CHAPTER THREE

ARABIC ROMANTICISM: A CONTEXTUAL REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

Chapter II attempts to establish the claim that Romanticism is a literary phenomenon that is born out of the human tendency to negotiate with any major changes in the social and personal realms. While the specific contours of this negotiation may be determined by the set of specific conditions related to the political, social, economic, and cultural state of a society, the tendency itself is born out of a common, human core. In Cox’s words, Romanticism is a convenient label that “enables us to gather together a group of poets who responded to a common moment of massive cultural, social, and political change with varying attempts to remake poetry and revision their world” (10). It is a permanent frame of mind, rather than an accidental formulation that owes its origin to the circumstances of a particular society, or age. Herbert Read and Kenneth Clark underscore the view that Romanticism might be found anywhere. Kenneth Clark finds it in some lines of Hadrian’s; Herbert Read quotes a great many examples. The Baron Seillière, who has written extensively on this subject, quotes Plato and Plotinus and the Greek novelist Heliodorus, and a great many other persons who, in his opinion, were romantic writers (Berlin 1). However, the undeniable fact that Romanticism becomes a movement, after centuries of momentary existence in the thought and writings of many poets and philosophers, only in the late eighteenth, early nineteenth century Europe makes it mandatory for anyone interested in studying the movement to deal with the context of its coherent and comprehensive articulation.
This is the rationale for the attempt in this study to deal with English Romanticism in contradistinctions to comparable literary movement which emerged in Egypt in the first half of the twentieth century, and call it Eastern version of Romanticism. The latter is assumed to have its own original qualities and distinguishing characteristics. A corollary of this view is the assumption that the context of Arabic Romanticism should be discussed alongside that of English Romanticism to explore the analogous traits in politics, culture, economics and literature in the two societies.

3.2 The Context of English Romanticism

Unlike the Enlightenment which started with an elite group and leisurely spread throughout Europe with gradual appeal to the common people, Romanticism was more extensive and influential. It was, probably, incomparable in its diversity, extent, and stamina by any other intellectual movement since the end of the Middle Ages. Romanticism is often defined in terms of its historical period, but the exact span of this period is a matter of some dispute. In Abrams’ opinion, who himself followes what he called the common usage of historians of English literature, English Romanticism is that span between the year 1798, in which Wordsworth and Coleridge published their Lyrical Ballads, and 1832, when Sir Walter Scott died; when other major writers of the earlier century were either dead or no longer productive, and when the passage of the first Reform Bill, after more than three decades of political stagnation and repression.

The era of the Romantic Movement was a turbulent period in political and economic history, during which England was experiencing a vital change from an agricultural society to a recognizably modern industrial nation. This change occurred "in a context first of the American
Revolution and then of the much more radical French Revolution, of wars, of economic cycles of inflation and depression, and of the constant threat to social structure from imported revolutionary ideologies to which the ruling classes responded by heresy-hunts and the repression of traditional liberties" (Abrams Norton Anthology 1-2).

3.2.1 The Pre-Romantic Period

The Romantic Movement, with its revolutionary spirit and deep desire for change, was not a sudden flash in the history of English literature. Lilian R. Furst (1970) believes that the first unmistakable signs of impending change manifested themselves before the middle of the eighteenth century. As a matter of fact, the roots of the change, then, seem to lie deep in the very heart of the period, in the work of James Thomson (1700-1748) whose departure from neoclassical conventions mainly concerned the choice of subject. He undertakes to describe outdoor nature, in its grand, impressive aspects. He does it in a four-book poem about rural life entitled "The Seasons", describing in turn Winter, Summer, Spring, and Autumn. The Preface to the second edition of the poem shows that it is a conscious effort to "revive poetry". Thomson is not satisfied in describing life in towns, and Nature for him is not only the background for man's activities, but is often presented for its own sake. He pays special attention to the observation of its various aspects particularly to the sights and sounds associated with the progress of the year, and offers detailed descriptions of colourful contrasts of light and shadow. Such passages shows Thomson's sensuousness (he feels a direct appeal to all five senses), and it is evidently a kind of an opposition against rationalism. But, on the other hand, his concept of Nature as a perfectly constructed mechanism of universe is typically neoclassical.
Thomson departs from neoclassical conventions in two other aspects; he comes back to Miltonic blank verse, rejecting the traditional closed couplet, and - more than once in his treatment of rural life - he shows sympathy for the poor rustics, in this way joining the humanitarian attitude with the beginnings of Nature poetry in this epoch.

But still in his conventional, Latinized diction, in the choice of vocabulary and style, Thomson is a neoclassical poet. He often speaks about young men as "youthful swains", and instead speaking about "poultry" or "the wind" he mentions "household feathery people" and "ethereal forces". His verse is neo-classically regular and ordered, he uses stock elements of scenery, introduces compliments to patrons and does not escape a moral tendency in his observations.

Similar tensions between neoclassical leanings and new attitudes marked the production of the majority of Nature and humanitarian poets of the age. William Cowper (1731-1800), when writing his poem "The Task" (1785), dedicates it to the theme that "God made the country and man made the town"; and although he shows affection for Nature, it is still treated as a setting for human occupations. In spite of its close observation - of hay-casting, of a country postman, of a wag goner breasting the storm, of a snowfall - the poem develops into a kind of discourse about social, domestic country life, adorns with moral topics and didactic passages. George Crabbe (1754-1832), as one of the belated Augustans and a transitional poet who also wrote in the Romantic period, shows a humanitarian attitude in his poem "The Village" (1783), offering a sordid picture of the 18th-century rustic life, but putting it into the neoclassical metre of heroic couplet. William Shenstone expresses in his rural poems his love of natural beauty and his desire for simplicity, but in his short poems could not escape from the weight of conventions in diction, endowing the places he described with many artificial ornaments. It is Oliver Goldsmith, who -
although equally neoclassical – joins his humanitarian interests with other new features of approaching pre-Romanticism: the melancholic mood and elegiac tone, as might be best observed in the poem "the Deserted Village" (1769) which presents the destructive influence of the industrial order on a happy and peaceful rural community.

The pensive, gentle, idyllic tone, and the fleeting mood, which is usually experienced at sunset and provoked by sylvan scenery appear in the poems of William Collins, a poet combining Thomsonian sensuousness with an elegiac atmosphere. The best example of his accomplishment is "Ode to Evening" (1746), praises for the most skilful use of musical assonance and onomatopoeia; which expresses the enjoyment of nature in solitude at the twilling hour. Other odes, published in the same volume, voiced his protest against the artificiality and ornateness of 18th-century poetry, although his practical striving for simplicity and naturalness was not always successful.

The same atmosphere, combined with neoclassical neatness, aphoristic diction, and orderliness on the one hand, and on the other, with the feeling for Nature and the sympathy for lowly folk can be noticed in the poetry of Thomas Gray (1716-1771). By training a classicist and an academic, who also wrote moralizing, didactic, neoclassical hymns and odes Gray's work is also a precursor to English Romanticism. The pre-Romantic topics appear in his most famous poem, "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" (1751).

Of course, many of these interests and attempts to introduce some changes were merely sentimental. Sentimental also were a few attempts to undertake the theme of love, either in prose by Jonathan Swift in his "Journal to Stella" (1710-1713), a collection of letters, or in verse, as in "Eloisa to Abelard" (1717) by Alexander Pope, a heroic epistle about Eloisa's renunciation of
love for the service of God. But it was among the "Nature" poets that some of the most important tendencies were born.

The introduction of the melancholy mood into neoclassical poetry seems to be one of the major steps towards a complete change of attitude. In neoclassical descriptive poems the stress fell traditionally on the observed object. This tradition suffered a decisive break: the expression of the mood shifted the stress onto the observing subject. The neoclassical WHAT was being slowly substituted by the pre-Romantic WHO and HOW. Objective distance and precision in rendering images of the world became less important than emotional, subjective intensity of a poetic vision. The rationalistic ambition of understanding and depicting changed into the pre-Romantic longing to feel and in effect objective and rationalized description changed into a poetic confession. The importance of the poet, the man who feels in a unique way, began to grow. Edward Young in his "Conjectures on Original Composition" (1759), a prose essay, rejects the ancients as models, because it was originality that became important. Poets should rely upon inspiration, he suggests; they should be creative, not imitative.

So, from the change of topic, through the introduction of mood, the development of neoclassical poetry into the pre-Romantic one was marked primarily by a great step from the descriptive poem to the personal lyric. And this step was taken first by the poets of the so-called "graveyard school".

3.2.2 The Political Context

The first half of the nineteenth century in England is considered as the age of political stagnation and repression in which a new language of 'rights' has been created. The rights of men, women, slaves, and even animals were discussed within this context of political upheaval
and uncertainty. The American War of Independence and the French Revolution had vital influence on the English community at the time. Consequently, the political tendency of the society has taken two opposite directions. The first group reacted positively to the political changes with great optimism when liberty spread across America and Europe and human rights were being openly discussed and enshrined in the constitutions of fledgling democracies. The second group regarded their time as dark days in which the threat of revolution was always present to challenge status, property, traditional hierarchies and security.

