CHAPTER-II

GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF MODERN ARABIC PROSE DURING THE 18TH AND 19TH CENTURY
UNIT-I

DEVELOPMENT OF ARABIC PROSE DURING THE 18\textsuperscript{TH} CENTURY
Development of Arabic Prose during the 18th Century:

Arabic means the language of the ancient Arabs classical or literary. Arabic is the most widely spread living representative of the family of Semitic languages. It was by the Arab conquests in the 7th Century and the later migration of wandering tribes and is spoken today by the people of Iraq, Syria, Arabia, Egypt, most of North Africa and the Northern Sudan.¹

Arabic as a language of trade and Islamic culture and religion, has wide spreading influence. The area, in which Arabic language is spoken extends from central Africa and Middle-East into the Soviet Union and Indonesia, the Arabs definitely belonged to Semitic group which was scattered over the whole of Asia.²

Although all Arabic speaking people are called Arabs, they include many millions who are descending from races such as Copts in Egypt and Berbers in North-West Africa; while in some people are found to have used their own dialect, which is a bit difficult to understand, so there is one common written language which is identical in all countries from Morocco to Baghdad. This is based on

² *A New Standard Encyclopedia*, vol. 8, p. 62
classical Arabic, the written Arabic of the middle ages when Arabic was the universal language of the near and Middle-East.³

Arabic has occupied an important position all over the Muslim World by virtue of its being the language of the Holy Quran as well as the Hadith (Tradition) and the prayer of Islam. It has also served as the vehicle of literature extending from Pre-Islamic period up to the modern times. It is also the principal medium of scientific and philosophical thought for some centuries as it has left much influence over the languages of Europe, especially in chemical and astronomical terms such as alcohol, elixir, azimuth and Nader.⁴

The present Arabic has developed out of its two forms: The South Arabic and the North Arabic. Differences in grammar, vocabulary and script are found in these two forms. South Arabic is known today only through inscription and North Arabic is known as Arabic language.⁵

The classical Arabic is called the Arabic language which used for all written purposes and for certain formal types of speaking, is the Arabic of the Holy Quran and the classical language of Pre-Islamic period.

³. Huart. C., History of Arabic Literature, pp. 4-5
⁴. Oxford Junior Encyclopedia, vol. 4, p. 31
⁵. New Encyclopedia, vol. 2, p. 188
Although the classical Arabic is relatively uniform in the Arabic World having minor difference in vocabulary and syntax in different regions, the colloquial is into various dialect are as with multifarious divergence in sound, grammar and vocabulary. With the spread of literary advancement in the Arab World, the classical Arabic is becoming more and widely known as a result which thinkers and leaders hope that the classical or the middle language will be a common spoken language of Arabs, preserving essential features of the classical with some changes introduced from colloquial form.⁶

**Arabic Literature:**

The Arabic term for literature is *Adab* which is derived from the root word *Adab* which means persistence, presence, tirelessness.⁷ The Arabic term *Al-Lugha al-Arabia* means Arabic Language; hence *Adabul Lughah al-Arabia* will mean Arabic literature in the literal sense of the term. A quotation available in the Encyclopedia of literature has extended the hands of assistance for clarifying the significant meaning of the literature which runs as; Nallino suggested that the term *Adab* for literature implies the sense of *Adab* steady work, continued striving. But the word can note what Godlier earlier had designated as the noble and human tendency of the character and its manifestation in the conduct of life and inter

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⁷. E.A.E. *The Dictionary English Arabic*, p. 15
course. Equally arresting are those definitions that make artistic expression equal to two thirds religious or that esteem knowledge of literature as a process leading to an intellectual culture of a higher realm of philology, poetry, exegesis and ancient history.

Following the period of urbanization (632-750 A.D.) and the gradual increase of secular composition under Persian, a more specialized application of the term literature gained acceptance. When the holy Quran, Hadith and Jurisprudence were treated as science, belles-letters, skill in sports and games were recognized as part of the literary art Adab curricula of Adab schools, include course on literary criticism and history in addition to the old subject of grammar, calligraphy, lexicology, poetic rhetoric, theory of style and logic in Arabic literature.8

Arabic literature begins with the poems and proverbs of the northern Arabia in the 5th & 6th Century A.D. of written literature before the redaction of the holy Quran nothing is known. Arabic literature as an extent works dates from the early 6th Century. The literature has continued since in both what is still in the Arab World and in medieval times, Persian, Spain and Sicily.

Though historical evidence to establish the earliest existence of Arabic literature is not available but Arabic poetry makes its appearance in such a developed from and in such a well evolved language that each and every body can say without hesitation that it must have had long carrier of growth before the fifth Century. Arabic literature may be classified age wise such as Pre-Islamic, Early Islamic and Modern Arabic literature.⁹

**Rise of Arabic Prose:**

The central role of Arabic poetry decreased after the thirteenth century and had perhaps begun to lose its dominance considerably earlier. Arabic prose in the meantime arose and flourished throughout the period 750-1500. For about the first 150 years of Islam, the Quran prevailed alongside poetry and oral narratives; before 750, little prose literature was written, apart from a handful of treatises, epistles and speeches, mostly connected with the government, such as those attributed to Abdul Hamid ibn Yahya (d. 750), the secretary of Umayyad caliphate system. Ibn al-Muqaffa also wrote some prose treatises. Most of them are translations from Middle Persian or Pahlavi literature, but a few of them are original or have original passages. His longest and best-known surviving work is the tale of talking animals, *Kalila wa Dimna*, an example of a mirror for princes

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⁹ Dr. Ali C.M. *A Study of Literary History of the Arabs*, Guwahati, 1996, p. 33
(advice book for rulers), translated from Sanskrit through Pahlavi and into Arabic, with some reworking by Ibn al-Muqaffa to make it acceptable to Muslim sensibilities. After these beginnings, a never-ending stream of Arabic prose composition in various genres of literature has been unbroken to the present day. The establishment of paper mills in Turkestan shortly after 750 and in Iraq before 800 made available an inexpensive writing material and facilitated an outpouring of prose composition and compilation. Unlike the compositions of Ibn al-Muqaffa, however, later Arabic prose literature was increasingly inspired by the religion of Islam. The Arabic reading public in that age of calligraphy and handwritten manuscripts consisted almost entirely of Muslims and most of these readers and writers worked in the religious field. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that most of the Arabic literature of the period 750-1500 is religious or ancillary to the religious writings. Two earliest surviving prose works are the Quran commentary by Muqatil ibn Suleiman al-Balkhi (d. 767) and the biography of the Prophet Muhammad by Muhammad ibn Ishaq. Several other almost as early Quran commentaries also exist and many others have been written down to the present, forming a major category of Arabic literature. The earliest commentaries were followed a short time later by the first significant treatise on Muslim law, *Al-Muwatta*’ by Malik ibn Anas, which includes many traditions attributed to the Prophet Muhammad as well as Malik’s own legal opinions.
Arabic Prose during Eighteenth Century:

The Modern Arabic Literature is developed in full glare of western literary influences. A new chapter is opened when Napoleon Bonaparte conquered Egypt in 1798. As a result, a great revolution was started in Egyptian culture and literature because the Egyptian scholars started writing in their own influenced by France literature, which is called *Al-Nahda al-Arabia* (The Arabic Renaissance).

The Arab renaissance was an outcome of the contribution of the men of letters of the Levant and Egypt and the leaders of important reform movements. Here we may mention the pioneers of the renaissance movement of Arabic literature like Nikula Yusuf al-Turk (1763-1828), Butrus Ibrahim Karama (1774-1861), Amin al-Jundi (1814-1878), Ahmad Faris al-Shidyaq (1805-1887), Butrus al-Bustani (1819-1883), Salim al-Bustani (1856-1925), Ibrahim al-Yazigi (1847-1906), Jamaluddin al-Afghani (1838-1898), Sheikh Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905) and other prominent figures who contributed lot for the development of Arabic literature and in other fields.

During the 18th century Arabic literature climbed its high water mark and it played a vital role to the development of Arabic language and literature. With the old and ancient genres modernity was remained alive and it changed the cultural atmosphere in Egypt with new trends. Day by day the traditional styles were
modified and new themes were introduced. By the end of this century the European influences were found in the way of Arabic language and literature and it impacted in a great extend.\textsuperscript{10}

*Maqama* was the only literary genres that aroused during the 18\textsuperscript{th} century and it remained a conservative and elitist genre.

In the beginning, *Maqama* were understood in vague terms of imitating Al-Hamdani and since the early twelfth century, Al-Hariri, but the later we get the more formless the term’s use becomes and the difference between a Hamdanian or Haririan *Maqama* and any piece of rhymed prose becomes blurred. Not even the use of a fictitious *Isnad* is always kept in later *Maqama*, nor is it restricted to them and very often it remains the only common feature, besides the use of *Saj*, between a late text labeled *Maqama* and the work of Al-Hamdani and Al-Hariri. Incidentally, even the formal element of the *Isnad* is problematic. In later *Maqamas*, the fictitious narrator often bore the name of the author himself and especially in anthologies and biographical dictionaries, the *Isnad* was sometimes dropped. Hence, e.g. Al-Rasmi’s (d. 1783) *Al-Maqama al-Zulaliyya al-Basariyya*,

as it stands in Al-Muradi’s *Silk al-Durar*, starts suddenly, without the speaker having been identified in an *Isnad*.\(^{11}\)

It should be emphasized that we cannot limit the genre to the picaresque *Maqama*, which is the most famous but not the only, nor even the most popular, subgenre. Distinguishing the genre from the *Munazara* is especially problematic from at least the fifteenth century onwards, when personified non-human characters started appearing more and more often as *Maqama* heroes, as in the flower *Maqamas* of As-Suyuṭi (d. 1505). They being among the most famous *Maqamas*, it would be somewhat awkward to rule them out from the genre, yet, in fact, it would be easier to classify the texts as *Munazaras* rather than *Maqamas*. The *Maqamas* of the eighteenth century were a varied lot, both qualitatively and content wise. To give an idea of the variety of *Maqamas* in the eighteenth century, we may select some authors who died between 1700 and 1799 as well as who wrote widely different *Maqamas*. Hence, Al-Sibami (d. 1703) wrote *Maqamas* after the fashion of Al-Zamakhshari in the tradition of exhortatory *Maqamas*. In 1708, Al-Fasi composed eulogies on the prophet after the model of Al-Hariri and Al-Marini (d. 1732) wrote panegyric *Maqamas* on his patron in later centuries, the genre was more and more drawn into the tradition of panegyric court literature with its mercenary aims. The process was, of course, already set in motion by Al-

Hamdani himself, among whose *Maqamas* there are several written for Walaf Ibn Aḥmad, but the full impact of this development was seen only centuries later, when more and more often the heroes in the end are advised to go and see the patron or patron-to-be of the author. Whether there was at any time a conscious imitation of the panegyric *qasida*, remains a point to be studied, but the structural similarities of the two genres are unmistakable. To come back to the variety of the 18th century *Maqama*, Abdul-Baqi Arif (d. 1713) celebrated conquests in his *Maqamas*, while Al-Wargi (d. 1776) personified a tavern pulled down by Ali Basa, clearing the ground for a Madrassa. Al-Ḥifni (d. 1764) wrote *Munazaras* between wine and flowers using the *Maqama* structure, after the fashion of Al-Suyuṭi who had made this subgenre one of the most popular ones since the 15th century.12

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UNIT-II

DEVELOPMENT OF ARABIC PROSE DURING THE 19TH CENTURY
Development of Arabic Prose during the 19th Century:

Modern Arabic literature began to emerge halfway through the nineteenth century; it was the product of the meeting of the indigenous Arabic literary tradition and Western cultural influences. In certain respects, it was a continuation with significant modifications of this tradition, while in others it constituted entirely new departures. Its development was a slow process marked as much by conservative opposition as by revolutionary zeal. It started in Egypt and Syria (which then included Lebanon), from which it spread to the rest of the Arab world, slowly at first, but in recent years the movement has gathered momentum, so that at present new experimental modes of writing can be found in what was once seen as the periphery of Arabic culture, namely North Africa as well as the Gulf States.

Historians probably exaggerated the extent of the decline of Arabic literature under Ottoman rule, which began in the sixteenth century, but there is no doubt that by the eighteenth century there was an unmistakable loss of vigour and originality, with poets and prose writers alike being enamored of an excessively ornate and artificial style of writing in which more attention was given to manner than matter. Creative writing consisted mainly of Maqamas (short narrative pieces written in a highly ornate mixture of rhyming prose and verse) or Maqamas like epistles, pious verses in praise of the Prophet, popular Sufi poems and empty
panegyrics addressed to local notables, verse celebrations of trivial social occasions, numerous conventional love poems employing stock imagery and a click-ridden language. It was a literature of an exhausted and introvert culture, living virtually in cultural isolation from the West, satisfied and convinced of its own superiority. Out of this complacency it was rudely shaken by Bonaparte’s invasion of Egypt in 1798, which revealed at once the great superiority of the well-organized and technologically advanced French forces.

