CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The Arabic Romantic Movement, which started in Egypt in the first half of the 20th century, marked a crucial turning point in the history of Arabic literature. It, implicitly or explicitly, played a significant role in revolutionizing the Arab consciousness, pushing the society ahead to accept the principle of change and the fact of cultural exchange, defending the Self, and modernizing Arabic literature. One of its best contributions was the successful attempt at saving Arabic poetry from hollowness, stagnation, and meaningless decoration, and giving it a new spirit to face the challenges of the complexity of the modern society. Arabic Romanticism negotiated with European literatures by introducing major changes in both the form and content of traditional Arabic poetry. It initiated radical changes in Arab outlook on art and poetry; changes that were terrifying to some writers of that time.

Poetry has always been called Diwan Al-Arab (the register of the Arabs). It has reflected the deepest sense of Arab self-identity, of communal history, and of aspirations for the future from the very earliest stages in the Arabic literary tradition. It was mandatory for every Arab tribe to have a poet to represent them on cultural occasions. In times of crisis it has always been, and still remains, the poet’s voice that is first raised to reflect the tragedies, the anger, the fears, and the determination of the Arab people. This hallowed significance of poetry in the Arabs’ consciousness impelled them to stick to its classical norms for centuries and consider any attempt to make some changes in these rules as a major flaw and despicable deviation. Attempts to develop the techniques, forms, and themes of Arabic poetry often met with stiff resistance as evident in the history of Arabic literature; none of them was able to challenge the Arabic qasida,
the foundation of Arabic poetry. It was the Romantic Movement, with its three branches the Diwan School and Apollo Group in the East and the Emigrant Poets in the West, which courageously declared its revolt against the classical form and subject matter of poetry. They highlighted the necessity of a new view of poetry to cope with the radical socio-cultural changes at that time, an approach that has the potential to compare well with the new rival forms introduced into Arabic literature. Unfortunately, this unprecedented role of Arabic Romanticism has not received satisfactory investigations by the critics and scholars. On the contrary, some of them underestimate the contribution of Arabic Romanticism; even acknowledge the charge that it was just a mere imitation of the European Romantic Movement. Paying scant attention to its internal dynamics, they doubt the Movement’s uniqueness and originality.

Contrary to this established view, the Arabic Romantic Movement is, undoubtedly, unique in the history of World literature, notwithstanding it being heavily influenced by English Romanticism. Its originality was manifest in its causes, themes, and poetics. The Arab Romantics, though they acknowledged the influence of the English Romantic Movement, emphasized the originality of their new theory of poetry. To quote Abbas Mahmood Al-Aqqad, the greatest student of the movement: “The truth is that the Egyptian school did not imitate English literature, but it benefited from it and was guided by it. Further, it formed its own opinion of each English author in accordance with its own independent judgment” (Shua’ra’a Misr 190). Thus, the emergence of the Romantic tendency in Arabic poetry was, at least in the beginning, due to a multitude of internal factors rather than foreign influences. Jayyusi too shares this view when she acknowledges that “[P]sychological, social and in particular political causes are considered by some writers to be the sole driving force behind the Romantic Movement in Arabic poetry” (363).
A revolutionary energy was in fact the core of both English and Arabic Romantic Movements. In this sense, the period of English Romanticism coincides with what is often called the "age of revolutions"—including, of course, the American (1776) and the French (1789) revolutions—an age of upheavals in political, economic, and social traditions; the age which witnessed the initial transformations of the Industrial Revolution. Arabic Romanticism too emerged in an age of revolution in politics, economics, culture, education and literature. 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 Arab identity was the prominent phenomenon in this context (44). In both the contexts, the revolutionary spirit quite consciously set out to transform the very way people perceived the world, resulting in the transformation of poetic form and themes.

Mohammed Hussein Haykal, one of the well-known contemporary writers of the Romantic Movement, gives us glimpses of a society in the middle of simultaneous changes in literature and several other fields. In his The Revolution of Literature (1933), Haykal discusses "the dangerous role of the revolution in literature" which "had been felt strongly by the West and received the same kind of attention as the national political movements" (11). He assures that the efforts of the literary revolution leaders, like those of the politicians, "had been observed and analyzed (by the colonizer) simply because literature is always the true spearhead of the civilization of any nation" (11).
Haykal believes that the only way to modernize poetry is to have a revolution similar to that of prose; “a revolution which has human emotions and true feelings as its solid base and the political and social revolutions as its tools” (62). But this revolution needs to be guided by distinguished writers who should have powerful spirits, eager souls and profound emotions. Then, Haykal expects: “If we get the unique writers whose thirst for freedom drove them to break the shackles which still tied down people in all walks of life... and satisfied their souls, emotions and minds, only then poetry can get its freshness, newness, novelty and reformation in its rhymed form and themes” (64). They, as he suggests, have to get rid of the constraints of classical poetry and derive their model from the development of Western poetry in the latest ages.

