Chapter 2

Life, Works and Age of Najib Mahfouz

The full name of Najib Mahfouz is Najib Mahfouz Abd al- Aziz Ibrahim Ahmad al- Basha; also transliterated as Nagib, Nageeb, Naguib or Najib Mahfouz. He was also well known as Najib Mahfouz Abd al- Aziz al- Sabilji. Regarding the word “al- Sabilji” Raja al- Nuqqash has said in his book “Fi Hubbi Najib Mahfouz” in this way – I did not understand the word meaning of “al- Sabilji”. This is astonishing and danger for me that the name comes down to family from the period of Mamluke or like that. But Najib Mahfouz made it clear in one of his conversations of the newspaper. He said that – “the word al-Sabilji do not have attachment with the name of my family. This is the word that dispatched my friend Dr. Adam Rajab. I had grandfather who was working as inspector of an elementary school from the old elementary schools. There was a road for this elementary school and I was telling this story to my friends. For this Adam said to me, come up O the son of al- Sabilji!”

2.1. His Family:

Mahfouz was born into the heart of the middle class. His father Abd al-Aziz Ahmad al- Basha was a high ranking civil servant who provided his family with a comfortable urban life. His home was in Cairo’s lively commercial district that was rich in historical monuments and cultural festivities. On the other hand his mother, a daughter of venerable gentleman was almost illiterate who could neither read nor write.

In 1924 his family moved to west al- Abbasiyya, a modern quarter of old Cairo was of slightly high standing he grew up. There were many small houses

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1 www.enotes.com
2 Raja al- Nuqqash, Fi Hubbi Najib Mahfouz, 275.
and a small hinder garden. On the contrary upper class dwelt in east al-
Abbasiyya from where Najib Mahfouz was attracted by the charming wealthy
girl at the time when he was in adolescent period.

Mahfouz had two brothers and four sisters. Muhammad, his elder brother
was an officer of army and Ibrahim older than Mahfouz about fifteenth years,
taught mathematics and finally became an Inspector of a school. His four sisters
also got opportunity to get education. Finally they became married and left their
home. His family never freed from phonograph and radio. They liked to
listening eastern song and the art of reciting holy Qur’an. Najib Mahfouz got
inspiration from his father to listen it as like he loved listening intuition that
enumerates the popular life.

2.2. Childhood:-

As a youngest son of the family Mahfouz always received love and
affection. His childhood was normal and grew up in a solid, cohesive family
undisturbed by the various ills he associates with broken home. His parents were
happily married whom he loved and respected as well. His father was a strict
Muslim who asserted home atmosphere to have religious. Becoming the
youngest child Mahfouz laments that he spent most of his childhood alone,
deprived of the companionship of his two brothers and sisters who started
career, married and left home while he was growing up. He says that he never
enjoyed playing with them, going with them for walk, or confiding his secrets to
them. This led Mahfouz to seek friends among the children of his
neighbourhood. In the spare time Mahfouz’s father used to visit Egyptian
museum with his family to see the relics of Pharaonic, Coptic and Islamic
Egypt. On other occasion Mahfouz accompanied his mother to the same
museum. Through this visit Mahfouz got inspiration about the ancient history of Egypt which is demonstrated in writing his three historical novels.¹

2.3. Adulthood Period:-

As a teenager Mahfouz was active in sports and football was his favourite game. He frequently used to go watching silent film in the cinema hall namely ‘al- Kulub al- Husayni’.² According to Adam Rajab (one of his friends) Mahfouz was remarkably a speedy soccer player. He had a tremendous sense of humour. Mahfouz frequently used to go in different coffee houses to meet with several intimate friends and exchanged different views. Mahfouz astonished them with his quick and spontaneous wit making them ridiculous. Sometimes he would confront twenty of these jokes tellers simultaneously who could not cope with him. While in high school Mahfouz formed an organization for protecting morality. Its objective was to impart moral principles in the students and combat the use of foul language. The organization was short-lived as Mahfouz found himself using foul language to fight those students who opposed him and his society.³

Mahfouz joined in weekly gathering at different coffee houses with his friends and enjoyed smoking, drinking coffee and reading newspaper. This was his regular habit to meet several intimate friends. One of his close friends namely Ahmad Muzhir gave the title of their group ‘al- Harafish⁴. The Harafish group met every Thursday evening at Casino Qasr al- Nil. It is said that Mahfouz always brought a kilogram of kabob to these gatherings. These are the meetings where one of his groups, Salah Abu Sayf discovered Mahfouz’s ability to write screen plays. Thus, Mahfouz began writing scenarios for many movies including those based on some of his novels. Mahfouz was well known for his

¹ J. Brugman, An Introduction to the History of Modern Arabic Literature in Egypt, 293-94.
² Hamdi Sakkut, Najib Mahfouz Bibliographya Tayrihya wa siratu Hayat wa Madkhal Naqdi, 18.
³ Adham Rajab, Safahat Majhula min Hayat Najib Mahfouz, 92-99.
⁴ Egyptian historian Abd al- Rahmn al- Jabarti used this term to mean “common people”.

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loyalty among his friends who maintained ties with the group to the present day.\textsuperscript{1}

2.4. His Education:

Mahfouz began his formal education reciting of the holy Qur'an from the Kuttab (Qur'anic School). Afterward he attended in Husayniya Elementary School and Fuad I high school. As a student he was brilliant and hardworking, proficient in the Arabic language, history and mathematics but weak in foreign languages. In order to gain proficiency in English he undertook the translation of James Baikie's book *Ancient Egypt* into Arabic. The translation was published under the title of *Misr al-Qadima* and this effort made Salama Musa, a Fabian and intellectual whose socialist ideas influenced Mahfouz.\textsuperscript{2}

Mahfouz began his studies with classical Arabic and started to compose Arabic poetry following the traditional meters and rhymes. But he discovered it difficult to achieve perfect rhymes and decided to break away from the rigid traditional form. He began composing free verse and credited himself with being the pioneer of the Arabic free verse movement.\textsuperscript{3} He also studied *Al-Bayan wal Tabyin* (The Book of Eloquence and Exposition) by Al-Jahiz and *Al-Iqd al-Farid* (The Unique Necklace) by Ibn Abd al-Rabbi. From 1930 onwards, Mahfouz started to read the works of prominent Egyptian writers like Taha Husayn, Tawfiq al-Hakim, Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad, Muhammad Husayn Haykal, Ibrahim Abd al-Qadir al-Mazini, Yahiya Haqqi and Mahmud Taymur etc. He was greatly impressed by Taha Husayn's autobiographical novel *Al-Ayyam* (The Stream of Days), which he calls "my life story written according to Taha Husayn's manner."\textsuperscript{4} Apart from this two books of Al-Hakim—*Awdat al-

\textsuperscript{1} Al-Ghitani, *Najib Mahfouz yataadhakkar*, 88.
\textsuperscript{2} Fuad Dawwara, *Al-Wujdan al-Qawmi fi Adab Najib Mahfouz*, 102.
\textsuperscript{3} Dawwara, *Rihlat al-Khamsin ma al-Qira'a wal-Kitaba*, 12.
\textsuperscript{4} Ibid., 13.
Mahfouz’s study was not systematic in his youth period. He studied haphazardly to satisfy his inquisitive nature. But after graduation he became more selective in his study, concentrating mostly on masterpieces of Western literature. Najib Mahfouz chose to study the history of world literature especially the works of English dramatist, critic and biographer John Drinkwater as he had no guide to recommend which book he should read in. After reading Drinkwater’s books Mahfouz looked upon world literature as one and not the literatures of different peoples. He also studied the works Shakespeare, Dickens, Wells, Galsworthy, Shaw, Joyce and D. H. Lawrence. Among the French writers, he studied Flaubert, Anatole France, Emile Zola, Stendhal, Proust, Mauriac, Sartre and others. Of the Russians he studied Gorki, Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky and Chekhov; In German literature he studied Goethe, Mann and Kafka. Of the American writers he studied Melville, Hemingway, Faulkner, Dos Paso’s and O’Neill etc. He studied mainly the works of English or French or in Arabic translation. Although Mahfouz mentioned many writers name but he did not read them in total; he says, “I have not read the complete works of Tolstoy. But when Drinkwater selected War and Peace, I read it.”

