

Development of Arabic Short Story

Tradition of Arab Fiction

Fiction (*al Fannul Qasasy*) is quite natural and very old as originated along with the history of the mankind . People have always liked to tell a story and to listen to one. There lies the need to understand one's human condition and to explore the significance of life, to make sense of one's experience and to answer the desire to learn about a variety of human experiences in life. These things increased the importance and popularity of fiction.

The Arab literary history never been poor in fictional creations. One major source of fictive tales and legends is the collected narratives of *Wahab bin al Munabbah* preserved in '*Kitaabu-tteejaan fee Mulooki Himyar*' (The Book of Crowns on the Kings of Himyar). The battle legends termed '*Ayyamul Arab*' (Days of Arabs) are earlier forms of Arab stories. These legends can be classified as '*al Mulahhamaat*' (Heroic Stories). A number of stylized and idealized love stories survived in the poems of well known Arabic poets. The short narrative or factual anecdotes termed as '*al Akhbaar*' is a pure Arabic genre . The Arab creative writers in the classical and post classical periods (A.D. 1250 – 1850) would find several methods of diversifying the fictional techniques such as the attempts made in '*Kaleela wa Dimna*' (a Translation of Indian fables), '*Alf Laila wa Laila*' and '*al Maqaama*' (The Assemblies). Most scholars choose *Maqaama* as the ancestor of the Novel, the Short story and the Drama in Arabic. But *Maqaama* pays special attention to the coherence of each episode and therefore it comes closer to the form of the Short story.

Generally the classical words '*qissa*' (pl. *qisas* = stories) , '*riwaaya*' (pl. *riwaayaat*= narratives) and less commonly '*hikaaya*' (pl. *hikaayaat* = tales)

are used in traditional fiction. The first of these is now the commonest. Early attempts at fiction writing tended to be in rhymed prose with rhetoric ('*balaagha*') devices. The literature is full of delightful anecdotes, which were a stock method of bringing home a point or sketching a character. And it is based on widely used technique of the frame story, into which are placed short stories of various types and varying origins. But these stories lack the psychological insight and detailed and developing characterization, which we expect of modern fiction.

Early attempts at Modern Short Story

A Short Story is usually called an '*uqsoosa*' (pl. *aqasees*), a word derived from the same root as '*qissa*'. But '*qissa qaseera*' is also used, '*qaseera*' meaning short. Short story in the modern sense is a term of new literary genre that developed in the last few decades of the 19th century and reached maturity only in the early decades of the 20th century. It is dealt with a single aspect or issue which revolves round a particular event or emotional state of being. The story concludes by the finishing of the situation dealt with. It aims at making an impression or impact in the mind of reader more than narrating the story. The theme of short story should be complete in analyzing and dealing and it should not indulge in a long span of time.

It is a well known fact that the Arabic Literature with its rich repertoire of anecdotes and short narratives gave a big spurt to the development of short story. But, like the Novel, its growth owes to the influence of European literature. Impacts of Maupassant, Emile Zola, and Balzac are very apparent in Arabic short story. At first thousands of French, English and Russian short stories were either translated or adopted by Arab writers. ('*Daarul Kutub*', Beirut puts their number at ten thousand before 1914). Starting from 1870, the year Saleem al Bustaani's (1848 – 1884) first story, '*Ramya min ghair Raami*' (Throw from non thrower) was published in the magazine '*al Jinaan*', the short story began to be produced widely. This story embodied the changes

required for the transition from the old narrative form and such as simplification of language and curtailing of rhetoric devices and rare words. The Cairo magazine '*al Diyaa*' from its inception in 1897, published one story in every number. Thus thousands of Short stories appeared in Egypt and Lebanon between 1870 and 1914 mostly in magazines and News papers. Other Arab countries lagged behind. But some Syrians, who had often been educated alongside the Lebanese story writers, wrote Short stories which were published in Lebanese magazines such as '*al Jinaan*'. Gradually the interest in Short story writing in other Arab countries. Since 1967 a magazine called '*Qasas*' (Stories) has been appearing in Tunis.