Referring to the first generation of the Romantics, Haykal hopes that “this revolution could be achieved by the new generation of poets who are receiving new education today which can help them leave traditional principles and gain emotional and intellectual freedom” (66). These unique poets, he advises, “have to enter the world of poetry with a new spirit which can allow them go beyond time and place and establish connections with angels and devils” (66). They have to be revolutionaries who have enough knowledge of “the Egyptian and Greek gods” and “the mythology of different nations in different ages” (66).

It could be established, then, that the principal direct cause of Arabic Romanticism was the dramatic change in the Arab society in the first decades of the 20th century. Absolutely, the pioneers of the Arab Romantic Movement were at the centre of this change. They had a strong belief that the neo-classical poetry, which was ranged very much on the side of the traditionalists and one of their most powerful weapons, became an empty rhymed verse which was too weak to face the new challenges of fashioning the Arab cultural identity. Alongside these internal
impulses, the Arab Romantics had been fascinated by the English Romantic poetry during their educational career and found in it something that could satisfy their revolutionary spirits. Therefore, they were deeply influenced by it and at the same time inspired to go forward in making the demanded changes in Arabic poetry.

In point of fact, the other side of the story shows that the severe accusation of the Arab Romantics as blind imitators of Western literature might be part of a bigger picture concerning the disputed relationship between the colonized and the colonizer. Hence, most of the Arab scholars have been driven by the unconscious belief that direct colonial contact in Egypt and other Arab countries in the beginning of the 20th century disrupted indigenous culture, often radically. It actually rendered traditional ideas uncertain and ended the easy performance of traditional practices. For them, the conflict between ‘tradition’ and ‘modernization’ rose as a big issue and constituted a challenge to one’s cultural identity, and thus one’s personal identity. Consequently, they felt that the voice of the Neo-classical school of Arabic poetry was louder and more defiant than the Romantics’ in the Arab struggle for cultural self-determination. But, is this true?

To have an accurate and comprehensive answer to the above question, it is useful to recall Hogan’s view on the reaction of the indigenous people to the alien culture of the colonizer. He argues that such reaction can be divided into two main types: orthodoxy and assimilation. Hogan’s ‘orthodoxy’ is a category that encompasses a wide range of attitudes toward tradition, including reflections on tradition, and a genuine attention to the structure and meaning of traditional beliefs and acts (Hogan, 11). The orthodox groups try to eliminate from indigenous culture all elements that it shares with the colonizer’s culture. Simultaneously, they stress all elements of indigenous culture that are in a sense the opposite of the colonizer’s culture. On the
other hand, assimilation, according to Hogan, is “the full acceptance and internalization of the basic culture” (14). Within assimilation there is a further distinction between critical or deliberative assimilation and unthinking or mechanical assimilation. He reserves the term ‘assimilation’ for the former and dubs the latter mimeticism.

Hogan’s division, when applied to the Arab context, helps locate the Arabic Romantic Movement within the process of decolonization. The Arab Romantics believed that assimilation, and not mimeticism, is the best way to face the challenge of the profound impact of the colonizer’s culture on the society as it could help Arab intellectuals and writers to open new vistas for their cultural and literary heritage. This is clearly stated by Al-Aqqad in his explanation of the literary interaction with the conqueror’s cultural influence:

One of the effects of the Arabs’ first shock of the superiority and sway of the modern European civilization was the imitation of the conqueror as usual. This imitation started blindly and unselectively but did not last long as it shortly changed to be well-selective and then partially and disorderly independent until it reached mature and active independence with a clear vision. (Al-Mathahib Al-Aladabyyah 8)

Thus the cultural identity, which they aimed to defend, was as important as the political resistance against the British colonizer.

Although the voice of the neo-classical mode of poetry was particularly dominant in the general context of political commitment in the first decades of the twentieth century due to its nature as a powerful form of public discourse in which the poet assumed the role of spokesperson for the community, the Romantics’ view of anti-colonialism was deeper and more complex. Despite their political engagement in their fields of work, they believed that the real
threat caused by the colonizer was, as mentioned above, the crisis of cultural identity. In fact, they targeted the Orientalist discourse in ways that emphasized culture as the arena of contestation. Thus, Abbas Al-Aqqad argues that by using the inorganic form and conventional desert imagery of the classical ode, 'neo-classical' poets were simply reinforcing colonial stereotypes about the incoherence and ahistoricity of the 'Oriental mind.' In this way, as Wail S. Hassan confirms referring to De Young's argument, the shift from the neo-classical to the Romantic mode was itself motivated by the need to construct a cohesive Arab self that defied such stereotypes. Further, the revolutionary zeal in the early stages of European Romanticism appealed to the Arab Romantics who came to see in it a reflection of their own rebelliousness against colonial domination (58).