The French occupation of Egypt lasted only three years; yet, its consequences, both direct and indirect, were incalculable for the political, social as well as cultural development of the whole of the Arab world. This violent encounter with the West had such a profound and traumatic effect upon the Arab imagination that the East-West opposition continued to be, in one form or another, a leading design in Arabic literature. The occupation also marked the beginning of Western colonization or domination of virtually the whole of the Arab world, with the result that the nationalist struggle for independence became an almost obsessive preoccupation for writers for a long time. An infect result of the French campaign was the rise to power of Muhammad Ali, the Albanian officer who came to Egypt with the Ottoman forces to help drive out the French, but who became the virtual ruler of Egypt in 1805, founding a dynasty which ended only with the deposition of King Farouk by the army revolution led by Nasser in 1952, an event
which, amongst other things, helped to change the course of modern Arabic literature.

Having seen the military superiority of the French, Muhammad Ali launched a programme of military reform, importing Western technicians and Western forms of education and sending educational missions to Europe. He superimposed upon the country a Western type of educational system, different from the traditional the centric one of the Azhar University. The drive for modernization begun by Muhammad Abduh strengthened by his grandson Khedive Ismail, resulted in the introduction of secular education, printing, journalism and much translation, at first of Western science and technology and subsequently of thought and literature. Consequently, a new readership public was formed which, thanks to the introduction of printing, had access not only to modern ideas, but also to the Arabic classics available only in a few manuscript copies. Likewise, a new conception of literature emerged. Inspired by growing political and social consciousness, rising nationalism and the conflict between Islam and Westernization, writers sought to reflect and indeed change social and political reality, instead of being largely contented with the display of verbal skill. Together with translations of scientific works, journalism helped gradually change the style of Arabic prose, ridding it of excessive rhetorical devices and making it a simpler as well as fitter vehicle for conveying ideas as well as for sustained narrative.
The editing of the first official Gazette in Egypt was assigned to the man who came to be regarded as the father of modern Arab thought, Rifa al-Tahtawi (1801-1873), an Azharite by training, who in 1826 was sent to France, where he spent five years acting as Imam to mission students. After his return, he published in 1832, an account of his trip to Paris in which he expressed his admiration for the rationality and good organization of the social as well as political institutions of the West. Al-Tahtawi included in his account specimens of what must be the first Arabic translation of French verse, which had formed part of his training as a translator. Al-Tahtawi later held the position of Director of the newly established Cairo School of Languages (1835), where Italian, French and English were taught as well as of the Translation Bureau (1841), which marked the beginning of a major translation movement that is still flourishing today. Muhammad Ali’s liberal attitude towards Europeans made the decade of the Egyptian occupation of Syria, in fact it led to a dramatic increase in French, British and American missionary and educational institutions.\footnote{Badawi, M.M., \textit{Modern Arabic Literature}, Cambridge University Press, 2006}

The graduates of these institutions, mostly young Christians, were eager to experiment in new literary forms, unknown in classical Arabic literature, such as drama as well as the novel. Both in Egypt and in Syria, the newspapers provided a forum for political activists and religious as well as social reformers, resulting in
the birth and development of the modern essay. At the hands of some of these writers, particularly the Egyptians Ibrahim Abdul Qadir al-Mazini (1890-1949) and Taha Husain (1886-1973), the essay attained its most elegant form from the second decade of the twentieth century onwards. A close connection between journalists and serious literature was forged to the extent that we find not only poems as well as short stories, but also works of literary criticism and even whole novels, such as those by the Lebanese Egyptian Jurji Zaydan, appearing in newspapers or magazines.

The history of modern Arabic literature can be divided roughly into three main periods. The first extended from 1834 to 1914 and may be called the *Age of Translations, Adaptations and Neo-classicism*. In 1834, Al-Tahtawi published his celebrated account of his trip to Paris, around 1914 Arab authors produced works which go beyond the stage of adaptation, revoking their virtual mastery of the imported literary forms: in the novel, Muhammad Hussain Haykal’s *Zainab* and in drama, Ibrahim Ramzi’s comedy and his historical drama.

The tension between language and sensibility which marks the work of the *Dewan* group disappears altogether from the work of the Romantic poets, whether they belong to the expatriate *Mahjar*, the Lebanese Arabs who immigrated to America around the turn of the century in search of fortune or freedom or came
from the Arab world itself. Their works are marked by a great lyricism and spontaneity, simple as well as evocative language, subjective feelings, a sense of mystery as well as wonder, reverence for nature and life in general as well as in particular for women, who are highly idealized, a deeper self-awareness, coupled with more freedom in stanza forms. The part played by the Mahjar thinkers particularly Jibran Khalil Jibran, Mikhail Nuaima and Ilya Abu Madi in spreading romantic attitudes was considerable. Because of their popularity among the young, they exercised a liberating influence upon modern Arabic poetry, adding a spiritual dimension to it. They turned away from rhetoric and declamation in favour of a more quiet tone of voice, keeping the feeling of homesickness and nostalgia, yearning to return to nature and the simple rural life and introducing biblical themes as well as images into their poetry, in which they had a distinct preference for short metres and stanza forms.¹⁴

Unlike poetry, in which the problem the authors faced was one of accepting new idioms and attitudes, the novel as a literary form was new to Arabic literature and therefore, initially viewed with suspicion and for a long time, not regarded as serious literature at all. Yet, of the literary genres borrowed from the West, the novel proved, despite the technical difficulties it presented, to be most alluring and most important in the modern Arabic literature. Arguably, it has replaced even

poetry in status. Few writers receive the universal respect accorded to the Nobel Laureate, the Egyptian novelist, Nagiub Mahfouz.

Although an Arabic translation of *Robinson Crusoe* appeared early in the nineteenth century, it is in the 1860s and 70s that the movement of translating Western novels and short stories into Arabic really commenced in Lebanon and Egypt. Significantly, one of the early translators was Rifāʿ al-Tahtawi, who published his translation of the French writers in Beirut in 1867. The movement gathered momentum and a vast number of novels as well as tales was translated primarily from the French, a mixture of heterogeneous standards and types, ranging from sentimental stories of love as well as adventure to didactic novels, from historical romances to science fiction, crime and detective stories. Despite their serious shortcomings, these adaptations and translations generally contributed to the development of the Arabic novel in that they helped to familiarize readers with the novelistic genre, even though not at its best and encouraged Arab authors to try their hand at writing novels.

Besides, by using the simple and more straightforward language of journalism, they also helped literary Arabic prose to shed many artificial features such as its rhymes, far-fetched conceits and other laboured figures of speech, thereby rendering it eventually a more suitable medium for narration.
Lebanese authors made the first experiments in the novel. The didactic fairest of Tomb (1865) by Francis Marrash was followed by the historical Love in Jinn Gardens (1870), dealing with the Islamic conquest of Syria, by Salim al-Bustani, who published nine novels, historical as well as non-historical. Many imitations followed, a noteworthy feature of most of which was the introduction of Western characters and settings. This was not due simply to copying Western models, but also to the difficulty of treating love, which was regarded as an essential ingredient of the novel, within the restrictive context of traditional Arab Muslim life. For a specifically Arab setting and specifically Arab characters, we have to wait for the Egyptians Muhammad al-Muwailihi’s *Hadith Isa ibn Hisham*, 1907, a work cast partly in the Maqama form but with certain novelistic features and Muhammad Hussain Haykal’s *Zaynab* (1913). In the meantime, the Lebanese-Egyptian Jurji Zaydan (1861-1914) continued the historical novel tradition by publishing serially in his periodical *Al-Hilal* 21 novels from 1891 to 1914 dealing with Arab history. These earliest attempts at writing historical fiction were in fact a curious combination of historiography and popular romance; yet, they still maintain their popularity in the Arab world.15

Muhammad al-Muwailihi’s *Hadith Isa ibn Hisham*, originally a series of newspaper articles published in Cairo between 1898-1902, deals, through a number

of situations and characters loosely held together by a narrative thread, with the impact of Western or modern culture upon Islamic society in Egypt. The clash it represents between Western and traditional Islamic values proved to be one of the chief themes in modern fiction, found in various forms in the work of the Egyptians Tawfiq al-Hakim (1898-1987), notably in his *Usfur min al-Sharq* (A Bird from the East) 1938 and Yahya Haqqi’s translation deals with the question of religious faith as well as doubt within an Islamic context, in the Sudanese al-Tayyib Silvis celebrated *Season of Migration to the Nod* (1969) and in the Saudi Arabian Abdur Rahman Ma‘luf who, in his *cities of Salt* (1984-1989), depicts the tragic impact of Western capitalism and technology (mainly the oil industry) on traditional Islamic values in Arabia. Muhammad Hussain Haykal’s *Zaynab* betrays the strong influence of French literature, is subtitled Scenes and characters from the country life. It is about love and the place of love in Egyptian society, both among the peasant class and the middle class of the landlords. It set the pattern for many subsequent novels in the juxtaposition of country and city life. Its protagonist, Hamid, a young man from a well-to-do family, returning from the city where he studies to his home in the village to spend his summer vacation there, is exposed to unsettling and thought-provoking experiences and becomes the prototype for many figures in future novels, mainly by Egyptian writers such as Tawfiq al-Hakim and Abdur Rahman al-Sharqawi.
It is generally agreed that with *Zaynab* the novel as a serious genre of Arabic imaginative writing was born. The next important novel to appear was *Ibrahim al-Katib* (Ibrahim the Writer) by the Egyptian Ibrahim Abdul Qadir al-Mazini, published in 1931. But the years in between witnessed the appearance of the Egyptian Taha Husain’s classic autobiography *Al-Ayyam* first came out serially in the periodical *Al-Hawa* between 1926-1927. Although more an autobiography and a work of social criticism than a proper novel, it is distinguished by its irony and detachment, its vivid characterization, its humorous and pathetic situations. Besides, during this period many experiments with Arabic prose narrative took place. The short story, as a serious branch of Arabic literature, began to assert itself and was eventually destined to become one of the most important literary genres in Arabic. The short story had its beginnings in the short didactic fictional pieces published in Egypt dealt with contemporary social and political problems in a relatively simple language. From these modest beginnings the short story gradually developed, either in realistic, humorous and satirical vein or emotional and sensational mode, in the works of the Egyptian Manfaluti and Muhammad Taymur, as well as the Levantine Jibran Khalil Jibran and Mikhail Nuaima. It can be said that this new form attained its maturity in the Twenties, in the works of the Egyptian Mahmud Taymur (1894-1973) and especially, Mahmud Tahir Lashin, a
member of a group calling themselves The Modern School, with their own periodical *Al-Fajr* from 1925 to 1927.\textsuperscript{16}

Inspired by French and Russian literature, they were possessed by an intense desire to write specifically Egyptian literature, which has a manifestation of the growth of nationalism at the time, already to be seen both in the novel *Zaynab* and in the plays of Muhammad Taymur. Their works abound in characters from Egyptian urban life. The short story soon became a very popular genre and its later development produced some of the finest achievements of modern Arabic literature. For instance, amongst Taha Husain’s most original works is his collection of short stories *Ala Hamish al-Sirah* (On the Margin of the Life of the Prophet), in which he expresses his deeply spiritual experience of Islam in a language of great lyrical beauty, redolent of religious fervour. The themes of their stories range from the social as well as political to the psychological, existential as well as mystical and the mode of treatment varies accordingly from the realistic as well as documentary to the symbolic, the poetic, the expressionist and the downright surrealistic.

During the Thirties, Modern Arabic novel continued to grow in strength, particularly in Egypt. Two major Egyptian writers began to publish novels then: the great humorist and ironist Ibrahim Abdul Qadir al-Mazini and the much-

talented Tawfiq al-Hakim. After the semi-autobiographical *Ibrahim al-Katib*, Al-Mazini affectionately draws a vivid picture of a middle-class Egyptian family, marked by the author’s tolerance, irony and urbanity of spirit. It ranks among the great works of humour in Arabic literature. Tawfiq al-Hakim continues the autobiographical type of novel, which tells the story of a middle-class Egyptian family which the author finds a symbol for the whole nation. The main theme of the book, from which much of its pathos derives, is the opposition between a highly elaborate legal system borrowed from a sophisticated modern European culture as well as the simple and rather naive villagers upon whom the system is imposed and who view its workings and its direct impact upon their lives with helplessness and inarticulate incomprehension. In 1939, Muhammad Taymур published his *Nidaul Majhul* (The Unknown Call) which is an Arabic experiment in the Romantic Gothic novel and marks the end of a stage in the development of the Egyptian Arabic novel.\(^\text{17}\)

Arabic drama was consciously and deliberately imported from the West by the Lebanese Christian Marun al-Naqqash (1817-1855) in Beirut in 1847 and the Egyptian Jew Ya‘qub Sannu (1839-1912) in Cairo in 1870. Al-Naqqash’s first play, *The Misery*, was inspired by Molly turned for his material to the *Arabian*  

Nights, which continued to be the source of inspiration for many Arab dramatists to this day. Sannu, on the other hand, dealt with issues raised by contemporary Egyptian society. Both dramatists were also men of the theatre who viewed drama primarily as a text to be produced on the stage. For various reasons, their theatres proved to be short lived, but the tradition was continued in Egypt by several theatrical troupes, Syrian and Egyptian and there, drama developed much faster and reached maturity long before the rest of the Arab world and this despite the considerable moral and social opposition it encountered for a long time before it reached respectability. By 1915, the Egyptian Ibrahim Ramzi (1884-1949) produced the first fully-fledged Egyptian comedy of intrigue and social satire, *Admission to the Baths*, as well as historical drama *Be Heroes of Mansura*, which uses the Crusades to comment on burning issues of the moment. In 1921, the Egyptian Muhammad Taymur (1891-1921), who in a series of plays had set out to write specifically Egyptian drama, produced *The Beczpice*, a bourgeois tragedy dealing mainly with the problem of drug addiction and the need for responsible relations between married couples. Even more impressive is *The Smacker*, written by the Lebanese-Egyptian Yazbak in 1925, which is drafted in the colloquial and is the most tragic work of the first half of this century. It treats the problems of
marriage and the question of the emancipation of Egyptian Muslim women within the context of a mixed marriage.  

