Modern Arabic Literary Biography:

A study of character portrayal in the works of Egyptian biographers of the first half of the Twentieth Century, with special reference to literary biography

BY

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I confirm that the work submitted is my own and that appropriate credit has been given where references have been made to the work of others

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Abstract

In Chapter one, I presented a comparative definition of the meaning of *Sīrah* (Pl.*Siyar*), *Tarjamah* (Pl. *Tarājim*), *Manāqib*, *Ṭabaqāt* and *Maghāzī* as they were understood in antiquity. I also showed how the meaning of *Sīrah* in modern times has only narrowly developed. Although the method of biographical writing continuously developed in Europe, it hardly progressed in Modern Arabic Literature. The only exception was seen in the writings by the pioneers of enlightenment in Egypt at the beginning of the twentieth century. This change of direction relied on borrowing European methodology in biographical writing.

In chapter two, I reviewed the early attempts at writing biographies in the nineteenth century by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Jabartī and ʿAlī Mubārak. Although both were the first pioneers in this respect, yet they followed the footpath of classical approach above all that of al-Maqrīzī, from whom ʿAlī Mubārak derived inspiration in his book *Al-Khiṭaṭ al-Tawfīqiyyah.*

In chapter three, I studied the twentieth century, starting with traditional biography writers who could not employ European methodologies and whose writings oscillated between biographical notes and biographical sketches; or whose texts were more of a literary study than a biography proper.

In chapters four to nine, I selected the most renowned, productive writers who best represented methodologies of biography writing. Perhaps certain writers have not been mentioned in this period of study. This is not out of negligence but simply because their texts were totally out of reach, or their writings did not exhibit the required literary criteria.

All methodologies representing the theory of biography writing in Egypt have been analysed in these chapters. All, in fact, form a digestion or assimilation of French. English and German schools. In Egypt, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn is considered the chairman of the French school, al-Māzinī and al-ʿAqqād of the English/German schools, al-Nuwāihī of the psychoanalytical/ anatomical school and Ṣidqī who employed both. By contrast, al-ʿIryān was the trailblazer of the distinguished biographical novel .

In these chapters, I tried to lay out the general outlines these writers have produced in the production of biographical texts, and how these attempts were a successful step on the road of presenting literary biographies characterized by high world standards.

Chapter ten may well seem traditional, but it is important to give a comparative outlook on the views of biography writers themselves when they study and analyse the same character.

Among the characters studied , I selected Bashshār, Abu Nuwās, Ibn al-Rūmī, al-Mutanabbī and al-Maʿarrī. These are outstanding landmarks in the history of Arab verse and the subject of a multitude of studies as well. Modern biographers took these figures as a test field for the deployment and employment of biographical methodologies. I selected these examples to provide comparisons and explain how far these biographies were successful in producing a biography or a profile of those classical poets.

The conclusion and the bibliographical list arrived at the end of research.

I wish, however, to clarify one important point here. It seems that I could not fix the year 1950 as the temporal parameter of my research but took some texts which were published shortly beyond that point. The reason for this obvious extension was either

to give additional useful details or simply because chapters of such texts had already been published prior to that year and were known to the readership.

At times I would satisfy myself with analysing the part rather than the whole. This again was meant to eschew repetition or was due to the fact that the book in question was not available.

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Modern Arabic biography writing has its roots in two different sources. The first is the developed European biography which Arab writers had come across during their encounter with Western civilization in the twentieth century. The second source is the classical, embryonic, raw forms of Arabic biography. This dual origin contributed to the development of a mode of biography writing. This chapter explains the classical lineage of the blend.

In its earliest prototypes, biography emerged at certain points in the development of civilizations. It stemmed out of spiritual (religious) or mundane needs, or out of both. In its simplest form, it was a record of the deeds of sublime figures, the two major classes of the time, statesmen and warriors. Obviously, it was a method of venerating or worshipping the past and instructing the living. By the same token, the deeds and sayings of sacred figures, prophets or saints, were also the subject matter of the first early forms of biography writings in the Arab-Muslim civilization. This feature was also observable in the early English biography writings in the medieval era.

We shall trace the classical forms, terms and functions of biography in the Arab-Muslim civilization. A comparative outlook shall follow taking the Western models as points of reference. This preliminary introduction would help us see how both the classical and modern, mainly Western developed, forms meanings and methods of biography writing were combined in the minds of modern Arab-Egyptian writers.

a. Definition of Terms

Sīrah

Sīrah [biography] is one of the oldest terms in Arabic literature. In several classical dictionaries we read:

"*Sīrah*: the prophet's traditions [*sunna*], method [*ṭarīqa*] or appearance [*haiʾa*]." in *Al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ*. (1)

"*Sīrah* is the prophet's tradition or manner" in *Lisān al-ʿArab*. (2)

" *Sīrah* is the method "in *Mukhtār al-Ṣiḥaḥ*. (3)

"*Sīrah* is the appearance, prophet's traditions, approach and doctrine [*madhhab*]. A man's *sīrah* is the record of his deeds and the mode of his behaviour towards others." in *Al-Munjid* .(4)

"*Sīrah*: the prophet's tradition, way, or man's behaviour." in *Muḥīṭ al-Muḥīṭ* .(5)

"*Sīrah* is the prophet's traditions, method or appearance." in *Tāj al-ʿArūs*.(6)

" *Sīrah* is the Prophet's tradition [*sunna*], form. Man's *sīrah* is his live history," in *Al-Muʿjam al-Wasīṭ* .(7)

"*Sīrah* is a manner of living " in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (8)

As far as this genre is concerned, *sirah* was the widest term in circulation. The term *tarjamah* came also into usage to denote the same meaning as *sīrah*. "The two words [i.e *sīrah* and *tarjamah*] revolve around one and the same connotation: life history."(9)

Perhaps *sīrah* signifies a detailed annals of an individual's life, *tarjamah*, by contrast, may indicate a more concise, abbreviated record.(10)

Tarjamah, according to M. Young, "tends to be restricted to shorter biographical notices, while *Sīrah* usually refers to biographies of substantial length."(11)

This differentiation, in point of fact, is more of a personal preference or subjective whim of certain students of this area in literature.There is, however, an objective criterion: "Usage and custom are the final determinant of the sense of each term."(12)

Sīrah emerged long before *Tarjamah*. Its application had religious beginnings.

"The term *sīrah* was first used in literature for the biography of the prophet Muhammad"(13) and for "his *Maghāzī*"(14). This strictly defined sacred-literary tradition continued for almost four centuries when, " the application of the term, *sīrah*, was expanded to cover the general life of an individual. A case in point, *Kashf al-Ẓunūn* argues, is the advent of a multitude of *siyar* (pl. of *sīrah*) with the rise of the fourth century of *Hijra*, such as the *Sīrah of Aḥmad Ibn Ṭūlūn* by Ibn al-Dāya, [Aḥmad b. Yūsif] (d.334 A.H.) or the *Sīrah of Ṣalāh al-Dīn* by Ibn Shaddād (d.622 A.H.)." (15)

This indicates a shift from sacred to mundane purposes of the *sīrah*. Apart from this change, neither the method of research nor of presentation was affected. The *sīrah* remained a collection of events related to an individual's life. The method of biographers hardly differed from the method employed by *Ḥadīth* [prophet's sayings] collectors, or that applied by *Ṭabaqāt* writers. The basic principle was the so-called *isnād*, i.e the chain of reliable, oral informants who link the biographer to the time of his subject. Without this chain no detail could ever be reliably ascertained by the biographers or be acceptable to the readership. This was a literate imperative to present the almost oral culture of early Islam when, apart from the *Qur'ān*, no written record was produced to register the deeds and sayings of the leaders of the Muslim community.

That is why early *sīrah* writers began their careers as transmitters and/or tellers of old *Akhbār* (events). Only when they matured, they became collectors/classifiers of biographical information.

Even when *sīrah* was expanded, it remained caged within the rigid fetters of *isnad* because "Muslim historians conceived of *sīrah* as being a constituent part of history itself."(16)

This conception retained its forceful presence until the beginning of modern times, much to the backwardness (17) of literary *sīrah* writing "which had been neglected by every pen."(18)

Tarjamah

The term *tarjamah*, on the other hand, had not been presented by classical dictionaries in the sense of *tarikh hayat* . This is quite clear in dictionaries such as *Lisān al-ʿArab* by Ibn Manẓūr, *Al-Qāmūs al-Muḥiṭ* by Majd al-Dīn b. Yaʿqūb al-Fairūzābādi, or *Mukhtār al-Ṣiḥāḥ* by Muhammad b.Abī Bakr b.ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Rāzī. In *Al-Aghānī* by Abī al-Faraj al-Aṣfahānī, the term *tarjamah* makes no appearance. *Al-Aghani's* author speaks of *Akhbār* (literally news) and lineages of this or that poet.

The origin of the word proves to be controversial. Modern writers maintain that "the word *tarjamah* is alien; it derived from Aramaic tongue and never has it been in current usage before the beginning of the seventh century of *Hijra* when Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī mentioned it in his dictionary as meaning a person's life." (19) Aramaic is a semitic language. By the end of the 7th Century (A.D.), Syria and Mesopotamia had become thoroughly Aramaized.(20) So why then had the Arabic speaking people spent almost seven centuries before they could adopt an Aramaic word, *tarjamah*? It is not clear on what grounds the idea that the term *tarjamah* was derived from

Aramaic tongue, is founded. Modern dictionaries, however, present the term, *tarjamah*, with similar shades of connotations:

In *Al-Mu'jam al-Wasīt* " *tarjamah* of a person is his *sirah*, his life story, its plural is *tarājim*."(21)

Al-Munjid hardly differs: "*Tarjamah* is the singular of *tarājim*; it means: a record of one's *sīrah*, character and lineage."(22)

Muḥīt al-Muḥīt refers to the word *tarjamah* as "record of one's *sīrah*, character and lineage."(23) *Al-Rā'id* dictionary is more concise: "somebody's *tarjamah* is his *sīrah* and life."(24).

Both *sīrah* and *tarjamah* may be conceived as one and the same concept, hence it is relevant to see them both used as synonyms. In its early form, *sīrah* was a historical record which first emerged and developed at the hands of traditional reporters (*Rijāl al-Ḥadith*) and later at the hands of historians.

Traditional reporters held firm to the aforementioned principle of *isnād*, chain of informants or transmitters as a condition sine qua non of the authenticity of the *Ḥadīth*, sayings of the prophet. This *isnād* is the classical equivalent of the sources of information in modern research techniques. If the *sīrah* came into existence as a method of recording the history of early Islam, it soon went beyond these confines to cover history at large, then to the realm of literature. In the words of Makkī, *sīrah* "is a historical work in which historians present the sayings, opinions, companions, masters, verse, prose and role of an individual without much of criticism or analysis. Examples are the *Al-Aghānī*, *Mu'jam al-Udabā'*, *Wafayāt al- A'yān* and others."(25)

Maghāzī

The term *Maghāzī* simply means "the expeditions and raids organized by the prophet Muḥammad in the Medinan period."(26)

Classical and modern dictionaries gave almost identical meanings for the same word. In *Lisān al-ʿArab*, we read, "*Maghāzī*: outstanding actions, instances of conquest."(27) While there is no mention of the word in *Mukhtār al-Ṣiḥāḥ*, other dictionaries like *Muḥīṭ al-Muḥīṭ*, *Tāj al-ʿArūs* and *Al-Munjid*, give the same explanation: "outstanding deeds of conquerors [*manāqib al-Ghuzat].* "(28)

As was the case with *sīrah*, the term *Maghāzī*, i.e military expeditions or conquest, was related to the prophet's first military battles "such as those of *Uhud*, *al-Khandaq*, *al-Hudaybiyyah, Khaybar, Mecca, Hunayn* and *Tabūk*; *Badr* is elsewhere styled a *ghazwa* but not by al-Wāqidī."(29)

According to C. Brockelmann, "The first who attempted at recording and classifying the military expeditions of the prophet was the leader of the *maghāzī* Mūsa b. ʿUqba b. Abī al-ʿAbbās al-Asadī, the protectee of Banī al- Zubair b. al-ʿAwām in Medina (d.141A.H.). "(30)

The editor of *Kitāb al-Maghāzī* M.B. Abū Mālik challenges Brockelmann's view that the *Maghāzī*, as a historical-religious genre of writing, were initiated earlier by ʿUrwah b. al-Zubair in his work, *Maghāzī Rasūl Allah*, (The Military Expeditions of the Messenger of God) (23-94 A.H.), and by Muḥammad b. Isḥāq (d.152 A.H.) in his work, *Al-Sīrah*. Both anticipated Mūsa b. ʿUqba. (31)

G.Levi Della Vida also differs with Brockelmann. He maintains that "The oldest author of a book on the biography of Muḥammad, ʿUrwa b. al-Zubair (23-94 A.H.).

is well known as a juristic as a historian, the son of the famous companion of the prophet ... " (32)

The aim of *Maghāzī* was to chronicle the formative period of the Muslim polity, in particular the revered symbol of this polity, the messenger of God. And irrespective of who initiated and recorded this genre, the concept is essentially religious and in the service of Islamic doctrine, " It was probably al-Wāqidī (d.207/823) who was the first to view *Maghāzī* and *Sīrah* as fields of study, which were related but could somehow be differentiated - a view in which he was evidently followed by Ibn Sa'd (d.230/845)." (33) Interest in *Maghāzī* kept its momentum among the second and third generations of Muslim historians for the sake of defending the religious creed.

Ṭabaqāt

Al-Ṭabaqāt is one of the oldest terms in classical Islamic thought. Literally, the term means a " layer, but developed a technical meaning of (generation) or (class) to denote a group of persons who had played some role in history of significance from a religious, scientific, military, artistic or other point of view."(34)

The notion of class or layer was the basis upon which a multitude of works was produced to classify and scrutinize difference of traditional reporters, poets, doctors of religion or any other elitist groups of individuals. In fact, these works on *Ṭabaqāt* "extended a great service to the collection and study of *Ḥadīth* (prophet's sayings) since these writings meticulously scrutinized the status, weight, and reliability of *Ḥadīth* transmitters."(35)

The concept of layers, *ṭabaqāt*, "originated with the concept of classifying the companions of the prophet. It developed at an early stage of the second *Hijra*

century when the *Ḥadīth* codifiers criticized the application of *isnād*. i.e relating a certain *Ḥadīth* to the prophet through a chain of informants."(36)

According to this concept, "the prominent figures who criticized the *sunna* (traditions of the prophet) were classified. The same method of classification was expanded to another type of leaders of the community, such as doctors of religion. Lastly the concept was utilized to arrange historical events themselves as was the case in the history of Islam by al-Dhahabī."(37)

The concept itself allowed for this multi-purpose usage because it had a double meaning. On the one hand, it conveyed a social status, rank or type. On the other, it had a temporal dimension. According to Arabic dictionaries, *ṭabaqa* means "rank, status or quality" (*Marātib wa- Aṣnāf*), but it also means "a span of time of a century - a community preceding another , or twenty years."(39) This dual meaning would best help the examination of the reliability and value of the reporters of the prophet's traditions according to their rank or their prominence in the prophet's era, or their generational cycles.

Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kabīr of Ibn Sa'd (d.230/845) is considered the earliest extensive Arabic biographical dictionary, in which its author followed the footsteps of his master and tutor al-Wāqidī who had produced his book, *Al-Ṭabaqāt,* or [*al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubra*] which had a decisive influence on later generations, and had a great impact on Baladhurī's *Ansāb al-Ashrāf,* (Noble Lineages) .

With the passage of time, a host of *Tabaqat* authors multiplied, such as :

Abū 'Abd allah Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī (d.256/870), the author of *Al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥīḥ.*

Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī (d.327/938). the author of *Kitāb al- Jarh wa-al-Taʿdīl.*

Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Kindī (d.350/961), the author of Kitāb. *Wulāt Miṣr wa-Quḍātuha.*

Muhammad b. al-Ḥārith al-Khushanī (d.371/981) author of *Quḍāt Qurṭubah.* In a later period, there appeared:

Ṭabaqāt al-Fuqahāʾ al-Shāfiʿiyyah; *Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābilah*; *Ṭabaqāt al-Aṭibbāʾ wa-al-Ḥukamāʾ*, which contained biographies and ranking of different doctors of religion and jurists from different *sunni* schools of law.

As for poets, *Ṭabaqāt Fuḥūl al-Shuʿarāʾ*, by Ibn Sallām al-Jumaḥī (d.232-847) "was the first of its kind in the realm of literature."(40) Other volumes on this topic, *Al-Shiʿr wa-al-Shuʿarāʾ* by Ibn Qutaība (d.276/889), *Yatīmat al-Dahr fī Maḥāsin ahl al-ʿAṣr* by ʿAbd al-Mālik b.Muḥammad al-Thaʿālibī (d.429/1038), *Al-Aghānī* by Abī al-Faraj al-Aṣfahānī (d.356/967) , followed.

It was obvious that as from " the second century of *Hijra*, *ṭabaqāt* volumes of general nature were going hand in hand with *ṭabaqāt* books on poets and their verse."(41) Relevant methods applied by the Greeks were introduced to the Arab intellectual life at a later period when Translation were already known.

Ansāb

Unlike the previous terms, *Ansab* is almost unanimously and uniformly defined whether in antiquity or at present. It simply means descent or better still blood kinship.(42) This concept has, as a matter of course, a tremendous value among Arabs before and after the advent of Islam. Tribes and clans were the natural social organization of the time. As Arabs built their empire under the banner of Islam, they acquired the status of a warrior-nobility. *Quraish*, the larger clan from which the

prophet Muhammad descended, ranked supreme among different Islamic schools and groups. Under such circumstances, it is no wonder that volumes upon volumes were produced to keep records of lineages and descent, above all of noble tribes. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ʿUṭba noted how numerous these lineage-centred writings are and singled out the most prominent among them: *Jamharat Ansāb al-ʿArab* of al-Kalbī, *Nasab Quraish* of al-Zubairī, *Jamharat Nasab Quraish* of al-Zubair b. Bakkār, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf* of al-Balādhuri, *Al-Ansāb* of al-Samʿānī, *Al-Lubāb fī Tahdhīb al-Ansāb* of Ibn al-Athīr, *Nihāyat al-Arab fī Maʿarifat Ansāb al-ʿArab* of al-Qalqashandī, and a host of others.(43)

Under Islam noble descent became a source of political legitimacy and religious veneration. It was the line through which sublime attributes of knowledge, wisdom, leadership and divine mediation powers would be transmitted to male offspring. In a word: "The political importance of *Quraish*", "the communal veneration of Ali" (The third *Caliph* and Muhammad's paternal cousin and son in law) " and the age-old importance of Arab tribes together with the pride the rulers and nobility (*Ḥukkām wa-Ashrāf*) took in their ancestry, all this contributed to the constant study of lineages and the appearance of numerous volumes on the topic."(44)

Religious, political and social aspects combined to enhance this tendency. The right to rule was restricted by Muslim jurists to *Quraish*. Political legitimacy was thus based on noble breeding. With it came the right of the ruler to collect religious taxes (*zakāt*) on behalf of the community; whereas the noble descendants from *Quraish* had the right to another religious tax, *the Khums*, (fifth).

Apart from this, lineage writings were also linked with the study of *Ḥadīth* for purely jurisprudential ends. At one point, *Ansāb* records overlapped with the *tarājim*.

Hence biographical sketches of *tarājim* were reinforced by *Ansāb*: "The lineage theory overwhelmed the conception of human relations. It was considered the prime mover of history. Thus lineage aspects penetrated the writings on *tarājim*." (45)

Manāqib

Like *maghāzī* and *sīrah*, *Manāqib* is a term specifying a genre of writings on the virtues of the prophet and, later on, the saints and other religious figures. The interpretation of the word in various, classical and modern dictionaries, is not dissimilar.

Al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ indicates that "*Manqaba* (s. of *manāqib*) is a proud deed (*Mafkhara*)."(46) *Lisān al-ʿArab* gives a more personified equivalent: "*Manāqib*: ethics (*Akhlāq*)" but ethics here is not neutral but a positive attribute in the sense of sublime ethics.(47) *Muḥīṭ al-Muḥīṭ* stresses the previous connotation in clear terms: "Man's *manāqib* is his fine qualities and ethics."(48) *Al-Munjid* retains only one meaning "*manqaba* is the outstanding deed (*Mafkhara*).(49) *Tāj al-ʿArūs* combines the two aspects; "*Manqaba* is the outstanding deed and fine ethics"(50) [of a person]. Only *Mukhtār al-Siḥāḥ* drops the word altogether.

According to this definition by classical Arabic lexicons, it can be safely inferred that the concept was applicable to certain biographical writings. In fact *Manāqib* is, in the words of M. Young, "a word which frequently appears in the title of biographies which are intended to present a portrait of a morally admirable person, together with a recital of his outstanding actions and achievements."(51)

The term *Manāqib* ranges from personal moral virtues, such as excellence (*Faḍā'il*) or fine ethics (*Akhlāq*), to remarkable achievements (*Mafākhir*) or outstanding

accomplishments (*Maʾāthir*) which are a source of pride. dignity and honour. The *Manāqib* writings were linked to the prophet but their arena was broadened to such an extent that the *Manāqib* appeared, during the early centuries of Islam "in the titles of individual biographies or of biographical compilations."(52), such as:

Faḍāʾil aṣḥāb al-Nabī by al-Bukhārī (d.256/870)

Manāqib Baghdād by Ibn al-Jawzī (d.597/1200)

Al-Najm al-Thāqib fī ashrāf al-Manāqib by Ibn ʿArabī (d.638/1240). (53)

Rawḍat al-Taʿrīf fī Mafākhir Mawlānā Ismāʿīl b. al-Sharīf by Ifrānī (d.1156 or 1157/ 1743-5)

Kitāb Akhlāq al-Nabī by Ibn Manẓūr (d. 711/1312).

The principal aim of *Manāqib* "is to offer the reader a moral portrait and information on the noble actions of the individuals who constitutes their subject or on the superior merits of a certain group."(54) This view is reminiscent of what M. Young maintained.(55)

b. Comparative Analysis

The presence of six terms all relating to biography, portraits and biographical sketches find its explanation in the methodological need to classify events on the basis of their nature, *Maghāzī* for military actions, conquest and battles, *Manāqib* for moral of the companions of the prophet (notably *Ḥadīth* reporters) or later Saints and doctors of religion, *Ṭabaqāt* for generational sequence or rank and status, *Ansāb* to establish noble lineages; *Siyar* and *Tarājim* for wider biographical contexts.

These conceptual terms are complementary to each other. As part of a historical-religious genre of writing, they all sprang from religious needs to preserve doctrinal. orally transmitted texts and glorify the religious symbol (the person of the prophet).

The glorious exaltation was a common feature to these writings from ʿUrwa b. al-Zubaīr, to Ibn Isḥāq, Mūsa b. ʿUqba, al-Wāqidī, Ibn Hishām and Ibn Saʿd and others. The interconnection between these forms was established by the fact that they revolved around the life events of the prophet, whose expeditions were told apart from other actions or aspects of his activity.

The *sīrah* achieves the same ends by recording the distinguished accomplishments of prominent figures in Muslim society. The shift in the usage of these biographical categories reflects a socio-political and cultural change, namely from the Arabian based early polity of Islam in Mecca and Medina, to a larger Islamic empire beyond the confines of Arabia. The old *Quraish* setting had its own social and tribal hierarchies, the new setting had a different stratification although in theory all Muslims were equal before divinity.

c. Characteristics of Medieval Arabic Biography

The historical sense among the Arabs was deepened by the Qurʾān which related and relayed accounts of earlier nations.(56) Perhaps this is the main source of the Arabs' focus on history and recording of past events down to the tiniest detail. The massive number of chronicles, annals and journals accumulated by Arabs testifies that "books of biography and personal portraits reached a level never attained by the Greek or the Roman."(57)

The prophet's *sīrah* was "The first written historical work by Arabs."(58), and it represented one method of "collecting Muḥammad's traditions [sayings and deeds], and having them codified at the hands of transmitters of *Ḥadīth*."(59) ʿUrwa b. al-Zubaīr, (23-94 A.H.), was "the first author of a book on the biography of Muḥammad".(60) In his record, al-Zubaīr relied upon oral transmission. He was

followed by a host of other biographers of the prophet, such as ʿIbban b. ʿUthmān (22-105A.H.), Shuraḥbīl b. Saʿd (d.122 or 123A.H.), ʿĀṣim b. ʿUmar b. Qatāda (d. between 119-129A.H.), Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī (51-129A.H.), Mūsa b. ʿUqba. (d.141A.H.) "who had a very marked influence on all later Tradition."(61), Muḥammad b. Isḥāq (d.152A.H.), al-Wāqidī (d.207A.H.), Muḥammad b. Saʿd (d.230A.H.) and Ibn Hishām (d.218 A.H.).

We received the best form of the prophet's biography in *Al- Sīrah Al-Nabawiyya* by ʿAbd al-Malik b. Hishām who had relied on a previous *sīrah* written by Ibn Isḥāq.(62) Credit was Ibn Isḥāq's indeed. He was a keen observer and tradition collector and codifier. For the sake of brevity, he dropped the long chains of transmitters (*Asānīd*), but he did not scrutinize any verse related to Muḥammad's biography. His rivals severely criticized the latter flaw. Ibn Isḥāq "found himself forced to give up teaching in Medina and to settle in Iraq."(63)

Ibn Hishām, by contrast, was more cautious and scrupulous than his master, Ibn Isḥāq. Hence he scrutinized available records, omitting what seemed flawed, abbreviating loose presentations, and the like. The personality of prophet Muḥammad was thus one major theme of biography and biographers from that time down to modern times.

Biography writing and methods underwent two developments. The first development took place in the third *Hijra* century, when the concept of the *Sīrah* shifted from the particular to the general, that is from revolving exclusively around the life and deeds of prophet Muḥammad, to covering generally the lives of other great men and leaders, such as *Sīrat Aḥmad b.Ṭūlūn* written by Aḥmad b. Yūsuf b. al-Dāya.(64) This trend continued in the centuries that followed.

The second development came in the seventh and eighth centuries. The *sīrah* written on the leaders of the past was replaced by the *sīrah* of living monarchs and rulers. A *sīrah* of this new type was written by Bahā' al-Dīn Yūsuf b. Raf'i' b. Shadād (d.632/1234) under the title: *Al-Nawādir al-Sulṭāniyyah wa-al-Maḥasin al-Yūsufiyyah*, on the achievements of Ṣalāh al-Dīn al-Ayyubī (d.589/1193) (65) This was followed by similar biographies, for example the biography of Taimurlane, the mongol monarch, which was written by Ibn 'Arab Shāh (d.845), titled: *Aja'ib al-Maqdūr fī Akhbār Taimūr*. This type was confined, then, to the biographies of rulers and monarchs, but on the whole, they "did not go beyond the traditional recording of events,virtues and achievements of the person in question."(66) If history is "the biographies of great men"(67), then perhaps it is relevant to categorize this type as historical biography.

At the very beginning, *sīrah* was developed by tradition collectors and transmitters and came to form a part of history. There are certain scholars who still consider that *sīrah* was part of history writing. Others, however, think that *sīrah* had gained independence, although it could not go deep into the life of the individual in question. In its classical stage, *sīrah* took many forms. In addition to individual biographies, there were the biographical dictionaries which "developed simultaneously in close association with historical composition."(68); and as M. Young put it, "it (was) developed in close association with the study of *Ḥadīth*, because it was important to Muslims to know who the transmitters of *Ḥadīth* were, and the study of the details of their lives would provide evidence of their degrees of trustworthiness."(69)

This type of biography, which emerged two centuries after the death of prophet Muḥammad, surpassed its match in other cultures.

Biographical dictionaries had different forms and varying volumes and covered the lives of Muslims, Christians and Jews, such as:

a. General biographical dictionaries; arranged on the basis of the year of death .This general type would "cover a group of individuals who are different in terms of occupation, class, status and the like, but are considered equals in terms of worthiness which merits recording."(70) Examples of this type, are ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad b. al-Anbārī (d.577/1181) in his *Nuzhat al-Alibbā' fi Ṭabaqāt al-Udabā'* [Recreation of the intelligent regarding the Classes of Authors], Yāqūt b.ʿAbd Allah al-Ḥamawī (d.626/1229) in his *Irshād al-Arīb ila Maʿrifat al-Adīb* (A Guide to the intelligent towards the Knowledge of the Men of Letters) and Shams al-Dīn Abū al-ʿAbbās Aḥmad b. Khallikān (d.681/1282) in his *Wafayāt al- Aʿyān wa-anbā' abnā' al-Zamān*

(Obituaries of Eminent Men and Notices on the Sons of the Epoch), which was arranged alphabetically and included 800 entries.(71)

b. There are other biographical dictionaries which are confined to a certain period, usually a century, or even centuries, recording the lives of prominent pen-men in specific era. Among them were ʿAbd al-Mālik b. Muḥammad al-Thaʿālibī the first to include in his *Yatīmat al-Dahr fī Maḥāsin ahl al-ʿaṣr* [The Unique Pearl of the Age on the Beauties of the People of the time], an anthology of the poets of the 4th century of *Hijra*, (72), and Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d.852A.H.) in his *Al-Durar al-Kāminah fī Aʿyān al-Mā'at al-Thāmina* [The Hidden Jewels of the Notables of the Eighth Hundred].

c. A third type was the biographical dictionary classified on an annual basis. celebrities were mentioned year by year. The difficulty in this form of classification lies in the fact that the specific year of death should be given in advance.(73) Ibn Shākir al-Kutubī (d.764A.H.) in his *ʿUyūn al-Tawārīkh* [Springs of Histories] put such a record which covered a long period ending in the year 760 A.H.

d. There are also biographical dictionaries of cities and countries such as *Tārīkh Baghdād* (The History of Baghdad) by Abū Bakr Aḥmad b.ʿAlī (d.463/1071), known as al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī. "This multi-volume work consists of topographical, cultural introduction to the city of Baghdad, followed by biographies of scholars who grew up in the city or settled there from elsewhere."(74). Another example is Abū al-Qāsim ʿAlī b. al-Ḥasan b.ʿAsākir (d.571/1176) in his *Tārīkh Dimashq* (The History of Damascus).