At this point, it is important to make a brief survey of the previous studies of Arabic Romanticism with an aim of getting a clear picture of the way the Arab scholars dealt with such a new phenomenon in Arabic literature, the positive as well as the negative responses.

One of the first studies which gives a hint of the originality of Arabic Romanticism against the charge of imitating English Romantic Poets was ShawqiThaif's Contemporary Arabic Literature in Egypt (1961). The well-known Egyptian critic studies Arabic romantic tendency as part of the development of poetry in Egypt in the first half of the twentieth century. Although he acknowledges the English influence on the poetry of the 'new generation' (the Diwan School) and the Apollo Society poets, he shies away from calling them 'Romantics' or the 'Romantic Movement' in Arabic poetry may be because of his rather conservative view that 'Romanticism' was, and could only be, a Western literary phenomenon. "Those poets were well cultured in English literature and that", he argues, "helped them to form a new outlook at poetry characterized by their stress on emotions, self-centered attitudes, simplicity and a different
treatment of Nature.” (Al-Adab Al-Arabi fi Misr 58) But he insists that the poets of these two groups were not mere imitators of English Romantic poetry, albeit being inspired by it. He believes that their attraction to the romantic tendency was due to social, political and economic context very similar to that of the English Romantic poets:

There is a strong connection between the poetry of this generation [the Romantics] and the common feelings shared by the Arab youths in Egypt in the beginning of this century; feelings of distress, annoyance, torment, and misery because of the abominable English occupation of their homeland which was a hindrance against their hopes and ambitions. (Fosoul fi Asshi’r 290)

Three of the six chapters of M.M. Badawi’s A Critical Introduction to Modern Arabic Poetry (1975) are a critical discussion of the Romantic groups of Arabic poetry, a work which is commonly marked as a primary reference in modern Arabic poetry studies. Badawi assumes that the first two groups of Arabic Romanticism are not qualified to be called Romantic, and it is more faithful to consider them as pre-Romantic Movements. Only the third generation of these poets, the Apollo Group, can be satisfactorily named Romantics. What is significant in this book is that the writer pays more focus on the poets individually and their contribution to the literary and poetic heritage of the Arab world with thoughtful literary analysis of some of their poetic writings. Unfortunately, the deliberation of the context of Arabic Romanticism, its major features, and the influence of Western literature is, by and large, ignored in this study.

In his article “The Diwan Group” Al-Zubaidi presents a penetrating overview of the Diwan school of poets focusing on three main points: the foundation of the group, the internal and external influences, and the prominent literary works and critical views of its members.
Indirectly, the writer accuses the poets of this school as passive imitators of the English Romantic poets and critics. He states that the inaugural step in establishing the group was Al-Aqqad’s critical essays on Arabic and Persian poets published in *Al-Dustur* magazine between 1907 and 1909 accompanied with the publishing of Shukri’s first collection of poems ‘The Light of Dawn’ in 1909. Both of them, Al-Zubaidi assures, were writing under the influence of the nineteenth century English literature. “While Al-Aqqad was deriving his critical views from his reading of Matthew Arnold, Hazlitt and Macaulay, Shukri was drawing on the poetry of Shelley, Byron and Wordsworth as represented in Palgrave’s anthology *The Golden Treasury*” (Al-Zubaidi, 36). Shukri met Ibrahim Al-Mazini at the Teacher’s Training College where he introduced him to the Abbasid and English Romantic poets. In 1911 Al-Aqqad met Al-Mazini in the office of *Al-Bayan* magazine and soon became friends. Towards the close of 1912 Al-Mazini introduced Al-Aqqad to Shukri who had just returned from England. As they held the same views and taste, the three writers found themselves soon forming a new literary school, which called for humanism and individuality, faithfulness to nature, truth and simplicity against national fanaticism, artificiality, rhetoric and imitativeness. Interestingly enough, Al-Zubaidi does not call it ‘Romantic Movement’.