The most important figure in the history of modern Arabic drama is undoubtedly Tawfiq al-Hakim. Al-Hakim wrote more than eighty works over a period of half a century, from the twenties to the seventies, a period which witnessed the full flowering of modern Arabic drama. He started writing drama while he was a student and he wrote for the popular stage, musical drama and satires on political and social issues, such as the British occupation of Egypt and women’s emancipation. During his three years stay in Paris, he learnt to regard drama as a serious form of literature. After his return to Egypt, he wrote a remarkably wide variety of plays ranging from the comedy of manners, emphasizing the war of the sexes, to dark comedies of social criticism in which the playwright probes deeply into the psychology of lush characters and to the dramas of ideas, of which the best known examples are *The People of the Cave* (1935), headed by the Egyptian critic Taha Husain as the first serious drama in Arabic based upon the Quranic version of the Christian legend of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus and *Shaharzad* (1934), in which he put forward his ideas of time and place, art as well as life, illusion and reality. He even dramatized the life of the Prophet in his play *Muhammad* (1936). Al-Hakim’s major contribution to Egyptian

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Arabic drama, clearly seen in these plays, is the philosophical dimension he added to it and for which he was partly indebted to the avant-garde European dramatists whose work he had come to know in Paris, notably Luigi Pirandello. Al-Hakim continued to develop and experiment in his plays. His early enthusiasm for the 1952 Revolution was expressed in plays in which a true marriage was effected between the theatre of the mind and popular theatre, while his later disillusionment was conveyed in darker plays which use some of the techniques of the Theatre of the Absurd.

Al-Hakim’s prolific output and constant experimentation tended to overshadow the more traditional work of his distinguished Egyptian contemporary Mahmud Taymur. A remarkable revival of the Egyptian theatre occurred in the fifties and sixties, following the mood of euphoria and optimism created by the 1952 Revolution and the encouragement the theatre received from the new regime. The new dramatists were young men, more eager to experiment with the form and the language of drama than the older generation, with the exception of Al-Hakim. Because of the banning of political parties, authors used the theatre to express their political views, often obliquely, particularly later in the growing disillusion with
the Revolution and the anger at the crushing of the individual by a totalitarian regime.\textsuperscript{19}

The Egyptian theatrical revival had its impact upon many parts of the Arab world like Syria and Lebanon, Iraq as well as North Africa. But perhaps the most distinguished non-Egyptian Arab dramatists to date are the Syrian Sa’ad al-Wannus and Muhammad al-Maghut. Wannus, who received his training in Cairo and Paris, set out, under the influence of Picador and Brecht, to use the theatre as a means of educating people politically. Al-Maghut, resorting to surrealistic as well as farcical technique, produced the most powerful and haunting dramatic statements of political oppression and tyranny in the modern Arab world.

**Prominent Figures of Modern Arabic Prose during the 19\textsuperscript{th} Century:**

The 19\textsuperscript{th} century sees a tremendous development in respect of prose, poetry as well as fiction and during this century Arabic literature has climbed the high watermark of its development. In the process of this development many scholars, writers and outstanding figures were flourished who left no stone unturned to the development of modern Arabic language and literature especially in the field of modern Arabic prose. It is not possible here to mention about all of them but some of the prominent and eminent figures are seen here in a prevailing manner.

\textsuperscript{19} Auzain, Dr. Ibrahim, *Al-Madkhalul al-Islam lidirasat al-Arabi al-Muasir*, Darul Kutub, Beirut, p. 231
1. Syed Mustafa Lutfi al-Manfaluti (1876-1924):

Syed Mustafa Lutfi al-Manfaluti was one of the earliest prose writers and essayists of modern Arabic literature. His short stories are distinguished by a deep pessimism and melancholy and dealt with social evils and the reaction against western habits in Arab society.

Syed Mustafa Lutfi al-Manfaluti was born on 30th December, 1876 in a town called Manfalut, situated on the west bank of the River Nile in Egypt. His father Syed Lutfi Muhammad was a learned man of law and leader of a Sufi group. His mother was a Turkish woman. His family is descended directly from Hussain, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

He started his early schooling at his native town where he memorized the holy Quran at the age of eleven. Then he received the traditional Muslim theological education at Al-Azhar University about ten years but was deeply influenced by pan-Islamism, Egyptian nationalism.

In reading literature freely in seclusion, Syed Mustafa Lutfi al-Manfaluti discovered himself to the environment that can kill the hidden desires, prevent their subjugation or suppress them inside a human being, one must either realize these

22. Al-Dasuqi, Umar, Nash’at al-Nathr al-Hadith wa Tatawwaruhi, Darul Kutub, Beirut p. 184
desires or achieve what one wants or resist them. Both the ingenuity of desires and the resistance to them are due to equally to the Creator of man and the demons. He did not read the prescribed books except those which he thought beneficial. So he got a sound taste pure mind.\textsuperscript{23}

In \textit{Al-Azhar} he was influenced by the teaching methodology of Imam Muhammad Abduh. Soon he would discover what he wanted with the Imam because he encouraged him and described him the ideal way to achieve the aims of literature and life. With the reforming ideas of the Imam he started to write on social evils, gender discrimination, injustice and other issues.\textsuperscript{24}

**His Works:**

Syed Mustafa Lutfi al-Manfaluti was one of the prolific writers who sacrificed their lives for the sake of Arabic language and literature. Nobody can deny his contribution the modern Arabic literature on the early stage of Arabic fiction. His books are as follows:\textsuperscript{25}

1. \textit{Al-Nazaraat}, collection of Essays in three volumes, published between 1902-1910

2. \textit{Al-Abaraat}, collection of Short stories, published in 1946

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid
\textsuperscript{25} Auzain, Dr. Ibrahim, \textit{Madkhalul Islam lidirasat al-Arabi al-Muasir}, Darul Kutub, Beirut, p. 235
3. *Al-Shayer*, Arabic versions of several French works, including Edmond Rostand’s *Cyrano de Bergerac*, published in 1921


5. *Fi Sabeel al-Taj* etc.

**His Theme and Writing Style:**

The contributions of Syed Mustafa Lutfi al-Manfaluti are immense. The style, the subjects, the manner of presentation, all possessed an immediate appeal to an Egyptian audience. For this Manfaluti 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 a trained scholar, heedless of inconsistencies and with perfect sincerity, the contents of that microcosm of pre-war Egypt. As a religious as well social reformer, he attacked conservatism and its sanctuary, the college of *Al-Azhar* and condemned saint-worship, the *darwish* orders, etc., yet went out of his way to insult his master Muhammad Abduh and having blamed him for introducing modern interpretations of the Quran. Together with a fervent Islamic patriotism, which led him at one time to condemn all Western studies and at another to protest against Armenian massacres, he betrayed on almost every page of his work the
influence of Western currents of thought. No more striking proof of the permeation of the Arabic world by such European currents could be given than this fact that a man entirely cut off as he was from direct contact with the West should yet have been so completely under the influence of Rousseau and Victor Hugo. Equally eloquent of Western influences is his attraction towards Abul Ala al-Ma’rri, whose verses he quoted and whose *Risalat al-Ghufran* he not only summarized in one essay, but also imitated in another. 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 no less than of Baghdad, but with characteristic candor he acknowledged the deep debt of gratitude which Egypt owes to the Syrians.26

The Social outlook of Syed Mustafa Lutfi al-Manfaluti was dominated by the idealistic and doctrinaire naturalism of the eighteenth century and the French romanticists, mediated through his *The City of Happiness*. The natural tendency in him to melancholy and sentimentality led him to take the most pessimistic view of humanity. Life was indeed to him a vale of tears, from which he sought an escape in imagination.27

Syed Mustafa Lutfi al-Manfaluti had a clear perception of the need for a change in Arabic literary methods and repeatedly expressed his conviction that the

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27. Ibid
secret of style lay in the truthful representation to the reader of the ideas which occupied the writer’s mind. With this he held strongly to the necessity of studying the great models of Arabic eloquence, asserting that the poverty of so much contemporary writing was due to ignorance and lack of confidence. For himself he disclaimed any sort of imitation; he expressed his ideas with complete freedom in the language which pleased his own ear which results a characteristic mixture of mediaeval and modern. Modernity is the general smoothness of his writing, especially in narrative passages and the framework of the essays and short stories. He delights to begin with a homely illustration or a simple parable, which serves as the text of his discourse and is often expanded into a complete story. A humorous scene with mosquitoes serves as prelude to a denunciation of inhumanity; at another time he bids farewell to humour with playful gravity before launching on a diatribe against Westernization. Modern, too, are his imaginative metaphors and similes, though European readers may often fail to realize how novel they are in Arabic. The influence of the Syro-Americans is obvious in the passages of prose poetry to be found in his earlier work, but in spite of the popularity of these passages, the prose poem seems to have followed regular poetry into the limbo of neglect.²⁸

²⁸. Ibid
With all this, he could not completely throw off inherited mannerisms. Though he criticized rhymed prose, he fell into it automatically whenever the emotional tone of his writing rose. The effect is often not unpleasing and to those who (like the present writer) regard rhymed prose as a natural and legitimate ornament of Arabic style, it gives, when properly used, a cadence and a finish that is sadly lacking in most of his contemporaries. But the use of rhymed prose is open to criticism when it is employed simply for its own sake and becomes mere highfalutin—a fault from which Syed Mustafa Lutfi al-Manfaluti was by no means free. Unfortunately, too, he showed a tendency in his later essays to restrict rhymed prose to just such passages of padding. A still more insidious fault, which he shared with almost all Arabic writers, was the habit of balancing words and phrases by rhyming or unrhymed synonyms, which add nothing to the sense and hinder the development of the narrative or thought. Occasionally, but not often, his excess of detail resulted in clumsy sentences. How far Syed Mustafa Lutfi al-Manfaluti is to be charged with the pedantry which he condemned in others is a question which, in the present state of Arabic letters, can be answered only by those who knew him personally. The later essays differ to some extent from the earlier, both in style and matter, but in an unfavorable sense. The writing is more mechanical and less humorous, the decoration more artificial; there is more effort
at symmetry and balance. His imagination has no longer the same wide play and the didactic purpose is more stressed.²⁹

Along with this went a certain stereotyping of his ideas. His Islamic patriotism and antipathy to the spread of Western influences were more pronounced and led him at times to idealize the old manners and even the old political organization. Yet he himself remained completely under the influence of Western thought in his interpretation of religious and social ethics and seemed quite unconscious of the contradiction. Nevertheless, taken as a whole, Syed Mustafa Lutfi al-Manfaluti’s work marks an immense advance on that of all his predecessors. It was the first really successful attempt to adapt the classical tradition to the new demands of popular literature, however much room it left for improvement.³⁰ There is certainly little in modern Arabic writing that affords so much pleasure as the *Nazaraat* and 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 stills 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 *Nazaraat*, Manfaluti had worked himself out. As the peculiar virtues of Al-Manfaluti’s style must largely be lost in translation, the contrast which he offers to his Syrian

³⁰. *Al-Madina al-Garbiya, Al-Nazaraat* by Manfaluti
predecessors may perhaps be best illustrated by comparing two essays which show a general similarity of plan in developing the text. He used to write with a simple warning that happiness must not be sought in riches, though there is nothing reprehensible in the acquisition of wealth by rightful means. To marry for money, on the other hand, brings evil moral as well as material consequences in its train and having drawn a picture of a dispirited husband, whose wife cares only for dress and spends the night out dancing with more attractive partners, he returns to draw the lessons of the danger of riches. The tone never rises above a pleasant conversational level, with an occasional touch of lightness.