3.2.2.1 The American Revolution

The beginning of the American Revolution can be traced back to the year 1764 when George Grenville and George III’s first minister levied new taxes on the colonists. This was backed up with a boycott of British goods and the formation of political groups called ‘Sons of Liberty’. Though the congress declared more acts which levied more taxes in 1773 and 1774, the American politicians remained divided between radicals who looked towards independence and moderates who sought reconciliation with George III. But Tom Paine’s Common Sense, published in January 1776 and achieving unprecedented sales, “seems to have offered them the courage, the inspiration and the vision” (Furniss 8). As a result the Congress issued the declaration of Independence on July 1776 – a document which attacks George III for the first time and no longer appeals to the rights of British subjects but to the ‘nature’ rights of man.

As stated by Tom Furniss, the American Revolution was also a British – or even European – event. Its documents and actions have been seen as significant influences on the French Revolution – especially through the participation of French soldiers in the American war and the publication in France of the Declaration of Independence. In Britain, many were sympathetic to
the colonists' cause before the revolution. Edmund Burke, spokesman for the Whig opposition, urged conciliation with the colonies for the same reasons as he urged reform in Britain – to protect commercial interests and avoid revolution. Burke warned the government that if it continued its unjust policies towards the colonists in the name of an abstract sovereignty it would teach them by these means to call that sovereignty itself into question. This is too why Burke initially supported British radicals who sought the reform of Parliament and the English constitution in the name of the same natural and historical rights as those which the Americans appealed.

After the revolution America became, in the eyes of British radicals and poets, the land of freedom. For this reason, the poets Coleridge and Robert Southey planned a scheme to emigrate to the Susquehanna river in Pennsylvania, near Priestley, that they called 'pantisocracy' (Ruston, 8). They imagined a commune-style life based on principles of equality, with the community equally sharing wealth and property.

3.2.2.2 The French Revolution

The early period of the French Revolution, marked by the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the storming of the Bastille to release the imprisoned political offenders, had an important influence on the writing of the Romantic period, inspiring writers to address themes of democracy and human rights and to consider the function of revolution as a form of change. In the beginning, the French Revolution was supported by writers because of the opportunities it seemed to offer for political and social change. When those expectations were frustrated in later years, Romantic poets used the spirit of revolution to help characterize their poetic philosophies.
The influence of the French Revolution was clear on the English Romantic poets particularly William Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley. In the beginning of the revolution Wordsworth appears enthusiastic and writes in favour of the revolution but after Napoleon takes over we see that enthusiasm turning into hatred for France’s aggressive imperialism. Wordsworth’s sonnets prove that Napoleon was very much in his mind in 1805, when he was working on the “Prelude”, and specifically when he crosses the Alps and he refers to Mont Blanc.

The day we first

Beheld the summit of Mont Blanc, and grieved

To have a soulless image on the eye

Which had usurped upon a living thought

That never more could be. (1805 Prelude VI.453-457)

Wordsworth goes across the Alps and into Italy through his sonnets as a specific indication of Napoleon’s military activities of the previous years. Using a very powerful way through his writing, Wordsworth accomplishes to show his anger for Napoleon’s actions during his participation in the revolution and particularly here the Alpine crossing.

Furthermore Wordsworth continues his intellectual conflict with Napoleon in "The Convention of Cintra", in which the poet criticizes Napoleon’s power as being imaginary. However Wordsworth and Coleridge recognize Napoleon’s ingenious talent to act far beyond the imagination. They depict Napoleon to be evil and similar to Milton’s Satan. Wordsworth and Coleridge reflect Napoleon as Satan because of his pretended role as liberator of Europe from
monarchy, where at the same time illustrating Napoleon in the Miltonic role gives him an ironically heroic figure while it attacks him.

Coleridge's "Fear in Solitude" is a great example of the influence of the French revolution upon the British Romanticism. "Fears in Solitude" is a significant work for the reason that it was written during the alarm of an invasion. Moreover it is extremely topographical in order to give an idea of the location in which the poet was inspired. Place and time are very important elements in Coleridge's writing and in this particular work he expresses the fears of a possible invasion. Here Coleridge portrays Nature as a spiritual gateway, an escape from the real world and the anxiety created by a potential invasion.

Unlike the Romantic poets of the first generation, whose early enthusiasm for the French Revolution was later superseded by a return to Toryism, Shelley and Byron remained radicals from first to last. Godwin's *Political Justice* (1793), which influenced Shelley, developed notions in harmony with the more extreme currents of feeling stemming from revolutionary France. *Prometheus Unbound* (1820), a lyrical drama, was the best expression of Shelley's revolutionary idealism.

### 3.2.3 The Socio-economic Context

The profound economic and social changes in England in the 19th century created a desperate need for corresponding changes in political arrangements and politics, and new class, manufacturing rather than agricultural, were beginning to demand a power in government proportionate to their wealth. The Industrial Revolution, which is defined by Abrams as "the shift in methods of manufacturing which resulted from the invention of power-driven machinery to replace hand labor," had begun in the mid-18th century with improvements in machines for
processing textiles, and was given immense impetus when James Watt perfected the steam engine in 1765 (Abrams Norton Anthology 3). It has a significant importance as the term is widely used to describe a complex period of social, technological and economic changes from around 1750 to around 1830.

The Industrial Revolution’s principal characteristic was the invention and application of means to produce goods more efficiently and cheaply. This process was facilitated by periods when capital was available for the building of machines and factories. It also coincides with a steep rise in population, which provided more markets, more mouths to feed, more employees for a workforce, and attendant problems of housing and economic welfare. One of its mere features was that it produced more wealth to the English society.

The production of wealth, according to Toynbee (1884), necessarily involved an equal revolution in its distribution. In agriculture the prominent fact is an enormous rise in rents; they almost doubled between 1790 and 1833. Much of this rise was “due to money invested in improvements—the first Lord Leicester is said to have expended £400,000 on his property—but it was far more largely the effect of the enclosure system, of the consolidation of farms, and of the high price of corn during the French war” (Toynbee 92). This, as a result, represented a great social revolution, a change in the balance of political power and in the relative position of classes. As the farmers shared in the prosperity of the landlords and many of them held their farms under beneficial leases, and made large profits by them, their character completely changed. They ceased to work and live with their labourers, and became a distinct class. The war with France caused high prices which thoroughly demoralized them, for their wealth then increased so fast, that they were at a loss what to do with it. “Cobbett”, Toynbee states, “has described the change in their habits, the new food and furniture, the luxury and drinking, which
were the consequences of more money coming into their hands than they knew how to spend. Meanwhile, the effect of all these agrarian changes upon the condition of the labourer was an exactly opposite and most disastrous one." (29) An exact analogous phenomena appeared in the manufacturing world when the new class of great capitalist employers made enormous fortunes, they took little or no part personally in the work of their factories, their hundreds of workmen were individually unknown to them; and as a consequence, the old relations between masters and men disappeared, and a 'cash nexus' was substituted for the human tie. The workmen on their side resorted to combination, and Trades-Unions began a fight which looked as if it were between mortal enemies rather than joint producers.

This shift from the old world to the new has ensured the need for a new government policy of a strict non-interference which leaves each man to pursue his own private interests. For the great majority of the laboring class the results of this policy were "inadequate wages, long hours of work under harsh discipline in sordid conditions, and the large-scale employment of women and children for tasks which destroyed both the body and the spirit" (Abrams Anthology 4). In addition, the workers had no vote and were prevented by law from forming labor unions. As a result, their sole recourse was to petitions, protest meeting, agitation, and hunger riots, which only frightened the ruling class into more repressive measures.

Suffering was largely confined to the poor, however, for all the while the landed classes, the industrialists, and many of the merchants prospered. The food riots were a direct result of the worsening living conditions of the poor. In London the Regency period was for the leisure class a time of lavish display and moral laxity. In the provinces, the gentry in their great country houses carried on their familial and social concerns – so fully reflected in the novels of Jane Austen- almost untouched by great national and international events.
The influence of the Industrial Revolution on art and literature was described by Francis Klingender in his book *Art and the Industrial Revolution*. The Romantic writers refer to the industrial Revolution, either in passing, as Shelley does in *Queen Mab*, referring to the early industry of nail-making, or as Keats does in ‘Isabella’. Blake’s ‘satanic mills’ in his poem “And Did Those Feet in Ancient Time” are sometimes taken to refer to factories. The most sustained and serious treatment of the Industrial Revolution is that of Wordsworth in book VIII of *The Excursion*. This passage acknowledges the progress made by industry and applauds the power of science, but also describes the ‘dark sides’ of the Industrial Revolution, picturing the building of factories, the change-over from day shift to night shift, the employment of women and children as well as men, and the subjection of human need to the profit motive:

Meanwhile, at social Industry’s command,

How quick, how vast an increase! From the germ

Of some poor hamlet, rapidly produced

Here a huge town, continuous and compact,

Hiding the face of earth for leagues – and there,

Where not a habitation stood before,

Abodes of men irregularly massed

Like trees in forests, – spread through spacious tracts,

O'er which the smoke of unremitting fires

Hangs permanent, and plentiful as wreaths
Of vapour glittering in the morning sun.

