CHAPTER-2

CONTRIBUTION OF NAJIIB MAHFOUZ TO THE
DEVELOPMENT OF ARABIC LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

Introduction:

Najib Mahfouz was one of the leading Egyptian figures who had contributed to the development of Arabic language and literature through his valuable writings. He was mostly famous as a novelist, short story writer as well as dramatist. As a well-known novelist of Egypt, Najib Mahfouz has produced the most professional novels of all about Cairo, its people and life. He portrays the changes that have occurred in the lives of the Egyptians highlighting the difference between one generation and another as these are influenced by new sources, ideas and events. He was an Innovative novelist and author of Awlad Haratina (The Children of our Alley), serialized in 1959 for which he was awarded as the first Arab Writer who won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1988. Here I am going to give a brief description about the life and academic career of Najib Mahfouz as follows-

2.1 Life and Academic Career of Najib Mahfouz:

Najib Mahfouz the leading personality of modern Arabic intellectual of Egypt was born in 11th December, 1911, when British were ruled over the whole Egypt. Najib Mahfouz spent his childhood in the Jamaliyya neighborhood, Jamaliyya was the district in which Mahfouz lived when he experienced perhaps the most important event of his
life. Mahfouz, although still a young boy, was strongly marked by the revolutionary spirit. The theme of personal and political freedom was one he visited again and again in his literary work.

Mahfouz said, of the 1919 revolution, “I became more and more affected by it and more and more enthusiastic about the cause. Everyone I knew was for the Wafd Party and freedom from colonization. Later I became much more involved in political life as an outspoken follower of Zaghlul Pasha Saad. I still consider that involvement one of the most important things I have done in my life.”

In 1920, the year after the 1919 revolution, Mahfouz moved with his family to Abbasiya district. In his primary school years, Mahfouz was engrossed by the detective novels of Hafiz Najib. In high school, he consumed the works of stylistic and political innovators like Taha Hussein, Mustafa Lutfi al-Manfaluti, and Muhammed Hussein Haykal. Then, although he continued reading and writing at university, Mahfouz chose to study not literature, but philosophy.

In 1930 Mahfouz began to read philosophy at the University of Cairo. He obtained his degree in 1934. After completion of graduation he continued his study and initially planned to work for his doctorate with Mustafa ʿAbd al-Raziq on a subject related to Islamic mysticism, but he never carried it out. In 1936 he was appointed at

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31Mahfouz, The Art of Fiction No. 129
32Atahaddath, P 87; according to somekh, who bases himself on Fuʿad Duwarah, “Rihlatul-khamsin maʿal-qiraʾahwaʿal-kitabah”, al-kalib 2, no 22 (January 1963), p.7, the subject was aesthetics (o.c., P 42)
the secretariat of the university. In 1939, Mahfouz joined the Ministry of Religious Endowments and began his career as a civil servant. He continued in various government capacities including a time as Egypt’s head censor until his retirement in 1971.

It was in 1939, while at work for the government, that Mahfouz published his first novel, translated into English as Khufu’s Wisdom. He brought out ten more books in the twelve years that followed. Then, after the 1952 revolution, he stopped writing for several years. Mahfouz achieved significant acclaim with these early novels. He also angered Egypt’s king. During the world war 2nd period, his Cairo Modern and Rhadopis of Nubia were censored.

After 1952, the king was no longer a factor, and the British were forced to remove their direct colonial presence. Mahfouz later became disillusioned with President Jamal Abdel Nasser and voiced criticisms of the Abdel Nasser regime, but Mahfouz was never arrested.

Mahfouz’s experimentation with literary forms continued, as did his complicated dance with power. From the 1950s, Mahfouz worked in various capacities for the government censorship boards. In 1959, he was in charge of all artistic censorship in Egypt when he agreed to censor his own pioneering Children of Gebelawi. The book, which was published in Lebanon, remained officially unavailable in Cairo for several decades.
Mahfouz also developed his strict writing habits while at work in the ministry. He worked his government job from eight till two. From four until seven, he wrote. Then from seven until ten he read. This was his schedule, he told El Shabrawy, every day except Friday.

The great novelist remained a bachelor until 1954, and later said that he hadn’t wanted to disrupt his writing habits. But in 1954, perhaps still in the thrall of a second revolution, he married. He and his wife raised two daughters in their Agouza apartment, where he resumed his exacting schedule: work, write, read. Mahfouz reportedly left Egypt only three times: once to Yemen, once to the former Yugoslavia, and once to England for surgery.

Najib Mahfouz’s daughter Faten said in an interview with AUC Press about his father “He was different from other parents because of his age. He married late. If we didn’t agree with his opinion, we could discuss our differences. If we couldn’t convince each other, he wouldn’t say this is right or wrong. He was an open minded person.”

Then, in 1988, seventeen years after his retirement from government service, the hard-working Mahfouz suddenly achieved blinding international fame. It was a surprise to him, he said, when he heard that he had received the Nobel Prize for Literature. Ever a glass-half-full fellow in his life if not in his novels Mahfouz said in his lecture, “In spite of all what goes on around us I am committed to optimism until the end. I do not

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33Mahfouz,Faten Interview, AUC press,Newsletter, May2011
say with Kant that good will be victorious in the other world. Good is achieving victory every day.”\textsuperscript{34}

After the Nobel, Mahfouz was deluged with a notoriety that disrupted his organized lifestyle. A few years later, in 1994, his life received a far more painful abruption when he was the victim of a religiously-motivated assassination attempt. The attempt, ostensibly in reaction to Mahfouz’s 1959 novel Children of Gebelawi, left him permanently disabled and able to write only for a half hour each day.

But this didn’t stop Mahfouz from writing. He altered his literary style yet again, expanding into a sort of dreamy flash fiction, only writing stories that he could memorize and work over in his head. In this period, he wrote the very short fictions based on his dreams that he called Dreams of Convalescence.

Slowly, however, Mahfouz’s life was narrowed: by his eyesight, by his diabetes, by the attack on his life as he said in his memory, “That is the way of life”. You give up your pleasures one by one until there is nothing left, and then you know it is time to go.”\textsuperscript{35}

Mahfouz died in Cairo on August 30, 2006, at the age of 94, accompanied in his final moments by his wife Atiya and his two daughters. He had told fellow author Mohamed Salmawy late in life that, “Among my works, I am especially fond of

\textsuperscript{34} Mahfouz, Najib ‘Nobel Lecture’
\textsuperscript{35} Najib Mahfouz at SidiGaber
the Trilogy, The Harafish, and The Thousand Nights. These have a unique place in my
heart.”