Among early Short story writers to make a mark in literature were *Mustafa Lutfi al Manfalooty* (1876 – 1924) in Egypt , *Jibraan Khaleel Jibraan* (1882 – 1931) and *Meekhaaeel Nuayma* (b. 1889) in '*Mahjar*' (Arab Migrants to Americas) . *al Manfalooty's* collections of stories called '*Abaraat*' (Tears , 1915) , distinguished by deep pessimism and melancholy, deal with social evils and the reaction against western habits in Arab society. The *mahjar* writers introduced psychological insight for the first time in Arab fiction. *Jibraan's* first good collection of Short stories , '*Araaisul Murooj*' (Brides of Meadow) was published as early as 1906. It contains stories about life and social problems in Lebanon. In '*al Arwaahul Mutamarrida*' (Rebellious Spirits , 1908) , the second collection *Jibraan* lashes out against religious and political vested interests. *Nuayma* reveals the influence of Russian realism in his story entitled '*Sanatuhul Jadeeda*' (Her new year , 1914).

Pioneers of the New Genre

The Arabic Short Story in its artistic form was born at the hands of *Muhammad Taymoor* (1892 – 1821) who published his Story '*Fil Qitaar*' (In the Train) in the year 1917 and is generally considered as the pioneer of the new genre in Egypt. He published Short stories in the magazine *Assufoor* and were collected in '*Maa Tarahul Uyoon*' (What the eyes see , 1922) . His stories

attempted to capture various facets of life's contradictions and to depict truly Egyptian characters. He played a significant role in providing the newly emerging genre with a clear sense of purpose. Other pioneers include *Khaleel Bydas* (1875 – 1949) of Palestine, *Labeeba Haashim* (1880 – 1947) of Lebanon, the brothers of Syrian origin *Eesaa Abeed* (1893 – 1923) and *Shahaata Abeed* (d. 1961) from Egypt and *Mahmood Ahmad Sayyid* (1901 – 1937) of Iraq. They were responding to the change in literary sensibility and the demands of the new reading public more than to each others work. And they had a clear understanding of both the formal limitations of the short story and the nature of the issues they wanted to tackle. Among the works of these pioneers, '*Ehsaanu Haanim*' (Goodness of Haanim, 1921) by *Eesaa Abeed*, '*Darsun Muelimun*' (Painful Lesson, 1922) by *Shahaata* and '*Fee Saaatin minazzamaan*' (In an hour of the Age, 1935) by *Mahmood Ahmad Sayyid* are significant collections.

The New School of Writers

Growth of the new school of writers (*al Madrasatul Hadeetha*) in Egypt during the end of the first quarter of the 20th century contributed to the maturation of Arabic Short story. *Mahmood Taymoor* (1894 – 1973), *Mahmood Taahir Laasheen* (1894 – 1954), *Yahya Haqqy* (1905 – 1993) and *Husain Fawzy* (1900 – 1988) were at the head of this school and they brought out the weekly journal '*al Fajr*' in 1925. This school is distinguished by the concern of modern sciences and fine arts with the literatures. They advocated for the production of national fiction. *Mahmood Taymoor*, the younger brother of *Muhammad Taymoor* was the most productive among Arab short story writers of his age. In six years he published five collections. He was particularly influenced by Maupassant, Tolstoy, Turgenev and Chekhov. The collection of *Mahmood's* short stories are named after a leading character. '*al Shaikh Jumaa*' (1925), '*Amm Mutawalli*' (1927), '*al Shaikh Sayyid al Abeet*' (1928), and '*al Haajj Shalby*' (1928) are the more celebrated collections. *Mahmood* achieves a sensitive balance between the various elements of narrative and creates a convincing human character, a mature fictional situation rich in texture, structure and conflict. His fame rests on his remarkable power of

characterization. His later works reveal a shift from the imaginative trend to a more analytical approach. It is to *Mahmood's* credit that with his creation the short story moved to the highest level of artistic perfection that places him among the best short story writers in the world. *Mahmood Taymoor's* shortcomings were overcome by his gifted contemporary *Mahmood Taahir Laashin*. He fell entirely under the spell of Russian literature until it became his main source of inspiration. His early short stories published in '*al Fajr*' were collected in '*Sukhriyyatunnaay*' (Irony of the Flute without mouthpiece, 1926) and '*Yuhka an*' (To be narrated, 1929). The story comprising the second collection, '*Hadeethul Qarya*' (The talk of the village) is his masterpiece. It is a turning point, for, the story is rich, economic in style, and makes a profound analysis of the clash between two distinct cultures. It maintains a delicate artistic balance and uses words to their full poetic value.

