works by and concerning Mahfuz on p.p. 346-354 of Shukri Ghaly's critical study of this writer, entitled Al-Muntami (The Insider), Cairo 1964. Mahfuz states that he has read and been influenced by many European writers, ranging from Dostoevski to Mann.28

The sound of heavy footsteps reverberated ominously within his breast, and the humph that accompanied it, was a forwarding of pain and trouble. It was the police-constable approaching in the dark. He longed to run away, but could not. With great difficulty he managed to lift himself up and to throw his weight against the wall at the corner of the lane. He staggered. At any moment now he might collapse. With difficulty he opened his eyes and focused them in the direction of his oncoming doom. Several times, he tried to move in the dark but could not, and his thoughts and recollections were all scattered. His face, colorless, dusty and rugged, looked numb by the light of the street-lamp. He wore nothing but the remains of a torn gallabeyya and his frenzied entrails burnt with a craving for the forbidden shot.29

"Hanzal, come here...."

That fateful call that was followed by blows and kicks. In a desperate, sickly voice he pleaded.

Constable, mercy on me, for god's sake."

He stood facing him, blocking the light of the street lamp, with his gun hanging from his shoulder. Hanzal pressed himself harder against the wall of Shanafiry Lane. In his fear, he tried to resist the faintness that threatened to overcome him; he whined miserable. But

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what was the matter? Why did the policeman not shout and sold and strike?

Have you had the shot?
No, I swear I haven't."
"but you're in a stupor, or you seem to be."
"that's because I haven't taken it."
There came a sigh from his maddened, famished breast.

2.6 RASHAD RUSHDI (1915- 1983 A.D.)

Rashad Rushdi was Professor of English Language and Literature at Cairo University. He studied at the Universities of Exeter and Leeds. He combines his academic work with imaginative writing in the fields of the short story and the play. He has also translated English works into Arabic, seeing it as one of his main tasks in the interpreting of western culture and literature to the Arab reader. His interest in the theatre goes back to the late thirties, when he collaborated with a group of young actors called the Vanguard Group, who performed in Egypt and other Arab countries: for them he provided translations of Marlow's Faustus and Gogol's Inspector General. He has reduced his own plays on the UAR broadcasting service, and has written Arabic scripts for the BBC, giving his impressions of English life. He has lectured in American universities as visiting professor and has published three books in English on Egyptian themes in English Literature, besides producing literary criticism in Arabic including Fannul qissatil-qasira (The Art of the Short Story) and Ma huwal-adab? (What is Literature?). He has edited a general cultural magazine as well as one devoted to drama. A one-act play of his, Odysseus, has been performed at Yale University. Since
1959 A.D., a succession of his plays have been very successfully produced on the Cairo stage. His collection Arabatul-harim (Ladis Compartment) was published in 1967 A.D. It is written entirely in Egyptian colloquial Arabic.32

2.7 YUSUF AL-SIBAI' (1917-1978 A.D.)

Yusuf Al-Sibai' combines humor with a knowledge and affection for the life of the popular quarters of Cairo. He was born in 1917 A.D.; his father, Muhammad Al-Sibai', was himself a man of letters. Yusuf Al-Sibai' passed out of the Staff College as a cavalry officer in 1937 A.D., and later taught military history. Between 1933-1965 A.D., he published over thirty-three volumes, consisting of novels, short stories, and plays. He has also written film scenarios33 He was Secretary General of three organizations: the UAR Higher Council for Arts and Letters, the Afro-Asian Peoples'solidarity Movement and the Afro-Asian Writers Solidarity Movement. The volume Bain Abu-r-rish wa Gunainat-Namish (From Abu-r-rish to Gunainat Namish) is a collection of short stories set in different quarters of Cairo.34