In the second section of the article, Al-Zubaidi rejects the view held by many Arab critics that Shukri, Al-Aqqad and Al-Mazini were followers of Khalil Mutran, calling it a conjecture or a baseless assumption. He even doubts any influence of Mutran on any of these writers who clearly denied it on many occasions. He does so to support his argument that the main cause of the emergence of the *Diwan* School was the influence of English literature. The last section is devoted to an analysis of the leading role of Shukri in the School, which was acknowledged by the other two members of the group.
In 1977 Salma Khadra Jayyusi published her remarkable book *Trends and Movements in Modern Arabic Poetry* which is considered by many Arab scholars as one of the main efficient references in modern Arabic poetry in general and its romantic trend in particular. In two volumes, Jayyusi could produce an insightful analysis of the revival and growth of Arabic poetry in the period from the beginning of the nineteenth century to the seventh decade of the twentieth century, a period which witnessed a hasty development of Arabic literature with various trends and different movements. Arabic Romanticism dominates three chapters of her book, although she names only one chapter as ‘the Romantic Current in Modern Arabic Poetry’ referring to the last romantic group in Arabic poetry ‘Apollo Assembly’ in Egypt and its contemporary poets in other Arab countries. It is clear, thus, that she considers the two other groups, the *Diwan* School in Egypt and the *Mahgar* (Emigrant) Poets in North America, as pre-romantic movements.

I will focus here on the chapters which dealt with the *Diwan* and *Apollo* groups of poets as Arabic romantic poetry in the West is beyond the scope of my study. Jayyusi titles the period of the first generation of the Romantics as ‘the breakthrough’ which reflects her awareness of the vital role these poets played in opening avenues for Arabic poetry to develop and meet the process of modernization in all fields of life at the time, though they were immature in practicing the new trend they had called for. She starts her chapter with an insightful discussion of the cultural activities in Egypt in the second and third decades of the twentieth century. She clearly states that the poetic field in Egypt and most Arab countries was sharply split between the successive generations of ‘avant-grade’, Western educated poets and critics who sought to establish links with Western poetic standards, and the movement of revivalism which aimed first of all at achieving a renaissance of the classical literary heritage.
Jayyusi acknowledges the English influence on the *Diwan* poets and assumes that they might have benefited more from English criticism than from poetry and other genres of literature. This influence evoked the rebellious mood which had a great hold on the minds and hearts of the three poet critics and immediately led to a sudden, dramatic, and complete break-away from the oppressive, old-fashioned ruling ideas about poetry as expressed in their critical writings. But despite their success on the level of critical theory, the writer argues that they failed to some extent in both their applied criticism and poetic creativity. They were not able to establish the romantic mood in poetry as their attempts were crude, direct and lack the evocative power and infectious warmth of later Romantics. She presents two reasons for their failure to reflect the romantic mood in their verse, albeit their hard and constant attempts to produce the ideal poetry they envisaged: the first of them is their lack of genuine talent, and the second reason is the rigid code within which Arabic poetry of that time worked.

Salamah not only admits the profound influence of English Romanticism on the *Diwan* Group but goes further to confirm the accusation of imitation illustrating it with a quotation taken from Abdurrahman Sidqi’s Memos who was surprised while reading *The Golden Treasury* that some poems had been copied by Ebrahim Al-Mazini (27). However, Salamah emphasizes that those poets were also aware of many other literatures namely, French, Spanish, Italian, German, Greek and Old Latin (29).

This kind of misleading interaction between literatures impels Suheer Al-Qalamawi, who welcomes the innovational spirit in the poetry of the *Diwan* Group or the School of Emigrants Poets in North America, to warn against the negative effects of the blind imitation of the Western poetry: “[T]hese fruits whether inspired by the Western poetry or a literal translation of it have borne the seeds of the big problem that faces our poets until today” (Cited in Salamah 1980, 20).
The extreme view against the originality of Arabic Romantic poetry is declared by Dr. Abdulhameed Jeedah in the introduction to his *New Trends in Contemporary Arabic Poetry* (1980). He assumes that Romanticism in modern Arabic poetry in the period between the two World Wars was a distorted imitation of the West; a very simple lyric poetry far removed from poetry born of true suffering (175).

"Can we really call the two great movements: the *Diwan* School and *Apollo* Group a comprehensive Romantic Movement in Arabic poetry?" Ra’oof asks in the very beginning of ‘Arabic Romanticism in Egypt’, a chapter of her book *Shelley in Arabic Literature in Egypt* (1980). The answer is a “yes”, she argues, if we accept H. H. Remak’s assumption that there are as many definitions of Romanticism as there are authors chosen to represent it. “At any rate, the divergences between the Romanticism of a particular country and that of another overshadow whatever resemblances may exist. There are, to be sure, romantic writers and features; there may be a romantic period; perhaps there are Romanticisms, but there is no Romanticism.” (Remak 1961, 225) Although she seems to acknowledge the uniqueness of Arabic Romantic poetry, the writer, as the title of the book suggests, admits to the profound influence of the English Romantics, particularly Shelley, on these two groups of poets.

