CHAPTER: II

NAJIB MAHFOUZ AND ARABIC NOVEL
The first Arab and the third Asian writer to be awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, Najib Mahfouz occupies an eminent place in the development of Arabic novel as Mahmud Taymur in the case of short story and Tawfiq al-Hakim in drama.

Mahfouz was born in Cairo, Egypt, on December 11, 1911. He was the youngest of seven children in a middle class merchant family. His real name was Abdul Aziz Shiblaji. His family lived in two popular towns of the district al-Jamaliyya, from where they moved in 1924 to al-Abbasiyya, then a new Cairo suburb.

Both these places have provided the backdrop for many of the author’s writings. His father, whom Mahfouz described as having been ‘old-fashioned,’ was a civil servant and Mahfouz eventually followed in his footsteps. His life-span has covered the greater part of the 20th century. This era has provided the time framework, the backdrop and the mood for the events and
interactions in which the majority of the large cast of his fictional characters engage. His has been an environment and a time-span of conflict, challenge and change, and Mahfouz has been its meticulous and indefatigable chronicler and commentator.

When Mahfouz was ten years old, his family moved to a more westernized (reflecting the ideals of Europe and the United States) neighborhood of Cairo. He became fond of reading detective stories, going to the movies, playing soccer and listening to music with his friend. During his high school years he began to read the Arabic classics as well as the western ones that he could find in translation.

Mahfouz grew up in the midst of stirring national events. The 1919 revolutions also had a lasting effect on Mahfouz, with his first real sense of nationalist feeling and greatly influencing his writing. Interestingly, he later became disillusioned with the
revolution of 1952, though he took issue with its practices, not its principles. He voiced his criticism clearly in some of his writings of the 1960s, but unlike any other intellectual of the time, he was never arrested by Nasser. The interlinking of national events with the lives of ordinary people became the main pillar of his writings.

Mahfouz’s childhood and youth coincided with a period of great change in the intellectual life of his country. It was not only a time developing national pride but also of intellectual discovery. Many newspapers and journals were for the first time available in Arabic, and there were chances for the expression of every kind of opinion and belief; they were also the medium through which Western literary forms were beginning to find their way into the national culture, through the translation and imitation prose fiction, both long and short. Imaginative narrative had always been an important part of Arabic literary
culture but up to then had been considered infinitely inferior to poetry. His family was stable and loving, religion played a very important role in their life, and in his early works there many signs of his affection for his childhood.

Mahfouz began writing in primary school, when he was a fan of detective, historical and adventure novels. In secondary school, Mahfouz moved on to the innovators of Arabic fiction--Taha Hussain, Muhammed Hussain Haykal, Ibrahim Abd al-Qadir al-Mazini—who served as models for the short story.

Despite his penchant for writing, and his early facility with mathematics and the sciences, Mahfouz opted for philosophy at Fuwad al-Awwal University in 1930 and graduated in 1934. His interest in philosophy was partly inspired by the writings of Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad. Beginning in secondary school and continuing through his University years, Mahfouz worked as a journalist at al-Risala and contributed to
al-Hilal and al-Ahram. He worked in the administration of Cairo University from 1936-39. He published more than 40 articles in various magazines and newspapers, most of which dealt with philosophical and psychological issues and were heavily influenced by Henri Bergson\(^\text{1}\). Western and Non-western scholars’ discussed and studied Mahfouz’s fictional works and the critics classified them into four chronological phases—historical romantic, realistic naturalistic, modernist experimental and indigenous traditional form known as episode phase. As a voracious reader and prolific writer, he was also influenced by many Western and Arab writers.

From 1934 until his retirement in 1971 at the age of sixty, he worked in a variety of government departments as a civil servant. He held a secretary post at Cairo University until 1938, when he moved to the Ministry of Religious Endowments

\(^{1}\) Henry Bergson was a French Philosopher awarded Noble Prize for literature in 1927.
to work as a parliamentary secretary to the Minister.

He devoted his time for creative writing after his first printed book a translation from an English work on Ancient Egypt. His first printed book *Ahlam al-Qariya* was not published because of political pressure.² He wrote many short stories for Salama Musa’s magazine *The New Journal*, but his genius found its best expression in novel which he published at the stupendous rate of one a year.