This type also included books which covered the biographies of monuments and edifices, that is " short or long biographies of the men who had built these monuments and edifices."(75), such as, *Al-Mawāʿiz wa-al-ʾI tibār bi-Dhikr al-Khiṭaṭ wa-al-athār,* [Lessons and Admonition through the Remembrance of Monuments and Edifices] by Taqī al-Dīn al-Maqrīzī (d.845/1441). Through his schematic description of the buildings and constructions he would present "biographies of those who initiated these structures."(76)

ʿAlī Mubārak in his *Al-Khiṭaṭ al-Tawfīqiyyah* described Cairo with its streets, neighbourhoods, mosques, schools and districts, and gave reference to the city's notables, jurists, scientists and pen-men.(77)

e. Among biographical dictionaries we find the so-called *Ṭabaqāt*, [layers].(78)

f. On the other hand, there were volumes confined to poets we may call it literary biographical dictionaries. This type appeared in the second century of *Hijra*. Their authors were clearly influenced by transmitters of *Ḥadīth*, and they focused on illustrious Arab poets, their tribal lineage, the best pieces they had created, evaluating and arranging them in a hierarchical order.

An example of this sort is *Ṭabaqāt Fuḥūl al-Shuʿarā'* [The Classes of Mature Poets] by Abū ʿAbd Allah Muḥammad b. Sallām b. ʿUbayd Allah b. Sallām al-Gumaḥī (139/756-232/847). The author collected entries of 114 poets, arranging them in a vertical order according to their value and rank in comparative and superlative poetical terms.(79) As a rule, the author begins with lineage, then moves on to the opinions expressed by different critics of their poetry supported by examples or evidence.(80)

Another example is *Al-Shiʿr wa-al- Shuʿarā'* by Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd Allah b. Muslim, known as Ibn Qutaybah (213/828-276/889), which, in the words of its author, is a book "on poets, their times, fate, circumstances, verse, tribal affiliation, their fathers' names, their epithets, titles, their records and best verse."(81) The book concentrates only on the celebrities among the poets "with, apparently, no consistent method of selection or presentation, for it begins with pre-Islam poets, then Muslim poets. The so-called veterans is included in both these categories."(82)

Al-Aghānī [Songs] by Abū al-Faraj ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad, known as Abū al-Faraj al-Aṣfahānī (284/897-356/967), was meant to present one hundred songs

which the *Caliph*, Hārūn al-Rashīd, had asked his entertainer, Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī, to select for him. This volume "attributed each song mentioned to its original author and composer, specifying the method of playing the notes and the rhythms employed."(83) The author relied on oral information, and the melodies were subjectively appreciated in order to please every taste.(84) The approach applied in these biographical dictionaries differs little from the methodology employed by predecessors or successors. These dictionaries were more of a traditional literary biography with whose norms and forms modern writers were, so to speak, relatively influenced.

Apart from the general and literary types, a third mode of biography writing emerged, which may be termed as folkloric biography. This mode, "goes beyond the historical narratives into an imaginative creation of dramatic situations and events. It resembles a historical novel, on the one hand, and the epic or heroic, on the other."(85) This type was, relatively speaking, a latecomer. It consisted of "a host of fiction stories and adventures of a single persona, such as the adventures of ʿAntara. This may have led to the development of the so-called fictional biography. (86)

These are the main forms or types of biographies which appeared, matured and lived on in the period under consideration. The needs to create these types were almost similar: the desire to record and preserve the achievements made by all men and women who contributed to the Islamic history. Diverse as the topics of these texts are, the biographers engaged in only one fixed method. The main feature they had in common is their emphasis "on the outer events rather than the mental development of the person's life."(87)

Individual biographies and biographical dictionaries were different but, "not in the sense of a development in the structure of (the) method, or an improved technique of analysis or characterization."(88)

In short, the majority of the medieval Arabic biographies are part of history and, "there is no evidence of any attempt to create a literary organization of these materials."(89) Thus literary biography has, literally, remained practically untouched by biographers.(90)

d. Previous Critical Works on Arabic Biography

Modern Arabic biography is a literary genre which has received little attention from either Arab critics or orientalist scholars. There are few exceptions, various scattered essays and a few books, which fall short of covering the whole range of such a vast literary genre such as biography. Orientalists focused, in a limited number of essays, on medieval Arabic biography. This has been reviewed in the third section of this part.(91)

As for Arab critics, their studies in this field are insufficient in number compared to works on drama, poetry or the novel. These studies may be classified into two types, theoretical and practical (case-study). Theoretical works, either books or chapters in volumes, are very scarce. The books are fewer than the fingers of one hand; the essays are only little more than that. Books that took on case-studies, however, focused, with some reservation, on al-ʿAqqād and Ṭāhā Ḥusayn.

In these writings, however, there was a great deal of recycling of materials and views, recurrent quotations from the *Encyclopaedia Britanaica* or *Encyclopaedia of Islam* and repeated excerpts from English literature. No concise, or standard

definition (or definitions) of the meaning of *sīrah* was offered let alone the differentiation of *sīrah* from *tarjamah*. Both terms were, in the majority of cases. used as synonyms; only a few writers marked off the two terms on a quantitative basis, the *tarjamah* was short, the *sīrah* was long.(92)

The definition of *sīrah*, when offered, was specified as being part of historical writing(93), or as first and foremost a literary text relying, only partly, on history.(94) Or, *sīrah* is a literary genre of a historical character.(95) Or *sīrah* is the study of the life of an individual in order to depict an accurate image of his personality.(96)

The most confusing concept, is the insistence of some writers that the term *tarjamah* was not used in Arabic literature before the seventh century of *Hijra*, that the word was borrowed from Aramean. This view was time and again recycled without any historical evidence.(97)

Perhaps Māhir Ḥasan Fahmī's *Al-Sīrah Tārīkh wa- Fann,* [*Al-Sīrah as History and Art*] is the most important source which anatomized the art of *sīrah* as a literary genre. Perhaps Fahmī is the only critic who specified the basic fundamentals of this genre on which biographers may have to rely for a long period to come. He conceives of *sīrah* not as a literary genre in itself, but attributes its literary nature to its dramatic context rather than its subject.(98)

I premised my remarks on the concept defined by Leon Edel who inferred that a biography would be considered a literary one if and when it portrays the life of a writer, or in his words, "it is my intention to focus in particular on a specialized branch of biography- the writing of lives of men and women who were themselves writers." (99)

e. Biographical Works In Egypt

The biographies that appeared during the first half of the 20th century in Egypt might well be summed up in three major long biographies and six short ones.

Firstly, the majority of the works could not differentiate between the literary study and the traditional biography (presenting a simple synopsis of the life passage of a certain individual). This confusion surfaced in most of the writings by those who took Arabic literature and its history as their topic, from Jurjī Zaydān down to Abū Shādī. This type, however, is a mere continuation of the Arabic traditional biographies, the books of classes (*Tabaqāt*) and of lauding virtues (*Manāqib*).

The second type thrived on the new social and political developments in the Egyptian society, the beginning of which is exemplified by the foundation of the *Al-Jāmi'at al-Maṣriyyah* (Egyptian University), 1908, later called Cairo University, and the new styles of literary research this university introduced (it should be mentioned that the *Dar Al-'Ulūm* had already achieved this precedence by sending one of its students, Ḥasan Tawfīq al-'Adl, (1862-1904)(100) to study in Germany under the auspices of the senior German Orientalist Carl Brockelmann).

This kind of study endeavoured to introduce Western critical methods into modern Arabic literature. This has led to the appearance of certain writings that might well be considered the first blossom of the literary critical biography, although the authors lacked the very materials necessary for any literary biographer: letters, diaries, habits, tastes, etc. They had to rely solely on what had been jotted down in traditional biographical dictionaries such as *Al-Aghānī* (songs) by Abī al- Faraj al-Aṣfahānī and *al-'Iqd Al-Farīd* (the lexicon of writers) by Ibn 'Abd Rabbihi.

Weighed in literary terms, this type is nearer to the literary critical biography. Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, al-ʿAqqād, al-Māzinī, Zakī Mubārak, ʿAbd al- Raḥmān Ṣidqī and al-Nuwaīhī are among the first precursor in this field who have different methods ranging from the historical to the psychological or social approach.

The third type resembled the novel. It is called the "rounded biography"(101). revolving around an individual and depicting his human emotions and passions. What helps the biographer is that he had cohabited the individual in question, had closely known him, had watched and studied his character, his likes and dislikes, his piths and marrows, his esoteric and exoteric features, and discussed details such as whether or not he suffered from schizophrenia, or if he still harboured the agony of the first failed love. Example of this latter type may well be represented by Muḥammad Saʿīd al-ʿIryān in his Biography on al-Rāfiʿi, and ʿAbd al- Raḥmān Ṣidqī in his two biographies of Abū Nuwās and Baudelaire.

The other six short biographies are:

1 Profile (Ṣūrah jānibiyah), a brief article to introduce a unique character, with a description of his intellectual and moral qualities and a list of his works.(102)

2 Sketch (Rasm Takhṭīṭī), a brief summary of a specific subject,(103) and it could be a short piece of prose and usually of a descriptive kind.(104)

3 Monograph (Maqalah Uhadiyyat al-Maudu'), an essay or treatise on a particular śubject.(105)

4 Commemorative Biography (Sīrah Tizkāriyah), an article to preserve the memory of some person.

5 Miniature (Rasm Munamnam), a miniscript illumination which gives a minute description.

6 Portrait (Ṣūrah), an article which gives a vivid description in words of a famous man.

These were the literary genres which developed in Egypt. At times there was a plethora of such productions. At other times, they were scarce indeed.

The reason why this art, literary biography, did not well develop may be attributable to the fact that the intellectual atmosphere in the first half of this century was still unfavourable yet for engagement in biography writing. Perhaps circumstances encouraged the translations of more inviting literary genres: poetry, dramas and novels. Speaking of literary biographies was to indulge in the mysteriously untold.

The writings by Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, al-ʿAqqād, al- Māzinī or al- Nuwaihī, Mubārak and Ṣidqī in this field were mere preliminary experimentations. They employed the modern European methodology of critical studies, relying, as they were, on the examination of the verse of the poet under consideration. This, as a matter of course, is an insufficient analytical tool for a biographical study, because poetry in itself represents a particular emotional vision of its author at a specific moment. Poetry can not be representational of reality as it is. It typifies, reconstructs this reality through definite, demonstrative sentiments. There would always be a missing part or parts, say the phase of childhood which is of paramount importance since it would explain the innermost, hidden determinant sensibilities and experiences which mould the poet's psyche.

The traditional aim of the literary biographer is to discover, define and depict the mind as well as the life of the artist (106) but the ideal biographer "must be endowed with industry, sympathy, judgement, and some literary capacity, qualities diverse

and seldom united in one person. On the other hand, his creative imagination must be held in severe check."(107)

Biography is a study aimed at portraying or analysing the life of a human persona distinguished by depth of thought or great achievements. It tries to bring the emotional temperaments and ethical qualities of the personality under consideration. To grasp these features, biographies tend to examine facts and circumstances relevant to the life of the person and how they influenced his behaviour and work. This examination may reach out for the general social milieu and the historical atmosphere under which the figure under consideration developed and from which were drawn many of his or her ideals, tendencies and tastes. The latter part would be a necessary complement to any biographical work.(108)

Unlike the classical mode, modern biographies do not focus on the hero or the ideal in the figure portrayed but probe the human himself. Instead of apology in the classical biography, there is in the modern form a deep dissection of the material and intellectual reality, a profound analysis of the various human aspects irrespective of their bad or good, simple or complex, deep or superficial, nature. "If the old biographer was a critic or an ethical judge, in modern times he should be a psychological novelist."(109)

The biographer should command extensive knowledge of the relevant facts and documents, to examine the circumstances and background of the individual under consideration. In addition, the biographer should enjoy a highly developed organizational efficiency, keen powers of observation and minute analytical capacity which would allow him or her to build into one integrated whole the development of

events, psychological transformation. material and intellectual traits of the character under study.(110)

Notes

1. Majd al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Yaʿqūb al-Fairūzābādī, *Al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ*, Vol. 2, Dār al-jīl, (Beirut, n.d), p. 56.
2. Abū al-Faḍl Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Makram b. Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, Vol 3, Dār al-jīl, (Beirut, 1988), pp. 252-253.
3. Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr b. ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Rāzī, *Mukhtār al-Ṣiḥāḥ*, edited by Maḥmūd Khāṭir, al-Maṭ. al-Amīriyyah, 8th edition, (Cairo, 1919), p. 325.
4. Louis Maʿlūf, *Al-Munjid fī al-Lughah wa-al-Aʿlām*, al-Maṭ. al-Kāthulīkiyyah, 29th edition, (Beirut, 1986), p. 368.
5. Buṭrus al-Bustānī, *Muḥīṭ al-Muḥīṭ. Qāmūs Muṭawwal Lillughat al-ʿArabiyya*, Maṭ. Maktabit Lubnān, (Beirut, 1977), p. 445.
6. Muhib al-Dīn Abī Fiyd al-Sayyid Muḥammad Murtaḍa al-Ḥusaynī al-Wāsiṭī al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-ʿArūs fī jawāhir al-Qāmūs*, edited by ʿAlī Shiri, Dār al-Fikr Lilttibāʿat wa-al- Nashr wa-al-Tawziʿi, Vol 6, (Beirut, 1994), p. 559.
7. See *Al-Muʿjam al-wasīṭ*, Vol 1 Magmʿa al-lughah al-ʿArabiyyah, Maṭ. Dār al-Maʿārif, (Cairo, 1980), p. 467.
8. G. Levi Della Vida, *Sīra [Sīrah]* in M.Th. Houtsma *et. al.*, EI[1], Vol IV, Leiden, E. J. Brill, London, Luzac & Co., 1934, p. 439.
9. Yaḥya Ibrāhīm ʿAbd al-Dāyim, *Al-Tarjamah al-Dhātiyyah fī al-adab al-ʿArabī al-Ḥadīth,* (Beirut, 1974), p. 30; Iḥsān ʿAbbās, *Fann al-Sīrah*, 2nd edition, (Beirut, 1967?), p. 15 and Jābir Qumaiḥa, *Manhaj al-ʿAqqād fī al-Tarājim al-Adabiyyah*, (Cairo, 1980), p. 18.
10. Māhir Ḥasan Fahmī, *Al-Sīrah Tārīkh wa-Fann*, 2nd edition, Dār al-Qalam, (al-Kewait, 1983), p. 5; Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Ghanī Ḥasan, *Al-Tarājim wa-al-Siyar*, 3rd edition, (Cairo, 1980), pp. 6, 28 and ʿAbd al-Dāyim, op. cit., p. 31.
11. M. J. L. Young, *Arabic Biographical Writing*, in M. J. L. Young *et. al., Religion, Learning and Science in the Abbasid Period,* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 168.
12. M. ʿAbd al-Ghanī Ḥasan, op. cit., p. 28.
13. M. J. L. Young, op. cit., p. 168; M. ʿAbd al-Ghanī Ḥasan, op. cit., p. 28; G. Levi Della Vida, op. cit., p. 439.
14. Y. ʿAbd al-Dāyim, op. cit., p. 30.
15. Ibid., p. 30.

16. I. ʿAbbās, op. cit., p. 28.
17. M. H. Fahmī, op. cit., p. 9.
18. I. ʿAbbās, op. cit., p. 19.
19. Y. A. al-Dāyim (1980), op. cit., p. 31; J. Qumaiha, op. cit., p. 15. (1980) and ʿAbd al-Qādir Rizq al-Ṭawīl, *Al-Maqālah fī adab al-ʿAqqād*, (Beirut, 1986), p. 221.
20. See Al-ʿAqqād, *Al-Thaqāfatu al-ʿArabiyya Asbaq min Thaqāfati al-yūnān wa-al-ʿAbriyyīn*, Silsilat al- Maktabah al-Thaqāfiyyah, (Cairo, 1985) pp. 14. 15 17, 18, and E. M. Horsley (ed.), *The New Hutchinson 20th Century Encyclopaedia*, 4th edition, (London, 1979), p. 66.
21. *Al-Muʿjam al-wasīṭ,* Vol 1, p. 83.
22. L. Maʿlūf, *Al-Munjid*, p. 60.
23. B. al-Bustānī, *Muḥīṭ al-Muḥīṭ*, p. 69.
24. Jubrān Masʿūd, *Al-Rāʾid*, Dār al-ʿilm Lilmalāyin, vol 1, (Beirut, 1981), p. 385.
25. Al-Ṭāhir Aḥmad Makkī, *Al-Adab al-Muqārn Uṣūluhu wa-Taṭwwurhu wa-Manāhijuhu,* (Cairo, 1987), p. 523.
26. M. Hinds, *Al-Maghāzī* in C E Bosworth *et al.*, EI^2 Vol V, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1986, p. 1161.
27. Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, Vol 4, p. 986.
28. B. al-Bustānī, *Muḥīṭ al-Muḥīṭ*, p. 658; L. Maʿluf, *Al-Munjid*, p. 550; Al-Zubīdī, *Tāj al-ʿArūs,* Vol 20, p. 14.
29. M. Hinds, op. cit., p. 1161.
30. Carl Brockelmann, *Tārīkh al-Adab al-ʿArabī*, Vol 3, Translated by ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm al-Najjār, (Cairo, 1977), p. 10.
31. Muḥammad Baqshīsh Abū Mālik (ed.), *Maghāzī Mūsa b. ʿUqba*, Mat. al-Maʿārif al-jadīdah, (Al-Rabāṭ, 1994), p. 36.
32. G. Levi Della Vida, op. cit., p. 441.
33. M. Hinds, op. cit., p. 1161.
34. Franz Rosenthal, *ʿIlm al-Tārīkh ʿInd al-Muslimīn*, Translated by Ṣālih Aḥmad al-ʿAlī and revised by Muḥammad Taufīq Ḥusaīn, (Baghdad, 1963), p. 133; Al-Ṭāhir Aḥmad Makkī, *Dirāsah fī Maṣādir al-Adab,* (Cairo, 1993), p. 152; M. J. L. Young, op. cit., p. 171; ʿAbd al-Ghanī Ḥasan, op. cit., p. 55; Heffening, *Tabakāt* [Ṭabaqāt], in M. Th Houtsma *et. al.*, EI^1. Supplement, Leiden, E. J. Brill-London, Luzac & Co., 1938, p. 215.

35. Carl Brockelmann, *Tārīkh al-Adab al-ʿArabi*, Vol 6, Translated by Al-Sayyid Yaʿqūb Bakr and revised by Ramaḍān ʿAbd al-Tawwāb, (Cairo. 1977). p. 35; ʿAbd al-Ghanī Ḥasan, op. cit., p. 55.

36. F. Rosenthal, op. cit., p. 134.

37. A. Makkī, *Maṣādir al-Adab*, pp. 152-153.

38. Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, Vol 4, p. 568; L. Maʿlūf, *Al-Munjid*, p. 460; Al-Rāzī, *Mukhtār al-Ṣiḥāḥ*, p. 388.

39. Al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-ʿArūs*, Vol 13, pp. 282-284.

40. ʿAbd al-Ghanī Ḥasan, op. cit., p. 64.

41. A. Makkī, *Maṣādir al-Adab*, p. 153.

41A. Ibid., p.153.

42. Al-Fairūzābādī, *Al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ*, Vol 1, p. 136; B. al-Bustānī, *Muḥīṭ al-Muḥīṭ*, p. 889; Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, Vol 6, pp. 3, 6 and Al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-ʿArūs*, Vol 2, p. 428.

43. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ʿUṭbah, *Maʿa al-Maktabat al-ʿArabiyyah*, 2nd edition, (Beirut, 1984), p. 181.

44. F. Rosenthal, op. cit., 140.

45. Ibid., p. 141.

46. Al-Fairūzābādī, op. cit., Vol 1, p. 139.

47. Ibn Manẓūr, op. cit., Vol 6, pp. 698-699.

48. B. al-Bustānī, op. cit., p. 910.

49. L. Maʿlūf, op. cit., p. 829.

50. Al-Zabīdī, op. cit., Vol 2, p. 448.

51. M. J. L. Young, op. cit., p. 168.

52. Ch. Pellat, *Manākib*, in C. E. Bosworth *et. al.*, EI^2, Vol VI, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1991, p. 357.

53. Ibid., pp. 349-351 [q.v.].

54. Ibid., p. 357.

55. M. J. L. Young, op. cit., p. 168.

56. I. ʿAbbās, op. cit., p. 12.

57. Ḥusayn Fawzī al-Najjār, *Al-Tārīkh wa-al-Siyar*, (Cairo, 1964). p. 34.

58. Ibid., p. 31.

59. ʿAbd al-Ghanī Ḥasan, op. cit., p. 31.

60. G. Levi Della Vida, op. cit., p. 441.
61. Ibid., p. 442.
62. ʿAbd al-Ghanī Ḥasan, op. cit., p. 32.
63. G. Levi Della Vida, op. cit., p. 442.
64. ʿAbd al-Ghanī Ḥasan, op. cit., p. 28.
65. Ibid., p. 30.
66. Ibid., p. 31.
67. H. F. Al-Najjār, op. cit., p. 31 [quoted from Plutarch].
68. H. A. R. Gibb, *Islamic Biographical Literature*, in B. Lewis and P. M. Holts (eds.), *Historians of the Middle East*, London, 1962, p. 54.
69. M. J. L. Young, op. cit., p. 169.
70. ʿAbd al-Ghanī Ḥasan, op. cit., p. 40.
71. M. J. .L. Young, op. cit., 175 and ʿAbd al-Ghanī Ḥasan, op. cit., p. 44.
72. ʿAbd al-Ghanī Ḥasan, op. cit., p. 47.
73. Ibid., pp. 50-51.
74. M. J. L. Young, op. cit., p. 174.
75. ʿAbd al-Ghanī Ḥasan, op. cit., p. 52.
76. Ibid., p. 53.
77. Ibid., p. 53.
78. See Term *Ṭabaqāt* in this chapter, pp. 18- 20.
79. Al-Ṭāhir Aḥmad Makkī, *Maṣādir al-Adab*, pp. 165-6.
80. Ibid., p. 165.
81. Ibid., p. 241.
82. Ibid., p. 246.
83. Ibid., p. 261.
84. Ibid., p. 265.
85. M. H. Fahmi, op. cit., p. 1.
86. I. ʿAbbās, op. cit., p. 28.
87. M. J. L. Young, op. cit., p. 172.
88. H. A. R. Gibb, op. cit., p. 57.
89. H. A. R. Gibb, op. cit., p. 57.
90. M. H. Fahmī, op. cit., p. 9 and I. ʿAbbās, op. cit., p. 19.

91. See p. 34ff, and C. Brockelmann, *Tārīkh al-Adab al-ʿArabī*. Vol 3. Translated by ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm al-Najjār, pp. 3, 10ff.
92. M. H. Fahmī, *Al-Sīrah Tārīkh wa-Fann*, p. 5; ʿAbd al-Ghanī Ḥasan, *Al-Trājim wa-al-Siyar*, p. 28; I. ʿAbbās, *Fann al-Sīrah*, p. 15.
93. H. F. al-Najjār, *Al-Tārīkh wa-al-Siyar*, p. 16.
94. Rashīda Mahrān, *Ṭāhā Ḥusayn bayn al-Sīrah wa-al-Tarjamah al-Dhātiyyah*, (Alexandria, 1979), p. 21.
95. Al-Ṭāhir .A. Makkī, *Al-Adab al-Muqāran*, p. 522.
96. Anis al-Maqdisī, *Al-Funūn al-Adabiyyah wa-Aʿlāmuha*, (Beirut, 1978), p. 547.
97. See Term *Tarjamah,* pp. 15-16.
98. M. H. Fahmī, op. cit., pp. 91-92.
99. Leon Edel, *Writing Lives Principia Biographica*, p. 34.
100. Ahmad Haykal, *Ḥasan Tawfīq al-ʿAdl Raʾid Tārīkh al-Adab al-ʿArabī*, in *Al-Ahrām International* Newspaper, London, 17 Jun 1996, p. 15.
101. M. H. Fahmī, op. cit., pp. 89, 90, 91.
102. Magdī Wahba, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms,* (Beirut, 1979), p. 436.
103. J. A. Cuddon, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms,* (Great Britain, 1979), p. 632.
104. Magdi Wahba, op. cit., p. 523.
105. J. A. Cuddon, op. cit., p. 400.
106. Jeffrey Meyers (ed.), *The Craft of Literary Biography,* (London, 1985), p. 2.
107. Donald .A. Stauffer, *English Biography Before 1700,* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1930), p. viii.
108. Al-Ṭāhir. A. Makkī, *Al-Adab al-Muqāran*, p. 522.
109. Ibid., p. 523.
110. Ibid., p. 524.

CHAPTER II

The Development of Biography writing in the Nineteenth Century

Introduction

a. Al-Jabartī

b. Ṣalih Majdī

c. ʿAlī Mubārak

Introduction

The expedition of Napoleon to Egypt (1798-1801) was the turning point in the modern intellectual history of the country. It led to the discovery by Egyptians of European literature (1) and the reforms of Egyptian education which were undertaken by Muḥammad ʿAli.(2) The development of the translation (3) movement went hand in hand with the developments which took place in the Egyptian educational system.

Muḥammad ʿAlī's main motive behind his reform activity was the creation of a strong state.(4) To do this lessons had to be learned from the Europeans, and hence the missions to Europe were "as varied as Muḥammed ʿAlī's ambitious schemes."(5) A prime aim of educational activity was the translation into Arabic of those works in European languages (mainly French, Italian and English) which were seen as embodying the technical and scientific progress in which Europe had outstripped the lands of Islam,(6) but this did not exclude the translation of literary, including historical works from Western languages.

Rifāʿah al-Ṭahṭāwi (1801-1873), who had spent five years in France as a member of the mission of 1826, and had made good use of that time in studying and observing, was made director of the school of translation.(7) This institution was founded in 1835 in Cairo.(8)

Among the few works of belles-lettres translated were Fénélon's *Télémaque* (translated by al-Ṭahṭāwi, and published in two editions in 1777 and 1867), Molière's *Tartūffe* (translated by ʿUthmān Jalāl under the title, *Riwāyat al-Shaykh Matlūf*, published in 1850) and La Fontaine's *Fables* (also translated by ʿUthmān Jalāl in 1850 under the title, *al-ʿUyūn al-yawāqiẓ fī al-amthāl wa-al-Mawāʿiẓ*).(9)

Biography played a little part in the early translation movement, but it did find a place to some extent in the historical works which were translated, such as *Taʾrīkh Mulūk Faransa*, *Taʾrīkh Itāliya* (10) and others.

