

All the family members revolt against the authority of 'Abd al-Jawad in different ways. 'Āyesha, the second daughter, exchanges glances with a police cadet but with a feeling of guilt. Yāsīn, who has inherited his father's lust, 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 overjoyed. "Congratulations Father: Today I have discovered you," he tells himself "today is my new date of birth."¹⁴³ The father too is in a sense happy that Yasin is his own image.

The wife Amina rebels in her own way, but with the support of her children. While 'Abd al Jawād is away on tour, she visits the tomb of al-Husayn. But her first sortie in the traffic confuses her and she is knocked down. Laid up with a broken bone she tells her husband of her venture and he, after twenty years of their marriage, packs her off to her mother's house.

When 'Abd al-Jawad discovers that Fahmī has been taking part in demonstrations he enforces his control on him just as he does on the other errant members. Fahmi first resorts to lying but walks out when asked to swear by the Qur'an.

'Abd al-Jawad himself cannot remain unaffected by an emotional attachment to the revolution, but does 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 a peaceful demonstration. Mahfuz describes the death in interior monologue:¹⁴⁴

ما اشد الضوضاء، و لكن بيم علا صراخها؟ هل تذكر؟ ما اسرع ما
تلفت منك الذكريات، ماذا تريد؟ ان تهتف؟ اى هتاف؟ او نداء فحسب..
من؟ ما؟ في باطنك يتكلم، هل تسمع؟ هل ترى؟ و لكن اين؟ لا شيء،
لا شيء، ظلام في ظلام.

"What a din! But why did the noise grow loud? Do you remember? or was it just a call? Do you see? But where? Nothing...Nothing except darkness within darkness."¹⁴⁵

(143) Najib Mahfuz, *Bayn al-Qasrayn* p. 260.

(144) Yusuf al-Sharuni, *Dirasat fil Adab al-'Arabi al-Mu'asir*, p. 80.

(145) Najib Mahfuz, *Bayn al-Qasrayn*, p. 516.

Fahmi's death stands in sharp contrast to the death of other heroes and heroines in Mahfuz's novels. Their deaths are a confusion of defeat and despair, while Fahmi's death is really a victory in defeat.¹⁴⁶

Qasr al-Shawq, the second part of the trilogy, opens on a quiet tone. Fahmi's death has been a severe blow to the parents. Abd al-Jawad abstains from his pleasures and permits his wife her little outings. The limelight is now no longer on him but on his youngest son, Kamāl, who symbolises the intellectual tensions of his generation. He is torn between conforming and not conforming, between bachelorhood and marriage, ideals and realities and is forever perplexed: al-hā'ir.¹⁴⁷

Al-Sukkariya, the third of the series, 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.¹⁴⁸ His nephew, Ahmad Shaukat, prefers the intellectual solution of the political problems which perplexed 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 simultaneously and sent off to concentration camps.

It is the detailed characterisation, the recording of descriptions, the fine sense of humour that 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 novel writing in Arabic. As Taha Husayn wrote about Mahfuz when *Bayn al-Qasrayn* was published:

".....because he enabled the novel to attain a perfection and beauty, a 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."¹⁴⁹

(146) Yusuf al-Sharuni, *Dirasat fi'l Adab al-'Arabi al-Mu'asir*, p. 64.

(147) Ghali Shukri, *al-Muntami*...p. 63.

(148) *Ibid* p. 52.

the following section we shall consider the contribution of Najib Mahfuz, Ihsan 'Abd al-Quddus and Yusuf Idris to Arabic prose after 1945.

NAJIB MAHFUZ (b. 1912)

Outstanding among the novelists is Najib Mahfuz who occupies the same eminent place in the development of the Arabic novel as Mahmud Taymur in the case of the short story and Tawfiq al-Hakim in drama.

The son of a middle class merchant, Najib Mahfuz lived first in al-Jamaliyya, the thickly populated heart of Cairo which forms the setting of his major stories.

In 1918, the family moved to al-'Abbasiyya, an area where posh villas and modest dwellings stand side by side in glaring contrast. The move also marked Najib Mahfuz' transition to modernity, and leaving the *kuttāb* he had earlier attended, he started going to a modern school.

As the other children in the family, much older than him, had all got married, Najib Mahfuz was brought up virtually as an only child. He got his way in most things, including the choice of his subject—philosophy—which he studied later at Cairo University.

(122) Menahim Milson, "Some Aspects of the Modern Egyptian Novel" *MW*, Vol LX, July 1970.

(123) See Mahmoud Manzalaoui, "*Arabic Writing Today-The Short Story*," p. 21.