2.8 EHSAN ABDUL QUDDUS (1920-1990 A.D.)

Ehsan Abdul Quddus is the most popular writer of fiction in the Arab world, and his work has been adapted for the cinema, television and radio. He is the son of Umme Fatma Al-Yusuf, a well known journalist and magazine owner of the thirties, of Lebanese origin, who had earlier had a distinguished career on the stage. Ehsan Abdul Quddus began to write after graduating in law. His output of romantic novels and short stories is very large, covering some twenty volumes.35
One of his stories namely 'A Boy's Best Friend' is quieter in tone than the typical story by Abdul Quddus. It is included in his Collection of stories 'Bint us-Sultan' (The Sultan's Daughter), published some twenty years ago. The original title is An-nas Yadribuna Antar (People Beat Antar). It has been adapted for television.\(^{36}\)

2.9 ABDUL QADIR AL-SAMIHI

Abdul Qadir Al-Samihi is a Moroccan writer who is equally at home in Arabic and French. His output, which includes poetry and radio plays, shows a great variety: for example, the radio play included in Muhammad Sadik Affi's Al-qissatul-maghribiyatul-haditha (The modern Moroccan story), Casablanca 1961 A.D., is set in a sophisticated Persian background, and is a total contrast to the monologue of the earthy tourist-guide. His first collection appeared in the Cairo in April 1965 A.D.\(^{37}\)

2.10 ABDUL RAHMAN AL-SHARQAWI

Abdul Rahman Al- Sharqawi (b.1920 A.D.) is a socially-committed author, deeply attached to the rural life of Lower Egypt, especially in his native Menoufia. He is best known for his novel Al-Ard (The Earth) which has been translated into English by Desmond Stewart. There is notice of it in French by Najib Baladi in Cairo Dominican publication Ml DO (No. 2, 1955 A.D. pp. 307-10). Sharqawi has written a second novel, Ash-shawri-ul-khafiyya (Back streets); he is also known as poet, and has written two verse plays, Masah Jamila (The Tragedy) of Jamila: on the Algerian national heroine jamila Bouhaired) and Al-Fata Mahran \(^{38}\). Sharqawi graduated in law in 1943 A.D., has worked as a lawyer, a civil servant, and a
journalist, and was in charge of the scenario-writing department of a film corporation.

He has written some stories in the post-war years, and gives a dual picture of Cairo as a leave-city for Allied troops during the Second World War and of the difficulties of life in a Lower Egyptian village during those days. The original title is Al-Aqarib (The Scoropion): these are found in the author’s collection Ahlamun saghira (Slight Dreams), as well as being anthologized in the two collections Alwanun min al-Qisssat-Il-Misriyya and Khamatu-Ashri Qissatan Sisriyya.39

2.11 ABDUL RAHMAN FAHMY

Abdul Rahman Fahmy read Arabic at Cairo University. He has worked as a schoolmaster, later entering the Ministry of Education, and worked in the Translation Office of the UAR Ministry of higher Education. Most of his short stories appeared first in the periodical press, but a selection of them has been collected in two volumes: Suize Wadh-Dhikrayat (Suize and Memories) and Almulka lak (Thine be the Kingdom). Abdul Rahman Fahmy says that he is half Ethiopian and half Turkish by blood, but, as Shukry Ayyad has written of himself (in the daily Al-Missa for Julay 2/1967AD), he has a thoroughly Egyptian outlook.40

The story ‘Three Men And A Dog’ was adapted for television. It is included in the anthology ‘Qissa min Misr’. The hero of this story follows a folk custom in complaining brief poems-always couplets in the original—express the mood of the occasion as it arises. The custom has been transmitted to the Spanish, and it is said that the Spanish Cols, with an emphatic repetition of the second line, from the original of the authentic blues from New Orleans.41
2.12 SHUKRY MUHAMMAD AYYAD