All of these contained some biographical writing, but "Biographical dictionaries published at that time bear witness, implicitly or explicitly, to broadly the same conservative taste."(11) Of indirect importance to the composition of modern biographies was the enrichment of Arabic stylistic possibilities by a new form of Arabic prose.(12)

a. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Ḥasan al-Jabartī (1754-1825)(13)

The earliest Arabic work of the Nineteenth Century which contains a significant amount of biographical writing is al-Jabarti's history of Egypt *ʿAjāʾib al-Athār fī al-Tarājim wa-al-akhbār*.(14) ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Ḥasan al-jabartī was born in Cairo.(15) His family came originally from the village of al-Jabart, near the Red Sea port of Zayla' - an area that was a dependency of the Abyssinian Negus and noted for the extreme piety of its inhabitants. Around the turn of the sixteenth century, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, seventh grandfather of our historian, emigrated to Egypt and became *Shaykh* of the jabartī *riwāq* in Al-Azhar, an office which then passed from father to son.(16)

Shaykh Ḥasan the father of our historian was one of the most learned men of his time, both in theology and in mathematics. Apart from this, he had a good command of Persian and Turkish.(17) So, al-Jabartī was brought up in an academic atmosphere, and had inherited enough wealth from his father to allow him to devote all his efforts to learning.(18)

Al-jabartī wrote three, historical works: (1) *ʿAjāʾib al-Athār fī al-Tarājim wa-al-akhbār;* (2) *Maẓhar al-Taqdīs bi-Dhihāb al-Faransīs*; (3) *Taʾrīkh Muddat al-Faransīs bi-Miṣr*.(19)

Al-Jabartī started to prepare the drafts of his book *ʿAjāʾib* before the arrival of the French expedition. In the introduction he states that he has not only dealt with historical events in Egypt in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries of the *Hijra*, but has also included short biographies of notable persons (*aʿyān*). "I have written drafts of the events of the closing year of the Twelfth Century (A.H) and the first quarter of the Thirteenth. I have collected part of the material in a general way, while the rest I have put down in great detail. Most of these events took place in my time and I had a chance of witnessing them. To these I added more which I got by hearsay or learned from old people. Besides this I have added the biographies of men of distinction; *ʿUlamāʾ* or rulers. I have also included some of their news and affairs and some dates of their births and deaths. I have put all this material, after arranging it chronologically, on cards and in an orderly manner."(20)

ʿAjāʾib covers the period from (1106-1236A.H.), giving details and precise dates "In dealing with authors, he quotes from their works, sometimes at length."(21) These biographical notices are composed in the traditional style of the Abbasid period, and resemble notices to be found in works of *Ṭabaqāt* and *Manāqib*. Al-jabartī's style was in fact generally poor, reflecting the decline in literary standards that had started in *Mamlūk* Times.(22) He includes biographies such as *Faṣl fī Tarājim al-Shuyūkh* (23), *Faṣl fī Tarājim al-Umarāʾ* (24), and those who died during these years. Al-jabartī on the other hand has been considered, according to David Ayalon as "one of the greatest historians of the Muslim world of all times, and by far the greatest historian of the Arab world in modern time."(25)

b. Ṣālih Majdī (1827-1881) (26)

His grandfather was from Mecca (27) but Ṣālih Majdī was born in the village of Abū Radjwān in the province of Giza in 1242 A.H (1827A.D.) he joined the Ḥelwān

School from which he was chosen. In the same way as his colleague Abū al-Su'ūd. he became a student at the *Alsun* School in 1252A.H. (1836A.D.),(28) so Ṣalih was one of the members of the *Qalam al-Tarjamah*, a school which was headed by al-Ṭahṭāwī. He spent many years as a student and friend of al-Ṭahṭāwī and this enabled him to write his biography, *Hilyat al-Zaman bī- Manāqib Khādim al-Watan*(29) which appears to be the first full length Arabic biography of the nineteenth century. His debt to Rifā'ah is not to be underestimated. It was the French and Arabic education which he received at the *Alsun* School that made him eligible for work in the higher school of engineering during the reigns of Muḥammad 'Alī and 'Abbās 1, while his legal education in the same school qualified him to be entrusted with the translation of laws and to be appointed as a judge at the time of Ismā'īl.(30) This explains Majdī's devotion to his professor. Among all Rifā'ah's pupils Majdī was the only one to write a biography of him after his death.(31)

c. 'Alī Mubārak (1824-1893)(32)

'Alī Mubārak was born in 1823 in the small Delta village of Birnibāl al-jadīdah (Daqahliyyah province).(33) His family was not wealthy and like most Egyptian boys, he received his primary schooling in the village *kuttāb*.(34) His excellence inthis early stage led to his selection for a place at the Cairo Secondary School *al-Qaṣr al-'Aynī*.(35)

In 1844 Mubārak had the good fortune to be chosen to accompany Muḥammad 'Alī's sons on an educational mission to Paris. He spent about five years in France studying mainly military science in Paris and Metz. In 1850, following the death of Muḥammad 'Alī, the entire mission was called back to Egypt.(36) His knowledge of European affairs was almost as broad as al-Ṭahṭāwī's after his five year stay in France.(37) 'Alī Mubārak was an outstanding government official who passed

through the schools of Muḥammad ʿAlī, studied in France and thereafter served Egypt as an administrator and engineer, and also as a teacher and organiser of schools.(38)

He had an inquiring and practical mind and was distinguished by the warm interest he took in his work and his students. He was appointed *wakīl* (Secretary) of the Schools Department on 12 October 1867, and several times thereafter became director of the department. Under his chairmanship a committee including *ʿUlamā'* and notables from outside the government service, elaborated the primary school law of 1868, which was superior to that proposed by the Chamber of Deputies.(39)

In 1871 he was instrumental in founding the *Dār al-ʿUlūm* in Cairo, and in 1881 the *Dār al-Kutub*.

Although ʿAlī Mubārak's culture was that of a military engineer, and although he wrote a good deal on engineering and other subjects, he had a great inclination for the study of history and it was on an historical subject that he wrote a book of lasting value and indeed the best of his books. It is *Al-Khiṭaṭ al-Tawfīqiyyah al-jadīdah li-Miṣr al-Qāhirah wa-Muduniha wa-Bilādiha al-Qadīmah wa-al-Shahīrah* (20 volumes, 1888-1889).(40)

Al-Khiṭaṭ was his most important published work. This is a topographical history of Egypt with emphasis on Cairo, and contains a mass of detail on the streets, Mosques and public buildings of the capital. In addition it abounds with biographical notices of prominent Egyptians and local worthies, including scholars, poets, authors, *ṣūfīs*, *faqīhs* and political figures.(41) Altogether the work contains 1,108 such biographical notices and also has several notices of non-Muslim figures. ʿAlī Mubārak also includes his own autobiography in *Al-Khiṭaṭ al-Tawfīqiyyah.*

Mubārak took al-Maqrīzī's book(42) as a basis and starting point for his *Khiṭaṭ*.(43) and as Brugman put it "This work, obviously set up as a Second Maqrīzī, is an

elaborate Topography of Egypt in twenty volumes, with many digressions on her history as well as numerous biographical notes."(44) He had consulted the old Arabic references and his good knowledge of the French language enabled him to read the writings of modern European authors and orientalists who deal with Egyptian history.(45)

In his introduction of *al-Khiṭaṭ* he says, "I collected and consulted the writings of Arabs and Europeans who have toured these places and their drawings in which they showed the boundaries of this country."(46)

Al-Khiṭaṭ will remain one of the most important references ever on the history of Egypt, and the main source for the biographies of the men who made the history of Modern Egypt.(47) ʿAlī Mubārak was the first biographer in modern Egypt who wrote all these biographies, but still in traditional Arabic style similar to al-Dhahabī, al-Suyūṭī and, in particular, al-Maqrīzī.

He often does not give the source of his information, making it difficult to check its accuracy. This common failing dated back to the Medieval Muslim historians.(48) In these respects, *al-Khiṭaṭ* was very traditional.

Among the biographical notices of literary figures in *al-Khiṭaṭ* are the father of the historian, Ḥasan al-Jabartī,(49) Ṣālih Majdī,(50) and Plutarch,(51) who are all presented in the same manner.

ʿAlī Mubārak apart from al-jabartī, "was the only person in nineteenth century Egypt who wrote a monumental historical (or to be more exact, biographical -Topographical) work, *al-Khiṭaṭ al-Tawfīqiyyah.*"(52)

Although there was a not inconsiderable amount of biographical writing in Arabic in Egypt in the nineteenth century, it was mainly a continuation of traditional collective

biography. It was still characterised by a close association with historical writing, and there is little indication in it of European influence.

Biographies during the nineteenth century, in the main, were simple, others rhetorical, but as time went on, biographers tended to concentrate more on matter than manner.(53)

NOTES

1. See I. Abū Lughod, *Arab Rediscovery of Europe*. (Princeton,1963). p. 58; for the first signs of this movement, see Bernard Lewis. *The Muslim Discovery of Europe*, (London, 1982), pp. 276-7, see also Zaīnab Al-Fātih Al-Badawī, *Dirāsah Naqdiyya Muqārana Li-shi'r 'Abbās Muḥmūd al-'Aqqād*, Maṭ. jāmi 'at al-Kharṭūm, 1990, p.21.
2. Abū Lughod, op. cit., p. 47.
3. Abū Lughod, op. cit., p .46.
4. Abū Lughod, op. cit., p. 32.
5. Abū Lughod, op. cit., p. 35.
6. For the growing Muslim awareness of the danger posed by the scientific progress of Europe, see, eg, B. Lewis, *The Muslim Discovery of Europe*, p. 168.
7. Abū Lughod, *Arab Rediscovery of Europe*, p. 41.
8. Abū Lughod, op. cit., p. 41.
9. Abū Lughod, op. cit., p. 53.
10. Abū Lughod, op. cit., p 50.
11. P. Cachia, *An overview of Modern Arabic Literature,* Edinburgh University press, 1990, p. 79.
12. Abū Lughod, op. cit., p. 65.
13. Louis 'Awaḍ, *Tārīkh al-Fikr al-Miṣrī al-Ḥadīth*,4th Edition, (Cairo, 1987), p. 178.
14. First published in (1297A.H.), in Cairo.
15. Jack. A. Crabbs, Jnr, *The writing of History in Nineteenth Century Egypt: A Study in National Transformation*, The American University Press in Cairo, Wayne State University Press, (Detroit, 1984), p. 44.
16. Jack. A. Crabbs, Jnr., op. cit., p 44; Gamāl El- Dīn El- Shayyāl, *A History of Egyptian Historiography in the Nineteenth Century,* p. 7.
17. El- Shayyāl, op. cit., p. 7.
18. El- Shayyāl, op. cit., p. 8.
19. Jack. A. Crabbs, Jnr., *The Writing of History in Nineteenth Century Egypt: A Study in National Transformation* , p .47.
20. El- Shayyāl, *A History of Egyptian Historiography in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 8; 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jabartī, *'Ajā'ib al-Athār fī al- Tarājim wa-al -Akhbār*, Vol 1, Dār al-jīl, (Beirut, n.d), p .5.
21. J . Haywood, *Modern Arabic Literature (1800- 1970)*, (London, 1971), p. 35.
22. Jack .A. Crabbs, Jnr., *The Writing of History*, p 56.
23. Al-Jabartī, *'Ajā'ib al-Athār*, Vol 1, pp. 113-142.

24. Al-jabartī, *ʿAjāʾib al-Athār*, Vol 1. pp. 142- 214.
25. D. Ayalon, The *Historian Al-jabartī*, in B. Lewis. and P.M. Holt. (eds.) *Historians of the Middle East*, Oxford University Press, (London. 1962). p. 392.
26. For his life see Ṭahā Wādi, *Al-Shiʿr wa-al-Shuʿarāʾ al-Majhūlūn fī al-qarn al-Tāsiʿ ʿashar,* Dār al-Maʿārif, (Cairo, 1992).
27. ʿAlī Mubārak, *Al-Khiṭaṭ al-Tawfīqiyyah*, Vol 8, Al-Haiʾa al-Miṣriyyah al-ʿāmah Lilkitāb, 2nd edition, (Cairo, 1990), p. 22.
28. El-Shayyāl, *A History of Egyptian Historiography in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 43.
29. I have been unable to trace a copy of this little-known work.
30. El- Shayyāl, *A History of Egyptian Historiography in the Nineteenth Century* p. 46.
31. El- Shayyāl, op. cit., p. 46.
32. ʿAṭiyya ʿĀmir, *Dirāsāt fī al-Adab al-Muqāran,* Mak. al-Anglo al-Miṣriyyah, (Cairo, 1989), p 157; Ḥusayn Fawzī al-Najjār, *ʿAlī Mubārak Abū-al-Taʿalīm*, al-Haiʾa al-Miṣriyyah al-ʿĀmah Lilkitāb, Aʿlām al-ʿArab, 129, (Cairo, 1987), p. 13; ʿAbd al-Raḥīm al-jamāl (ed.) *Ḥayāty,* Mak. al.Adāb, (Cairo, 1984), p. 3.
33. El- Shayyāl, *A History of Egyptian Historiography in the Nineteenth Century,* p. 48; Jack. A. Crabbs, Jnr., *The Writing of History in Nineteenth Century Egypt*, p. 109.
34. Jack. A. Crabbs, Jnr., op. cit., p. 109.
35. Jack. A. Crabbs, Jnr., op. cit., p 109; J. Brugman, *An Introduction to the History of Modern Arabic Literature in Egypt*, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1984, p. 65.
36. Jack. A. Crabbs, Jnr., op. cit., p. 110.
37. Jack. A. Crabbs, Jnr., op. cit., p. 111.
38. W. R. Polk and R. L. Chambers, *Beginning of Modernisation in the Middle East in the Nineteenth Century*, (Washington, 1968), p. 289.
39. W. R. Polk and R. L. Chambers, op. cit., p. 289.
40. El- Shayyāl, *A History of Egyptian Historiography in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 49.
41. See Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Ghanī Ḥasan, *Al-Tarājim wa-al-Siyar,* 3rd edition, Dar al-Maʿārif, (Cairo, 1980).
42. Taqī al-Dīn al-Maqrīzī author of *Al-Mawāʿiz wa -al-ʾiʿttibār bi-dhikr al-khiṭaṭ wa- al-athār*
43. El- Shayyāl, *A History of Egyptian Historiography in the Nineteenth Century*, p 50.

44. J.Brugman, *An Introduction to the History of Modern Arabic Literature in Egypt,* p.67
45. El- Shayyāl, op. cit., p. 50.
46. ʿAlī Mubārak, *Al-Khiṭaṭ al-Tawfīqiyyah*, Vol 1, (Cairo, 1994). p. 28.
47. El- Shayyāl, p. 51.
48. Jack. A. Crabbs, Jnr., *The Writing of History*, p. 116.
49. ʿAlī Mubārak, *Al-Khiṭaṭ al-Tawfīqiyyah*, Vol 8, p.18.
50. ʿAlī Mubārak, op. cit., p. 64.
51. ʿAlī Mubārak, op. cit., p. 263.
52. D. Ayalon, op. cit., p.392.
53. J. Haywood, op. cit., p. 20.

CHAPTER III

Traditional Literary Biography of the First half of the Twentieth Century

Introduction

a. Jurjī Zaydān

b. Ḥasan al-Sandūbī

c. Aḥmad Taymūr

d. Mayy Ziyāda

e. Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal

f. Aḥmad Amīn

g. Ibrāhīm Nājī

h Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Zayyāt

i. Zakī Muḥammad Mujāhid

j. Aḥmad Zakī Abū Shādī

* The works of each author were arranged in Chronological order according to the Time of Publishing.

Introduction

In this chapter I shall give a critical analysis of some. rather than all. of the biographers, because it was too difficult to lay my hands on all the writings of certain authors.

We shall see that some of the biographers published their biographies under different titles: *The History of Arabic Literature*, *The Great Literary Figures*, *Contemporary Poets*, *Pioneers of Poetry* and the like.

a. Jurjī Zaydān (1861-1914) (1)

Born in Beirut in 1861, his family belonged to the Greek Orthodox Community(2). He received his primary education in Beirut, but he left school because of economic conditions. Later he passed the entrance examination for the Syrian Protestant College and enrolled as a student of medicine (3). He was successful during his first year of studies, and was the best in his class. He completed his studies by receiving an award for distinction as a student of chemistry and Latin (4). Later he left Lebanon for Egypt to complete his medical studies in *al-Qaṣr al-ʿAynī*. However he did not complete his medical studies and interested himself in literature and journalism (5). Eventually he was sufficiently able to become the editor at *al-Zamān* newspaper.

In 1844 he went to Sudan with an expedition as a translator. He returned after that to Beirut where he studied the Hebrew and Syriac languages. Later he travelled to London where he spent most of his time in the reading rooms of the British Library becoming familiar with the works of the European orientalists (6).

He returned to Egypt to become the editor at *al-Muqtaṭaf* magazine, but he left to publish his own magazine *al-Hilāl* in 1892. Jurjī Zaydān was self-taught and gained mastery of the English, French and German languages, which enabled him to

become conversant with the works of orientalists. particularly Brockelmann's *Geschichte der Arabischen Litteratur.*

In his introduction to the biography of a compatriot of his. Salim Sidnawi (7). he explained the purpose of writing this and similar biographies: "There are biographies of people like Disraeli, Rothschild and other men of action and hard work who were born poor and achieved wealth or knowledge or a profession through their efforts and activity. The purpose of such biographies is not so much the immortalisation of their memory but rather the emulation of their deeds. The closer their vitae are to the needs of the reader, the greater the benefit in publishing their biographies. The biographies of politicians, administrators and soldiers are of no use in our hope for success in our own work. As far as scholars, merchants or professionals who achieved their wealth or greatness through their own efforts and faith are concerned, their biographies set a good example for the young generation - an ounce of example is better than a pound of instruction. Our writers have this habit of restricting themselves to biographies of scholars, soldiers, or politicians, yet we are in greater need of biographies of merchants who are self-made men and who became rich by lawful means befitting the conditions of success. Trade is the most important source of income in our country yet it is part of the popular fantasies that wealth is not (to be) attained in a legitimate, *Ḥalāl*, manner; that the true believer lives in poverty and dies a needy man; so that only liars, cunning people and sly men get rich ... is the excuse of those who fail in their efforts."(8) Zaydān aimed, however, to map out a main road, in his biographical conception.

Jurjī Zaydān was one of the greatest historians in Egypt towards the close of the 19th century(9). He wrote many books about Arabic literature, Islamic civilisation. English and Roman history, a history of the Arabs before Islam etc. Zaydān's chief

contribution to literary history is in his two important books; *Tarājim Mashāhīr al-Sharq fī al-Qarn al-Tās*ʿ*i* ʿ*Ashar,* (Cairo, 1907), and *Tārīkh adāb al-Lughah al-*ʿ*Arabiyyah*, which appeared in 1911-1914 (10).

His first book *Tarājim* was published in two volumes. The first part of the book was devoted to Muḥammad ʿAlī's family, Kings, leaders, reformers and politicians. The second part concentrates upon founders of the *Nahdah* - publishers and journalists, men of science and *adab*, and poets (11).

Most of the people who are the subjects of the biography are Arabs but there are some non-Arabs. In about ninety short biographies, Zaydān cites biographical accounts which do not form a notable contribution to literary biography, but it is a useful collection of biographical data, and remains until today a valuable source for biographical information, especially for Egypt and Syria in the 19th century (12).

Zaydān's second book, *Tārīkh adāb al-Lughah al-*ʿ*Arabiyyah*, which appeared in four volumes, gives brief lives of the poets, consisting of not more than two or three pages (except in the case of the *Muʿallaqāt* poets, where the treatment is longer). He uses European criteria, dividing poets according to their occupations, family names, and also according to whether they are from Bedouin or settled communities. The book does not present poets from the point of view of literary biography, and in fact offers little more than sketches. The organisation of Zaydān's *Tārīkh* follows the periodisation of Brockelmann (13).

Zaydān "made great use of Nicholson's and Brockelmann's works. Probably very much of the bibliographical information and some of the biographic information were

taken more or less directly from Brockelmann's *Geschichte der Arabischen Litteratur"* (14).

Zaydān divides his book according to political events, into a pre-Islamic (*jāhiliyya*), Islamic, Umayyad, Abbasid, Mogul, an Ottoman and a modern period (*al-Nahḍah al-Akhīrah*).

In his first chapter he classifies poets primarily according to their subject matter, *Muʿallaqāt* poets, court poets, chivalrous poets, gnomic poets, love poets, vagabond poets, Jewish poets, poetesses and so on.

In the second chapter he divides the poets according to their tribal *nisbah* and contrasts the large number of *jāhili* poets with those in the Umayyad period. He then divides the early Islamic poets into followers of ʿAlī and followers of Muʿāwiyah. Then he uses the categories of leading poets *fuḥūl*, political poets, love poets, licentious poets and poets who were singers.

In chapter three he brings together the rest of the Umayyad poets. In the Abbasid age he divides poets into four different sections: first for Urban and Bedouin poets and the same in the second and third sections (232-334A.H., 334-447A.H.), famous poets and literary figures. In the fourth section he divides poets' lives into seven different classes: Egyptian poets, Syrian poets, Iraqi poets, Persian poets, *Andalusian* poets, Moroccan poets, and poets of the Arabian peninsula.

Thus the author aims at presenting, in chronological order, the bare facts of the lives of the poets as he understands them, quite impartially and without ulterior intentions in the sense of representing any particular critical viewpoint. Even in his last chapter *al-Nahḍah al-Akhīrah*, he continues this arrangement for the modern period.

Altogether Zaydān brings together more than five hundred biographical sketches using the historical approach described. Although Zaydān was known for having

imitated Brockelmann (15), still his book, *Tārīkh ádāb al-lughah al-ʿArabiyyah.* " is one of the first attempts of an Arab at a periodization of his own Literary History" Zaydān "was one of the most prominent" (16) of "intermediate figures." (17)

b. Hasan al-Sandūbī

In his first book *Aʿyān al-Bayān min subḥ al-Qarn al-Thālith ʿAshar 'ila al-yawm,* al-Sandūbī presented the celebrities of Arab literature and history who "rose to prominence under the reigns of Muḥammad ʿAlī, Ismāʿīl down to the reign of ʿAbbās [Ḥilmī]."(18) The aim of the book is to "immortalize the memory of the ingenious literary figures of that period and revive their works." (19)

The work is divided into two volumes, of which only the first is available. It covers prestigious personalties who were born at the beginning of the 13th century of *Hijra*. In his presentation, the author applied the traditional *Tarjamah* method of providing a meagre sketch of the person in question, his qualities, prosaic or poetic works and finally his status.

Al-Sandūbī, we presume, had no object other than honouring those who upheld literature in a book which differs little from the traditional, classical authors. His approach is consistent with his period, characterized, as it was, with reviving the classical spirit and trumpeting our past as being one productive of great men. It is more like a history of literature than a biography record. This may well apply to his second book, *Al-Shuʿarāʾ al-Thalātha, Shawqī, Mutrān and Ḥāfiz*, where he reviews and presents the verse of those three poets, Shawqī, Muṭrān and Ḥāfiẓ, providing their comments on each other together with his own commentary on them.(20)

c. Aḥmad Taymūr (1871-1930)

In his first book *Abū al-ʿAlāʾ al-Maʿarrī,* Taymūr strives to record every detail that has been preserved regarding al-Maʿarrī's kinship, friendships, travels, studies, his wealth, his ascetic way of life, and his books. He depends for his facts on published research into the life of al-Maʿarrī, and does not develop a critical approach to al-Maʿarrī's work through a close study of what is known about his career.

His second book, *Tarājim aʿyān al-Qarn al-Thālith ʿAshar wa-awāʾil al-Rābiʿ ʿAshar,* is a collection of biographical sketches. It includes twenty three different characters who were famous in Taymūr's day. Some of them were personal friends. He devotes a few pages to each, including dates of birth and death and details of their hobbies and personal affairs. In general these notices are in the tradition of *Ṭabaqāt* literature.

d. Mayy Ziyāda (1886-1941)

Mayy Ziyāda was born in Nazareth in Palestine. Her father Ilyās Zākhūr Ziyāda was a Lebanese from Saḥtūl village, Kesrwān province; her mother Nuzha Muʿammar from al-Jalīl. Mayy attended elementary school at her home town, and continued her learning at ʿAyn Ṭūra school in the Lebanon.(21) She studied the French language and had a good command of it.

In 1907, her parents migrated to Egypt where they settled. The young lady, Mayy gave private tuition in French to the daughters of the upper class. In 1911 she published her first poetry collection in French, titled *Fleurs de rêve.* She started to contribute to *al-Maḥrūsa* magazine, edited by her father. During the First World War she was admitted to the Egyptian University, and graduated in 1918.

Mayy Ziyāda produced two biographies, the first on Malak Ḥifnī Nāṣif, a reformist and pro-women writer; the second ʿĀʾisha Taymūr, the poetess.

In 1913 Mayy Ziyāda came to know Malak Ḥifnī Nāṣif through the latter's essays and commentaries run by *Al-Jarīda* and *Al-Muʾayyid* journals. Malak Nāsif published her pieces under the pen-name: Bāḥithat al-Bādiyya, literally: [The Bedouin Researcher]. In her columns she advocated the education of women, recognizing their rights, delivering them from the shackles of ignorance and serfdom. Mayy Ziyāda admired these dashing columns, and the two women got acquainted in person. Their liaison developed into a strong intellectual bond of friendship, admiration and respect.

In 1918, however, Bāḥithat al-Bādiyya died. In her grief for the loss of a friend and a reformist writer, Mayy Ziyāda serialized essays on Malak Nāṣif's life and work in *al-Muqtaṭaf* review. These were collected in one volume and published under the title: *Bāḥithat al-Bādiyya: A Critical Study,* in 1920. This was "The first book written in Arabic by an Arab woman on an Arab woman."(22)

Ziyāda traces Malak Nāṣif's family descent saying she was born in Cairo in 1886, attended a Cairene high school, and got a diploma as a lecturer in royal schools for girls. In 1907 she got married and died in Cairo on 17 October 1918.(23)

Ziyāda described her first encounter with Malak Nāṣif, and observed that what attracted her attention most was Malak Nāṣif's unlimited tenderness and generous hospitality. Malak Nāṣif "was a typical Egyptian both in her sweet humour and her staunch patriotism."(24) In fact "her playful witty spirit beamed from between the lines she wrote."(25) If Malak Nāṣif, on the one hand, was merry, joyful,

humorous, joke-teller, she was, on the other "succumbed, like all ill-tempered, bilious people, to depression, a sense of grief which was sharpened by her readings."(26)

Although both her father Ḥifnī Nāṣif Bey, and her spouse ʿAbd al-Sattār Bey al-Bāsil, were sons of the upper aristocracy in the Egyptian society, Malak Nāṣif befriended middle and lower classes, above all the bedouin and peasant women with whom she liaised and conversed, and to whom she listened and gave advice.

Mayy Ziyāda reviews Malak Nāṣif's Islamic beliefs, her position on polygamy, equality and education for women and concludes that "she was a devout Muslim who jealously guarded Islam in the manner a lover would jealously guard his own beloved."(27) Ziyāda even justifies Malak Nāṣif's religious fanaticism: "Her religious feeling was blended in her mind with nationalist and social symbols, as is the case with most human beings."(28)

Ziyāda postulates that Nāṣif's character was made from different elements, but these "are inseparably linked together, with none working unless assisted by the others."(29) In a special part of the volume, the letters they exchanged, are printed together with an obituary and a piece on her achievements. Ziyāda even draws a contrast between the advocate of women's emancipation, Qāsim Amīn, and her friend Malak Nāṣif, in their endeavours to defend women's rights.

What Ziyāda has presented in this volume is considered "a literary, social, historical and critical study of the life and works of Malak Ḥifnī Nāṣif, more known as Bāḥithat al-Bādiyya, particularly her book *Nisāʾiyyāt* [Women's Affairs]."(30), which included her previous essays on the topic. And it was Yaʿqūb Ṣarrūf, *al-*

Muqtataf's editor, who asked Miss Mayy to write "on the cause the deceased lady advocated." (31 I came across views which consider this work of Ziyāda as "a new model in writing a scientifically disciplined biography, because it contains an all-encompassing analysis of the life and works of Bāḥithat al-Bādiyya."(32)

In point of fact what Mayy Ziyāda presented was more of a portrait, emphasizing few features in Malak Nāṣif, such as modesty, religious belief, humour, melancholy, or her calls for removing the veil. Her study lacks the depth required to follow up the development of the character in question. We encounter Malak Nāṣif as a ready-made mature woman. The various aspects of her personality are disconnected by the very organization of the book into different chapters. Ziyāda produced the text in an atmosphere of immense grief for the loss of her friend, and she could only jot down those observed qualities in Malak Nāṣif's behaviour and character without much deeper analysis even of the so-called "ill-tempered, bilious "nature. It is a posthumous eulogy, stressing the positive side of Malak Nāṣif in an attempt to support the latter's crusade. But this does not mean to say that Ziyāda's study was void of any rational analysis or vivid portrayal of her friend's sensibilities, on the contrary, "Mayy [Ziyāda] could empathize with the person of Malak Nāṣif in her various life-stages."(33)

In her second book *ʿĀ'isha Taymūr Shaʿirat al-Ṭaliʿah,* 1925, Mayy Ziyāda strives to record every detail that has been preserved regarding ʿĀ'isha Taymūr's life. She portrayed the social and intellectual life of Taymūr's period. In her words, ʿĀ'isha Taymūr appeared at a time when women were in a dark night of ignorance, and she came out as a glimmer of hope to Egyptian woman and their future. Intellectual and social life was in constant development, but women had not yet reached that stage of self-education. On the contrary, they were content in their insulation and ignorance.

Taymūr's father was the source of her support. It was he who brought her tutors to teach her Persian, Turkish and Arabic grammar, rhetoric and style, until she gained literary maturity.

As for her social milieu, Ziyāda says " ʿĀ'isha was the daughter of a prominent notable and senior official who assumed several high positions under ʿAbbās I, Saʿīd and Ismāʿīl, and came to hold the post of the head of the Royal Court under the Khedive of Egypt. She married Muḥammad Bey Tawfīq, son of Muḥammad Bey al-Islambulli, the governor of the Sudan, and had various connections with the daughters of the Egyptian upper class." On the reason why this study was written, Mayy Ziyāda says: "I read all what I could find of her writings and gathered all available personal details and I wanted to write a research about ʿĀ'isha. The reason is that she was the vanguard of the wakening of women in this country, also because the public knew her as a poetess without having read her verse."(34)

Ziyāda based her biography of ʿĀ'isha Taymūr on the noble lineage, assisting and inspiring environment and the challenging era. In her words, ʿĀ'isha Taymūr was " irrespective of her frailties and shortcomings, the first experience in the current of innovation, the pioneer of the new approach".(35) Taymūr had the credit, in her opinion, of breathing the first sighs at a moment when the voice of the woman was in itself considered as shameful. Ziyāda portrayed the 19th century Cairene life quoting "the French academy member Xaviet Morniet's, *From Constantinople to Cairo*, a diaries of its author's journey in the Orient between 1845-6."(36)

On the upper class private life she relied upon "the vivid narratives by Niya Salīma, the pseudo name used by premier[sic] Ḥusayn Rushdī's French wife." (37)

In her dissection of Taymūr's life, Ziyāda followed the traditional *sīrah* and the analytical methods (psychological and historical) combined in one. On the other hand, there is a traditional narrative of Taymūr's life passage, but there is the emotional, psychological struggle within herself after her daughter's death and her relations with her social milieu.

This book constitutes a stride forward in literary biographing in Egypt. Compared to the previous volume on Bāḥithat al-Bādiyya, it reveals a better grasp of biography, a deeper analysis and powerful expression, yet the part dedicated to the study of Taymūr's verse is weak.

