Chapter - IV

Arabic Dramatists After World War — II

Background
The starting-point for an account of modern Arabic literature has traditionally been regarded as 1798, the date of Napoleon's invasion of Egypt. The 19th century saw much of the Middle East being systematically exposed to European ideas and influence on a large scale for the first time, and the resulting re-examination of traditional Islamic society had major implications for most areas of Arab life—political, economic, social and educational. Associated with these developments were changes of major importance for the development of modern Arabic literature, including the growth of a new reading public, the rise of indigenous journalism, and the development of a new, simpler Arabic prose style. In both poetry and prose, authors were re-examining traditional Arabic literary conventions, while at the same time the growth of translation from western languages was making European literary forms known to a newly literate public. The resulting literary and cultural renaissance (nahda in Arabic) reached its high point in the last third of the 19th c. and was effectively complete by the time of World War I; by then, poetry had seen the flourishing of a vigorous ‘neoclassical’ movement, while in prose traditional Arabic literary forms had been all but replaced by the western novel, short story, and drama.

Fiction before World War II

The development of modern Arabic literature was slow to make an impact on the West, and the first work to attract significant attention outside the Middle East was the first part of &Tbdot;&Hbdot;usayn's al-Ayyam (1929, The Days). One of the best-loved works of modern Arabic literature, the work—essentially an autobiography written in the third person—tells the story of the upbringing and education of a blind boy in an Upper Egyptian village. Its importance was recognized by the appearance in 1932 of an English translation by E. H. Paxton, as well as translations into other European languages; two further volumes of &Tbdot;&Hbdot;usayn's autobiography, which appeared in Arabic in 1939 and 1967 respectively, have also been translated into English, by Hilary Wayment and Kenneth Cragg respectively.
Stylistically, *al-Ayyām* (particularly the first volume) is an idiosyncratic work, which blends the parallelisms typical of classical Arabic prose with eccentricities peculiar to the author. These problems pose formidable problems for the translator, and Paxton in particular fails on occasion to cope successfully with them, at times attempting to imitate the author's repetitions and parallelisms in an almost slavish fashion; unfortunately, the idiosyncrasies which give *al-Ayyām* its charm in English often sound merely quirky.

Although *al-Ayyām*’s work was the first to attract western attention, some earlier fiction has since been translated into English. Al-Muwayli’s *‘Adith ʿĪsā ibn Hishām* (1892–1902, The Tale of ʿĪsā ibn Hishām) stands at the end of a great tradition, as perhaps the last great Arabic work to be written as a series of maqāmat—a classical narrative form involving the use of rhymed prose; as such, it presents problems for the translator quite different from those of most modern fiction. Roger Allen’s vigorous translation entitled *A Period of Time*, with its copious notes and introduction, will serve the English-speaking reader as an excellent introduction to the cultural developments of the period as well as to the work itself. Astonishingly, only 20 or so years separate al-Muwayli’s work from the first genuine Arabic novel with a contemporary plot: Muḥammad &Hbdot;usayn Haykal’s *Zaynab* (1913), written while the author was studying in Europe. Both in the original Arabic and in J. M. Grinstead’s English translation, however, this sentimental story of peasant love and life, which reflects the author’s nostalgia for his home country, has a somewhat dated feel to it.

More appealing are the four novels of Tawfiq al-&Hbdot;akīm—all autobiographically based, reflecting a trend already established by Ibrahim al-Māzin’s *Ibrāhīm al-Kātib* (1931, Ibrahim the Writer), translated by M. Wahba. Of al-&Hbdot;akīm’s novels, three are available in English translation: *‘Awdat al-Rūḥ* (1933, Return of the Spirit), translated by W. Hutchins; *‘Uṣfur min al-Sharq* (1938, Bird of the East), translated by R. Bayly Winder; and *Yawmiyyāt Naʿīb fi al-Aryāf* (1937, Diary of a Country Prosecutor), translated by A. S. Eban. From a structural point of view the last is by far the most accomplished, being noteworthy for some of the most pungent social criticism to be found in the pre-1952 Arabic novel; both *Return of the Spirit* and *Bird of the East*, by contrast, are marred by a lack of artistic unity which no translator can disguise. The nationalist element in the former, however, has ensured its continuing popularity, not least with the late Egyptian president Nasser; while the latter is an
important early example of a work illustrating a group of themes revolving around the clash of values between East and West. These themes—often deriving from the experiences of Arabs studying in the West—were subsequently developed by a number of authors, both from Egypt and from elsewhere in the Arab world: among other examples may be mentioned the Egyptian Ya&hbdot;aqqTs Qindil Umm Hāshim (1942, The Saint's Lamp), translated by M. M. Badawi; and the Sudanese al-&Tbdot;ayyib &Sbdot;āli&hbdot;'s Mawsim al-Hijra ilā al-Shimāl (1966, Season of Migration to the North), translated by Denys Johnson-Davies. The quality of the English translations of these works is generally competent, though Hutchins's version of Return of the Spirit sometimes tries to follow the distinctive syntax and word order of the original Arabic too closely, with unidiomatic results. By contrast, Badawi's version of The Saint's Lamp occasionally gives the impression of attempting to solve translation problems by simply leaving out the phrase in question—a strategy which is unlikely to worry the non-Arabist reader particularly, but which may well prove irritating to those able to consult the original text.

Fiction since world war II

The development of the Arabic novel and short story since World War II has seen an increasing sophistication of technique and diversity of theme, against an evolving political background that has often been reflected in literary trends. Many of these trends are exemplified in the works of the Arab world's best-known writer, the Nobel prize-winner Najīb Ma&hbdot;fūzbdot;, whose works are discussed below [II b 7] The first main trend, towards 'commitment' (Arabic īltizām), had its origins in a combination of political and social developments, and is best exemplified in 'Abd al-Ra&hbdot;man al-Sharqawī's al-Ard. (1954, The Land), translated into English by Desmond Stewart and recently described as 'arguably the most widely known work of modern Arabic fiction both inside and beyond the Near and Middle East' (Robin Ostle, introduction to Egyptian Earth, tr. Desmond Stewart, 1990). The book revolves around themes of power and corruption and is unashamedly socialist in tone. An important means of conveying authenticity is the use of Egyptian colloquial in the dialogue sections, a technique which al-Sharqāwī extends through the use of different dialects which vary with the speaker: though Stewart's translation reads smoothly and easily, subtleties of this sort are almost inevitably lost in his English version. No other 'committed' Arabic novel of comparable power to al-Ard. exists in an English version,
the realism of this phase of Arabic prose writing being best appreciated by the English reader through translations of collected short stories by writers such as Yusuf Idrīs—many of whose best stories are available in English. Equally at home in Cairo and in the Egyptian countryside, and with an eye for the foibles of human nature unsurpassed among modern Egyptian writers, Idrīs's first collection, *Arkhas. Layāli* (1954, *The Cheapest Nights*), translated by Wadida Wassef, caused controversy from the time of its appearance. Idrīs's writing is marked not only by a stark realism but also by an entirely distinctive use of language, which often goes well beyond the simple use of colloquial Egyptian in dialogue, importing features of the colloquial dialect even into the narrative passages. Although Idrīs has been generally well served by his English translators, many of these features are lost, or partly lost, in English translation.

The atmosphere of 'commitment' which dominated Arabic literature in the 1950s had already begun to be eroded by the mid-1960s as the idealism of the 1952 Egyptian Free Officers' Revolution gave place to disillusionment. The new mood was exemplified in Egypt by the writings of a group of authors often known as the 'generation of the sixties', among the principal members of which were Allāh Ibrāhīm, Jamāl al-Ghīānī, and Yusuf al-Qaḍī. Translations of works by all these authors are available in English, including the work that possibly best exemplifies the new mood: Allāh Ibrāhīm's novella *Tilka al-Rā'i* (1966, *That Smell*), translated into English by Denys Johnson-Davies, an autobiographically inspired example of Arabic 'prison literature' in which the protagonist—newly released from jail—drifts aimlessly around Cairo, vainly attempting to forge relationships with the people who inhabited his past. Johnson-Davies's English version faithfully recaptures the spirit of the original, whose cynicism and explicit depiction of sexual themes caused outrage on first publication, but which remains an effective chronicle of the monotony of life of the Cairo lower classes.

Particularly demanding from the translator's point of view are the works of Jamāl al-Ghīānī, whose frequent use of 'intertextuality' poses particular difficulties—the translator being faced not only with the usual linguistic and cultural problems of translating from Arabic but also with the task of translating, within the same work, from a number of styles, some of which may involve complex historical allusions. A particularly good example is provided by what is generally regarded as al-Ghīānī's finest work, the novel *al-Zaynī Barakāt* (1971),
which incorporates texts by the medieval historian Ibn Iyas and other material written in his style, into a work painting an allegorical picture of the corruption of contemporary Egypt. Farouk Abdel-Wahab's translation copes with these problems admirably, his polished and elegant English well capturing the changes in linguistic register of the original Arabic, including a suitable measure of 'archaic' language at appropriate points.

Less successful is Peter O'Daniel's version of the later Waqa'i' &hbdot;arat al-Za'farānī (1976, Incidents in Za'frani Alley), in which al-Ghī&tbdot;am pastiches newspapers and other contemporary material; although reasonably accurate, O'Daniel's version occasionally betrays signs of carelessness or haste—for example, in his rendering into English of the Arabic tense system. The presentation of the volume is also markedly inferior to that of Zayni Barakat. The same contrast between the standards of publication of a major western publishing-house and the Cairo-based General Egyptian Book Organization may be observed by comparing the English translations of Yūsuf al-Qa'id's two novels al-&Hbdot;arb fi barr Mi&sbdot;r (1978, War in the Land of Egypt) and Akhbār 'Izbat al-Manūsī (1971, News from the Meneisi Farm); although both are competently done, and both include useful and perceptive introductions or afterwords, Abdel-Messih's version of News from the Meneisi Farm gives the impression at times of needing a good sub-editor to iron out the frequent unidiomatic expressions and inappropriate registers of the English.

An entirely distinctive voice in modern Arabic literature (though closely associated with the 'generation of the sixties') is Idwār al-Kharrāt, who has gained a reputation as a notoriously difficult author to translate. Al-Kharrāt's command of the subtleties of the Arabic language far outstrips that of most of his contemporaries, and his meandering style often produces an effect akin to a prose poem. Frances Liardet's translations of Turābuhā Za'farān (1986, City of Saffron) and Yā Banāt Iskandariyya (1990, Girls of Alexandria) have, however, rightly acquired a reputation as two of the most successful translations into English of a modern Arabic author; in her translations—for which she received the co-operation of al-Kharrāt. himself—she succeeds in making the author's unique vision her own and expressing it in an English idiom so finely crafted that the reader is seldom conscious of reading a translation of all.