2.2 Literary Life:

Najib Mahfouz was an outstanding literary figure of Egypt. He has left his valuable contribution in the field of modern Arabic literature through his writings. He wrote more than 30 novels, much collection of short stories, more than 12 film scripts as well as some plays also. Here I have cited his selected works which are given as below-

Selected works of Najib Mahfouz:

- Abath Al-Aqdar, 1939 - Khufu’s Wisdom (translated by Raymond Stock, 2004)
- Radubis, 1943 - Rhadopis of Nubia (translated by Anthony Calderbank, 2005)
- KifahTiba, 1944 - Thebes at War (translated by Humphrey Davies, 2004)
- Khan Al-Khalili, 1944 - Khan Al-Khalili: A Novel (translated from the Arabic by Roger Allen, 2011)
- Zuqaq Al-midaqq, 1947 - Midaq Alley (translated by Trevor le Gassick, 1975)

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36 Salmawy, Mohamed. Al-Ahram Weekly 8-14 November 2001, Issue No. 559

- BidayahWa-Nihayah, 1949 - The Beginning and the End (translated by Ramses Hanna Awad, 1985)


- Al-lis`swa el-kilab, 1961 - The Thief and the Dogs (translated by Trevor Le Gassic and Mustafa Badawi, 1984)


- Thartharafawq al-Nil, 1966 - Adrift on the Nile (translated by Frances Liardet, 1993)


- Al Maraya, 1971 - Mirrors (translated by Roger Allen, 1977)


- Al-Karnak, 1974 - Three Contemporary Egyptian Novels (translated with a critical introduction by Saad El-Gabalawy) / Karnak Cafe´ (translated by Roger Allen, 2008)

- Qalb Al-Layl, 1975 - Heart of the Night (translated by Aida A. Bamia, 2011)

- Hadrat Al-Muhtaram, 1975 - Respected Sir (translated by Rasheed El-Enany)

- Hikayatharitna, 1975 - Fountain and Tomb (translated by SoadSobhy, EssamFattouh, and James Kenneson, 1988)


- Malhamat Al-Harafish, 1977 - The Harafish (translated by Catherine Cobham, 1994)

- Asr Al-Hubb, 1980

- Al-Baqi Min Al-Zaman Sa'ah, 1982
- Rihlat Ibn Fattumah, 1983 - The Journey of Ibn Fatouma (translated by Denys Johnson-Davies, 1992)
- AmamAl’arsh, 1983
- Al-‘A’ish fi-l-haqqa, 1985 - Akhenaten, Dweller in Truth (translated from the Arabic by Tagreid Abu-Hassabo)
- YawmMaqtal al-Zaim, 1985 - The Day Leader Was Killed (translated by MalakHashem, 1989)
- Qushtumur, 1988 - The Coffeehouse (translated by Raymond Stock, 2010)
- ThartharahAla Al-Bahr, 1993
Voices from the Other World: Ancient Egyptian Tales, 2004 (translated by Raymond Stock)

The Seventh Heaven: Stories of the Supernatural, 2006 (selected, introduced, and translated from the Arabic by Raymond Stock).

Mahfouz’s early writings have been categorized traditionally as historical in that he dealt with subjects inspired by ancient Egyptian history. In an interview to the literary magazine Al-Hawadess, Mahfouz corrected this misconception by saying that only one of the early three works—KifahTiba (The Struggle for Thebes, 1944)—was strictly a historical novel. The other two—Abath Al-Aqdar (The Meanderings of Fate, 1938) and Radobis (1943)—were fictional stories inspired by folk epics.

In an area of the world where literacy is still not widespread, radio, cinema, and television play a crucial role in the education and entertainment of the people. Many of the writings of Mahfouz have been successfully adapted to the screen and stage. This enabled him to become widely known and admired throughout the Arab world. Mahfouz also wrote many scripts for works of other writers, which may perhaps explain the mastery of cinematic techniques that is manifest in his own writings.37

He has written many novels, short stories as well as a series of drama which was contained six dramas. Now I want to discuss about his valuable contribution in the

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37Gale, Thomson, encyclopedia, 05-06
various field of modern Arabic literature. First of all I want to give a brief description of his writing in the field of Arabic novel.

2.2.1: CONTRIBUTION OF NAJIB MAHFOUZ IN THE FIELD OF ARABIC NOVEL:

Najib Mahfouz began his literary career with his first novel ‘Mısır al-Qadima’, (Ancient Egypt) in 1932. This is a translated work of Najib Mahfouz which was originally from English book Peeps at many lands: Ancient Egypt written by famous English writer James Baikie. It has been written primarily for children, an historical account. Although it is dated by the values of its time it’s still worth listening to. Among other things it includes a description of the life of children in ancient Egypt.

Then, he wrote his historical fiction with wide ambitions. He wrote three novels about ancient Egypt as Hikmatkhufu (Khufu’s Wisdom) 1939, which was Radubis, (Rhadopis of Nubia) 1943, and Kifah tibah (Thebes at war), 1944 aiming eventually to gather up all of his nation’s complex history within his imaginative vision.

These three novels have been written on the basis of a monumental project on Ancient Egypt. It is the story about the pharaohnic Egypt which are relevant to political problems of Ancient Egypt in the nineteenth thirties. Yet despite having a nearly abstract setting, the novels display all of those qualities that were to make Mahfouz’s subsequent books so popular: compelling dialogue, credible three dimensional characters that have an inner as well as an outer life.
For many of Mahfouz's non-Arabic speaking readers, these three books remain unexplored territory. Now that they are available, however, their importance to understanding Mahfouz's corpus, no less than their immense appeal in themselves, is something for which readers and scholars of Mahfouz will be grateful to the American University in Cairo Press. His novel Kifahtibah (Thebes at war) was able to won the literary prize of the Arabic Academy.

In 1945 another novel Al-Qahira al-Jadidah (New Cairo) was published. The story of this novel has sets in 1930 where Mahfouz wanted to focus the conditions in Egypt at the said time. Through this novel, the reader gets an insight into the country's politics. Hopefully today's government is less corrupt, but surely today's students are still discussing pretty much the same things and with the same attitudes as in the 1930s.