Shukry Muhammad Ayyad (b. 1921 A.D.) is an Associate professor of Modern Arabic Literature in the Faculty of Arts of Cairo University. He was born in a Delta village, Kafr Shanwan, in Menofia, and has combined the academic life with translation of European (mainly Russian) fiction. He has been a schoolmaster, journalist, and a diplomat, has worked in the secretariat of the Arab Language Academy, and has studied in the United States. His publications include an edition of the medieval Arabic translation of Aristotle's Poetic (1967 A.D.), a collection of essays Tajrub fil-adabi wan-naqd – Experiments in Literature and Criticism, 1967 A.D.) on modern Arabic literature, and a study of the indebtedness of the Arabic short story to the indigenous tradition (Al-Qissatul-Qasira Fi Misr – The short story in Egypt, 1968 A.D.) He was an assistant-editor of Al-majalla, the leading cultural magazine of Cairo. Alone among the authors, he has himself chosen and translated his story. It is from his collection Miladun Jadid (A New Birth), which was published in 1957 A.D., but had first appeared in the daily Al-Misri in 1953 A.D. a second collection of his short stories. Tariq Uj-Jami'a (The University Road) appeared in 1961 A.D.

2.13 HASEEB AL-KAYYALI

Haseeb Al-Kayyali is a Syrian story writer. His stories may be found in the Cairo anthology Khamsatu-Ashri Qissatan Siriyya – Fifteen Syrian Short Stories (second collection), published in April 1958 A.D. Kayyali is considered as an iconoclast and rebel, but the satirical portrait he gives us is that of an imam of the traditional type in fact shows a gentle affection towards his foibles.
2.14 EDWARD AL-KHARRAT

Edward Al-Kharrat comes of an Upper Egyptian Family, but was born in Alexandria, in 1926 A.D. He read law at the university in the same city, graduating in 1946 A.D. He had already by then began to write short stories, but gave this up by 1955 A.D., when he returned to the genre. He has worked as a store-keeper, a bank-clerk and an insurance clerk, and was a professional translator. Among the fifteen or so translations he has produced of the world's classics is an Arabic version of Tolstoy's War and Peace. Author's privately-printed collection Hitanun Aliya (High Walls) which appeared in 1959 A.D. was written in April 1955 A.D.45

2.15 YUSUF IDRIS

Yusuf Idris, (b. 1927 A.D.), is one of the most outstanding writers of plays and short stories in Egypt of modern age. He graduated in medicine and practiced as a doctor and worked as a health inspector until he decided to devote himself exclusively to journalism and literature. Idris graduated in 1951 A.D., but he had already written his first short story in 1947 A.D. It can be seen from the theme of his stories that is is his medical studies which led him to an interest in social problems, the problem of overpopulation. Indeed, his story 'The Cheapest Night's Entertainment', of which the original title is Arkhas Layali (The Cheapest of Nights), was the first of his publications to gain general attention and it is under its title that his first collection was published in Cairo in August 1954 A.D. His stories deal with the country life which Idris knows well having been in an Egyptian village.46
Yusuf Idris turned to dramatic writing after he established his name as a short story writer, but contrary to the usual current notion of his later, he has practiced the two arts almost concurrently, for his first play was written in 1954 A.D., only four years after his first short story. The last of his seven collections of stories in Lughat ul-Ay-ay (The Language of Ah!ah!) published in 1967 A.D. Idris states that he did very little serious reading until he had already established himself as a writer, and that his initial impulse was neither foreign nor literary, but indigenous and actual. Another story by Yusuf Idris is entitled Hadithat-Sharaf (An Incident touching upon honor). It is the title-story of a collection published in Beirut.

His stories also dealt with the reluctance of a present-day conscience to accept the traditional duties associated with family honour and revenge.47

2.16 GHALIB HALASSA

Ghalib Halassa is young Jordanian writer who studied at Cairo University. He is a critic as well as a short story-writer and has contributed to Lebanese reviews. His first story appeared in the Kuweiti magazine, Ar-Ra'id ul-Arabi, in November 1964 A.D. the original title Al-Bish a is used by Halassa in the sense the branding, but the word carries the overtone of the cognate al-Bashi'a, the violent crime, a word which is spelt in exactly the same way in Arabic, and is more familiar to most readers than the dialectal al-bish'a.48
2.17 ZAKARIA TAMIR

Zakaria Tamir is largely a self-educated Syrian, who has worked as an apprentice to a craftsman. He has worked in television and journalism, and has published several collections of short stories, which have appeared in Beirut and Damascus. The title of his first story is Thaljun Akhiral-Layal, A Snow fall towards the End of the Night: it is included in his collection Rabi'un Fir-Ramad (Spring in the Ashes), published in Damascus in 1963 A.D.49