Mayy Ziyāda is a real pioneer, for she was "the first in modern times who devoted her efforts to study two modern Arab poetesses, Bāḥithat al-Bādyiyya and ʿĀ'isha Taymūr. Her study of their lives and works was more of a defence of herself and her womenfolk rather than a narrow portrayal or a mere defence of two women."(38)

e. Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal (1888-1956)

Tarājim Miṣriyyah wa-Gharbiyyah (1929) (republished as *Shakhsiyyāt Miṣriyyah wa- Gharbiyyah*)

This book is a collection of articles published in a weekly newspaper, *al-Siyāsah al-Usbuʿiyyah*. In the first part the author tells us he intends to present for the reader "a portrait of the life of political Egypt in the latest period." (36) He deals in this part with Cleopatra (B.C 69-30), Ismāʿīl Bāsha (1830-1895), Tawfīq Bāsha (1852-1892), Muḥammad Qadrī Bāsha (1821-1886), Buṭrus Ghālī Bāsha (1846-1910), Muṣṭafa Kāmil Bāsha (1874-1908), Qāsim Amīn Bey (1863-1908), Ismāʿīl Ṣabrī

Bāsha (1854-1923), Maḥmūd Sulaimān Bāsha (d.1922) and ʿAbd al-Khāliq Tharwat Bāsha (1873-1928).

Ismāʿīl Ṣabrī Bāsha was the only poet among all these prominent figures. Haykal covers the life of Ismāʿīl Ṣabrī Bāsha in twelve pages from birth to death, and includes specimens of his poetry. "He (Ismāʿīl Ṣabrī Bāsha) really was an Egyptian poet. He was never inclined towards Bedouinism, but he was imbued with the delicacy of the Nile valley and its clear sky which is reflected strongly in Ismāʿīl Ṣabrī's soul and which is rarely found in other poets."(40) Ṣabrī left a collection of poems. The author draws attention to the impact of Western life on Ṣabrī's mentality, which in his opinion added a new dimension of beauty and taste to his poetry. This appears clearly in his love poetry.

In the second part of his book he writes about Beethoven, Taine, Shakespeare and Shelley, "I wrote about them on the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of Beethoven's death and hundredth birthday of Taine..." (41)

The book is, in fact, as the author says, "biographical sketches" and does not really deserve the description of "literary biography", because it does not record the actions and re-create the personality of an individual life, but seeks to introduce each personality to the general reader, and is therefore similar to a collection of biographical articles.(42)

f. Aḥmad Amīn (1886-1954)

An Islamic Historian, who was born, lived and died in Cairo. He was educated at al-Azhar college-mosque and graduated from the school of law. He was appointed as judge and lecturer at the faculty of Arts in Cairo university whose deanship he assumed later on. He was a member of the Damascus-based Arab Science Academy.

the Cairo-based Arabic Language Academy and the Baghdad - based Iraq Science Academy. He authored and published several works on Islamic history and was the editor of *al-Thaqāfa* magazine. He studied the English language and acquired a good command of it.With the exception of Ṭāhā Ḥusayn and Zakī Mubārak, he had no quarrels or clashes against his contemporary pen-men.(43)

A Portrait of Ḥāfiẓ Ibrāhīm

In his introduction to *Ḥāfiẓ Ibrāhīm's poetry,* Aḥmad Amīn provided personal notice, more of a curriculum vitae of the poet relying on the latter's file kept by the Pensions Administration.

The poet's father, Aḥmad Amīn says, is Ibrāhīm, hence an Egyptian, but his mother, Hānim Aḥmad al-Bauslit-lī, is of Turkish origin. Ḥāfiẓ Ibrāhīm was born in Dairūṭ, lower Egypt, in 1872. When his father died he was brought up by his maternal uncle. Ḥafiẓ Ibrāhīm had a limited tolerance of modern schooling or civil service. Detesting both, he spent much of his early career in dire need. At sixteen, he was attracted to becoming a lawyer but could not continue this career for long. Then he applied for the military school and graduated as an officer at the age of twenty. Three years on, he mandited his service to the department of the interior and was shortly thereafter despatched to the Sudan. Upon his request, he was relieved from service and retired in 1899. Between 1911-1932, he was appointed head of the literary department at *Dār al-Kutub Al-Miṣriyyah.* He died in 1932.

Aḥmad Amīn studied four aspects of Ḥāfiẓ's life, his character, culture, verse collections and literary status, in a very brief manner, reminding one of biographical dictionaries. Apart from amassing few details on the poet, there was nothing novel. On Ḥafiẓ's character, Amīn says Ḥāfiẓ was dissatisfied, unhappy, failed, frustrated

with his life and community. He lamented his era, complained of his people, felt forlorn and miserable. He revealed deep paranoia of death, perhaps by way of conveying his bitterness and wrath. Ḥāfiẓ Ibrāhīm, Amīn explains, cared little for money yet he was liberal in spending, tolerant of his critics. Unlike Aḥmad Shawqī the aristocrat, Ḥafiẓ's Turkish blood was more democratic, more inclined to live with ordinary people. But his literary culture was rather limited although he did his best to expand on it by reading or attending intellectual lectures delivered by prominent thinkers of his time, such as sheikh Muḥammad ʿAbdu, Saʿd Zaghlūl, Qāsim Amīn and Muṣṭafa Kāmil. He also studied the French language.

The most outstanding feature of his poetry was that "it crystallized the expectations of the Egyptian nation first, and of the Arab people second. He was the mouthpiece of patriotism, the poet of the people, of politics and of community. Never was he surpassed in this propensity by any other poet of his age."(44) At the end, Aḥmad Amīn reviews Ḥafiẓ's verse, classifies it under different rubrics according to the purpose of the poem, signifies his best pieces and defines his place on the map of contemporary poetry.

Aḥmad Amīn, in our view, had no intention of producing a biography of Ḥāfiẓ Ibrāhīm but would rather give preliminary notes by way of acquainting the reader with the poet. In fact, Amīn was well aware of the literary prerequisites of biography writing, and in his words, literary biography, "should be based on a thorough knowledge of the social environment in which the poet lived, of his daily liaisons with his mates, of the crucial factors defining his history, of his expectations, endeavours, above all his failures, interconnections between his works, on the one hand, and the external and internal circumstances under which these works were created, on the other."(45)

Applying Aḥmad Amīn's own criteria on his introduction of Ḥāfiẓ reveals that his brief notice is far from any form of biography proper.

g. Ibrāhīm Nājī (1898-1953)

He was born on 31 December 1898, in al-Mansūra province. At the age of eleven he memorized the verse of the classical Arab poet al- Sharīf al-Raḍī. At the age of thirteen he wrote some poems and pieces of prose. In the academic year 1916-17 he was admitted to the Medicine College to graduate in 1923. During his study, he did not give up poetry. With Ṣālih Jawdat, Al-Hamshārī and ʿAlī Maḥmūd Ṭāhā, Nājī established the nuclei of the Apollo School "which still retains its strong roots to this very day in modern poetry."(46) In Cairo he married Samiya and they had three daughters. His first collection of poetry appeared in 1934 under the title: *Warāʾa al-Ghamām* [Beyond the Clouds]. At the time he was the leader of Apollo group.

Nājī "was focusing his reading on the Science of Psychology to deepen his knowledge of the various schools. Freud's school had the strongest influence on him."(47) Nājī "was the master of lover- poets in modern time who no one could match in their sublime arena."(48) At the age of fifty-five, Nājī was suspended from his work as a physician due to some vague intrigues by rivals.(49) Nājī died on 25 March 1953.

A Portrait of Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm

In a chapter titled *Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm Ḥayātuhu al-Nafsiyyah Min Kutubihi* (Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm his psychological life through his books), Ibrāhīm Nājī tried, in a book on Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm which he co-authored with Ismāʿīl Adham (1911-1940) to analyse al-Ḥakīm's psychological fabric. He said al-Ḥakīm's mother was a Turk but his father was an Egyptian peasant. The mother had a formidable, dominating character.

and she was keen on segregating her son from mixing with the peasants so as to keep him from being contaminated by what she considered unacceptable behaviour, life-style and traditional values. Being subordinate, the father bowed to her wishes. "The parents could not develop into him [Tawfīq] outward orientation (outside his self); he was thus more and more inward oriented to the point where he became so self-insulated that he created for himself an inner, private realm made from his dreams and fantasies, a realm where his will to power would materialize. "(50)

In his adolescence, his artistic talents began to develop. Viewed from a behavioural point of view, this youthfulness was bereft of any violence, misconduct or vanity, and constituted a continuation of his legitimate childhood. He began to write verse and showed early interest in music. A premature failed love affair plunged him deeper into his inner, magical realm (51) and disturbed his approach to the other sex. He developed a traumatic phobia towards women, this was "perhaps partly produced by the mother complex."(52) Like Turk women, his mother "was renowned for her strong, dominant and feared character who harboured a tender and caring soul underneath this facade of decisiveness and sway."(53)

Applying a psychological methodology, Ibrāhīm Nājī examined al-Ḥakīm's personality relying heavily on the latter's creative works. He also studied al-Ḥakīm's life, parentage and the influence of the Turkish environment on his inner mood and temper during early formative years, above all the said self-insulation which "apart from few moments of rare waking, left no room for society."(54)

This image was fragmentary. No accounts were given by the author on al-Ḥakīm's behaviour during childhood, at school, at home, or even in France where he studied. We know nothing about his various relations with those whom he liaised with during

those years. Only sporadic aspects of these relationships are depicted but they fall short of producing sufficient evidence to properly evaluate, let alone draw an accurate image of his personality. Nājī confined his analysis to the texts written by al-Ḥakīm. Thus the voice of al-Ḥakīm the child, the school boy or the young student was missing. Frequent mention of Turkish background was almost a tautology. In fact the nature of the Turkish environment in the Egyptian society was remained totally obscure, al-Ḥakīm lived in the Cairene milieu which he reflected in his *ʿAwdat al-Rūḥ,* but artistic presentation is different from actual reality lived by the author.

Nājī could have examined al-Ḥakīm's private diaries, interviewed his closet contemporaries and friends to unearth what is unknown by the public of his real life, his struggle with the self and the others. Nājī failed to be an interpreter and explorer of al-Ḥakīm's real life experiences. What he has written about al-Ḥakīm may well be considered a mere analytical study of certain literary works of al-Ḥakim to discover his character.

h. Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Zayyāt (1885-1968)

Al-Zayyāt was born on April 2, 1885, in the village of Kafr Dumayrah in the Daqahliyyah province, as the son of a peasant (55). He was sent to al-Azhar when he was twelve, where he met Ṭāhā Ḥusayn. In 1907, he became a teacher of Arabic at a French School. In 1908 he registered with the Law School, to obtain a licence in 1912. Later, in 1922, he went to France for further studies (56). In 1929 he left for Iraq where he taught for three years at the Teacher's Training College in Baghdad. In 1933 he established his own magazine, *al-Risālah,* which was in circulation until 1953. Al-Zayyāt was a prolific writer himself as appears from his collected articles which were published under the title of *Waḥy al-Risālah* in four volumes. He died on June 12, 1968 in Cairo.(57)

In his *Tārīkh al-Adab al-ʿArabī,* al-Zayyāt includes the major Arab literary figures from the *Jāhiliyyah* up to modern times, giving brief biographical notes for each figure.

In his first chapter *al-ʿAṣr al-Jāhilī,* he introduces orators (public speakers) and poets in a few lines each, concerning their education, life, and poetry.

The second chapter covers various groups of Islamic writers: Iraqi poets, *Shīʿah* poets, *Khawārij* poets, *mukhadram* poets and prose writers.

The third chapter deals with the Abbasid Age: including prose writers and post-classical Syrian, Andalusian and Egyptian poets.

The fourth chapter deals with poets of the *Mamlūk* Age and the fifth with writers and poets.

This book in effect follows the tradition of the biographical sketches; in each entry little more than a curriculum vitae is given.

I. Zakī Muḥammad Mujāhid

In his book, *Al-Aʿlām al-Sharqiyyah fī al-Miʾat al-Rābiʿate ʿAsharata al-Hijriyyah (1301/1883-1365/1946),* Mujahid provided, *Tarajim*, of "the fourteenth century of *Hijra* oriental celebrities across different nations and countries irrespective of their creed, religion, culture, tradition, rank and orientation."(58) In his own words, this type of study was the favourite topic for a host of jurists, historian, exegesis experts and transmitters of traditions. This, he emphatically pronounces, is " a book of *tabaqāt* [layers] like any other of its kind."(59)

He divided the text into sixteen chapters, each covering a specific group: monarchs, princess, ministers and ambassadors, leaders of the national movement; high military and naval commanders, Muslim doctors of religion, judges and lawyers, *ṣūfī* orders, celebrities of non-Muslim denominations, pen-men (writers and poets), historians

and travellers, journalists, physicians, financiers and businessmen. artists. miscellaneous professionals, and women. According to his original intentions. the chapters were to be divided into five volumes, of which only the first three books came into circulation covering some 775 figures in eight chapters.

We could not find a trace of the fourth and fifth volumes which are of importance to our topic, particularly the fourth which contains the chapter on pen-men. From reading the first three volumes, we observe that he selected the celebrities on the fourteenth century of the *Hijra* who died before (1366 A.H.) His approach is meagre and schematic, confined to the mentioning of personal details, such as dates of birth and death, place of birth, education or destination of travel, rank, customs, post, the events they witnessed and their works.

It is a traditional book of *tarājim* which may suit the needs of literature historians rather than biography records. The author pays no attention to the celebrities' characters, their development, their responding actions to their environment, in fact they appear void of any will or individuality.

J. Aḥmad Zakī Abū Shādī (1892-1955)

Abū Shādī was born in Cairo in 1892. His father was an eminent lawyer and a lettered man. His mother was a poetess. He had his education in Cairo and joined the Medical School, but he broke off his study, and left for Istanbul and London after an unsuccessful love affair. In England he studied English Literature in detail. He stayed for ten years, and married an English woman. In 1922 he returned to Egypt with his wife, and he resumed his scientific activities, especially his profession as a bacteriologist. He edited various literary periodicals; *Apollo* was the most important and famous magazine for its distinguished contributors, especially young poets from all over the Arab world.

He published a number of literary studies. His prolific output includes more than 15 volumes of verse and a number of operas and plays. He left for the U.S.A. after his wife's death in 1946 and resumed his literary activities. He worked in New York for the "Voice of America", then in Washington until his death.(60)

His book, *Shuʿarāʾ al-ʿArab al-Muʿāṣirūn*, was published posthumously in Cairo in 1958 - that is, three years after the death of its author. The publisher presented the book with the following words: "A thorough study of the literary production of the *Shuʿarāʾ al- ʿArab al- Muʿāṣirūn*, in the light of the modern critical schools, and a scientific, impartial history of the renewal movement."(61)

Abū Shadī's book was edited for publication by Raḍwān Ibrāhīm, who gave a concise note of each poet, including that of the author Abū Shadī. In his introduction as an editor, Ibrāhīm says: "This is a critical study classified into harmonious groups not for the sake of drawing regional limits, but to bring into bold relief the common, local concerns and the responses to environmental factors which were all reflected in the verse of each category of poets whom this survey studies." (62)

Ibrāhīm introduces each poet in brief terms. The publisher call this a thorough biography, "based on the meagre, insufficient information I have got."(63) He adds: "Among the most demanding obligations, we should concern ourselves with studying talented poets, their achievements, and do them justice."(64)

In his study on Khalīl Muṭrān, the author says: "Khalīl Muṭrān's star shone too brilliantly for a young lad like him, during the last quarter of the 19th century."(65) Leaving the poet's illumination, the author goes on to say: "In his poetic sensibilities the poet is indebted, genetically speaking, to his maternal grandmother. From his mother, Malakah al-Ṣabbāgh, he inherited sapience and sagacity, from his father. ʿAbdu Muṭrān and the Muṭrān family as a whole, his indignation over injustice and his

will to defy the mighty."(66) The way Abū Shādī depicts Mutrān is more of a simplified portrait, in fact mere biographical notes.

Another example of his presentation of ʿAbd al- Raḥmān Shukrī: "Born in 1886. One of the pillars of renewing modern poetry. He has Western education, and is influenced by English poetry. He published seven verse collections and a book titled *Confessions*, in 1916. He led an isolated, melancholic life, and died alone in Alexandria due to paralysis. His liberal spirit was clearly mature even in his first collection. He focused on intellectual contemplation and the classical poets like al-Maʿarrī, Ibn al-Rūmī, and Milton, through the marriage of philosophical contemplation, emotional feelings, mystical impressions, and natural emotions."(67) In this second sample, Abū Shādī presents a brief account on Shukrī that borders on the nature of a simplified essay written for a weekly. We know nothing of the poet's melancholy, why he was so distant from politics and journalism, what drove him to take this or that position against al- Māzinī and al-ʿAqqād. Why he kept himself locked in that solitary confinement, although he was among the pioneers of the *Diwān* school in Arabic poetry?

Abū Shadī gave very brief, even poor accounts of those whom he studied, although his literary comments on their pieces were, in certain cases, somewhat detailed. This may well apply to his remarks on the Apollo School, or the author's school itself, or on those who may have enjoyed richness in vocabulary, vivid passions, graphic ideas and musical charm.

He analyses the elements of poetic creativity whether they are original or simply an echo of one's own readings of European literary sources. Each poet is introduced through his basic feature. Nizār Qabbānī, for example, is a poet of prodigious lust. Zakī Mubārak's poetry is renowned for its vitality, strength and classical music. His

is an independently unique verse. When he pleased, he would analyse this or that poet, irrespective of its subject, be it a patriotic piece, or one of love and revolution. Some prosaic pieces are also reviewed and criticised.

Abū Shādī was well acquainted with Western literary methods; English, American, and he tried hard to draw the attention of his fellow writers and disciples, including the Apollo Group, to the masterpieces of English poetry, above all the English Romantic poets. But when he wrote his book, he did not apply any methods from these methods. His study came out poor in content, looking more like journalistic essays or even reminiscent of the purely traditional studies which require no knowledge of Western methodology.

The book is grouped into five geographical sections, as follows: the poets of Egypt, the poets of *al-Shām* (Greater Syria), the poets of Iraq, the poets of the Arabian peninsula and the poets of the North *Mahjar* (i.e. the migrant poets of North America). Traditional as the study is, it retains a degree of importance, if for no other reason than for its study of this great number of poets from the second generation of the modern *Nahḍa* (renaissance) in the Arab world.

Notes

1. See Aḥmad Ḥusayn al-Tamāwī, *Jurjī Zaydān*, (Cairo, 1992); Thomas Philipp, *Jurjī Zaydān His Life and Thought*, (Beirut, 1979), and J. Brugman, pp. 218-224.
2. Thomas Philipp, op. cit., p. 11.
3. Ibid., p. 11.
4. Ibid., p. 17.
5. Gamāl El-Dīn El-Shayyāl, *A History of Egyptian Historiography in the Nineteenth Century*, (Alexandria, 1962), p. 75.
6. See Gamāl El-Dīn El-Shayyāl, op. cit., p. 75; Thomas Philipp, op. cit., p. 26.
7. Thomas Philipp, op. cit., p. 14.
8. Thomas Philipp, op. cit., pp. 14-15.
9. Gamāl El-Dīn El-Shayyāl, op. cit., p. 75.
10. The four volumes had been published by Zaydān in *al-Hilāl* during 1894-95.
11. Thomas Philipp, op., cit, p. 226.
12. Thomas Philipp, op. cit., p. 226.
13. Jābir Qumaiha, *Manhaj al-ʿAqqād fī al-Tarājim al-Adabiyyah*, (Cairo, 1980), pp. 41-42.
14. Thomas Philipp, op. cit., p. 227.
15. J. Brugman, op. cit., p. 220 [quoted from Joseph Ḥarb, *Gurgī Zaydān, Rigāl fī Ragul*, (Beirut, 1970), p. 67].
16. J. Brugman, op. cit., p. 220.
17. H. A. R. Gibb, *Studies in Contemporary Arabic Literature* in *Bulletin*, p. 465.
18. Ḥasan al-Sandūbī, *Aʿyan al-Bayān min Ṣubḥ al-Qarn al-Thālith ʿAshar al-Hijrī ʾila al-Yawm*, Mat. al-Jammāliyyah, first edition, (Miṣr, 1914), p. 14.
19. Ibid., p. 14.
20. Ḥasan al-Sandūbī (ed.), *Al-Shuʿarāʾ al-Thalāthah Shawqī, Mutrān, Ḥafiz*, Mat. al-Maktaba al-Tijāriyyah, first edition, (Cairo, 1922).
21. See Khir al-Dīn al-Zirikli, *Al-Aʿlām*, 9th edition, Vol 5, (Beirut, 1990), p. 253, Ṭahir al-Ṭanāḥī, *Aṭyāf min Ḥayāt Mayy*, Kitāb *al-Hilāl*, (Cairo, 1974), p. 10; Al-Ṭahir A. Makki, *Al- Adab al- Muqāran Dirāsa Naẓariyyah*

Taṭbīqiyyah, (Cairo, 1988), p. 133; Husayn ʿUmar Ḥamāda. *Aḥadīth ʿAn Mayy Ziyāda wa-Asrār Ghīr Mutadāwala min Ḥayātiha*. Dār Qutayba, first edition, (Damascus, 1983), p. 7.

22. Al-Ṭanāḥī, op. cit., p. 13.

23. Mayy Ziyāda, *Bāḥithat al-Bādiyya. A Critical Study*, Vol. 1 Complete Works, Muʾassast Nūfal, first edition, (Beirut, 1975), p. 19.

24. Ibid., p. 64.

25. Ibid., p. 66.

26. Ibid., p. 45.

27. Ibid., p. 46.

28. Ibid., p. 62.

29. Ibid., p. 88.

30. Salma al-Haffār al-Kazbarī, *Mayy Ziyāda Au Maʾasat al-Nubūgh*, Vol. 1, Muʾassast Nufal, first edition, (Beirut, 1987), p. 199.

31. Al-Ṭanāḥī, op. cit., p. 12.

32. Al-Kazbarī, op. cit., p. 200 [quoted from Yaʿqub Ṣarrūf's introduction of *Bāḥithat al-Bādiyya*].

33. Al-Kazbarī, op. cit., p. 200.

34. Mayy Ziyāda, *ʿĀʾisha Taymūr Shaʿirat al-Taliʿah*, (Beirut, 1975), p. 16.

35. Ibid., pp. 207-208.

36. Al-Ṭahir Makkī, op. cit., p. 142.

37. Ibid., p. 143.

38. Ibid., p. 156.

39. Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal: *Tarājim Miṣriyyah wa-Gharbiyyah*, (Cairo, 1980), p. 8.

40. Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal, op. cit., p. 171.

41. Ibid., p. 8.

42. Ṭāhā Wādī, *Al-Duktūr Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal wa-Turāthuhu al-Adabī*, (Cairo, 1969), p. 141.

43. See Al-Ziriklī, *Al-Aʿlām*, Vol 1, p. 101; Ḥusayn Aḥmad Amīn, *Fī Bayt Aḥmad Amīn*, Kitāb *al-Hilāl*, No 415, (Cairo, 1985).

44. Aḥmad Amīn (ed.), *Dīwān Ḥafiẓ Ibrāhīm*, 2 vols, (Beirut, n.d.), p. 28.

45. Aḥmad Amīn, *Al-Naqd al-Adabī*, 2 vols, Mak. al-Nahḍah al-Maṣriyyah, 5th edition, (Cairo, 1983), p. 88.

46. Ṣālih Jawdat, *Ibrāhīm Nājī Ḥayātuhu wa-Shi ʿruhu*, (Cairo, 1960). p. 139; Aḥmad Haykal, *Taṭawwur al-Adab al-Ḥadīth fī Miṣr*, (Cairo, 1978), p. 300; J. Brugman, *An introduction to the history of modern Arabic Literature in Egypt*, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1984, pp. 167-168; M.M. Badawī, *An Anthology of Modern Arabic Verse*, Oxford University Press, 1976, pp. xxviii and *A critical introduction to Modern Arabic Poetry*, Cambridge University Press, 1975, p. 129 and p. 137.

47. Ṣālih jawdat, *Ibrāhīm Nājī*, p. 54.

48. Ibid., p. 155.

49. Ṣālih Jawdat, *Balābil min al-Sharq*, Silsilat Iqraʾ, Dār al-Maʿārif, 2nd edition, (Cairo, 1984), p. 20.

50. Ismāʿīl Adham and Ibrāhīm Nājī, *Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm*, Dār Saʿd Miṣr Liltibaʿat wa-al-Nashr, (Cairo, 1945), p. 202.

51. Ibid., p. 204.

52. Ibid., p. 205.

53. Ibid., p. 212.

54. Ibid., p. 206.

55. See J. Brugman, p. 382 [quoted from Niʿmāt Aḥmad Fuʾād *Qimam adabiyyah*, p. 195].

56. J. Brugman, op. cit., p. 383 [quoted from Niʿmāt, op. cit., p. 202].

57. Aḥmad Haykal, op. cit., p. 253; J. Brugman, op. cit., p. 382, p. 387.

58. Zakī Muḥammad Mujāhid, *Al-Aʿlām al-Sharqiyyah fī al-Miʾat al-Rābiʿata ʿashrata al-Hijriyyah (1301/1883-1365/1946)*, first edition, Dār al-Tibāʿah al-Miṣriyyah al-Ḥadīthah, Vol 1, (Cairo, 1949), p. 1.

59. Ibid., p. 1.

60. See M. M. Badawī, *An Anthology of Modern Arabic Verse*, Oxford University Press, 1976, pp. xxvii-xxviii; *A Critical Introduction to Modern Arabic Poetry*, Cambridge University Press, 1975, pp. 116-117; J. Brugman, *An Introduction to the History of Modern Arabic Literature in Egypt*, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1984, pp. 158-167; Aḥmad Haykal, *Taṭwwar al-Adab al- Ḥadīth fī Miṣr*, (Cairo, 1978), p. 299.

61. Aḥmad Zakī Abū Shādī, *Shuʿarāʾ al-ʿArab al-Muʿāṣirūn*, ed. Raḍwān Ibrāhīm, Dār al-Ṭibāʿah al-Ḥadīthah, (Cairo, 1958), p. 12

62. Ibid., p. 14.

63. Ibid., p. 15.

64. Ibid., p. 18.
65. Ibid., p. 32.
66. Ibid., p. 33.
67. Ibid., pp. 44-45.

CHAPTER IV

New Paths in Literary Biography: Ṭāhā Ḥusayn (1889-1973)

Introduction

a. A Portrait of al-Maʿarrī

b. A Portrait of Abū Nuwās

c. A Portrait of Bashshār b. Burd

d. A Portrait of Ḥāfiẓ Ibrāhīm

e. A Portrait of Aḥmad Shawqī

f. A Portrait of Ibn al- Rūmī

g. A Portrait of al- Mutanabbī

h. His short biographies

His characteristics as a biographer

Introduction

Ṭāhā Ḥusayn was born on November 14, 1889, in a village in Upper Egypt, ʿIzbat al-Kīlū, near the town of Maghaghah,(1) which is situated on the side of the Nile. Ṭāhā was the seventh of his father's thirteen children, and the fifth of his mother's eleven.(2) His father, Ḥusayn ʿAlī, was a low income worker, but the family belonged to the lower middle class, by local standards was neither rich nor poor.(3) He went blind when he was, three years old, because of ill-treated eye disease, but this did not prevent his family from sending him to the *kuttāb* (village school) to learn Qurʾān. By the age of nine Ṭāhā had satisfied his teacher.(4)

In 1902 he was sent to Cairo, to continue his studies at al-Azhar, in his brother's care.(5) Among the Azharist teachers, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn was impressed by Shaykh Sayyid al-Marṣafī.(6) It was through him that Ṭāhā Ḥusayn discovered literature and began to discover himself.(7) He remained at al-Azhar until the year 1912.

Ṭāhā Ḥusayn was not satisfied with the education level of al-Azhar.(8) He was already learning French at evening school and had taken to attending the evening lectures of the Egyptian University(9), given by great Orientalists such as Littmann, Carlo Alfonso Nallino, Santillana - which opened a new perspective on his own inherited culture.(10)

Ṭāhā Ḥusayn left al-Azhar after he failed at the final examination, *Al-ʿĀlamiyyah*, but at the new university, he was, very successful; in 1914 he was the first to obtain his doctorate, with a dissertation on Abī al-ʿAlāʾ al-Maʿarrī.(11)

He went to France in November 1914, he read Anatole France, attended the lectures of Durkheim, Lanson, Casanova, Pierre Janet, and wrote a thesis on Ibn Khaldūn. Ṭāhā Ḥusayn received the university's doctorate from the Sorbonne with distinction "*Très Honorable*" on 21 January 1918 and was given the *doctorat d'Etat* the

following year.(12) In 1917 he had married a French woman who was a great support to him during the rest of his studies. (13)

In 1919 he returned to Egypt and was appointed professor of Ancient History in the old Egyptian University. Afterwards he was appointed professor of Arabic literature at the state university.(14) During the next thirty years, Ṭaha Ḥusayn was at the very centre of literary and academic life in Egypt, as teacher and administrator in the Universities of Cairo and Alexandria, and an official in the Ministry of Education. From 1950 to 1952, he was the Minister of Education in the last *Wafdist* government.(15)

Ṭāhā Ḥusayn "had attained considerable personal prestige in Egypt, in the Arab world, and even in Europe."(16) Ṭāhā Ḥusayn died on 28 October 1973. Ṭāhā Ḥusayn was known as the *Zaʿīm al-Mugaddidīn* (Leader of the Modern School), (17) and his autobiography *al-Ayyām* (the days) is one of the most celebrated books in Modern Arabic literature.(18)

Ṭāhā Ḥusayn found great delight in reading Pluto, Aristotle, al-Taftāzanī, Descartes, Comte, Spencer, Bergson, Goethe, Schiller and Heine; but Kant and Hegel he did not find so palatable and he admits that he had to refer to French works to understand them. (19) The first source that impressed Ṭāhā Ḥusayn was his Egyptian environment, classical Arabic literature and the subjects he studied at al-Azhar, (20) the Qurʾān was the main source through all his life. His second source was European thought, particularly French. "Europe for him means three things: human culture, the civic virtues, democracy."(21)

Ṭāhā Ḥusayn underwent the influence of Nallino, to whom he owed a great debt, and "he had been struck by the Orientalists, especially by their methods: they did not primarily occupy themselves with aesthetic judgements, but studied both what was good and what was bad."(22) Although Ṭāhā Ḥusayn wrote his biography of

al-Maʿarrī before his studying in France, but "it seems more likely that Nallino and Wiet led him into this direction, the more so as, certainly at the beginning of the twentieth century, most Orientalists had an objectivist approach towards literature."(23)

Ṭāhā Ḥusayn had noted that the study of literature should be a mixture of the two methods; the traditional, which has been served by Sayyid al-Marṣafī in al-Azhar, emphasising the language and critical approach of ancient writers, and the second method introduced by Nallino and other Orientalists, which was the analytical approach.(24)

Ṭāhā Ḥusayn was impressed by French culture, French literature, Greek and Roman literature and French philosophy. He had an appetite for reading both Arabic and European literature. He wrote most of his biographical articles for periodicals or journals, which were later collected in collections such as *Ḥadīth al-Arbiʿā'* (3 vols, appeared in 1925, 1926, 1945), *Min ḥadīth al-Shiʿr wa-al-Nathr* (1926), *Laḥaẓāt* (2 vols, 1942), *Fuṣūl fī al-adab wa-al-Naqd* (1945), *Alwān* (1952), *Min hunāk* (1955), *Khiṣām wa-Naqd* (1955), etc.