2.5. His Favourite Writers:

In an interview Mahfouz expressed his opinion regarding the Western writers who had influenced him. According to him Shakespeare was like a dear friend. His impressive thoughts and humour were so melded with Mahfouz’s soul that he could say, “I felt that Shakespeare was the son of my own country, not of another.” After Shakespeare he liked Isben and Strindberg, but he was unenthusiastic about the theatrical works of Chekhov, which he found lethargic

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1 Dawwara, Riḥlat al- Khamsin, 7.
2 Al- Ghitani, Najib Mahfouz Yatadhakkar, 41-42.
3 Hafiz, Najib Mahfouz, 93.
and tiresome. He was fascinated by Joseph Conrad’s Heart of Darkness, whose broad and comprehensive outlook on life affected his late novels. He also liked Proust and Kafka but claims he found Joyce unpalatable, considering his ideas and style an experiment that requires meticulous exploration. Mahfouz made a comment about Ulysses that “It is an awful novel. Nevertheless, it has created a trend. It is like the one who points to love, but asks those who desire to attain it to use their own way.”1 Mahfouz saves most of his praise for Melville’s Moby Dick, which he considers perhaps the greatest novel in the world. Although Hemingway and Dos Passos were fine writers, he says, their work could not reach its level. Mahfouz notes that he did not like Faulkner, considering him unnecessarily complex.

Regarding the above mentioned Western writers, Mahfouz says that in one way or another he was influenced by these writers and their works. In writing his novels, he used such diverse techniques as internal monologue, naturalism and realism but with modifications.2 Realism was his favourite technique and he chooses it courageously after some deliberation. Mahfouz admits that Virginia Woolf had attacked the realistic technique, saying European novels were over-sated with it. When the concept of realism was not known in Egypt or the Arab world at the time Mahfouz adopted the same to write his novel. In this regard it is said that if he had not done so, he would not have been merely one among many writers who followed what he calls “modern” techniques.3

2.6. Studies in University:

Mahfouz joined in philosophy department in the University of Fuad- I (at present in Cairo) in 1930 A. D. Most of his lectures and examinations were in two languages. One is French and another is English. He had a good command

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1 Ibid., 93-96.
2 Mahmud Kushayk, Hiwar ma Amid al- Riwaya al- Arabiya Najib Mahfouz, 140.
3 Shusha, Ma al- Udata: Najib Mahfouz, al- Adab (June 1960), 18-20.
over these two languages. It is well known fact that Mahfouz was too loved by his teachers as well his fellow student. However, every teacher expected from him a lot. Among the aspirant teachers one name may be mentioned is Prof. Masiuokubi, department of philosophy who became very sad when he came to know that Najib Mahfouz altered his subject from philosophy to literature as he predicted Mahfouz to become a genius man in the field of philosophy. On the other hand Mahfouz had astonished by the affection of his former English teacher namely Burtasharad who sent his congratulation to him while he got Nobel Prize. Mahfouz said himself that after a long gap of fifty four years from university how can his teachers still remembering him. The only reason was that he had an excellent command over these two languages. During University life Mahfouz met so many teachers whom he loved so much. Among them he praised one of his teachers namely al- Shaykh Mustafa Abdur Razzaq. He said that Abdur Razzaq was a most important person who left a remarkable contribution to him. He had a strong personality having good knowledge and noble humanity. He always stood up behind my thinking. Mahfouz prayed for him and said that very few persons are found like him in this world.¹

In University Mahfouz emphasized more to study philosophy instead of literature. Although Mahfouz was more interested to read philosophy but he never neglected short stories. His interest in philosophy gave him an opportunity to get government scholarship to further his study in French. After graduation from the University of Fuad- I in 1934, he applied for the scholarship but unfortunately his application was turned down. The screening committee mistook Mahfouz for a Christian Copt, dropped his name from the list and chooses another candidate who in fact was a Copt.² Mahfouz’s inclination toward philosophy was the dissertation he choose for his master’s degree, entitled “Mafhum al- Jamal fi al- Falasafa al- Islamiyya” (The Concept of

¹ Abd al- Aziz. 82.
² Al- Ghitani, Najib Mahfouz Yatadhakkkar. 94.
Aesthetics in Islamic Theology), under the Islamologist al—Shaykh Mustafa Abd al—Raziq. He collected so many relevant materials to write this dissertation for two years, but he did not complete the project.  

From 1930 onwards, however, Mahfouz began to study with the works of towering writers’ like- Taha Husayn, Tawfiq al- Hakim, Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad, Muhammad Husayn Haykal, Ibrahim Abd al- Qadir al- Mazini and the less famous writers like- Yahya Haqqi and Mahmud Taymur. He was greatly impressed by the autobiographical novel of Taha Husayn’s *al- Ayyam* (The Stream of Dys), which he calls “my life story written according to Taha Husayn’s manner.” Apart from this the two other books of Tawfiq al- Hakim’s- *Adat al- Ruh* (The Return of the Spirit) and *Yawmiyyat Na‘ib fi al- Ayyaf* (The Diaries of an Inspector in the Country) left an indelible imprint on his mind. Moreover Mahfouz also studied the books of scientific culture that were spreading and summarising the books of science in the magazines *Al- Biology wa al- Tabiyya wa Astal Madda*. The three eminent writers namely- Fuad Saruf, Ismail Mazhar and Salma al- Musa were publishing these books. And he loved sciences specially physics and astronomy. During that period he also studied Darwin’s book. And he says, “My studies were distributed between literature and philosophy and the summarising of sciences that I acknowledged. The recorded without specialization become more enjoyable in presence of the philosophy and the modern literature. It distinguishes a little from the two and the abundant attainment.”

2.7. Friends of Najib Mahfouz:

In University life Mahfouz had many friends with whom he enjoyed all the moments. Among them some were very closer to him are- Abu Reeda,

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3 Abd al- Aziz, 56.
Tawfiq al- Tawil, Ali Isa, Abd al- Rahman Badwi, Muhammad Abd al- Hadi and so on. They were not only his friends but also very close companion to him. In the philosophy department he had four friends. Mahfouz memorizes one of his friends namely Abu Reeda in this way- “he was the first among us and had an utmost intelligent and character …. And whenever found Abu Reeda we turn to discuss the new and serious in the Islamic philosophy. And when we meet three altogether we lough and sometimes we speak about politics ……. Afternoon we depart from the philosophy in order to attend the lecture on Taha Husayn in the field of literature.”

Najib Mahfouz along with his four friends graduated in the same year i. e. 1934. They met each other in the lecture of Professor Karwas who taught the realization of philosophical text once in a week. They introduced each other in the house of Mustafa Abd al- Razak and Mahfouz says- “I have met Abd al- Rahman Bdwi in the house of Mustafa Abd al- Razak because he was one of the closer students to him. And I frequently used to visit Professor Mustafa and I met there Abd al- Rahman Badawi.”

To appreciate the talents of Najib Mahfouz and his friends, Hamdi Sakkut says in his book ‘Bibliographiyya Tajribiyya wa Siratu Hyat wa Madkhal Naqdi’ in this way- “we have seen Najib Mahfouz’s friends and his companions in the secondary stage of the school, who are brightened like the stars among the great philosophy teachers in Egypt and the Arab world till today. The friends of Najib Mahfouz’s were talented and he was fortunate that he chose the way of literature. The readers imagine that if at present there were not gifted like the gifted of Najib Mahfouz with us or if Mahfouz were born like the past sixth century and studied in the schools and Universities in these days what would have possible to happen? (Abd al- Aziz)
2.8. Literary Career:

Literary career of Najib Mahfouz started when he was reading in high school. He wrote so many essays on various topics like philosophy, literature and along with an occasional short story. In fact, as an elementary school student he tried to rewrite the short fiction of many writers, added a few details from his own life and put his own name on the cover, as if he were the author, and invented the name of publisher.¹

Najib Mahfouz had an internal conflict over the choice between philosophy and literature that makes him perplexed and finally he choose literature, specially the writing of fiction. There were many reasons behind his choosing at first to write on philosophical topics. He had concluded that philosophy was more important than literary genres like fiction because it had a definite and concrete objective, the quest for truth, while fiction was meant only to amuse and entertain. To him, writing fiction was for idealists and dreamers, not for practical men who strove not only to transform society but to make decent living, as well. He also realized that his country men were more inclined in politics than literature, including fiction. They held fiction writing in low esteem; some of them considered such activity a matter of shame, not pride. Mahfouz admits that when some of his early short stories appeared in periodicals like Al- Risala and Al- Riwaya, he denied his authorship in order to escape the ridicule of his friends.²

The second reason of Mahfouz’s conflict between philosophy and literature is, he says, that many of his early short stories were rejected, while his article on philosophical themes were accepted for publication. This convinced him that the reading public was more interested in serious subjects than fiction. The conflict between philosophy and literature continued to obsess him until he

finally reached a point where he had to choose between them. He decided in favour of fiction only after he saw his short stories being readily accepted for publication. Even so, he spent the years from 1930 to 1945 mostly in writing essays; his first short story anthology *Hams al-Junun* (The Whisper of Madness) appeared only in 1938.