In 1945 he requested transfer to the Ghuri Library, near his birth place Jamaliyya, where he managed the Good Loan Project, an interest-free loan program for the poor. This was a very happy time for him; he had plenty of opportunity to observe the life of the area and to read Western literature, including his favourites: Shakespeare, Conrad, Melville, Flaubert, Stendhal, Tolstoy, Proust, Ibsen etc. From 1950s

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² Fuad Dawwara, *al-wazdan al-qaumi fi Adab Najib Mahfouz*, al-Hilal special number, February.70
he worked as secretary to the Minister of National Guidance, director of the Film Censorship office, director-general of the Film Support Organization, advisor to the General Organization for Film Industries, and finally as advisor to the Minister of Culture.

Mahfouz was invited to be a writer emeritus at *al-Ahram* newspaper in 1971, and he continued to produce a weekly column that was published simultaneously in Arabic *al-Ahram* and in English weekly until shortly before his death. The Egyptian nation bestowed on him its highest honours: the state prize for literature and the Collar of the Republic.

Mahfouz married in his early forties and was the father of two daughters. In 1954, when Mahfouz was 42 years old, he had made a false idea in his mind that if he got married, he could not perform properly his literary works. But after marriage he found
that this was wrong. Because he could perform more works than the previous ones. His marital life was very happy.

The year 1959 may be seen as another pivotal year in Mahfouz’s career, in that it saw the publication, in the newspaper al-Ahram, of Mahfouz’s most controversial work, Awlad Harratina. Mahfouz made frequent contribution of al-Ahram to right a weekly column and this provided him with a forum for his ideas on both international and local issues.³

Mahfouz’s early writings are considered historical because he dealt with the subject inspired by ancient Egyptian history. He published the first of the three novels set in ancient Egypt, but the political and social tribulations of his home land during the Second World War provided a powerful incentive for him to turn the novelist’s eye on the ills of the present day.⁴

³) Dr,Badr uddin al- Hafiz, Najib Mahfouz, P-40

⁴ ) Roger Allen, The Arabic Literary Heritage, P-306
Many of the Mahfouz’s writings have been adapted to the screen. This enabled him to become widely known and admired throughout the Arab world. In October 1998 Mahfouz was awarded Nobel Prize in literature, the first Arab writer to be so honoured.

The awarding of the Nobel Prize for literature to Mahfouz in 1998 signifies international acknowledgement of the standing of the Egyptian novel and his performance as a creative artist in his own right. Acquaintance with existentialism, especially the concepts of the absurd and alienation and awareness of modern development in the western novel, played an important part in determining the novelist’s responses to this situation.

Mahfouz’s literary output consists of about thirty five novels and twenty collections of short stories. He has also

5) M.M.Badawi, Modern Arabic Literature, P-239
written plays. While the Arabic Language remains a barrier for a western readership, the award of the Nobel Prize to Mahfouz has led to certain increase in the interest on the part of western reader. His literary talent is clearly associated with a significant development in the mode of literary presentation and the code of reference to external reality Censorship led him to develop certain methods of narrative codification to express effectively his values.

The vast and varied literary output of Mahfouz played a vital role in accelerating the development of modern Arabic fiction and justifying its relevance. The major theme of his output is that of the impact of rapid change in social values and the radical alternations of the perspective of reality on the common people. His work oscillates between romantic and realistic narrative and attempts to root the genre in the concern of the newly emerging semi-urban middle class. He developed
variable new techniques of his novels. He succeeds partly because he selected a number of his characters from the educated, even intellectual class in a manner which justifies the introduction of intellectual and contemplative elements.

Mahfouz is a scientific humanist with his wide knowledge of various cultures, religions and philosophies. He endeavors to maintain the delicate balance necessary to save creative writing from academic dryness without sacrificing intellectual depth. He is ceaselessly fascinated by the effect of temporal human encounters on the life, views or feelings of man, and tries to explore and understand the mechanism of such encounters. One of the major attainments of Mahfouz’s work is its skill and ability to be always in the forefront of its development. This makes him unique among his contemporaries. The short stories benefit from his awareness of the necessity of endowing the short story with multiple layers of meaning which can assume
symbolic value. He is often spoken as a symbolic writer and as
an idealist. So he became one of the most universal writers
produced by the Arab world. Mahfouz achieved fame in the
Arab World and wrote with distinction in the field of novel and
some other genres of literature.