Although many of the most interesting recent developments in Arabic prose writing have been undertaken in Egypt, other parts of the Arab world have also seen a growth in the
production of innovative fiction, only a fraction of which has so far been translated into English. Among the most ambitious is the Saudi 'Abd al-Rahman Munif's five-volume *Mudun al-Milbdot* (1984, Cities of Salt), which chronicles the progress of a Bedouin community into the oil-rich but western-dominated 20th century and provides a major challenge to the translator through sheer volume alone; the first three volumes have been carefully and lovingly rendered into English by Peter Theroux, providing a quite different perspective on the Middle East from that of most Egyptian novels of the same period.

Liardet's translations of al-Kharratbdot;'s novels are rare examples of works translated and published purely for their literary and artistic merit. In the limited market for modern Arabic literature in English translation, commercial considerations also play an important role—readers' tastes being influenced to an appreciable extent by the fashion of the moment. One example of this phenomenon may be found in the mushrooming of translations of works by Najib Ma&hbdot;fu&zbdot; following his award of the Nobel Prize for literature in 1988, another in the boom in translations of writing by women in the last few years. An excellent introduction to the growth, and intricate variety, of feminist writing in Arabic over the last century may be found in the anthology *Opening the Gates: A Century of Arab Feminist Writing*, edited by Margot Badran and Miriam Cooke. Fashion is of course no guarantee of excellence, either in an original work or in a translation. The popularity in translation of works by Nawal al-Sa'dawi—including a number of works of fiction translated into English by her husband, Sharif Hatata—undoubtedly owes more to admiration for her courage as an outspoken feminist than to the opinions of the literary critics. Moreover, not all recent translations of women's fiction have themselves received critical approval. The need for translators to acquire an adequate understanding of the problems involved in translating from Arabic to English, and the technical skills necessary to solve them, are well illustrated by comment on the Arab Women Writers Series, edited by Fadia Faqir and recently discussed at some length in an article by Hilary Kilpatrick (1996). Kilpatrick's review of the four translations so far published in this series includes much material of wider relevance to translators of contemporary Arabic literature, and indeed to translators from other languages also.134

134 http://www.answers.com/topic/modern-arabic-literature#ixzz3B7T6loqo
The western influences which led to the gradual substitution of the novel and short story for traditional Arabic prose narrative forms also bore fruit in the establishment of western-style drama in the Middle East. The first experiments along these lines took place in Beirut in 1847; but for most of the 19th and early 20th c. productions were largely confined to farce and melodrama, together with free adaptations of western plays. Moves towards the establishment of a serious Egyptian theatre started with the efforts of Muḥammad Taymūr, Anṭūn Yazbak, and Ibrāhīm Ramzi around the time of World War I, and reached fruition with Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm, who dominated the Egyptian theatre from the 1930s until well after the Free Officers' Revolution in 1952.

Although early 'intellectual' plays such as Ahl al-Kahf (1933) and Shahrazād (1934) remain among the most interesting of Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm's works, many were written to be read rather than acted, and recent translators have tended to focus on his later works, which—from the early 1960s—show the influence of techniques derived from avantgarde western theatre. Outstanding among these works is Yādi 'al-Shajara (1964, The Tree Climber), the first play by al-Ḥakīm to show the influence of the Theatre of the Absurd. The play is characterized by lively and fast-moving dialogue, the freshness and lively tone of which is well captured by Denys Johnson-Davies, whose translation has been successfully produced on the English stage.

Al-Ḥakīm's dramatic output also includes a series of plays on social themes published in the late 1940s and early 1950s, the most successful of which is Ughniyat al-Mawt (1947, Song of Death)—perhaps the most accomplished one-act play in Arabic. The work revolves around the conflict between traditional and modern values, a theme which recalls the setting of the earlier novel Yawmīyyāt Na‘īb. The play is again characterized by fast-moving dialogue between characters talking at cross purposes—a feature which poses particular problems for the translator; although Johnson-Davies's translation captures the general mood well, the wide cultural gap between the play's setting and the intended audience at times makes his rendering seem a little stilted.

A perennial problem for Arab dramatists has been the choice of 'classical' or 'colloquial' Arabic as a medium of communication. Most of al-Ḥakīm's drama, designed for the armchair at least as much as the stage, was written in 'classical' Arabic (though
sometimes 'translated' into colloquial when staged); but newer generations of Arab playwrights, more politicized in outlook, have increasingly employed the colloquial, even in print. Although these questions continue to be hotly debated, and although they inevitably face the translator with sharp questions of the appropriate register to adopt, much of the passion they arouse among sections of the Arab cultural elite is inevitably lost in any translated version.

As with the novel, recent drama has been characterized by an increasing tendency towards experimentation, while at the same time theatre production has become increasingly linked with television. There has also been a sharp rise in theatrical activity outside Egypt. An excellent idea of the diversity of contemporary Arab theatre, both in theme and provenance, may be gained from the anthology of Modern Arabic Drama, edited by S. K. Jayyusi and Roger Allen, which includes vigorous translations of plays from Egypt, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, Kuwait, Iraq, and Tunisia, each play carrying the name of two translators—a technique which Jayyusi has also used to good effect in the field of poetry (see below). Particularly welcome is the inclusion of no fewer than three plays by writers from Syria, a country where dramatic innovation has recently been particularly—and perhaps unexpectedly-conspicuous.135

It is perhaps partly for this reason that comparatively little neoclassical and romantic poetry has been translated into English. Most poetry translated recently dates from the period following World War II, when poets began to adopt modernist techniques derived from the West, including the use of prose poetry and various forms of free verse. As with the novel, the choice of material to be translated has occasionally been influenced by political as well as by literary considerations, among the best-known poetry of this era in English being that of the Palestinian poets Maḥāmdūt Maḥāmdūt Darwish, Samīḥ al-Qāsim, and others. Of these, it is perhaps Darwish whose work has the most universal and immediate appeal. In addition to the several volumes of his poetry available in English, his autobiographically based prose poem Dḥākira līl-Nisyān (1995, Memory for Forgetfulness), set during the Israeli bombardment of Beirut, has been sensitively and vigorously translated into English by Ibrahim Muhawi. Much Palestinian literature has inevitably been coloured by political events, but any suspicion that this literature is monolithic will be quickly dispelled by a glance at Salma Khadra Jayyusi’s lovingly compiled

135 http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/goldman/aando/drama.html
Anthology of Modern Palestinian Literature (1992) (which includes prose passages as well as poetry).

Complete volumes of works by some other individual modern Arab poets have appeared in English (including Adūnīs, the most adventurous and iconoclastic), but the English-speaking newcomer to the field is probably best served by the several anthologies available, for example those of Boullata, Asfour, Khouri and Algar, al-Udhari, and Jayyusi. Although these anthologies are all generally accurately and competently translated, Jayyusi's Modern Arabic Poetry: An Anthology again has the edge, if only because of its size and scope. Jayyusi's policy of having all translations reworked by an English-language poet has been criticized by some as the first stage on the road to 'translation by committee'; but in practice the resulting translations—the majority of which preserve the authenticity of the original in an idiomatic and readable English poetic style—appear to have justified the technique. Although predominantly based on poetry from after World War II, Jayyusi's anthology also contains a selection of poetry from earlier periods of modern Arabic poetry; her perceptive preface and introduction draw attention to some of the problems of translating these works and serve as a useful poetic complement to Kilpatrick's observations on translating Arabic fiction.

Modern Drama was founded in 1958 and is the most prominent journal in English to focus on dramatic literature. The terms, "modern" and "drama," are the subject of continuing and fruitful debate, but the journal has been distinguished by the excellence of its close readings of both canonical and lesser known dramatic texts through a range of methodological perspectives. The journal features refereed articles that enhance our understanding of plays in both formal and historical terms, largely treating literature of the past two centuries from diverse geo-political contexts, as well as an extensive book review section. Published quarterly.136

If the dramatic subjects chosen by the early Romantics were wider ranging than those chosen by the ancients, the treatment the subjects received, as we have suggested, was far from realistic. The tendency to idealize the poor also led to the glorification of the outlaw, a sign of the revolutions that were to come. Added to this, a newly self-conscious nationalism found

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136 Encyclopædia Iranica, University of Toronto Press, Volume 57, Number 2, Summer 2014

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expression in a variety of historical dramas that extolled two often-lost causes, liberty and nationhood.

So long as discontent and unrest make themselves but dimly felt within a limited social class, the powers of reaction may often succeed in suppressing such manifestations. But when the dumb unrest grows into conscious expression and becomes almost universal, it necessarily affects all phases of human thought and action, and seeks its individual and social expression in the gradual transvaluation of existing values.

An adequate appreciation of the tremendous spread of the modern, conscious social unrest cannot be gained from merely propagandistic literature. Rather must we become conversant with the larger phases of human expression manifest in art, literature, and, above all, the modern drama—the strongest and most far-reaching interpreter of our deep-felt dissatisfaction.

What a tremendous factor for the awakening of conscious discontent are the simple canvasses of a Millet! The figures of his peasants—what terrific indictment against our social wrongs; wrongs that condemn the Man With the Hoe to hopeless drudgery, himself excluded from Nature's bounty.

The vision of a Meunier conceives the growing solidarity and defiance of labor in the group of miners carrying their maimed brother to safety. His genius thus powerfully portrays the interrelation of the seething unrest among those slaving in the bowels of the earth, and the spiritual revolt that seeks artistic expression.

No less important is the factor for rebellious awakening in modern literature—Turgenev, Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, Andreiev, Gorki, Whitman, Emerson, and scores of others embodying the spirit of universal ferment and the longing for social change.

Still more far-reaching is the modern drama, as the leaven of radical thought and the disseminator of new values.

It might seem an exaggeration to ascribe to the modern drama such an important rôle. But a study of the development of modern ideas in most countries will prove that the drama has
succeeded in driving home great social truths, truths generally ignored when presented in other forms. No doubt there are exceptions, as Russia and France.

Russia, with its terrible political pressure, has made people think and has awakened their social sympathies, because of the tremendous contrast which exists between the intellectual life of the people and the despotic regime that is trying to crush that life. Yet while the great dramatic works of Tolstoy, Tchecov, Gorki, and Andreiev closely mirror the life and the struggle, the hopes and aspirations of the Russian people, they did not influence radical thought to the extent the drama has done in other countries.

Who can deny, however, the tremendous influence exerted by *The Power of Darkness* or *Night Lodging*. Tolstoy, the real, true Christian, is yet the greatest enemy of organized Christianity. With a master hand he portrays the destructive effects upon the human mind of the power of darkness, the superstitions of the Christian Church.

What other medium could express, with such dramatic force, the responsibility of the Church for crimes committed by its deluded victims; what other medium could, in consequence, rouse the indignation of man's conscience.

Similarly, direct and powerful is the indictment contained in Gorki's *Night Lodging*. The social pariahs, forced into poverty and crime, yet desperately clutch at the last vestiges of hope and aspiration. Lost existences these, blighted and crushed by cruel, unsocial environment.