2.18 MAHMUD AL-SAADANI

Mahmud Al- Saadani (b.1927 A.D.) is a playright, novelist and short-story writer. He started his career in 1946 A.D. as a journalist. Largely self-taught, his early life is the subject of his autobiographical Mud Haqqiratul-Waladi-Sh-Shaqiy (The Reminiscence of a Mischievous Boy), which appeared serially in the weekly Sabah Al-Khair in 1964 A.D.50

Saadani’s collection (February 1968 A.D.) is ‘As-Sa'laki Fi Biladdil 'ifriki' (An Idler in the lands of the African), an account of his travels, written in his own blend of literary and colloquial Arabic. The title of his famous story lla Tima (To Tima). It is found in the author’s collection entitled As-sama us-sawada (The Black Sky) – which appeared in 1955 A.D. a short study of the element of humor in this collection can be found in a chapter (pp. 161-169) of Dr. Abdul Qadir Al- Kut's work, fil-adabil-misriyyil-mu'asir (On Contemporary Egyptian Literature), Cairo 1955 A.D.51

The story is typical of Saadani’s work in which the hard life is depicted in a sympathetic but ironical manner. Saadani’s heroes belong to the lower middle classes and in the gap in comprehension
which separates them from environment in which they find themselves.52

2.19 SULAIMAN FAYYAD

Sulaiman Fayyad is among the younger writers who are beginning to be appreciated. He worked as a teacher in a Cairo school, and graduated from the Islamic university of Al Azhar.

His first short story published in 1960 A.D., it is included in his collection published in 1961 A.D.: under the title 'Atshan Ya Sabaya' (the opening words of a traditional song, meaning I'm Thirsty, Girls). There is a study of this collection in Ghali Shukry's Kalima Min-aj-Jaziratil-Mahjura (Words from the Desert Island), Sidon, 1964 A.D.; Shukry entitles his study of Fayyad (pp. 206 ff). Legend and the Short Story53

2.20 SAMIRA AZZAM

Samira Azzam (1934-1967 A.D.) was a Palestinian refugee. She lived and wrote mainly in Lebanon from 1948 A.D. until her death in a car accident in 1967 A.D., and was married to a national of Iraq, a country in which she had worked, as a broadcaster, for a short time. She wrote two novels and published four collections of short stories, of which the last was Al-insnu was-sa'a (Man and Cloack); she also translated Ray West's Fifty years of American Fiction.54

Her first story 'Still Another Year' (originally Amun akhar) is included in her collection, Adh-dhillu-l-kabir (The Great Shadow), published in Beirut in 1955 A.D. the author deftly weaves humor into her melancholy theme. The setting of the events is, of course, the annual visit of Christian Arabs form Israel to the Holy Places in the Old City of Jerusalem; until more recent events the Mandelbaum Gate was
the focal centre for temporary reunions of divided families and friends.  

2.21 IHSAN KAMAL

Ihsan Kamal, is an Egyptian woman writer, whose first collection of short stories appeared in 1965 A.D. The collection is named Sijnun Amlikuh, after the title of a story, with which it opens. Other stories in the collection show a wary sense of humor. A film scenario is being based upon his story 'A Jailhouse Of My Own', which provides an interesting contract with the one which follows it. There is reviews of her collection in the weekly Al Kawakib for June, 1966 A.D. (56).

2.22 GHADA AL-SAMMAN

Ghada Al-Samman (b.1942 A.D.), although she was a Syrian, was representative of a movement which has the Lebanon capital, Beirut, as its centre. She is one of the several women writers who have made their name there in the writing of fiction, two others being Colette Suhayl and Laila Baalabaki. All are regarded as unusually frank and daring.  