In the early period of Mahfouz’s career, when he divided
his attention between the essay, the short story and the novel, he
produced very checkered short stories which oscillate between
the romanticism of Mahmud Taymur or even the sentimentality
of Adil kamil 6 and the realistic works of Yahya Haqqi, without
ever succeeding in attaining the artistic heights that Haqqi
achieved in the same period. When Mahfouz returned to the
genre in the 1960s, after dedicating the intervening period
to the novel, he brought to the genre the dexterity and
coherence of narrative structure which he had mastered in the

6) Adil kamil, the son of a lawyer, studied law and literature, writer of Malik min
Shu’a (a king of sunbeams).
Arabic novel. But he failed to detect, let alone assimilate, the elements of the modern sensibility that had germinated in short story since he started writing it. Only after the devastating shock of the 1967 Arab defeat did he become aware of these changes and assimilate some of these strategies into his traditional narrative edifice. His stories focus on character. He elaborated a set of imploding symbols which he skillfully interwove with his ostensibly innocent description.

From the beginning of his literary career he was aware of the fact that a good writer needs to understand not only the subject and the limits and the nature of his writing, but also all the social rituals, details of life and so on. In his writing he shows tragic elements interwoven with the rituals of everyday life. He does not confine himself to the urban middle class and he touches the very spirit of Egypt and explores the undercurrents of Egyptian social life. He excels in portraying the
details of background and presenting of panoramic views. His characters are vivid and his plots are true to life. A touch of humour pervades his writing.

Mahfouz is generally considered the best Arab writer in modern Arabic literature. He broadened his knowledge of French, English and European literatures, and returned to Egypt for the creation of a new Egyptian theatre and an adequate form of expression for the modern short story, novel and other literary works. He was convinced of the literary independence and therefore saw the creation of indigenous literature as a patriotic task contributing to the shaping of the national identity and the articulation of its aspirations and goals. His stories which attempt to capture various facts of life’s contradictions depict truly Egyptian characters. This played a significant role in providing the newly emerging genre with a clear sense of purpose. He had created and developed the techniques of using symbolic action.
Among the Egyptian thinkers who made an impact on Mahfouz is Salama Musa, the great intellectual who propagated interest in the pharonic legacy of Egypt. Salama Musa’s ideas on socialism shaped the political ideology of Mahfouz who wrote on socialism long before it was accepted in Egyptian circles. Mahfouz also followed Taha Hussain and Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad with their liberating ideas which inspired his free thinking.

Mahfouz’s momentous source of inspiration came from Russian writers like Gorky, Chekov, Turgenev and Dostoyevsky. Their fellow feeling for the downtrodden is shared by him. Like these Russian writers, Mahfouz graduates from simple events and ordinary characters to men and matters of deep importance.7

Mahfouz got so many ideas from Lawrence, Proust, Malrank, Mann, Joyce, Anatole France, Stendhal and Galsworthy. He

7) Ghali Shukri, Al-Muntami, Dirasa-fi-Adab Najib Mahfouz, P-
especially owes to Walter Scott because Walter Scott inspired him to write his historical sequences. He also followed his contemporary writers to develop his writing style and techniques. He wrote his early short stories with the same unexpected twist and accidental turns. His application and capacity developed his literary talent.

Mahfouz represents the new liberal spirit in Arab thought and his ideas on literature and life influenced the Arabs greatly. He showed the path to a new Arabic style in modern Arabic literature. He was able to write it in vivid description with a witty style. Mahfouz’s satirical and witty language describes rural officialdom of his time. He wrote more intellectual novels and in his writing he was successful. Mahfouz’s novelistic output equals in quantity with that of various great novelists.

8) Ismat Mahdi, *Modern Arabic Literature*, P-246
Arab thinkers contemporary to him made their impact in shopping his political and socialistic ideology and free thinking.

By the attempt of Mahfouz, the Egyptian novel reached its maturity. Of course, as time passes and new generations of novelists appear in this period of maturity. Mahfouz’s Nobel Prize for literature (1988) indicates international position of the standing of the Egyptian novel. Most obviously the works of Mahfouz focuses on the change from a traditional to a modern way of life. So he became the most famous Egyptian novelist governing the fictional exhibition for more than two decades.