France, on the other hand, with her continuous struggle for liberty, is indeed the cradle of radical thought; as such she, too, did not need the drama as a means of awakening. And yet the works of Brieux—as *Robe Rouge*, portraying the terrible corruption of the judiciary—and Mirbeau's *Les Affaires sont les Affaires*—picturing the destructive influence of wealth on the human soul—have undoubtedly reached wider circles than most of the articles and books which have been written in France on the social question.137

137 http://www.answers.com/topic/modern-arabic-literature#lxzz3B7T6loqo
In countries like Germany, Scandinavia, England, and even in America—though in a lesser degree—the drama is the vehicle which is really making history, disseminating radical thought in ranks not otherwise to be reached.

Arab civilization contributed in the Middle Ages in literature, arts and thought as well as in science in influencing the civilizations around. Arab civilization has strong presence and prosperity which conduced to the entry of Arab culture to Europe by European ‘Orientalists who provided for the transfer of Arab culture to their countries, besides the impact of Arab civilization on the people and their language, food, clothing, also has effected on English literature, as a European thinker says, ‘If the Arabs did not appear on the stage of history, the European renaissance would delayed for several centuries’. Mainspring of the influence on European writers was to renewal and evolution of their literature as Dr. Youssef Ezzedine says, "Literary Osmosis is that develops the literature and saves it from deadlock", he also adds, "Literary Osmosis stronger in West than of us now, it started from the roots of Arab culture, interested in Arab Arts and Humanities and appeared in their poetry and prose literature." Arab heritage in Middle Ages was on a high level of prosperity and maturity and it occupied the foreground of the world at that time scientifically, culturally, intellectually and literature also.

Modern literature

During the 19th century, a revival took place in Arabic literature, along with much of Arabic culture, and is referred to in Arabic as "al-Nahda", which means "the Renaissance". This resurgence of writing in Arabic was confined mainly to Egypt and Lebanon until the 20th century when it spread to other countries in the region. This Renaissance was not only felt within the Arab world but also beyond, with a great interest in the translating of Arabic works into European languages. Although the use of the Arabic language was revived, particularly in poetry, many of the tropes of the previous literature which served to make it so ornate and complicated were dropped.

Just as in the 8th century, when a movement to translate ancient Greek and other literature had helped vitalise Arabic literature, another translation movement would offer new
ideas and material for Arabic. An early popular success was *The Count of Monte Cristo*, which spurred a host of historical novels on Arabic subjects. Two important translators were Rifa'a al-Tahtawi and Jabra Ibrahim Jabra.

Throughout the 20th century, Arabic writers in both poetry and prose have reflected the changing political and social climate of the Arab world in their work. Anti-colonial themes were prominent early in the 20th century, with writers continuing to explore the region's relationship with the West until the present day. Internal political upheaval has also been a challenge, with some writers suffering censorship. There are many contemporary Arabic writers, such as Mahmoud Saeed (Iraq) who wrote *Bin Barka Ally*, and *I Am The One Who Saw* (Saddam City). Other contemporary writers include Sonallah Ibrahim and Abdul Rahman Munif, who were imprisoned by the state for their anti-government work. At the same time, others who had written works supporting or praising governments were promoted to positions of authority within cultural bodies. Non-fiction writers and academics have also produced political polemics and criticisms aiming to re-shape Arabic politics. Some of the best known are Taha Hussein's *The Future of Culture in Egypt*, which was an important work of Egyptian nationalism, and the works of Nawal el-Saadawi who campaigns for women's rights.

In drama, George Bernard Shaw’s *Pygmalion* has clear influence on the Egyptian playwright Tawfiq al-Hakim. Tawfiq al-Hakim watched it as a film and despite the fact that the play of Tawfiq al-Hakim had the same name, which Bernard Shaw's play afforded, Hakim denies that he was influenced by Bernard Shaw's play. He says that the reason for the effect was due to the painting, "Pygmalion and Galatea" by the artist, Jean-Léon Gérôme, whom he admired. Whether the writer admitted it or not, the impact of Bernard Shaw's play on Tawfiq al-Hakim is clear when we compare the two plays. Ghassan Kanafani in his novel *What remained to you* was influenced by William Faulkner. Kanafani says, "For Faulkner I am very impressed with his

The Sound and the Fury, I think this is true; I am very impressed with Faulkner, but in What remained to you is not effected mechanically by Faulkner, but it is an attempt to take advantage of the aesthetic tools and artistic accomplishments achieved by Faulkner for the development of Western literature.
Until the nineteenth century, most European playwrights drew their tragic plots from ancient myths or legendary history and their comic material from a repertory of stock characters and attitudes. These choices of dramatic subjects reflect the priorities that endured from the days of Periclean Athens to the middle of the eighteenth century. On the one hand, these choices demonstrate a belief that truly important things happened only to those who were high on the social scale; on the other, they show that artists tested their abilities not so much through innovation as by imitation. Thus familiar plots and characters continued to be worth writing about; new talent revealed itself by finding new ways to dramatize old truths.

By the 1750s, however, the same changes that were brewing political revolution began to affect the drama. More and more plays began focusing on the trials and tribulations of those on the lower rungs of the social ladder. From this so-called bourgeois drama emerged a transformation that culminates in one of the great periods of theatrical activity, the modern era, which begins around 1870.

Interest in the experiences of ordinary people reached a high point with Romanticism and its exaltation of the common place. The poor invited little notice in pre-eighteenth-century literature; when nineteenth-century writers turned their attention toward these lives, they began by "romanticizing" them. However dirty and boring common life was, the Romantic artist saw in it a trace of Edenic innocence. Lives not lived in palaces were somehow perceived as being unspoiled.

**HAFIZ IBRAHIM (1870-1932)**

Called the poet of the Nile, Hafiz Ibrahim was born on a river boat in Upper Egypt. His father died when he was four the helpless mother took him to her brother in Cairo. Later the family lived in Tanta where Hafiz went to a mosque school. He was strong-willed from early childhood and walked out on his uncle when criticized and decided to fend for himself.

A disorganized student, Hafiz read only what he fancied, But his taste was good and memory excellent. He knew hundreds of Qur’anic verses by heart and also selections from the ‘Abbasid poets.
As he wanted to stand on his own, Hafiz decided on a law career. He did not have an aptitude for the legal profession, and a better alternative seemed to be the army where the pay was good.

After passing out the Military Academy in Cairo, Hafiz was posted in the Sudan. The hard and disciplined life of the army where he had to obey and not command was odious to his nature. The military Academy with British, French and Turkish elements and nothing Egyptian about it roused Hafiz's national spirit. He began to form his own views on politics which appeared later in his verses.

During "the seven lean years" in the Sudan, Hafiz was also very homesick. He joined the soldiers' rebellion against Lord Kitchener, for which he was put on trial and pensioned off. Through most of his life Hafiz was in financial sorrow as misery coupled with insecurity was the constant fortune of his life.

Hafiz, however, laughed his cares away. He had the unusual capacity to keep his friends amused for which he was loved. For all his outward humour our and lightheartedness, Hafiz was overwhelmed by sorrow and pain. Ahmad Amin in the introduction to Hafiz Ibrahim’s *diwan states*:

"The best poetry of Hafiz is linked with sad feeling"\(^{138}\)

Hafiz Ibrahim’s social and political views were enriched by his close friendship with Muhammad ‘Abduh and the intellectual circles in Cairo. It was from ‘Abduh that Hafiz learnt tolerance \(^{24}\) and it was ‘Abduh who instilled in him faith in humanity.

"I was nearest to the Iman and visited his house frequently. At al-Azhar he delivered lectures on tafsir and at home on wisdom."\(^{139}\)

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138 Ahmad Amin. Introduction to Diwan al-Hafiz, P-39

139 Abd al-Hamid Sanad al-Jundi, Hafiz Ibrahim Sha’ir al-NII. (Cairo 1959) P-78
When Muhammad 'Abduh died in 1905, Hafiz was heartbroken. To divert him from his grief, his mother persuaded him to marry. But Bohemian in his ways, Hafiz got bored. He divorced his wife after four months and never thought of marrying again.

Notwithstanding his adversities, Hafiz wrote the bulk of his poetry during this period. Drawn to the masses by circumstances Hafiz shared their plight which he expressed feelingly in his poems. They are tinged with anger and reflect his bitterness against the establishment. Having a poet’s conscience, Hafiz pleaded for the large interests of the nation and never his own personal cause.\textsuperscript{140}

Seeking employment was not easy for Hafiz and his army record did not endear him to the Khedive. After another, lean period of eight years, he was at last appointed Head of the Literary Division at the National Library, Dar al-Kutub in 1911.

The tenure at Dar al-kutub changed the disorderly course of Hafiz life but not his temperament. He adjourned to the nearby cafes, the routine of office. However, the specter of poverty reminder him to be crateful in his compositions’. As a result his poems began to loge their revolutionsty fervor.

Diwan al-Hafiz was first published in three volumes between 1911 and 1932 and later collected into complete edition shortly after his death. Social and political poetry, eulogy and elegy form the main core of Hafiz Ibrahim’s diwan. Hafiz also wrote a series of prose articles in the maqama style called Lyali-Satih (1907) and adapted Les Miserables of Victor Hugo al-Bu’sa.

Hafiz Ibrahim follows al-Barudi’s neo-classical style. In his verse, taqlid (tradition) reigns supreme, marked by al-bayan (statement) and the twin requisites of the qasida: al-arsenal and al-jazala (elegance of form and purity of style). Weaving his ideas in the pattern of the qasida with graceful expressions and Hallmarks of al-Barudi’s verse.

\textsuperscript{140} Ahmad Tahir, Muhadirl an Hafiz Ibrahim, p-39

151
A characteristic of Hafiz Ibrahim’s poetry is clarity. His verse is free from vagueness and philosophical overtones. Hafiz seldom employs rare or foreign expressions. Since his task was to address the masses, his message was clear and easily understood by all.\(^{141}\)

Another characteristic is pre-occupation with sound effects. Hafiz chose words for their musical appeal, sonority and resonances, e.g. the opening lines of Muhammad \(\text{Abduh’s elegy.}\)

As he recited his poems himself, Hafiz was especially conscious of rhythm. His elegies are composed in beautiful metres with several elongated feet to suit the words of sorrow and dignity.

To rouse his readers Hafiz repeats words like huna,(here) or ara (I see), sometimes as many ....times in a line.\(^{142}\)

In solitary poem on Pharaohnic Egypt, Misr tatahadath’un Nafiha (Egypt Talks About Herself) Hafiz scans the historic splendour of his ancient land. Consider these lines:\(^{143}\)

\[\ldots.\text{Have ye not stood.}\]
\[\text{Beneath the Greater Pyramid and seen}\]
\[\text{What I have laboured? Have ye not beheld}\]
\[\text{Those magic carvings which defeat the art}\]
\[\text{Of any rival craftsman? Centuries}\]
\[\text{Have not assailed their pigments though the day}\]
\[\text{Itself turns colour. Do ye not understand}\]
\[\text{Those mysteries of hidden lore, which I}\]

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\(^{142}\) Ahmad al-Tahir, Muhadirat an Hafiz Ibrahim, P-62

Hold secret in my cloak? My glory stands

Unrivalled, rooted in eternity.