And, wheresoe'er the traveller turns his steps,

He sees the barren wilderness erased,

Or disappearing; triumph that proclaims

How much the mild Directress of the plough

Owes to alliance with these new-born arts!

Then the poet expresses his regret upon the beautiful, calm, sweet and peaceful past condemning what he calls the 'lamentable change':

Oh! where is now the character of peace,

Sobriety, and order, and chaste love,

And honest dealing, and untainted speech,

And pure good-will, and hospitable cheer;

That made the very thought of country-life

A thought of refuge, for a mind detained

Reluctantly amid the bustling crowd?

Where now the beauty of the sabbath kept

With conscientious reverence, as a day

By the almighty Lawgiver pronounced
Holy and blest? and where the winning grace

Of all the lighter ornaments attached

To time and season, as the year rolled round?

He eloquently describes how industrialization affected the social infrastructure of the family when husband, wife and children had to work to make more money lamenting the loss of its emotional intimacy and unity:

Lo! in such neighbourhood, from morn to eve,

The habitations empty! or perchance

The Mother left alone, – no helping hand

To rock the cradle of her peevish babe;

No daughters round her, busy at the wheel,

Or in dispatch of each day's little growth

Of household occupation; no nice arts

Of needle-work; no bustle at the fire,

Where once the dinner was prepared with pride;

Nothing to speed the day, or cheer the mind;

Nothing to praise, to teach, or to command!
3.2.4 The Religious Context

The religious dispositions, political aspirations, economic interests, and literary tastes of Dissenting communities “impelled the genesis of Romanticism in England” (White I). Though the Enlightenment had weakened established religion in Europe, it could not totally uproot it. However, sophisticated thinkers and writers had less interest in conventional piousness. But the attitude towards religion during the Romantic period was more complex as it has been transformed into a subject artistically treated differently from traditional religious conception. The Romantic intellectuals were fascinated by religious imagery in the same way they dealt with other ancient traditions in which they no longer believed. Religion for them was a source of artistic inspiration just like the classical mythology, so that they felt free to draw on its themes with little reverence.

Mark Canuel in his book Religion, Toleration, and British Writing, 1790–1830 (2004) offers an illuminating and expansive discussion of religious discourses as central to a process by which Romantic writers came to envision the establishment in church and state as a national community that would tolerate and sustain divergent kinds of religious belief. He discusses how Coleridge’s The Watchman (1796) reflects his outspoken argument against the authority of the state to command belief. Even his later work which was frequently considered conservative by many critics Canuel confirms that it “actually bears a closer resemblance to his early radicalism than to defenses of established religion by Burke and other eighteenth-century Anglican apologists.” (8) Coleridge’s On the Constitution of Church and State (1826) suggests that he regarded his defense of the church as a way of undermining the legacy of forced and falsified religious conformity. Like Coleridge, Wordsworth considers the church less as a block of beliefs than as an accommodation and articulation of vastly dissimilar orientations. Though his later work The
Excursion (1814) has been taken by many critics as a dogmatic attempt to exclude or endorse specific beliefs—whether radical or conservative, Canuel assures that it would be more accurately understood as a poetic reconstitution of religious establishment and the social body shaped and maintained by it. Religious establishment that is “less significant for enforcing doctrinal conformity than for organizing the movements of national and imperial populations in the absence of that conformity.” (163)

The Gothic genre and the later writings of Coleridge and Wordsworth, especially, depict nonconformist positions and beliefs in relation to political institutions and establishments in order to “embrace nonconformity within newly broadened and invigorated structures of social cooperation” (Canuel 38). Without referring to exceptional, but important, cases like Coleridge and late Wordsworth, David Jasper states that “In religion the Romantic period may be characterized as a time in which many people inspired to a new and heartfelt belief were deeply suspicious of old ecclesiastical institutions, while a new and radical secularism took root through thinkers such as William Godwin and the Utilitarians who followed him” (221).

3.2.5 The Intellectual Context

Undoubtedly, Romanticism was not confined to the political arena; it is impacted socially, intellectually and literary. Even religious faith was attacked on many different grounds during the Romantic period, from scientific, political and philosophical perspectives. Early in the century the French surgeon, Julian Offray de la Mattrie, argued in his book The Machine Man, that human beings could be regarded as machines (Ruston 22). He believes that the soul, if it existed, would be seen by physicians when they operated on the body. Subsequently, it seemed to some, after Newton’s discovery of the law of gravity, that the world was a machine which
worked according to regular and universal rules that could be discovered and explained by scientists. This belief supported David Hume’s argument that every effect had a cause, which in fact was a matter of habit; it was simply something we expected rather than anything we could prove.

On the contrary, these conceptions of the Enlightenment period have been reargued in the Romantic era. Rather than being primarily concerned with the rational, the Romantic period was fascinated with the irrational, the superstitious, and mysterious; with madness, with feelings and with the imagination. The philosophy of Immanuel Kant, who believes that there is something more real than mere matter, was influential at the time. His philosophy has become known as transcendentalism in which he argues that there is something beyond the material world, beyond that which is actually tangible. While reason might govern our knowledge and experience of the material world, Kant points out that we also are capable of moral reasoning, of making choices because they are the right or the dutiful choices to make. The question of how well known Kant’s philosophy was in Britain is a vexed one, but it was certainly known to Coleridge, who studied the German philosophers. Coleridge had first been influenced by David Hartley, whose *Observations on Man* (1749) took its cue from Locke’s idea that people were not born with innate ideas. Locke imagined people as a kind of blank canvas or *tabula rasa*. Hartley believes that sensations were physical vibrations in the nerves; moral awareness was achieved by reflecting on these sensations. This idea of a solitary and personal reflection on one’s experiences of empirical world particularly appealed to Wordsworth, whose early poetry is filled with such moments of internal exploration: ‘emotion recollected in tranquility’.

The problem Coleridge, and perhaps Wordsworth, have with Hartley is that he perceives the mind as a passive tool, merely receiving impressions from the world. For the Romantics the
mind is essentially active and creative; Wordsworth could see that memory is only partly
recollection and that the imagination was also at work in the exercise of remembering childhood.
For him the senses ‘half create’ what they perceive. In other words, the external world has no
independent existence from the mind that witnesses it. This idealism elevates the individual and
subjectivity.

Some other notions as the ‘nature’ of poetry and the ‘poetic truth’ have also faced a radical
change in the nineteenth century. M. H. Abrams discusses these changes in detail in his book The
Mirror and the Lamp (1958). He believes that the problem the 18th century critics faced when
they tried to reconcile the traditional poetic elements as class myth, romantic magic, fairy-lore,
and even figurative deviations from literal fidelity of statement with the cardinal criterion of truth
to nature. Hence, the ‘mimetic’ theory, which takes poetry as an imitation of the external world,
has been reexamined.

In the course of the 18th century theory, there were two extremes. At one extreme are the
critics who agree with Hume that ‘the mind is displeased to find a picture, which bears no
resemblance to any original. At the other, we find Thomas Twining, who agrees wholeheartedly
with what he thinks to be the opinion of Aristotle, that the end of poetry is pleasure, and that
therefore, we must justify in poetry not only impossibilities, but even absurdities. These debates
gave birth to a new view on the ‘poem’ from ‘an imitation of nature’, to be ‘hetrocosom’, which
means ‘a second nature’, created by the poet in an act analogous to God’s creation of the world.
In fact, the beginning of this change started in the 18th century. Thus the word ‘create’ started to
be used as a metaphor applied to literary invention.
A prime source of the concept of the 'creative imagination', discussed by 18th century critics, was the endeavor to account for fantastic poetic characters which are most utterly 'original', because they had to be invented without the assistance of prior forms in sense. A characteristic excellence of Shakespeare, Josef Warton wrote as early as 1753 is his 'lively creative imagination'. In *The Tempest* Shakespeare has wonderfully succeeded in forming a character totally original, for 'the monster Caliban' is the creature of his own imagination.