The sheer quality and quantity of Mahfouz’s output made him the doyen of Arab novel, but his remarkable career had also coincided with a period of tremendous growth in the popularity of fiction throughout the Arab world. In his time male and female writers have begun to experiment with a variety of

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9) Roger Allen, *The Arabic Literary Heritage*, P-314
techniques in the process of exploring the significant issues of the time. As Mahfouz became aged, his work had also become more retrospective and wistful. In some work, he had repeated earlier experiments in structure and language. He had looked for inspiration in the narrative genres of the classical tradition and with age had come also a certain nostalgic tone. The reader took back to earlier days in the narrator’s life, days of hopes and loves and of struggles both physical and intellectual.

The tradition of Arabic novel can only begin to convey the enormous role that the genre continues to play in the cultural life of the region. While Mahfouz himself had been the primary beneficiary of such interest, other novelists had also attracted Attention.10 His most controversial piece of fiction which was immediately banned in Egypt and during the Nobel year of 1988 led to a sentence of death from a popular preacher which was

10) Ibid, P-314
almost carried out in October 1994. Mahfouz wrote no novels for a time, concentrating instead on a series of lengthy and cryptic short stories. When he did return to the novel it was in changed circumstances. He himself had retired and Anwar Sadat had become president on the death of Gamal Adb al-Nasir (Nasser). This was an unsavory period of political retribution of that time.

After getting acquainted to the tasks of various European writers and literary institution, Mahfouz revealed that the western world was a much more progressive form. It had its established tradition and techniques. Therefore, Mahfouz felt the need to resort to the west for models and inspiration. However, it was originally in his works that the first signs of fruitful contact with western patterns began to appear. During the 1930s Mahfouz could read the works of different authors from various nations such as, Russia, France, Germany and England. These
varied literary readings led to his assimilation of different influences which aided him in a short span of time to catch up with the latest improvements of the novel as an artistic form. He was one of the leading figures of this art who had played an outstanding role in its development.

Mahfouz travelled widely in his life and he absorbed the literary trends of Europe and 19th century Russian Literature. His services to literature are widely recognized. He succeeded in putting the Arabic novels on the world literary map.

Mahfouz’s novels are broadly divided into three groups which are as follows:

(I) Historical novels:-

a) *Abath al-Aqdar* (The Game of fate, 1939)

b) *Radubis* in 1943.

c) *Kifah Tiba* (The Struggle of Thebes, 1944)

(II) Socio-realistic novels:
(I) Pre modernist novels:

a) *Al-Qahira al-Jadida* (New Cairo, 1945)

b) *Khan al-Khalili*, in 1946.

c) *Zudaq al-Midaq* (Midaq Alley, 1947)

d) *Bidaya wa Nihaya* (The Beginning and the End, 1949)


(II) Post modernist novels:

a) *Awlad Harithina* (The children of our Alley, 1967)

b) *Al-liss wa al-Kilab* (The Thief and the Dogs, 1961)

c) *Al-Summan wa al-Kharif* (The Quail and the Autumn, 1967)

d) *Tharthara fawq al-Neel* (Chatting by the Nile, 1966)


Mahfouz’s career as a novelist began in between the two world war (1914-1945). He ventured into the realm of novel as well as short story but his popularity is owing to his expertise in novel writing. His creative journey started with the
philosophical writings and short stories which were published in Salama Musa’s journal *al-Majalla al-Jadida*. In the field of novel, his early writings have treated historical topics. The choice of historical stories has been probably influenced by his experience of translating James Baikie’s, *A History of Egypt* into Arabic called *Misr al-Qadima* during his student days. Thus he got interested in pharaonic history and he was also influenced by nationalistic movement in Egypt and by the company of Salama Musa. His first novel *Abath al-Aqdar* (The Game of fates, 1939) was a historical romance. It is set during the reign of Khufa, builder of the Great Pyramid and the second Pharaonic King of the fourth dynasty in the time of old Pharaonic kingdom. The action begins when one day Khufa asks a soothsayer how long his posterity was to reign over Egypt. The soothsayer answered that though the king himself was to rule undisturbed until the last day of life, none of his descendants would sit on the throne
after him, but rather a boy just born to a priest of the god Ra’. Immediately, the king sets out at the head of a military campaign to protect his throne against the younger would be usurper. He killed the wrong baby and unwillingly saved the right one from further danger. Eventually, the young man whom Khufa would have murdered many years before saved him from murder at the hands of his own son and heir apparent in an attempted coup. In recognition of his loyalty and distinguished services, the king who finally learns on his death-bed the identity of his saviour, appointed him successor to the throne. Mahfouz has taken his entire plot from chapter seven which gives an account of some ancient Egyptian Legends.