The first philosophical article of Mahfouz *Ihtidar Mu‘taqadat wa Tawallud Mutaqadat* (The Death and Birth of Doctrines) appeared in Salma Musa’s periodical *Al-Majalla al-Jadida* in October, 1930. Through this article Mahfouz pointed out that life is subject to constant change and evolution, which man must accepts the inevitable result of civilization. Yet man is also by nature a believer who needs religious faith or an acceptable substitute to achieve tranquility and happiness. The early articles of Najib Mahfouz on philosophy reveal him as an intelligent young Muslim trying to reconcile various Western concepts with his traditional beliefs. Despite his respect of philosophy, he seems convinced that the modern age is dominated by science, technology and pragmatism.¹ Besides philosophy, religion and science Mahfouz wrote on psychology, music, literature and two of his articles on Arabic writers are especially significant. In one he calls Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad the soul of the Arab literary nahda (awakening), Taha Husayn its intellect, and Salma Musa its will.² In a 1945 article, however, he sharply disgraces with al-Aqqad whose little book *Fi Bayti* (At my House) praises poetry at the expense of fiction which he call inferior.³

The outstanding and the best known writer of Arabic fiction on an International level who occupied the same eminent palace like that of Mahmud Taymur in short stories and Tawfiq al-Hakim in drama. He wrote an impressive number of novels, short stories, dramas and philosophical literary essays, which

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³ Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad, *Fi Bayti*, 27.
got huge acceptance across the world and translated in many languages. Some of his novels and short stories prepared for cinema which turned as full length films. His works are as below -

**Novels:**

- **Khufu’s Wisdom** (translated by Raymond Stock, 2004) - عبيت الأقدار (1939)
- **Radubis of Nubia** (translated by Anthony Calder bank, 2005) - رادوبس (1943)
- **Thebes at War** (translated by Humphrey Davies, 2004) - كفاح طيبة (1944)
- **Khan Al-Khalili: A Novel** (translated from the Arabic by Roger Allen, 2011) - خان الخليلي (1945)
- **Modern Cairo** (translated by William M. Hutchins, 2008) - القاهرة الجديدة (1946)
- **Midaq Alley** (translated by Trevor le Gassick, 1975) - زقاق المدق (1947)
- **The Mirage: A Novel** (translated from the Arabic by Nancy Roberts, 2011) - السراب (1948)
- **The Beginning and the End** (translated by Ramses Hanna Awad, 1985) - بداية ونهاية (1950)
- **The Trilogy** (1956-57) - (Palace Walk, translated by W. Hutchins and Olive Kenny, 1989);
- **Palace of Desire** (translated by W. Hutchins, Lorne Kenny and Olive Kenny, 1991); - قصر الشوق (1957)
- **Sugar Street** (translated by W. Hutchins and Angele Botros Semaan, 1992) - السكرية (1957)
- **The Thief and the Dogs** (translated by Trevor Le Gassic and Mustafa Badawi, 1984) - اللص والكلاب (1961)
- **Autumn Quail** (trans. Roger Allen, 1985) - الصمان والخريف (1962)
• (1964) - The Search (translated by Muhammed Islam, 1987)
• (1965) - The Beggar (translated by Kristin Walker Henry and Nariman Khales Naili al Warrah, 1986)
• (1966) - Adrift on the Nile (translated by Frances Liardet, 1993)
• (1972) - Mirrors (translated by Roger Allen, 1977)
• (1973) - Love in the Rain (translated by Nancy Roberts, 2011)
• (1974) - Three Contemporary Egyptian Novels (translated with a critical introduction by Saad El-Gabalawy) / Karnak Cafe’ (translated by Roger Allen, 2008)
• (1975) - Heart of the Night (translated by Aida A. Bamia, 2011)
• 1975) - Fountain and Tomb (translated by Soad Sobhy, Essam Fattouh, and James Kenneson, 1988)
• (1975) - Respected Sir (translated by Rasheed el- Enany, 1986)
• (1977) - The Harafish (translated by Catherine Cobham, 1994)
• (1980) - Arabian Nights and Days (translated by Denys Johnson Davies, 1995)
• الباقى من الزمن ساعة (1982)
• رحلة ابن فطومة (1983)
• أمان العرش (1983)
• العادات في الحقيقة (1985)
• يوم مقتل الزعيم (1985)
• حديث الصباح والمساء (1987)
• The Journey of Ibn Fatouma (translated by Denys Johnson-Davies, 1992)
• Akhenaten, Dweller in Truth (translated from the Arabic by Tagreid Abu-Hassabo)
• The Day Leader Was Killed (translated by Malak Hashem, 1989)
• Morning and Evening Talk: A Novel (translated from the Arabic by Christina Phillips, 2009)
• The Coffeehouse (translated by Raymond Stock, 2010)

Collection of Short Stories:

• همس الجنون 1938 (Hams al-Junun)
• دنيا الله 1962 (Dunya Allah)
• بيت سيء السمعة 1965 (Bait Seeuo al-Sama’a)
• خماره القت الأسود 1969 (Khamarat al-Qitt al-Aswad)
• تحت المظلة 1969 (Tahta al-Mizilla)
• حكاية بلا بداية ولا نهاية 1971 (Hikayat bila Bida wa bila Nihaya)
• شهر العسل 1971 (Shahr al-A’sal)
• الحريمة 1973 (Al-Jareema)
• الحب فوق هضبة الهرم 1979 (Al-Hubb fawqa Hadbat al-Haram)
• الشيطان يعظ 1979 (Al-Shaitan Yaizu)
• واحد من الناس 1982 (Wahid min al-Nas)
• التنظيم السري 1984 (Al-Tanzeem al-Suri)
• صباح الورد 1987 (Sabah al-Ward)
• الفجر الكاذب 1988 (Al-Fajr al-Kazib)
• أصداء السيرة الذاتية 1995 (Asdau al-Seera al-Zatia)
• القرار الأخير 1996 (Al-Qarar al-Akeer)
• صدى النسيان (Sada al- Nisyan)
• فتاوى العلواف 2001 (Fatwat al- Atouf)
• أحلام فترة النفاهة 2004 (Ahlamu Fitrat al- Naqaha)

Many works of Najib Mahfouz widely filmed in cinema which are as below –

• عبث الأقدار (Converted to serial entitled Fate, starring Ezzat Alayli and Ahmad Salama)
• القاهرة الجديدة (Turned into a film entitled Cairo 30, starring Hamdi Ahmad and Suad Hasniou Ahmad Mazhar and Abdel Moneim Ibrahim)
• خان الخليلي (Turned into a film starring Emad Hamdi and Samira Ahmad Hassan Yousef and Abdul Waris A’sar)
• زقاق المدق (Converted into a film starring Sadiya, Salah qabeel, Hassan Yousuf, Yousuf Sha’abanu and Husayn Riad)
• السراب (Turned into a film starring Majida and Nour al-Sherif and Rushdi Abaza)
• بداية ونهاية (Turned into a film starring Omar Sharif and Farid Shawqi)
• بين القسرين (Turned into a film directed by Hasan Imam and starring Yahya Shaheen Amal Zayed and Abdel Moneim Ibrahim and Salah Qabeel)
  (Converted into a television serial starring Mahmoud Morsi, Salah al-Saadani)
• قصر الشوق (Turned into a film directed by Hasan Imam and starring Yahya Shaheen Amal Zayed and Abd al- Moneim Ibrahim and Nour al-Sherif)
  (Transformed into a serial starring Mahmoud Morsi and Salah Saadany)
• "السكرية" (Turned into a film directed by Hasan Imam and starring Yahya Shaheen and Noor Al-Sharifou Abd al-Moneim Ibrahim and Hoda Sultan)
• "القص والكلاب" (Converted into a film starring Shukri Sarhan and Shadia)
• "السمن والخريف" (Converted into a film starring Mahmoud Morsi and Nadia Lutfi)
• "الطريق" (Turned into a film starring Shadia and Rushdi Abaza and Suad Hosni)
• "ثورة فوق النيل" (Converted into a film starring Imad Hamdi and Adel Adham and Majida El Khatib)
• "المراكام" (Converted into a film starring Shadia Yousuf Shaaban and Imad Hamdi and Nadia El Jendy)
• "المرايا" (converted to Wim starring Nour El-Sherif and Najlaa Fathy)
• "حب تحت المطر" Love under the rain (1973) (turned into a film starring Nour El-Sherif)
• "الكرنك" (Converted into a film starring Suad Hosni, Nour El-Sherif Kamal Shenawi, Mohamed Sobhi and Farid Shawqi)
• "قلب الليل" (turned into a film starring Farid Shawky and Nour El-Sherif)
• "حضرة المحترم" (Transformed into a serial of starring Ashraf Abdul Baqi and Sawsan Badr)
• "المذنبون" (Turned into a film starring Hussein Fahmy, Emad Hamdy and Suhair Ramzy, Adel Adham, Youssef Shaaban and Waheed Saeef.
• "ملحمة الحرافيش" (Converted into a film entitled the Fig and the Bobbin directed by Niazi Mostafa and starring Ezzat Alallaylaosmer Sabri and Mahmoud Al Jundi)
(Transformer into a serial of starring Nour El-Sherif and Ma’ali Zayed)
• "عصر الحب" (Converted into a film starring Mahmoud Yassin and Suhair Ramzi and Tahiyyat Kariouka)
• (Turned into a film starring Nadia El Gendy, Mahmoudis, Ouhidesev and Mahmoud Abdul Aziz.