Ghada al- Samman' mother, Salma Ruwaiha, who died when her daughter was only five years old, was herself a writer. Her father was a scholar, and was a former Rector of the University of Damascus. Miss Samman claims that until the age of four she knew French only, and that, at the age, she began to learn to speak both Arabic and English simultaneously. After a brief attempt at studying medicine, she changed over to English Literature, in which she graduated in 1961 A.D. she has worked as a civil servant, as a
journalist, and as a University lecturer: she carried her research in English literature in London. She has published three collections of short stories, and has completed a published novel, As-Suqut Ilal-Qima (The Fall Towards the Summit). In her stories, with a sensibility formed to a great extent by her European education, she explores the tensions which can be felt in her environment between tradition and modernism. Her heroines contrast sharply in their sensibility with the heroine of Ihsan Kamal's story.58

Her first story collection La baahra fi Beirut (There Is No Sea at Beirut), published in 1963 A.D.; its first story is Ghajariyya bila marfa (A Gipsy Without a Haven). An article by Galal Ishri, devoted to Ghada al-Samman, will be found in the May 1967 A.D. number of the Cairo periodical Al Fikrul-Muasir. A study of Laila Baalabakki and Colette Suhayl forms Chapter 8 (pp. 257-300) of Ghali Shukry's Azmtuj-jinsi fil-qissatil-arabiyya (The Sexual Crisis in Arabic Fiction), Beirut, 1962 A.D.59

2.23 YUSUF AL-SHAROUNY

Yusuf Al-Sharouny was born in 1924 A.D. in the Delta governorate of Menoufia. After studying philosophy in Cairo, he worked as a teacher in Sudan, then for the Supreme Council for the Arts, literature and Social Science in Cairo, and has also been on the editorial board of a cultural periodical. He has produced critical essays (mentioned in our Arabic reading list at the end of the volume) and general volumes of short stories. The Crowd appeared in the literary pages of the daily Al Ahram on February 15th, 1963 A.D. and a version of this translation has been broadcasted on the European language service from Cairo. His work combines the assurance of the
established generation with the experimentalism of the younger writers, and achieves a balance between the qualities of both.\(^{60}\)

**2.24 FATHI GHANIM**

Fathi Ghanim was born in Cairo in 1924 A.D. and took a degree in law from the University there in 1944 A.D. After working as a civil servant, he began to write fiction – his first published work being Aj-jaba (The Hill), inspired by his official investigations into a crime concerning the disappearance of some antiquities in a village near Luxor. He entered journalism, and became editor of the weekly Sabah Al-Khair, in which many of the works of younger short story writers have made their first appearance. He was also the editor of daily Al-Gumhuriyya, as well as being at the head of a state publishing house.\(^{61}\)

Ghanim's best-known work is the tetralogy 'Ar-Rajulul-Ladhi Faqada Dhillahu' (The Man who lost his Shadow) in which he adopts the technical device of retelling the narrative from the point of view of different characters. As with many English and European writers and critics, the device came to him from Lawrence Durrell's Alexandria Quartet (one might ask how the true master of the method, William Faulkner, apparently passed unnoticed by them for forty years). The Man who Last his Shadow has been translated into English (by Desmond Stewart) and into French.\(^{63}\)

Ghanim's work has become increasingly experimental, and he is attempting impressionistic and surrealist techniques. His famous story Dunya is in the volume Tajrubatu Hubbin (1958 A.D.), to which a critical essay is devoted in Shukry Ayyad's Tajrub fil Adabi Wan-Naqd (Experiments in Literature and Criticism) as given in the Arabic

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reading-list at the end of this volume. Ghanim's later collection Suru Haddin Mudabbab (A spiked Iron Fence) reveals his tendencies more clearly.  

2.25 AL-ADEEB

Al-Adeeb is prominent among the younger generation of Egyptian writers. He is on the staff of the weekly Sabah Al- Khair, in which some of the most interesting new ventures in fiction have appeared: his own contribution should be reckoned among these. Qari ul-kaf (The Palmist) appeared in his collection Al-Qahira, (October 1964 A.D.), takes its title from that of a long short story which forms the bulk of the volume.  

The war in which the aged fortune teller became a refugee, if we are to take it at all as a historical event, seems to be the First World War, in which Arab nationalists came to Egypt from Syria to escape Ottoman persecution.