Most of his contributions appeared in literary journals such as *al- Siyāsah, al-Ḥadīth, al-Wādī, al-Jihād, al-Risālah, al-Jumhūriyyah.*

a. A Portrait of al-Maʿarrī

In his *Tajdīd Dhikra Abī al- ʿAlā'* (1915) [Towards the Renewal of Abī al-ʿAlā' 's Remembrance], Ṭāhā Ḥusayn describes the ramified aspects of of Abū al-ʿAlā' 's era in its political, economic, social, religious moral and practical facets together with the direct milieu he liaised with "Political turmoil at the time was so acute that it weakened Muslims and gave rise to treacherous figures whose hearts were suffused with greed, miserliness and meanness." (25)

The distribution of wealth was "so unbalanced that it split the nation into two separated, diametrically opposed social classes with no rank in between, namely the class of the very rich and that of the very poor."(26) The degeneration of social and moral life was so deep that "it left its deep marks on his sensitive soul and drove him to embrace distinct social and ethical views and ideas."(27) Paradoxical as it may seem, this social and ethical degeneration corresponded to a general progress "in the Muslim's intellectual and scholarly life. In no other epoch had thought and culture flourished so magnificently."(28)

The poet's life in the eye of Ṭāhā Ḥusayn is divided into three phases; phase one covers the period prior to his journey to Baghdad, the second depicts his residence in the capital city, the third extends over the rest of his life in the town of Maʿarrat al-Nuʿmān, where he was accused of apostasy. His permanent, self-imposed home-confinement, his disposition and temper, his old age and death, are closely followed by Ṭāhā Ḥusayn. When al-Maʿarrī, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn tells us, went blind, his loss of sight developed in him a strong sense of timidity and shyness. A host of qualities ranging from "inherited modesty, timidity, self-esteem, dignity, truthfulness, to compassion towards the weak, have combined together to free him from the desire to make his living by selling his poetry at such an early stage of his life."(29)

Al-Maʿarrī, according to Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, was naturally disposed to introversion but this withdrawal was reinforced by the calamities which befell him, the loss of his father and mother, his dire poverty, mistreatment by other people and lastly his failure to achieve the fame he deserved for his sharp intelligence and refined sensitivity. Al-Maʿarrī was an austere, ascetic puritan, who vowed chastity and lived in full priestly celibacy. Despite his sensitive gentleness and compassion, he was distrustful of others, suspicious of their intentions and inclined to conceal his inner

thoughts from them. He was more of a rationalist who had belief in the power of human reason rather than a mere sceptic. His rational thinking led him to deny revelation and prophecy, the Qur'ān included, but he believed in the existence of a God. In his daily life he never approached strong beverages, or animal products. To the very end, he remained a vegetarian.

In his second book entitled *Ma'a Abī al-'Alā' Fī Sijnihi* (1939) [With Abī al-'Alā' in His Prison], Ṭāhā Ḥusayn leads a philosophical dialogue with the classical poet, revealing thereby how the latter was driven by excessive pride and loftiness to extreme, unbearable limits. He set for himself lofty ends which were far beyond human reach. Abū al-'Alā' was so excessively rationalistic that he rejected everything else. In the end, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn casts a comparative glance at Abī al-'Alā', al-Mutanabbī and Bashshār to bring forth their differences and similarities.

The third book by Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, *Sawt Abī al-'Alā'* (1944), [The Voice of Abī al-'Alā'], is totally dedicated to the interpretation of the *Al-Luzūmiyyāt*, the well known poetry collection of the classical, blind poet-philosopher .

b. A Portrait of Abū Nuwās

Abū Nuwās reflected in his poetry the spirit of his own age as 'Umar b.Abī Rabī'a had been the true representive of the Omayyad Period (30).

Abū Nuwās personality, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn says, was that of "a sarcastically humorous, jesting, dissolute and uninhibited poet who would liberally indulge in all sorts of lusts and boast of these worldly pleasures. He was impudent, worldly, moody, frivolously audacious and reckless indeed."(31) He was "neither melancholy nor disposed to sadness but jubilant and joyful by nature." (32) He went to the extremes. His bacchanalian poetry was as ingenious and refined as his verse on

asceticism or on his sensuality or passion towards his young gay lovers. As for his satirical poems, the images were extremely obscene and foul. Abū Nuwās abhorred life in its entirety and his indulgence in sensational lust and fun was for him a means of distraction. "He was a true incarnation of his epoch, an era renowned for scepticism, insolence and sensuality." (33) Abū Nuwās had "a passionate affection for intoxicating beverages, verging on worship." (34) His wine-poems were excellent, warm and subtle, and they flowed so eloquently and spontaneously from his pen as they were the product of "an epoch which instituted such inclinations and ways of seeing and living one's life." (35).

c. A Portrait of Bashshār b. Burd

Ṭāhā Ḥusayn depicted Bashshār's physical appearance and character in precise and concise manner: Bashshār was perhaps the ugliest person in his surrounding. His face was unsightly and hard-featured and his figure was bulky and clumsy. Although he was a bad companion, he was bestowed with powerful artistic talent and poetic prowess. He was sightless but could not reconcile himself to this nature-imposed imperfection and concealed his discontent by taking pride in being blind. Undoubtedly, he was shrewd and intelligent, but he was sincere to nobody. He was also a coward, deceptive, extremely hypocritical, an atheist, sensual and blasphemous. He was a thinker who believes that a second return of man to life is possible, a man who excommunicates the whole nation of Muslims. His affection and passions towards females were warm and lavish indeed.

To the doctors of religion and Muslim jurisprudents his satirical pieces were a source of horror. His was not the best verse of his age nor was he the most powerful poetic talent, yet his poetry represents a relentless indulgence in sexual and other worldly

pleasures combined with a strong desire to parade his liberal, immoral conduct. His satirical verse ridiculing the *Caliph*, al-Mahdī, and his *Vizier* cost him his life. (36)

In this portrait, it is clear that Ṭāhā Ḥusayn is mainly concerned with Bashshār's character and he uses this analysis of personality as a means to explain Bashshār's poetry and epoch combined together. He specifically says: " Bashshār's imagination reveals to us that his contemporaries were far from being delicate, prudent or polite towards him. Obviously, they cruelly mocked at him to the point that would drive him out of his senses. More often than not he would lose control over himself. " (37)

d. A Portrait of Ḥāfiẓ Ibrāhīm

In his portrayal of Ḥāfiẓ, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn provides the reader with a simplified psychological image: "His psyche has no enigmas, perplexity or anomaly. It is rather plain and lucid."(38) Ḥāfiẓ was unsteady, unstable, wasteful, extravagant, joyful contrary to his mostly melancholic poems. In social life he had no privileged patronage at the court of the *Sulṭān*. In addition, Ḥāfiẓ was characterized by his keen sensibilities, his sharp observation of people, their disposition and qualities, and his sympathetic concern for others.

Ḥāfiẓ excelled in lamentation [*Rithā'*] poetry, that verse dedicated to mourn the dead, perhaps because he was miserable and unhappy. He would only compose his poems when he was grieved.

e.A Portrait of Aḥmad Shawqī

Shawqī's persona, according to Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, combined Arab, Ottoman Turkish, Greek and Circassian cultural influences. These elements interacted in such a way as to create a labyrinthine, complex but rich persona. (39) Shawqī was raised in the same period as Ḥāfiẓ, but unlike the latter Shawqī was a member of the aristocratic

class. His privileged social status enabled him to acquire wide learning and knowledge of foreign languages, like Turkish and French. Ṭāhā Ḥusayn maintains that Shawqī was of dual character, an ascetic person on the one hand, and a liberal cynic who cared for pleasures, on the other. This duality may have been a deliberate construction envisaged out of caution to "secure safety and success." (40)

f. A Portrait of Ibn al-Rūmī

Ibn al-Rūmī was, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn writes, an Arab poet of Greek origin who was so agonised by his alien descent. No other genealogy influenced him more than his Greek ancestry. Ibn al-Rūmī was so poisoned with hatred that he ended being poisoned at the hands of foes "He was extremely unfortunate in his life, disliked by people even abhorred and detested. Perhaps this was why he was so badly tempered, disturbed, apprehensive, neurotic, aggressive. This in turn would tarnish his reputation and make him looks like a nuisance and generate more hatred and animosity against him." (41)

He was so superstitious and apprehensive that he would stay in his house for several days lest a horrendous calamity should befall him. Should he hear the voice of an owl or recognize an unpleasant name of a visitor knocking at his door, he would interpret this incident as a portent of evil, because, mentioning the name of the guest had connotations indicative of calamity. His pessimism would thus peak. Ṭāhā Ḥusayn says that it is necessary not to attribute Ibn al-Rūmī's qualities to his Greek parentage or to his inherited culture, because "we do not know whether or not Ibn al-Rūmī had a good command of Greek tongue. There are no visible, textual evidences showing he was versed in Greek language to an extent that would enable him to communicate with Greek literature."(42) The fact that Ibn al-Rūmī was influenced by the Greek and Persian cultural traditions while living in a Muslim environment

implies that "he was neither induced by pure Persian nature nor by pure Greek nature but was guided by a combination of foreign, Arab and Islamic traditions which moulded his thought and poetic talents."(43) Ṭāhā Ḥusayn adds: "I attribute his intellectual disposition to the Islamic/ Greek culture rather than to a Greek blood descent. It is most certain that the unanimous reference to his Greek parentage as the factor determining his culture was generated by the unique visions we find in his poetry." (44)

Ṭāhā Ḥusayn comes nearer to the views of al- Māzinī and al- ʿAqqād in their evaluation of Ibn al-Rūmī. He says:"Ibn al-Rūmī's conception of things, his concepts on nature, his thought were totally unfamiliar. In this he was quite different from his contemporaries or predecessors. The only exception we may find is the verse of Abū Tammām, as I have indicated earlier." (45)

Ibn al-Rūmī is an imaginative, creative, intuitive and passionate poet who personifies meanings and senses, depicts life as an arena or a theatre where people come to play their roles. "This kind of deep contemplation and this staging of dialogue between things as if they were conscious beings reveal their Greek origin and show to what extent Ibn al-Rūmī was instigated by the Greek nature and Greek culture." (46)

Ṭāhā Ḥusayn criticises what al- Māzinī and al-ʿAqqād had written about Ibn al-Rūmī. "Al-ʿAqqād was more interested in the poet than in his poetry."(47) Al- Māzinī, on the other hand "brings forth more quotations from Ibn al-Rūmī's verse, but, in line with al-ʿAqqād, he revolves around the character of Ibn al-Rūmī, giving more weight to the personality and leaving aside the literary analysis of the poetical creations. It seems that both, al- Māzinī and al-ʿAqqād, were passionately loving admirers of the characters of poets."(48)

g. A Portrait of al-Mutanabbī

In his biography of al-Mutanabbī, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn studied the latter's poetry and life. investigating al-Mutanabbī's early, adult existence, the psychical formative period. Ṭāhā Ḥusayn discovered how painful that period was for the poet. In a tribal society so keen on and sensitive about noble lineages, al-Mutanabbī could not clearly establish his paternal or maternal ancestries. His agony over the ambiguity of his descent, his poverty and lastly his embracing of *Qarmaṭism*, were crucial factors in al-Mutanabbī's life: "He could not establish a pure Arab parentage neither on the side of his mother nor on the side of his father."(49)

Ṭāhā Ḥusayn depicted al-Mutanabbī as a person antipathetical to the corrupt social order, scornful of the others, having appetite for wealth, social rank and power. To achieve all these ambitions, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn contends, al-Mutanabbī saw one way: the *Qarmaṭī* movement. Subscribing to this radical, egalitarian movement, he soon became one of its agitators, calling for rebellion against despotic rulers and for more blood letting. This rebellious career soon led to his incarceration. In the gaol he quickly surrendered and turned sheepish, remorseful and eulogistic. That was the first phase in his life.

In the second, he reverted to the princes of Syria, praising them in his poetry and concealing his audacious, dashing ambitions as well as his *Qarmaṭī* convictions. At that time, he approached Sāīf al-Dawla al-Ḥamdānī who helped him recover his self confidence and dignity. Soon, al-Mutanabbī became the favourite poet in the royal court of al-Ḥamdānī. Ṭāhā Ḥusayn says the new milieu provided al-Mutanabbī with two traits, an intellectual sophistication which soon crept into his poetry, and a climate fraught with jealousy and envy by rivals which destroyed his special relation with Sāīf al-Dawla and forced the poet to take flight.

The third phase in the poet's life took place in Egypt. Ṭāhā Ḥusayn considered the different impacts the Egyptian environment had on al-Mutanabbī's verse. Of course Aleppo had no similarity to Egypt. But the change in the poet's mood and disposition was caused by a double injury: he had lost his heart and mind to Aleppo where his previous patron was, but had not yet achieved his goals in the new court. He was so displeased with himself that he left Egypt after having satirized its Prince Kāfūr beyond any repair.

He then rode to Kūfa city to visit the notable celebrity Ibn al-ʿAmīd, and praise him. Later he appealed to ʿAḍud al-Dawla in Shīrāz. But his thoughts were focused on mending fences with Saīf al-Dawla in Aleppo. On his way to Baghdad, Fāṭik al-Asadī, a mutinous brigand, intercepted him and took his life.

Ṭaha Ḥusayn was very deeply interested in al-Mutanabbi's character, though he confirmed that the poet was neither his favourite nor the best. In his eyes, al-Mutanabbī was self-conceited, arrogant, pompous, restlessly unstable with limitless, self-destructive ambitions. He yearned for change but sought protection by a centre of power or a powerful patron. Ṭāhā Ḥusayn took the poet's psychological traits and features and dissected them as being facets of al-Mutanabbī's inner nature. Even the selection and interpretation of al-Mutanabbī's poems were examined as psychological evidences rather than artistic structures. For him, "al-Mutanabbī was a poet like other poets, a man like other men, but he imagined himself to have been above the others; he pretended to have values and morals which he simply lacked; he languished for rank and power well beyond his reach. He fancied himself a free individual but he was a slave to money; and he had the illusion that he was dignified but in actual reality he was but a humble vassal of the *Sulṭān*." (50)

h. Ṭāhā Ḥusayn and his Short Biographies

Writing obituaries, commemorations or on celebrations, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn produced a multitude of short biographies of many classical Arab poets or French literary celebrities. Most of these miniatures were published in periodicals like *Al-Wādī*, *Al-Ḥadīth*, or *Al-Siyāsah*. That is perhaps why they were lacking in depth and sketchy in style. They were collected and reprinted in separate books.

His first biographical essay was the piece he wrote on Abū al-ʿAlā in 1909, the last was on Aḥmad Shawqī in 1968. The number of such pieces was approximately 70, standing between the portrait (as on Paul Valery) and the monograph (as the articles on Voltaire, Sartre and Camus). His study on Andre Gide was a biography in the literary sense of the word. It was the longest and deepest study he created. His admiration of Gide was so compelling that when Ṭaha Ḥusayn described the French nihilistic, novelist, "he [Ṭaha Ḥusayn] was in point of fact as if describing himself and his own character but in different social and cultural circumstances." (51)

The bulk of short biographies was dedicated to classical Arab poets from the pre-Islamic, Umayyad or Abbasid epochs. The pre-Islamic poets were the subject - matter of his *Fī al-Shiʿr al-Jāhilī* [On the Pre-Islamic Verse], where he deployed the Cartesian sceptical method (52) to study these figures. In this book he questioned the existence of some poets or the reality of the poems of others. As far as biographical aspects are concerned, the book presented portraits, profiles of some of those under consideration. His method in short biography was that of the literary-scientific approach to which he was adhered.

His characteristics as a Biographer

In his book on *Abū al-ʿAlāʾ al-Maʿarrī,* Ṭāhā Ḥusayn "adhered to the principles the French critic Taine had established. "(53) In fact Ṭāhā Ḥusayn was a great admirer of Taine, and more often than not, he kept reminding his readership "ask Taine and he will inform you that the character, mood, emotions and whatever constitutes the psyche of the poet or the author do not in the least mean anything beyond the fact that they are an outcome produced by the epoch and the environment under whose impact the poet came and by the nation from which he descended."(54) Bearing this in mind, we may clearly understand why Ṭāhā Ḥusayn said that Abu al-ʿAlāʾ "was the product of his period, a product which was conditioned by its time and space, by political, social and economic circumstances."(55) which then prevailed played a decisive part in the formation of his personality. (56)

Ṭaha Ḥusayn also approached the poet's nature "from an expanded psycho-analytical angle, specifying his mental features describing the worst agonies he had had in his struggle with life and the self, and revealing the hidden aspects of the life of the blind, self-isolated poet."(57) He was driven by the irresistible force of Compulsion. Blindness, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn believed, was the cause of al-Maʿarrī's depression and the sense of deprivation and powerlessness. Self-imposed seclusion or solitude was another fact Ṭāhā Ḥusayn focused on. His sarcastic view of life was triggered by his injured pride. Al-Maʿarrī was shrinkingly timid and suspicious of people. His soul, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn asserts, was the battle ground of a fierce war between his humanistic nature and animal instincts.(58)

His above mentioned admiration of Taine was coupled with his appreciation of Saint-Beuve. Ṭāhā Ḥusayn's *Ḥadīth al-Arbiʿāʾ*, [*Conversation on Wednesday*] was an echo of Beuve's *Aḥadīth al-Ithnayn*, [*Conversation on Monday*].(59) In his work, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn analysed "the characters of many literary figures on the basis of

a rational study of the creations and works attributed to them."(60) Ṭāhā Ḥusayn. I believe, applied different methodologies, the historical method (61), on the one hand, and the Cartesian method, on the other. These two were supplemented by the impressionist method.(62) Ṭāhā Ḥusayn in his studies on Abbasid poets, "was more concerned with the artistry of each poet than with his life and character."(63)

By contrast, the cases of Ḥāfiẓ and Shawqī were psychologically approached. Ṭāhā Ḥusayn "penetrated their nature and temper, establishing links between their souls and their poetry. From psychological features he inferred motives for success or failure in this or that art." (64)

In his *Maʿa al-Mutanabbī* [With al-Mutanabbī], his analysis hinges exclusively on the texts of poetry. This source, however, was inadequate, since " the poetry-based picture of al-Mutanabbī is not the real image of the man who faced life and people of his period in bone and flesh."(65) Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, however, conceded that al-Mutanabbī's *Dīwān* reflected no more, but no less, than moments in the life of its creator. In line with the historical approach, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn hinted at the fact that al-Mutanabbī was "the product of that political turmoil, economic and social corruption of his days. His mind and art were also the fruit of that rational, intellectual progress which characterized the Muslim world in general and the Iraqi context in particular at the end of the third and the beginning of the fourth century of *Hijra*."(66)

The sense of being descended from debased lineage or parentage, Ṭāhā Husayn believes, was "the prime factor which influenced al-Mutanabbi's character, shaped his social antipathy and imprinted in his young soul the idea that his existence was, contrary to his mates and comrades, bizarre, shrouded in thick mystery and abnormality."(67)

Ṭāhā Ḥusayn locates al-Mutanabbī in his specific space "in the system of things prevailing at his time, then analysis his psychological peculiarities and closely relates these to his poetry. He even associates certain rhymes and rhythms in the verse of al-Mutanabbī with certain psychological frames of mind."(68)

Ṭāhā Ḥusayn's method in constructing the portrait may be summarized in the following points:

* Probing the poet's character, his psychology, his feelings, perceptions, how he describes these feelings and perceptions, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn uses his findings in this respect, above all the emotions, passions and propensities from which the character is composed, as an instrument to understand the poet's epoch, environment and the ethnic origins and the influence these may have had upon him .(69)

* Analysing the artistic structure of the poetry produced and the impressions it imparts to him, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn casts a critical look at the aesthetic feature which may ignite his admiration and acknowledgment. This assessment runs in line with the criteria set by Jules Lemaitre's school .

In analysing sentiments, such as shyness or misgiving which were deepened by circumstances in Abū al-ʿAlāʾ, or pride which was so apparent in Bashshār, al-Mutanabbī or Abū al-ʿAlāʾ, in different comparative degrees, and the consequences arising therefrom, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn applied the psychological method.(70)

In his *Dhikra Abī al-ʿAlāʾ*, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn says "Any scholar exploring the history of literature should have by all means studied individual and collective psychology if he desired to perfectly understand the works left by an author or a poet."(71)

* Ṭāhā Ḥusayn also adopted the social approach, because the individual, in his opinion, is a social phenomenon .

* Ṭāhā Ḥusayn employed these different methods combined, but he leaned on each method to a greater or lesser extent in different cases. Explaining the background of this variety of methods, Jabir 'Usfur says : "This is due to the enlightening nature of the civilizational project Ṭāhā Ḥusayn advanced. Enlightenment is essentially encyclopaedic. It stimulates its bearer, the encylopaedist, to get involved in every direction and urges him to provide his backward society with every intellectual product assisting its progress."(72)

Ṭāhā Ḥusayn laboured to have the civilizational, intellectual critical project in which he had been schooled in France transplanted in the Egyptian soil so as to enrich what had so far been achieved by this nation. He "tries to cumulate the main principles of Sainte-Beuve, Taine and Jules Lemaitre by bringing out first the poet's personality, then his environment and finally the artistic pleasure that is to be found in his Poetry."(73) The views of Taine, Beuve or Lemaitre were not uncritically taken by Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, because " literary criticism cannot become science." (74), and because each of the above European figures stressed different aspects.

What should be credited to Ṭāhā Ḥusayn is the introduction of these methods into the study of Arab literature. The service this introduction extended to the Arab enlightened elites had an enduring effect. And his *Dhikra Abī al-ʿAlā'* was indeed the first attempt at literary biography proper, and it was somehow "the first study in Arabic to apply the rules and techniques adopted by European Scholars."(75)

NOTES

1 See Pierra Cachia, *Ṭāhā Ḥusayn His Place in the Egyptian Literary Renaissance*. (London, 1956), p. 45; John A. Haywood, *Modern Arabic Literature (1800-1970) An Introduction with Extracts in Translation*, (London, 1971), p. 193; Ṭāhir Khemirī and G. Kampffmeyer, *Leaders in Contemporary Arabic Literature*. Part 1 (Leipzig, Cairo, London, 1930), p. 34; Albert Ḥourānī, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age (1798-1939)*, (Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 326; J. Brugman, *An Introduction to the History of Modern Arabic Literature in Egypt*, (Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1984), p. 361; Shawqī Ḍaif, *Al-Adab al-ʿArabī al-Muʿāṣir fī Miṣr*, 9th edition, Dār al-Maʿārif, (Cairo, 1988), p. 277; Ḥamdī al-Sakkūt and Marsden Jones, *Aʿlām al-Adab al-ʿArabī al-Muʿāṣir fī Miṣr, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn*, Vol 1 (Cairo, 1975), p. 1; Kamāl Qulta, *Ṭāhā Ḥusayn wa-Athr al-Thaqāfah al-Faransiyyah fī Adabihi*, (Cairo, 1970), p. 21.

2 Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, *Al-Ayyām*, Vol 1, 58th edition, Dār al-Maʿārif, (Cairo, 1979), P.17.

3 J. Brugman, op. cit., p. 361.

4 Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, op. cit., p. 27.

5 See J. Brugman, op. cit., p. 361 and Pierra Cachia, op. cit., p. 46.

6 Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, *Al-Ayyām*, Vol 3, 5th edition, Dār al-Maʿārif, (Cairo, 1980), p. 20; H.A.R. Gibb, *Studies in Contemporary Arabic Literature*, *Bulletin*, Vol V, (london, 1928-30), p.454.

7 Pierra Cachia, op. cit., p 51.

8 J. Brugman, op. cit., p. 361.

9 Pierra Cachia, op. cit., p. 52.

10 Albert Ḥourānī, op. cit., p. 326.

11 See J. Brugman, op. cit., p. 361; Pierra Cachia, op. cit., p. 53; Kamāl Qulta, op. cit., p. 23; Shawqī Ḍaif, op. cit., p. 278; Ḥamdī al-Sakkūt and Marsden Jones, op. cit., p. 8; Ṭāhir Khemirī and G.Kampffmeyer, op. cit., p.34; C. Brockelmann, *Geschichte der Arabischen Literatur*, Supplementband, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1942, p. 284.

12 Pierra Cachia, op. cit., p. 55.

13 Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, *Al-Ayyām*, Vol 3, J. Brugman, op. cit., p. 362.

14 Ṭāhir Khemirī and G. Kampffmeyer, op. cit., p. 34.

15 Albert Ḥourānī, op. cit., p. 326.

16 Pierra Cachia, op. cit., p. 62.

17 Ṭāhir Khemirī and G. Kampffmeyer, op. cit., p. 34.

18 John A. Haywood, op. cit., p. 196.

19 Quoted by Pierra Cachia, op. cit., p. 77 from Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, *Ḥadīth al-Arbi'ā'*, Vol 3.

20 Kamāl Qulta, op. cit., p. 30.

21 Albert Hourānī, op. cit., p. 328.

22 J. Brugman, op. cit., p. 366.

23 J. Brugman, op. cit., P. 367.

24 jabra I. jabra, *Modern Arabic Literature and The West,* in I.J. Boullata(ed.), *Critical Perspectives on Modern Arabic Literature*, p.9; H.A.R. Gibb, *Studies in Contemporary Arabic Literature*, p. 454 and P. Cachia, *Ṭāhā Ḥusayn*, op. cit.,p. 135.

25 Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, *Tajdīd Dhikra Abī al-'Alā'* ,(Cairo, 1937), Third edition, p. 64.

26 Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, op. cit., p. 71.

27 Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, op. cit., p. 79.

28 Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, op. cit., p. 79.

29 Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, op. cit., p. 135.

30 David Semah, *Four Egyptian Literary Critics,* Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1974, p. 114.

31 Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, *Ḥadīth al-Arbi'ā'*, (Cairo, 1981), 13th Edition, Vol. 2, p. 128.

32 Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, op. cit., p. 133.

33 Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, op. cit., p. 44.

34 Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, op. cit., p. 86.

35 Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, op. cit., p. 99.

36 Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, op. cit., p. 188.

37 Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, op. cit., p. 190.

38 'Aṭā' Kafāfī, *Fuṣūl*, *Journal of Arabic Literature,* Vol. IX, No. 1, 2 (Cairo, October 1990), p. 145.

39 Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, *Ḥāfiẓ wa-Shawqī* , (Cairo, n.d), p. 179.

40 Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, op. cit., p. 174.

41 Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, *Min Ḥadīth al-Shi'r wa-al-Nathr,* First edition, (Cairo, 1948), p.134.

42 Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, op. cit., p. 139.

43 Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, op. cit., p. 140.

44 Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, op. cit., p. 140.

45 Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, op. cit., p. 140.

46 Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, op. cit., p. 142.

47 Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, op. cit., p. 154.

48 Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, op. cit., p. 154.

49 Ibrāhīm ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Muḥammad, *ʻIttijāhāt al-Naqd fī al-Adab al-ʿArabī al-Ḥadīth..Dirāsāt Taṭbiqiyyah*, (Cairo, 1993), p.14.

50 ʿAṭāʾ Kafāfī, op. cit., p. 140.

51 Kamāl Qulta, op. cit., p. 69.

52 Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, *Fī al-shiʿr al-Jāhilī*, (Cairo, 1979), 13th edition, p. 67.

53 Ḥamdī al-Sakkūt and Marsden Jones, op. cit., p. 24.

54 Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, *Ḥadīth al-Arbiʿāʾ* ,(Cairo, 1981), 13th Edition, Vol. 2, p. 53.

55 Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, *Tajdīd Dhikra Abī al-ʿAlāʾ* (Cairo, 1937), Third edition, p. 17.

56 David Semah, op. cit., p. 129.

57 ʿAṭāʾ Kafāfī, op. cit., p. 142.

58 ʿAṭāʾ Kafāfī, op. cit., p. 142.

59 Ibrāhīm Salamah, *Tayyārāt adabiyyah,* (Cairo, 1951), First edition, p. 84.

60 Ḥamdī al-Sakkūt and Marsden Jones, op. cit., p. 32.