A number of these diverse developments from the analogy between the poet and the Creator are brought together in the Berlin Lectures of August Schlegel. In these lectures, Schlegel attacks the doctrine that art must imitate nature. For English writers of the early 19th century, 'create' had for the most part become a routine critical term, but in some uses it continued to manifest its metaphorical vitality. Shelley, for example, reverts to an interpretation of the method of creation close to that of the Renaissance Neoplatonists. Only in the philosophy of Coleridge, however, is creation a central and thoroughly functional metaphor. He adds a third term – the mind in perception – to the existing analogy between the poet and the creative God. The result is a triple parallel. This creative process is reflected in the primary imagination by which all individual minds develop out into their perception of this universe, and it is echoed again in the secondary or re-creative imagination which is possessed only by the poet of genius.

3.2.6 The Sense of the Past

Several concurrent developments influenced a shift in English attention from Rome to Greece during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In terms of literature, the writings of ancient Rome and Greece had long been lumped together under the rubric of "classical studies." Typically, Latin translations of Greek works served as the basis of such studies, due in part to the
difficulty of the Greek language. But gradually, a separation of Roman and Greek cultures began to occur, resulting in a new respect for Greek works as the models on which subsequent Roman literature was based. At the same time, Greece was experiencing a new wave of travelers to its shores. This interest, as Timothy Webb states,

expresses itself sometimes negatively and sometimes positively; sometimes as a nostalgic yearning to escape into another place and another age apparently more golden than the present and sometimes as a desire to make the lessons of the past immediately relevant to the urgencies of contemporary life; sometimes as an emphasis on the differences between Greece and England, sometimes as a suggestion of analogies... (169,170).

The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries also saw numerous developments within the field of mythography. Throughout most of the eighteenth century mythographers were primarily concerned with making pagan "idolotary" acceptable to a Christian audience. While the typical eighteenth-century attitude toward Greek mythology was a negative one, it remained a source of interest, mainly out of a sense of obligation to classical studies. By the late eighteenth century, the distortion of Greek myth for the sake of Christian sensibilities was becoming increasingly unpalatable to the growing Romantic Movement. Greek mythology underwent a revival in which it was presented factually and objectively, rather than being reduced to Christian allegory. These more "scientific" treatments, as well as more comprehensive studies of lesser known myths, became the point-of-entry into Greek myth for many Romantics. Edward B. Hungerford (1941) stresses that for Shelley and Keats, as well as other Romantics, mythology became a "new language" for exploring religious and spiritual themes.
Before long, such shifts in attitudes were reflected in the works of England's Romantic poets. Lord Byron, just prior to his departure for Greece in 1809, disparaged the Elgin marbles as "freaks" and "mutilated blocks of art." After having traveled in Greece, Byron published the first two cantos of his Childe Harold's Pilgrimage in 1812, which included passages glorifying Grecian ruins. In The Curse of Minerva (1815), Byron berates Lord Elgin for his vandalism of Grecian statuary. Byron treats Greek themes in other poems as well, including The Bride of Abydos (1813) and The Giaour (1813). Byron, Shelley, and Keats are acknowledged by modern critics to be the best representatives of English Romantic Hellenism; as Levin notes, the three poets are very near the centre of Romantic Hellenism in England. Yet Byron is often characterized as Philhellenic, in that his interests toward the end of his career turned away from ancient Greece and toward the political issues surrounding contemporary Greece. In fact, Byron died at the age of 36 when he was killed fighting for Greek independence from the Turks.

The works of Shelley and Keats, on the other hand, continue to be examined as more purely Hellenic. William Wordsworth, as well, has been identified as a Romantic Hellenic, with Douglas Bush (1937) describing him as "the fountain-head of nineteenth-century poetry on mythological themes." Bush points to such poems as "Laodamia" (1815) as evidence of Wordsworth's embracing of myth as a symbol of religious imagination, and credits the poet with establishing mythology as the "language of poetic idealism." Bush further maintains that Wordsworth "passed on to younger poets ... a noble and poetic conception of mythology as a treasury of symbols rich enough to embody not only the finest sensual experience but the highest aspirations of man." One of these "younger poets" was Shelley. Levin describes Shelley's Hellenism as "sentimental." Shelley's most noted Hellenistic work is Prometheus Unbound (1820), in which he reworks the ancient myth of Prometheus. Though John Keats is considered
by Bush as the poet most influenced by Wordsworth; Levin describes him as the most Grecian of modern poets. Keats's inspiration includes Grecian sculpture and art, as in "Ode on a Grecian Urn" (1820), as well as mythology, as in Endymion (1818).

Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley, and Keats, like many minor poets, were inspired in a variety of different ways by ancient Greece. Stephen Larrabee (1943), in concluding his analyses of the influence of Greek sculpture on the Romantics, summarizes what is perhaps the main thrust of English Romantic Hellenism when he notes that the Romantic poets wished to emulate the Greeks in making great art from the circumstances of their time.

3.2.7 The German Influence

British interest in German literature rose steeply in the years around and remained high throughout the Romantic period. Kevin Hilliard (1992) divides the German influence into two phases. In the first, the impact was made by writers of the so-called Sturm und Drang (Storm and Stress) movement: by Goethe, Schiller and Burger. The second phase began in 1813 with De L'Allemagne by Madame de Stael, which shifted critical attention to the mature works of Goethe and Schiller.

In his attempt to prove the German influence on the English Romantics, Hilliard quotes the following statement from the London Magazine (1820): "We suspect that German philosophy is at present the noblest in Europe; and we are sure that German criticism is at present the best" (115). It was through and in the writings of Immanuel Kant, Johan Gottlieb, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, Friedrich Schlegel, A.W. Schlegel and others that the Romantic Movement became most fully conscious of itself, of its religious, metaphysical, aesthetic and literary principles.
The clearest figure of influence can be found in Coleridge whose mind was regarded by many critics as 'much more German than English', which caused him to defend himself against the charge of plagiarism in his remarkable book *Biographia Literaria*. In fact he had studied Kant thoroughly by 1801, and put his studies to use especially in *The Friend* (1808), *Essays on the Principles of Genial Criticism* (1814) and *Aids to Reflection* (1825). The influence of Schelling is particularly marked in *Biographia Literaria*. Schlegel's lectures had, indeed, their influence on Coleridge, which was clearly reflected in his lectures on Shakespeare (1811-1812).

Romanticism, as a phenomenon which glorified in the 19th century not only in England but also in Europe in general, was an upshot of complex social, religious, political, intellectual and literary changes. The spirit of revolution was an expected result of the accumulation of these changes. This new spirit in the European man has manifested itself politically in the French Revolution, economically in the Industrial Revolution, socially in the return to individuality, and literary in the Romantic Movement. The Romantics had the feeling that they were representing a new phase of English literature which is very different from the previous stages. They called this deviation from the norms of literary history 'The Spirit of the Age' (Hazlitt 1825). Another point of interest in reading the context of English Romanticism is the mutual influence between art and society. As the changes of the European society prepared the ground for Romanticism to come to existence, at the same time, the Romantic poets redirected the European mind to a new philosophy of life.
3.3 The Context of Arabic Romanticism

3.3.1 The Historical Context

In the eighteenth century most of the Arab countries were still under the conquest of the declining Ottoman Empire that kept the Arab World in a complete cultural and intellectual isolation. This period has been regarded as the darkest age of Arabic literature. The factors leading to this darkness have been perfectly summarized by M. M. Badawi (1975) when he states:

The Arab provinces lived in a state of even greater cultural isolation. At the same time the political instability from which they suffered; the narrowness of the prevalent system of education which was chiefly theocentric in character and which did not encourage much initiative and originality; the lack of patronage as a result of the relegation of Arab lands to the position of provinces governed by Turks untutored in the Arabic tongue; the replacement of Arabic by Turkish as the official language; the scarcity and high cost of books owing to the absence of Arabic printing presses (for the purpose of printing Muslim and Arabic literature); the constant living on the cultural past, and not on what was best, for that matter – all these factors resulted in the degeneration of the literature of the period, which remained basically medieval in outlook and tended to be slavishly imitative of the past. (7)

As a result, all Arab countries, almost with no exception, suffered stagnation not only in literature but in all fields of life. Illiteracy spread in all over the Arab world. Hence, common people were not aware of their backward situation as they did not have any contact with or even knowledge of the western movements and developments. Standard Arabic, with its poetic and
prose heritage, was ‘imprisoned’ in Al-Azhar (the famous mosque in Egypt) and the like mosque-schools in the other Arab states. Methods of teaching in these schools were traditional and the very few scholars who had got the chance to join them “have closed the door of novelty” in religious, cultural and literary thoughts, and ignored to read about the golden ages of Arabic literature (Salamah 1-2).

Therefore, Arabic poetry was eventually deprived of the social and cultural role it had played in the preceding centuries and was finally reduced to a merely ceremonial, and the most part negligible, function. It was “bedeviled by the passion for verbal jugglery, the aim of the poets apparently being to impress their audience with command of the language, with their ability to manipulate it with acrobatic effects” (Haddarah 16). They put themselves in a net of limitations and constraints as they used to write verses in which a word begins with the same letter as that with which the preceding word ends, or in which every word or every letter must be dotted and so on and so forth (Farahat 1). This lack of seriousness led them to produce poems full of empty figures of speech for their own sake, and their subjects were traditional, limited largely to “panegyric and gazal (amatory verse), mystical, devotion and didactic verse, descriptive and bucolic verse” (Badawi 7).