The plot of this engrossing novel takes us away from the government and settles more on how this system affected the everyday man and his family. It also details the lives of those in power and those who wish to be in power. New Cairo is an uncomplicated and quickly read book that will cause the reader to think hard about some of the sage advice on its pages.

Then another masterpiece of Najib Mahfouz was published as Khan al-Khalili and it also brought him the literary prize of the Ministry of Education. The story is set in 1942, and the African campaign during World War II has started to directly affect the inhabitants of Egypt. Mahfouz paints a compelling picture of Cairo during the war from an angle that many readers have probably never encountered before. Khan al-Khalili is
a great introduction to the work of Najib Mahfouz and the rich and complicated life of modern Egypt and Egyptians.

Then he published Zuqaq al-Midaqq (Midaq Alley) in 1947. Midaq Alley, belongs to the earlier period of Mahfouz's work. Although written and set in the early forties, it provides glimpses of unusual intimacy into Egypt in a period of fast transition that is still today in progress. The past thirty years have seen enormous changes in every area of Egyptian life yet much there has remained the same. In Midaq Alley we are able to see how characters are enticed away from the roles natural to their birth and upbringing by the hope of material gains chiefly through work with the British Army, nowadays it is the factories of semi-industrial Africa and the Arab world that draw people away from their traditional roles in village and town. The universal problems of behavior and morality the novel examines remain, of course, the same. In this, as in many of Mahfouz's works, we perceive time, here personified in the ageless Alley, to be the novel's central focus. The aspirations and tragedies of its inhabitants are witnessed with total indifference by the Alley within which the circle of life and death is forever run again. In this it is a view in close focus of the human drama at large, selected by a literary craftsman of impressive skills.

In 1948, he had published Al-Sarab (Mirage). This famous novel was nominated for the literary prize of the Ministry of Education but the committee was denied to award the same for its eroticism. The Mirage is the story of an intense young man named Kamil Ruâba, who has been so dominated by his mother that her death sets him dangerously adrift in a world he cannot manage alone. Kamil Ruâba, is a tortured soul
who hopes that writing the story of his life will help him gain control of it. Raised by a mother who fled her abusive husband and became overbearingly possessive and protective toward her young son, he has long been isolated emotionally and physically. Now in his twenties, Kamil seeks to escape her posthumous grasp. Finding and successfully courting the woman of his dreams seems to promise salvation, until his ignorance of mature love and his fear and jealousy lead to tragedy. As such, it is a specimen of Mahfouz’s prose at its finest.

Then in 1949, Najib Mahfouz wrote another novel Bidayahwa al-nihayah (The beginning and the end). This is a Tragic novel set during the World War II, and address social issues that followed the global economic crisis, where Egyptian society were full of layers and issues especially popular and middle classes, and their attempts to ascend to higher class. The story begins with the Death of the Father who had three children and a Daughter was under the responsibility of the Mother. Hassan, Housein, Hassanin, and Nafisa were Characters of different dimensions, First the Mother worked hard to make the Family overcome the difficulties of life, Hassan worked as a Musician inside a popular party group, he was so adorable to his father until he becomes one of the bitters inside the family, Housein was a mighty man who feels the need of the family and worked hard to overcome poverty, He was the best Characters inside the story, the Latter was Hassan in, a very cruel and rude one, he didn't like the way the family lives in, he was always against the rules, He came to be a sub-officer inside the Egyptian army but Life goes against him as well he fall in love with a girl inside the Bourgeois class but that love came to be the principles of his end; Nafisa the Only daughter inside
the family worked as a tailor, but later she falls in a falsified love with a shop keeper who deceive her, in the last moment she begin having promiscuous relations for the sake of money. And thus the life of the family came to an end after being a united family during the life of its main keeper.

Then Najib Mahfouz published a three-part family saga named Al-Thulathiya (The Cairo Trilogy) as Bayn al-qasrayn (Palace Walk) in 1956, Qasr el-Shōq (Palace of Desire) in 1957 and Al-Sukkariyah (Sugar Street) in 1957 respectively.

Al-Thulathiya (The Cairo Trilogy) is a three-part family saga, centred around al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad and his family, his wife, his children and eventually his grandchildren. It covers the period from 1917 to 1944, and, though originally apparently conceived as a single novel, the tri-partite division is a logical one, as Mahfouz presents the story in distinct chunks, rather than one continuous whole: Palace walk covers the period from 1917 to 1919, Palace of Desire jumps ahead and covers the period from 1924 to 1927, and Sugar street covers the period 1935 to 1944.

The Cairo Trilogy begins at a very leisurely pace, with Mahfouz focusing on simple family routine and a seemingly unchanging everyday life. As the sons (and, to a much lesser extent, the daughters) go their separate ways the routine and life is shaken, growing less and less steady. The saga does not quite become frenetic, but the pace increases steadily. The Centre can not quite hold, and the many pieces whirl apart, characters drawn always back to that original hold but unable to find stability there any longer.
Mahfouz is excellent on many of the details, particularly the complex interpersonal relationships. Mahfouz offers an impressive picture of everything from the staggeringly backwards treatment of the girls and women, and the amazing ease in which marriages are entered into, to the more complex relationships as class and sexual barriers are lowered.

In 1959, he published another novel Awlad al-Haratina. This book was Mahfouz’s most controversial novel. It turned away from his traditional realism and portrayed a straightforward allegory of the prophets. Nominally it is the story of the inhabitants of an alley set up and owned by their ancestor, who also sets the rules for the alley, called the Ten Conditions, i.e. Ten Commandments, Gebelawi, who is clearly an allegory for God. Gebelawi is not seen, living alone in his house. We hear the stories of the five main inhabitants, each of whom has tried to help the poor and oppressed inhabitants of the alley. The first and favored one is Adham (Adam), followed by Idris (Iblis), who is angry at Adham for being favoured. Gabal (Moses) is next and it is he takes the people off into the desert when things get really bad in the alley. He is followed by Rifaa (Jesus) and then Qasim (Mohammed) and the book ends with Arafa (modern man) who replaces Gebelawi with science and magic. Mahfouz, as usual, leaves us with the possibility of hope at the end but it is certainly not clear-cut.