In his book *An Introduction to the History of Modern Arabic Literature in Egypt* 1984, Brugman devotes two chapters to cover the two schools within the Romantic Movement in Arabic literature in Egypt, namely the *Diwan* School and *Apollo* Group. Although the writer does not group them together under the label ‘Romantic Movement’, he always refers to the poets in both groups as Romanticists. He historically traces the emergence of the romantic tendency in the Egyptian thought and literature in the first decades of the twentieth century, and briefly discusses the new theory of poetry the Arab Romantics held opposing that of their predecessors’
and the internal and external factors behind that change. He avows that the recurring central theme in all their prefaces, reviews and manifestos is that real poetry must be of life and of the present time, and that it must express true feeling.

Among the main internal factors of the emergence of the Diwan group of Arab romantic poets, Brugman mentions: the rise of a new middle class, the reinforcement of the Egyptian, that is Arabic-speaking element in society as opposed to the rulers who spoke no Arabic or hardly any, and the printing press. Yet, the writer deals at length with the influence of English literature in forming the new doctrine of poetry at the time. He does not forget to refer to the Romantics’ interest in the classical Arabic poetry in the Abbasid period, which formed an important element in the nature of their poetry.

Brugman’s approach is more historical and biographical than literary and critical. For example, he traces the detailed steps of the establishment of the Apollo society and magazine with no critical comments on the literary features of that group’s poetry. He also intends to make brief biographies of the major Romantic poets of both groups which would help the reader to have a clear idea about the lives of these literary figures and their efforts to serve Arabic poetry to keep up its notable place in world literature.

In his attempt to shed light on the role of the foreign influences on modern Arabic literary criticism, Staif assures that the contextual-comparative perspective would be the best approach to get an adequate comprehension of the modern critical discourse of Arabic literature as it caters, through being contextual, to the various internal determinants which contributed to the formation of the critical text, and explain, through being comparative, the role which foreign influences have played in motivating and stimulating most of the developments and changes which modern
Arabic literary criticism has undergone during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He successfully accomplishes the aim he states in his article, that is to discuss three main issues in the domain of foreign influences: their channels to the Arab world, the difficulties involved in tracing them and the importance of their role in stimulating the critical changes and developments.

Khifaji was one of the few writers who talks about the importance of glorifying and exploring the originality of Arabic literature. He hopes in his preface to his book *Studies in Modern Arabic Literature and Its Schools* (1992) that the researchers would put the best of their efforts in producing critical and literary studies on modern Arabic literature, its major figures, the main currents, schools and attempts of modernization, with an aim to highlight the artistic originality of Arabic poetry and the eternal Arabic language.

In the first introduction of the book (there are two introductions), Khifaji praises at length the classic Arabic literature with its purity, independence, and creativity. It did not, as he claims, narrate or imitate any other literature but it came out of the souls and minds of the Arabs at the time. Therefore, it attracted the eyes of the European readers when there was no real culture in Europe. But, unfortunately, the Arabic civilization collapsed and its literature and finally the whole Arab world got occupied by the West.

From a post-colonial perspective, Khifaji attacks the colonizer’s constant attempts to westernize the Arabic culture and education. He seems very conservative as he considers all the modern literary currents in Arabic literature in the twentieth century like Neo-classicism, Romanticism, Realism, Symbolism, Existentialism ... etc, as of Western origin. Thus, he strongly criticizes all the stages of change that took place in Arabic poetry in his contemporary age. He
boldly declares: “Our literature today does not represent our own life, and does not stand for any kind of culture or civilization related to us. It hardly reflects the original features of the culture of our society.” (12) Then he concludes his introduction with the call for a new Arabic literature which has to be able to convey the true conflict between the Arabs and the West.

Interestingly enough, Khifaji contradicts himself when he confesses in his brief introduction to chapter one that the ‘Renaissance’ of modern Arabic literature appeared only in the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century; the period which witnessed the direct contact between the Arab world and Europe, the emergence of the intellectual movements and the spread of press and education. These factors helped to initiate the modern literature “which took from present and past, looked at the East and the West and truly expressed the entire Arabic environment and the personal affairs of the writers” (39).

Despite his unfitting introduction, which seems to be out of sync with his thesis, Khifaji presents an in-depth study of the schools of Arabic poetry in Egypt in the first half of the twentieth century amongst them the Romantic Movement. He devotes four chapters for discussing Arabic Romantic poetry starting with Khalil Mutran then Immigrant poets, Diwan group and Apollo society respectively.