Napoleon Bonapart’s expedition on Egypt in 1798 marks a turning point in the history of Egypt, in particular, and the Arab world, in general. The invasion demonstrated the military, technological, and organizational superiority of the Western Europe powers to the Arab world, leading to profound social changes in the region. It was enough, as Badawi comments, “to shock the Muslims out of their complacency and groundless feeling of superiority” (9).
Although Egypt's influence on European history dates back more than 5000 years (see Bernal's *Black Athena* 1987), at the beginning of the 19th century, it was still a mysterious and relatively unknown place to Europeans. One reason was that Egypt was Muslim and Europe was Christian, and the bitterness engendered by the Crusades and subsequent wars did not facilitate open communication. Another reason was that most of the knowledge of ancient Egyptian society had been lost some time before the Greeks occupied the coast, so even though many people had seen the pyramids, temples and hieroglyphics, no one knew their origin or purpose (Jim Jones 1).

Although he was not successful in achieving his goal which was to disrupt Britain's trade with India, Napoleon's invasion kindled European interest in Egypt and its history. His campaign, which was mainly military, was accompanied by scholars from different disciplines including science, archaeology, history and linguistics. The French occupation was ended shortly by the Ottomans in 1801 and Egypt was ruled by Muhammad Ali, from 1805 to 1848.

### 3.3.1.1 Muhammad Ali Pasha

Muhammed Ali first became prominent during the three chaotic years following the French withdrawal from Egypt, 1802-1805. In this period various factions fought for control of Egypt. Born in Cavalla, Macedonia in 1769, Muhammed Ali journeyed to Egypt in 1799 as an officer in the Ottoman expeditionary force that was defeated by the French at Abu Kir in July, 1799. Soon after the French evacuation the Sultan appointed him leader of the Albanian troops in Egypt, whose designate task was to establish Turkish control there – Egypt had technically been part of the Ottoman Empire since 1517. However, Muhammed Ali showed little interest in accomplishing this end. He and his troops fought for and against the Turkish governor. In the
meantime he was wooing the support of Sayyid Umar Makram, who held the second most powerful position in the hierarchy of the Egyptian ulama (religious scholars). The ulama had considerable influence over the populace and Muhammed Ali saw Makram as the key to gaining control of Egypt.

In 1805, under the guidance of Makram, the ulama led a popular revolt against the Turkish Governor of Egypt, Khurshid Pasha. He was deposed and Muhammed Ali was acclaimed as his successor. It is notable that without the ulama's assistance in stirring and leading the mob, Muhammed Ali could not have attained this goal at this time. He had insufficient troops to achieve it without outside assistance; moreover, there was considerable dissension within the ranks. In addition, he was virtually unknown to the Egyptian people.

In an attempt to modernize Egypt, Muhammed Ali engaged western scientists, technicians and teachers and applied western forms of education in the large number of schools he had set up from 1816 onwards (Badawi). Planning to detach Egypt from the Ottoman Empire, he decided to develop it in all fields of life, particularly, economy and military.

Muhammed Ali based his strategy of economical development of Egypt on agriculture and industry. He encouraged plantation of crops like rice, indigo, sugarcane, and long-staple cotton which would later be the primary source of exportation. Areas under cultivation have been rapidly expanded. The increasing agricultural productions supported the government with surplus income which has been used to finance industrial and military developments and accomplish public works such as barrage, dams, canals, and irrigation. The government planned to have a monopoly over the country's agricultural resources by, firstly, guiding the peasants to the preferable crops to plant, over what area and in what quantity; secondly, buying directly from
them then selling the products to the buyer without intermediaries. The widespread of agricultural production impelled the government to establish modern factories for weaving cotton, silk, wool, and jute. Muhammed Ali demanded the assistance of foreign advisers and imported machinery to build more factories for indigo, glass, sugar and tanning.

The fifteen years between the end of Muhammed Ali's reign and Ismail's accession were largely uneventful as far as modernization was concerned, but there were a few noteworthy developments. One of them was the commencement of construction on the Alexandria to Suez railway in the reign of Abbas I. The other was the commencement of the digging of Suez Canal in the reign of Said Pasha.

3.3.1.2 Refa'a At-Tahtawi: Pioneer of Enlightenment

Refa'a At-Tahtawi is considered by many Arab scholars and intellectuals as the father of the Arab rising and of enlightenment in modern Egypt. He was the pioneer of introducing the European culture by translating many European masterpieces as well as of modernizing throughout his writings on reform.

At-Tahtawi, who entered Al-Azhar at sixteen and taught by Shaykh Hassan Al-Attar, a reform-minded Islamic scholar who used to encourage his students to get more knowledge in European sciences, had been well educated in the classical Islamic sciences, including Quranic and hadith (the prophet Mohammed's speeches and deeds) studies, philosophy and Arabic grammar. He has been delegated for five years to Paris where he had the opportunity of direct encounter with the European culture and sciences. Upon his return to Egypt he started his career as a reformer and theorizer of the culture of toleration and compatibility between East and West. His doctrine has been reflected in his writings and translations.
At -- Tahtawi's view depends on calling for keeping the heritage without bigotry and taking from the West without dependency; thus he was the first thinker who established a relationship between heritage and modernity. He did not refuse quoting and borrowing from European civilization, but at the same time, did not accept it without thorough examination. That's why he asked Al–Azhar school mosque to teach all civil sciences and knowledge side by side to the Islamic law jurisprudence (sharia).

Some scholars consider At-Tahtawi as the pioneer of the secular trend in Egypt. Thaher, in this sense, confirms: “It is clear that Refa’a’s nationalism was pure Egyptian and secular; neither Islamic nor Arabic” (62). Others, on the other hand, claim him the leader of the reforming school which adopted the belief that Egypt had to be open to the Western developments without abandonment of the religious and cultural heritage.

Instinctively, At-Tahtawi was a teacher and educator as long as he lived his life. He started his life as a sheikh surrounded by al-Azhar students and ended his life as a teacher to the nation who saw no way to its advancement except by science, which is available to all people without differences between the rich and the poor, or male and female and exerted his best effort to achieve this goal and wrote books that support his ideas. At-Tahtawi lit the torch of thought and enlightenment after he had found a new cultural system.

3.3.1.3 Egypt under Khedive Ismail

During the reign of Khedive Ismail (1863-1879), Egypt witnessed the fastest and boldest process of westernization. Ismail not only followed his grandfather in his policy of European-style reform but went further to declare his wish to make Egypt a part of Europe: “My country is no longer in Africa, it is in Europe” (Cited in Rifaat 95). He believed that following the
European style would be the shortest way to the world of modernity. Thus the influence of the European culture in education, arts, poetry, music, archeology and museums was obvious. However, the real socio-political ground for modern Egypt was constituted in his time which, in fact, affected the characteristics of the Egyptian nation.

The digging of the Suez Canal was the greatest achievement of Khedive Ismail. It was designed and constructed by Ferdinand de Lesseps. It was a huge project which took more than ten years to be achieved. At the celebration of inauguration Lesseps summarized the great significance of the canal announcing that “the two ends of the globe get closer to each other... Oh West! Oh, East! Get closer, look at each other, recognize each other, greet each other, embrace each other!” (Cited in El-Shorbagy) Due to its unique geographical position, it gave Egypt a substantial impact on the global trade which in turn enhanced the Western desire to keep Egypt under control.

To achieve his ambitious projects of modernizing Egypt, Ismail resorted to huge loans from Europe at ruinous discounts and pledged the revenues royal lands, taxes and railroads to get the necessary funds. This gave Great Britain and France the opportunity to have a dual control over Egypt in the name of the bondholders. As a result, foreign capital got special privileges in investment which caused national political groups and societies to form a union to encourage the Khedive to withstand foreign financial control. One of the most influential societies at that time was Misr Al-Fatah (young Egypt) which was formed by Abdullah Al-Nadim and certain other journalists and intellectuals. They published a periodical of the same name in which they directly attack the financial policy of the ‘Dual Control’. Being worried of this solidarity, England and France succeeded in convincing the Ottoman sultan to depose Ismail in 1879 in favor of his son Tawfeco.
During the period from 1879 to 1882, Egypt witnessed the development of the first national movement led by Ahmad Urabi who declared a military revolt against Tawfeeq Pasha and the foreign advisers. Unfortunately, the revolt failed and ended with the British occupation of Egypt on 14 September 1882.