The novel caused considerable controversy on publication after being first published in newspaper form in Al Ahram, as it portrayed Mohammed. It was not published in book form in Egypt but in Lebanon. Despite the fact that the Lebanese version has been distributed in Egypt, that it has been published in Egyptian newspapers
and that it was published in English in Egypt, it has never been published in Arabic in Egypt. When it was cited, after Mahfouz won the Nobel Prize, the controversy was reignited and it is believed that, at least in part, Mahfouz's subsequent stabbing was because of this book. During his lifetime, Mahfouz refused to push for its publication in Egypt.

Then he published another novel in 1961 Al-Liswa al-kilab (The Thebes and the Dogs). It is a multi-faceted story that is equal parts crime thriller, morality tale, and political allegory. As a writer of realist fiction, Al-Liswa al-kilab (The Thebes and the Dogs) marks Mahfouz's first use of the stream of consciousness technique. The result is a ground-breaking work that allows the reader intimate access to the thoughts, emotions, and motivations of a man consumed by rage and hell-bent on self-destruction.

In 1962, Al-samanwa al-kharif (Quail and Autumn) was published. It is a tale of moral responsibility, alienation, and political downfall featuring a corrupt young bureaucrat, Isa ad-Dabbagh, who is one of the early victims of the purge after the 1952 Revolution in Egypt. Mahfouz presents a remarkable portrait of the clash between past and present, a portrait that is ultimately an optimistic one.

Then he published his novel in 1964 as Al-Tariq (The Search), this novella is full of duplicity and criminal behavior. It was supposed to be a critique of post-Revolution morality in Egypt perhaps it is more understandable within that historical context. Read in the contemporary context, it is a depressing and disturbing look at man with no idea of how to support him by any means other than criminal ones.
Although it has often been called one of Mahfouz’s lesser efforts, Al-Tariq (The Search) is the story of a young man who has been thrown into poverty by the death of his formerly wealthy prostitute mother. This novel is supposedly an indictment of the rapidly declining moral sense of Egypt's youth. Saber, the protagonist, goes to Cairo on a search for his unknown and supposedly wealthy father, only to fall into relationships with two very different women. One of those women, a brutal female like his mother, convinces him to murder her much older husband. It’s a good tale with some interesting psychological twists.

In 1965 he had published his novel Al-Shahadah (The Beggar). It is a story about the failure to find meaning in existence. It is set in post-revolutionary Cairo during the time of Jamal Abdel Nasser. This novella takes on the biggest political issue of all the meaning of life. The Beggar is full to the rim with metaphors and moral issues. It would be a good choice for a high school English class as there is plenty to chew on for such a short book.

Then Thartharah fawq al-Nil (Adrift on the Nile) was published in 1966. This novel certainly describes the lives of the characters that populate it, especially civil servant Anis Zaki. They are adrift in an Egypt that allows only limited outlets political, cultural, and sexual. The novel is a dark look at a troubled society, the surface merriment and excess barely veiling the very fundamental faults in it. It’s effectively presented, though the teasing banter can get to be a bit weari some, and the book seems at times more sketch than novel. Certainly, Mahfouz displays his considerable range with this book, very different from many of his others, and bits are excellent.
Al-Miramar (Miramar) was another famous novel of Najib Mahfouz which was written in 1967. The novel is set in 1960s Alexandria at the pension Miramar. The novel follows the interactions of the residents of the pension, its Greek mistress Mariana, and her servant. The interactions of all the residents are based around the servant girl Zohra, a beautiful peasant girl from the Beheira Governorate who has abandoned her village life. As each character in turn fights for Zohra's affections or allegiance tensions and jealousies arise. In a style reminiscent of Akira Kurosawa's 1950 film Rashomon, the story is retold four times from the perspective of a different resident each time, allowing the reader to understand the intricacies of post-revolutionary Egyptian life.

Al-Mariya (Mirror) was one of the most famous novels of Najib Mahfouz written in 1972. This book is presents the subtle insights of a man who has compassion for the more fragile sides of life and people. Mahfouz explores people who are adrift, who seem to be simply waiting for something that will never arrive; he also exhibits a fascination with the seamier sides of life. In many ways, this book could be a literary accompaniment to studying the history of Egypt during those time periods. Mahfouz brings some of that history alive, alive in the sewers of society as well as the “upper crust” that live in another sort of sewer, alive in the poor and the middle class who are struggling to survive not only economically, but also are trying and sometimes failing to keep their morals intact.

Al-hubb tahta al-matar (Love in the Rain) was written by Najib Mahfouz in 1973. Certainly, the novel reflects the Egyptian conditions of the times. Its a vibrant novel of love, bitterness, and betrayal set in Cairo in the aftermath of the Six-Day War.
of 1967, Love in the Rain introduces us to an assortment of characters that, each in his or her own way, experience the effects of this calamitous event. The war and its casualties, as well as people’s foibles and the tragedies they create for themselves, raise existential questions that cannot easily be answered. In a frank, sensitive treatment of everything from patriotism to prostitution, homosexuality and lesbianism, Love in the Rain presents a struggle between “old” and “new” in the realm of moral values that leaves the future in doubt. Through the dilemmas and heartbreaks faced by his protagonists, Mahfouz exposes the hypocrisy of those who condemn any breach of sexual morality while turning a blind eye to violence, corruption, and oppression.

Al-Karnak (Karnak Café) was published in 1974. The story of this novel was set during one of those difficult periods in modern Egyptian history when citizens were routinely picked up by the police, questioned and held without recourse, often for totally inexplicable reasons. These kinds of experiences form the background for the interactions that take place in the café in present time. The story line follows the patterns of café life as the seasons change and the young people disappear and reappear. They explain their absences as periods of imprisonment, which they describe tearfully. These prison episodes have a considerable impact on their appearance and demeanor over time. It provides the reader with some background on this conflict and its impact on the collective psyche on the Egyptian people.

In 1975 Mahfouz wrote Hikayat al-Haratina (Fountain and Tomb). This was a unique and enjoyable book, consisting of over seventy brief vignettes. Speaking in
present tense, the narrator describes life in the Cairo neighborhood where he grew up in the 1920s. The stories focus on the people and customs that surrounded the boy and made an impression on him, defining not only his life but the life of the alley. He tells of romances and heartaches, marriages and deaths; he describes both highborn and lowborn neighbors, pious people and lawbreakers. In his telling he neither judges these characters nor asks the reader to. He presents a distinct look at a distinct culture, but is not compelled to defend, explain, or propagate the religion and customs of his people. He merely weaves, in spare but picturesque language, a fascinating portrait of life as seen and interpreted by an observant and impressionable young boy.