Abu-Haidar raises big doubts to call the new trend in Arabic poetry in the thirties and forties of the twentieth century as ‘Romanticism’. He justifies that it would be like an examination or scrutiny of ‘empty words’ if he tries to apply Western critical terms like ‘romantic’ and ‘romanticism’ without any qualification to Arabic literature. For him, the social, political, and philosophical background of Romanticism in Europe makes it inapplicable for literature in the Arabic context. On this basis, he underestimates the contribution of the Romantic poets in the
East (mainly Egypt) and pushes the Emigrant Romantic poets who settled in the West into the façade of the Romantic Movement of Arabic poetry. He claims that “the difference between the Syro-American Arab poets and their contemporaries in the Arab World is that they were not primarily concerned with poetry, but with what they wanted to say through poetry.” (12) His implication, thus, is this, if we accept the existence of Romanticism in Arabic literature, it would be only manifested in the works of emigrant poets who were profoundly influenced by the West and lived in a Western society.

Cachia directly, and boldly, accuses Arabic literature in the Romantic period of shallow imitation of the West and thus lack of originality. In that period, he claims, “European norms were now almost unquestioningly applied.” (126) Then he attacks the Romantic poets as being mere imitators:

What they had in common was that – unlike most writers of their time – the foreign language they mastered was not French but English, so it was the poetry of late English Romantics that they translated and emulated. Al-Aqqad especially preached a literary creed derived mainly from Hazlitt and other nineteenth century English critics, and he was soon followed by many who not only subjected contemporary production to such Western criteria as “the organic unity” of a poem but also searched for their applicability to the classical heritage, where they do not always sit comfortably. (156)

In a recent study, Al-Musawi agrees that tradition still has its impact on the new trends of Arabic literature. He insists that in Arabic, “the past still holds significance, not only because it survives as language, and in accounts, symbols and values, but also because it acts through these
on the present. Its registers may be recalled, invested, manipulated, and validated according to
the rising occasion or need” (4).

Although he approves that modernity in Arabic literature “properly began with the
emergence of coteries, groups, and schools that came into contact with Russia and Europe, and
developed a new consciousness of individualism and democracy, like the *Diwan* school in Egypt
(1912), with a publication under this name in 1921, and the following one *Apollo* (with a journal
under this name, too, 1932–1934),” (7) the writer supports M. M. Badawi’s assumption that the
poets of the *Diwan* school apparently favored those Abbasid poets noted for their individuality or
emotionalism, such as Ibn Al-Romi, ‘Abbas Ibn Al-Ahnaf, and Al-Ma‘arri.

He finds that even the Romantics of the *Apollo* school in the 1930s and 1940s (the second
generation) were much attuned to poetry “which celebrated the world of the senses and intense
emotion such as the poetry of love, wine, and mysticism” (Al-Musawi, 10). Unlike the Tunisian
poet Abn Al-Qasim Al-Shabbi, who was obviously an extreme case in criticizing tradition in
general, they searched the tradition for precisely those qualities which they wished to realize in
their own poetry.

Ebrahim Khalil devotes four chapters of his book *Introduction to Modern Arabic Poetry*
(2007) to Arabic romanticism under a part titled ‘Romanticism in Arabic Poetry’ in which he
discusses the poetry of Emigrants, *Diwan* Group, *Apollo* Group, and Arab women respectively.

As the objective of the book seems to be more pedagogical than critical, the writer focuses on the
individual poets and their works giving less attention to the critical explanation of the emergence
of the Romantic Movement in Arabic poetry as a phenomenon; its causes; its influences; and its
chief characteristics. However, he modestly refers to the English influence on the *Apollo* Group
of poets: "Most of these poets were fond of Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley, and John Keats. They even imitated them in their conduct, life style, thoughts and doctrines" (161-162).

When I surveyed studies on Arabic Romanticism, I found only three works focusing on the Arabic Romantic Movement as a literary phenomenon: Jihan Al-Sadat's *The Influence of English Criticism on the Egyptian Romantic Critics in the Period between the Two World Wars (In Poetry)* (1980), which is confined to Arabic literary criticism, Muhammed Abdul-Hai's *Tradition and English and American influence in Arabic Romantic Poetry: A Study in Comparative Literature* (1982), and Fuad Al-Farfuri's *Important Romantic Features in Modern Arabic Literature and the Foreign Influences* (1988). All three are comparative studies basing their accounts on the influence of English Romantic literature, exploring how such influence is manifest in the poetics and poetry of Arabic Romanticism.