In *Radubis* young Firaun falls in love with a court dancer neglecting the duties of government leading to a popular uprising and rebellion and finally death of Firaun. What Mahfouz has attempted here is the realistic depiction of a king
hated by the Egyptian people due to his irresponsible and morally degrading deeds. It appeared in 1943.

In the third novel *Kifah Tiba* (The Struggle of Thebes), the war between the Ancient Egyptian Kings and the external invaders of the Hyksos\(^\text{11}\) has been narrated in which it is the Egyptian people who are victorious at the end. Here also there is a clear divergent connection with the real event in the Egyptian history and depicts the British invasion of Egypt, the ensuing struggle of the Egyptian people against the imperialist invaders and their ultimate triumph against the design of imperialist Britain.

Structurally, *Kifah Tiba* is a better novel than its predecessors where the action does not depend on coincidence or fate as is the case of the previous two novels, but the conflict here is between human skills. This novel attained maximum

\(^{11}\) Hyksos was a north western Semetic people who entered Egypt between 1720 and 1710 BC.
popularity which can be estimated by the commendatory review of Sayyid Qutb, in his journal *al-Risala*. It was this work which helped him to attain the heights of popularity in which the critical acclaim of Sayyid Qutb and Anwar Sadat was to a great extent instrumental in extricating him out of the world of anonymity.

In the art of historical novel writing Mahfouz has been greatly influenced by the work of Sir Walter Scott, a historical novelist in Britain. In socio-realistic novel Mahfouz participated under the influence of Salama Musa.

After the decline of pharaonic movement, Islamic movement caught hold of the public imagination in Egypt, which resulted into an intellectual shift in Mahfouz’s writings from ancient history to contemporary social reality. He started writing novels with social themes in which *Khan al-Khalili* (1945), *al-Qahira al-Jadida* (1946), *Zuqaq al-Midaq* (1947)
*al-Sarab* (1948) and *Bidaya Wa Nihaya* (1949) are worth mentioning.

The central focus of these novels are the lower middle class and the historical time is that of 1930s and second world war in which poverty and starvation was prevalent and people used to go to mausoleums and graves to seek solace from the hardships of life. Thus these novels had a theme of conflict between the old and the new, or the past and the present. In other words, the conflict between two value systems is prevalent in these novels. The novelist has tried to show the way the people get affected by the socio-economic and politico-cultural environment, the way sins and crimes are committed and the way human values got degraded.

In *Khan al-Khalili* the novelist has described the life of such a family which shifts residence to *Khan al-Khalili*, the ancient part of Cairo after losing the family head in the second
war. Ahmed Akif, a member of this family gets soon mixed in the local environment and develops an intimate relationship with a beautiful girl. His younger brother also wins the heart of the girl and after knowing this, Akif gets himself out of the way. Tragically, younger brother gets a stroke of paralysis and does not survive. The conflict here is between the old value system represented by Ahmed Akif who is a religious man and the new values represented by Ahmed Rashid, a socialist lawyer. The protagonist seeks refuge in the past from the threat of the new.

*Al-Qahira al-Jadida* (New Cairo) has the life of a young boy, who wants to make a good living by attaining university education, along with three other boys; first one influenced by communism, second one by capitalism and third one by Islam. Through these three characters the novelist has attempted to project the three ideological and intellectual streams in the Egyptian society.
Zuqaq al-Midaq is set with the description of the alley and its inhabitants, some at their work, others at the cafe, the hub of the men’s social life, and the women in their homes. The action starts as the alley’s one emigrant, Husayn Kirsha the cafe owner’s son, returns on leave. The outside world represents opportunities for enrichment, but it is a place of moral anarchy in which the tone is set by an occupying army. Husayn persuaded his friend the barber, Abbas Hilw, to go to work for the British, not out of any ambition, but because he wants to marry Hamida, the strong willed tigerish beauty of the alley. Although Abbas becomes engaged to Hamida before his departure, the girl does not hesitate to break the engagement when a better match, in the shape of an elderly merchant, presents itself, when he suddenly falls ill the ground has been prepared for her to fall in love with a pimp, who skillfully lures her into his ring of prostitutes. Abbas, on leave from the Army
camp where he works, learns of Hamida’s disappearance, and when he sees her in a cafe surrounded by allied soldiers, he attacks her, only to be beaten to death himself while his friend Husayn looks on helplessly. This novel offers a wide range of contrasted characters and subtle psychological analysis, especially in Hamida’s case.