Not all the poems of Hafiz reflect the poet's pride in his country. Hafiz pictured Egypt more as an unhappy nation, awakening, hesitating, and struggling to progress. Hafiz depicts the reality of present Egypt, not the old Egypt celebrates by Shawqi, or the "Islamic" Egypt of Ahmad Mubarram. Hafiz Ibrahim's disappointment with his country is summed up in these lines:144

And if asked about the kinana say it is a nation.

That plays and amuses itself.

The changes Hafiz introduces relate to content. He deals with problems concerning the common man and his aspirations. These themes were introduced for the first time in Arabic verse. Hafiz took poetry a step ahead of al-Barud, Sabri and Shawqi. Who ignored these subjects? Not merely his straitened circumstances but the depth of his feelings and attitudes made him a natural spokesman of the masses. He projected popular sentiments more effectively than any of his contemporaries. He wrote on all matters concerning Islam, Arab politics, and current events.

The poem composed on the Dinshaway incident is a striking example of Hafiz Ibrahim's forthright approach to some of the major national issues. Dinshaway was the village where a British soldier on a pigeon shoot died of sunstroke.145 The authorities, however, held the whole village responsible. Severe sentences were passed on the local inhabitants and some were brutally hanged. The whole nation was shocked. Qasim Amin describes the impact of Dinshaway on the Egyptians.

"Sadness was on every face, but it was a peculiar sort of sadness.

145 Ahmad Haykal, Tarawwr al-Adab al-Hadith fi Misr, P-106

153
It was confused, distracted and visibly subdued by superior force

.....The spirits of the hanged men seemed to hover over every

Place in the city. 146

Hafiz laces his poem with heavy sarcasm: 147

O you mighty ones who yield supreme power

Forget not our loyalty to you and our affection

Have no fear in our fair Egyptian land

Disperse your guardsmen and banish all apprehension

And when you weary of your sport

Then shoot the poor local rustics.

Man’s life is as cheap as beast’s

And like the wild doves are we, made of the selfsame metal:

We too have our chains round our necks.

Would that I knew if the Inquisition or

The age of Nero had returned.

With the incidents of Dinshaway still fresh in his mind, Hafiz refers to them again in the poem composed on the arrival of Lord Gorst, Cromer’s successor. It is a strong outburst against the British. 148


Perhaps the most challenging tone adopted by Hafiz in asserting the aspirations of the Egyptians is found in the poem composed after his dismissal from Dar al-Kutub. Throwing caution to the winds, Hafiz is bold and threatening.

Sometimes Hafiz Ibrahim is tolerant and friendly towards the British. This is illustrated in the conciliatory start and finish to the poem composed on the eve of Lord Cromer’s departure from Egypt, due perhaps to the mellowing influence of Muhammad ‘Abduh who was sympathetic to Cromer.  

O poet this is the time for honesty and righteousness

Do not falsify history if you are to recite.

The time has come to bid farewell to the Commissioner (Cromer)

And truly he is worthy of it from friend and foe.

Hafiz ends the poem on the same note.

If I were of the politicians I would have recorded my opinion and reached my goal

But I am a poet who adds to history an everlasting word. Yet in spite of some caution in dealing with the British, Hafiz generally expresses the pulse of the nation faithfully, and adopts a fierce stance when events seem hopeless or painful. The poem entitled Shakwa Misr min al-Ihtilal (Egypt’s complaint against the British Occupation), composed in 1907, is a case in point. Aimed directly at the British Prime Minister, it is an attack on rising prices and carries the poet’s plea for a return to the days of Ismail in spite of its known evils.

Oppression was rampant among us, till its outward expression

Was corrected then it became merely organized oppression.

To day you may recall your favours, in that wealth has multiplied,

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149 Mounah A. khouri, Poetry and the Making of Modern Egypt. (Brill, 1971) Pp-80-81

150 Hafiz Ibrahim Diwan I,P- 88, Tran: Mounah A. khouri, Poetry and the Making of Modern Egypt. P-80

And that Egyptians have become free, with good things supplied.

I say bring back Isma'il’s days, with their flogging and forced labou

Equally outspoken on social issues, Hafiz a strong supporter of the female emancipation movement of Qasim Amin, does not spare his countrymen:152

O Qasim, the hearts of my people are dead and they have not

Understood what you are writing in this book.

Even to this day the veil of their ignorance

Has not been lifted up.

Whom are you then going to call and

Whom are they going to censure and chastise:

Depth of social feeling characterizes most of Hafiz Ibrahim’s poems on the poverty of the vast majority. These lines on the neglect of children were composed for a function of Children’s Home. Perhaps the vision of his own suffering as a child prompted him to pour out his feelings so poignantly.153

Is that a phantom that I see or a vision

No, it is a young girl, there under the open sky,

Left at the mercy of calamity with no protector or guardian.

On another occasion Hafiz wrote.154

This is a young lad, wandering confused in the darkness:

153 ibid. P-132.
Misery has robbed him of his youth and tamed his spirit.

Look at his tattered clothes; there is nothing left of them but torn pieces.

Classical eulogies were composed to praise a man for his valour in battle, hospitality or generosity. Hafiz infused a national spirit into these compositions, e.g. the eulogy to ‘Abd al-Hamid on the coronation and the eulogy to the Khedive, composed in 1904.

It is in his elegies that Hafiz Ibrahim reached heights not attained by any other poet in modern times. Being deeply attached to his friends, Hafiz was inconsolable when they died. His art lies in transforming individual grief to social loss. Muhammad ‘Abduh’s death is a calamity which shakes Egypt and the Islamic world. Mustafa Kamil’s a catastrophe for Egypt and nationalism. Sa’d Zaghlul’s, a setback for leadership.

After describing the traits and giving a total picture of the departed leader, Hafiz mentions the greater loss to the nation. The elegy given below was composed on the death of the Egyptian nationalist Ali Abul-Futuh.\footnote{Najib Ullah. Islamic Literature, (New York, 1963) P-188}

Grief is great, but show your courage,

If you refuse, at least be decent.

O Egypt I your hero is gone,

And there was no hero but ‘Ali

The genius of the arrow is dead,

And the star of the Assembly has vanished;

Arrow fell after arrow, and

It hit the body where the

Wound is fatal.

That one, who was untying difficulties,
Perished from a hard infirmity.

Woe to Cairo!

Why can she not overcome a misfortune?

All the night one sadness was followed

By another sadness.

The elegies are written in different moods according to the poet’s link with the dead leader. Muhammad ‘Abduh’s passing away was a tremendous blow to the poet. He depicts the sorrow as a tornado hitting everyone and everything. Religion is left with a void, as its main protector has died. The Eastern world from to corner is stunned. Each hemistich of this elegy is like a groaning gulp of a distressed soul or the wail of one in agony.156

Al-Barudi’s death is mourned in an elegant and powerful style reminiscent of classical elegies. But the poet is not able to move the hearts. Al-Barudi’s death was not a national catastrophe. It was a tragedy for the intellectuals but not for the common man.

Hafiz mourned Mustafa Kamil in three poems each being a picture of a tormented soul. Hafiz was a dear friend of the leader and Mustafa Kamil gave a glowing appraisal of his first volume in al-Liwa.157

Oh grave! This guest you welcome158

Gave hopes to a whole nation.

So praise God, and receive him,

Respectful, in prostration

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156 Abd al-Hamid Sanad Jundi. Hafiz Ibrahim Sha’ir al-Nil, (Cairo, 1959) P-139

157 Ibid. P-142.

Oh martyr of high purpose,
That Voice of yours is sounding
Unchanged, today just as it
Was yesterday resounding.
It shouts out saying ‘This is
A building I erected:

Consign not to destruction
This same thing I erected.
It orders us; ‘in God’s name,
Be not ye disunited:
Behave like men, and make not
Your enemies delighted.
Allow us one day’s weeping!
Then you will find us ready,
At dawn, as you would have us,
Like mountains, firm and steady.
Oh river Nile! If you should
Not flow, after his going,
Blood-red, I swear you would no,
Oh Nile be truly flowing.
MA'ROF AL-RUSAFI (1876-1945)

The first humanitarian poet of modern Iraq, Ma’ruf al-Rusafi was born of Kurdish and Arab parentage in Baghdad. Poor and brought up singlehandedly by his mother, Ma’ruf al-Rusafi was deeply moved by the neglect and poverty of the masses, which he later depicted and rebelled against.

His mother had high aims for her son’s education. This was unusual for her environment, where the boys usually learned some trade. Al-Rusafi went to about half-a—dozen mosque schools. At this stage he showed a flair for poetry and was fortunate in having al-Shaykh Shukri al-Alusi, an authority in Arabic, as his guide. Al-Alusi introduced him to Islamic principles and Sufism. Sometimes al-Rusafi spent entire nights praying or weeping in the nearby mosques. Though his outlook was religious, al-Rusafi was not bigoted but believed in harmony among all denominations.

Islam does not give one person advantage over

Another among the descendants of Adam

Rich and poor are equal and Arabs the same as non-Arabs.

The glory of a man is his work.

The best is he who has piety and helps others.

Al-Rusafi’s poetic style matured and his poems started appearing in prestigious Egyptian periodicals, when he was appointed to teach in a secondary school and entered a higher social and stimulating intellectual milieu.

Al-Rusafi proceeded to Istanbul to publish al-Aqdam , but the working terms were never finalized. Disappointed and stranded in the Ottoman capital, he decided to return to Baghdad. But he was called back, this time to publish a monthly magazine, Sabil al-Rashad , henceforth called al-Arab. To supplement his income, al-Rusafi lectured on Arabic literature. In 1912 he

\[^{159}\text{Notably in al-Muqtabas and al-Muayyad, which were edited by Muhammad kurd ‘Ali.}\]
was nominated to represent an Iraqi district in the Turkish Chamber of Deputies and remained in Istanbul till the end of World War I.

In the cosmopolitan city of Istanbul, al-Rusafi read widely by way of translations, European philosophical works and the writings of French revolutionaries. Much of his poetry deals with politics.

From Istanbul, al-Rusafi proceeded to Jerusalem to teach Arabic literature, but when it was rumored that he was going to edit a paper supporting the theory of "Iraq for the Iraqis" he was summoned to Baghdad. This was the time when Amir Faysal was being nominated king of Iraq.

Al-Rusafi could only find piecemeal jobs in Baghdad, among them was one with the Ministry of Education from 1923 to 1928. This disturbed atmosphere of Iraq made him seek Lebanese or Turkish, nationality, but eventually he returned to his country where he was elected member of parliament for one term. Afterwards he retired to al-Faluja, near Baghdad, writing "The Personality of Muhammad or The Sacred Enigma."

Al-Rusafi remained a bachelor, His relations with women were ambiguous, He was devoted to his mother, and had a strong attachment to his niece as well as to a Turkish woman he lived with in Istanbul.