2. Jibran Khalil Jibran (1883-1931):

Born in Lebanon, but a resident of the United States, Khalil Jibran holds a unique place among the modern Arabic as well as English writers, in as much as he wrote well in both English and Arabic and was widely acclaimed in both cultures. Sitting astride two worlds, Jibran created his own unique literary style, one that has won fans in every generation. He was Lebanese-American philosophical essayist, novelist, mystical poet and artist. In the 1960s Jibran’s works influenced especially American popular culture; his most famous book, *The Prophet* (1923), has been a

31. *Al-Islam wal Masiha, Al-Nazaraat* by Manfaluti
bestseller from the 1920s. Jibran believed that if a sensible way of living and thinking could be found, people would have mastery over their lives.

Jibran Khalil Jibran was born January 6, 1883 in the village of Bisharri, in Northern Lebanon.\textsuperscript{32} He had two younger sisters and an older half-brother. Though Jibran would never speak ill of his father, the historical record shows him to have been difficult and irresponsible. Khalil loved to draw but his father not only discouraged his art, he forbade it and punished him severely if he was caught drawing pictures. Young Khalil did not attend school, though he was informally tutored by a local priest.\textsuperscript{33}

Jibran’s father worked as an assistant at his uncle’s pharmacy, but he was a hard drinker and gambler and when young Khalil was eight years old, his father was thrown in jail for tax evasion and fraud. All family possessions were confiscated and Jibran’s family was bankrupt and homeless, staying temporarily with a relative. On the other hand his mother was a strong-willed woman and decided to emigrate with her children, but without their father, to America. When the father eventually was released from jail, he had no interest in joining his family there. Jibran along with his family settled in Boston, which had a large community of Arab immigrants, including a few relatives. At the age of 12 Jibran’s brother

\textsuperscript{32} Nuwaimah, Mikhail, \textit{Hayatu Jubran Khalil Jubran}, Darul Kutub, Beirut, p. 36
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid
eventually opened a hardware store and his mother as well as sisters worked as seamstresses to make ends meet. But through a charitable gift, Khalil was able to attend school, where he was to learn, even master English.\textsuperscript{34}

When Jibran was 15 years old he returned to Lebanon for better understanding of his heritage, where he enrolled at the Maronite college of \textit{Madrassa al-Hikmah}, then perhaps the foremost Christian secondary school in the Arab world. This land of mystic beauty became his solace, his source of imagination and in later years his object of yearning. After four years, he returned to Boston to face there in short succession the deaths of his sister Mariana, his half-brother and his beloved mother, all of who succumbed to poverty-induced illnesses. As he exclaimed

\begin{quote}
My God died with Sultana. How can I live without God?\textsuperscript{35}
\end{quote}

As 17 years old, Khalil was developing a reputation in Boston within the art community, but his family felt it would do him good to reacquaint him with his own cultural roots. They sent him back to Lebanon to study at college there. He immersed himself again in Arab culture and language and treasured it the rest of his life.

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid
But he also yearned to return to his family in America, especially when he learned that they were not well. He returned, but over the next year, his brother and one sister would die of tuberculosis as well as his mother would die of cancer.

Jibran went through a period of mourning and grief, but it was just after those losses that he met Mary Haskell at a Boston art gallery that was showing his art. Mary Haskell would become perhaps the most influential person in his life from then on. She was the headmistress of a girls’ school. He was 20 years old and she was 30. She encouraged this young artist and became his benefactor, patron as well as collaborator and later editor of his writings in English. Their friendship spanned the gamut of feelings and at one point Jibran actually proposed marriage to her, but she declined because of the differences in their age. Jibran would have many romances during his life, though he never married, but Mary Haskell always remained his most intimate relationship.  

In 1909, Jibran spent two years in Paris studying art and upon returning, he settled in New York City, where he would remain the rest of his life. In America, he was always deeply involved in the Arab-American community and founded an organization that promoted Arab literature as well as Arab writers around the world. He also wrote regularly for Arabic newspapers and publications abroad.

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36. Ibid, pp. 59-60
Jibran also took part in the New York Pen League, also known as the *Adab al-Mahjar* (The Immigrant Literature), alongside important Lebanese-American authors such as Ameen Rihani, Ilya Abu Madi and Mikhail Nu‘aima. Most of the writings of Jibran deal with Christianity, especially on the topic of spiritual love. His poetry is notable for its use of formal language, as well as insights on topics of life using spiritual terms. Jibran’s best-known work is *The Prophet*, a book composed of twenty-six poetic essays.

Jibran died of liver disease, possibly accelerated by alcoholism, in New York on April 10, 1931. Upon his death, his body was shipped back to his hometown in Lebanon, where alongside his tomb *The Jibran Museum* was later established. In his will Jibran left all the royalties of his books to his native village.\(^{37}\)

**His Works:**

In Arabic:

1. *Al-Musiqa* (The Music, 1905)
2. *Ara‘is al-Muruj* (Brides of the Valley, 1906)
3. *Al-Arwh al-Mutamarrida* (Spirits Rebellious, 1908)

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\(^{37}\) Nuwaimah, Mikhail, *Hayatu Jubran Khalil Jubran*, Darul Kutub, Beirut, p. 38
5. *Dam’a wa Ibtisama* (A Tear and A Smile, 1914)


7. *Al-‘Awasif* (The Tempests, 1920)

In English, prior to his death:

1. The Madman (1918)
2. Twenty Drawings (1919)
3. The Forerunner (1920)
4. The Prophet (1923)
5. Sand and Foam (1926)
6. Kingdom of The Imagination (1927)
7. Jesus: The Son of Man (1928)
8. The Earth of Gods (1931)
9. The Wanderer (1932)
10. The Garden of the Prophet (1933)
11. Lazarus and his Beloved (1933)
12. Prose and Poems (1934)
13. A Self-Portrait (1959)
14. Thought and Meditations (1960)
15. Spiritual sayings (1962)
16. Voice of the master (1963)
17. Mirrors of the Soul (1965)
18. The Vision (1994)
His Theme and Writing Style:

Throughout his life, Jibran attracted supportive mentors and patrons. At this young age he pursued his love of art and some influential art leaders in Boston recognized his talent. An important mentor was Fred Holland Day, a pioneer photographer and influential in the Boston arts community. Jibran passionately pursued his love of drawing and painting. He was very much interested in the teachings of Bible, Torah and Buddhism and in the personalities of Christ, Muhammad and Imam Ali which are found in his writings.38

Professor Ismat Mehdi wrote about the theme of Jibran Khalil Jibran as Social disparity forms the main theme of Jibran’s short stories. Other refrains are a return and its simplicity as compared to the corruption of the cities. Many of Jibran’s stories are arranged in two contrasting parts the revolving round the happiness of an innocent and simple life and the second relating to the evils of civilization with its attendant misery.

Jibran’s Arais al-Muruj, one of the first good collections of Arabic short stories, was published as early as 1906. It contains three stories about life and social problems in the Lebanon of which the most moving is Marta al-Baniyya. An innocent village girl is seduced by a rich man from the town. The story traces her

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life with him, the different stages of her degradation as he tries of her and finally her death in abject circumstances.\(^{39}\)

Jibran willed the contents of his studio to Mary Haskell. There she discovered her letters to him spanning twenty-three years. She initially agreed to burn them because of their intimacy, but recognizing their historical value she saved them. She gave them, along with his letters to her which she had also saved, to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Library before she died in 1964. Excerpts of the over six hundred letters were published in *Beloved Prophet* in 1972. Mary Haskell Minis (she wed Jacob Florence Minis in 1923) donated her personal collection of nearly one hundred original works of art by Jibran to the Telfair Museum of Art in Savannah, Georgia in 1950.

Jibran is often quoted and has had a large cultural influence across the English and Arabic speaking worlds. For example, an excerpt of his poem *Sand and Foam* (1926), which reads: Half of what I say is meaningless, but I say it so that the other half may reach you was used by John Lennon and placed, though in a slightly altered form, into the song Julia from The Beatles’ 1968 album The Beatles.

\(^{39}\) Ibid, p. 149
Throughout his life, Jibran attracted supportive mentors and patrons. At this young age he pursued his love of art and some influential art leaders in Boston recognized his talent. An important mentor was Fred Holland Day, a pioneer photographer and influential in the Boston arts community. Jibran passionately pursued his love of drawing and painting.

Jibran’s life crossed paths with a virtual who’s who of the early twentieth century: artist Auguste Rodin, psychologist Carl Jung, Baha’i founder Abdul Baha, Western artist Charles Russell, poet W.B. Yeats and many more.40

In America, Jibran was making a name for himself as an accomplished artist. Since in those early years he only wrote in Arabic, in the Arab world he was becoming well known as a writer. In 1913, at the urging of Mary Haskell, Jibran began writing books in English. Perhaps one of the most astounding facets of the legacy of Khalil Jibran is that English was, for him, a second language and his writing displayed a mastery of the language that few native speakers could aspire to achieve. But one theme of Jibran’s life, as well as his religious philosophy, was the blending of cultures and human differences. His friend Mikhail Nu‘aima, another Lebanese poet, spoke of his decision to write in English, saying this:

40. Ibid
Jibran, urged by the incessant calls for enfoldment of the twin sisters lovingly nursed by his soul—Poetry and Art—was far from being content with the small and slow conquests he was making in the world. To the American public he offered his art without his poetry. To the Arab public, his poetry is without his art. The English-speaking world could not read his Arabic poetry; the Arab-speaking world could not understand his Western art. The twins must be made to work as one team. For that he must write in English.\textsuperscript{41}

Jibran remained in New York the rest of his life. He moved in circles of the avant-garde artists and writers. But he died in heartbreaking circumstances in 1931 at the young age 48. The doctors detected liver cancer, but his deteriorating condition was complicated by the fact that in recent years, Jibran had succumbed to the same problem that afflicted his father using alcohol to numb the pain of disease, though making that disease worse.

Jibran’s greatest English work, of course was \textit{The Prophet}, published in 1923. This book has become not just a classic for all time, but its text has been considered almost as scripture by many around the world. In fact, next to the Bible, it was the second best-selling book of the twentieth century in America.

\textsuperscript{41} Nuwaimah, Mikhail, \textit{Hayatu Jubran Khalil Jubran}, pp. 57-63
After 1920, Jibran wrote mainly in English, producing eight books in eight years. These brought him instant success and watered down his disappointments and bitterness. He was now writing for a universal audience and dealing with wider human problems. Leaving behind his romanticism he wrote in the symbolic strain explaining his ideas in the forms of allegations and sayings in free-flowing, easy expressions. His philosophy, built on love, reached its climax in *The Prophet* which made him the most popular writer in the west.\(^{42}\)

*The Prophet* was published in 1923. This book has become not just a classic for all time, but its text has been considered almost as scripture by many around the world. In fact, next to the Bible, it was the second best-selling book of the twentieth century in America. Much of *The Prophet* was originally written in 1899 in the Arabic language. Parts of it were distributed to customers at a Boston inn. Over the next decades he would return to it and revise it. Eventually, he rewrote it in English when he felt it was ready for publication. When it was published, the first edition was not highly reviewed and sales were low. It was only through word of mouth that the praise for the book spread. The rest, as they say, is history and this book has achieved a status unequalled by any modern inspirational text.

*The Prophet* is the story of Al-Mustafa, the name that Jibran associated throughout his life with a spiritual guide that directed his art and writing. The

\(^{42}\) Ibid
narrative is simply of the wise man bestowing wisdom on the citizens of a village. The Lebanese village in which Jibran was born was predominately of an Eastern Christian sect known as the Maronites. The Arabic community throughout the Middle East and the community of Arab immigrants that he associated with in America were, of course, predominately Muslim. At an early age, Jibran disassociated himself from any sectarian religion. He considered himself to transcend the separations of creeds and doctrines. As he once wrote about sectarian religious doctrine:

His view of the divine was consistent with the tradition of American transcendentalism. When he spoke of God his description was indistinguishable from what he had to say about nature or about the best in human nature. He spoke of God with the same reverence with which he spoke of human worth and dignity, as if there were, in fact, no difference between the two. He wants to prove that all things in this creation exist within soul of the prophet and all things in the prophet exist in creation; there is no border between this two.43

43. Ibid
3. **Dr. Taha Husain (1889-1973):**

Dr. Taha Husain was one of the most influential Egyptian writers and intellectuals of 20th century and prominent figures of *Al-Nahda al-Arabiyyah* (The Arab Renaissance) and the modernist movement in the Arab World.

Taha Husain was born in the village called Maghagha in Upper Egypt in 14th November, 1889. His father was minor official in sugar factory in Egypt. Probably because of wrong treatment, he was afflicted with blindness when he was barely three of his age. But his indomitable will, sharp intelligence and phenomenal memory helped him to overcome this handicap. 44

Taha Husain took his early education from a village school at his native village Maghagha and memorized the holy Quran in a tender age. Then he was sent to Al-Azhar University, where he was educated in religion and Arabic literature. From his childhood days he was reluctant to engrave the traditional education in his heart. Taha Husain was the seventh of thirteen children, living in a lower-middle class family of Egypt. He became blind at the age of three due to a faulty treatment by an unskilled practitioner and was dealt with a great deal of anguish throughout his entire life.45

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44. Daif, Dr. Shawqi, *Al-Adab al-Arabi al-Muasir fi Misr*, Darul Ma’rif, Cairo, 1961, p. 277
45. Ibid
Husain met and married Suzanne Bresseau while attending the University of Montpellier in France. She was referred to as *sweet voice*. This name came from her ability to read to him as he was trying to improve his grasp of the French language. Suzanne became his wife, best friend, mother of his two children and mentor throughout his life. He says on her praise, she changed his life from misery to bliss, from despair to hope, from poverty to affluence.\footnote{Taha Husain, *Al-Ayyam*, part-I, p. 152}

**His Works:**

Taha Husain’s literary works can be divided into 3 categories i.e. Studies of Arabic and Islamic literature and culture, fictional literary works centered on social commentary attacking poverty and ignorance and political articles published in the two journals of which he was editor-in-chief.