• (Converted into a television serial directed by Hany Lashin and starring Ali al- Hajjar, Fareed Shawkyuazat Alaily)

• حديث الصباح والمساء (Converted into a television serial starring Leila Alawi, Ahmad Khalil and Ahmad Maher)

2.9. Civil Service Life:-

Mahfouz not only devoted his life to literature but also served in various government departments par excellence. After completing graduation from Cairo University he served for a long period of time in various departments. As far as Mahfouz’s service life is concerned in 1934 he joined the administration of King Fuad I University as a clerk (there, for instance, he picked up the model for Ahmad ‘Akif, the eccentric hero of Khan al- Khalili). In 1938 he moved to Ministry of Religious Endowments, where he worked as parliamentary secretary to the minister for fifteenth years. According to some critics, his employment in this Ministry- which among other things was in charge of the mosques – was of importance to his early work because it put him in touch with many aspects of the life of the people. It was perhaps more important that Mahfouz knew about minor officialdom with its ambitions and frustrations: the minor official plays a major part in his realistic period.1 In 1945 he was transferred to al- Ghuri Library in Jamaliyya at his own request, thereby returning to work in his birth place, which was to remain a permanent spiritual refuge for him and a fathomless source of inspiration for his art. From there he moved on, still in the service of the ministry of endowments and still in Jamaliyya, to manage a good loan project apparently an interest free loan scheme for the destitute. The early 1950s brought Mahfouz’s connection with the endowments to an end and saw him move to the seemingly more appropriate sphere of information and culture.

1 Somekh, o.c., 47.
For the next twenty years or so of his civil service servant’s career he was to occupy fairly influential cultural posts: secretary to the Minister of National guidance (i.e. information); director of the film Censorship office; director general of the Film support organization; adviser to the General Organization for Film Industry, Broadcasting and Television; Chairman of the Board of directors of the same; and finally, adviser to the Ministry of Culture. After his retirement in 1971 he was also invited to join the host of distinguished “writers emeriti” where he continued to writing.

It is worthwhile to mention here that his imprint of genius and literary talents traces out in his novels. His entire novels can be divided into three categories which are: - Historical novel, Social realistic novel and Post realistic novel.

2.10. Historical Novels: -

Mahfouz’s preoccupation with the history of Ancient Egypt continued till 1931. He published a translation of an English text with title Ancient Egypt by James Baikie. The original book was published in London in 1912 as part of a series entitled “Peeps at many Lands” aimed apparently at young readers in English. It was a precise undertaken to improve Mahfouz’s English, but the choice must have been dictated by his growing interest in the history of Ancient Egypt, it was only a few years later expressed more extensively. This interest must also be placed within the context of a main intellectual current at the time which found in the face of foreign rule a sense of national and cultural pride in Ancient Egyptian history. Elementary as the translation book is, there is no doubt that it had an influence on Mahfouz’s early historical novels. On the other hand the translation with the title M\(\text{isr al- Qadima}\) appeared in the

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1 Rasheed el-Enanny, Najib Mahfouz, 35-36.
publication of *Al- Majalla al- Jadida* published by Salama Musa who encouraged Mahfouz at the beginning of his career.¹

It is a well-known fact that Mahfouz got encouragement from Salama Musa to write historical novels and published three historical novels. He called the first novel *Hikmat Khufu* (The wisdom of Cheops), but Musa renamed it *Abath al-Aqdar* (Ironies of Fate) and printed it as a separate issue of his magazine in September, 1939. His other two novels are – *Radubis* (1943) and *Kifah Tiba* (The Struggle of The Bes, 1944). In writing these novels, Mahfouz followed the tradition of Salim al-Bustani and Jurji Zaydan. He also possessed many ideas from the noted writers of the world like – Galsworthy, Anatole France, Stendhal, Proust, Malraux, Mann, Joyce and Lawrence, but more especially from Walter Scott who inspired him to write the historical series

2.1.0.1. *Abath al- Aqdar* (The Game of Fates):-

It is set during the reign of Khufu (Cheops), builder of the great Pyramid and second Pharaonic king of the fourth dynasty in the time of the Old Pharaonic kingdom.² The action begins when one day Khufu asks a soothsayer how long his posterity was to reign over Egypt. The soothsayer answers 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 boy just born to a priest of the god Ra’ immediately, the king sets out at the head of the military campaign to protect his throne against the young would be usurper. He killed the wrong baby and unwittingly saved the right one from further danger. Eventually, the young man whom Khufu 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 deathbed the identity of his saviour, appointed him

¹ Rasheed el- Enanny, *Najib Mahfouz*, 35.
successor to the throne. Mahfouz has taken his entire plot from chapter seven of the book which gives an account of some ancient Egyptian legends.¹

2.10.2. Radubis (Radubis):-

It appeared in 1944. It is set during the short reign of Mirinra (Merenre) toward the end of the 6th dynasty of the Old Pharonic kingdom.² The young Pharaoh of the novel is engaged in a power conflict with the clergy over their enormous land possessions. Meanwhile, accident or fate brings the king in contact with Radubis, a beautiful courtesan to whose luxurious house flocks the cream of the society. On the day of Nile festival she saw the new Pharaoh and was fascinated by him. It is love at first sight- love which takes possession of the king to the detriment of the affairs of the state and the feelings and pride of the queen, his sister and wife. More tragically, the affair gives the clergy moral weapon to use against their opponent, who was finally killed in a popular uprising which he bravely faced without protection. True to romantic form, Radubis committed suicide with poison. In Radubis’s fate acts by proxy using circumstantial elements such as the conflict between king and clergy and the king’s weaknesses before his passion to accelerate the inevitable end.³

2.10.3. Kifah Tiba (The Struggle of Thebes):-

It appeared in 1944. The action takes place in the period when Hyksus ruled Egypt. It deals with the struggle of the Egyptians against the foreign rule of Hyksus, the invaders from Asia, who ruled lower Egypt for around a hundred years in the 16th century B. C. His action of the novel spans some twelve years and the reign of three Pharaohs until Egypt was finally and fully liberated under

¹ Rasheed el- Enannya, Najib Mahfouz, 36.
² Alan Gardiner, Egypt of the Pharaohs, 102.
³ Rasheed el- Enannya, Najib Mahfouz, 37- 38.
the leadership of king Ahmus (Amose), later known in history as the founder of the 18th dynasty.¹

The heroic, nationalistic line of the plot is further complicated by a love story between the victorious king Ahmus and captive daughter of the vanquished Hyksus king Abufis, a love which he will have to renounce in favour of duty. The novel was written at time when Egypt was under the combined foreign rule, the British on the one hand and an aristocracy of Turkish stock on the other. Throughout the novel contrasts the brown skinned Egyptian peasants (fallhun) with the white skinned Hyksus shepherds. The old Hyksus held the Egyptian peasants in contempt just as their modern Turkish counterparts did. Egyptians in the novel are equally scornful of the Hyksus who are portrayed as coarse sphered coming from the north Asian desert. In modern terms this corresponds to the nomadic origin of the Ottoman Turks. In the novel aging the Hyksus are consistently described as arrogant and quick tempered tyrants without mind, epithets which correspond neatly to the modern Egyptians popular image of the Turk.² All of which leaves us with no doubt that Mahfouz had in mind the contemporary scene as he was writing this novel history offered both parallel and hope. *Kifah Tiba* did not only herald the beginning of Najib Mahfouz’s involvement in the political reality of modern Egypt but also in the social and economic structures dictated by it. Mahfouz was also intending to write four more such books, embracing the whole history of Pharonic Egypt. But he abandoned the idea.