Fettered neither by official laurels, nor by family obligations, al-Rusafi could afford to express his political views fearlessly. This singled him out from other Iraqi poets who were compelled by one reason or another to compromise on their principles. Another exception to the rule was that al-Rusafi was neither persecuted nor imprisoned as almost all the poets of opposition were in those days. The British authorities failed to win him over, but his attitude to them was distant as it was towards king Faysal too.

Al-Rusafi spent the last four years of his life in Baghdad. Generous friends came to his aid, but he squandered large sums away and remained poverty stricken. In his will he stated that his only belongings were the bed he slept on and the clothes he wore.

Compared to the poets of his generation, al-Rusafi wrote very little. A single diwan was first published in 1910 in Beirut and then enlarged to include some of his later poems in 1949. It
contains social poetry, political verse and love poems. Al-Rusafi also translated Turkish works and wrote on literary criticism.

The literary influences on al-Rusafi were entirely Arabic. He was fascinated first by al-Mutanabbi, and then by Ibn Malik, half of whose Alfiyya he had learnt by heart. But more important was the impact of Abu al-Ala’al-Ma’arri from whom al-Rusafi learnt to approach problems boldly and whose humanitarian vers inspired him to deal with this neglected aspect of poetry. Al-Maarris scepticism too is reflected in al-Rusafi verse e.g. The Negative Truth About Me: Haqiqati al-Salabyya:

I do not think religions first were giv’n
To prophets in a message sent from heav’n
But were imposed those who invented them
Where men of intellect and stategem.
I am not one of those who thing and say
The spirit will ascend to heaven one day
Because the earth is hovering in space,
And heaven as we know it, is but space.

Among the neo classicists, al-Rusafi has a close affinity with Hafiz Ibrahim and echoes his sentiments of national and social issues. Shawqi and Mutran also influenced al-Rusafi but to a lesser degree.

A traditionalist, al-Rusafi mastered and reproduced the technique of the classical qasida with its monorhyme and long metres. He, however, discards the stress on tonal excellence, but places the emphasis on meaning, selecting each word with care for its importance. Al-Rusafi also avoids artificiality and rhetorical devices and keeps his verse unaffected and clear.

It is in the content of verse that al-Rusafi’s innovations can be seen. His compositions deal with social problems He discusses freedom, Iraqi politics, social ills like forced marriages
and divorce and the need or progress and education. He also deals with important wars and their impact on Arab countries. Al-Rusafi shows remarkable descriptive powers in his compositions on modern inventions as for instance in “An Autobus Ride” and “The Clock.”

Al-Rusafi focuses his attention on the most pressing problems of his early environment— the poverty of the masses. His technique is to present varying pictures of their suffering in the form of a story with fervent pleas to God and man to alleviate their woes. “The Nursing Widow, “Poor Armenians,” “The Prison in Baghdad” and “Orphan at I'd” are some of his more poignant poems and all are sparked off by some moving scene that he describes in detail.

Perhaps the most famous poem in this series is faqr wa Suqam (Poverty and Disease). It was composed on hearing a woman groan on the next roof top in the summer nights of Baghdad. Al-Rusafi describes how poverty leads to under nourishment and then to sickness and death when the bread earner himself falls ill. He describes, how the helpless woman watches her brother suffer and die:

He wants bread while hunger is burning his entrails

She puts him off with hope, then brings him water and begs his forgiveness

But will the water, while it cools his thirst

Also still the fire of hunger in him?

The poem is simply narrated. It ends as another funeral procession winds its way to the graveyard. This time it is the sister’s. The poet admonishes the rich:

O rich people! How many times
Have you misused the favours of God
Since you have no mercy?

Miserable people remain awake through hunger

While you sleep at ease, satiated

With all sorts of food and drink
Al-Rusafi diwan contains a section devoted to the problems of women. He calls for an end to their social seclusion (the veil) and ignorance. How can they bring up their sons if they are not themselves educated? Al-Rusafi gives references of famous poetesses and warriors from Arab history and also describes the position of women in the days of the Prophet. A'isha for instance contributed two thirds to the entire corpus of Islamic tradition (Hadith) and was recommended by the Prophet himself as a reliable source.\\footnote{160}{Al-Rusafi al-Diwan P- 339. Izz al-Din, Modern Arabic Poetry (Leiden 1977), P-202.}

Is not Knowledge, in Islam, the duty of both sons and daughters?

Our mother was like an ocean of knowledge

And solved all the problems for her questioners

The Prophet taught her the best knowledge

Until she became one of the greatest scholars

Therefore he said:” Refer to her, always.

For two thirds of your religion

Which is clear, proof.”

But the actual status of women is quite deplorable and al-Rusaf, lays the blame on male chauvinists.

They are leading them along a road

And keeping them away from the paths of life,

So that they stay at home and become

Like mere tools in the house.

\\footnote{160}{Al-Rusafi al-Diwan P- 339. Izz al-Din, Modern Arabic Poetry (Leiden 1977), P-202.}
In his political poetry al-Rusafi criticizes dictatorship and monarchy and those Ottoman Sultans who oppressed their subjects. In a poem composed on Sultan Abd al-Hamid’s deposition, he warns all rulers to take heed.\(^{161}\)

O kings of the people, take warning from kings who were oppressive in their deeds.

Abd al-Hamid is not alone, but there are many like him.

Set the people free or else you will live in fear.

Around the first World War, however, al-Rusafi’s political views were characterized by a strong tilt towards pan-Islamic ideals. This is reflected first in his praise of the Ottoman Sultanate even while it was disintegrating, and then in his appeals for Islamic unity in the face of European colonialism, and finally in his anti-British stand after the British occupation of Iraq;

Al-Rusafi’s fiery tone is at its best in his call for internal reforms within the framework of the Empire. This verse is taken from a poem composed on the opening of a conference in Beirut.

Give my compatriots

A message which contains words

That hurt and burn like fire

Ask why they have not awakened from their blindness

Since the dawn of hope has risen for them.

Why do they not earn glory

When glory smiles at them?

A close observer of political developments, al-Rusafi generally protests against the turn of events where he is a helpless observer. He renews his faith in the ability of the Ottomans to save Iraq from the British and makes the river Tigris say the following lines.\(^{162}\)

\(^{161}\) ibid. P-205

\(^{162}\)
I keep my trust and remain true to my promise

Even if those I love wound my heart

I must complain to them of their conduct

O wind, bear to them my complaint

On Anglo-Iraqi relations, al-Rusafi does not mince words. The first treaty gave Iraq a semblance of independence but this was just an eye wash. Provoked by the irony of the situation, al-Rusafi echoes the mood of the nation quite fearlessly:

Flag, constitution, parliament! The right meaning of all is distorted

Of these names we have the words only

But their meaning is unknown

Who reads the constitution will find

That it was from the mandate thea this document was compiled

Who sees flags fluttering

Finds that they are not fluttering to the glory of our nation

Who comes to our parliament believes

That it is assembled but not for us

Who comes to the cabinet will find

That it is chained walking in the shackles imposed by advisers.


163 ibid. P-159.
Perhaps the most forceful poem was composed by al-Rusafi when the British established their airbase at Habbaniyya, near Baghdad. Rousing the nation out of its stupor he says:

Company of Arabs! Where will you stand amongst the people,

When Time's revolution is complete?

Asleep, whilst Destiny opens amongst you the two eyes of a waker, its day and night?

The people have broken compact with you before this, and have made light of keeping it in the taverns:

They have held in contempt their promise and pone back on it, and they have exploited the buried treasures of the homelands, And they have established their air bases to muster armies and aircraft.

Then they disseminated spies therein, working mischief and corruption in its court yards and edifices. Then they proceeded to rule the country like a ship in which they held the rudder. All this, whilst you are independent so they allege by grace of themselves. Those treaties, O people, are simply like treaties of wolves with lambs. Do you not remember how your ancestors were scornful when they were treated with misprision? The day when they rode out, glory accompanying their ranks, (armed) with the ridged Indian sword, And their banners fluttered on high, in armies to which East and West submitted. So arise today, seeking to renew a glory such as that which surpassed the sun and moon.164

By composing his verses in the perfected tradition of neo-classicism, al-Rusafi gave a brilliant lead to the poets of his own time and later poets, and remains the most extensively quoted of all the Iraqi poets to this day.

JAMIL SIDQI AL-ZAAWI (1863-1936)

The Iraqi neo-classicist who best projects the anxieties of the Iraqis in their transition from backward to modern conditions is Jamil Sidqi al-Zahawi. He was born of Kurdish parents

in Baghdad and was taught mainly by his father, a learned Mufti of Baghdad. Good at languages, al-Zahawi was equally fluent in Persian, Kurdish, Turkish and Arabic. Later through Turkish translations, he became interested in western sciences and philosophy.

Al-Zahawi first taught in Baghdad, then held a number of government jobs, of which the most interesting was from 1888 with the newspaper al-Zawr, the official Turkish organ.

In 1896, al-Zahawi traveled to Istanbul from where the Sultan, in order to keep al-Zahawi away from criticizing him, sent the young poet to the Yemen as a member of the reforming Mission. But al-Zahawi open attack of Ottoman policy in the Yemen alerted the Sultan, who ordered him back to Baghdad after a short spell of imprisonment in Istanbul.

In Baghdad, al-Zahawi taught at the Law School. From 1908 he represented Baghdad in the Ottoman chamber of Deputies at Istanbul. His greatest contribution in Parliament was to promote the cause of Arabic in Syria and Iraq for which he became very popular.

On account of ill health, al-Zahawi returned to Baghdad. His article on the emancipation of women raised a fury of conservative reaction and the Ottoman wali dismissed him from the Law School in 1810. Fearing further persecution, al-Zahawi sold his books and migrated to Egypt. He also lived in Turkey for sometime, returning to Baghdad only after the British Mandate was formed.

Al-Zahawi, who had been critical of the Turks and sympathetic to the British, thought that he would be given a position of honour in the British mandated Iraq. But official recognition in his appointment as member of the Education Panel to Arabise Ottoman Laws, and as member of the Iraqi Senate from 1925 to 1929, fell far short of his expectations. He also felt unhappy that his overtures to King Faysal only brought him a token pension and the title King Poet, both of which he refused.

His health never too good, began to fail him. For years al-Zahawi was afflicted with paralysis and his wife’s solace was the only silver lining in the life of the poor and ailing poet who aspired to be great, but greatness was denied him.

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165 jalal al khayyat, al talbshir bil thawna wa qiamiha al muasir. al shir wal Thawar, P-20

168
Al-Zahawi wrote serious prose articles in the magazines al-Muqtataf and Mujalat al-Arab and a few books including al-Fajr al-Sadiq (The True) to gather support for Sultan Abd al-Hamid.

His poetic output is contained in six volumes published between 1908 and 1939 in Beirut, Cairo and Baghdad. They are ‘al Kalim al Manzum (Poetic Utterances 1908) Rubaiyyat al-Zahawi (Zahawi’s Quatrains 1924) Diwan al Zahawi (1924) al Lubab (The Essence, 1928) al Aushal (Trickles, 1934) and al Thumala (Last Drops, 1939). His verse includes love poems, description, elegies and philosophical poems plus a considerable amount of political poetry. Al Zahawi also translated the Rubbaiyyat of Umar Khayyam.