Unfortunately, Arabic literature was slow to react to the changes that were taking place in the Arab World in the nineteenth century and poetry in particular was the last to come under the western influence. In his attempt to justify the slowness of the changes in Arabic poetry at that time, Badawi suggests two reasons. First, poetry is the subtlest and most complex form of literature, and its appreciation therefore presents peculiar problems to the foreign reader. Second, the Arabs have always prided themselves on their poetry, which they regarded as their greatest and most congenial mode of literary expression. For a long time they relied on poetry to express their experiences and until the end of the nineteenth century “we find even those writers who were familiar with western literature expressing their firm conviction that Arabic poetry was superior to western poetry in all aspects and can therefore learn nothing from it” (Badawi 14).

Hence, the first stage of revival in modern Arabic poetry, which started by the distinguished and talented poet Mahmood Sami Al-Barooodi and developed by what is usually called the neoclassical school of Arabic poetry, was a call for the return to the classicism of early medieval Arabic poetry, especially the poetry of the Abbasid period. Unlike the western neoclassicism, the neoclassicism of Barooodi and his followers has no philosophical foundations and is not a philosophically sophisticated humanist movement which assumes that man’s ethical reason is, or should be, his guiding principle in life. Yet, the Arabic Neoclassic Movement shares with English Neoclassicism “the tacit or explicit belief that, first, there are absolute rules and standards of judgment; secondly, although these rules and standards are valid for all time they
are to be found in the works of a glorious period of the past; and thirdly, it is the duty of the poet to imitate creatively these works which are regarded as exemplars of good poetry” (Badawi 27).

Mahmood Sami Al-Baroodi (1839-1904) was, undoubtedly, the pioneer of the revival change in the modern Arabic poetry. As an army officer and a creative poet, he has been called ‘master of the sword and the pen’ (Badawi 16). He was the first who called for a return to the purity of diction and the forceful expression of the classic Arab poets with particular reference to the Abbasids (AL-Aqqad Egypt Poets 11). His aim was to free Arabic poetry from artificiality and aimless figurative versification. To achieve this goal he published his famous anthology Mukhtarat Al-Baroodi in 1909 in four large volumes in which he selected the best poems of the glorified classic poets such as Al-Nabigha Al-Thubiani, Al-Mutanabi, Al-Ma’ari, Abu Al-Atahiah, abu Nuwas and others. In this book, he revived not only the true value of poetry but also the readers’ taste by offering the masterpieces of the classic figures of Arabic poetry. But in his Diwan he showed his originality which can be seen in the plenty of diversity of the themes of the poems and the subtlest use of the language (Farahat 4).

As a matter of fact, the neoclassical school of Arabic poetry reached its maturity with Ahmad Shawqi and Hafith Ibrahim. Shawqi is regarded by many Arabs as the greatest of modern Arabic poetry. Although he was familiar with western culture, especially French and Spanish, he admired the Arabic poetry of the medieval ages and some of his poems deliberate imitations of works by Arab poets of the past, such as Al-Buhturi, Abu Tammam, Al-Mutanabi and Al-Ma’ari (Thaif 114). His first volume of verse entitled Al-Shawqiyyat and published in 1936 and in 1943, contains poems on political, historical, and social themes. On the level of form, Shawqi followed, strictly, the conventions of the old Arabic Qasida in style, language and imagery. Moreover, at its best, his poetry “has the impersonality of great classical art” (Badawi 41).
Whereas Shawqi was for a large part of his life the poet of the court, Hafith Ibrahim was more related to common people. He was often described as 'the people’s poet, and that was not only because he was born in a lower middle class family and grew up in poverty, but because he wrote much of his poetry about the sufferings of the people and about nationalistic themes (Thaif 107). He was inspired by Al-Baroodi, whom he regarded as an exemplar even in his life. Like his master, he turned to the ancient Arabic heritage for his inspiration, endeavouring to model his style on the rhetoric and the pregnant phrase of the Abbasid poets. He, like Shawqi, believed Arabic poetry to be the greatest and most eloquent in any language. His conception of poetry, which is regarded by Badawi as “traditional in the extreme”, was revealed in the preface he wrote to his Diwan.

Despite the high position that Shawqi and Hafith Ibrahim held in modern Arabic literature, their poetry has been sharply criticized by their contemporary writers. One of these scholars was the famous Arab critic Taha Hussein who assured that the vital defect in the poetry of Shawqi and Ibrahim was their lack of originality. This is the reason, as he illustrated in his book Hafith and Shawqi, which lies behind Muhammed Hussein Haikal’s failure in his introduction to Shawqi’s volume of verse to find out the poetic doctrine of Shawqi. Depending on the mere imitation of the great classic Arab poets like Al-Mutanabi, Abu Tammam, Al-Buhturi...etc. was the real weakness of their poems (Hussein 18-19).

The period 1900-1950 (which is the Romantic period in Arabic poetry) constituted a new phase in the economic, political, social and cultural evolution of the modern Arab World. It witnessed great events, such as the western occupation of most of the Arab countries and the two world wars. According to Khouri (1971), that period was characterized by the growing influence of western culture, the spread of education, the increase in the number of printing presses and
translated works, the struggle for independence led by the emergent political parties, the rise of a new generation of writers and the growth of a popular press. The question of the identity was the prominent phenomenon in this context (44). These developments had a profound impact on the Turkish and Arabic societies and therefore caused deep and radical changes in the social, economic, and political structures of these communities (Thaher 111).

### 3.3.2 The Political Context

The British occupation of Egypt crushed the first outbreak of Egyptian nationalism and anti-Westernism led by Ahmed Urabi and renewed the conflict of East and West as a political issue. In the first phase of the occupation, the British government planned to restore the authority of the Khedive, to reform the administration, to set up a government working upon human principles, and to withdraw from the country as soon as such a government was made stable and progressive. Achieving these aims "would preserve the British imperial communications from the danger of foreign intervention" (Khouri 45). But it soon became clear to Lord Cromer (The British Consul-General in Egypt) that these aims could not be carried out without the prolongation of military occupation. The British government supported him in his new policy and enabled him to become the unchallengeable ruler of Egypt for a period of twenty three years. Under his regime, Khouri believed, Egypt had progressed in almost every direction except toward self-government. Cromer himself refers to these achievements when he claims:

> No one can fully realize the extent of change which has come over Egypt since the British occupation took place unless he is in some degree familiar with the system under which the country was governed in the days of Ismail Pasha. The contrast between now and then is indeed, remarkable. A new spirit has been instilled into the population of
Egypt. Even the peasant has learnt to stand on his rights. Even the Pasha has learnt that others besides himself have rights which must be respected... Justice is no longer bought and sold. Nature, instead of being spurned and neglected, has been wooed to bestow her gifts on mankind. She has responded to appeal. The waters of the Nile are now utilized in an intelligent manner. Means of locomotion have been improved and extended. The soldier has acquired some pride in the uniform which he wears. He has fought as he never fought before. The sick man can be nursed in a well-managed hospital. The lunatic is no longer treated like a wild beast. The punishment awarded to the worst criminal is no longer barbarous. Lastly, the schoolmaster is abroad, with results which are as yet uncertain, but which cannot fail to be important. All these things have been accomplished by the small body of Englishmen who... devoted their energies to the work of Egyptian regeneration. (Cited in Khouri 69)

In sharp contrast to this view, the Egyptians believed that the British cared exclusively for their selfish interest and their authority was based only on military power. This view was deepened in the World War I which clearly showed that

the English were not in Egypt as officials and officers of an Ottoman Sultan or even of an Egyptian Khedive ... They were, as a matter of fact, there by right of sea-power to guard the main waterway to the Asiatic possessions of the Empire to garrison the main base of its African provinces. They were there, secondarily, to develop the resources of Egypt to the advantage of Europe in General and of England in particular, and to convert both Egypt and the Sudan into profitable dependencies of the Empire. Thirdly, they were there to continue educating the Egyptians until they became English. (Cited in Khouri 51)
When the war ended, the nationalists began to press the British again for independence. The Egyptians, in fact, were encouraged by the American president Woodrow Wilson, who declared the right of self-determination for all nations. In September 1918, the Egyptians formed a *wafād* (delegation), which later became a political party, to voice its demands for independence at the Paris Peace Conference. The idea of forming a delegation had originated among prominent members of the Umma Party, including Lutfi Assayyid, Sa’ad Zaghlul, Muhammad Mahmud, Ali Sharawi, and Abdulaziz Fahmi.

Sa’ad Zaghlul went to the British Residency and demanded the Egyptian independence. He was allowed to speak and leave, but was arrested a month later and sent to Malta. Egyptians revolted when they heard this news. Consequently, Egypt became a revolutionary state, as every town and city was seized by Egyptians. Everything was stopped and strikes began. Eight British soldiers were killed on March 18, 1919 on their way to Cairo. Many people were killed either in the fighting or executed for killing British officers.