2.11. Social Realistic Novel:

After completing the first three novels, Mahfouz abandoned his original plan to write one historical novel in a year. And he concentrated to write on realistic novels, aiming to focus on contemporary life in his native Cairo and

¹ Rasheed el- Enanny, *Najib Mahfouz*, 38.
between 1945 and 1951 he published five novels dealing with social themes which are as below:

1. *Khan al-Khalili* (1945)
2. *Al-Qahira al-Jadida* (New Cairo 1946),
4. *Bidaya wa Nihaya* (The Beginning and the End, 1949)
5. *Al-Thulathiya* (The Trilogy, 1956-1957)

2.11.1. *Khan al-Khalili:*

In 1945 Najib Mahfouz published a popular novel *Khan al-Khalili* keeping the interest on contemporary social reality in lieu of ancient Egyptian history. It was the first of a series of novels which deals the best traditions of realism and naturalism, with contemporary Egyptian society before the 1952 armed revolution led by Naser. Through this novel Mahfouz describes the highly sensitive to the tragic potential like the conflict between individual and society and tries to explore the fact from different angles. The writing of this novel spans one year from the life of a Cairene family during the Second World War (1939-19450 from September 1941 to August 1942 following the height of German air-raid on Cairo. The family decides to escape from the modern quarter of al-Sakkini where they have lived for a long time to the old religious quarter of *Khan al-Khalili* in the neighbourhood of the shrine of al-Husayn, grandson of prophet Muhammad (S). They believe that al-Husayn will protect the area and the Germans should know better than unnecessarily invoke the wrath of Muslims by booming their holy places. The symbolic aspect of the family’s flight can hardly be missed, it is a flight from the dangers of the new to the safety of the old, and on which the course of events will prove to have been futile. The last few chapters of the novel present a distressing picture of
bereaved family, whose only hope and light has suddenly extinguished. Then they decided to leave Khan al-Khalili as quickly as possible.¹

His novel Khan al-Khalili, 1945 began a series of eight novels in which he emerged as the master par excellence of the Egyptian realistic novel, the chronicler of 20th century Egypt, and it’s most vocal social and political conscience. With titles taken from the names of streets of old Cairo the novels offer a Pharonoic vista of the Egyptian lower and lower middle classes, with the minute details of their daily lives vividly and lovingly portrayed. Unlike Lawrence Durrel’s Alexandria, Mahfouz’s Cairo has more romantic imaginative validity. It is a recognizable physical presence. Its powerful impact upon the lives of characters is as memorable as that of Dickens’s London, Dostoevsky’s St Petersburg or Emile Zola Paris.²

2.11.2. Al-Qahira al-Jadida (New Cairo): -

It was written during 1938-39 but appeared in 1946. It presents a sketch of Egyptian life in the 30s with an emphasis on its poverty and corruption. It is the Cairo of the middle classes which grew up in the shadow of British occupation and reflects the contradictions in the social and economic order of the city and more so within the individual characters.³

The story opens on an optimistic note Mahjub the son of a poor village employee is able to enter the university for further studies students with different backgrounds like Mahmud Ridwan of the Brotherhood and Ali Taha of the socialist party can discuss their political and social ideas openly indicating a spirit of tolerance.

¹ Rasheed el-Emnny, Najib Mahfouz, 47-51.
³ Ghali Shukri, Al-Muntami Dirasa fi Adab Najib Mahfouz, 95.
In *Al-Qahira al-Jadida*, the muscular paralysis of Mahjub's father complicates his financial situation. Mahjub thinks that he can bend fate. The irony of fate which he thinks he is bending makes him become its victim. Such an irony is that of high realism. Mahjub despairs, "O canals of the countryside, distribute your favour among your children with justice."

On graduation, Mahjub's friends all get settled or go abroad for higher studies. Only he remains unemployed. A friend tells him frankly-

"Forget your qualifications. Do you have a recommendation? Are you related to someone in power? Can you marry the daughter of a government official?"

In a show for the blind, Mahjub meets Ikshidi, an old friend who has settled down to a life of ease after deserting the cause of his student days. He sees him with the upper crust, who are displayed speaking French and thinks that this glamour and glitter make life worth living and that money is the key to everything. He sees his rich cousin Jahiyya and is spurred by a mad desire to overpower her. They make a date at the pyramids but Mahjub fails to seduce her. "Forty centuries regard my tragedy from the top of the pyramids" he concludes sadly as if he is speaking for the whole of Egypt.

Mahjub's search for a job continues. Ikshidi shows Mahjub the way the wealth by dubious means. He can get him a sixth class position if he marries the mistress of his boss to be.

As regards to wedding on Mahjub philosophies-

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The bride turns out to be nove other than Ishan, the girl Ali Taha, Muhijub’s friend used to love and who mysteriously had later appeared from his life. She too had loved him deeply, who had gambled her honour away.

The story reaches a dramatic end when the boss wife, at the instance of al-Ikshidi, who is jealous of Mahjub’s quick promotions, enters Mahjub’s flat to find her husband with his mistress. Simultaneously Mahjub’s parents arrive on the scene, and the scandal becomes public. The government servant resigns and Mahjub is taken away to the country side far from the entanglements of “New Cairo”.

Najib Mahfouz delineates his characters skill fully, especially Mahjub whose changing lifestyle is drawn in detail form his college days and life at the student hostel, to the one room tenement he takes up when he is out of funds and he courts every qirash to the post apartment when he lives after his marriage.

Thus the novel al-Qahira al-Jadida presents the life of Egyptian society in 1930’s with stress on poverty and bribery and portrays middle class in Cairo with its social and economic denials in the shadow of British occupation.

2.11.3. Zuqaq al-Midaq (Midaq Alley, 1947): -

The most popular novel set in the core of Cairo, in the quarter of Khan al-Khalili. It describes in miniature the lifestyles of the urban lower classes during World War I

Mahfouz’s brilliant descriptions of the life of the Alley dwellers can be seen in his opening lines.

“A whispering here, a muttering there. Oh God, my help. O provider, O Generous one. A quite death, O God. All is in His Hands, Good evening all. Come on, it is time for entertainment. Getup, uncle Kamil, and close
the shop. Change the water of the hookah, Sanquri put the over out, Ja’dal!"\(^40\)

Mahfouz’s novel *Zuqaq al-Midaq* established a new yardstick for social realistic fiction in Arabic. In tune with the general chain of events in Najib’s stories life ends sadly for most of the Alley dwellers. Abbas the barber joins the army to make enough money to marry Hamidah, but finds on his return that she has become a prostitute. He attacks her in rage and is in turn over powered and killed by the soldiers she has been entertaining. The son of the coffee shop owner Husayn Kirsha indulges in the black market trade and lives in luxury with a fashionable girl but has to return to his father’s fold as the war ends. His frustration makes him ever ready to burn the whole place.

“What hopeless wretches we are! Our country is pitiful and so are the people. Why is it that the only time we can find a little happiness is when the world is involved in a bloody war? Surely it’s only the devil who was pity on us in this world!”\(^1\)

It is a world in miniature that Najib Mahfouz creates with his characters assuming a life of their own, much like those of Dickens. One such character is the dentist Bushi.

“He was perhaps, the first doctor to receive his doctorate, from his patients.”\(^2\)

Mahfouz introduces some dramatic touches such as the arrest of Sayta and doctor Bushi while they are robbing a grave, and the arrival of Husayn with his wife and brother-in-law. But in contrast to the main plot these incidents. Do not bring any lasting change in the lives of any of the Alley’s inhabitants.\(^3\)

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\(^1\) Najib Mahfouz, *Zuqaq al-Midaq*, 267.
The search of moral values in a changing society which is at the heart of Mahfouz’s preoccupation in the period is illustrated in the careers of the alley’s younger generation, Husayn and Abbas as well as Hamidah when they come into contract with the outside world. Hence Mahfouz shows a preoccupation with sex which is well illustrated in Zuqaq al-Midaq. Granted this, the novel offers a wide range of contrasted characters and some subtle psychological analysis. There is nice sense of the tension between words and the intentions behind them in some of the dialogues of the less aggressive characters.

2.11.4. Bidayah wa-Nihaya (The Beginning and the End): -

The last of the Cairene realist novels has a family at its centre. There is far less interest in grotesque human types here, and although ambition and sex are driving forces of two of the main characters, a third represent a more mature approach, the capacity to make sacrifices and to turn to good account the limited possibilities for satisfaction and happiness which are offered him.

Al-Sarab (The Mirage): -

Al-Sarab is another novel of Najib Mahfouz. Although it was written after Bidayah wa-Nihaya, yet it was published earlier, around 1949, stands out for several reasons.

It illustrates about the crucial point where maternal instinets, motherly love and mother-fixation interest. It is a psychological novel but, as many times before and afterwards issues of fate, desting and free will are raised but not answered. There is shame, but there is not guilt.

A mother, who cannot let her son go after her husband, brings up the protagonist. He is the apple of her eye, and there is no lack of love during the years when he is growing up. He is unhappy and miserable at school and at the University however, he gets an insignificant government post. He marries, but
cannot establish a good relation with his wife, who is unfaithful; she has a love affair, and dies after an abortion. When he finally dares to revolt against his mother and reproaches her, arguing with her for the first time, she dies of a heart attack.