Although al-Zahawi’s early education was traditional his devotion to western thought made him emerge as a writer perhaps too modern for his environment. In al Zahawi we see a preoccupation with progressive ideas in science and politics and a desire to plunge into thorny problems. His essays on the emancipation of women, for example, made him unpopular not only with the conservative section of society, but also with the masses. Saddened by their violent reaction to his verse also, al Zahawi stated

“I wrote poetry to alert my countrymen but they only blamed me, and when I persisted they persecuted me.

But I shall write till I die.”

If he could not publish his works in Baghdad, he got them published in Cairo.

Al-Zahawi hankered after political activity but could not really take an effective part in it. He had no clear-cut idea about politics and ended up by vacillating between one camp and another. His verse clearly conveys the contradictions that ruled his life.166

Kept away from public office, exiled, imprisoned and beset with financial worries. Al Zahawi started to commiserate with himself. Indeed this trait became second nature to him and

he became frustrated even when things were not so bleak with him. In an early poem he whines:167

To which of these people shall I complain of the wrong done to me,

Since all Arabs and Turks know I am persecuted.

The following verses taken from a poem composed in 1909 express his pessimistic streak;

Death for the youth is better than a life in which168

He is a heavy burden to his fellow men.

None is more troubled than the wise man who can see

The ignoramus honoured, while he is despised

One tenth of all mankind live with contented minds,

While nine tenths of mankind live lives of misery.

In the whole wide world is there no reforming man

To give some small relief from all the woes of life?

Al-Zahawi devoted a large part of his poetry to championing the rights of women, perhaps out of gratitude to his wife who nursed him faithfully all through his illness. He sums up his idea of women in one verse.169

The happiness of a man is a wife who obeys him and Whom he obeys,

These lines were composed on his wife. Note the poet’s complaining tone”


169 Al-Zahawi al Diwan.pp. 310-311 Trans: Yusuf Izz al Din, Modern Iraqi poetry (UAE University, 1997) P-206
O Buthayna if the foe quickens the hour of my departure
By a bullet or a sword,
Remain firm in that misfortune,
Believing I will always be your companion in dreams.
Patience in adversity is the patrimony of
A noble woman of high birth
I will not be the first who dies for his country.
Nor the first among those
Who hope for the progress of their people
With other nations.
Rejecting fanaticism and striving to save the people from prejudice,
I wish them life, and they wish me death.
Oh, what a difference between their wish and mine!

Al-Zahawi made many experiments in poetry. Perhaps the most interesting was his attempt to introduce variety in the rhyme pattern of the qasida. Keeping the meter intact, al-Zahawi changed the end rhyme with every change of theme within a poem, thus making a departure from the mono-thyme which had become a permanent feature of Arabic poetry. Al-Zahawi also introduced blank verse into some types of poetry and poetry containing arguments.170

170 An earlier attempt at blank verse in Arabic was made by Rizq Allah Hasan of the Lebanon (1825-1880) when he translated a chapter of the Book of Job in blank verse. Al-Zahawi however gets the credit of being the first to write original in blank verse. John A. Haywood, Modern Arabic Literature P-10.
In his Rubaiyyat al Zahawi rhymed only the second and fourth lines as opposed to the first second and fourth of the Persian and Urdu quatrains.\textsuperscript{171}

In al-Zahawi there is a shift in emphasis from form to content. He does not strive to attain sound effects and his verse appears prosaic when compared to his contemporaries. Concentrating more on subject matter, al-Zahawi deals with scientific subjects and modern discoveries as well as all important social and political matters. A refreshing change in his poetry is the absence of eulogies.

His verse is plain and clear with no exaggeration or hyperbole.

The early verse of al Zahawi is characterized by a spirit of rebellion against established customs and regimes. Later as he grew old, al Zahawi either kept silent on controversial issues or being confused by them he kept shifting his position. Thus his early poetry is characteristic of al Zahawi the rebel, such as the poem composed around 1897 in which he criticizes the Ottoman rulers and for which he was extradited to Baghdad. Al-Zahawi later compositions, however, betray a bewildered old soul.

At first al Zahawi supported the Ottoman Turks and even argued that whoever disobeyed the Sultan was an unbeliever. He was hopeful when the Ottoman constitution was announced that a new era would begin. These lines also show his socialistic leanings.\textsuperscript{172}

\begin{verbatim}
Freedom has been proclaimed and the time for forced
Unrewarding work and the whip has passed
Every man is free now-----
And this is the time hoped for by all.
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{171} John A. Haywood, Modern Arabic Literature. (Lund Humphries, 1971) P-107

\textsuperscript{172} Al-Zahawi al kalim al Manzum , p 183. Trans : Dr. Ysuf Izz al Din, Modern Iraqi Poetry . (UAE University, 2997) P-35
But the hopes of the Arabs were not fulfilled and they suffered many set backs. The Turks too lost the war and the British landed in Iraq to take their place. In a fiery tirade al Zahawi asks the Arabs to unite:\textsuperscript{173}

The sword shall wash away my shame,

It will be sharp and strong until broken

By God, I shall never turn my steed away from my enemy

Until they and flee.

Persisting in his call for freedom even though it was foolhardy to offend the British, al Zhawi says:

Oh, hands of injustice, may you be paralysed!

Oh, land, become independent!

Oh, flag of our land, fly again and shelter us,

Our hearts are like cauldrons boiling with anger.

But al Zahawi changed his attitude and called the British the best of administrators. He asked his countrymen to transfer their loyalties to the British as the Turks had been exploiting them.\textsuperscript{174}

The Turks have humiliated you and robbed you of your rights:

Make the British your friends, Because they are men of truth

And trust and deed.

In another poem al Zahawi Praises the British:\textsuperscript{175}

\textsuperscript{173} ibid.

I love the British and select them from all mankind
Because I know they are the best of people
Their rule lights the darkness of injustice
Justice shines like the full moon.

The poet's admiration of the British is quite evident during the Iraqi revolt of 1919. Yet he wrote an elegy on the martyrs of the revolt. In another instance when the nationalist leader al Sa'dun died tragically, al Zahawi not wanting to remain isolated, joined the other poets and composed an elegy. His changing loyalties are difficult to explain. The one reason, a far fetched on stems perhaps from the troubled political milieu of Iraq with its consequent changes in social life which led the poet to shift his loyalties too often.

On social problems, however, al Zahawi remained true to his convictions. Cases in point are his views on women's emancipation and on educational and scientific progress,

The veil only paralyses and hides the nation
And when it unveils it appears
How can a nation rise to civilization
While half of it is hidden from the other?

But women do not figure in al Zahawi verse in the same way as in al Rusafi. He is not move by their social and economic plight nor does he ask for the improvement of their lot by society as al Rusafi does. But sometimes stray incidents affected him deeply and he was able to portray them quite poignantly. Seeing the widow of a soldier beg for arms he says.176

She wears ragged clothes and cloak


176 ibid. P- 86
Torn like her entrails
She holds back her rears with her fingers
And when she takes a step or two she does it slowly;
She holds her weak right hand begging
'As she is ashamed before those she begs from
O widow of the soldier, do not feel ashamed for it is the high
Duty of the government to feel shame.

Al Zahawi wrote some of his best pieces on science. Reminiscing about the glories of the Mustansariyya College he proclaims:

O science, shine forth like a star since ignorance has spread darkness
And send your light as a messenger.

The poem Siyahat al Aql (The Flight of the Intellect) is a fascinating account of a journey in space through stars and planets composed as it were by a space scientist. What detracts from the value of the poem. However, is the lack of any comment or interpretation by the poet.

Thawra fi'l Jahim (Revolt in Hell) was published in 1929. It is inspired by Risalat al-Ghufran of Abu al Ali and caused a stir with its revolutionary and heretic ideas. The poet dies and is buried and the two angels of reckoning examine him about his faith. Not satisfied with his answers they take him to heaven so that he can see for himself the bounties he is reffusing. The poet observes everything but finds that heaven is inhabited mostly by ignorant men. The angels then take him to hell, which is filled with men of genius. Suddenly something extraordinary happens. One of the inventors brings out a fire hydrant. A revolt starts in hell and its inhabitants move up to heaven on devilsbacks and occupy it in a lightning raid.

Al Zahawi wrote beautiful poems about his country. Here is one of them.

O mirror of limpidity.
Sky of Iraq,
The best of skies,
Look at me.

For a long time
My heart has loved you
And adored you, my soul
Look at me at dawn

When the nightingale sings
On the top branches of the tree:

Look at me when the sun disappears,
Witnessed by the staring eyes of the shadows.

Look at me when the creation hides its noises.
And nature in the darkness of the night.
Hears only the murmuring of waters.

Look at me when the autumn mourns its leafless trees.
And the gardens lose their flowers.

Or the flowers lose their gleam.

Look at me, secretly, through the broken clouds,
And look at me when I cry and look at you
With my tearful eyes.
For all his contradictions, al Zahawi remains one of the most admired poets of Iraq. While poets in Egypt and Syria said what pleased the masses, al Zahawi was not afraid of displeasing them. Though he has not acquired the status of al Rusafi, his forward looking ideas and revolutionary fervour have a special appeal and relevance even today.

KHALIL MUTARAN (1872-1948)

The Lebanese poet Khallil Mutran of Baalbek, is amongst the first to tread fresh ground in Arabic poetry, paving the way for its modernization.

Mutran was born in conservative family with a lineage going back to the Christian tribe of the Azd of Yemen. His father was engaged in trade but his mother had acquired pronounced literary learnings. Mutran went to school in Beirut and was guided by the doyen of all intellectuals the celebrated al Shaykh Ibrahim al Yaziji.

For a poem criticizing Sultan Abdul Hamid, young Mutran was persuaded to leave Beirut. In 1890 he went to Paris where he studied French literature. Lured by politics he joined the movement of the Young Turks in Paris, but the Turkish intelligence there kept him under surveillance. To get away Mutran thought of migrating to South America. But then decided on Egypt and lived there all his life from 1892.

First in Alexandria, later in Cairo, Mutran settled down to writing. He became a reputed journalist, but had learnt to be careful and avoided controversial issues. He edited al Ahram till 1900, then al Liwa and al Mu’ayyad and also started his own fortnightly review, al Majalla al Misriyya.

Around this time Mutran fell in love. A chance encounter with a girl in a park, where she was stung by a bee, developed into a deep attachment. But their happiness was shortlived. She was forced to leave for Syria where she fell ill and died. Mutran never recovered from this tragic shock and remained unmarried till he died at seventy seven.

177 In the 16th century a branch of the Azd tribe settled in the Lebanon and maintained it Christian faith. Josephe el Hacime.
After a brief spell in business and agriculture, Mutran turned back to writing. He translated profusely for the theatre and stage plays at the National Theatre, whose director he became from 1935 onwards. But it was poetry that brought Khalil Mutran the widest acclaim and title Shair al-qutrain (The Poet of the Two Regions – Syria and Egypt).