His outstanding books are including:

1. *Dhikra Abil Ala*, 1915
2. *Falsafatu Ibn Khaldun*, 1925
3. *Hadith al-Arbe‘a*, 1925
4. *Al-Sher al-Jahili*, 1926
5. *Fis-Saif*, 1933
6. *Al-Ayyam*, in 3 Volumes, 1933
7. *Hafez wa Shawki*, 1933
8. *Ala Hamesh ail Sira*, 1933
9. *Adeeb*, 1935
10. *Abil Ala Fi Sijn*, 1935
13. *Ahlamu Sheherzad*, 1943
14. *Shajarat al-Bu‘s*, 1944
15. *Al-Fitna al-Kubra*, 1947
17. *Al- Wa‘d al-Haq*, 1950
18. *Ali wa Banuhu*, 1953

**His Theme and Writing Style:**

As a prolific writer Taha Husain is depicted the typical mentality of contemporary Egyptian throughout his writings. He has drawn and repelled one and the same time by its two different cultures i.e. the Egyptian and the western cultures. There has been little of real fusion between the traditional culture of Egypt and the West to form a distinctive modern civilization. In contradistinction
to nearly whole sale acceptance of that culture in some circles; though one may perhaps perceive the shape that this may take, the true picture of Taha Husain’s philosophy, the fundamental fact that he has wandered widely over the fields of Western thought without ever penetrating sufficiently to assimilate the true intellectual discipline of the West. The inaccuracies of his translations from the French are typical of much of the modern Egyptian culture which affects the rest of the Arabic speaking world in its turn to a not inconsiderable extent.47

Perhaps it is as a literary critic that Taha Husain is at his best, though his earlier more dataset views on ancient Arabic verse are said to have been modified of later year. Eyes view that it is textual criticism which forms the basis of all critical work, his respect for those engaged in the revival of ancient texts and for the value of their labours must inevitably have a special appeal for the Orientalization.48

Taha Husain’s social creed does not seem entirely logical. He is aware of ignorance to be combated and has the usual sympathy for the Egyptian peasant and labouring groups—but who has not at his leaning towards democracy seems to be very consistent, but his answer to specific problems is unfortunately tangled in the mesh of his political creed and his party allegiance. In the matter of Taha Husain’s

48. Ibid
literary style there seems to be one surprising omission which has always seemed
self-evident to the reviewer, who had at one time to listen to many radio talks of
his, namely that the reason why his style is discursive or repetitive, is surely just
because Taha Husain is blind his style is therefore rather that of speech, however
literary, than that of print. The simple fact that everything must be spoken, the
composition, dictation, the reading back of the finished word by secretaries, this
conditions his style, even some of the errors in his books which, had he proof-read
them himself, would have been eliminated.\footnote{Ibid}

The Western reader of Taha Husain must always look on his self-imposed
task of bringing other cultures into the eye of the Arabic-speaking and especially
the Muslim world, as dull, especially if he himself be an orientalist, yet this aspect
of his activities must surely have its salutary effect as a counterbalance to the
tendency of the more conservative Islamic groups at least, to look inwards, rather
than outwards. As a mirror of his time and a very profound influence on it Taha
Husain is of major interest to us. Moreover despite the element of showmanship in
his role as grand litterateur or very well stage-managed, one is convinced of the
underlying and true sincerity of the man and his purpose.

Taha Husain introduces descriptive background information on the Arab
world. He places the tales in a cultural context which makes them meaningful, not
merely quaint or exotic. They are set in the everyday; a setting that contrasts unusually with the reality of many of the stories. He encourages the reader to feel at home in a foreign environment and to prepare for an adventure in folk telling. Taha Husain also makes subtle observations in these introductions, as in the tales themselves, which are probably not realized consciously by readers, but are absorbed nonetheless. These comments allow a Western audience a glimpse of the depth and beauty of Arab culture. An example of these insights and his ability to relate his ideas cross culturally, is the analogy she draws between the annual hajj made by Muslims to Mecca and similar religious pilgrimages made earlier in Western Christianity. Such an allusion immediately alerts Western readers to similarities between our folk traditions and minimizes the reader’s sense of otherness. Arab Folktales brings together stories from a variety of Arab countries and social groups within these countries. Striking thematic and stylistic similarities are demonstrated. In fact, the regional differences Taha Husain reveals are more a matter of detail than of substance. At the same time, he contrasts effectively the differences which do exist between classes and lifestyles, regardless of region.

The short stories of Taha Husain relates carefully reflect the notion of honour which pervades Arab tribal society. This complex system of values is often romanticized by Arabs and revered as the quintessence of Arab civilization. He also discusses honour in an open, discerning style which creates familiarity without
hyperbole or over-simplification. The tales themselves then bring these observations to life. City tales, which unfold in a very different social context, are given an equally rich background. As a result, his treatment does not make the Arab world seem schizophrenic, but much like the Western world, where city folk and country folk occupy different, yet interpenetrating social worlds. The short stories themselves are filled with the magic, charm and romance which mark folktales around the world. Beautiful youths fall in love at first sight, clever men amass fortunes, mothers protect their young, wicked people are outsmarted and the wise as well as religious are rewarded. The tales are filled with evil villains who capture our imagination and are thwarted only by the clever and brave. Animal tales, humorous tales, moral tales and foolish tales all have their place in this full as well as timeless collection. Children will be captivated by the stories and demand that they be read as well as reread, which should only delight the reader. His work, like folktales in their spoken form, should be shared by every generation and be delighted in by every culture.\textsuperscript{50}

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid

Mikhail Nu‘aima may be considered as one the best critics as well as short story writers of Arabic literature and one of the earlier pioneers of Arabic Renaissance who tried their level best to revive the glory of Arabic language and literature.

Mikhail Nu‘aima was born in 1889 in the district of Biskinta, Lebanon, after completing his secondary education in the Biskinta School; he studied at the Russian Teachers' Institute in Nazareth and the Theological Seminary in Poltava, Ukraine in 1906. He moved to the United States where he received degrees in Law and Liberal Arts at the University of Washington and began his writing career in Walla Walla, Washington in 1919.\(^{51}\)

After graduation he moved to New York, where along with Khalil Jibran and eight other writers he formed a movement for the rebirth of Arabic literature, the New York Pen League. He was the Vice President and Khalil Jibran was the President of this association. In 1932, having lived in the States for 21 years, he returned to Biskinta, where he lived for the rest of his life. He died of pneumonia at the age of 98 on March 1, 1988 in East Beirut.\(^{52}\)


\(^{52}\) Wikipedia
Literary Life:

Mikhail Nu‘aima is considered a pillar of the Lebanese Renaissance literature of the 20th century. His books have spread throughout the five continents with themes of the Self, the Major and the Minor Self, its stretch to infinity and the perpetual quest for it in its many aspects. The philosophy of Nu‘aima revolves around the axes that Humans are the Micro-Cosmos, for the whole universe is summarized in them. The humans’ goal is return to the macro-cosmos which is the micro-cosmos, to unite and to melt with the one.

In 1914 published his first story Sanatuha al-Jadidah (Her New Year). He wrote it when he was in America. He was completed his education there then he published his story The Barren. It was said that he stop writing stories for a period until 1946. In 1952 his drawn story published. After six years the story (Apo Bata) published in 1958. This story was a reference for Arabic cum Lebanese narrative literature which was bent to universal. Before that he published the function group Akabir in 1956 which is a foot step of the Prophet by Jibran Khalil Jibran.
His Works:

1. *Ahadith ma'a al-Sihafah*
2. *Akabar*
3. *Ab 'ad Min Moscow wa min Washington*
4. *Al-Aba'wa al-Banun*
5. *Abu Batta*
6. *Al-Authan*
7. *Al-Bayadir*
8. *Al-Ghirbal*
9. *Al-Marahel*
10. *Al-Nur wal-Dijur*
11. *Al-Youm al-Akheer*
12. *Book of Mirdad*
13. *Fi Muhebb al-Rih*
14. *Gubran Khalil Gubran*
15. *Hams al-Jufon*
16. *Hawamish*
17. *Kana Ma Kana*
18. *Karim Ala Darib*
19. *Liqa*
20. Min wahi al-Massih
21. Muzkarat al-Arqash
22. Najwa al-Ghurub
23. Sab‘un
24. Sawt al-Alam
25. Wamadat etc.

His Theme and Writing Style:

As a prolific writer Mikhail Nu‘aima has picked up the raw materials from the Lebanese society especially from the oppressed nation. His touch is soft, musical and light, almost like a faint whiff of air with nothing hard or grating. His wrings move from tune to tune and rhythm to rhythm all in calmness. Makhill Nu‘aima conforms to the new values of poetry he laid in al-Ghirbal. He frees his verse form the laboured effect of classical prosody and its meticulous care for short and long syllables. Considerably influenced by Lebanese folk poetry, he prefers short metres Al-Bahur al-Mazja. His rhyme is light and he varies it in each stanza to give musical effects. His choice of words is homely, almost colloquial.  

54. Ibid
Among his best known books is *The Book of Mirdad*, a mystical text first published in Lebanon in 1948, which was translated into English and published in London in 1962. There are millions of books in the world, but *The Book of Mirdad* stands out far above any book in existence. The book is a parable about a monastery that stood where Noah’s ark came to rest after the flood subsided. It describes the very nature of human existence and Man’s relation to the God within. It is told through the eyes of the monks as their lives change when a mystical stranger, *Mirdad*, enters the monastery. It is a small book, but the man who gave birth to this book and in mind my words, I am not saying the man who wrote this book, nobody wrote this book was an unknown, nobody. And because he was not a novelist, he never wrote again; just that single book contains his whole experience. The name of the man was Mikhail Nu‘aima. 

Another notable book of Mikhail Nu‘aima is *The Whisper of the Eyelids* written in both languages Arabic and English. The fresh style of poetry that Nu‘aima introduced in this book to the Arabic reader became later an influence on modern Arabic poetry and poets.

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56. Ibid
5. Tawfiq al-Hakim (1898-1987):

The most imaginative writer of the Arab world and its greatest playwright, Tawfiq al-Hakim, was born in a well-placed family in Alexandria, Egypt. He was the son of an Egyptian wealthy judge and his mother was a Turkish lady. The triumphs and failures that are represented by the reception of his enormous output of plays are emblematic of the issues that have confronted the Egyptian drama genre as it has endeavored to adapt its complex modes of communication to Egyptian society.

From his childhood Tawfiq al-Hakim was very independent in thought. He was very much interested in theatre, operas and stories but his parents wanted him to be a lawyer. So, after finishing schooling at his native village he was sent to the Law College of Cairo. Neglecting his main subject law he was indulged freely in music and artistic fictions.57

In 1924 Al-Hakim went to Paris for higher education in law where he got a chance to study the European literature and he established a new world of music and art. He absorbed all the trends of European culture from ancient to modern times. Finally he intended toward fiction. After returning from Paris he was posted at an Egyptian countryside but he did not feel easy as that was against his will.