61 Aḥmad Ḥusayn al-Ṭamāwī, *Jurjī Zaydān,* (Cairo, 1992), Silsilat Nuqqad al-Adab, Vol. 11, p. 107.

62 Kamāl Qulta, *Ṭāhā Ḥusayn wa-Athr al-Thaqāfah al-Faransiyyah fī Adabihi* , (Cairo, 1970), p. 159.

63 P.Cachia, *Ṭaha Ḥusayn,* op. cit., p. 172.

64 Muḥammad Khalf Allah, *Min al-Wujhat al-Nafsiyyah fī Dirāsat al-Adab wa-Naqdihi* (Cairo, 1947), p. 131.

65 Ibrāhīm ʿAbd-al-Raḥmān Muḥammad, op. cit., p. 26.

66 Ibrāhīm ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Muḥammad, op. cit., p. 13.

67 Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, *Maʿa al-Mutanabbī*, (Cairo, 1980), pp. 25-26.

68 Muḥammad Khalf Allah, op. cit., p. 133.

69 Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, *Ḥadīth al-Arbiʿāʾ* ,(Cairo 1981), 13th edition, Vol. 2, p. 52.

70 Muḥammad Khalf Allah, op. cit., p. 133.

71 Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, *Tajdīd Dhikra Abī al-ʿAlāʾ*, p. 7.

72 Jābir ʿUṣfūr, *al-Maraya al-Mutajāwirah Dirāsah fī Naqd Ṭāhā Ḥusayn* , (Cairo, 1983), p. 10.

73 P.Cachia, *Ṭāhā Ḥusayn,* op. cit., p. 167.

74 Jābir ʿUṣfūr, op. cit., p. 49.

75 David Semah, op. cit., p. 124.

CHAPTER V

ʿAbbās Maḥmūd al-ʿAqqād (1889-1964)

Introduction

a. A Portrait of al-Maʿarrī

b. A Portrait of al-Mutanabbī

c. A Portrait of Bashshār b. Burd

d. A Portrait of Ibn al-Rūmī

e. A Portrait of Shuʿarāʾ Miṣr

f. A Portrait of ʿUmar b. Abī Rabīʿa

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h. A Portrait of Abū Nuwās

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m. His short biographies

His characteristics as a biographer

Introduction

ʿAbbās Mahmūd al-ʿAqqād was born in Aswān of an Egyptian father and Kurdish descent (1). He was largely self-taught. At the age of fourteen, when he was halfway through his secondary school, he left his native town of Aswān and went to Qena and later to Zaqāzīq, capital of the Sharqiyyah province. Cairo was his last stop. Having spent some time in a junior post in the Civil Service, he took up journalism. He also did some school teaching, which gave him the opportunity of meeting his future friend al-Māzinī (2).

He learned English mainly through his own efforts; and in spite of his sometimes painful understanding of the texts he was reading, he was keen on reading whatever he could lay his hands on. His reading was, however, unsystematic and somewhat confused (3), "Carlyle was probably the first English author he read, for it is generally assumed that this writer inspired al-ʿAqqād's series about the great men in Islam *al-ʿAbqariyyāt*."(4) In 1912 he published his first book, *Khulāṣat al-Yawmiyyah wa-al-Shudhūr*, which includes a short biography of Ibn Ḥamdīs al-Ṣiqillī (the famous poet Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd al -Jabbār b. Abī Bakr b. Ḥamdīs al -Azdī al -Ṣiqilli).

After the First World War, both he and al-Māzinī gave up school teaching to devote their time to journalism. He wrote many political articles for *Al-Balāgh* and later wrote much of his literary criticism for its weekly literary supplement. In May 1925, he became a member of the Egyptian Senate, and in 1929 he was elected to the House of Representatives.(5) He was prosecuted for his attack on King Fūʾād (1869-1936) and was sentenced to nine months imprisonment, and in his *World of Prisons and Chains,* he left us an account of his incarceration.(6) For his writings he received honours; membership of the Academy of the Arabic language (*Majmʿa*

al-Lughah al-ʿArabiyyah) in 1940, chairman of the Poetry Committee of the High Council for Arts, Literature and Social Sciences. On March 12, 1964 he died at his home in Heliopolis.(7)

Al-Dīwān consisted of critical essays written by al-ʿAqqād and his friend al-Māzinī, in which they attacked the popular writers of the period, al-Manfalūṭī and Shawqī. Al-ʿAqqād's favourite poets were Ibn al-Rūmī, Bashshār, Abū Nuwās, al-Maʿarrī and al-Mutanabbī. Among non-Arab writers he read books by authors such as David Hume, Tāgore, Marie Corelli, Anatole France, Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Shelley, Byron, Carlyle, Browning, Tennyson, Hardy, Poe, Coleridge, Hazlitt, Heine, Hugo, Darwin, Petrarch, Pluto, Plutarch, Rousseau, Rilke, and Renan.(8)

Al-ʿAqqād led a full, active life, and his works, which run into more than ninety volumes, deal with politics and society, literature and philosophy, both in East and West.(9) Most of this material was first published as articles in the magazines *Al-Dustūr* (daily) and *Al-Balāgh*. He wrote one novel, *Sārah*(1938) and a number of biographies.(10)

Al-ʿAqqād is one of the leading twentieth-century writers not only in Egypt, but in the whole of the Arabic literary world. Al-ʿAqqād was much impressed by Plutarch (46 - 120) (11) and read his works widely and gave him much serious consideration. This influenced him and this is apparent in his biographies, so"it is close to his heart, as it is close to his hand."(12) Al-ʿAqqād shared Plutarch's attitude towards the portrait of the ideal hero, more particularly he was attracted by the same idea in Thomas Carlyle (1795 - 1881)(13) with his *On Heroes and Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History* which was an important source for him. The more one reads Carlyle's *Heroes and*

Hero-Worship the more one is convinced that his concept of the great man, or the divinely inspired unpredictable hero, is the key to al-ʿAqqād's thinking.(14)

Al-ʿAqqād had particularly high regard for his presentation of the prophet of Islam, which satisfied him as being a true portrait. Al-ʿAqqād was greatly affected by the"spiritual tendency in explaining history which appears in his [Al-ʿAqqād's] biography, the main element in his writing."(15)

Sainte-Beuve Charles Augustin (1804 - 1869)(16) owes his high standing as a critic to his exceptionally successful handling of a method that is in itself obvious enough: it consists in penetrating a writer's personality thoroughly and expressing it in human no less than in aesthetic terms. It is thus mainly a process of psychological and intuitive perception. But it is nevertheless based on a preliminary process of exploration, which takes full note of all surviving biographical data, letters, memoirs, as well as his published works. Sainte-Beuve was able to effect an assimilation of his subject's moral and physical characteristics and his art has many similarities to the physician's art of diagnosis.(17) So Sainte-Beuve's method consists in a psychological and literary portrait, but also in searching for the roots and the milieu of his subject. Al-ʿAqqād was particularly influenced by Sainte-Beuve in writing about Ibn-al-Rūmī. He clearly used the methods which had been set by the French critic.(18)

To know the character you must know his personality, his milieu and his written works. This is what was said by Sainte-Beuve. So al-ʿAqqād chose the title of his first literary biography, *Ḥayātuh min Shiʿrihi,* (his life out of his poetry). Al-ʿAqqād was also influenced by Nietzsche (1844-1900), whose Superman impressed him.(19)

Emil Ludwig (1881-1948) (20) was one of the leaders of a new biographical school. He relied very much on soliloquies and descriptions of psychological movements but this was not based on a wide acquaintanceship with documentary sources.(21) His writing in literary biography was appropriate literary using a narrative approach. He was the first to reverse this, using the methods of psychology in most of his writing to psychoanalyze substance,"never be interested in political movements or battle, but all his concern was in the character of Napoleon and his psychology."(22) Ludwig was one of the understandable biographers "who adored exaltedness which is rare in reality." (23) Al-ʿAqqād met Ludwig when the latter visited Egypt in 1923 and some of the comments made in their discussions were later published. Al-ʿAqqād was stimulated by Ludwig's technique of inner monologue and his narrative style in his biographies.

Freud wrote critical biographies using psychoanalysis such as his long chapter on Leonardo da Vinci, (24) and this book was constantly consulted by al-ʿAqqād.

Al-ʿAqqād read European literature and European philosophy assimilating what suited his individual temperament and spiritual tendency. He had an appetite for reading, and European culture was the fountain and source of what he searched for. Between 1908 and 1931, the date he published his first portrait of the life of Ibn al- Rūmī, al-ʿAqqād wrote many of his biographical articles - in effect, portraits in miniature - for journals, which were later collected in books. For example, *Khulāṣat al-Yawmiyyah wa-al-Shudhūr,* his first book, published in 1912, contained four short biographies; Nietzsche in two pages, Ḥafiẓ Ibrāhīm's poetry in one page. The third, Ibn Ḥamdīs ʿAbd-al-Jabbār b. Abī Bakr b. Muḥammad b. Ḥamdīs al-Ṣiqillī al-Sarqusī (25) who died when he was about eighty (447A.H.), he became a poet when he was twenty

years of age.(26), he had good relations with al-Muʿtamid b. ʿAbbād. His father was a poet, he went to Africa, his tomb is in Maurka (or Bijaya)(27) and the last thing he says "his poetry was sentimental not artificial."(28) Al-ʿAqqād infers from Ibn Hamdīs' poetry portrait, which was clear. Ibn Hamdis was Al-ʿAqqād's first appropriate short biography. The fourth, Qāsim Amīn.

Al-ʿAqqād has a pre-eminent place in this study not only because of the size of his literary production over a period of sixty years but also for his contributions in the field of literary biography.

In both his longer independent works, and his contributions in journals, al-ʿAqqād was without doubt a pioneer. His works written between 1908 and his death in 1964 include more than one hundred books and nearly five thousands contributions in journals. He wrote twelve full-length books on literary figures, four of them on non-Arab authors: *Al-Mutanabbi* (1924), *Ibn al-Rūmi* (1931), *Tidhkār Goethe* (1932), *Shuʿarāʾ Miṣr wa-Biʾatuhum fī al-Jīl al-Māḍī* (1937), *Rajʿat Abī al-ʿAlāʾ* (1939), *Shāʿir al-Ghazal: ʿUmar b. Abī Rabīʿa* (1943), *Jamīl Buthayna* (1944), *Bernard Shaw* (1950), *Abū Nuwās* (1953), *Al-Taʿarīf bi-Shakespeare* (1958), *Shāʿir Andalusī wa-jāʾizat ʿĀlamiyyah (Juan Ramon Jimenez)* (1960), *Rijāl ʿAraftuhum* (1963).

Al-ʿAqqād's contributions to journals appeared in literary periodicals such as *Al-Balāgh* and *Al-Dustūr*, or in daily newspapers. Most of these articles were written to mark important literary anniversaries such as those of the birth or death of celebrated authors. These contributions may conveniently be called "portraits in miniature" cf. the volume by Lytton Strachey, *Portrait in Miniature,* (1931) and some of them have been re-published under new titles in al-ʿAqqād's lifetime and also after his death.(29)

a. A Portrait of Abū al-ʿAlāʾ al-Maʿarrī

Al-ʿAqqād did not write an independent biography of al-Maʿarrī but studied different aspects of his life and poetry in separate essays. The first series appeared in 1916 in the *al-Muqtaṭaf,* a monthly literary review. The topic was Al-Maʿarrī's disposition. In 1923, five new essays were published by al-ʿAqqād in *Al-Balāgh* weekly. This time he studied al-Maʿarrī's pessimism, cynical sarcasm, fantasy and views on women. In 1939 he published a full book titled: *Rajʿat Abī al-ʿAlāʾ*. In fact al-ʿAqqād never stopped writing about the classical, blind poet-philosopher in subsequent years, notably in response to Ṭāhā Ḥusayn's critical observations. Taken in their entirety, the essays, pieces and books penned by al-ʿAqqād constitute a psychological portrait of al-Maʿarrī. Taken singularly, each would look more like a sketchy profile. Al-Maʿarrī, says al-ʿAqqād, came into existence orphaned, poor, pessimist, melancholist and excessively sensitive. Among the symptoms revealing this disposition are "his deep sadness, gloominess, perplexing depression, focus on death in daily conversations, misgiving and, last but not least, loss of confidence in people as in himself."(30)

He adds:"Had it not been for his blindness and early good upbringing, the misfortunes which befell him in his boyhood, the chaos and upheavals which plagued society, his weak body enervated by smallpox, the cynical mood he had would have distanced him from asceticism and self imposed isolation."(31) True his pessimistic temperament was deeply rooted in him, but his life events intensified it. He had no rational choice in his intentions and deeds. Thus, al-Maʿarrī arrived at the conclusion that the will of man is suspended, his mind or reason is harnessed and passions are uninhibited."He was inclined to self-torture like mentally deranged masochists."(32)

The key to al-Maʿarrī's philosophy, al-ʿAqqād asserts, is "to study his disposition and mood and attribute his thoughts and contemplations to the peculiarities of this disposition which the environment conditioned."(33)

Al-ʿAqqād views al-Maʿarrī's pessimism and sarcasm towards life in its totality as being conducive to "a disdainful attitude and rejection of worldly, material benefits."(34) Thus al-ʿAqqād depicts the psychological features of al-Maʿarrī and the conditions prevailing in his era, focusing on the poet's cynicism which resembles that of the German philosopher, Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860).

b. A Portrait of al-Mutanabbī

Al-ʿAqqād takes al-Mutanabbī's early life in Kūfa city as his starting point. Kūfa at that point was the nest of the anti-Abbasid *Shīʿa* and the birthplace of all sorts of oppositional groups, from the descendants of ʿAlī to various religious sects, to power mongers, who were hostile to the Abbasid *Caliphate* seat in Baghdad. When the Qarāmiṭa captured Kūfa in one of their forays and took the military commander of the *Caliphate* army into captivity (during the reign of al-Muqtadir), al-Mutanabbī was a twelve- year-old boy. Under those circumstances, when the state of rebellion was held high and that of religion was held low, claimants of prophecy would multiply. Al-Mutanabbī was a natural born aspirant to such lofty ranks. He observed no prayer or fasting and disdained prophets, never recited the text of the Qur'an, the holy book of Islam. Absorbing Greek philosophy and the teachings of apostatical and atheistic groups, he was, al-ʿAqqād asserts, well prepared for such pretences. His self-magnifying, his sense of grandeur led him to inflate, magnify, exalt and exaggerate on the one hand, and to underrate, decry and belittle, on the other. Al-Mutanabbī developed vehemence of character, pride, grandeur, and perhaps these qualities prompted him to strive for power and supremacy.

His failure, however "left him indignant at and contemptuous of his folks. his time and his life. The more failure bit, the more he magnified his ego in his poetry."(35)

He yearned for wealth, because money was the instrument and machine for achieving a majestic glory. He craved for knowledge and philosophical wisdom because they were instrumental in achieving supremacy, triumph and eminence. For al-Mutanabbī "sovereignty was the purpose of his life, and the will to power was the source of moral virtues and the pivot on which good and praised conduct hinged."(36)

In his social relations, al-Mutanabbī was known to have been truthful, frank and loyal to friends, but he tended also to conceal his inner thoughts and real ambitions. Among his interesting qualities was his love of Bedouin females who were in his eyes so pure and truthful that they did not need to chatter incessantly to hide their desires nor to use cosmetics to artificially beautify their eyebrows and eyelids.

c. A Portrait of Bashshār

The key to the portrayal of Bashshār's persona lay, for al-ʿAqqād, in his physical composition:"He was of bulky body, very tall, with heavy scapula. He had that kind of animality which is disposed to all sorts of debauchery, dissolution, entertainment and pleasures."(37) Being born to "Persian parents from the *Mawālī* [non-Arab clients]"(38), he received no religious upbringing and was far removed from any sort of piety. The early Abbasid epoch during which he grew up to maturity witnessed the development and currency of various philosophical and irreligious views and schools. Bashshār was well acquainted with the different contending and rival intellectual schools and groups whose meetings he would attend, such as the gatherings of the *Muʿtazila*, the advocates of Fātalism or the *Shīʿa*, i.e the followers

of ʿAlī, prophet Muḥammad's cousin and son in law, and his household, namely his offspring from Fatima.

Al-ʿAqqād points out that Bashshār's poetry was suffused with a ridiculing spirit. His intelligence "his pleasure seeking fervour, or his insincerity were attractive and repulsive. People liked and feared him."(39) As for his poetry "it was bereft of inspiration, longing, yearning, nostalgia or even imagination, but it was rich with breathing experiences. In his poems he merely registered his life encounters in the manner any other person might well have done using rhyme and rhythm. The only difference was that he had better eloquence and sharper expressive capabilities. This is clearly reflected in his poems of wisdom, vivid description, erotica, love episodes and of course satirical attacks."(40)

Bashshār's love and erotic poems "presented either a sincere narrative of sensual and real experiences or an expression of desire. His amorous lust was focused on the female, which for him, was one in every actual woman he may have liaised with irrespective of name or shape."(41) Al-ʿAqqād's approach was three dimensional. First, the physical composition of Bashshār is considered in its own right as a pivotal aspect in the analysis. The second aspect is the poet's sensual, fleshly demeanour. Lastly, there is the impact of epoch in which he lived, the age of contradictions. These factors combined to leave their mark on his poetic nature and strengthened his inclination to satirical assaults to intimidate people and achieve fame and eminence.

d. A Portrait of Ibn al-Rūmī

Applying a psychological approach, al-ʿAqqād reviews Ibn al-Rūmī's life and epoch, analysing in depth his human character. "In his collections of poetry, there is an esoteric translation of his psyche in which he conceals places, spaces and time but reveals the emotions, sentiments and inner thoughts from which human life is made."(42)

In his portrait of Ibn al-Rūmī, al-ʿAqqād counted on the poet's collection first and on historical chronicles second. To have a graphic image, al-Aqqad reviews the third century of *Hijra*, the period in which Ibn al-Rūmī lived, saying it was the age of political paradoxes and contradictions, the era in which feudalism, corruption, bribery, chaos, upheavals, rebellions and mutiny against the Sulṭān prevailed. But it was also the days of luxury, entertainment and joyful gaiety as well as the times of alienation, loss and destitution. The list of paradoxes never ends. This era was also "the best of all times for the flourishing advance of sciences, civilization and culture."(43) It is in the third century of *Hijra* that all kind of literary genres and scientific callings and productions blossomed, poetry and poetry scholars included."(44) During that period "different schools, sects and dogmatic/scholastic antagonisms emerged and led to violent inter-struggles."(45)

This age was the least favourable for Ibn al-Rūmī who, by dint of his poverty and frailty, lacked the instruments of success in his capacity as a man. In his function as a poet who enjoys talent and delicate artistic sense, it was the most convenient epoch. Al-ʿAqqād says that his over-reliance on Ibn al-Rūmī's poetry for analytical purposes stems from the fact that "unlike other poets, Ibn al-Rūmī was unique in his keen observation of his own psyche as in his detailed recording of the events of his life in verse."(46)

Al-ʿAqqād takes his reader to review Ibn al-Rūmī's lineage; he is Greek on the side of his father; Persian on the side of his mother. Details of his family life, his wife, children, education, his command of Arabic language, his character and disposition are given. Al-ʿAqqād even depicts his physical features: "He had a rounded, small head and white complexion."(47) He was hypersensitive, neurotic, tense, anxious, excessively apprehensive (perhaps due to a mental disorder). He was also renowned

for his sarcastic humour. Far from being envious or hateful, his satirical poems were "a natural outcome, a truthful expression of his real inner suffering from his own self and society."(48) He would conjure up spectres of phobia, imagine horror and manufacture panic. In his last years, he was possessed by dreadful delusions to the point of hypochondriasis. Evil misgivings overwhelmed his words and deeds. He even developed a hydro-phobia.(49) Ibn al-Rūmī was totally unlucky "Calamities overshadowed him. Achieving no success in literary life, he lost his wife and children, his property was gone, his farms were burnt."(50)

Al-ʿAqqād also studied Ibn al-Rūmī's satirical poetry, his relations with other contemporary poets, the men whom he praised in his verse, and lastly his poisonous death. Seeing him as a genius, al-ʿAqqād contended that this faculty stemmed from the Greek knowledge and creativity which was characterized by a deep love of life, love of nature and the faculty of personification and the power to envision.

e. A Portrait of Shuʿarāʾ Miṣr

In his studies of the lives of the Egyptian poets who preceded his generation, al-ʿAqqād focused "on the environment, because studying it is very important in any critic of poetry in any nation or generation."(51) Ḥāfiẓ Ibrāhīm, he says, lived in circumstances which were different from those under which Shawqī existed; and the environment which embraced Ismāʿīl Ṣabrī was dissimilar to that which enveloped Muḥammad ʿAbd al- Muttalib. Ṣabrī lived in Cairo and was educated in Paris where he came in contact with French poetry and admired Lamartine, hence his Cairene gentleness and Parisian sincerity. By contrast, ʿAbd al- Muttalib lived in a religious atmosphere which was clearly reflected in his verse.

What al-ʿAqqād wrote about Aḥmad Shawqī was, perhaps, the deepest of his studies. Shawqī lived "among the Egyptianised (ruling) Turks who were only skin-

deep Westernized."(52) That is why, al-ʿAqqād thinks, Shawqī's sensibilities were alienated from the mood of the nation. He was a man of the royal court and his rhyme was "monarchical."(53) Al-ʿAqqād's concept of environment was dual, it is a macro setting, here the Egyptian, and a micro frame, here the family, city or neighbourhood.

f. A Portrait of ʿUmar b. Abī Rabīʿa

ʿUmar b. Abī Rabīʿa represents an unprecedented psychological phenomenon in Arabic literature. He was born in the year (23A.H.) (on the very day the second *Caliph* ʿUmar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb passed away) and presumably died in (93 A.H.). Al-ʿAqqād relies heavily on the *Dīwān* [poetry collection] of Ibn Abī Rabīʿa to provide biographical details. The poet descends from the wealthiest families of *Quraish*, the tribe from which prophet Muḥammad comes. He leads a luxurious life "surrounded by female-slaves and male slaves who serve and provide pleasures for the young and rich man so delivered from the agony of winning his bread."(54) With his good looking countenance, graceful, tall figure, wealth and leisure time, "he had the means to paying court to and keeping company with charming young females. He was the best representative of the Yemen and Ḥijāz civilized urban life during the first century of the *Hijra* calendar."(55)

It seems that his was the age of love episodes in its width and breadth, for there was "no doctor of religion, jurisprudent or even commander who had not written love poems and had had a wide, receptive audience."(56)

Love and love-poems, it seems, were more than a necessity in that epoch. ʿUmar was the poet of that luxurious, rich and idle class in those days. All the women he courted were rich and charming. The females of this upper class "were not only gracefully attractive but took pride in parading their beauty, and were keen on seeing

the effects of their attraction and hearing what was to be said about it."(57) It was only natural for love-poetry "to thrive under such circumstances where women are invited to approve of it and lured to heed to it."(58) Umar excelled in this kind of rhyme and al-Aqqād attributes his success to two factors: the legacy he inherited from his Yemen mother, and the feminine trait in his nature.

The latter attribute, al-Aqqād says, is discernible in the fact that the poet betrayed his fondness of the vocabulary used by women and the pleasure he found in uttering these words. The poet was also in the habit of mimicking feminine attitudes, like flirting, or playing heart-break or hard-to-get. The fact that Umar assumed many nicknames for himself was another evidence of his flirting. Umar was neither inclined to poor women nor content to have only one, no matter how far any woman may have been attracted by his elegance, glamour or eloquence. Al-Aqqād tried to analyse Umar's character by means of the latter's verse, but he also studied the Hijāz setting in those times and the impact it had on determining the course Umar took. In the eyes of al-Aqqād, "Umar reflected that environment in the best possible of all ways."(59)

g. A Portrait of Jamīl

Jamīl b. Abd Allah Ibn Ma mar, the poet of love, lived in Hijāz, the mercantile, developed part of Arabia at the time. And al-Aqqād would take as his starting point this setting where desert and civilization meet. Speaking of Hijāz, al-Aqqād says: " It is an environment from which emerges the likes of Jamīl, the poets of the bedouin desert which neighbours the Hijāz civilization and has contacts with the remote Islamic centres of civilization in Egypt and Syria."(60) Hijāz was then "resuming its customary life which developed prior to the rise of Islam, but in a new way."(61) In

this setting, Jamil appeared and matured as a poet of love. Certainly, he was extremely self-conceited, strutting like a peacock.

True, he was tall and handsome, but was coddled since childhood. His character had already prepared him for that fate, to be bewitched by Buthayna, that bedouin, slim, charming and tall young woman. When the time came and the encounter occurred, he could not escape his destiny. Unlike him, Buthayna was of a moderate temperament. "Both Jamīl and Buthayna had the same ancestry, their common grandfather Han Ibn Rabī'a."(62) To add insult to injury, his beloved Buthayna was married to another man. The husband "was weak, unlovable, unworthy of esteem and one-eyed. She could never sense she was being supported or protected by her husband."(63) Among the paradoxes of Jamīl's life is that "his own love poetry destroyed his very endeavours to accomplish his objective."(64) These passionate poems simply alienated Buthayna.

Yet Jamīl's love for Buthayna never waned. Although the Sulṭān had issued restrictive order, Jamīl would, nevertheless, stalk to the forbidden place: Buthayna's neighbourhood.

h. A Portrait of Abū Nuwās

In al-'Aqqād's words, Abū Nuwās was a typical character (Shakhṣiya Numūzajiya) in many senses. His persona was composed from the combination and interaction of various influences, starting with the family breeding. Under the excessive care of his loving mother, he was completely spoiled. The Baṣrah society was the scene of many social, political and moral paradoxes. There were rival religious-political movements, military raids launched by dissidents or bandits, inter-struggles between Persian and Arabs, and among Arabs between the Qaḥṭānī nobility and the 'Adnānī

lineage. It was the age of political, racial and religious conspiracies and antagonism. In the social realm, drunkenness, gambling and prostitution flourished.

Abū Nuwās was a narcissist, and narcissism, according to al-ʿAqqād, caused his deviation. But other factors stemming from family upbringing, the social environment in Baṣrah and the nature of his epoch, assisted and enhanced this moral divergence. The influences which moulded him were unique indeed.(65) In his motives and sexuality he was homosexual. To overcome the complex of inferiority caused by his humble lineage "he intoxicated his senses with wine because wine was the beverage of the kings or the lordly liquor of his Persian ancestors and Caesars."(66) His heart was the place in which atheism, asceticism, love for the females and the males found a common habitat.(67)

i. A Portrait of Goethe

"He is the offspring of the Church which rebelled against nature, and the castle which rebelled against the Church, and the city which rebelled against the castle and the individual who rebelled against the city."(68)

In this manner al-ʿAqqād starts his account of Goethe's life. He goes on to outline the features of this epoch: a period of flourishing science and knowledge. Presenting the history of artistic freedom in Germany, al-ʿAqqād asserts that the German spirit was characterized by its esoteric propensities.

In this context, he describes Goethe's life stages (1749-1832) from cradle to grave. Being the descendent of the wealthy classes he studied Latin, Italian and French from his early boyhood. More often than not, his father was his tutor. At such an early age, his talent began gradually to blossom. He completed his university degree at the age of twenty two. He had close relations with Karl August, prince of Weimar, and had the chance to make acquaintance with Napoleon Bonaparte. Herder and Schiller were among his literary comrades. Goethe's attraction to women never

waned throughout his entire life, that is because "his instinct was that of a passionate woman-loving poet ready for romance."(69) Goethe begot five sons who all prematurely died in their childhood, except his elder son, August, who lived on to the age of forty. He passed away in Italy. Al-ʿAqqād praised Goethe as a genius: "His is an artistic genius which finds a home in sensing the beauty of the present and transforms this beauty into a balanced, spiritual devotion and aesthetic creation."(70) Al-ʿAqqād analysed Goethe's external and internal persona, following him in his intertwined psychological and spiritual transformations.

Goethe observed the leading principle of classical Athens, in fact of Aristotle: No excesses on either extreme. In his practical philosophy, "Goethe was humbly satisfied to get whatever part from the world."(71) He was a believer in God and submissive to divine will.

j. A Portrait of Bernard Shaw

Bernard Shaw emerged in the age of science and social, emancipatory systems calling for the breaking of the fetters inhibiting human liberty. It was the age of Sigmund Freud and Lombroso "Shaw was not placed far from these callings or propensities in both his thought and literature."(72)

Being Irish is another factor. The Irish are "diligent, hard working people, bent on achieving liberty and enjoy a great sense of humour."(73) This was the ideal soil to produce the insurgent, sarcastic Shaw. In fact Europe as a whole "was productive of systems, theories and pleas to rebel and demolish traditions whether in art, literature, science, philosophy or society."(74) From this atmosphere Shaw derived many of his rebellious ways of thinking which hardened his will to defy the power of

traditions. In a sense, Shaw was the offspring of his age in as much as he was the true heir of his mother's satirical temper.