*Al-Sarab* (The Mirage) is truly a psychological novel in which the husband and wife get separated due to tense marital relationship. Their son lives with the mother and is unsuccessful in his personal and social life. He could not have a successful conjugal life and his wife becomes pregnant due to extra marital relationship. She dies while undergoing abortion. His mother dies out of the shock of all this stresses. This novel is a successful psychological novel.

*Bidaya Wa Nihaya* (The Beginning and the End) has a story of a happy middle class family in which the dreams of the
family are shattered after the death of the father. The eldest brother gets involved in drug trafficking and younger brother after the sister’s involvement in prostitution loses courage to face life.

After writing these novels, Najib Mahfouz did not write for some years, probably waiting to produce some great work. Truly so in 1956 he published a collection of three novels, Bain al Qasrain, Qasr al-Shawq and al- Sukkariyya. This trilogy was actually a 463 pages long novel which was divided into three parts due to the publisher’s request. This novel is written in simplistic symbolism, each of the characters standing for one or other of the political ideas or forces rife in Egypt during the last three quarters of a century. It has a psychological assessment of a middle class Cairo family spread across three generations suffering from the miseries. The novel has tried to present a vivid description of the Egyptian socio-political condition in the
period between first and second world wars. It is as if the novelist wanted to delineate the history of modern Egypt as a flux of suffering and frustration, a homogenous continuum of lost opportunities. This collection is Mahfouz’s most successful collection which was responsible for the immense critical acclaim he received after its publication.

Mahfouz’s *Awlad Harratina* (The children of our quarter, 1959), the most controversial work proclaims the onset of this new phase in the novel as well as in its author’s career. It uses certain religious stories - the fall, the lives of Moses, Christ and Muhammad- in such a way as to bring out two aspects of the history of mankind, the search for social justice and the problem of the existence of God. The stories are set in a poor quarter of traditional Cairo, with its cafes, its drug peddlers and prostitutes, its poets and strong men and on the realistic level they focus on the need for a just political and economic organization. The
book was banned throughout the Arab World, except in Lebanon.

In seven years time between 1960 and 1967, *Al-Liss wa al-kilab* (The thief and the dogs, 1961) is the first novel of this series which appeared in installments in widely circulated Egyptian daily *Al-Ahram* and in 1992 it came out in the form of a book. It became highly popular with the old readers of Najib Mahfouz and received appreciation for stylistic and technical finesse. The thief and the dogs, was to deal directly with the new realities of Egyptian society and so were all the novels of the 1960s.

*Al-Summān wa al-Kharīf* (The Quail and the Autumn, 1962) and *al-Shahhādh* (the beggar, 1965), which are the most prosaic and artistically unsatisfying. The first of these traces the predicament of a former Wafdist politician who cannot come to terms with the Revolution which has broken his promising
career and achieved many of the goals his party had set itself, while in the latter a successful lawyer suddenly perceives the monotonous futility of his life and drops out, searching for ecstasy first though sex and then through mysticism, while haunted by the realization that he has betrayed the socialist ideals of his youth. Although technically proficient, the novels suffer from an overly rational and at times unsympathetic presentation of the hero’s consciousness and a certain poverty of imagination.