Khalil Mutran’s poems are collected in four volumes called Diwan al Khalil. The first volume was published in 1908 and the other three some forty years later (1948-9). His verse ranges from elegies, eulogies and national poetry of the neo-classicists to narrative poems and romantic short light lyrics. Mutran says of the first volume “Love forms three quarters of my poetry”.

The plays translated by Mutran include Shakespeare’s Hamlet, Macbeth, Othello, The Merchant of Venice, Corneille’s Polyceute, Le Cid and Cinna, Racine’s Berenice and Hugo’s Hernani.

Throughout his life Khalil Mutran pursued the two aims of the Lebanese intellectuals’ (1) to safeguard Arabic and its basic rules (2) to create original works drawing on European literature are for ideas and material.

In his pursuit Mutran was helped by the example set by al-Shaykh Ibrahim al Yaziji whose style he describes:

“Precision” was never more important to any scholar that it was to him. If you read any of his completed qasidas you found strength, the proper placement of words, purity of style, sound structure, eloquence or smoothness (depending on the nature of the subject matter), freedom from the rare or the archaic and constant search for the genuine. The best description of his poetry is in my opinion to call it poetry of perfection (Shiir al Itqan).178

Mutran strove for the same ideals.

Mutran was impressed no less by Sulaiman al Bustani’s contention that Jahiliyya poetry was characterized by a spontaneity of thought that was rarely found in the poetry of Islamic

times. So he decided to follow the jahiliyya models closely. It will be noted that in doing so, Mutran swerved from the trend of al Barudi and his disciples who followed the Abbasid poets.\textsuperscript{179}

Perhaps Mutran was drawn to jahiliyya poetry by reason of his ancestry or by the wave of Arabism which was at its crest among Christian intellectuals and called for a return to pre Islamic norms rather than those of the Islamic periods.

In France Mutran came under the full impact of European literature and more particularly of the romanticists. Lamartine, Hugo and de Musset. Describing de Musset, Mutran says;

He was a poet whose life was a lyrical line rhymed with a sigh

His art in every line concealed a subtle sensibility.\textsuperscript{180}

Fascinated by the form as well as content of French poetry. Mutran regarded the French poets to be creative artists and innovators. By innovation, Mutran implied that poets should think out the subject matter themselves and work out the details and descriptions imaginatively.

Mutran was of the view that compared to European poetry, which offered a variety of forms like narrative verse and epic poetry, Arabic poetry was like a monotonous caravan.\textsuperscript{181}

Mutran faithfully maintained the general framework of the classical qasida its metres, stress on purity, eloquence and diction, Within the verse, however he made important changes, He felt, for instance, that it was not necessary to hold on to old similes and metaphors as these hindered the poet from expressing himself freely or confused the reader by conjuring up vague images and dim specters. By discarding the traditional repertoire, Mutran was able to give precision to his ideas. He did not move away from the pale of classical qasida, but added new

\textsuperscript{179} ibid.

\textsuperscript{180} ibid. P-148.

\textsuperscript{181} ibid. P-148.
trends; the most important of which were the unity of theme in the poem and the accent on meaning rather than on form.¹⁸²

Instead of dealing with many subjects in one poem. Or flitting from theme to theme in the manner of traditional poets Mutran concentrated on one subject in one poem the subject being defined in the title. His poems contain one experience which is depicted in successive verses, each verse being a part of the whole. In place of contradiction or disconnection between verses there was coordination and cohesion. Mutran based this unity on the model of European lyrics with complete unity in different parts of the lyric. e.g. “Do You Remember “ about his childhood in Zahla.

Do you remember when we both were children.

Those happy days in Zahla

When our shadows met, exchanging laughter,

Amidst the grapevines secrecy.

Do you remember how we rushed,

Drunk with joy, to pick the best of the grapes,

And paid for them with our smiles?

Do you remember that morning when two angels

Took us both to the replenishing heaven

Of the highest and the lowest, and to the Pleiades?

And that river?

Is it still flowing as it did

When it was haunted by us?

¹⁸² Adil al Ghadban, khalil Mutran, creator de L ecole Moderne de Poesie Numero Speciale L Revue du (Caire 1953) P-48
Do you remember it?
It nursed the gardens
With its sweet, refreshing water,
And its love assured their splendour.

Mutran art is varied, He excels in subtle nuances in depicting his feelings and his images reveal a richness. The following verses form the first, third and seventh of “A Lover Bouquet.”

If only what we wished to
Were in our power to do,
A rose-garden I’d send you-
No mere bouquet would do:
But this card, written for you
In rhymes of blood must do ...
This passion is a secret
Between my heart and I
By change, unasked, you caused it
In me-unique am I.
Alas! I put my trust in
My treacherous heart and eye.
I scanned a star, and yet I
Of blame could feel no stain.
And how could any star know
That coldness causes pain?

Or that some gazing lover

Might of some wound complain?

The other experiments of Khalil Mutran include the use of blank verse as in the Eulogy to Ibrahim al Yaziji: narrative verse as in “A Cup of Coffee”, epic poetry in “Nero” and allegory in “the Chinese Wall”.

Mutran wanted poetry to be a picture of life with its good and evil and sweet and bitter aspects. Analyzing his feelings carefully, he introduced new ideas in the realm of human passion and sorrow, His poems thus became expressions of his inner self.

The emphasis on the individual element, and on imagination and emotion, marked a new beginning in Arabic poetry. Mutran describes the romantic tread in the introduction to his first diwan of poetry:

I claim frankly and without fear, that this kind of poetry and I do not mean my own modest works, is the poetry of the future because it is the poetry of life and truth as well as of imagination. My poetry is nothing but the tears I have shed and the groans I have raised and the parts of life I have wasted and then felt I had recovered by putting them into poetry.

My highest hope for my readers is that, while reading this work they share my innermost feelings (musharakati fi Wijdani)...... and benefit from my experience. 

The poem Baalbek Castle is a fine example of an eloquently composed poem in which Mutran recollects his emotional experience. Hikayat Ashiqayn (A Tale of Two Lovers) 1897:-1903 is a long poem running over thirty six pages in which Mutran records his love for the girl he first met in the park, to their parting and her death. He composed many poems in the memory of his beloved. Warda Matat (A Rose That Died) was written on her death anniversary.

O questing birds, what seek you in your wanderings? they made answer:

183 Mounah A. khouri, poetry and the Making of Modern. (Brill, 1971) p.149
We are the hopes of youth: and here our beloved lived and suffered.

She was the rose in our garden, reigning

Justly with the submission of all therein

Yet all too soon we saw her fall from her throne, then disappear.

And so you see us ever searching for some trace of her, or flocking where once she was wont to be.

Mutran is more expressive in his feeling in this longer narrative poems. Al – Asad al Baki(The Lion in Tears) is filled with a despair that reaches out to the reader’s soul, as also Tasji Janazatayn (Death of a Dear Couple) the description of a lover who commits suicide as he despairs of love, and al janin al Shahid (The Martyred Foetus) about a man who lures a girl and then throws her out on the streets,

Another aspect of romanticism that Mutran introduces is a deep and intangible spiritual bond between external nature and the mind of man.\(^{184}\) This is finely portrayed in one of his best lyrics, al Masa, (Evening) composed in 1902.

Mutran is suffering from two agonies: physical sickness and the pangs of a hopeless and unrequited love:\(^{185}\)

In afflicting disease I thought to find the cure for my

Longings but my burdens redoubled

Oh, two weaklings hold me in thrall and nothing in injustice equals the tyranny of the weak.

A heart drained by passion and love, and a frame wracked by disease.

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Nothing really helps the poet in alleviating his pain and inner turmoil. Nor is there any relief in moving from place to place.\footnote{186 ibid}

In vain have I roamed the land, the exile seeking cures for my ills

In solitude with ardent longing, alone in my grief, unaided with my burdens

Complaining to the sea the tumult of my thoughts and it with violent wind replies

I settle upon silent rocks: would that my heart resembled this dumb stone.

Unlike the classical poets who were generally onlookers observing only the outward aspects of nature, Mutran blends so harmoniously with nature that his portrayals suggest that his feelings have merged with the atmospheres.

Standing by the seashore, he watches the sunset. The restless ocean waves are echoes of his own disquiet feelings the waves that lash against the rock are like calamities that come upon him. The sea is full of sorrow like the poet's heart that evening. The muck of the land rises as if within his soul. The horizon too is soiled and he sees his own forebodings reflected in the gory sunset. As he thinks of his beloved his tears glisten in the resplendent rays of the setting sun.

I remembered you at day's end, my heart being between hope and fear,

And my thoughts appear before me, wounded like yonder blood red clouds,

From my eyes flow ear drops gleaming in the sunset's shining rays.

The fusion between nature and the poet's emotion is complete and a stage arrives where sensualism does not exist. The poem ends in a dramatic climax where the poet finds a human meaning in the sunset. As the sun makes its descent, the day ends and dies, the whole of creation weeps with him as he sees his own vigour ebbing:

As if the last tear in creation had joined with the last of my tears to mourn me

As though I had known of my day and seen my own twilight reflected.

\footnote{186 ibid}
Mutran’s verse represent the first successful synthesis of Arabic and European poetry which became the base for future experiments. The ideas elaborated by Mutran as early as 1908 when his first volume was published were taken up by younger poets who developed them into a movement. Whether they acknowledged Mutran’s lead or not is not relevant considering that he was years ahead of both the Diwan school and the Mahjar poets.

ABBAS MAHMUD AL’AQQAD (1889-1964)

Al-Aqqad was the chief guiding light of the Diwan movement that heralded romanticism in Arabic. He was nicknamed Giant” both for his physical stature and his status in literature.

His birth place was Aswan, a city steeped in antiquity and famous for its scenic splendour. Here he began to love nature and its birds and bees and the Nile the subject matter of much of his verse. Also in the awe inspiring and almost spiritual ambience of Aswan, al Aqqad grew up with a broad perspective of life and universal love of man.

For financial reasons, al Aqqad left school early but all his life never left studying. He taught himself from the Arabic classics and mastered English in which he read European literature and philosophy.

He showed a flair for poetry by composing martial songs as a child. In prose too he made an early mark. While still at school he started a journal parallel to Mujalat al-Ustadh (The Intellectual’s journal) of Abd Allah al Nadim to refute the ideas of the veteran statesman.

However, it was not journalism that al Aqqad could first select as his vocation but teaching. Talking of his first job he said;

“I remember that I received the news of my appointment as I would that of a prison sentence, for I felt with all my heart that a salaried man was the 20th century slave.”

187 Abd al Hayy Dayyab al Aqqad wa tatawwur al fikri p-33
Al-'Aqqad later helped edit al-Dustur. He signed his articles in the European fashion: A. M Aqqad; the first two initials read A.M and led to the humorous query "What does the uncle say today?" And "uncle" was not yet twenty.\(^\text{188}\)

At the closure of the paper in 1909, al Aqqad returned to Aswan exhausted and ill. He even despaired of life and packed up his writings for posthumous publishing, but a change in Alexandria brought him back to health.