Moreover, it was irked him and the human suffering caused by injustice and poverty pained him and art as well as harmony around him were conspicuous by their absence, his genius could not be curbed. He was able to write about his reality and experiences in newspapers and journals. And thus he devoted his life to creative writings.\textsuperscript{58}

Fortunately he got a job in the ministry of education and welfare in Cairo but he resigned from his government job in 1943 and joined the newspaper \textit{Akhbarul Yaum}. In 1951 he was appointed Director General of \textit{Darul Kutub} which opened a new dimension to the literary career of Tawfiq al-Hakim.\textsuperscript{59}

Tawfiq al-Hakim started his literary output from 1933 with a novel entitled \textit{Audat al-Ruh} (The Return of the Spirit). During this period he was inspired by the Egyptian Revolution and depicted the national sentiment to awake the Egyptian people to support the revolution. When he was a student of law in Paris he wrote two autobiographical books namely \textit{Usfur min al-Sharq} (Sparrow from the East) in 1938 and \textit{Zahratul Umr} (The Flower of Life) in 1943.\textsuperscript{60}

When Tawfiq al-Hakim was a young boy he had a negative thought on women which failed to influence his life seriously. He was dominated by the

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid
powerful hand of his mother. As a result he was forced to make a negative attitude towards women in general and became hostile in his creativity also. So, the women themed many of his fictions like *Al-Mar‘a al-Jadidah, Al-Khuruj min al-Jannah, Pygmalion* etc. which resulted him as an enemy of women but this attitude has overcome after his marriage in 1946.61

Tawfiq al-Hakim was inspired by the writings of Wilde, Moliere, Chekov, Schiller, Goethe and de Musset. Their one act plays gave al-Hakim the idea to depict social themes like *Ahl al-Kahf*. The publication and performance of his play, *Ahl al-Kahf* (The People of the Cave) 1933 was a significant event in Egyptian drama. The story of this drama is to be found in the eighteenth *surah* of the Quran as well as in other sources. It concerns the tale of the seven sleepers of Ephesus who, in order to escape the Roman persecution of Christians, take refuge in a cave. They sleep for three hundred years and wake up in a completely different era without realizing it, of course. In its use of overarching themes rebirth into a new world and a predilection for returning to the past Al-Hakim’s play obviously touches upon some of the broad cultural topics that were of major concern to intellectuals at the time and because of the play’s obvious seriousness of purpose, most critics have chosen to emphasize such features.62

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Within a year Al-Hakim produced another major work, *Shahrazad*, 1934. While the title character is, of course, the famous narrator of the *One Thousand and One Nights* collection, the scenario for this play is set after all the tales has been told. Now cured of his vicious anger against the female sex by the storytelling virtuosity of the woman who is now his wife, King Shahriyar abandons his previous ways and embarks on a journey in quest of knowledge, only to discover himself caught in a dilemma whose focus is *Shahrazad* herself; through a linkage to the ancient goddess, Isis, *Shahrazad* emerges as the ultimate mystery, the source of life and knowledge.⁶³

When the National Theatre Troupe was formed in Egypt in 1935, the first production that it mounted was *The People of the Cave*. The performances were not a success; for one thing, audiences seemed unimpressed by a performance in which the action on stage was so limited in comparison with the more popular types of drama. It was such problems in the realm of both production and reception that seem to have led Al-Hakim to use some of his play-prefaces in order to develop the notion of his plays as theatre decides, works for reading rather than performance. However, in spite of such critical controversies, he continued to write plays with philosophical themes culled from a variety of cultural sources: *Pygmalion* (1942), an interesting blend of the legends of Pygmalion and Narcissus;

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⁶³. Ibid
Sulayman al-Hakim (Solomon the Wise) 1943 and El-Malik Udib (King Oedipus) 1949.⁶⁴

Some of Al-Hakim’s frustrations with the performance aspect were diverted by an invitation in 1945 to write a series of short plays for publication in newspaper article form. These works were gathered together into two collections, *Masrah al-Mujtama* (Theatre of Society) 1950 and *Masrah al-Munawwa* (Theatre Miscellany) 1956. The most memorable of these plays is *Aghaniyat al-Mawt* (Death Song), a one-act play that with masterly economy depicts the fraught atmosphere in Upper Egypt as a family awaits the return of the eldest son, a student in Cairo, in order that he may carry out a murder in response to the expectations of a blood feud.

Al-Hakim’s response to the social transformations brought about by the 1952 revolution, which he later criticized, was the play *Al-Aydi al- Na‘mah* (Soft Hands), 1954. The *soft hands* of the title refer to those of a prince of the former royal family who finds himself without a meaningful role in the new society, a position in which he is joined by a young academic who has just finished writing a doctoral thesis on the uses of the Arabic preposition *hatta*. The play explores in an amusing, yet rather obviously didactic, fashion, the ways in which these two apparently useless individuals set about identifying roles for themselves in the new society.

⁶⁴ Ibid
socialist context. While this play may be somewhat lacking in subtlety, it clearly illustrates in the context of Al-Hakim’s development as a playwright the way in which he had developed his technique in order to broach topics of contemporary interest, not least through a closer linkage between the pacing of dialogue and actions on stage. His play formed the basis of a popular Egyptian film by the same name, starring Ahmed Mazhar.

In 1960 Al-Hakim was to provide further illustration of this development in technique with another play set in an earlier period of Egyptian history, Sultan al-Ha’er (The Sultan Perplexed). The play explores in a most effective manner the issue of the legitimating of power. A Mamluk sultan at the height of his power is suddenly faced with the fact that he has never been manumitted and that he is thus ineligible to be ruler. By 1960 when this play was published, some of the initial euphoria and hope engendered by the Nasserite regime itself, given expression in Al-Aydi al-Na‘mah had begun to fade. The Egyptian people found themselves confronting some unsavory realities: the use of the secret police to squelch the public expression of opinion, for example and the personality cult surrounding the figure of Jamal Abdul Nasser. In such a historical context Al-Hakim’s play can be seen as a somewhat courageous statement of the need for even the mightiest to adhere to the laws of the land and specifically a plea to the ruling military regime
to eschew the use of violence and instead seek legitimacy through application of the law.  

The theatrical art of Al-Hakim consists of three types:

1. Biographical Theatre: The group of plays he wrote in his early life in which he expressed his personal experience and attitudes towards life were more than 400 plays among which were Al-Arees, (The Groom) and Amam Shebak al-Tazaker, (Before the Ticket Office). These plays were more artistic because they were based on Al-Hakim’s personal opinion in criticizing social life.

2. Intellectual Theatre: This dramatic style produced plays to be read not acted. Thus, he refused to call them plays and published them in separate books.

3. Objective Theatre: Its aim is to contribute to the Egyptian society by fixing some values of the society, exposing the realities of Egyptian life.

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65. Awad, Louis, Dirasat fi Adabuna al-Hadith, Darul Kutub, Berut, p. 97
66. Ibid
His Works:

1. A Bullet in the Heart, 1926
2. Leaving Paradise, 1926
3. The Diary of a Prosecutor Among Peasant, 1993
4. The People of the Cave, 1933
5. The Return of the Spirit, 1933
6. *Sharazad*, 1934 (Play)
7. Muhammad the Prophet, 1936
8. A Man without a Soul, 1937
9. A Sparrow from the East, 1938
10. *Ash‘ab*, 1938
11. The Devil’s Era, 1938
12. My Donkey told me, 1938
13. Braxa/The problem of ruling, 1939
14. The Dancer of the Temple, 1939
15. Pygmalion, 1942
16. Solomon the Wise, 1943
17. Boss Kudrez’s Building, 1948
18. King Oedipus, 1949
20. Equilibrium, 1955

21. Isis, 1955

22. The Deal, 1956

23. The Sultan’s Dilemma, 1960

24. The Tree Climber, 1966

25. The Fate of a Cockroach, 1966 etc.
His Theme and Writing Style:

Tawfiq al-Hakim was able to understand nature and depict it in a style which combines symbolism, reality and imagination. He mastered narration, dialogue and selecting settings. While Al-Hakim’s earlier plays were all composed in the literary language, he was to conduct a number of experiments with different levels of dramatic language. In the play, Al-Safqah (The Deal) 1956 for example with its themes of land ownership and the exploitation of poor peasant farmers he couched the dialogue in something he termed a third language, one that could be read as a text in the standard written language of literature, but that could also be performed on stage in a way which, while not exactly the idiom of Egyptian Arabic, was certainly comprehensible to a larger population than the literate elite of the city. There is perhaps an irony in the fact that another of Al-Hakim’s plays of the 1960s, Ya Tali al-Shagarah was one of his most successful works from this point of view, precisely because its use of the literary language in the dialogue was a major contributor to the non-reality of the atmosphere in this theatre of the Absurd style involving extensive passages of non-communication between husband and wife. Al-Hakim continued to write plays during the 1960s, among the most popular of which was Masir Sorsar.67

67. Ibid
Hakim was viewed as something of a misogynist in his younger years, having written a few misogynistic articles and remaining a bachelor for an unusually long period of time; he was given the *laqab* (title) *Adu al- Mara’* (Enemy of woman). However, he eventually married and had two children, a son and a daughter. His wife died in 1977; his son died in 1978 in a car accident. He was survived by his daughter after his death in July 23, 1987.
6. Nagiub Mahfouz (1911-2006):

Nagiub Mahfouz was an Egyptian writer who won the 1988 Nobel Prize for Literature for his book *Auladu Haratuna*. He is regarded as one of the first contemporary writers of Arabic literature, along with Tawfiq al-Hakim, to explore themes of existentialism. He published over 50 novels, over 350 short stories, dozens of movie scripts and five plays over a 70 year career. Many of his works have been made into Egyptian and foreign films.

Nagiub Mahfouz was born into a lower middle class Muslim family in the Jamaliya quarter of Cairo in December 11, 1911.\(^{68}\) Nagiub Mahfouz was named after Professor Nagiub Pasha Mahfouz (1882-1974), the renowned Coptic physician who delivered him. Nagiub Mahfouz was the seventh and the youngest child in a family that had five boys and two girls. The family lived in two popular districts of the town, in Al-Jamaliya, from where they moved in 1924 to Abyssinia, then a new Cairo suburb; both provided the backdrop for many of Nagiub Mahfouz’s writings.\(^{69}\)

His father was a civil servant and Nagiub Mahfouz eventually followed in his footsteps. In his childhood Nagiub Mahfouz read extensively. His mother often

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took him to museums and Egyptian history later became a major theme in many of his books.

The family of Nagiub Mahfouz was devout Muslims and Nagiub Mahfouz had a strictly Islamic upbringing. The Egyptian Revolution of 1919 had a strong effect on Nagiub Mahfouz, although he was at the time only seven years old. According to him:

For the first time I learned the meaning of the word *kill* as a real experience and not just through popular stories I saw loads of corpses spread-eagled around the square and human blood staining people’s clothes and the ground. I heard people yelling from the depths of their throats long live our homeland and May we die and *Sa‘ad* live on forever.70 From the window he often saw British soldiers firing at the demonstrators, men and women. After completing his secondary education, Nagiub Mahfouz entered King Fuad I University (now the University of Cairo), where he studied philosophy, graduating in 1934. By 1936, having spent a year working on an M.A., he decided to become a professional writer. Nagiub Mahfouz then worked as a

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70. As quoted by Ismat Mahdi from *Mirror by Najib Mahfuz* by Rogar Allen, p. 245
journalist at *Al-Risala* and contributed to *Al-Hilal* and *Al-Ahram*. The major Egyptian influence on Nagiub Mahfouz’s thoughts of science and socialism in the 1930s was Salma Musa, the Fabian intellectual.\textsuperscript{71}

Nagiub Mahfouz left academia and pursued a career in the Ministry of Religious affairs. However, he was soon moved to a role in the Ministry of Culture as the official responsible for the film industry, due to his apparent atheism. A long time civil servant, Nagiub Mahfouz served in the Ministry of Mortmain Endowments, then as Director of Censorship in the Bureau of Art, Director of the Foundation for the Support of the Cinema and finally as a consultant to the Ministry of Culture. Nagiub Mahfouz left his post as the Director of Censorship and was appointed Director of the Foundation for the Support of the Cinema. He was a contributing editor for the leading newspaper *Al-Ahram* and in 1969 he became a consultant to the Ministry of Culture, retiring in 1972.\textsuperscript{72}

Prior to his death, Nagiub Mahfouz was the oldest living Nobel Literature laureate and the third oldest of all time, trailing only Bertrand Russell and Halldor Laxness. At the time of his death, he was the only Arabic language writer to have won the Nobel Prize. In July 2006, Nagiub Mahfouz sustained an injury to his head

\textsuperscript{71} Mahdi, Ismat, *Modern Arabic literature*, Dairatul Ma’rif Press, Hyderabad, 1983, p. 245
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid
as a result of a fall. He remained ill until his death on August 30, 2006 in a Cairo hospital.\textsuperscript{73}

In his old age Nagiub Mahfouz became nearly blind and though he continued to write, he had difficulties in holding a pen or a pencil. He also had to abandon his daily habit of meeting his friends at coffee houses. Prior to his death, he suffered from a bleeding ulcer, kidney problems and cardiac failure.

Nagiub Mahfouz was accorded a state funeral with full military honours on August 31, 2006. His funeral took place in the Al-Rashdan Mosque in Nasr City in Cairo. Mahfuz dreamed that all of the social classes of Egypt, including the very poor, would join his funeral procession. However, attendance was tightly restricted by the Egyptian government amid protest by mourners.