On March 16, between 150 and 300 upper-class Egyptian women in veils staged a demonstration against the British occupation, an event that marked the entrance of Egyptian women into public life. The women were led by Safia Zaghlul, wife of the *wafād* leader Sa’ad Zaghlul; Huda Sharawi, wife of one of the original members of the *wafād* and organizer of the Egyptian Feminist Union; and Muna Fahmi Wissa. Women of the lower classes demonstrated in the streets alongside the men. In the countryside, women engaged in activities like cutting rail lines. On the next day more than 10,000 teachers, students, workers, lawyers, and government employees started marching at Al-Azhar and wound their way to Abdin Palace where they were joined by thousands more, who ignored British roadblocks and bans. Soon, similar demonstrations broke out in Alexandria, Tanta, Damanhur, Al Mansurah, and Al Fayyum. By the
summer of 1919, more than 800 Egyptians had been killed, as well as 31 Europeans and 29
British soldiers. The British government was forced to release Sa’ad Zaghlul and his colleagues.
This revolution had a profound impact on the Egyptian people on the economic, cultural and
literary levels. It succeeded in blending the various currents of resentments felt by the whole
nation in a powerful resistance which eventually forced Britain to abandon the Protectorate (see
Abdunnoor 56-61).

3.3.3 The Socio-economic Context

The process of industrialization, which was the main element of the economy of Egypt in the
second half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, caused radical
changes in the structure and life of the Egyptian society. The shift from being merely agricultural
to the realms of industry and trade, the formation of new classes, the growing urbanization, and
the gradual increase of life expenses were the major phenomena of such change. However, the
industrialization program was most of the time abortive and disappointing.

The beginning was with Muhammed Ali’s inauguration of European style factories in three
major sectors: Military production, agricultural processing and textiles. Later on, Khedive Ismail
established 22 sugar refineries in Upper Egypt and the Delta, but by 1878 only ten remained in
operation. During the American civil war cotton cultivation has been expanded rapidly and many
gins were built throughout Egypt. Moreover, Ismail encouraged the investment of large sums of
European capital in Egypt whose crown achievement was the Suez Canal. After the British
occupation of Egypt, the foreign capital got more support by the Government.

Socially, the main source of recruitment of Egyptian wage labor was “the mass of landless
peasants whose number grew continually during the second half of the nineteenth century”
(Beinin 15) as a result of agricultural reformation started by Muhammed Ali and continued more dramatically by the British administration of Egypt. Traditionally, most of the agricultural land was a state property but could not be alienated from the cultivator. Muhammed Ali set new rules of landholding system which enabled him to transform vast holdings to his family and favored notables. The British colonizer dispossessed a huge number of peasants for nonpayment of taxes or other debts which forced most of them to shift to the cities looking for new work.

3.3.3.1 The Economic Crisis in the Wartime

Just as the political revolution of 1919 must be viewed against the backdrop of the First World War, so the accompanying economic changes reflected wartime economic developments. The war exposed major weaknesses in Egypt's pre-war economy. It, as discussed by Tingor (1976), demonstrated the vulnerability of an economy which depended so fundamentally upon the export of a single crop—cotton—and on substantial European financing for the marketing of this product. There were two peak moments of tension and discontent during the war: the first at the onset of the war in 1914-15 and the second during the last year. When the war broke out, in August 1914, the Egyptian government found itself faced with an immediate economic crisis. Nearly a quarter of Egypt's cotton exports had gone to countries which were now enemies of Great Britain or would be in a position to supply Britain's enemies. Since the British prohibited cotton exports to these countries, the demand for Egyptian cotton declined abruptly. The price paid in the markets also fell. Moreover, the British found themselves unable to provide Egypt with gold, which was used to purchase the crop in the countryside. British officials in Egypt drew a picture of landholders seething with discontent, unable to find merchants willing to pay reasonable prices and yet still facing their regular tax payments.
The most serious economic problem Egypt faced in the latter war years was rampaging inflation. The inflation was related to many governmental economic policies, for the state had increased the amount of currency in circulation at a time when, because of reductions in imports, the quantity of goods available for purchase was severely limited. This inflation, however, afforded golden opportunities for powerful business firms controlling the manufacture and distribution of necessities to reap unanticipated profits. The huge gains of these companies, coming, as they did, at the expense of the rank and file of the population, caused Egyptian nationalist critics to scrutinise and attack the behaviour of these firms, all of which were dominated by foreign capital and foreign administrators. The Egyptian press shaped Egyptian thinking about the exploitative nature of foreign business companies in Egypt and the need for governmental regulation. Egyptians began to call for the creation of Egyptian-financed and -run firms which would have a more sympathetic attitude toward the plight of the people.

The revolution of 1919 paved the way for new economic organizations to be established to achieve the Egyptian nationalists' call for an economic independence. In 1920, landed magnates did what some Egyptians had been anticipating for four decades. They created a national bank (Bank Misr) the goal of which was to enable Egyptians to have more influence in their own economy and to diversify economic activities. The Bank sought to attract capital which would have lain idle or would have gone into banks run by foreigners. It hoped to use this capital to create new industries. Largely pioneered by a newly confident and resurgent foreign community residing in Egypt, an Egyptian Federation of Industries was established as a pressure group working to promote economic, social, and political conditions conducive to Egyptian industrial development. In the cotton crisis of 1921-22, Egyptian landed magnates established another important pressure organ, the Egyptian General Agricultural Syndicate, the purpose of which was
to wrest from foreign merchants some measure of control over the financing and marketing of Egypt's most important export crop, cotton. Although these new institutions were just coming into existence during the conflict-torn years of the Egyptian revolution, and did not become powerful until the 1930s, they eventually constituted three of the most influential organs in Egypt. Their founding reveals a great deal about an emerging Egyptian middle class, its economic attitudes and goals, and its relationship with Egypt's traditional source of wealth, the land.

3.3.4 Education

The progressive change of education in Egypt started early in the nineteenth century when Mohammed Ali Pasha established modern schools in which he applied the western system of education. One of these schools was the Cairo School of Languages where many European languages were taught. In Syria and Lebanon, various European educational institutions were set up on a wider scale still, and these included schools for girls. The Americans, who had started a college in 1847, founded the American College in 1866 in Beirut. The graduates of these schools and institutions played a formative role in the movements of modernization in Arabic literature. Later on, Khedive Ismail established more schools of European style as he wanted Egypt to be part of Europe.

Education in Egypt developed rapidly in the first half of the 20th century. By 1914, then, there were 68 government-supported primary and secondary schools, 328 foreign schools and 739 Egyptian private schools, with a total attendance of 147000 pupils. The first university in Egypt was opened in 1908. It was restricted to teaching certain courses in literature, history, philosophy, and social sciences including a number of distinguished Orientalist lecturers. This
national university became the nucleus of the state university which was established by the government after the First World War. In 1919 an independent private institution, the American University at Cairo, was founded.

Under the British occupation, teaching in English was introduced in Egyptian secondary schools and colleges, and as a result English literature influenced the younger generation greatly. Novels and poems were translated and views about poetry began to change. The principles of Western poetry were discussed; its themes, metaphors and principles of prosody (Moreh 56).

On the other hand, Student mission abroad which started by Mohammed Ali Pasha continued and increased rapidly when Sa'ad Zaghloul became the minister of education in 1907. As noticed by Khouri, before the British occupation of Egypt 80 percent of the students had been sent to France, and 90 percent had studied technical subjects, but during the occupation period, 75 percent of the student missions studied in England, and 65 percent conducted their studies in the fields of humanities and the social sciences. With these missions, many Arab poets and writers got the chance to study in England and deal directly with English literature (Khouri 41).

3.3.5 The Intellectual Context

In first half of the 20th century the Arab cultural identity underwent critical changes under the influence of the Western occupation of most of the Arab countries. One of these changes, as illustrated by Gershoni 1992, was “the emergence of modern literate culture and its evolution into a universal culture shared by broad sectors of the society” (326). Until the last quarter of the 19th century there were two types of cultures in the Egyptian society i.e., the high and written culture and the low and oral culture. Under the aegis of the religious scholars (ulama’), the men of letters (udaba’), and the scribal officials of the civil and military services, the "high culture"
was shaped and preserved as the system of values, norms, and modes of behavior of the
governing elites.

In contrast, the cultures of the society's broader sectors were for the most part oral and
popular. Their contents and symbols were derived from two primary sources: on the one hand,
the tradition of popular Sufi Islam, with its strong mystical components and its affiliation with
the universal religious framework of the Islamic nation (umma); and, on the other hand, the local
Egyptian folk traditions and customs which developed in the Nile Valley region and were
assimilated, beginning in the seventh century, into the popular religion of Islam. This dualistic
structure of divergent cultures, "high" and "low," "learned" and "popular," survived for centuries,
although channels of communication and interaction between the "two cultures" did exist.