Alternating between journalism, Government positions and teaching between Cairo, Aswan and Alexandria, he nevertheless carried on serious literary work.

The movement which later came to be called the diwan movement was conceived about this time with the close collaboration of Shukri and al Mazini.\(^\text{189}\) Al Aqqad's friendship with al Mazini was reminiscent of Wordsworth and Coleridge's and they even lived together like the Lake poets and had a comparable impact on changing the course of poetry. Al-Aqqad composed most of his first diwan during this period.

After the first World War, al-Aqqad wrote outspokenly in favour of the Wafd party. His reputation as a political commentator grew. During the revolution of 1919, he published secret revolutionary bulletins with his friend al Mazini.

All this activity corroded his health again, and al-Aqqad returned to Aswan. In 1921 he wrote with al Mazini the famous Diwan al-Naqd wal-Shi'ir in two parts. It is considered fundamental in the poet's approach to poetry and criticism.

The political climate of Egypt deteriorated in the thirties, Al-Aqqad was sentenced to imprisonment for nine months in 1930 for his writing in praise of democracy and stand against the monarch.

Al-Aqqad remained a bachelor and devoted his life to literature. His best works appeared during the thirties and forties. For his services to literature al-Aqqad was awarded the State Prize al ja'iza al-Dawla in 1960.

\(^{188}\) Ibid. p-44

\(^{189}\) According to Dr. Ahmad Haykal, the name Diwan for the movement is misleading on two counts.
Although al-Aqqad’s main concern was journalism and he wrote eighty two prose works, his diwans numbering ten appeared uninterruptedly from 1916 to 1950.

His prose ranges from journalistic articles, literary essays and research papers, (e.g.on Ibn al Rumi), to works on literary criticism (On Old and New Poets) and philosophy (The Second Man, about Schopenhauer’s views on women), Al-Aqqad wrote extensively on Islamic topics. This include Muhammad, al-Masih and biographies of Abu Bakr, Umar and Ali. He also produced an interesting account of Satan. The novel Sara was published in 1938.

The there parts of his first diwan appeared in 1916. 1917 and 1921 respectively and were printed together with the fourth part in 1928 as Diwan al Aqqad. Other famous collections are Wahy al Arbain (On Attaining the Age of Forty, 1933), Hadiyyat al karawan, 1933 about the plover as its name suggests and Abir Sabil (The Wayfarer, 1937) about commonplace topics.

Among the poets of the classical school who influenced al aqqad was Ibn Rumi, whose subject matter, sorrow and complaints about people and time greatly appealed to him. Echoes of Abu Tammam and al Buhturi and their endeavour to incorporate nature and its inspiration in poetry are also discernible in his verse.

Very important in the molding al Aqqad verse were the views of the English critics: Carlyle, Hunt and Hazlitt, and the main spur toward romanticism, came from his vast reading of the English poets Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Keats and Shelley.

Al-Aqqad breaks away from neoclassicism in two important ways he insists on the organic unity of the poem which was incidentally a feature that distinguished European poetry from Arabic. In al Aqqad’s verse there is no variety of topics as in the classical qasidas Al-Aqqas keeps firm control over the harmony of different verses making the whole of his poem, and not one of them can be transferred or removed from its place.

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190 Shawqi Daif al Adab al Arahi al Muasir fi Misr, (Cairo, 1971) p-140
191 Ibid p 142
According to al Aqqad this unity is achieved only if poetry springs from some deep emotional experience which us to the second feature of his verse the treatment of nature and its phenomena and love with the imagination and spontaneity of the romanticists.

Al Aqqad resembles the neo classicists in his use of pure classical Arabic and the stress on the elegant word. His language is clearly marked by tahadid (definition) as opposed to ha (suggestion). His verse however suffers at times from over clarification.

In prosody al Aqqad’s experiments are restricted to the length of the metre which he varies according to the subject matter. For instance he uses short metres for commonplace themes.

According to al Aqqad poetic experience is not limited to feeling or imagination about the past, but also extends to the present and about only to a few topics like nature and love but to all scenes and perspectives.

Not gardens alone or seas or stars but everything in our daily lives which stirs our feelings can be suitable material for poetry.

The diwan Abir Sabil contains many poems in which al Aqqad attempts to convert ordinary and even prosaic subjects into verses no less beautiful than the poems on love and nature, Beautiful examples of these are The Passing Soldier and The Laundryman on Sunday Night.

Al-Aqqad however soars with his imagination in his meditation son nature and its objects such as his poems on the desert, the Nile, the sea, the moon, the seasons of the year, of which the most beautiful are on the winter scenes in Aswan, on flowers, especially the rose, and on birds. Some of these poems seem inspired by the English romanticists. The plover in Hadiyyal al karawan, like Wordsworth’s Nightingale, is hidden in the darkness song is lost in the wilderness just as the cry of a genius is wasted on his people.192

Some of his love poems too are inspired or adapted from the English poets. Wada (Farewell) is an adaptation of a song by Burns, In his love poems al Aqqad describes his feelings

minutely and also gives his reflections. These lines are taken from a small poem Mazij (Love’s Compound).

Love is not mere friendship son,

Neither enmity alone:

Love an equal compound is

Mingled of both qualities.

Purest enmity’s to share

With the sweetest friendship there,

Free for all, to yield and rape

And but few on earth escape.

In “he Birth of Love and Death of Love “al Aqqad contrasts love’s birth with its quick end in a fascinating comparison. His love poems are not devoid of wit. The poem below is called akdhibini(Cheat Me).

Cheat me once or cheat twice:

With a thousand thousand lies

Wondrous in variety

Fraudulently cozen me!

Never, O my heart’s delight

Shall thou bridge the infinite

Firmament of difference

Twixt thy folly and my sense!

Lie to me, lie anew,
As thy fancy bids thee do:
What is worth my wealth of wit
If thou be not cheating it?
Plunder me, as takes thy will,
I have wit in plenty still'
Where's the harm, to steal a grain
Or a couple from my brain?

Love also entails suffering. In "Outpourings "al Aqqad cries, "My verse is my tears, "
but sense of resignation eventually prevails. These lines are from the poem "Forgetting.193

Time has cast us adrift on sea; we are lost in its wastes, like two beings who have never met.

No longer are you the dearest one to me, nor am I your sole comfort in this world: no longer are we prepared to die for one another.

Strange is our past and strange too our present,. Is it like this that the landmarks of our lives go, leaving no trace behind.

These lips, is there in their smiles any mark of her kisses which happened not so long ago?

These eyes, where are the traces in their looks of her merciful touch or the bliss of her breath? Nothing, not a word or a sing has remained.

Only a memory that haunts life, sick orphaned and fraught with shame, then it will pass as if it had never been.

In considering al Aqqad’s contribution to poetry it should be remembered that while he strove to effect changes in poetry when Shawqi, the foremost neoclassicist, had yet to produce his best verse, and tried as he says, not to be restricted but to one thing and that is the beautiful expression of true feeling, he could not shake off the legacy entirely however much he tried.194

The emergence of prose as a vital force vying with poetry for the pride of place in Arabic literature was the landmark of this period,

Enriched with a masterful adoption of Western forms and ideas, Arabic prose did not yield its characteristic flavor, In fact a quest for regional and individualistic identity and an interests in prismatic history are of significance.

These trends are best represented in the writings of Taha Husayn. As a scholar he incorporates European methods of research and probes into the sensitive areas of Arab legacy such as history and poetry. As a writer the account alone of his life in al Abysm (The Stream of Days) places him among the immortals of literature.

The selection of an authentic Egyptian environment is seen in Memphis Taymir’s writings, Introducing realism into fiction, Mahmud perfects the art of the short story with the focus on ordinary characters and situations and delineates them with compassion and fine subtlety.

TAHA HUSAYN (1889-1973)

Taha Husayn (sometimes spelled Hussein) (1889-1973) is considered one of Egypt’s leading men of letters. Blind from early childhood, he devoted his life to intellectual freedom for the writer, critic, and scholar and to the introduction of Western learning into his country.

Taha Husayn was born on Nov. 4, 1889, in Maghagha, a mill town in Minya Province, Egypt. One of 11 children, he became blind at the age of three from a combination of eye disease and folk medicine. After completing studies at the village mosque school, Taha was sent to Cairo (1902) to attend al-Azhar, the mosque university that served as a theological seminary to much of the Moslem world. Because of his outspoken opposition to the school’s teaching system at al-

Azhar, Husayn was failed in his final examinations. He enrolled in the new, secular Egyptian University, where he studied with some of the leading scholars of the time, Egyptian.

It is an unusual distinction for a man dismissed from office to acquire the widest acceptance from his people, yet Taha Husayn on ceasing to be the Den of the Arts College began to be acknowledged as the Doyen of Arabic letters.

He was born in Upper Egypt, where his father was a minor official in a sugar factory. Probably because of wrong treatment, he was afflicted with blindness when barely three. But his indomitable will, sharp intelligence, and phenomenal memory helped him to overcome this handicap.

The only profession open to Taha Husayn was religious teaching. He was sent to a village school where he memorized the Quran. At thirteen he was already at al Azhar (1902) concentrating on linguistic and religious studies. Although Taha Husayn was sifted by the repetitions of the Shaykhs, he learnt there the vital lesson of being thorough in the study of texts, avoiding superficialities and developing those qualities and retentive faculties that enable patient research. He took interest in lectures delivered outside the curriculum by the great shaykh al Marsafi. And came to realize that literature and not religion was his calling.

In 1908 the new Egyptian University was established. It offered subjects like Ancient Egyptian History and the relation of geography to literature. Taha Husayn who had been made to fail in the finals by the Ulema of al Azhar was only too keen to join it. Now he had the occasion to study under the orient lists, Nallino and Guidi, who lectured in pure classical Arabic. Taha Husayn also mastered French. In 1914 he submitted his thesis on Abu alAla al Maarri and got his doctoral degree, the first conferred by the University.

On a university scholarship to France, Taha Husayn went first to Montpellier and then to the Sorbonne to study historical sciences. He also learnt Greek and Latin.

In Paris, Taha Husayn met his future life companion who brought light into his life.

"She changed his life from misery to bliss, from despair to hope, from poverty to affluence he says in al Ayyam.

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After completing his second doctoral theses on the social philosophy of Ibn Khaldun in 1918 and getting a diploma of higher studies in ancient history, Taha Husayn returned to Egypt in 1919. He was appointed to teach history at the Arts College.

A period of intense literary research and scholarly writing ensued, as editor of the literary journal Al Siyasa he enabled his readers to have an insight into Greek and French literatures.

The years 1920-1940 were characterized in Egypt by a rift among writers and poets in their approach to literature. Known as “The Rift between the Old and the New” between the scholars of Azhar calling for the preservation of classical norms and the university graduates.