Jihan Al-Sadat studies in detail the influence of the English Romantic theory and criticism on the Egyptian Romantic poet-critics in the period between the two World Wars. She draws the reader's attention to the fact that her study is confined to the critical writings of the Arab Romantic poets in Egypt even as she acknowledges such influence on other writers in other Arab states or in the *Mahjar* (Emigrant poets). She divides her thesis into four chapters: introduction, English Romantic criticism, Arabic Romantic criticism, and conclusion. In the introduction she discusses two major points, the conflict between Neo-classicism and Romanticism both in English and Arabic contexts and the main sources for the Arab Romantics to interact with the English romantic poetics. In chapter two the writer tries to make a quick survey of the English theory of poetry in the Romantic era with a purpose of preparing the ground for the comparative study which would be conducted in the next chapter. The core of her thesis was chapter three.
where she critically and comparatively examines the basic perspectives of the Egyptian criticism referring to the influential elements of English Romanticism.

Al-Sadat's book is a useful reference for any scholar of Arabic Romanticism as it draws a clear picture of the main aspects of the Arab Romantic theory on poetry and how those critics played a vital role in changing the mood of the Arab readers towards poetry. It, however, proves what Al-Aqqad once declared that the Arab Romantics got benefit from English criticism more than poetry. Irrespective of the English influence, the significance of the study lies in fact that it sheds light on the first attempt of the Arab writers to build up a modern and complete theory of poetry with a new standard of critical judgment.

One of the most important contributions to the study of Arabic Romanticism was Abdul-Hai's *Tradition and English and American influence in Arabic Romantic Poetry: A Study in Comparative Literature* (1982) which was originally a doctoral thesis submitted to the Oxford University in 1973. It is a genuine study with a penetrating analysis of important aspects of Arabic romantic poetry. As the title suggests, the writer intends to make a comparative study discussing the interplay between tradition and foreign influences, namely English and American, in the formation of Arabic Romanticism.

With no introduction, the study is divided into four parts; each one discusses a different aspect of the Romantic experience in modern Arabic poetry. In part one, Abdul-Hai explores the Arab Romantics' knowledge of English and American poetry which they received directly through their education or indirectly through the translations of the English and American poets from Shakespeare to the young Romantics and from Longfellow to Poe. Part two is devoted to the radical change in the concept of the 'poet', 'poetry' and 'poetic language' under the influence
of English Romanticism. For the Romantics, the writer concludes, the poet is no more a man of oratory but a prophet and visionary. In the second section of this part, Abdul-Hai attempts an examination of the role of Arabic verse translations of English and American poetry in the emergence and growth of the language of Arabic Romantic poetry. These translations helped in encouraging the Romantics to make the shift from the Neo-classical ideal language to the simplicity of the Romantic lyric, and generally, the intimate, subjective and symbolic tone of the Romantic language of poetry. Section three focuses on the emergence of mythology as a new experiment in Arabic Romantic poetry. The writer exposes the nature of the Romantic identity in part three and concludes his study with a general observation of the post-romantic experimentalists who appeared in the forties of the twentieth century attacking the romantic concept of poetry and calling for the doctrine of modernity.

It seems that Abdul-Hai was more loyal at exploring the English and American influence in Arabic Romanticism rather than discussing the way such influence interacted with tradition to form a new current in Arabic poetry. Though he has, deeply and neatly, traced the English influence in the creative and critical writings of the Arab Romantics, the impact of tradition got less attention than the reader might expect. Moreover, the promise of tracing the American influence on Arabic poetry, made in the title is not fulfilled as he fails to discuss it with any significant length in his study.

Al-Farfuri's book *Important Romantic Features in Modern Arabic Literature and the Foreign Influences* (1988) can be taken as one of the best studies focusing on Arabic Romanticism as a phenomenon in modern Arabic literature. The main objective of the study is to trace the influential elements of English Romanticism in Arabic Romantic poetry. The writer chooses the area of comparative literature to prove, as he declares, that he does not believe in the
Euro-centrism or the superiority of Western literature as the matter of influence is there in all ages and all literatures. On the contrary, he states that being influenced does not indicate defect, weakness or inferiority in Arabic literature but reflects its flexibility and readiness to revive and improve. He assures that Arabic literature did not blindly imitate Western Romanticism nor was it totally absorbed into it. In fact, it appropriated it and formed an Arabic version which had its own qualities and flavors.