2.11.5. **Al-Thulathiya** (The Trilogy, 1956-57): -

The realistic masterpiece that brought the author universal fame and the Nobel Prize, which was published between 1956 and 1957, in separate volumes taking their titles from street name in Old Cairo where some of the characters lived: *Bain al-Qasrain, Qasr al-Shawq, and al-Sukkariyya*. It traces the fortunes of a middle-class cairene family over three generation beginning in 1919 revolution and ending in 1944, during the world war -II. There the family of Ahmad Abd al-Jawad, a merchant, lives in an atmosphere steeped in tradition. The father Abd al-Jawad is a strict disciplinarian who brooks no nonsense at home. Outside it, and undetected by the family he is a libertine who drinks and sings with his trader friends every evening and visits his mistress who is a singing girl. The women of the house know very little of the outside world and hardly ever go out.

*Bain al-Qasrain* starts with the family obeying the father blindly and ends with the open rebellion of Fahmi the second son, who joins the revolution against his father’s wish.

All the family members revolt against the authority of Abd al-Jawad in different ways. Ayesha, the second daughter, exchanges glances with a police officer but with a feeling of guilt. Yasin, who has inherited his father’s, just, seeks his own pleasures transgressing the rules laid down for him and in the course of his adventures; he comes upon his father’s clandestine activities. When the initial shock is over, Yasin is over-joyed. “Congratulations Father:
Today I have discovered you." He tells himself today is my new date of birth."¹

The father is too happy in a sense that Yasin is his own image.

Abd al-Jawad himself cannot remain unaffected by an emotional attachment to the revolution, but does not nothing practical and flies from it when it affects the tenor of his home life. The story ends as Fahmi is killed while taking part in peaceful demonstration.

Fahmi’s death stands in sharp contrast to the death of other heroes and heroines in Mahfouz’s novels. Their deaths are a confusion of defeat and despair, while Fashmi’s death is really a victory in defeat.

It can be added that the comprehensive portrayal of life in Bain al-Qasrain, with its extravagancies its changes of tone and its richness, belongs to a medieval tradition of literature which yields in the later to a modern, concentrated but also fragmented and reductive approach.

The second part of The Trilogy, Qasr al-Shawq, translated into English with the title Palace of Desire, covers the period from 1924 to Sa’d Zaghlul’s death in August, 1927. In it Mahfouz depicts the deterioration of the national movement into petty squabbling between the politicians and the palace, and shows the class of traditional values and concepts with those imported from the west, especially as it affects Kamal. It opens on a quiet tone Fahmis death has been a severe blow to the parents. Abd al-Jawad abstains from his pleasures and permits his wife little outings. The limelight is now no longer on him but on his youngest son, Kamal, who symbolizes the intellectual teens of his generations. He is torn between conforming and not conforming between bachelorhood and marriage, ideals and realities and is forever perplexed al-ha’ir.²

¹ Najib Mahfouz, Bain al-Qasrain, 260.
² Ghali Shukri, Al-Muntami, 63.
The final volume of *The Trilogy, al-Sukkariyya* (Sugar Street), covers the period from January 1935 to the summer of 1944. In it Mahfouz looks closely at political upheavals, the conflict between western ideologies and traditional Muslim beliefs, and the cultural and social changes without by modern civilization and world war-II. It is named after the street where the eldest daughter of Abd al-Jawad lives with her family, and is not so-much a historical stage in the family’s development as a continuing examination of Kamal’s split personality. His nephew, Ahmad Shaukat, prefers the intellectual solution of the political problems which perplexes the older generation by joining the communists. The other nephew becomes a member of the Muslim brotherhood. The story ends as both the brothers are arrested simultaneous and sent off to concentration camps.

It is detailed characterization, the recording of description the fine sense of humour the pervades the dialogues and above all the accurate account of social and political events as seen through the eyes of the family that makes *The Trilogy* a landmark in the history of Arabic novel. Taha Husayn wrote about Mahfouz when *Bain al- Qasrain* was published.

.....because he enabled the novel to attain a perfection and beauty, profundity and precision and almost magical impact with which no Egyptian writer before him had invested it. I do not doubt that this novel sustains comparison with any of the international novels, in any language of the world.¹

2.12. Post Realistic Novel: -

Najib Mahfouz’s post realistic novel starts with *Awladu Haratina* ("literally, “Children of Our Quarter”, 1959; translated as (Children of Gebelawi), to comment specifically on the Egyptian situation, within the more general context of the human condition. The Children of Gebelawi is one of the few allegorical novels in Arabic. The events, true enough, still take place in

Cairo, but unlike the earlier novels, which are set in a particular place and at a particular juncture in modern Egyptian history, the Children of Gebelawi evokes the General atmosphere of old Cairo, in an almost timeless period, although it is clearly before the late 19th century. It is divided into five chapters, each named for its central figure, and the book follows a loose chronological sequence. The first chapter retells the thinly disguised story of Adam and Eve; the next three parallel the lives of Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad; and the last, most important chapter introduces Arafa, who symbolizes modern science. The chapter dwells in the hara (alley) of history, which is dominated by the nearby house of the powerful, enigmatic Gebelawi; they experience history as an endless cycle of hope and despair, escaping tyranny only briefly. Mahfouz is interested here not in religious questions, but in social and political issue and the role science plays in setting them. Structurally, it is an interesting work and significantly, the novel is divided into 114 chapters, the same number as that of the chapters or Suras of the Qur'an. This cannot be dismissed as mere coincidence. Mahfouz here is giving modern man’s view of the stories of prophecy narrated by the Qur’an.

There is same ambivalence throughout the work concerning the nature of Gebelawi, the idea or concept of God which exists in the minds of men, and whose name is repeated endlessly for generation not always with love and respect. The people curse him for his lack of compassion, his distance, and his failure to spare them suffering. There is apparently a direct correlation between men’s faith and the worldly favours they reclive from him, and the division of his "estate" is always on their minds. The third chapter is confusingly disjointed and lacking in historical accuracy if one demands that the “Characters” of the work follow the known events of history, or the myths created of such events over the millennia’s. It portrays Rifaa (Jesus) as a true prophet, concerned solely with the realm of the spirit, but presents Gebelawi not as a concrete, transcendent God, but as one fashioned over time in man’s image. The strongest
chapter, in terms of chapter development and motivation, is the fourth, in which Qasim (Muhammad) implies that without force, those who hope to be reformers, religious or otherwise, cannot succeed. It may be his despair at ever finding solutions to society’s ills that leads him to detail such gory events. In the final chapter, the hара has again succumbed to misery and haired, though its residents still hope to be delivered from their wretched state.

Arafa and his dwarf brother Hanash are isolated and scorned, symbolizing Islamic society’s low regard for science and technology. Mahfouz introduces a woman, Awatif, who attempts to soften Arafa, i.e., to mitigate the power of science by wedding it to human feelings. Arafa sees himself as having a sort of messianic mission, though he is concerned with worldly, material aims. He does not deny neither God’s existence nor, better, the concept of God—or seek to supplant him, but he does insist that his magic, like God’s, is all powerful. Believing he must follow in the footsteps of Gebel, Rifaa, and Qasim, he sees out to see, hear and identify Gebelawi. Tunneling under the mansion well, he steals into an ancient, darkened house and intentionally kills a frail old servant. Soon afterwards, the unintentionally kill a frail old servant. Soon afterwards, the hара buzzes with the news that Gebelawi is dead, from shock and grief at the loss of his faithful servant. Believing he has indeed killed Gebelawi, Arafa undertakes to give the people something to fill and void. Later, the trustee of Gebelawis estate successfully pressures Arafa for his magic bottles, i.e., modern weapons, and uses them to dispose of his enemies and subdue the people. Corrupted by hashish and compromised by the trustee, the confused, guilt ridden Arafa becomes estranged from Awatif, and eventually the trustee kills them both. Yet the rumour spreads through the hара that Hanash, having escaped with Arafa’s magic look, will finish his work and avenge his death.

Symbolically, science does not kill God, but kills men’s image of God, which is distorted by their constant focus rewards, and
perpetuated by God's so called representatives (priests), science does not, cannot replace religion, but it may dispel the superstitious darkness that has always surrounded the hara, science has not quarrel with Gebelawi; its enemy is irrational thought and behaviour. But presently forced to serve the narrow political interests of the few, science weakens permanently any faith in a higher, nonmaterial spirit or power.

The work reflects Mahfouz's doubt that any society can maintain justice for long. Religious figures come and go, but the people remain powerless and miserable. Science represents the last great hope of mankind, but whether if can overcome human tyranny is unclear. Mahfouz seems to think that religion, if freed from fanaticism, parochialism, and superstition, could lead men's to use science for the good of all.

When Awladu Haratina was serialized in the Cairo newspaper Al-Ahram 1959, leaders of the Islamic University Al-Azhar, the custodian of faith and morals, called for the banishment of the 'heretical' book, and crowds of people marched on the streets to the big Al-Ahram building shouting their protests against the blasphemous book by Najib Mahfouz. The ban was never officially sanctioned, the serialization did not stop, but the novel was only published abroad in book form. In her well informed dissertation The Limits of freedom of speech; prose literature and prose writers in Egypt under Naseer and Sadal Stockholm University, 1993), Marina stagh showed the secret forces at work behind this public drama, and the final agreement reached between the author and the government in this affair. Today, there is no official ban on this book and in fact, there never has been.