He wrote another novel in 1975, Hadharat al-Muhtiram (Respected Sir). It is the story of Othman Bayyumi. Born in modest circumstances, he was a very good student, drawing "ahead of his bare-footed playmates from the alley", but had to stop pursuing his studies when his mother died, the final family support (his father and siblings had died earlier). Left alone, "a branch cut off a tree", he enters the civil service, where his excellent grades immediately bring him to the notice of his superiors. Mahfouz's morality tale is fairly effective, the drama of Bayyumi's rise and concurrent failures making for a good story. Bayyumi's struggles, with his personal demons and with the bureaucratic structure in which he wants to succeed, make for good drama, and Mahfouz presents an interesting protagonist.

Then he had published his Epic novel Malhamat al-harafish (The Harafish) in 1977. The Harafish belongs to that group of fictional works by Mahfouz that make use of the allegory of Harah (the quarter) and its inhabitants as a means of investigating
many of the larger philosophical issues that have been abiding concerns of the author ever since he abandoned an academic career in philosophy for creative writing in the 1930s. It is the resort to allegory in order to explore the complexities in the moral life of the community that really serves as their primary characteristic. The Harafish is indeed a landmark in Mahfouz’s output, in that he manages to produce a work of modern fiction that blends the generic purposes of the modern novel with the structures of more traditional indigenous narrative types.

In 1980, Mahfouz wrote another novel ‘Asr al-hubb’ (In the time of Love). The story of the novel was set at Cairo in the early to middle part of the twentieth century; Najib Mahfouz creates a variety of characters that depict the many manifestations of love. Simple in approach, uncomplicated in its depictions of personalities, and firmly rooted in the social structure that Mahfouz himself knew and grew up in, the author provides insights into the love between parent and child, the passionate and totally committed love between a man and woman, thwarted love and the obsession it breeds, the love between friends, and the love of home, neighborhood, and country. This is a story in and of twentieth-century Egypt, which can be read on more than one level. The neighborhood and the motifs may be familiar, but they combine to tell a new and intriguing tale, with an unexpected outcome.

Alf layla wa laila (Arabian Nights and Days) was one of the most famous novel of Najib Mahfouz published in 1980. Mahfouz’s novel begins with the sultan’s deciding to spare Shahrzad’s life. The reign of blood has ended, but the sultan is not happy. He has awakened to his guilt, and with that awakening has come awareness of his many
weaknesses. The joy that the sultan’s madness has ended is tempered with worry over the dangers that his changed mood might bring. Arabian Nights and Days beautifully delineates the workings of corruption, showing how impossible social and governmental conditions can grow out the small decisions each person makes every day and out of the bad example of a leader. The novel mimics Shahrzad’s narrative technique, coating a bitter pill of knowledge in a few sugary wisps of interconnected tales.

Afrah al-qubbatah (Wedding Song) is a short novel published in 1981 by renowned Egyptian author Najib Mahfouz. The story of this novel concerns the marriage and ultimate downfall of the theater troupe’s promoter, Karam, and cashier, Halima, and their family. The past is stirred up when the troop is in rehearsals for a play that Karam and Halima’s son Abbas has written based on these tragic events. Although the couple unites and begins their lives well enough, money trouble pushes them to welcome gambling and drugs into their home for extra cash. They are eventually arrested and sent to prison. Abbas marries Tahiya, a girl from the troupe, which sends the actor Tariq into a fit of jealous rage. Abbas and Tahiya are unable to rise from poverty, and Tahiya and their infant son become ill and die. This past is told to us through the eyes of Tariq, Halima, Karam, and finally Abbas himself.

Rihlat ibn fattouma (Journey of Ibn Fattauma) was another famous novel of Mahfouz published in 1983. The Journey of Ibn Fattouma is a novel that uses allegory to examine the evolution of human civilization. The protagonist Ibn Fattouma questions the merit of his Islamic society and goes on a journey to the land of Gebel, which he
believes to be a perfect civilization. In doing so, he passes through a number of countries, each representing a distinct system of societal organization in human history. The novel parodies the journey of Ibn Battuta, a 14th century Muslim traveler who trekked across Africa and Asia. Ibn Battuta set out across the Muslim world to examine the way that Islam was expressed in different civilizations. While Ibn Battuta did not visit civilizations similar to the fictional ones in the novel, he shared many characteristics and experiences with that of his fictional counterpart. In this novel we have found Mahfouz’s arguments about the ideal civilization and compare them with Ibn Battuta’s conclusions.

Yawm al-Muqtil al-jaeem (The Day the Leader is killed) was published in 1983 by Najib Mahfouz. It relates the tale of a middle-class Cairene family. Rich with irony and infused with political undertones, the story is narrated alternately by the pious and mischievous family patriarch Muhtashimi Zayed, his hapless grandson Elwan, and Elwan's headstrong and beautiful fiancée Randa. The novel follows multiple narratives written in the stream of consciousness format. The novel is set during the early 1980s whilst Egyptian President Anwar Sadat was introducing the infitahor open free-market economic policies which led to widespread unrest. The plot revolves around a young Egyptian man who is in love with a co-worker, but her father will not permit their marriage due to the fact that the young man cannot earn enough money to purchase and furnish an apartment. Eventually their engagement is called off, and the woman is engaged to their boss. In a fit of rage and despair, the protagonist murders his boss on the same day that Sadat is assassinated by Muslim extremists, and the two narratives are
intertwined. Hearing the news of the President’s death is the catalyst for the protagonist’s decision to kill his employer. The grandfather of the protagonist reflects on the generational gap in Egypt throughout the novel. The Day the Leader Was Killed brings us the essence of Mahfouz's genius.