*Al-Tareeq* (The way, 1964), the record of a playboy’s search for his mysterious and wealthy father and his losing his way between two women, uses a universal motif and endows it with emotional, social and mystical significance; in this last respect the novel treats one of Mahfouz’s abiding preoccupations, the problem of belief.
Tharthara Fauq al-Nile (Chattering on the Nile, 1966) is also a novel of alienation, but here the characters, most of them drug addicts, are already advanced on the path of estrangement from worldly cares. Their meeting - place, a barge on the Nile where most of the novel is set, suggests their tangential relationship to everyday Egyptian reality. The foundation of this book is the regular evening hashish - session presided over by Anis Zaki, a minor civil servant. This novel is clearly a commentary on certain aspects of Egyptian society in the mid sixties, and its exposure of opportunism, cynicism, disillusionment with the government’s discourse and a sense of powerlessness to influence events can, with hindsight, be seen as prophesying the defeat of 1967. But escapism, whether Hashish- induced or not, is a universal phenomenon and the sense of the absurd is a typical affliction of modern man. Moreover Anis’s hallucinations, which are an important
component of the book, reflect his personal sorrows and his sense that injustice has occurred throughout history.

*Miramar* (The Mirage, 1967) also appeared in due time. In this novel Mahfouz has used the ‘stream of consciousness technique’ through which he has provided the readers an opportunity to find for themselves the inner sensibilities of the characters and other affects, thus giving the readers a wider scope of interpretation and wider arena for their play for imagination. The language is much denser and more evocative than before, using image, motif and association to depict emotional tension and to hold together in a powerful unity the entire fabric of the work.


With coronation of Anwar Sadat in 1970, retrospection became a preoccupation for many intellectuals; Mahfouz’s contribution in fictional form was *al-Maraya* (1972), a montage of vignettes about a series of Egyptian ‘characters’ arranged in alphabetical order.

*Al Hubb That al-Matar* (Love in the Rain, 1973), was solely concerned with the impact of this tragic event on the Egyptian psyche.

*Al-Karnak* (1974) added a deep antipathy to the president’s (Gamil Abd al-Naseer) personality and style and to the open
market’s policy which served to exacerbate the class divisions within Egyptian society.

In *Hazrat al- Muhtaram* (1975), Mahfouz satirically portrays a civil servant and government employee ‘Uthman Bayyumi, in which he most probably also ironically portrays himself as an aspiring official, a part of the system and the class he satirizes.

Novels such as *Malhamat al- Harafish* (The Harafish, 1977), *al-Baqi min al- zaman sa‘ah* (Just One Hour Left, 1982) and *Yawm qutila al-Zaiem* (The Day the Leader was Killed, 1985) show a society of glaring contrasts, one in which basic amenities such as housing remain a dream and there is little mobility.

The novels *Rihlat ibn Fattuma* (The Journey of Ibn Fattuma, 1983) and *Layali alf Lailah* (Arabian Nights and Days,
1982) Mahfouz has looked for inspiration in the native genres of the classical tradition

_Hadith Al-Sabah wa al-Masa_ (Talk of Morning and Evening, 1987) stands out as the most significant Arabic novel of the 1980s. In this novel Mahfouz proved to be in the forefront of narrative innovation in his portrayal of the fragmentation of Egyptian society after the successive failures of the process of modernization. The novel is a vast undertaking in its historical scope, encompassing a period of two centuries of Egyptian history. It starts before Napoleon’s expedition to Egypt in 1798 and continues until the 1980’s and the aftermath of the infitah (open markets) economic policy of Anwar Sadat. One of the major achievements of this novel is its success in finding fragmentary novelistic structure capable of portraying the disintegration of the old coherent system of values, human

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12) Anwar Sadat (1918-1981) was the third president of Egypt, serving from 1970 to 1981.
relationships, Ethics, and a strong sense of national identity.

And with the age has come also a certain nostalgic tone which is evident in both *Qushtumor* (The name of a Cafe, 1989) and *Asda al-Sirah al-Dhatiyyah* (Echoes of an autobiography, 1997). The latter was a remarkable evocation of classical sufi writing, takes the reader back to earlier days of the narrator’s life, days of hopes and loves and a struggle both physical and intellectual.

From the above all discussion I find that, the world of Najib Mahfouz is a vast and extremely rich one extending from pharonic times down to the present day. Mahfouz’s work spans the various changes in the reality, dreams and aspirations of his nation and provides an elaborate record of its attempts to come to terms with the process of modernization. Although his world is mainly centered on Cairo and predominantly the old quarter of Jammaliyya in which he spent his childhood, he made the
urban scene an elaborate and highly significant metaphor of the national condition. On the literary plane, his career spans the whole process of development of the Arabic novel from the historical to the modernistic and lyrical. He earned the Arabic novel respect and popularity and lived to see it flourish in the work of numerous writers throughout the Arab world.