2.26 FARUQ KHURSHID

Faruq Khurshid (b. Cairo 1914 A.D.) lived in the provinces as a child, and graduated in Arabic from Cairo University in 1950 A.D. He has been a teacher and a broadcaster and a Director of Programmes in the UAR Broadcasting Service. His short stories have shown an increasingly experimental manner, the title-story of his first volume 'Al-kullu batil' (All is Vanity) with earlier stories such as those in the anthology Qisas min Misr (Short Stories from Egypt) (1958 A.D.). Khurshid has written stories of earlier Arabic fiction (e.g. Ar-riwatil- Arabiyya – the Arabic Novel), and has given particular attention to sirah or popular prose epic in his two books Fannu kitabati-s-Suirati-
sh-Sha'biyya (The Art of writing in the popular prose-epic) and Adwa'ala-s-Sirati-sh-Shabiyya (New light upon the popular prose-epic). He has himself written a modern version of the popular traditional tale of Sayf ibn dhi Yazan, and other works deriving their inspiration from these traditional sources.  

2.27 MAGID THAUBIA

Magid Thaubia was born in 1938 A.D., and took a Teachers' Training Diploma in 1960 A.D. He worked as a teacher of mathematics, and was studying scenario writing in the Cairo Film Institute. He has had one collection of stories published: it takes its title from its first story 'Vostok Reaches The Moon' (Vastok was, of course, the name of one of the experimental Russian space ships.) and appeared in 1967 A.D. with a preface by Dr. Suhair Al-Qalamawi. The first publication of this story, however, was in Al Magalla in May 1965 A.D. Other stories of Thaubia's appeared in dailies and weeklies. In 1964 A.D. Thaubia won the award of the Short Story Club, as well as taking first prize for his story al-Makamir (The Dung Heaps) is a film scenario competition organized by the Cinema Institute.

2.28 DIA AL-SHARQAWY

Dia al-Sharqawy was born in 1938 A.D., took a diploma in insurance in 1959 A.D. and worked in a fertilizer firm. His stories appeared in Egyptian and Lebanese magazines, and one collection in book was published under the title ‘Rihla fi aitari sulli yawm’ (A little Journey by the Railway Train of Everyday). His first story appeared under the title Al-tasallul (Infiltration), in the special avant-garde number of Al-Qissa, in June 1965 A.D.
2.29 MUHAMMAD HAFIZ RAGAB

Muhammad Hafiz Ragab (b. 1935 A.D.) is a self-taught writer, who, forty years ago, was peddling nuts in the streets of Alexandria. His usual stand at the suburban tram terminus was next to the new boys who sell current books as well as newspapers and periodicals. It was by reading the books and magazines that were on sale there that he acquired the urge to write. His father had been a street vendor before him, and Hafiz Ragab was the only one of ten brothers and sisters to have survived. His formal education ended at the primary level, and at his father's insistence, he married at the age of seventeen, and became a father himself at eighteen (his family at present consists of two daughters).

He worked as a clerk in the Ministry of Culture, and in the Alexandria Municipality, and also as the staff of the Graeco Roman Museum of Alexandria. He started a literary magazine in his home town. Ragab claims to be entirely uninfluenced by western literatures, which he has not read, and states that his blend of reality and fantasy derives its inspiration from Czechoslovak cartoon films, with their composite use of the photograph and the drawing. His stories have been published in magazines in Egypt, Lebanon and Kuwait, and have been broadcast from Cairo. His earlier stories, written between 1952 and 1959 A.D., were of a more conventional type than the recent ones; some of them appeared with the works of six others in the collection Aish wa malh: bread and Salt (1959 A.D.), with a preface by Yahya Haqqi. His first story originally appeared under the title 'Assabi ush-sha'r' (Fingers of Hair) in the special avant-garde number of Al-Qissah (June 1965 A.D.). A collected volume of his stories appeared
under the title Al kura wa ra’su-r-arjul –The Ball and the Man's Head in 1968 A.D.70

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