In my readings I came up with two interesting points. Firstly, the significant role Arabic Romanticism played in transforming modern Arabic poetry, has not received the attention it deserves, with very few scholars taking it up as the main topic of their studies; the majority’s best efforts have been to include it as chapters of their books on Arabic literature/poetry in general. It makes one wonder if the current intellectual climate, wherein imitation of Western literature is no less than stigma, has forced Arab critics and scholars to underemphasize the contribution of Arabic Romanticism to the development of modern Arabic poetry. The second observation is the one about the originality of Arabic Romanticism. Most of these studies work with the unstated belief that Arabic Romanticism is a poor imitation of Western Romantic literature. Even those who attempted a comprehensive discussion of the Movement confined themselves to the influence of English Romanticism and the similarities between the two movements. The scholars’ dilemma over the depiction of the relation between British and Arabic Romanticism is a product of what Frantz Fanon calls ‘inferiority complex’ that often marks the colonized intellectual’s response to the colonizer’s culture. Sadly, contemporary Arab scholarship on Arabic Romantic poetry has serious doubts about the Arab poet’s capacity for invention.
Fanon criticizes the colonized for having internalized the others’ depiction of them as “inferiors.” For him, the colonized could never be away from the dominating “they.” Fanon called for the abandonment of this internalized inferiority complex for the sake of liberation. A counter-narrative (in addition to political resistance) has to redefine the boundaries of the colonized self and the colonial other. The colonized or “the wretched of the earth” would be intellectually free the moment they abandon Western definitions, descriptions, and vocabulary. Perhaps this is why Fanon has written Black Skin, White Masks, a critique of the social consciousness of the natives. Therefore, the major motivation of the present study is, hopefully, to fill the lacuna left in the previous studies of Arabic Romantic poetry.

The aim of this study, in brief, is to bring Arabic Romanticism into focus by highlighting its feature as an original literary phenomenon coming out of the womb of the Arab society and nurtured by the crucial changes in its social, political and economic contexts in the first half of the twentieth century. The study does not deal with the Arab Romantics who lived in the West as the double consciousness of the diaspora poets will cloud a discussion of Arabic Romanticism that treats the movement as a product of the struggle to find inspirations to revive a decadent art form while avoiding the trap of servile imitation of an alien cultural form. This study will limit itself to the Romantic Movements in the Arab world, namely Khalil Mutran, The Diwan School (Abbas Al-Aqqad, Abdulrahman Shukri and Ibrahim Al-Mazini) and Apollo Group (Ahmad Zaki Abu Shadi, Ibrahim Naji, Saleh Jawdat, and Abu Al-Qasim Al-Shabbi).

The study, which is partially comparative in nature, will follow what Lilian R. Furst called the ‘family likeness’ approach which emphasizes “the underlying similarities between differing national literatures” (13). Based on the conviction of its fundamental unity, Furst has used this approach in his book Romanticism in Perspective (1969), an in-depth and critical analysis of
Romanticism in three European countries, i.e. England, France, and Germany. Holding the same conviction René Wellek maintains that “we find throughout Europe the same conceptions of poetry: of the workings and nature of poetic imagination, the same conception of nature: its relation to man, and basically the same poetic style, with a use of imagery, symbolism and myth which is clearly distinct from that of eighteenth-century neoclassicism” (“The Concept of Romanticism” 147). Using the same logic, one can extend his pan-European generalization to other national literatures.

The ‘family likeness’ approach would seem in the long run more promising of fruitful, worthwhile results than the fragmentary investigation of influences. In Furst’s words, “the supreme advantage of the ‘family likeness’ approach lies in its width, its expansive view as against the narrowing down forced on the influence-hunter” (15). To make the image of the ‘family likeness’ approach clear, he illustrates:

… just as the members of a human family may share certain characteristics, each person, however, displaying only some of those characteristics and only in some degree or variant, likewise the literary works ascribed to any movement can each have some, but by no means necessarily all the traits usually associated with that movement, and as many individual variations are possible as within a human family. Thus the differences between the members of the family would not disqualify from membership; on the contrary, these very differences beneath the resemblances, testifying to the individuality of the person or the work, are of particular significance. And it is an idiosyncratic combination of individual and family traits which makes up every person and every literary work too. (15)
At this point, it gives a new look at the complicated interrelationship amongst the divergent forms of any literary phenomenon in different literatures.

Nevertheless, the 'family likeness' approach with its wide perspective and deep critical investigation of the differential elements of the varied movements belonging to the same literary family, would be more beneficial to maintain the main objective of the thesis i.e., the originality of Arabic Romanticism. Since most of the previous studies were based solely on the examination of the resemblances between Arabic and English Romantic Movements attempting to prove the influence of the latter, the 'family likeness' approach makes the present study different.

Devoting two chapters on exploring the multiplicity of meanings given to the term 'Romanticism' and the contextual similarities between the two Movements, the study bases the argument of the individuality of each movement. Meanwhile, the practical part of the study focuses on Arabic Romantic poetry showing how the common elements of Romanticism are manifest in the Arab land with distinctive qualities and various degrees.