However the publication of Salman Rushdie's The Satanic Verses in 1988, famous as well as infamous for its international consequences, raised the almost thirty year old question of Mahfouz's blasphemy and his alleged
undermining of the dignity of the prophets. Suddenly Najib Mahfouz found himself paired with a foreign author with whom he had nothing in common. Himself a pious Muslim believer, an author of international reputation and learning and an earnest moralist, he felt obliged officially to defend Rushdie and the freedom of speech as a holy right of humanity. This made some of Rushdie’s enemies compare, *The Satanic verses* to the *children of Gebelawi*, concluding that a similar fatwa should have been pronounced on Mahfouz too.¹

Najib Mahfouz then summarized his moderate and very measured standpoint in this way:

"I have condemned Khomeini’s fatwa to kill Salman Rushdie as a breach of international relations and as an assault on Islam as we know it in the era of apostasy. I believe that the wrong done by Khomeini towards Islam and the Muslims is no less than that done by the author himself. As regards freedom of expression, I have said that it must be considered sacred and that thought can only be corrected by winter thought. During the debate, I supported the boycott of the book as a means of maintaining social peace, granted that such decision would not be used as a pretext to constrain thought."²

This did not finally settle the matter, however, nor could the stigma and the suspicion ever be effaced. The Egyptian Government offered him protection, but the author always refused, keeping to the simple routines of his private life in Cairo. One day in October 1994, however, on one of his regular visits to the Qasr Nil café, an attempt was made on his life by a follower of al-Jihad, the same religious group that assassinated Sadat. He was stabbed in his neck with a knife and was seriously injured, but survived.

The highly political novel emphasizes the importance of freedom and terrible consequences of its absence from society as a whole. They can be seen as documents of the disappointment of Mahfouz’s generation in Nasser’s regime

¹ [http://nobelprize.org/]
and their attempt to undermine his growing popularity. They are documents of
defiance and glorification of the spirit of rebellion (Al-Liss wa’l-Kilab, 1961; The
thief and the Dogs, 1984). They lament the blindness and cruelty of change
and sympathize with its victims (Al-Samman wa’l Kharif, 1962; Autumn Quail,
1985). The impossible quest for meaning and search for a way out of the
impasse pervades the majority of these novels, and reaches its acme in (AI-
Tariq, “The Road” 1964) and (Al-Shahhaz, 1965: The Beggar, 1986), Mahfouz
repartees al-Nil, 1966: Adrift on the Nile, 1993), turns the novel into powerful
critical commentaries on corruption and tyranny.

Al Liss wa’t-Kilab (The Thief and the Dog) marked the beginning of a new
phase of shorter novels, generally concentrating on one protagonist, more
dramatic in nature, more lyrical in style, more symbolical in mode, employing
interior monologue and some of the stream of consciousness techniques, dreams
and flash back, as well as other modernistic devices in keeping with the nature
of their subject.¹

The Thief and The Dogs, is a study in depth of the mind of its protagonist,
Sa’id Mahran. On one level it can be viewed as a psychological study, a portrait
of a revolutionary nihilist, or a disenchanted revolutionary idealist; nearly all the
events are presented to us as seen through his eyes. The boy said growing in
extreme poverty. His parents are the care takers of a Cairo students hostel, in
which he falls under the influence of the dynamic character of Rauf Ilwan, a
student with revolutionary ideals, who implants in his mind the spirit and
principles of revolutionary action, trains him, together with others, military
encourages him to read revolutionary literature and, when he learns that the
youth has robbed the rich, provides him with the necessary intellectual and
moral justification. Sa’id falls in love with and marries a servant girl from the
neighbourhood and has a child by her, called Sana soon afterwards he is caught

¹ M. M. Badawi, A Short History of Modern Arabic Literature, 144.
by the police and jailed for four years, in the course of which Nasser’s revolution is successfully staged. On the anniversary of the revolution, as a result of an amnesty, he is freed from jail. The book opens with emerging from the prison gates an angry man possessed by a desire for revenge, for a while he is in jail his wife divorces him and marries his assistant ‘Ilīsh, whom he suspects of having seduced her and informed on him to the police.

Sa’īd’s first thoughts turn to his daughter whose vague image in his mind grew ever lovelier and more adorable during his absence in prison. So he goes to the house where she has been living with her mother and self-father. After a painful scene in which his daughter naturally enough turns away in fear from her real father, whom she hardly knows, said threatens to apply to the Law court for the custody of the child. The following day he goes to see his old mentor Raiuf Ilwan, but to his harrow he discovers that, instead of the revolutionary journalist who write fiery and idealistic articles attacking the political system in a progressive newspaper of slender means, his friend has now become a rich and successful corpulent man, who occupies the plush office of sub-editor in a leading newspaper, and works as a columnist specializing in writing on trivial matters such as women’s fashions. He now lives in great luxury in an imposing house in the very street said used to frequent as a burglar before his prison sentence. During an uncomfortable meeting, Rauf makes it clear that he now has no time for said, and he concludes the meeting by giving him a little money to tide him over until he finds himself an honest job. Enraged at what he regards as the ultimate in treachery in his old mentor, who has betrayed all the values he taught and become a bourgeois opportunist under the new revolutionary regime, said resolves to avenge himself on him, posing as the champion of the exploited masses. He goes to burgle his house at night, but is caught by Ra’uf, who has been expending his raid, and who thoroughly humiliates him and orders him to pay back the money he has given him. Still resolved to punish his ex-assistant
and his unfaithful wife, said manages to procure a gun, goes to Ilish’s house, and fires a shot at a person he is convinced in Ilish, but it turns out that, anticipating trouble, Ilish had already moved out with his family the previous day and that the person killed is a new tenant, a totally innocent man. Now the police are after said the murderer, against whom Rauf’s newspaper vigorously whips up public opinion. Sa’id subsequently tries to shoot Ra’uf, but again he bungles the affair and kills his door-keeper instead. Sa’id is given a temporary home and some comfort by an ex-flame, a prostitute, who soon disappears my seriously and said is left a hungry captive in her flat overlooking the cemetery. He is finally caught and shot by the police who, with their dogs, chase him in the cemetery where he has been hiding. Thus, the novel ends in a volley of gun fire and Sa’id is not dead in a graveyard by the police.

In *Al-Samman wa’l-Kharif*, 1962. (Autumn-Quil. 1985) explores the mind of Isa, a prominent member of the wafd party, a somewhat unscrupulous, high-flying bureaucrat under the ancient regime, whose career as well as personal life is dashed by the outbreak of Nasser’s revolution and the subsequent dissolution of the wafd party. It is a study in alienation, even though the protagonist, an utterly selfish man who cruelly, abandons his pregnant mistress, shows at the end signs of beginning to come to terms with the revolution.

In *The search* Sabir, a play boy whose mother, a prmer prostitute, reveals to him on her deathbed that he is the son of a wealthy aristocrat whom he should seek for finance support, sets out on a search for his father, whose mysterious where about no one knows for certain. He never finds his father, but in the course of his search he gets involved with two women and ends up by committing double murder for which he receives a death sentence, but which he hopes be commuted to life imprisonment. The story full of spiritual significances, paradoxes, and tragic irony, treats amongst other themes the problem of religious belief.
In *The Beggar ‘Umar*, a successful and happily married middle-aged lawyer with two loving daughters, finds himself bored with work and suddenly unable to enjoy life, having lost his religious faith which gave a meaning to his life. He tries in vain to find consideration in sex, then in mysticism, gives up his work, runs away from his family, and lives like a drop out and a recluse, lost in his wild visions. The novel describes an existentialist experience relating to loss of the meaning of life.

*Tharthra Fawq al-Nil* (translated as *Adrift on the Nile*) set in 1964, it depicts a group of intellectuals who meet in boat, rented by Anis Aki, a middle-aged minor civil servant, who, not having recovered from the loss of his wife and baby, is almost permanently drugged and escapes from harsh reality, a boring job, and the pressures of modern life by thinking about periods of past history, has his inspired reflections on the mysteries of an absurd world. They are joined by a young woman journalist in search of material for a play. Unlike the others who are either cynical, morally corrupt, or escapist, she is an idealist; yet when they are faced with a moral dilemma regarding the need to report an accident in which their car has been involved, resulting in the death of a pedestrian, they all fail the test, except Anis Zaki. The novel full of moral ambiguities emphasizing the absurdity of life is at the same time an eroticism of Egyptian society, particularly its cynicism and moral disintegration, lack of commitment, and fatal apathy, the result of lack of political power and suppression of freedoms.