By the end of the 1920s the works of *Mahmood Taymoor* laid the foundation for the romantic short story, while *Mahmood Taahir Laashin* established the rigorous tenets of the realistic one in Egypt. But the maturation of the short story in other parts of the Arab world took place a few years later. In Iraq in the 1930s *Jaafar Khaleely* (1914 – 1984) continued to write stories based on traditional themes and concepts of narrative. But the works of *Dhunnoon Ayyoob* (1908 – 1988) in the 1930s owed a great deal to that of *Mahmood Taymoor* in both form and content. Like his counterparts he was influenced by Russian literature. *Ayyoob's* best collection of the period is '*Burooj Baabal*' (The Tower of Babel, 1939). In Syria *Ali al Khalafy* (1911 – 1984) in his collection '*Rabeeu wal Khareef*' (spring and Autumn, 1931) succeeded in taking the Syrian short story beyond the domain of rudimentary level. In Palestine *Najaaty Sidqy* (b. 1905) was the most significant short story writer during the 1930s. And most gifted Lebanese writer of the period is *Tawfeeq Yoosuf Awwaad* (1911 – 1989).

The Romantic Short Story and Sentimentality

The three decades starting from 1930 to 1960 witnessed a number of conflicts and contradictions in the Arab world. These reflected in works of *Mahmood Taymoor*. His works underwent a significant change in the 1930s and 1940s without completely abandoning the old pattern. One other romantic short story writer who was keen to introduce political dimensions into Arabic short story is *Muhammad Ameen Hasoona* (1908 – 1958). Romanticism was to await the arrival of the talented and prolific *Saad Makaawy* (1916 – 1958). In Syria, the short stories of *Muzfar Sultaan* (b. 1913), *Muraad assibaaey* (b. 1914), *Badeeu Haqqy* (b. 1922) and *Ulfat Umar al Edlaby* (b. 1912) combine the patriotic flair of *Hasoona* with the romantic sensibility of *Mahmood Taymoor*. Most significant Syrian short story writer of the romantic school is *Abdul salaam al Ujaily* (b.1919) who started writing in the early 1940s. *Sameera Ghazzam* (1925 – 1967) was a leading woman writer of romantic trend in Palestine. *Mahmood Kaamil* (b.1906) was the most popular figure in Egypt among the writers of sentimental short stories. *Yoosuf assibaaey* (1917 – 1978), *Muhammad Abdul Haleem Abdulla* (1913 – 1971), *Ehsaan Abdul Quddoos* (1919 – 1990), *Ebraheem al Wardaany* (1919 – 1991) and *Jaadhabiyya Sidqy* (b. 1927) tried to keep *Kaamil's* sentimentality alive. The followers of *Kaamil* are many. They are: *Abdul Hameed Yaaseen* (1908 – 1975) and *Muhammad Adeeb al Aamiry* from Palestine; *Muraad assibaaey* (b. 1914), *Wasfy al Bunny* (1915 – 1983), *Muhammad ashshalq* (b. 1915) and *Widaad skaakeeny* (1918 – 1986) from Syria; *Khaleel Hindaawy* (1905 – 1976) and *Naseeb Namir* (b. 1925) from Lebanon; *Jaafar al Khaleely* (b. 1908), *Meer Basry* (b. 1911) and *Shaloom Darweesh* (b. 1913) from Iraq. The work of all these writers attained significant popularity and diverted the attention of the reading public. The influence of socialist realism varied considerably from one writer to another. The following writers were influenced by the socialist realism: In Egypt: *Zakariya al Hijaawy* (1914 – 1976), *Ebraheem Abdul Haleem* (1919 – 1981) and *Abdul Rahman al Sharqaawy* (1920 – 1987); In Syria: *Haseeb al Kayyaaly* (1921 – 1993), *Saalih Dihny* (b. 1925), *Shwqy Baghdaady* (b. 1928) and *Aadil Abushanab* (b. 1931); *Muhammad Dakroob* (b.1929) in Lebanon; In Iraq: *Ghaaib Tuma Farmaan* (1927 – 1990) and *Mahdy Eesa assaqr* (b. 1927). One of the major writers of this socialist strand is the Egyptian *Al Sharqaawy* who started his literary career as a Marxist and ended closer to