2.2.2 CONTRIBUTION OF NAJIB MAHFOUZ IN THE FIELD OF SHORT STORIES:

Although Najib Mahfouz is known as novelist, he began his literary career by writing short stories and articles in his first year at University, in 1930. By 1944, Mahfouz had published more than seventy short stories in various subjects. However, because most of these stories appeared in periodicals and were never published as collections in book form, they have been overlooked by the critics who misleadingly usually refer to this early phase of Mahfouz’s writing as historical because of the three historical novels he wrote during this period. His first collection of short stories, Hams al-junun (Whispers of madness) was published in 1938, and it contains 28 stories, about half of what he had already published in periodicals. These stories can be discussed most conveniently in two main groups. The first consists of stories which clearly betray the influence of what is called in Egypt the school of Muhammad Taymur, or the modern school of the short story, which came into being in the late 1910s and flourished in the 1920s. The principal writers of this school were Muhammad and Muhammad Taymur, Isa and Shihata, Ubayd, Mahmud Tahir Lashin, and Ibrahim al-Misri. The writer’s purpose, which was given impetus by the national revolt of 1919 against the
occupying British, was to give expression to the Egyptian personality in a specifically Egyptian, and more realistic type of literature. Therefore the themes they dealt with were frequently common family problems, such as polygamy, the marriage of young girls to old man, adultery, drunkenness, and she compelling by law of a wife to remain in the home of a husband she hates. As might be expected in short-story writing at this early stage of its development in Egypt, the authors frequently relied upon unlikely coincidences or unusual incidents to give their stories a striking or unexpected ending.\textsuperscript{38}

Mahfouz began writing in 1930, and most of the stories he wrote at this time indicate that he took stories of this school as models for his own. His stories have the same type of social theme, for instance, in al-Sharida, A husband’s neglect of his wife drives her to take a lover; in Nakth al-Unu’ana, is the story of a middle aged woman who desperately tries to maintain the illusion that she is still young. In al-Zaif, a woman goes out of her way to have an affair with a man, simply because she thinks, mistakenly that he is the most celebrated poet of the time, and she wants to boast of her connection with him. When her mistake is revealed, she becomes an object of ridicule. We also find in Mahfouz’s short stories description of lower-class characters, such as Filfil, in the story of that name, an apprentice waiter in a café, Ja’d, an ex-convict in NahnuRijal, and Hasan Shaldam, a traditional comedian, in Hayat Muharrij.\textsuperscript{39}

\textsuperscript{38}Ostle, R.C. Studies in Modern Arabic Literature, P 114, P 2

\textsuperscript{39}Ibid, P 115, P 3
Certain stories display even more striking similarities with earlier stories by writers of Tymur’s school. For example, Mahfouz’s Kayduhunna is about a man married to a woman of 25 years younger, who takes a lover, and although her husband suspects, and attempts to surprise her with her lover, she is too clever for him. This plot closely resembles that of Mahmud Tahir Lashin’s Qarar al-Hawiya, in which a poorly-educated petty official marries a rich upper-class woman, who is involved in an affair with her cousin, and successfully foils her husband’s attempt to catch her. Again, there is Lashin’s story Walakinnah al-Hayat, in which a desolate widow, dedicated to her husband’s memory, is consoled by the lawyer employed to clear up her husband’s estate, and in the end, one understands that they will marry; this story is closely echoed by Mahfouz’s Islah al-Qubur, which describes a widow goes regularly to visit her recently deceased husband’s grave; she is seen by a man whose house she passes on her way to the cemetery, and finally he asks for her hand in marriage. Although she is shocked at first, she soon yields, and the money which she was going to spend on improvements to her husband’s grave is spent instead on her trousseau.40

It is not surprising that Mahfouz, when he first started to write, should have been influenced by the popular Egyptian writers of the day, especially as his acquaintance with western literature was only beginning at this time; what is more surprising is that while critics have tried to show that Mahfouz was influenced by writers of the older

40 Ibid, P115, P4
generation such as Taha Husain, al-‘Aqqad and Salma Musa, they have overlooked the influence of the younger generation, and Mahmud Tahir Lashin in particular.\(^{41}\)

The second group of short stories in Hams al-junun gives indications of Mahfouz’s growing belief in socialism, although he had not yet discovered how best to express his views in literary form, and indeed his ideas of socialism do not yet seem to have crystallized. In one story al-ju‘ he appears to suggest that reform could be achieved by the capitalist upper classes, if they were prepared to make the effort. A factory worker who has an arm in a factory accident, and cannot support his family on the miserable pension allotted to him is about to commit suicide, when he chances to be saved by the factory owner’s son, who promises him a new job and gives him some money, while reflecting that the money he loses gambling every night could support many such family’s. On the other hand, the message of al-Waraqa al-Muhlika is that any help rendered by the upper classes to the poor is destructive. In this story, a rich man gives ten pounds to the poor singer; the money makes him change his way of life; he became a gangster and is eventually hanged for murder. A search for his accomplishes leads the police to destroy the slum homes of his former neighbors. Although Mahfouz’s attitude varies in these short stories, it is clear that he is attempting to pass judgment on aspects of social injustice, whereas in his later works he is content to describe appalling social conditions objectively without comment.\(^{42}\)

\(^{41}\) Ibid, P115, P5

\(^{42}\) Ibid, P116, P6
From the artistic point of view, the stories in Hams al-junun are mediocre. Their principal defects are the improbable situations and coincidences, the contrived effects and the unexpected endings, although it should be remembered that these were common faults in short stories of that period. Sometimes Mahfouz expresses his social criticism much too directly, without any subtle, and many of the stories are mere narratives, superficial, and lacking any deep significance; indeed some sound almost like summaries of novels. At the same time, Mahfouz’s language in these stories is often too pompous and rhetorical, and he slips frequently into the use of clichés. However, these were Mahfouz’s first literary efforts, and should not be judged too harshly.\footnote{Ibid, P116, P7}