Mahfouz has become the most prominent novelist who helped the development of Arabic novel as Mahmud Taymur in case of the short story and Tawfiq al-Hakim in Arabic drama. His writing style is panoramic and he does not avoid colloquial idioms in his writing. The nation confers upon him its highest honour: the State Prize for Literature and the Collar of the republic. He obtains various prizes and covetous positions:

Mahfouz became the most acclaimed man of letter in Arab world. His works have been translated in other languages which are as follows:-
1. *Zuqaq al-Midaq* (French, German)
2. *Bidaya wa Nihaya* (English)
3. *Awlad Haratina* (French, German)
4. *Al-Liss wa al-Kilab* (English)
5. *al-Suman wa al-Karif* (English)
6. *Duniya Allah* (English)
7. *Al-Tareeq* (English)
8. *Miramar* (English)
9. *Bayn al-Qasrayn* (French)
10. *Tharthara Fauq al-Nail* (German)

Mahfouz was a vocal critic of the September 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States, although he also stated that war was not a solution to the problem of terrorism. In 2002, it was announced that a statue of Mahfouz would be built in west Cairo to honour his achievements. Although Mahfouz continues to write, his failing eye sight and problems with his arm have
caused him to restrict himself to mostly shorter pieces, such as a series of descriptions of his dreams that have been published in Egypt’s *Nisf al-Dunia* magazine.

Mahfouz, called the ‘Balzac\(^{13}\) of Egypt’, described the development of his country in the 20th century. He combined intellectual and cultural influences from East and West. Among those people, who brought early translations of his work to the English speaking readers was Jacqueline oasis. In Egypt, Mahfouz was widely considered a spokesperson not only for Egypt but also for a number of non-western cultures. Many of his writing also appeared in his weekly column, ‘Point of View’. Before the Nobel Prize only a few of his novel had appeared in the west.

Like many Egyptian writers and intellectuals, Mahfouz was on a death list by Islamic fundamentalists. He defended

\(^{13}\) Honore de Balzac (1799-1850) was a French novelist and playwright.
Salmon Rushdie\textsuperscript{14} after the Iranian spiritual leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini condemned Rushdie to death in 1989, but also criticized Rushdi’s Satanic Verses as ‘insulting’ to Islam. Mahfouz was stabbed in the neck with a kitchen knife and two Egyptian Islamic militants were sentenced to death for attempting to kill him. In fact, Sayyid Qutb\textsuperscript{15} was one of the first critics to recognize Mahfouz’s talent in the mid 1940s. Mahfouz even visited Qutb when the latter was in the hospital, during the 1960s, near the end of his life. In his semi-autobiographical novel, \textit{Mirrors}, he drew a very negative portrait of Qutb. He was greatly disillusioned with the 1952 revolution and by Egypt’s defeat in the 1967 Six-Day War. He opposed the 1952 revolution not because of its principles, but because he felt that the practices failed to live up to them. Mahfouz influenced

\textsuperscript{14}Salman Rushdie, a famous Anglo-Indian novelist known for his use of mythology

\textsuperscript{15}Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966) was an Egyptian author, educator, Islamist terrorist, poet and the leading member of the Egyptian Muslim brotherhood in the 1950s and 60s
new generation of Egyptian lawyers, including Nabil Mounir and Reda Aslam.

Text written after the assassination attempt for a weekly woman’s magazine was collected in dreams (2000-2003). In his old age Mahfouz became nearly blind and though he continued to write, had difficulties in holding a pen or a pencil. He also had to abandon his daily habit of meeting his friends at coffee house.

Prior to his death, Mahfouz was the oldest living Nobel literature laureate and the third oldest of all time, trailing behind only Bertrand Russell and Haller. At the time of his death, he was the only Arabic-language writer to have won was the Novel prize. In July 2006, Mahfouz sustained an injury on his head as a result of a fall. He remained ill until his death on 30 August 2006 in a Cairo Hospital. He suffered from a bleeding ulcer, kidney problems, and cardiac failure. Mahfouz was accorded a
state funeral with full military honours on 31 August 2006. His funeral took place in the Al-Rasdan Mosque in Nasr city in Cairo. Though Mahfouz died yet he succeeded in putting the Arabic novel on the world literary map and winning it a wider readership and international recognition.