He was neither a nihilist nor a sensualist but a humble, ascetic vegetarian who never went near spirits. Women occupied an important place in his works rather than his emotional life. For him, reason was the only means to arrive at truth.

k. A Portrait of Shakespeare

In his account of Shakespeare's life, al-ʿAqqād depicted the Age of Renaissance and the reign of Queen Elizabeth, the epoch of the new outlook to man and knowledge. Shakespeare's was a rural family of middling rank. At an early age, he was taught to read and write at home. At the age of twelve he left school to stand by his father in his work, dealings and cattle herding. It is reported of him that he travelled or ran away to the city either out of indiscretion or simply to study the art of dramatics. In short, Shakespeare, in al-ʿAqqād's words, was "the son of a rural family which, in that age, was keen on upholding the values of honour, dignity and hard work."(75) At the age of fourty five he stopped writing altogether. His was an epoch of "political intrigues, accusations, trials, defamation and slander."(76) Solemnity, hard-work, self-confidence and probity were among his personal qualities. His disposition was that of a humble, contemplating philosopher, a man of dignity, tranquillity, humour, resourcefulness and originality. His was a message of artistic creativity which was mainly concerned with human nature.

l. A Portrait of Jimenez

Al-ʿAqqād presented a simple, concise profile of Juan Ramon Jimenez, in which he detailed where and when Jimenez was born, lived and died, what was his literary status and the intellectual features of his period and his love of nature.

m. Al-ʿAqqād and his Short Biographies

Al-ʿAqqād produced a multitude of short biographies during his career as a writer. Some of these narratives ranked high in terms of modern, artistic biographical writings, others were simply traditional. During more than half a century, al-ʿAqqād jotted down more than one hundred short biographies relating to Arab and foreign writers and poets. This huge production was first published in current dailies, weeklies and monthlies. The materials were collected later on in separate works like: *Al-Fuṣūl*, *Murājaʿāt fī al-Adāb wa-al-Funūn, bayn al-Kutub wa-al-Nās*, *Sāʿāt Bayn al-Kutub*. These contained biographies of modern and classical figures.

In general, biographies by al-ʿAqqād are classifiable into five categories: the miniature, the portrait, the monograph, the commemorative biography and the profile. He was very eloquent and clear about the delicate differences between these types.

In selecting the characters, al-ʿAqqād applied a method of his own: they were all celebrities with whose persona his own character had things in common such as integrity, self-reliance, will to power, individualism. In all cases, he sought to disclose the key features of the personality and its ingenuity. Being aware of the individual texture of each, he did his best to show the singularity and selfhood of the writer and study the impact of the social environment. The psychological approach, which he deemed the pillar of modern literary research, was at the centre of his methodology.

Al-ʿAqqād, in fact, came under the influence of European biographers with whose works he was acquainted. This applies in particular to short biography writers, in whatever sense of the above mentioned we may understand the term "short biography". It is interesting to note that al-ʿAqqād uses the term "portrait in miniature" without giving credit to its original author, Lytton Strachey. Al-ʿAqqād had borrowed many terms from Strachey, even some of the titles he chose for his essays.

To sum up, al-ʿAqqād composed different profiles, miniatures or short biographies of more than 60 Arab and around 40 European poets and writers. The size, method and motives for writing these pieces were different and varied. Some were mere quotations and repetitions, lacking artistic creativity. Many essays were simply translation of texts on this or that poet, the more so if the latter was a European; other essays were a reproduction of biographical details covering life passage, from birth to death. For example, what al-ʿAqqād inscribed about Ibn Ḥamdīs was mostly a repitition of what had been mentioned in this respect in historical annals. Critics, however, consider al-ʿAqqād's text on Ibn Ḥamdīs (77) as the first biographical work he had done. Almost all Egyptian critics are unanimous in the opinion that al-ʿAqqād masterfully applied the psychological method on the great literary figure. Each new critic would reiterate the same above without supporting his claim with any evidence. A chain of assertions has become, thus, available.

It seems that al-ʿAqqād chose only those whom he considered to have genius, to be eccentric and to have callings. On the other hand, his choice was intended to "uncover a hidden truth or restore a lost right."(78) for the celebrity in question.

His short biographies were mainly concerned with bringing into bold relief the psychological nature of the person. He applied different methods ranging from historical determinism, to psychological method to impressionism as Ṭāhā Ḥusayn

We may safely conclude that al-ʿAqqād was a productive biography writer, perhaps the most prolific. Perhaps the journalistic character of his work might well be held responsible for such shortcomings. Yet he was a pioneer in this field who introduced this literary type and acquainted the readership and literary milieux with many new ideas which he derived from European authors. By this al-ʿAqqād also introduced French, German and English methods of research.

His characteristics as a Biographer

Al-ʿAqqād's book on Ibn al-Rūmī, applied a technique on which critics had seemingly divergent views. In the eyes of one critic, this technique constituted "biography and portrait at one and the same time. It is a biography because in it al-ʿAqqād covers the epoch, circumstances and life accounts of Ibn al-Rūmī. And it is a portrait because it constitutes a study of Ibn al-Rūmī's psychology, faculties, genius and philosophy."(79) In the opinion of another "It was a good example on the application of the psychological approach."(80) Or, according to another view, it is "a study in which al-ʿAqqād presented Ibn al-Rūmī on the basis of a mild, understated, psychological method."(81) A fourth judgment saw it as a psychological biography because in it "Al-ʿAqqād exhibited a picture of Ibn al-Rūmī's life, leaning on the latter's poetry to depict his psychological demeanour and the features of his human image."(82) All these comments revolve around essentially one idea dressed in different wording.

This applies to the observations on al-ʿAqqād's biographical methodology: "He [Al-ʿAqqād] neither pertains to the method of the Arabic *Sīrah* nor to that of the European biographies, although he was versed in the latter and made extensive use of it. What he gives us is a portrait constructed from quick, but lively outlines. From these outlines the image of an individual emerges."(83)

In his book on Ibn al-Rūmī, al-ʿAqqād built upon "two pillars, the first he borrowed from Saint-Beuve, namely that the literary work is but the incarnation of the man who created it, it is the incarnation of his life, thought and soul. To comprehend the work we need to fathom the talent of the artist by means of studying his intellectual culture and private life. The second pillar on which al-ʿAqqād built was taken from the regularities Taine formulated. These principles state that the artist is the product of his

epoch, environment and race, and the art is the product of the artist."(84) Hence al-ʿAqqād researched these elements relevant to Ibn al-Rūmī "and used them as an instrument to dissect the artistic creations of the poet as being the result of these different influences which formed the genius of Ibn al-Rūmī."(85)

This was an orientalist, scientific method relevant to the study of the lives of poets. Ṭāhā Ḥusayn derived it from his tutor Carlo Alfonso Nallino and applied it to the history of Arabic literature.(86) But al-ʿAqqād also adopted the psychological and other methods. In fact "he combined most of the methods of literary criticism."(87) from that of Plutarch to that of Freud and his disciples. But, al-ʿAqqād, we may presumably conclude, applied these combinations in different ways and to varying extents on the authors whom he selected and who "represented cases exemplifying his literary philosophy embedded, as it were, in his philosophy of life."(88)

One is strongly inclined to believe that al-ʿAqqād's interest in Ibn al-Rūmī increased remarkably when he found in him support for Nordau's theory (or rather for the theory of Lombroso with which he had acquainted himself through Nordau's Degeneration).(89)

Al-ʿAqqād stressed the significance of the environment as a context whose changing nature would produce different effects. Hence ʿUmar b. Abī Rabīʿa lived in a setting which encouraged romance poetry. The environment of al-Mutanabbī influenced the process of moulding his character and strengthened in him the propensities of greed, money-grabbing and search for high rank. By contrast, Bashshār's circumstances as one of the *Mawālī*, i.e non-Arab proteges, played a significant role in shaping his personality.

Among the symbols used by al-ʿAqqād was the so called "key to personality" which he used to depict the desired image. But this symbol was stretched beyond the limits. On the whole, al-ʿAqqād was inclined to write biographies "of great men; he had a conscious grasp of the meaning of biography."(90) and kept asserting that we should "look at the sayer not the saying."(91) His critical remarks against what he termed as Emil Ludwig's incoherent representation of the characters in his biographies (92) was another example of his conception of what biographies should look like. Abstract perception notwithstanding, al-ʿAqqād burdened his biographical method with a heavy critical tone which went beyond the limits of scientific analysis. His characters were depicted in such a way that they appeared to "have been stabilized or fixed in steady maturity. They were constant, sustaining no change or development through different life stages from childhood to manhood and death no matter how traumatized or agonized they had been during this passage."(93)

Biographers "must learn to understand man's way of dreaming, thinking and using his fancy, not to fall in love with their subjects."(94) Attention should not be fixed on specifying one key to personality.

Al-ʿAqqād did not create modern literary biographies in the strict sense of the term, but he did create psychological images, fluctuating between portrait and profile, of those literary figures whom he considered as unique individuals in their lives and artistic creativity.

Al-ʿAqqād's *Ibn al-Rūmī Hayātuhu Min Shiʿrihi,* was the second, serious attempt to create a literary biography in Egypt based, to a certain extent, on the critical scientific method. In his many profile-like essays on al-Mutanabbī, al-ʿAqqād stressed "megalomania" as the key element in understanding the poet's character, although he

conceived this "key" as being the outcome of different, interacting, internal and external factors.

Some literary critics considered al-ʿAqqād's essays on al-Mutanabbī as master pieces in biographical attempts (95), but, in my opinion, they fell short of this category in its capacity as a life-story. What al-ʿAqqād achieved was an attempt at character analysis rather than anything else. The same judgement may well apply to his portrait of al-Maʿarrī. The latter's mocking sarcasm was, in his view, the "key" to his persona, and Bashshār's "key" was his bulky, ugly form. The influences of Lombroso, Nietzsche and Freud on al-ʿAqqād appear very clearly.

His examination of Abū Nuwās was anchored in psychoanalysis. This is quite obvious from the terminology applied, such as self-centred libido, self-idolating, neurotic regression and the like. Only the sections on Abū Nuwās' disposition mention environment and inherited qualities. Again, in the case of Jamīl Buthayna, al-ʿAqqād attributes the latter's love, in fact burning passion, towards Buthayna, to his paralysed will and Masochism. Again this masochism is seen as the product of superficiality, spoiled childhood, weakness of personality in addition to soft, idle living. His artistic and poetic disposition amplified these propensities. The "key" to his character is weakness of the will. But al-ʿAqqād employed this concept in the context of the environment and epoch. This exhibits to what extent he relied on the critical scientific method in his work.

In his study of *Shuʿarāʾ Miṣr*, he divided them into two categories according to their micro and macro environments. Accordingly, he classified poets into different types. "He took up the views of Taine and Saint-Beuve, combined them together in his

analysis of the environment, epoch and ethnicity of each poet, and then had the poets categorized in different clusters."(96) Here we have a profile.

ʿUmar b. Abī Rabīʿa was another model taken by al-ʿAqqād in the "self-same", previous style. Has al-ʿAqqād introduced a consistent method for biography writing?

True he combined many approaches, but the application was amateurish and superficial in many cases. His piece on Goethe was perhaps a copying of what Emil Ludwig had written about the great German figure through a translated text, since al-ʿAqqād had no knowledge of German language. Many inaccurate generalizations stemming from national vanity surface in al-ʿAqqād's accounts, such as his assertions, which need to be verified, that Goethe's genius was due to the influences the Oriental, Islamic and Arabic texts had on his mind, for Goethe "read the biography of Prophet Muḥammad, the holy Qurʾān, hence the Qurʾānic aura in his religious writings."(97)

Al-ʿAqqād's were attempts at biography writing rather than biographies proper. It was out of sheer desire to be complimentary that some critics described his book *Tidhkār Goethe*, [Remembrance of Goethe] as "another ticket to pioneering the world of modern literary biography."(98)

His weakness is most pronounced in his book on *Bernard Shaw.* A few, miscellaneous bits, as quoted or copied from other authors, are assembled together. lacking, as it were, any logical coherence. Even the customary psychoanalysis is wanting here. The same conclusion can be said of his book on *Shakespeare*, where there is hardly a life story. His brief portrayal of Shakespeare's period or his family background was the only exception. Apart from this, al-ʿAqqād preoccupied himself

with reviewing and criticising negative opinions on Shakespeare. Another example is his text on Jimenez. It can hardly be anything but a sketch relying on sources available in English. In fact al-ʿAqqād had not read one book by Jimenez, the only exception was the latter's volume on Platero.(99)

NOTES

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42. ʿAbbās Maḥmūd al-ʿAqqād, *Ibn al-Rūmī Ḥayātuhu min shiʿrihi*, Dār al-Kitāb al-Lubnānī (Beirut, 1980), first edition, Vol. 15, p. 12.
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44. al-ʿAqqād, op. cit., p. 41.
45. Jābir Qumaiha, op. cit., p. 348.
46. al-ʿAqqād, *Ibn al-Rūmī,* p. 67.
47. al-ʿAqqād, op. cit., p. 88.
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49. al-ʿAqqād, *Ibn al-Rūmī*, p. 102.
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CHAPTER VI

Ibrāhīm ʿAbd al- Qādir al- Māzinī (1890 - 1949) (1)

Introduction

a. A Portrait of Ibn al-Rūmī

b. A Portrait of al-Mutanabbī

c. A Portrait of Bashshār b. Burd

His characteristics as a biographer

Introduction

Ibrāhīm ʿAbd al- Qādir al-Māzinī was born in a middle class Egyptian family, his father being a lawyer.(2) Al- Māzinī's childhood was spent in a religious home, but his adult world seems to have been secular. His father and grandfather were Islamic scholars. After his father's death, the family moved into a communal residence which included a prayer hall for *Sūfī* meeting.(3)

Al-Māzinī graduated from *Madrasat al-Muʿallimīn al-ʿUlya*, [a teachers training College] in 1909 (4), and worked for a short period as a teacher for translation (English-Arabic) in a secondary school in Cairo, then as a teacher of English. In 1917 he gave up teaching to become a freelance journalist, devoting his energies to politics and literature. (5)

He had profound knowledge of the English language, and was at home with the works of Shakespeare, Byron, Thomas Hardy and Heine who were his favourite authors.(6) Al-Māzinī translated into Arabic poems by Shakespeare, Milton, Waller, Shelly, Hood, Morris, Edward Fitzgerald and James Russell Lowell, attributing some of them to himself. (7)

He thus became notorious for plagiarism. Apart from Arabic Literature he loved European literature and his favourite writers were Dumas, Maupassant, Shaw, Max Nordau, Anatole France, Freud, Tolstoy, Nietzsche, Charles Kingsley, and Homer, among others.

He began by writing poetry and literary criticism. The two volumes of his *Dīwān* appeared in 1914 and in 1917 respectively, and he published an essay of literary criticism on the poetry of Ḥāfiẓ Ibrāhīm in 1915.

In 1921 he collaborated with ʿAbbās al-ʿAqqād in producing the famous work of criticism *Al-Dīwān* (8), which was the manifesto of the modernist movement.

Al-Māzinī published most of his works in *Al-Jarīda, Al-Akhbār, Al-Siyāsah, Al-Balāgh, Al- Ḥadīth, Al-Wādī, Akhbār al-Yawm, Al-Asās* and at a later stage some of them reappeared in collections entitled *Ḥaṣād al-Hashīm* (1924), *Qabḍ al-Rīḥ* (1924), *Khuyūṭ al-ʿAnkabūt* (1935), etc. He was honoured by being appointed member of the Academy of the Arabic language [*Majmʿa al-Lughah al-ʿArabiyyah*] in Dec. 1947. On July12, 1949 al-Māzinī died in Cairo.(9)

In addition al-Māzinī composed some literary biographies in the form of biographical essays or complete biographies.

a. Biographical essays: This category is again reducible into two sub-forms, they are:

1. Lengthy biographical essays which were collected in a subsequent period in one book, under the title *Ḥaṣād al-Hashīm* (The Harvest of Chaff): Example, the portrait of Ibn al-Rūmī.

2. Short biographical articles, a profile or a sketch of a literary figure, published in *Al-Balāgh* newspaper, *Al-Siyāsah*, *Al-Ḥadīth, Al-Asās, Al-Wādī*. A sample of this is the sketch of al-Mutanabbī (included in the collection: *Ḥaṣād al-Hashīm*).

b. Complete biographies: an example here is the critical biography of the Abbasid poet Bashshār b. Burd.

In this section of our research, we shall focus on three samples of al-Māzinī's writings in this area which, hopefully, would illuminate the author as a biographer.

a. A Portrait of Ibn al-Rūmī *

In his introductory remarks, al-Māzinī explains why he had chosen Ibn al-Rūmī as a study case so we come to understand that al-Māzinī conceives of the task of producing a biography of "great figures, whether attempted by a man of letters or a scientist, or whatever, should start with exploring the events of this great figure in

order to trace back the features of his life, his intellectual maturity, his psychological markers. In all this, the study should be based on a thorough analysis of the psychological, moral and ethical side of his character. The psyche of the great figure must be dissected in such a way as to bring into bold relief the various specifics, instinctive and other traits of the personality in their totality."(10)

To achieve such a standardised task, al-Māzinī relied on Ibn al-Rūmī's own poetry to derive and deduce an image of his life. It is the same method which had already been applied by al-Māzinī's colleague, al-ʿAqqād, to the case of Ibn al-Rūmī, in his book: *Ibn al-Rūmī Hayātuhu Min Shiʿrihi* [His Life out of His Poetry]. That is because "Ibn al-Rūmī and al-Mutanabbī are two poets who fulfil the basic precondition adopted by the *Dīwān* Group *[Jamāʿat al-Dīwān]* to ascertain the greatness of the poet, this basic precondition is the reflection of his life in his own verse." (11)

Al- Māzinī was totally fascinated by Ibn al-Rūmī. To him the latter was the nearest to the heart, the best and most cherished poet among classical Arab poets. He preferred and supported Ibn al-Rūmī because the latter lived in dire poverty, fighting for his life or defending himself against the onslaughts of staunch opponents or humorous challengers.(11A) Al-Māzinī gave a detailed description of Ibn al-Rūmī's physical appearance and psychological characteristics, his birth, death, his culture, his behavioural imbalance, his being prone to pessimism, his indignation, sarcastic irony, and lastly his philosophical contemplations.

Ibn al-Rūmī was eccentric. First, he was an alien, he was not of Arab, but of a Greek origin in an era when the lineage was held in high esteem. "He adhered to his ethnicity, the race from which he descended; he clung to his Greek origin with such a passion that he kept announcing who he was without the slightest inclination towards

concealment, or pretensions of Persianism and this is the key to comprehending his poetry." (12) He was "sensitive, refined in soul, of keen intellect where views and creeds clash with various aspects of life and actual reality."(13) Ibn al-Rūmī. according to al-Māzinī, digested the culture and thought of his time, sciences, knowledge and literature, for "he wanted to lead an artistic life: that is a life verging on the lofty ideal he cherished and more in harmony with what he thought the sublime function of the poet and with the literary status the poet should hold. He had great desire to achieve this ideal but in vain."(14)

He who suffers such frustration would inevitably be plunged into self-centred indignation, unhappy with his misfortune, leading a self-insulated life, sad and angry towards society at large, hostile to social regimes and conditions, and lastly burning with the unrealistic ambition of fame and glory.

Nothing was known of his parentage, al- Māzinī says, but we definitely know that the poet lost his children at their early years and he shed tears over their tragic fate in many of his pieces. His nervous system was in disorder [neuropathy], his reproductive system was also disturbed. As for his pessimism it was easily aroused and continuously fed. A paranoid view dominated his outlook towards people and nature: his sense of being oppressed by them never departed from him. Perhaps it is these factors that made him so hot-tempered, easily angered, rebellious and obscenely satirical.

b. A Portrait of al-Mutanabbī **

In the articles on al- Mutanabbī, al-Māzinī considers the high quality of his verse is due to its imminent power. This power is attributable to the power of al-Mutanabbī himself. This, in turn, is the key to personality. "He was of that type of strong

personality that was created for struggle and the challenge not for submission and servile obedience."(15)

His poetry is but a record conveying this high self-esteem, his awareness of his value, destiny, ambition and magnified glory. One example, among many, of this magnified self is seen in what he wrote about his mother:

Had you not been the daughter/ of the noblest of fathers
Your great merit would have been/ That you were my mother (16)

"It is the character of the al-Mutanabbī that created that sound and fury among people in his time, and made them divide into only two camps, one fanatical, advocates of al- Mutanabbī, the other bitter rivals and enemies. Such a sharp division can only be produced by a strong personality. It comes like a tempest. None can afford to ignore it or dismiss it."(17)

His piece on Kāfūr, the prince of Egypt, vividly illustrates the depths of his strength, his rebellious drive, his thirst, in fact greed, for assuming political power, because "he was a great and a strong man with deep sense of manhood and its conditions. We can detect this sense of manhood in him when we consider how he declines to accept lenience and softness."(18) Perhaps that is why we see that he "deliberately lauds and extols, even magnifies himself in advance before uttering a good word in praise or compliment of a prince or a person."(19)

As for the alleged miserliness of al-Mutanabbī, al-Māzinī mentions certain opinions critical of al-Mutanabbī, for his avarice, greed and tight fistedness, but he counters these views by suggesting that miserliness and bravery never come under one roof let alone in one heart. He says " al-Mutanabbī was far from being a miser but was in

point of fact a man who knew and appreciated the value of money and the great effects it has on our lives."(20)

Glory can not be achieved without good finances, al-Mutanabbī believed, and in support of this idea he said in one of his poems:

No glory in the world for the penniless
And no penny for those bereft of glory.(21)

The elements of power and strength are the key to al-Mutanabbī's character. But what are the qualities of this personality?

They are self-esteem, non-lenience, dashing bravery, the will to gain power, the awareness of destiny and ambition.

It would have been more apt and more fruitful if al-Māzinī had presented a deep analysis of al-Mutanabbī's character, how this personality had developed, what parents he had, what had been the true story of his controversial sacred lineage, allegedly extending to the family and the prophet Muḥammad(s). What sort of strain, pressures and tensions overtook him? What fatal ambitions fraught his heart? What traumatic experience had he during his imprisonment?

c. A Portrait of Bashshār b. Burd

The method applied in the case of Ibn al-Rūmī was the same one employed in the analysis of the life and poetry of Bashshār b. Burd.

Bashshār b. Burd, al-Māzinī says, was born in Baṣrah, the port city in what is now the south of Iraq, around the year 95 of the *Hijra* to a Persian family of the *Mawālī*, i.e. an alien, here a non-Arab, 'client' usually of a weak tribe, patronised by a strong Arab tribe, a widespread practice at the time of the Islamic conquests.

As a child, he was taken to the desert to experience primitive conditions of the life by living among the Bedouins. Again this was a tradition among many to bring their sons to the hard life of chivalry, to give them the opportunity to learn the 'pure' Arab language, free of any alien accent in the desert where contact with the outside world was limited. Among the Persians, his community was as prominent as *Quraish* was among the Arabs. It was only mishaps and misfortune that brought them down the ladder of power, prestige and status.

Bashshār was born blind and ended his life being accused of heresy. In his loyalties and allegiance he was capricious. At an early age, in fact at ten, he began to produce verse. He took satire for a start. Of his mother he knew absolutely nothing, including her name. His father was said to have been naive and ignorant; he died while Bashshār was still an adolescent.

His blindness was a main source of creative tension. Because of this physical disability he tried to prove to others that he was talented and gifted with a sharp intellect and that blindness would not in the least affect such faculties of mind and heart as his. The era in which he was destined to live was one of precarious instability, of Arab-tribal solidarity, which meant harsh prejudice against non-Arabs, of chaos, revolts and general disruption and upheavals.

His character was rebellious. Being blind, of low parentage, debased lineage, utterly ugly countenance, bulky body and lastly *a Mawla*, i.e. a client of low status, all these were factors that strengthened his revolt against the Arabs' religious and other traditions. He was indignant and embittered. His bitterness took various forms, including that of obscene satire, vulgar cursing and insult without any regard to the constraints of good conduct, virtue or ethical standards.

What is true of his attitude towards society is also true of his attitude towards women. To him she was only a female, a tempting body. and object of satisfying masculine lust, an instrument to quench his instinctive thirst. He preferred her soft and tender- skinned, and he drove his female companions to reveal their admiration for his overwhelming power, domination and masculine roughness. He dedicated most of his verse to love and satire. At the end of his life, he was accused of heresy. a serious, in fact, fatal offence at the time. Consequently, he was whipped to death, and he died at the age of seventy.

His characteristics as a biographer

Al-Māzinī in his portrait of Ibn al-Rūmī relying on a varied and rich intellectual education, al-Māzinī could make use of modern, critical schools, applying them to his study of Ibn al-Rumi's portrait.

1. Al-Māzinī used the "key to the character" concept as an introduction to study the personality of Ibn al-Rūmī. The key here is the poet's ethnicity, the fact of being a Greek (*Rūmī*). This trait sharpened his keen sensibilities and rendered them more delicately receptive than others. In other words "He had an all encompassing feeling of life, he would reach out for it with all his organs, touching it deeply with his bare nerves to absorb as much as possible of it, to have it shrouded into his own soul."(22) He is a poet gifted with a very specific power to sense nature. To him, nature "is a living creature, a vital organism, like him, an entity having sensibilities, soul, memory and even a will of its own."(23)

Such qualities, al-Māzinī thinks, made him, unlike the Arabs, a unique poet. Al-Māzinī contends that "the Arabs are not the most poetical people, for they are naive simpletons like all Bedouins and tent dwellers. Hence it is not surprising that they would elevate to the status of guardian and protector those individuals among them

who show any degree of eloquence, and has any amount of witty imagination, any sort of heavy shoulders and strong muscles. Those individuals would be turned by their tribe into a protective shield and a weapon to challenge the rivals with."(24)
Genetics plays a decisive role in breeding the structure of the physical; the readiness of the intellect. It is only in the nature of things that Ibn al-Rūmī, the man of Arian origin (Persian-Greek), should bequeath a multitude of the features distinguishing his people, and that his verse would be nearer to the Greek poetry than to the Arab."(25)
The "key to personality" was a concept developed by Saint-Beuve who looked into the literary texts and productions for traits leading to the author himself. It is worth mentioning that al-ʿAqqād applied the same methodological principle in his study of the biography of Ibn al-Rūmī.

2. To analyse the verse and character of Ibn al-Rūmī, al-Māzinī applied both psychological methodology and the principles of the science of physiology.
Ibn al-Rūmī's pessimism, for instance, is attributed to his neuropathy. His "satirical pieces were fraught with obscenity and vulgarity explainable by his fragile masculinity, a weakness that drove the poet to be found of liberal allusions to sexual organs. He made contused, liberal mention of women, likening them with nature."(26)
As a biographer, al- Māzinī focused on Ibn al-Rūmī's psychological motives, analysing his character and showing warm sympathy towards him. In short, the psychological features were explored.
Al-Māzinī was under the strong influence of the Orientalist writers who held the Arian race superior to the Semitic race, and this is a racial essentialist approach, and an exaggeration to say the least. To a great extent, al-Māzinī merely reproduced al-ʿAqqād's views and ideas on the same topic.(27)

Al-Māzinī explained Ibn al-Rūmī's mental disorder and neuropathy by the untimely death of his offspring. No concrete, scientific evidence was ever given to support such linkage.

One of the outstanding features which al-Māzinī attributes to Ibn al-Rūmī is that the poet had strong, keen and highly sensitive feelings of nature and man, but this keen perception of nature "was not only achieved through the faculty of hearing and seeing but also through other senses, notably the sense of smelling and of feeling. These greatly enhanced his potential to capture the beauty of nature."(28)

On the whole, al-Māzinī's analysis of Ibn al-Rūmī's character and personality may well be considered a "free formation" (Al-Tashkīl al-Ḥurr).(29) It comes under the heading of critical biography.

Al-Māzinī in his portrait of Bashshār moved along various pivotal trajectories. These are:

a. The key to Bashshar's character is his rebellion, or better still his aggressive disobedience and insubordination. Focusing on this aspect, al-Māzinī revealed the causes of such mutinous behaviour and the consequences it produced.

b. Al-Māzinī applied the scientific, critical French method which demands that biographical research should be anchored in a three dimensional study of race, surroundings and epoch. Taking this into consideration, al-Māzinī applied the same method as al-ʿAqqād.

He also made use of psychological analysis and the science of physiology. This is best seen in the conclusion that Bashshār's blindness motivated his sharp satire, and the idea that his ugly and bulky body drove him to indulge in all sorts of bodily lusts. Lastly, his race, i.e. being of Persian origin, was a catalyst of his insultive attitude towards the Arabs and glorifying attitude towards the Persians. His inferiority

complex produced in him that kind of rebellious behaviour which tempted him to oppose all schools of theology and all colours of faith.

Al-Māzinī justifies Bashshār's positions and behaviour on the grounds that his psychological nature, his time, and his surroundings have worked together to pull him down that path.(30)

The idea that the character of the poet is to be found in his poetry is a literary, critical method adopted and applied by al-ʿAqqād and al-Māzinī on the case of Ibn al-Rūmī and Bashshār b. Burd.

It is postulated by al-Māzinī that Bashshār's blindness at birth might have been caused by his father's illness. His assumption might prove unfounded. The reason why al-Māzinī chose for his study the same figures which had been analysed by al-ʿAqqād, asserts the fact he was inclined to further enhance the method of study he had adopted in his earlier work, that is the *Dīwān*.

NOTES

1. M.M. Badawī, *A critical introduction to Modern Arabic Poetry,* (Cambridge, 1975), p. 84; Ṭāhir Khemiri and G. Kampffmeyer, *Leaders in contemporary Arabic Literature*, (Cairo, 1930), p.27, and John A. Haywood, *Modern Arabic Literature (1800-1970),* (London, 1971), p.23.
2. M.M. Badawi, op. cit., p.84.
3. William Hutchins, *Al-Māzinī's Egypt,* (Washington, 1983) p.8.
4. M.M. Badawī, op.cit., p.84 and William Hutchins, op. cit., p.3.
5. M.M. Badawī, op. cit., pp. 84-85.
6. Ṭāhir Khemiri and G. Kampffmeyer, op. cit., p. 28-29.
7. M.M. Badawī, op. cit, p106.
8. M.M. Badawī, *An Anthology of Modern Arabic Verse,* (Oxford, 1975) p, xxvii.

* The essays on Ibn al-Rūmī appeared monthly in *Al-Bayān* between (February-July) 1913 and in *Al-Akhbār* between 9.8-27.9 (1924) on a weekly basis. All the essays were reprinted in the first print of *Ḥaṣād al-Hashīm* which came into circulation in January 1925.