During the nineteenth century, the processes of rapid modernization that swept through the
Egyptian society began to erode this traditional socio-cultural structure. In the late nineteenth
century, and more visibly during the first half of the twentieth, the central institutions, outlooks,
and practices of this structure broke down. The processes which helped transform written culture
into a major symbolic system, conceptual as well as operative, of modern Egyptian society were
the advent of universal modern education and the massive growth of a literate public; the
mushrooming of media based on written Arabic; the emergence of secular groups within the
intelligentsia which gained control over the literary cultural centers and became major producers
of new cultural products; the accelerated urbanization that dramatically expanded the educated
urban community, which was the primary consumer of the new literate culture (Gershoni 327).
While in some respects this modern literate culture was merely a sort of universalization of the
traditional "high" or "literate" culture, many of its contents and symbols were new, and certainly
to most of its "lower" consumer groups it was a complete novelty.
The principal agent of this socio-cultural transformation was nationalism which was primary to provide both a framework for the formation of a modern written culture and an instrument for diffusing its products at the various levels of society. The essence of the national culture was a continual effort to discover and shape what Gershoni called ‘the collective identity’ of the Egyptian people and the Egyptian land, as well as to adapt it to the rapid and effective (or controlled and selective) reception of the modern value system.

The collective identity, as discussed by Gershoni, was formed by two distinct socio-cultural processes; the Westernizing Egyptianist culture and the Islamic-Arab culture. These two wings of the Arabic culture in Egypt at that time reflected, undoubtedly, the deep conflict in the Arab society in dealing with the rival culture of the colonizer.

The Westernized and secular groups of the educated elite made their attempt to articulate a secular national culture capable of being absorbed by the society, while endeavoring to expunge from it traditional (i.e., Islamic-Arab) sources from which its identity and cultural symbols had been drawn. This Westernized elite formulated a modern culture based on distinctively Egyptian elements. Its contents and symbols were all drawn from the Nile Valley and from Egypt's non-Islamic cultural heritages: Pharaonism, Hellenism, and the Roman-Byzantine heritage. This movement hoped that it would, in time, establish itself as a comprehensive alternative to the traditional culture, in both its elitist literate form and its popular oral mode. Many factors such as the attractiveness of Western models at the time, personal exposure to European education and culture, and material interests which were best served by an independent Egyptian nation-state led these elitist groups to espouse an exclusively Egyptian territorial form of nationalism and to promote a cultural value system which was Egyptian, secular, and Western.
In the second socio-cultural process, the traditionalist groups within the educated elite aimed to formulate and inculcate a modern national culture, yet one that was anchored in traditional frameworks of identity and cultural values. They sought to reformulate the tradition so as to rationalize it and bring it into harmony with modern national views and practices. These groups therefore objected to the sweeping emulation of a "Western model" of national culture based exclusively on Egyptianist foundations and themes. Instead, they drew on the heritage of Islamic civilization, on the legacy of Arabic culture and language, and on prevailing sentiments of solidarity with Eastern people. The result was that this elite could adduce a formula for a national culture bearing a more indigenous Islamic-Arab character.

In this culture, Islam and Arabism became the principal foci of identity for the Egyptian community, rather than the traditionalist Islamic-Ottoman loyalty or the Egyptianist affinity. The new perspective held that Arabic language and culture, Egypt's Islamic-Arab history, and the Arab heroes and myths were symbolic reservoirs from which could be constructed modern values, symbols, mythology, literature, poetry, and art. These were depicted as alternatives to the Westernized Egyptianist culture, which derived its contents and symbols from Pharaonic or Greco-Roman civilizations. To its proponents, Islamic-Arab culture offered the "authentic" spiritual answer to the Western cultural challenge.

In the middle of these two extremist views, there was a moderate movement led by Mohammed Abduh who was "the most important name in the history of modern Egyptian thought, for all the contemporary writers and most of the early founders of the Wafd are in some degree his heirs and descendants" (Eban 196).

Muhammad Abduh was greatly influenced by Jamaluddin al-Afghani, the founder of the modern pan-Islamic movement which sought to unite the Muslim world under the banner of the
faith. When they met in al-Azhar in 1872 Abduh was roused from his asceticism to activism and sought to bring about a renaissance of Islam and liberation of Muslims from colonialism. Unlike his mentor, Jamaluddin al-Afghani, Abduh tried to separate politics from religious reform. Abduh advocated the reform of Islam by bringing it back to its pristine state and casting off what he viewed as its contemporary decadence and division. His views were opposed by the established political and religious order, but were later embraced by Arab nationalism after World War I.

Abduh maintained that religion must not be made into a barrier, separating men's spirits from God-given abilities in the knowledge of the truth of the contingent world. Rather, religion must promote this very search, demanding respect for evidence and enjoining the utmost possible devotion and endeavor through all the worlds of knowledge. He considered that the study of the contingent world, the analysis of astronomical worlds and the diverse theories of stars in their courses, the dimensions of the world's length and breadth, the sciences that study plants in their growth and animals in their quest to survive, that all of these and more belong with the relevant branches of learning and have been the area of much eager rivalry over their detailed investigation. These things, however, belong wholly with the means to material acquisition and well-being and are within those gifts of comprehension whereby God has willed that humanity be directed. Those who pursue these sciences increase in prosperity but short-comers incur only trouble. Only gradually does man attain to perfection; so runs the Divine principle. The prophetic laws are to promote endeavor along this path, in a general sense, and to sustain man in the attainment of the high dignity that God has promised to human nature (Abduh 103).

When Abduh entered public life the conflict between tradition, represented by the Azhar theologians, and modernism represented by the Syrian school, was waxing fierce. It was a sterile
conflict, Professor Gibb observes, because neither side had the least comprehension of the other's position.

The Arabic literary world was split into two hostile camps, each bitterly contemptuous of the other. On both sides indeed the protagonists were in an artificial position. The adherents of the old school were out of touch with the developments which were revolutionizing contemporary thought; they appealed only to a narrowing circle of kindred spirits and, in so far as they remained tenaciously conservative, they were fighting a losing battle. The protagonist of the new movement on the other hand, as is often the way with small groups had run or been thrust too far ahead and in cutting themselves adrift from the past they were hacking at their own roots. ... Western ideas had been too rapidly acquired to have penetrated more than skin deep. (169)

In this particular period, Egypt was a fertile environment to produce new intellectual movements, literary trends, religious institutions and political parties. It actually produced the greatest writers in the history of modern Arabic literature, amongst them the Arab Romantic poets.

Mohammed Abduh urged his countrymen towards a comfortable path which involved no choice as drastic as that offered by the extremists of either school. He held the belief that if Muslims jettison their tradition would have been an intolerable wrench, a cutting off of roots, and a violent plunge into the unknown. On the other hand they cannot reject the modern culture with its scientific developments. Abduh thought that Islam and modernism were compatible; and this became and has remained the axiom of modern Arabic literature, that starting point of all its contemplation. This compatibility could only be ensured by emphasizing the rational against the mystic schools of Islam, which thus interpreted was tolerant of scientific investigation and discovery. Western culture, too, was not to be imposed as it stood. It was to be fashioned to the
shape of a society predominantly Muslim in its structure. The laws of Islam were to be examined in a spirit of historic criticism; this would show that many qualities and customs now associated with it—polygamy, slavery, mysticism, social apathy and the like—were accretions, not organically bound up with Muslim principle. Strip these off and there would remain a certain code of theology, ethics and conduct which was in no way uncongenial to the progressive moods of modern Europe. (Eban 170)

These conflicts had their impression on the psyche of that generation. It was, in the words of Al-Aqqad, “an age of anxiety and hesitation between the ancient past and the vague future and the distance between the people’s belief in how things should go and what was really going on was so far.” (Cited in Sallamah 16) Shukri refers, in his confessions, to that perplexed and depressed spirit of the people of his time: “The Egyptian youth in the current state of our nation are so hopeful and so depressed at the same time; may be due to the social situation which strongly bears hopelessness and despair. Moreover, the Egyptian youth suffered the crisis between the Old and the New, and Past and Present just as a football in the feet of destiny.” (Cited in Sallamah 17)

The emergence of the Arab Romantic poets in this period, with their revolutionary spirit and open-minded attitude, gave a new dimension to the relationship between the Westernized and the traditionalist groups, at least in the field of literature. Following the reformation and moderate method of the Islamic reformer Mohammed Abduh, they tried to bridge the gap between the two cultures with a new outlook on the relationship between the Islamic culture of the Arab World and the contemporary civilization of the West; a relationship of compatibility not of difference. Thus, they opened their hearts to the European literary productions in general and the English Romantic poetry in particular. They did not hesitate to take from the English Romantic theory
whatever can help them modernize Arabic poetry and give it a new spirit. The Romantics' believed that the poetry which was performed by the Neoclassicists was almost a dying technique and therefore it had to be reevaluated and reformed not only in form but also in content. They labored to revitalize it and achieved great success in restoring it to a distinguished position.