Islam . In his Collection, '*Ardul Maeraka*' (The Battle Field, 1953) he laid the foundation for socialistic realism in Arabic prose fiction. The second collection, '*Ahlaamun Sagheera*' (Small Dreams) is the hope of the oppressed. Socialist Realism began to disappear in the early 1960s. for, by 1960 most of its writers were imprisoned throughout the Arab world and when they were released a few years later everything was changing. We can observe positive romanticism and individual stir in the first collections of the Nobel laureate *Najeeb Mahfooz's* stories entitled '*Hamsul Junoon*' (whispering of mad, 1938).

The Realistic Short Story

In Arabic literature realism is attributed to the rise of a literate middle class. The contribution of realism to the development of Arabic short story must start with the towering figure *Yahya Haqqy* while the works of *Mahmood Taymoor* and *Kaamil Mahmood* received a great deal of attention and popularity. *Yahya Haqqy* published seven collections including '*Qindeelu Ummuhaashim wa qasasun ukhraa*' (Candlestick of Ummu Hashim and other stories, 1944) and the contribution of these collections to the development of Arabic Short story is by any standards an important thing. Some of the stories of *Ebraheem al Misry* (1909 – 1981) exhibit certain of *Haqqy's* characteristics. Else were in the Arab world, the standard of the short story among his contemporaries was still far behind what *Haqqy* had achieved. But the publication of two collections in 1936 and 1937 by Lebanese *Tawfeeq Yoosuf Awwaad* was a mile stone in the development modern Arabic short story. He calls for radical social reform and he has won Saddam Husain Prize for literature in 1988.. Another major realistic short story writer is the Egyptian *Mahmood Badwy* (1910 – 1985) who started his literary career in 1933 by translating Chekhov's short stories and in 1935 published his first book '*Arraheel*' (The Departure) . The collection of short stories by *Yoosuf Idrees* (b. 1927), '*Aakhiruddunyaa*' (End of the World, 1961) marked a substantial change in theme and form, despite certain element of continuity. His approach to creative writing is refreshing. He seeks to disassociate himself from the onslaught of western influences and to mould a literature based on Egyptian character and personality. Although *Idrees* works in all prose genres, he is best known for his short stories. The prose

of *Idrees* is characterized by liveliness, wit and simplicity. To regenerate the language *Idrees* resorts to liberal use of the colloquial ('*Aammiyya*') especially in dialogue. Coinciding with the emergence of *Idrees* and his generation, the realistic trend flourished in other parts of Arab world. Particularly notable is the work of *Abdul Malik Noory* (b. 1821) in Iraq, *Fadl assibaay* (b. 1929) in Syria, *Suhail Idrees* (b.1924) in Lebanon and *Jabra Ebraheem Jabra* (1920 – 1994) and *Ghassaan Kanafany* (1936 – 1972) in Palestine. *Noory* was awarded the prestigious short story award of '*al Aadaab*'. *Kanafany* is the most gifted Palestinian Short story writer.

By the mid 20th century, it had developed to become an established venture and the leading fictional genre with many short story writers in various parts of the Arab world.. This continued beyond the 1950s and well into 1970s , when the short story kept its higher status and produced great riches within the genre. Following list sheds light to the fact : *Attaahir Wataar's* (b. 1936) '*Attaenaat*' (The Stabs, 1969) in Algeria ; *Farooq Waady's* (b.1949) '*Manfaa Hubbee*' (Exile my Love, 1976) in Palestine; The woman writer *Laila al Uthmaan's* (b.1945) '*Lilhubbi Suwarun katheera*' (Love have many images, 1984) in Kuwait ;*Muhammad Zafzaab's* (1945 – 2001) '*Malikul Jinn*' (King of Jinn, 1988) in Morocco; The woman writer *Sahr Tawfeeq's* (b.1951) '*Taemuzzaytoon*' (Taste of Olives, 2000) in Egypt .

The short story has shown a more vigorous development than any other literary genre in Arabic. In 1920's it reached a position of eminence. Later the novel took the lead but the short story regained its position soon after the second world war. For, short story is a more condensed literary genre than Novel and reflects the feeling of the author, his outlook on life and society. Despite western influence, Arabic short story is still essentially Arab in spirit and expression.

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