After 1942 only a few sporadic stories were published. But in the early nineteen-sixties Mahfouz produced another batch of short stories, which appeared in the newspaper al-Ahram, and were then published under the title Dunya Allah in 1963. Since the publication of Hams al-junun, a quarter of a century had passed, during which Mahfouz had established himself as the most distinguish novelist in Egypt, perhaps in the Arab world. At the same time, the standard of short story writing in general had improved immensely. The stories of Dunya Allah are mature, realistic, and therefore convincing. Mahfouz has managed to embody his social and metaphysical message in situations and actions through his stories. The book contains fourteen stories which can be divided into two groups, those with social and those with metaphysical themes.\footnote{Ibid, P117, P10}
In Dunya Allah we have found social and metaphysical themes. Mahfouz’s social criticism takes various forms. In the title story, Mahfouz condemns a society which denies to the poor even the simplest of pleasure. The poor and elderly ‘Amm Ibrahim, whose long life has been devoid of any pleasures, has one dream to go to Alexandria, and see the sea. To achieve this dream he steals the monthly pay packet of some office workers whom he knows will be able to manage without the money. He enjoys several days of pure bliss, before he is found by the police and arrested. The reader has to sympathize with ‘Amm Ibrahim, in spite of his one crime, which one feels was justified. A similar impression is given by Hanzalwa ‘I- ‘askari. Hanzal, a drug addict lying in the street in a stupor, dreams that this time when he is picked up by the police, he is treated kindly, sent to the hospital and cured, and then given a little shop and a wife, so that he can start a new life. He asks for his friends to be given the same kind of help. He is just dreaming that his new wife is caressing his neck when the caress begins to feel rather rough; he regains consciousness to find that, not his wife’s hand, but a policeman’s boot is on his neck, and he is dragged off to the police station. In this story, Mahfouz shows that some prostitutes are more honest, more patriotic, and closer to God, than the Imam of the mosque in the street where they work. It would take too long to describe all the stories of this type, but there is one, more significant story, which deserves mention. This is al-Jabbar, which shows the despotism of a village headman, ‘Abd al-Jalil al-Jabbar. A peasant, named Abu’l- Khayr, is to be executed for a rape which al-Jabbar committed; his sole crime is that he witnessed the rape, unseen by al-Jabbar, but gave himself away by a cry of horror. The whole village realizes that
he is innocent, and also who the real criminal is, but they are helpless. It is clear that Mahfouz’s criticism is not aimed at despotism in the village alone, but has a much more general application. This type of political criticism is found increasingly in Mahfouz’s subsequent collections of short stories.45

The metaphysical themes found in Dunya Allah are basically two: the problem of death and the search for a religious faith. There are three stories on death. Two describe death’s unpredictability and seeming irrationality. In the story Haditha, a stranger is killed in a car accident, and a letter found in his pocket reveals that on this very day he had seen the realization of his hopes; his daughters were married and his son had found a job. Therefore, he had decided to go to the country, where he had been looking forward to enjoying the rest of his days with his relative round about him. Maw’id describes how a man named Jum’a feels that death must be near, when his application for a life insurance policy is rejected on medical grounds. He summons his brother from the country to commend to him the care of his wife and children. His brother is so distressed by the bad news, that when he leaves Jum’a, he does not look where he is going, and is knocked down by a car and killed. The third story is called Didd Majhul, the implication of which is, briefly, that death is a mindless criminal, and we have to ignore the murders he commits, if we are too able to carry on living a normal life.46

46 Ibid, P119, P12
There are two stories which symbolize man’s search for religious faith in order to cure his spiritual desolation. In the story Za’balwi, a man learns that he has a disease which the doctors are unable to cure. He had been told that Za’balwi can cure such diseases, and he searches for him in vain. At times he begins to doubt Za’balwi’s existence, but eventually, while in a drunken sleep in a tavern, he dreams that he is in a beautiful garden, and has reached a state of harmony and content. He awakes to find that Za’balwi was with him and tried unsuccessfully to wake him up, but now he has disappeared again, and nobody knows where he went. The afflicted man is convinced by his mystic dream that he must continue his search for Za’balwi. The theme of this story is that God is necessary for human peace of mind, and can only be reached through a mystic experience of some kind.47

We find the same idea in the story Kalima fil layl which is about a high ranking official who has been driven by ambition to devote himself to work all his life, even sacrificing human relationships. On the first day of his retirement, he does not know what to do with him and feels utterly lost. He wonders in misery how he can manage to endure his retirement. He prays as a matter of routine, but one day the meaning of the phrase bismillahi, in the name of God, dawns on him. Out walking, he reflects that, all his life, his actions were performed in the name of ambition, greed, selfishness or hatred, but not a single was done in the name of God. This realization enables him to appreciate beauty around him, to which he had been blind before. On his return home,

47 Ibid, P119-P13
he tells his wife of his intention to start a new life. For the first time he smiles a smile of pure happiness, unmixed with hypocrisy, gloating or cunning.⁴⁸

Dunya Allah was considering as Mahfouz’s best short story collection. Here Mahfouz has succeeded in conveying his social message as well as portraying man’s deepest emotions through a great variety of situations. To achieve this, he has made use of dreams, the stream of consciousness, dramatic dialogue, symbolism and expressive language which reaches at moments the level of poetry.

Two years after the publication of Dunya Allah, Mahfouz’s third collection of short stories was appeared as the title BaytSayyi’ al-Sum’a. Here again Mahfouz continues his social criticism and his philosophical searching. We find in these collection indications of the growing tendency towards political criticism, noted earlier. There are three stories in which the political meaning is very obvious, and a further two stories which could be taken as symbolizing Egypt’s political situation at that time. In Sa’iq al-Qitar, the engine driver, in a fit of seeming madness, drives faster and faster, and refuses to stop the train at any of the stations. His fellow railway workers and the passengers implore him to stop because he is endangering their lives, but to no avail. As the train crashes, all this turns out to have been a nightmare dreamed by one of the passengers on the train. The political significance of the story al-kawaf is equally clear. The people living in the quarter of al Farghana are terrorized by two thugs: al-A’war, the one-eyed, and ju’ran, the scarab of dung-beetle. A young police officer rids them of

⁴⁸Ibid. P 119, P 14
these thugs, but gradually his behavior towards the people becomes even more offensive than that of the thugs. The people wonder helplessly how the man who risked his life to bring them peace and security, can now treat them in this way.  

A different type of social criticism is found in Suq al-Kantu, the moral of which is that the different classes in Egypt steal from each other, but punishment only falls upon the poor, while the rich keep their ill-gotten wealth. After the Arab-Israeli war of 1967, Mahfouz published five collections: Khammart al-Qitt al-Aswad (1968), That al-Misalla (1969), Hikaya bila Bidaya Nihaya and Shar al-‘Asal, both in 1971, and al-Jarima (1973).