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid
Literary Life of Nagiub Mahfouz:

Most of Nagiub Mahfouz’s early works were set in Al-Jamaliya. *Abath Al-Aqdar* (Mockery of the Fates) (1939), *Rhadopis* (1943) and *Kifah Tibah* (The Struggle of Thebes) (1944), were historical novels, written as part of a larger unfulfilled project of 30 novels. Inspired by Sir Walter Scott (1771–1832) Nagiub Mahfouz planned to cover the whole history of Egypt in a series of books. However, following the third volume, Nagiub Mahfouz shifted his interest to the present, the psychological impact of the social change on ordinary people.\(^4\)

Nagiub Mahfouz’s central work in the 1950s was the Cairo Trilogy, an immense monumental work of 1,500 pages, which the author completed before the July Revolution. The novels were titled with the street names Palace Walk, Palace of Desire and Sugar Street. Nagiub Mahfouz set the story in the parts of Cairo where he grew up. They depict the life of the patriarch Al-Sayyed Ahmed Abdul Jawad and his family over three generations, from World War I to the 1950s, when King Faruk I was overthrown. With its rich variety of characters and psychological understanding, the work connected Nagiub Mahfouz to such authors as Balzac, Dickens, Tolstoy and Galsworthy. Nagiub Mahfouz ceased to write for some years after finishing the trilogy. Disappointed in the Nasser regime, which had

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overthrown the monarchy in 1952, he started publishing again in 1959, now prolifically pouring out novels, short stories, journalism, memoirs, essays and screenplays.\textsuperscript{75}

*Tharthara Fawq al-Nil* (Chatter on the Nile), 1966 is one of his most popular literary works. It was later made into a film featuring a cast of top actors during the time of President Anwar al- Sadat. The film or the story criticizes the decadence of Egyptian society during the Nasser era. It was banned by Sadat to avoid provocation of Egyptians who still loved former president Nasser. Copies were hard to find prior to the late 1990s. Nagiub Mahfouz’s prose is characterized by the blunt expression of his ideas. His written works covered a broad range of topics, including socialism, homosexuality and God. Writing about some of these subjects was prohibited in Egypt.\textsuperscript{76}

*Auladu Haratina* (Children of our Alley), 1959 one of Nagiub Mahfouz’s best known works, has been banned in Egypt for alleged blasphemy over its allegorical portrayal of God and the monotheistic Abrahamic faiths of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, until the ban was released in 2006. It portrayed the patriarch Gebelawi and his children, average Egyptians living the lives of Cain and Abel, Moses, Jesus and Mohammed. Gebelawi has built a mansion in an oasis in

\textsuperscript{75} World Literature Today, Vol. 63, No. 1, Winter, 1989, p. 6

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid
the middle of a barren desert; his estate becomes the scene of a family feud which continues for generations. Whenever someone is depressed, suffering or humiliated, he points to the mansion at the top of the alley at the end opening out to the desert and says sadly, “That is our ancestor’s house, we are all his children and we have a right to his property. Why are we starving? What have we done? The book was banned throughout the Arab world, except in Lebanon and in Egypt where the novel was published in 2006. In the 1960s, Nagiub Mahfouz further developed its theme that humanity is moving further away from God in his existentialist novels. In The Thief and the Dogs (1961) he depicted the fate of a Marxist thief, who has been released from prison and plans revenge”.77

In the 1960s and 1970s Nagiub Mahfouz began to construct his novels more freely and to use interior monologues. In Miramar (1967) he developed a form of multiple first-person narration. Four narrators, among them a Socialist and a Nasserite opportunist, represent different political views. In the centre of the story is an attractive servant girl. In Arabian Nights and Days (1981) and in The Journey of Ibn Fatouma (1983) Nagiub Mahfouz drew on traditional Arabic narratives as subtexts. Akhenaten, Dweller in Truth (1985) is about conflict between old and new religious truths.78

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77. Ibid
78. Ibid
His Works:

1. *Al-Misr al-Qadim* (Old Egypt), 1932
2. *Hams al-Janun* (Whisper of Madness), 1938
3. *Abthul Aqdar* (Mockery of the Fates), 1939
4. *Radubis* (Rhadopis of Nubia), 1943
5. *Kifah Tibah* (The Struggle of Thebes), 1944
6. *Al-Qahira al-Jadida* (Modern Cairo), 1945
7. *Khan al-Khalili*, 1945
8. *Zuzaq al-Midaq* (Midaq Alley), 1947
9. *Al-Sirab* (The Mirage), 1948
10. *Al-Bidaya wan Nihaya* (The Beginning and The End), 1950
11. *Al-Sulasiyah* (Trilogy), 1956-57, i.e. *Bainal Qasrain*, *Qasr ash-Shawq* and *Al-Sukriya*
12. *Auladu Haratuna* (Children of Gebelawi), 1959
15. *Duniya Allah* (God’s World), 1962
17. *Miramar*, 1967
18. *Shahrul-Asl* (The Honeymoon), 1971
19. *Al-Hubb Tahtal Matar* (Love under the rain), 1973


22. *Al-Ju’* (The Hunger), 1986, etc.

**His Theme and Writing Style:**

Nagiub Mahfouz described the development of his country in the 20th century. He combined intellectual and cultural influences from East and West his own exposure to the literature of non-Egyptian culture began in his youth with the enthusiastic consumption of Western detective stories, Russian classics and such modernist writers as Marcel Proust, Franz Kafka and James Joyce. Nagiub Mahfouz’s stories are almost always set in the heavily populated urban quarters of Cairo, where his characters, mostly ordinary people, try to cope with the modernization of society and the temptations of Western values. Most of his writings mainly dealt with politics, a fact which he himself once emphasized:

> In all my writings, you will find politics. You may find a story which ignores love or any other subject, but not politics; it is the very axis of our thinking.⁷⁹

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He greatly espoused Egyptian nationalism in many of his works and expressed sympathies for the post-World-War era Wafd Party. He was also attracted to socialist and democratic ideals early on in his youth. The influence of socialist ideals is strongly reflected in his first two novels, *Al-Khalili* and New Cairo and also in many of his latter works. However, in spite of his firm belief in socialism, Nagiub Mahfouz was never a Marxist in any sense of the word.\(^80\)

Parallel to his sympathy for socialism and democracy was his antipathy towards Islamic extremism as expressed by the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. He strongly criticized radical Islam in his works and contrasted between the merits of Socialism and the demerits of Islamic extremism in his first two novels. He perceived Islamism as critically delineated and rejected it as unsuitable for all times. In his memoirs, he stated that out of the entire forces active in Egyptian politics during his youth, he always despised the Muslim Brotherhood.

Nagiub Mahfouz had personally known Sayyid Qutb in his youth, when the latter was showing a greater interest in literary criticism than in Islamic fundamentalism; Qutb later became a significant influence on the Muslim Brotherhood. In fact, Qutb was one of the first critics to recognize Nagiub

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Mahfouz’s talent in the mid-1940s. Nagiub Mahfouz even visited Qutb when the latter was in the hospital, during the 1960s, near the end of his life. In his semi-autobiographical novel, Mirrors, he drew a very negative portrait of Sayyid Qutb.

He was greatly disillusioned with the 1952 revolution and by Egypt’s defeat in the 1967 Six-Day War. He supported the principles of the revolution but became disillusioned, saying that the practices failed to live up to them. Nagiub Mahfouz influenced a new generation of Egyptian lawyers, including Nabil Mounir and Reda Aslan.
**7. Ihsan Abdul Quddus (1919-1990):**

Ihsan Abdul Quddus is a popular writer of fiction and his work has been adapted for cinema, television and radio. He is the son of Fatma (Rose) al-Yusuf, a well-known journalist and magazine owner of the thirties, of Lebanese origin, who earlier had a distinguished career on the stages.

Ihsan Abdul Quddus was born in Egypt on January 1, 1919, a period of national resistance against the British occupation, led by Sa‘ad Zaghlul. He graduated from the Faculty of Law in 1942. At first, he joined the law office of Edward Qussairi while working as a journalist for Fatma (Rose) al-Yusuf Magazine. But due to his reserved nature he resigned the legal profession and dedicated himself to journalism and literature. He did, however, maintain the title of lawyer on the name plate on the door to his office at Rose al-Yusuf Magazine.

Although Abdul Quddus was born into a well placed family, he was brought up to rural rather than aristocratic traditions. His grandfather; Sheikh Ahmad Razwan took young Ihsan to spend the summer holiday in the countryside. Thus keeping him away from the artistic environment in which his parents were involved.\textsuperscript{81}

\textsuperscript{81} Wikipedia
In his childhood Ihsan Abdul Quddus was an avid reader and his father, who was keen on providing his son with the best education, encouraged him. He was deeply influenced by the overwhelming personality of his mother, a dedicated career artist and journalist, his loving and caring aunt and his wife.

Ihsan Abdul Quddus was a prolific writer. He wrote more than forty nine novels which were adapted to film, five novels which were dramatized, nine novels which were adapted to a radio series, ten novels which were adapted for television and fifty six other books. His output of romantic novels and short stories cover some twenty volumes. In his writings, he urged Egyptian and Arab women to actively participate in the public life. Several of his novels were translated into English, French, Ukrainian, Chinese, German and some other languages. 82

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Achievements:

For his outstanding contribution to development of modern Arabic literature Ihsan Abdul Quddus has won many national and international awards and prizes. The most influential are-

1. Order of Merit of the First Class, awarded by President Jamal Abd al-Nasser.
3. Best Film Story Prize for *The Bullet is Still in my Pocket*, in 1975.

While belonging to the contemporary generation of great novelists such as Tawfiq al-Hakim, Nagiub Mahfouz and Yusuf Idris, yet, Ihsan Abdul Quddus was not only a man of letters but also a politician, who unveiled many hidden mysteries of political and social conflicts under the royal regime. Generally, he was a daring and straightforward writer both on the political and the social levels.\(^83\)

\(^83\) Ibid
Literary Life:

At the early age of eleven, Ihsan wrote short stories in a style closer to blank verse, in addition to classical and colloquial poetry. His literary writings reflected a progressive spirit and rebellion against stagnant political and social conditions. His style was characteristic of simple expression and sweet musical flowing phrases. Rather influenced with journalist writings, he was highly attentive to detailed description and straightforward expression. He frequently criticized important and influential personalities, for which he was imprisoned three times and subjected to three attempts at his life. In 1944, Ihsan started writing film scripts, followed by two collections of short stories; Love Maker and Love Seller, featuring memories of a young man on a visit to Europe. With The Black Glasses in 1949, he was inclined to the sentimental novel. His novel I am Free, in 1952, came, however, rather as a press feature than a novel. All through, Ihsan remained committed to a board nationalist trend, while woman remained the central theme of his literary works. He was deeply influenced by the overwhelming personality of his mother, a dedicated career artist and journalist, his loving and caring aunt as well as wife. He regarded women as a symbol of self denial and sacrifice for the object of her love. Ihsan urged in all his writings, Egyptian and Arab girls to fully understand and train themselves to actively participate in the public life as well as avoid shipping into sin. His novels and short stories, which sounded sometimes provocative,
contributed to a far reaching change in conventional concepts. They, however, provided the sincerest expression of women’s feelings. In his controversial novel *I am Free*, he advocated independence of women. Beside themes of politics and love, Ihsan wrote some short stories of spiritual and religious nature such as *Love within the Realm of Allah*.84

In his childhood, Ihsan’s favourite hobby was reading and reading. So, he was interested in his father's will which was a good education who encouraged him to read and it was a charity school students Selehdar until he graduated from the Faculty of Law, Cairo University in 1942 and worked as a lawyer under the Office of the exercise, a senior lawyer, the lawyer, Edward and short joining after work in the magazine *Rose al-Yusuf* in 1944.

Ihsan Abdul Quddus Began his career as a writer such texts movies, short stories, novels and then leave the legal profession and devoted himself to journalism and literature, he felt that literature and the press for him were the necessities of life which are not indispensable and became less than a few years, news that is distinctive and famous as well as Royalty and political writer, After working in *Rose al-Yusuf* created him all the opportunities and circumstances to

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work in *Al-Akhbar* newspaper for 8 years and worked in *Al-Ahram* newspaper and was appointed President of the editorial board of Egypt.\textsuperscript{85}

**His Theme and Writing Style:**

The literature of Ihsan Abdul Quddus is a distinct quantum leap in the Arabic novel and short story to the adults of his generation like Nagiub Mahfouz, Yusuf al-Sibai, Mohammed Abdul Halim Abdullah, but all of them marked by two things, one of them grew up in the bosom of the press and feed since childhood the huge database offered by the press to penetrate the layers of various community and the press as well as Salon Rose al-Yusuf and direct relations with senior writers, artists, politicians and stars of society is the source, which allowed to Ihsan Abdul Quddus that depicts the hidden aspects of Egyptian life and skips so many of the barriers that prevented among his colleagues and knowledge of this data, while the second feature instead Ihsan is that it was a deep faith in the cause of freedom, various levels of political, economic and social development.

In the story *My dear we are all thieves*, followed Ihsan Abdul Quddus’ spirit of robbery and rape of the rights of others, moving from thieves traditional to social modeling were measured in segments rich with power and authority and influence, to reach the head large mislead all interfaces false shiny and masks, fake

\textsuperscript{85} Ibid
hid behind the functions of thief tradition more efficiently and without raising the
doubt or exposure to criminal liability.\(^8\)

Abdul Quddus lived charity and studied as a writer as well as political feature is affiliated with the generation forties Majeed, the same generation of officers in July 1952, has lived as a journalist believes in freedom of opinion and pluralism and difference amid political turmoil, which reflects the collapse of the monarchy in Egypt was the position of Ihsan political is the refusal of the monarchy and the traditional parties, they did not charity believes the leader of a certain old and studied as a student rights and brushed the political forces of the new development of community forties political, economic and social troubled which chosen the independence and the votes in a democratic ideas of freedom and reject the tyranny and despotism is no doubt that the technical environment and press open the consciousness and helped him on the way to press Father Mohamed Abdul Quddus writer and an intellectual architect and a representative of his excellence and the mother, Fatma Yusuf master of great Arabs who made her way since she came to Egypt in the twenties from Lebanon, became symbols of the scene of Ramses and ended up in truth Abdul Quddus sometimes to prison for defending the ideas and principles he believes in, while rejected calls to many on the ground.