Egypt defeat in the 1967 war, realizing the prophecy of doom enshrined in *Miramar* (*The name of a pension; 1967)* the last novel of this period came as a shock nonetheless and led to another period of silence in Mahfouz’s career. It explores through a handful of characters the predominating political friends in contemporary Egypt.

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Miramar (1967), one of his warmest novels, brings together people of diverse backgrounds in an Alexandria boarding house run of Mariana, a sixties woman of Greek origin (and widow of a British consul) whose beauty and fortunes have faded. Amir Wajdi, an octogenarian journalist, who like her, recalls the nationalist revolt of 1919, narrates the first and last of its five chapters. Each of the three middle chapters presents the same series of events, as related by representatives of the younger generation; The wealthy Husni Allam, who seeks sensual pleasure as an outlet for his dislike of the ongoing of Naseer revolution; Mansour Bahy, who quietly acquiesces in the changes in post revolution Egypt; and Sirhan al-Buhayri, an opportunist whose effort to profit from the changing economy ultimately costs him his life. The only hopeful character in the novel is Zahra, a young peasant girl newly arrived from the country side, who represents the growing independence and desire for individual freedom of the masses.

Al-Tariq, (The way; 1964) The record of a play boy search for his mysterious and wealthy father and his losing his way between two women uses a universal motif and endless it with emotional, social and mystical significance; in this last respect the novel treats one of Mahfouz’s abiding preoccupations, the problem of belief.¹

With the advent to power of Sadat in 1970, retrospection became a preoccupation for many intellectuals Mahfouz’s contribution is fictional form was ‘al-Maraya’ (1952), a montage of vignettes about a series of Egyptian characters arranged in alphabetical order.²

His next novel, Al-Hubb Taht al-Matar (“Love in the Rain”, 1973) was solely concerned with the impact of this tragic event on the Egyptian psyche. Al-Karnak (Karnak, 1971), written immediately after the death of Nasser, was a

¹ M. M. Badawi, Modern Arabic Literature, 255
harsh and strongly critical illustration of the police state and its responsibility for the destruction of the spirit of the younger generation and their will to Right for their own country.

The 1970 and 1980 witnessed a marked increase in Mahfouz’s Productivity. He wrote more than 20 novels and eight collections of short stories. Although many of these novels were quickly written and loosely structured and some of them are closer to film treatments that fully developed novels, Mahfouz justifies this by his strong urge to illustrate the various aspects of a rapidly shifting reality. Among these humorous works, three novels stand as some of the best examples of the modern Arabic novel. *Malhamat al-Harafish* (1977; The Harafish; 1993) is a remarkable achievement that rivals *The Trilogy* in its richness and complexity. *Layali alf Layla* (1982; Arabian Nights and Days 1995), is an ambitious attempt to inscribe the modern preoccupations of the Arab world into the fantastic world of the Arabian Nights. Mahfouz posits the modern novel as rival to the great classic of Arabic narrative, and succeeds in reproducing the magic world of the old classic but with completely content.

His novel *Al-Baqi win al-Zaman Sa’ah* (just one hour left, 1982) and *Yaum qutila al-Zaim* (The day the leader was killed, 1985) both novels show a society of glaring contrasts, one in which basic amenities such as housing remain a dream and there is little mobility.¹

In *Layali Alf Layla* (1982, Arabian Nights and Days), established both the new metaphoric rules of reference and the intersexual dialogue with archetypal narrative geneses and liberate the novel from its dependence on specific reality and time. *Layali Alf Layla* with its bold attempt to transform the archetypal narrative of the Arabian nights, positioning the modern novel as rival to the

¹ Roger Allen, *The Arabic Literary Heritage*, 308.
great classic of Arabic narrative, and succeeding in reproducing the magical world of the old classic but with completely modern content.

But *Hadith Al-Sabah wal-Masa* (Talk of Morning and Evening, 1967) with its fine intersexuality with classical Arabic biographical dictionaries stands out as the most significant Arabic novel of the 1980’s. In this novel Mahfouz proved to be in the forefront of narrative innovation in his portrayal of the fragmentation of Egyptian society under the successive failures of the process of modernization. This novel is vast undertaking in the historical scope encompassing a period of two centuries of Egypt’s history. It starts before Napoleon’s expedition to Egypt in 1798 and continuous until the 1980’s and the aftermath of Sadat’s unfaith economy policy. One of the major achievement of this novel is its success in finding fragmentary novelistic structure capable of portraying the disintegration of the old coherent system of values human relationships, either and a strong sense of national identity.

And with the age has come also a certain nostalgic tone., both *Qushtumor* (the name of a café, 1989) and *Asda al-Sirah al-dhtiyyah* (Echoes of an Autobiography, 1997) the latter a remarkable evocation of classical sufi writings take the reader back to earlier days in the narrator’s life, days of hopes loves and of struggles both psychological and intellectual.\(^1\)

Mahfouz last work, *Ahlam Fatrat al-Naqaha* (Dream of Convalescence, 2005) is considered by many to be the epic of the urban middle class, and being a born and bred middle class Cairene, Mahfouz was able to provide the genre with its needed urban dimension.

From the above discussion it is found that, the world of Najib Mahfouz is a vast and extremely rich one extending from chronic times down to the present day. Mahfouz spans the various changes in the reality, dreams and aspirations of

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\(^1\) Roger Allen, *The Arabic Literary Heritage*, 308.
his nation and provides an elaborate record of its attempts to come to terms with
the process of modernity. Although his world is mainly Cairo and predominantly
the old quarter of Jamaliyya in which he spent his childhood he made the urban
scene and elaborate and highly significant metaphor of the national condition.
On the literary plan, 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 lives to see it flourish in the work of
numerous writers throughout the Arab world.

2.13. His Achievement:-

Before receiving the Nobel Prize on literature in the year 1988, Mahfouz
had received a number of national and international awards and prizes which are
as below-

- Qut al- Quloub Award for his historical novel *Radubis* in 1943.
- Award of the Ministry of Education and culture for his novel *Kifah Tiba*
in 1944.
- Arabic Language Academy Award for his novel *Khan al-Khalili* in 1946.
- State Prize in literature for his novel *Bain al- Qasrain* in 1957.
- Order of Merit of the first layer in 1962.
- State Award in the Arts in 1968.

- **Nobel Prize for Literature in 1988.**
- Cafafis Award in 2004.
2.14. His Marriage:

Mahfouz remained a bachelor until the age of 43. The reason for his late marriage was that he laboured under his conviction that with its numerous restrictions and limitations, marriage would hamper his literary future. In 1954, he married an Egyptian woman Atiyyah-Allah Ibrahim at the age of 43 with whom he had two daughters namely Umm kulthum (Hadi) and Fatima (Fiatin).

2.15. His Controversial Period:

Mahfouz was not escape from controversy outside of his work. As a result of his open support for Sadat's Camp David peace treaty with Israel in 1978, his books were not allowed in many Arab countries until after he won the Nobel Prize. Like many Egyptian writers and intellectuals, Mahfouz was on an Islamic fundamentalist "death list". He defended Salman Rushdie after Ayato Allah Ruho Allah Khomeini condemned Rushdie to death in 1989, but also criticized his Satanic Verses as "insulting" to Islam. Mahfouz believed in freedom of expression and although he did not personally agree with Rushdie's work, he did not believe that there should be a fatwa condemning him to death for it. In 1989, after Ayato Allah Ruho Allah Khomeini's fatwa calling for Salman Rushdie and his publishers to be killed, Mahfouz called Khomeini a terrorist.\(^1\) Shortly after Mahfouz joined 80 other intellectuals in declaring that "no blasphemy harms Islam and Muslims so much as the call for murdering a writer."\(^2\)

The publication of The Satanic Verses created a great controversy surrounding Mahfouz's novel Children of Gebelawi. Death threats against Mahfouz followed, including one from the "blind sheikh," Egyptian theologian Omar Abd al-Rahman. Mahfouz was given police protection, but in 1994 Islamic extremists almost succeeded in assassinating the 82-year-old novelist by

\(^2\) Le Monde. 8 March 1989.
stabbing him in the neck outside his Cairo home. As a result of it, the two Egyptian Islamic militants were sentenced to death for attempting to kill him. In his old age, Mahfouz became nearly blind and though he tried to continue his writing, but some difficulties arose in holding.

2.16. Death:-

Najib Mahfouz died in 30th August, 2006 following a bleeding ulcer after twenty days from entering the Police Hospital. Before it he had also admitted to hospital in July of the same year for being wound in the head after falling in the street. He was given a state funeral with full military honours on 31 August 2006. His funeral took place in the Al-Rashdan Mosque in Nasr City in Cairo.

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1 "President pays tribute to Mahfouz". BBC News. 30 August 2006.