The stories written after the war are noticeably different from those written earlier, both in technique and in content. This phase of Mahfouz’s writing can be termed political, because these later stories are almost entirely political and topical in content. This makes them more difficult for non-Egyptians to appreciate. But even Egyptian readers find these stories extremely obscure, because Mahfouz relies too heavily on symbolism and the use of the absurd that, while the general message of a story may be grasped, the significance of details is sometimes not at all clear. Critics, on the whole, have avoided commenting on these later collections, and have hesitated to offer any interpretations.
In addition to this use of symbolism and the absurd, we find that Mahfouz has increased his use of dramatic dialogue. The vast majority of these later stories are written almost entirely in dialogue. The first five stories of this type, which appeared in Taht al-Mizalla, are actually called one-act plays, and are arranged on the page as such. Latter stories are not called plays and are not so arranged, but nevertheless they consist of dialogue, apart from occasional lines of narrative which read rather like stage directions. A number of these ‘theatrical stories’, as Mahfouz calls them, have been acted on the stage, in spite of the difficulties of interpretation which the producer faces.\(^51\)

The first of the post ‘67-war collections, khammarat al-Qitt al-Aswad, is really transitional, as it contains a large proportion of stories written before the war. These pre-war stories resemble those of the earlier collections, except that Mahfouz has almost abandoned the metaphysical, in order to concentrate on the social, and above all the political aspects of Egyptian life. From the artistic point of view, these stories are inferior to the last of Dunya Allah and BaytSayyi’ al-Sum’a. The title of story khammarat al-Qitt al-Aswad which gives an indication of the new trend of Mahfouz’s writing.\(^52\)

After the 1967’s war, Mahfouz had published four collections of short stories. The stories can be divided into two main groups: those which criticize the Egyptians

\(^{51}\) Ibid, P122, P25  
\(^{52}\) Ibid, P122, P26
for their attitude of indifference towards their government’s conduct, and those which comment on Arab-Israeli situation.

In the title story of Taht al-Mizalla, we find a crowd trying to shelter from the rain in a bus shelter. As they wait, they observe a thief fighting with his pursuers, a bad car crash in which several people die, a naked couple making love on top of one of the corpses, the burial of the couple alive with the crash victims, and an orgy of sex, murder and dancing, which takes place round the grave. A policeman is there but turns his back on all this. Eventually one of the man under the shelter shouts to draw the policeman’s attention to what is going on. Instead, he comes over to the shelter and casks for their identity cards. Declaring that their gathering is suspicious, he shoots them all dead. Clearly Mahfouz wants to say to the Egyptian people: ‘What is happening in reality is as absurd and as terrifying as this, yet you do not use to get involved. This passive attitude will result in your destruction’.

Al-nawm, conveys a similar message, but is directed more to the intellectual who waste their time in useless discussion, while their country is being destroyed by incompetent government. The one-act plays in Taht al-Mizalla are no different. An example is Yumit’ wayuhyi: on a platform at the back of the stage are lying a number of figures, either dead or asleepe. In the foreground, a young man is insisting on avenging his defeat by a more powerful enemy, in spite of the pleas of his girlfriend, who begs him not to fight. A giant enters and offers his help, but the fulfillment of the conditions

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53 Ibid, P123, P29
he wishes to impose would produce consequences similar to those of defeat by enemy. The young man rejects his proposal, and in a struggle, is pushed against the platform, thus shaking the sleeping figures into life. They slowly rise and fill the stage. The giant takes the opportunity of slipping off in the direction of the enemy; then the young man, at the head of the troops of figures, marches off with determination against the enemy. The reference to the political situation between Egypt and Israel is too obvious to require any comment; the giant might represent the United States or even Russia, and the girl perhaps peace.54

The remaining two collections, Hikaya bila Bidaya wa al-Nihaya and Shahr al-‘Asal do not differ greatly as per as the subject matter is concerned, but the stories are longer: the first collections contains only five and second seven stories. Also Mahfouz more frequently suggests an outcome to the situations he presents. In the title story of Hikaya bila Bidayawa al-Nihaya, an outwardly pious Sufi Sheikh called Mahmud who is revered by the common people, leads a private life of ease and corruption in which he is joined by his close associates. The younger generation of the quarter notices his hypocrisy, and criticizes him publicly. Finally Shykh Mahmud decides to have their leader ‘Ali killed. ‘Ali’s mother, to save his life, brings proof that he is actually Shykh Mahmud’s illegitimate son. This revelation is shattering to both ‘Ali and to Shykh Mahmud, and the latter finally agrees to confess all his past crimes in public, and to begin a new life. The story alludes to the situation which existed between the

54 Ibid, P123:124, P30
government and the students, born after the 1952 revolution, and here Mahfouz is suggesting a solution to the problem.\(^{55}\)

The title story describes how a young couple enters their apartment to find some thugs hiding in it. The thugs lock the door to prevent them escaping, and when they try to call for help from the window; people in the street throw stones at them. After several fantastic complications, the wife manages to set fire to the kitchen and in the ensuing confusion she and her husband are able to attack the thugs with knives. The neighbors and the police now break into control the fire and put an end to the fighting. Everything in the apartment is smashed and the couple is wounded but the thugs are removed. Here again the Arab-Israeli problem is clearly intended, as is also the case in Walia al-‘Ana, in which a woman who has lost two babies succeeds in giving birth to a third, this time living baby, after a difficult labor during which she is aided by modern equipment and experienced helpers. Four thugs arrive to shoot the baby but the baby, in defense, strikes them all to the ground and killing them. To the Egyptian reader, the baby here represents a new generation who are capable to defending itself against its enemies.\(^{56}\)

One can see from the outlines of these stories that they have very little meaning when taken literally, and the majority can be understood only at the symbolic level. Moreover, the symbolism is such that most of the stories are experienced on the level of riddles or crossword puzzles than of artistic and emotive allegories. In his enthusiasm to

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\(^{55}\) Ibid, P124, P31

\(^{56}\) Ibid, P124, P32
comment on contemporary events, it is not surprising that Mahfouz should turn to the short story, rather than to the level which requires time and reflection. In these most recent collections although Mahfouz may be said to have perfected his techniques, the stories are so topical and so limited in application that it is questionable whether they have any lasting literary value.\textsuperscript{57}

Regarding conclusion of this chapter I want concluded that although Mahfouz’s principal contribution to literature is in the field of the novel, it cannot be denied that many of his metaphysical and social stories are first-class literary productions by any standard and deserve world-wide recognition.

\textsuperscript{57}Ibid, P125, P33