\(^8\) Ibid
Evidence of adherence to his views and his inability to survive in the face of the enemies he left the floor in 1974 due to publish articles by Mustafa Amin after his release from jail without Flag Ihsan and he became a full-time writer of *Al-Ahram* and then in 1975 became head of the founder and editor of *Al-Ahram* and then left suddenly after months and was due to the refusal Ihsan transfer some of left-wing writers and journalists, as well as refused to close Journal of the Vanguard which was headed by Lutfi Kholi and has travelled abroad period and then returned full-time writer in *Al-Ahram* and noted then that the reader silence for writing policy and exploded his talent and stories feature as abundant business after his decision to not take the press or official positions and after leaving the *Al-Ahram* which actually conduct a dialogue and the dissemination of the magazine *Doha*, by country under the chairmanship of prosperity (please debate) was along the silence for political writing and his fellowship and its proximity to the pads since 1948 and knowledge of Abdul Nasser since 1950 before the revolution.

Ihsan, who wrote about love, written in the policy also and of exposing the issue of weapons of corrupt and reward was received from the revolution, which is to stop them, eight pounds, the price of the two magazines *Rose Al-Yusuf* and *Good Morning*, which Othman his mother from her trouble as well as race. Charity did not escape the oppression of their alive and dead. After his death, some publishers gave themselves the right to distort his books and delete and add what they want,
except that they were confronted by his son and fought fiercely to be printed as is. May God have mercy Abdul Quddus, which was unique did not improve the appreciation. And literature Ihsan managed to emerge from local to come into the world, has translated many novels and books of this writer major political force big into foreign languages Kaalangelizip, French, Ukrainian, Chinese and German. Ihsan Abdul Quddus died on January 11, 1990 and is still named Shine a global work and creations excellence.  

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87. Ibid
His Works:

Of the most important work; the holy writer Ihsan Abdel fruitful Apart from his involvement outstanding journalism wrote the following:

- 49 novels had been turned all the provisions of the movies.
- 5 accounts were transferred to the texts of the play.
- 9 novels had been turned into a radio series.
- 10 novels had been turned into television series.

Yusuf Idris was an Egyptian writer of short stories, plays and novels. He was originally trained to be a doctor, studying at the University of Cairo. He sought to put the foundations of a modern Egyptian theatre based on popular traditions and folklore. His main success in this quest was his most famous work, a play called *Al-Farafeer* depicting two main characters: the Master and the *Farafur*. For some time he was a regular writer in the famous daily newspaper *Al-Ahram*. It is known that he was nominated several times for the Nobel Prize of literature.

Yusuf Idris was born in May 18, 1927. His father was a specialist in land reclamation and so it was heavily influenced by the movement of his father and lived away from the city that sent his oldest son to live with his grandmother in their native village.⁸⁸

As the chemistry and science attracted him Yusuf wanted to be a doctor. During his study of Medicine he participated in many demonstrations against the British colonialists and the regime of King Faruk. In 1951 he became executive secretary of the Committee for the defense of the students, then Secretary of the students. In this capacity magazines published a revolutionary, imprisoned and

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⁸⁸ Wikipedia
further study for several months and he intended to write a short story first, which enjoyed great popularity among his colleagues.

**His Literary Life:**

Since his college years Yusuf tried to publish his writings and began his short stories appear in the Egyptian Rose Al-Yusuf. In 1954 appeared his *Cheapest Nights*. In 1956 he tried to practice psychiatry, but was soon abandoned this and continued to the medical profession until 1960 to quit and then he was appointed as the editor of newspaper of *Al-Jamhuriya* (The Republic) and he travelled in the Arab world between 1956 and 1960.

In 1961 Idris joined the Algerian militant in the mountains and fought the battles of independence for six months and was wounded and gave him the Algerians and the toxic expression of appreciation for his efforts in the process and returned to Egypt and he became a recognized journalist as he published many short stories, novels as well as plays.

In 1963 the Egyptian Republic recognized him as one of the prolific writers of his time. However, the success and appreciation did not save him from the preoccupation with political issues and he has been diligent to express his opinion openly during the Nasser regime and banned his plays but still short stories and plays published on non-political issues from Cairo and Beirut. In 1972, he
disappeared from the public arena, but the impact of his public comments against the political situation in the Sadat Era and no longer to appear only after the October 1973 war when it became the great writers of *Al-Ahram* newspaper.89

**His Literary Contributions:**

The first anthology of stories of Yusuf Idris *Arkhas layali* (The Cheapest Nights), appeared in 1954 and was quickly followed by several more volumes, including *A laysa ka zalik* (Isn’t That So?), 1957. In the 1960s he sought to create a uniquely Egyptian dramatic form using colloquial language and elements of traditional folk drama and shadow theatre. He presented this plan in a series of three essays entitled towards a new Arabic theatre and he tried to put it into practice in his own plays, notably *Al-Lahzat al-Harija* (1958; The Critical Moment), *Al-Farafir* (1964; The Farfoors or The Flipflap) and *Al-Mukhatatin* (1969; The Striped Ones). Idris’ other major works included the novels *Al-Haram* (1959; The Forbidden) and *Al-Ayb* (1962; The Sin). *In the Eye of the Beholder: Tales of Egyptian Life from the Writings of Yusuf Idris* (1978) and *Rings of Burnished Brass* (1984) are two collections of his works published in translation.

89. Ibid
His Works:

1. *Arkhas Layali* (The Cheapest Nights)
2. *A Laisa ka Zalik* (Isn’t it so?)
3. *Qaul Madina* (Dregs of the city)
4. *Al-Batal* (The Hero)
5. *Hadithatu Sharf* (An incident of Honour)
6. *Akher al-Duniya* (The End of the world)
7. *Laghatul Ai Ai* (Tha Language of Oh Oh)
8. *Al-Nadahah* (The summons)
9. *Baitu min Lahm* (A House of Flesh)
10. *Ana Sultan Qanun al-Wajud* (I am Sultan of the law of existence)
His Theme and Writing Style:

Nagiub Mahfouz once said of Yusuf Idris that he was a man strange in the way he lived, strange in what he wrote. It may have been Idris’ tempestuous, multifaceted life that Mahfouz was referring to or the fact that he remained intent on introducing echoes of colloquial Arabic into the standard language. As the eminent critic Faruq Abdel-Qader points out, however, colloquial Arabic was not the only vernacular strain that ran through Idris’ writing. His works were often populated by a new kind of protagonist: the abject fellah, the unemployed worker, the street child, the hustler and the prostitute. And the magnitude of Idris’ achievement, as the critic clearly shows, can only be fully appreciated in relation to the history of society as a whole and its relentless transformations. Yusuf excelled at describing the group, writes Abdel-Qader, projecting its movement which transcends and includes the movement of the individual, but acquires its own special logic, group logic. But Idris does not stop there. He also explores the individual as an independent force. For Idris, the individual is part of the group, but it is in the light of the relationship between the individual and the group that the meaning of heroism emerges...

Yusuf Idris remains the uncontested overlord of the Arabic short story. In being repeated and nauseas, this statement loses its force, channeling the emphasis
away from the prospect of Idris’ vision and towards the genre that best represents it. A few writers were born as if with an appointment with destiny, critic and professor of modern Arabic literature at London University, Sabri Hafez, states sedately, identifying Idris as the second of the two accepted protagonists of contemporary Arabic literature. Mahfouz, who was destined to put the Arabic novel on the international map, was born in the year in which Zaynab, the first Arabic novel, was written. Idris, who was destined to establish the short story as a major literary genre in Arabic, was born four months after the closure of Al-Fajr (The Dawn), the pioneering journal that put the short story on the cultural map of Egypt and the Arab world. Edited by a medical doctor, Ahmad Khayri Said, Al-Fajr established the short story as a major literary form in a culture that had not previously known it, Hafez adds emphatically. And a quarter of a century later, Idris, another medical doctor, gave it its first great breakthrough, for before Idris a predilection for the short story was synonymous with mediocrity. Idris provided the genre with popularity, sophistication and artistic excellence, Hafez states.

The short story truly is the genre in which Idris made his lasting impact and which provided him with his outstanding literary status and extensive impact on the literary movement, as Hafez insists. But identifying Idris’ achievement with his short stories alone remains an arbitrary strategy of assessment at best. Idris embodied a range of literary phenomena: the visceral vitality that informed his
numerous short stories and novels, some of which, in the process of being composed, tipped over into the form of the novel, also informed his essays, journalistic articles and plays. In a 1990 introduction, Idris called *Al-Bayda’* (White Woman), his one full-length novel an early autobiographical statement on the collapse of the communist movement in Egypt, a story that has become aged, like aged wine, the work for which I paid the most precious years of my life. Similarly *Al-Farafir*, Idris’ theatrical landmark in book form the text is preceded by the seminal essay Towards an Egyptian Theatre, spawned dozens of self-consciously Egyptian theatrical experiments that set out to body forth his prophecy that a grass roots tradition of theatre should emerge independently in Egypt, liberated from the overriding influence of the Western model.90

This concern with what is Egyptian, the ideological and aesthetic compulsion to make things Egyptian intimates an approach to Idris. So does the language he used, which in turn reflects his desire to give voice to the genius and poetry of his life-like cast of characters, many of whom had hitherto been denied access to literary discourse. To concentrate on the vehicle through which he expressed himself, by contrast, is to miss the point: form was, after all, the least of Idris’ concerns. Among his priorities, rather, writer Ibrahim Aslan points out was the project of capturing the spiritual aspect of the local: Yusuf Idris managed to

90. Ibid
present to the readership the contours of a true Egyptian short story, paying attention to those who were socially marginalized and presenting a huge number of archetypes. His genius resided in his ability to hunt down the archetypes and paradigms that were already part of reality; he was capable of applying his politically committed beliefs to the dynamics of society with the utmost ease; the connections he made were always convincing.\textsuperscript{91}

For the prostitutes and policemen, muezzins as well as madmen who inhabit Yusuf Idris’ short stories, the cheapest nights invariably turn out to cost the characters dearly in self-respect. This collection, spanning more than 15 years of Idris’ writing career, explores the social problems of everyday life in Egypt with authenticity, empathy and humour. Most of the stories, set in villages or the narrow alleys of Cairo, plunge matter-of-factly into an individual’s daily life, using a detached and unadorned style to carve unforgettable personalities from Egypt under classes.\textsuperscript{92}

Idris is clearly drawn to the weak, the poor, the misfits, the powerless and fascinated by the function they serve for the society that has cast them out. Two characters that seem to be diametrical opposites a beautiful village girl in \textit{The Shame} and a deaf, dumb and disfigured man in \textit{The Freak} actually bear similar

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{91} Ibid
  \item \textsuperscript{92} Ibid
\end{itemize}
burdens in their communities as repositories for their neighbour’s lusts and fears. As the two figures evolve helplessly into projections of their villages’ darker sides, both are ultimately sacrificed to their communities’ collectively guilty consciences.\textsuperscript{93}

Sex and death are omnipresent forces in the stories, driving diverse characters to despair. A pious muezzin, freshly graduated from Al-Azhar, climbs a minaret to deliver the call to prayer and gets an unexpected glimpse into a forbidden bed chamber. A Cairo judge forces his servant to submit to his advances, reveling in his power over her. An old man dies broken as well as alone and his brutal employer suddenly breaks down in sobbing remorse.

A masterly storyteller, Idris is adept at selecting the telling detail that vividly fixes a scene. In \textit{The Caller in the Night}, a funeral tent has been set up in a village and relatives as well as friends begin to arrive: They were not used to lights by night so that they were momentarily blinded the moment they stepped inside and it was some time before they could recognize any of the people sitting there. In another story, \textit{The Errand}, a policeman seeks shelter for a madwoman, who embarrasses him by bursting forth with trilling cries in crowded streets as well as cafes. He finally takes her to Sayyeda Zainab mosque in Cairo, which was swarming with the usual crowd of saintly idiots and half-wits always to be found in

\textsuperscript{93} Ibid
profusion around a shrine. The woman blends in with the crowd, while the policeman begins to feel out of place, yet fascinated with the freedom the mosque’s inhabitants enjoy: They did what they like and nobody stopped them, he muses.

The best selections, such as *The Errand*, evoke widely-divergent emotions manufacturing predicaments that are simultaneously hilarious and tragic. *In Did You Have to Turn on the Light, Li-Li?*, an imam leaves his congregation prostrate in prayer while he dives through a window in search of a woman he has glimpsed. *In The Caller in the Night*, a medical student who boasts to his simple village neighbors of his university learning is rewarded with a corpse on his doorstep in the middle of the night.94

94. Ibid