9. J. Brugman, *An Introduction to the History of Modern Arabic Literature in Egypt*, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1984, p. 142.
10. ʿIz al- Dīn al- Amīn, *Nashʾat al-Naqd al-Adabī al-Ḥadīth Fī Miṣr,* 2nd edition, (Cairo, 1970), p. 198, al-Māzinī mentioned that in *Ḥaṣād al-Hashīm*, p. 219.
11. Muḥammad Mandūr, *Al- Naqd wa- al- Nuqqād al- Muʿāṣirūn*, (Cairo, 1964), p. 175.

11A. Al-Māzinī, *Ḥaṣād al- Hashīm*, 3rd edition, (Cairo, 1984), p. 255ff.

12. Ibid., p. 264.
13. Ibid., p. 265.
14. Ibid., p. 297.
15. Al-Māzinī, *Ḥaṣād al- Hashīm*, op.cit., p. 140.
16. Al-Māzinī, *Ḥaṣād al- Hashīm,* op.cit., p. 142.
17. Al-Māzinī, *Ḥaṣād al- Hashīm,* op.cit., p. 145.
18. Al-Māzinī, *Ḥaṣād al- Hashīm,* op.cit., p. 153.
19. Al-Māzinī, *Ḥaṣād al- Hashīm,* op.cit., p. 155.
20. Al-Māzinī, *Ḥaṣād al- Hashīm,* op.cit., p. 168.
21. Al-Māzinī, *Ḥaṣād al- Hashīm*, op.cit., p.169.

** A collection of articles first published by *Al-Akhbār* newspaper between 16.4.1923-14.5.1923 every week. Later they were reproduced in *Ḥaṣād al-Hashīm* in January 1925, first edition.

22. Ibid., p. 298.
23. Ibid., p. 307.
24. Ibid., p. 238.
25. Ibid., p. 241.
26. Muḥammad Zaghlūl Sallām, *Al-Naqd- al-Adabī al-Ḥadīth,* (Alexandria, 1981), p. 286.
27. He even acknowledged that he made use of every single opinion of al-ʿAqqad that was mentioned in the latter's preface to a book by Kāmil al-Kilani.
28. Al-Māzinī, *Ḥaṣād al- Hashīm,* op.cit., p. 308.
29. Māhir Ḥasan Fahmī, *Al- Sīrah Tārīkh wa-Fann,* (Al-Kuwait, 1983) p. 172.
30. Al-Māzinī, *Bashshār b. Burd,* Silselat Aʿ*Lām al- Islām,* (Cairo. 1971), pp.107-108.

CHAPTER VII

Zakī Mubārak (1891-1952)

Introduction

a. A Portrait of ʿUmar b. Abī Rabīʿa

b. A Portrait of Jamīl Buthayna

c. A Portrait of Kuthayyir b. ʿAbd al- Raḥmān

d. A Portrait of Al-ʿAbbās b. al-Aḥnaf

e. A Portrait of al-Sharif al-Radi

His characteristics as a biographer

Introduction

Muḥammad Zakī, son of ʿAbd al-Salām Mubārak, better known as Zakī Mubārak, was born on the 5th August, 1891, in the village of Sintrīs, Munofiya Province. He was descended from an Arab Ḥijāzi tribe which had emigrated to Egypt and settled in that village. His mother's father was Lebanese, a fact which Zakī has himself placed on record.

Zakī Mubārak had great affection for the village of Sintrīs where he was born and brought up, and often praised it in his articles. In many articles he described himself as a physically fit and handsome man, and thanked God for having given him regular features without defect. Mubārak was a narcissist and therefore considered himself among the brightest and strongest of men. He was extremely fond of academic recognition, and admitted this in an interview with the weekly *Al-Ṣabāḥ* when he was preparing for his third doctoral examination. Asked whether the quest for knowledge should be limited to preparation for a doctor's degree, Mubārak denied this, but said that the examination for such a degree had a very strong appeal for him because it lasted three whole hours in the presence of the public.

Once he had memorised the Holy Qurʾān, his family sent him to al-Azhar, but he did not stay in al-Azhar long enough to obtain the *Al-ʿĀlamiyyah*. Instead, he transferred to the Egyptian University. This was the most important stage in his life. He entered the University in 1916 and passed the initial test with distinction. He was awarded a doctorate in 1924 for a thesis entitled *Al-akhlāq ʿind al-Ghazālī* [Ethics as viewed by al-Ghazālī], by the Egyptian University. His second doctorate was from the Sorbonne (1931) for a thesis on *Al-Nathr al-Fannī fī al-Qarn al-Rābʿi al-Hijrī* [Artistic prose in the Fourth Century of *Hijra].* He was not, however, satisfied with this, and took a third Ph.D (thesis *on al-Taṣawwuf al-Islamī*) at the Fūʾad I

University (1935). As a result he was dubbed *al-Dakātirah* (possessing three doctorates).(1) He died in 1952.

In considering the work of Zakī Mubārak one must distinguish between works of literary criticism and literary biography. Zakī Mubārak left a large number of articles scattered in different literary magazines. Some of these have been collected and published by research students or members of his family. Most of this material was published during his lifetime; some was published after his death, and some has still not been published up to the present. Philosophy and literature were the subjects he loved most and in them he obtained his three Ph.Ds.(2)

The majority of his books are concerned with the history of Arabic literature and literary criticism, e.g. *Al-Badāʾiʿ* (Cairo, 1923), in which he discusses various ideas related to literary criticism, as well as certain social issues, *Al-Muwāzanah bayn al-Shuʿarāʾ* (Cairo 1926); *Madam iʿ al-ʿUshshāq* (Cairo 1928); *Al-Nathr al-Fannī* (Cairo 1934), etc.

Zakī Mubārak composed two different forms of biography, namely short biographies which appear in three of his books, some of them being in fifty words only, such as *Al-Muwāzanah bayn al-Shuʿarāʾ* and *Naqd al-Shiʿr* and *Al-Madāʾih al-Nabawiyyah.* In his book *Al-Muwāzanah* he suggests new criteria for judging between poets. Moreover, he offers much instruction to the reader to enable him to enjoy poetry.(3) To compare between Al-Būṣirī and Aḥmed Shawqī, he says: "he (Al-Būṣirī) is Muḥammad b. Saʿīd b. Ḥmmād b. ʿAbd allah b. Ṣanhaj. One of his parents came from Abū Ṣyr and the other came from dlās, so his name was formulated from these two different names to be dlāṣyrī, but his famous name was al-Būṣirī."(4) In his second book *Al-Madāʾih al-Nabawiyyah* he studies the careers of all the poets who praised the prophet Muḥammad. This book commences with Ḥassān b. Thābit and includes poets up to al-Būṣirī.(5)

Zakī Mubārak shows himself to be fully aware of the great significance of comparisons as a tool in the hand of the critic,(6) and this was a direct result of his reading in both Arabic and French literature.(7) He strongly recommends that the critic should analyse and study the social life and mentality of the poet. In his view "literature is a portrait of the writer."(8) In point of fact Zakī Mubārak looks upon the critic as one whose basic function is not just to analyse art, but also to draw the attention of men of letters to the aesthetic values inherent in the work, values which they can later bear in mind, when they undertake literary composition.(9)

The second type of literary biography authored by Zakī Mubārak is represented by his three books

1. *Hubb b. Abī Rabī'a wa-Shi'ruh,* [The Love Affairs of b. Abī Rabī'a and His Verse], where a portrait of the poet and his poetry is given.

2. *Al-'Ushshaq al-Thalātha* [The Three Lovers], where the portraits of three love-poets, Kuthayyir, Jamīl and al-'Abbās, are presented.

3. *'Abqariyyat al- Sharīf al-Radī* [The Genius of al-Sharīf al-Radī], which is a literary biography and a literary critical research combined.

These three examples shall be examined below in the same sequence with certain quotations and reproductions so as to reveal the focus of Zaki Mubarak's attention and his method, coupled with some critical remarks showing not only the significance of what has been said but also of what has not been mentioned or questioned.

This review would presumably show that these works stand on the dividing line between traditional anecdotes and the modern literary forms. These life stories are, in a sense, biographies in embryonic form, since this literary genre was novel and its

methodology was not yet fully absorbed and digested. Yet as in the last example of al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, the scientific method is applied with varying degree of success.

a. A Portrait of ʿUmar b. Abī Rabīʿa

In his book *Hubb b. Abī Rabīʿa wa- Shiʿruh* (1928), Zaki Mubarak analysis the youth, love and love-verse of Ibn Abī Rabīʿa. The only marks left of Ibn Abī Rabīʿa's youth and handsome looks, Zakī Mubārak contends, are embodied in his poetry, above all in his love-verse. Poetry is the self-portrait of the poet himself. The question about him remains: Was he a true lover, solid in his affection, or was he a conceited young man, fond of his own fair appearance, a man who does not care for love? If he could neither love nor have deep emotions, how could he then produce such perfect love poems and recreate in his reader that thrilling emotion? What is it in his poetry which surpasses the high poetic level his friends and colleagues achieved?(10)

Zakī Mubārak sets off to study the ideas of The Prime Young Man of *Quraish* (his nickname), and says: As for love, I would accuse him of it and deny it at one and the same time.

This duality, Zakī Mubārak elaborates, would soon be clear as soon as we come to see the difference between the love of a Bedouin and that of the urban dweller. In his passion, the urban dweller behaves more like an addict, wrestling every day with his uncontrolled desire for the drug or the cup. With his second dose he would only quench the thirst created by the first one.(11) And the chain may thus go on uninterruptedly.

During the sacred ceremonies and rituals of pilgrimage to Mecca, ʿUmar would be looking for glamour and beauty. He would tour the places where the scent of

females could be sensed and their physical existence could usually be seen and touched. It is in this garden of women that he would bend to pluck a charming rose of which there is no equal; or it is at a night gathering that he is present in the hope of seeing if any new fair maidens have arrived in the city. He might come across a young woman ready to give him her heart but he would stand aloof. Or he would offer a glamorous maiden his heart and she would only reward him with negligence.(12)

Zakī Mubārak's idea of urban love is that it is not sincere. It is a play, deceit, it has self enjoyment as its main aim. ʿUmar was so pompous, he was so conceited with his youth, so fond of his own handsomeness, so self-trumpeting about how women quickly and irresistibly fell in love with him. In a word he is a typical narcissist. Such a 'loved' person seldom loves, such a strongly desired man seldom strongly desires the partner. In his poetry, Zakī Mubārak says, I found the self- glorifying satisfaction of the loved not the agony and submission, disarray and feebleness of the lover.(13) True in some of his poems he would swear he longed for a single true love, one endless affection, yet we find out that he is ever changing partners, ever in want of another relation and a new affair. His flirting mood is well depicted in the following two pieces.

His concubine Layla has grasped his mentality. He admits saying:

> In a secret letter, Layla blamed me/
>
> saying I am easily bored, moody and changing mistresses.

Rabāb, another mistress of his, comes to the same judgement. He writes about her:

> Rabāb sent gentle reproach, said/
>
> She heard what praise [for other women] I chanted.

Yet the longing for one eternal love is also expressed.

In a poem dedicated to his ʿAbda he says:

> Oh ʿAbda, your affection shall not be forgotten by my beating heart/
> For better or worse, It will not be pleased [without you]

In another piece on Zainab, he depicts himself as having no other thought or dedication but to his love:

> In my soliloquy, and inner dialogue is rich,
>
> The focus of my self and my soliloquy is Zainab

Asmāʾ receives even more praise. He says about her:

> Never has [my] heart experienced a love like yours
> Never have I set eyes on such a charming beauty

It is obvious that these over-statements cannot all be taken at their face value, and when one is proved false the authenticity of other statements are consequently questioned. ʿUmar is a cunning, deceitful man, he gives a solemn oath to every single pretty girl that he is hers, and the innocent hearts tend to believe what appears to them a sincere pledge.(14)

ʿUmar b. Abī Rabīʿa seems, in Zakī Mubārak's presentation, untrue in his love relations. He seems to use his good looks, youth, wealth and fame to subdue females. But, Zakī Mubārak goes on, it is not right to judge the verse of a poet or the prose of a writer before a thorough study of his inner feelings and the secrets buried deeply in his chest. That is why we should diagnose his psychological features and personal mentality.(15) To dig into the poet's psyche, to weigh the facts. to scrutinise the allegations that Ibn Abī Rabīʿa's love claims were false and that he was

moody and changeable in love, to see how all these possible interpretations left their impact on his poetry, Zakī Mubārak did nothing but repeat the opinions of the classical writers and historiographers, saying they did not grasp the true essence of the poet. This applies to the author of *Al-Aghānī,* who wrote 70 pages on ʿUmar "which told us nothing of the truth about him, and gave us no clue to his personality. The details were jotted down without systematisation, they were even groundless."(16)

Zakī Mubārak takes each sentence of the seventy pages of *Al-Aghānī* dedicated to ʿUmar and scrutinises them word by word to prove that Abū al-Faraj al-Aṣfahānī, the author of *Al-Aghānī,* was completely wrong. He also sharply criticises what has been attributed to Ibn Abī Rabīʿa of new poetic allegories and novel, creative wording. He says that this kind of focus on poetics bears unknown, or unfamiliar method in studying poetry.(17)

Zakī Mubārak depicts Ibn Abī Rabīʿa as a young man envied by his young contemporaries, desired as a sweet hope by so many pretty girls. Young virgins would dream of him, cherishing the agonising wish to win his favour. Pretty women, we are told, were caught between the two layers of desperation and hope in their love for him. In their restless sleep they would murmur his name. In private female gatherings, women are said to have spoken of him as their favourite topic. A loving young girl fond of the poet would only confess to her sister, at times a daughter would uncover her secret love for him to her mother. His fame was great, and the desire of females for him was even greater. Much to his delight, ʿUmar knew well that he was the focus of attention and conversations at male gatherings and female private social meetings at night.(18)

But Ibn Abī Rabīʿa sought to propagate this image more widely. For this purpose he perhaps invented vividly subtle and charming images of females, to lend his message

to them a tender poetic character. He pleased them with his sweet words and lovely praise of their beauty, glamour and charming features. He deliberately gave overstated descriptions of the moments of secret encounters and night adventures. He insistently and consistently gave impudent, uninhibited accounts of these delicate moments of love. Such dissoluteness and immorality were never seen before by the community. And ʿUmar did his best to go beyond all limits.(19) "He was characterised by sweet narrative and lovely wording in depicting his night adventures with his charming concubines."(20)

Cunning as he was, ʿUmar used his poetry as a camouflaged net to hunt his females.(21) After forty, the ageing ʿUmar almost deserted love poetry, and only resorted to it, the classical tellers of his life story say, when an agonising memory occasionally overshadowed his mind.(22)

b. A Portrait of Jamīl

Zakī Mubārak explains that the consensus of the classical poetry narrators on the great status Jamil had in the realm of verse and love was, in a sense, a response to a strong psychological drive, namely the desire to have in Arab history a lover who would reach, by dint of his generosity and honest emotions, the same sublime status heroes usually enjoy.(23)

Jamīl's poetry was emotive, well-built and had an elegant style. He was totally ripe for writing verse, "he was the narrator of Hudba b. Khashram, Hudba was a poet and narrator of al-Ḥuṭay'a, and al-Ḥuṭay'a was a narrator of Zuhaīr."(24)

For passionate love he was prepared and well equipped with literary skills that would make his story more attractive than ever. Jamīl was a man of integrity, dashing heart, feared by the foe and liked by the friend. To him, love was not an art of

having fun but an ordeal befalling his bold heart. His agony was prolonged by his uncontrollable affection. Only death could save him as a lone expatriate.(25)

His first encounter with his beloved, Buthayna, took place on one day of the Muslim holiday (*ʿīd*), and the love he felt for her at first glance is liberally depicted by him without any due respect to keeping the affair in secret. But Buthayna marries a man other than him and falls in love with a third. Hence an estrangement between the two. The details of their affair reveal that both held love in high esteem, seeing it as transcending the vulgarity of worldly sensualities.(26)

Jamīl suffered most in his passion. The *Wālī* (Governor) issued an order to have him beaten if and when caught in the act of visiting Buthayna. To avoid persecution, he headed for Yemen, then for al-Shām and lastly for Egypt, where he died.

c. A Portrait of Kuthayyir

Kuthayyir b.ʿAbd-al Raḥmān is the second poet Zakī Mubārak studies. The physical and moral character of Kuthayyir is thoroughly pictured. These traits left their impact on his love verse. He was "so short that he was mocked at and ridiculed. He was also one-eyed. Shortness and eye loss are two horrible defects in the Bedouin communities."(27) Thus, "the poet felt too feeble to retaliate when other poets would wage attacks on him. Perhaps deep in his heart he felt he was inept to wage battles in the field of love."(28)

In his religious belief he was "an extreme *shīʿī* to the point of absurdity, and this absurdity is the invincible power that made him one of the magnates of the time ... He also believed in reincarnation, the transmigration of souls from one form into

another. He believed in the rise of the dead in the hereafter and saw no point in fearing death."(29)

It is unclear whether or not this belief was the product of a philosophical contemplation or some psychological illness, the more so when we come to know that he praised the Umayyads and played the hypocrite. The answer is he "abides himself by the rule of *Taqiyya* [*Al- Shīʿi* tradition to hide one`s own beliefs to avoid persecution], the rule of the weak."(30)

As for his passionate love, "it is not difficult to see that when Kuthayyir was accused of lying, the accusation was out of prejudice and mockery against him. Perhaps he started his love pretensions to lend his life a mantle of curiosity and put it on equal footing with the interesting lives of the many poet-lovers of the time. But what was started as mere humour ended up seriously. He said:

> What I did for fun became serious
>
> Seriousness may well come out of play.(31)

d. A Portrait of al-ʿAbbās b. al-Aḥnaf

The last of the three lovers is al-ʿAbbās b. al-Aḥnaf: "He is the *Imām* of the honest lovers in the Abbasid epoch. He hoisted aloft the banner of decent affection in that age which was so bewildered by the *Imām* of the most dissolute libertines, Abū Nuwās."(32) He dedicated his verse to only one woman. He was a man of heart. His verse was richly lyrical and confined to love themes. He was unattracted to travels with the *Caliphs*. Fawz was the only woman al-ʿAbbās loved and cared for. She was clever and well versed, she read his letters, and on occasions replied to them. But he never revealed her name. He was the poet of concealment par

excellence. He was among the companions of Hārūn al- Rashīd in some of his travels and serious moments. On his way to Mecca he died.

e. A Portrait of al-Sharīf al-Raḍī

Zakī Mubārak describes the era in which al-Sharīf al-Raḍī (359-406 A.H.) was born - the second half of the fourth century of *Hijra* - which was also notorious for its widespread political corruption. His father, Abū Aḥmad al-Mūsawī, was arrested and incarcerated in the Castle of Faris from (369-376A.H.). His property was confiscated. The arrest was ordered by ʿAḍud al-Dawla, the prime vizier (minister) and the actual ruler during the time of the Abbasid *Caliph*, Al-Ṭāʾiʿ. The *caliph*, in fact, was a toy in the hands of the Buwāihī warlords who assumed premiership.

Al-Mūsawī remained in prison until the death of his oppressor ʿAḍud al-Dawla. Fighting for their father's crown, aḍud al-Dawla's two sons split the kingdom into two halves. Ṣimṣām al-Dawla controlled and ruled over Iraq. His brother, Sharaf al-Dawla seized Fāris. It is the latter who released al-Raḍī's father from the cell.

Before his personal tragedy of incarceration, al-Raḍī's father had another traumatic experience. Chaos reigned in Baghdad when the fight broke out between the Daylam and the Turks. Baghdad suffered most. Al-Karkh city (the part of Baghdad on the western bank of the Tigris river) was conquered and it was declared permissible for the warriors to loot, kill and burn at will. The Karkh was set ablaze, and the arson continued for a week or so. Men were burnt in public baths. Women were killed by sword or fire in their family houses or public female baths. Pillage reigned. Abū Aḥmad al-Mūsawī, al-Raḍī's father (al-Raḍī was in his infancy then) could not watch these tragic events unfolding before his very eyes without uttering a word. The catastrophic events caused al-Mūsawī deep sorrow. And in his capacity as the Chief

of the Guilds of Notables (in the classical Islamic guilds), he approached and reproached Abbas b. al-Ḥusayn, the vizier of Bakhtīar for the massacre and arson in al-Karkh. Angered by this challenge, the vizier excluded al-Mūsawī from the guild of *Ashrāf* (nobles), a post of paramount importance for any noble family to assume.(33) Political life was extremely unhealthy, fraught, as it was, with plots and conspiracies.

Intellectual life, on the other hand, was rich and vigorous. Literary criticism, philosophical debates and artistic prose thrived. There were also magnificent poets who enjoyed great popularity. Their verse was widely read and admired.

In this atmosphere, al-Raḍī's poems were ignored, much to his bitterness and agony. His wounded pride produced that kind of hatred towards those who neglected him. His reactive attitude was to develop an inflated ego, plagued with vanity and arrogance. With such a responsive self-inflation, it was only natural that the poet became so egocentric that he could see no other poet but himself.

Zakī Mubārak explains that al-Raḍī was but the product of such negative political, and positive intellectual, environments.

Mubārak says: "My approach to him is not that of a master to disciple, but that of friend to friend. We have many traits and features in common. We are very similar to each other. Were he to rise now from the dead, he would certainly have come to embrace me and kiss me on the cheek as a brother does to a brother, because what he suffered in his life is similar to what I have also suffered in mine: he fought so resolutely for glory but his community and his epoch ignored him, and I fought so resolutely for glory but my people and time ignored me."(34) and "We go around a depressed soul that suffered injustice, a soul that honestly struggled and decently endeavoured for honour, sublimation and glory."(35) he adds.

In Zakī Mubārak's words, al-Sharīf al-Raḍī was a permanent companion of wretchedness, and he relentlessly fought misfortune. His qualities made him a genius and enabled him to overcome these difficulties.

Like his father and the magnates of his extended family, al-Raḍī was a knight. He inherited from his parents many Bedouin connections and friendships which he further consolidated during his trips from Iraq to Ḥijāz (west Arabia). His brother was one of the celebrities in religious and philosophical sciences. Al-Raḍī was a healthy man with colourful talents and skills; he was a poet, writer, grammarian, jurisprudent, knight and politician. In his character, sweetness and bitterness, seriousness and jesting, sentiment and reason were combined.(36)

In matters of religious belief, he had a free thinking mind that could transcend the communal and theological divisions in order to study all schools and illuminate his mind with the lights beaming from all Islamic schools. His great interest in the *Shāfi'ī* school of Islamic law is well known.(37)

Al-Raḍī took an active part in the literary and scientific life of his era. He also made genuine contributions in his writings. He studied the verse of Ibn Ḥajjāj, the most humorous and mocking poet of the fourth century of *Hijra*, mostly renowned for powerful descriptions of liberal laxity. Al-Raḍī's ambitions were limitless, he even prepared himself for assuming the *Caliphate*. As an intellectual and educated person, he clearly saw and realised how fiercely minds, passions and schools of religious thought struggled with each other. He looked at life through the eyes of a noble intellectual rather than those of a base pauper. Caught in the middle of the battlefield between heart and mind, he endeavoured to have in one all the realms of glory. He wanted to be a great jurisprudent, a magnate of poetry, and the most prominent *Caliph*.(38) He considered the poetry of al-Mutanabbī inferior compared to his own.

Had people been unbiased and free from religious, political and literary prejudices, they would have crowned him, not al-Mutanabbī, as the best, he thought.(39)

Zakī Mubārak analyses and describes the factors which contributed to the moulding of al-Sharīf al-Raḍī's character and prepared him for the transition to the second phase of his life, that of the search for power and glory, the stage of desperately searching for a role that would satisfy his wild desire for eminence, a role that would compensate for the moral and material loss his family had sustained.

This shift in al-Raḍī's career is well apparent in his eulogy dedicated to the *Caliph*, al-Qādir. He simply claimed his right to the *Caliphate* before the *Caliph* himself, winning the latter's anger and wrath, and of course severance of any kind of relationship for ever.

In this challenging piece, al-Sharīf al-Raḍī says:

> Oh, the Commander of the Faithful be humble/
>
> In the garden of the noble we are together
>
> When we compare our glory, no difference exists
>
> Except for the *Caliphate*
>
> From which I am deprived and by which you are surrounded.

The *Caliph* angrily retorted: I am surrounded by it in spite of you.

This incident reveals an important side of his character, namely how he conceived of the *Caliphate* as a legitimate right of his, as a post for which he was prepared and destined. It is perhaps for this reason that there would be no channel, method or way he would not try to achieve his political ambitions. We see him praising in long poems the *Caliph*, al-Ṭā'i', and the latter is so pleased that he bestows on him great

gifts and endowments, yet when the *Caliph* is humiliated at the hands of Bahā' al-Dawla, the warlord and the actual ruler, who storms the court with his men and deposes the *Caliph* by force, we see al-Sharīf al-Raḍī run away, leaving the unseated *Caliph* to his tragic demise.

He redirects his eulogies to Bahā' al-Dawla, bestowing on him the most delicate, moral and spiritual qualities. His verse collection betrays the great gifts he received from Bahā' al-Dawla, the honours and rewards he had, and how the warlord, the true ruler in Baghdad, heavily relied on him in various affairs.(40)

Yet, the life of al-Sharīf al-Raḍī was in constant turmoil, hesitation and bewilderment, shifting him from right to left and back and forth. For example, we know how much he hated the Abbasids, but also we know how far he went in praising them. He likes the *Caliph*, al-Ṭā'i', who handsomely rewarded him, but he shifts his loyalty to his successor, al-Qādir.

No explanation is provided by Zakī Mubārak as to why al-Sharīf al-Raḍī was so keen on showing his constant loyalty to the Daylam and the Turk, or his drive to strike a political marriage, namely getting the daughter of Ibn ʿAlī, the vizier under Bahā' al-Dawla, as a wife.

Zakī Mubārak, it seems, could not explain or justify why al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, the Chief of Pilgrimage, the symbol of religious power at the time, should ever chant erotic verse which runs contrary to the delicate religious status he enjoys. He says in one such piece:

Ask my bed what I and she had

We accept what the mattresses testify

There are many examples of his obvious contradictory attitudes. although Zakī Mubārak justifies this by saying that it seems that the "end justifying the means" was the supreme principle and guiding ideal which al-Raḍī was brought up to accept and cherish. And this was due to circumstances under which he and his family had to live. This is the outline of the life story of al-Sharīf al-Raḍī as told by Zakī Mubārak in his two volumes.

His characteristics as a Biographer

Zakī Mubārak in his portrait of Ibn Abī Rabī'a was more a transmitter of what has been said about Ibn Abī Rabī'a than a critic or even a biographer in his own right. He re-introduced what the previous authors had said, but he reorganised the material so as to support his idea that 'Umar, the poet, was an impudent, uninhibited lover, a jester void of any sincerity in his passions.

But did Zakī Mubārak ever seem to be willing to investigate the inner motives behind some insincere immorality, or behind that liberal impudence and sex-thirst, or the erotic lust which verges on the pathetic?

Was Ibn Abī Rabī'a that type of a sex maniac, or in another possible reading of his personality, was he a Don Juan type of man, searching for the ideal perfect love that exists only in the head, hence the continuous, and ever ongoing search for a new love? Or is it simply a phenomenal narcissism? Many possible interpretations perhaps exist to give what may be called character typology.

Zakī Mubārak did not touch upon the history of the Makhzūm extended family from which Ibn Abī Rabī'a descended, and never investigated the possibility of whether such an erotic disorder was, say, a family symptom.

From Zakī Mubārak's accounts we know nothing of the attitude of the community. their reaction towards such laxity practised even on days of holy pilgrimage when man is expected to do his best to regain purity of soul and body, absolve himself of previous sins rather than going after lust, flirting and courting with this or that female.

Other questions may also arise. What was the effect of such a supposedly erotic, adventurous life on his own family, his wives and sons? What about his last days, and ultimately his death? If, with occasional exceptions, he had almost given up poetry at the age of forty, as Zakī Mubārak contends relying on many classical narrators, then what did he do and say during the last thirty years separating him from his demise as he died at the age of seventy? What sort of culture and intellectuality had he? How did he start his career as a poet?

His work is more of a portrait, a traditional image reminiscent of what had already been done by al-Aṣfahānī in his classical historiography, *Al-Aghānī*.

Zakī Mubārak in his portrait of Jamīl attempts a presentation of Jamīl b. Maʿmar showing him as a mystic *ṣūfī* lover, driven by an invisible force towards this woman. He is unable to disconnect himself from the unseen fetters that tie him to this married lady. It is difficult to imagine such desperate emotions unless the lover is psychologically unbalanced, yet the personal features given by Zakī Mubārak contradict the possibility of such a mental disorder. Jamīl is said to be brave, decent, feared by the enemy and respected by the friend. A bold man of integrity would and should show due respect to a married woman in that conservative community. In addition, Zakī Mubārak gives no details about the poet's childhood. Had he done that, perhaps we would have come to know the hidden motives behind his passive

agnosticism. Man is but the sum total of his previous lives. If Jamīl was so passively obedient, a man without a will, humiliated by his own clan, running away from Buthayna's next of kin who chase him in order to exact revenge on him for their wounded honour, dying in exile, if Jamīl was all that, then it was either that the classical narrators fabricated all these accounts of his attitude and verse, or the secret of this pathetic behaviour goes back to his childhood, an aspect totally unknown to us and completely neglected by the author.

Jamīl's submissiveness is reduced by Zakī Mubārak to his (Jamīl) being "forced to submit to his emotions by a hidden force, it is the hidden hand of destiny which mercilessly and relentlessly controls human hearts."(41) He even adds, "Jamīl the dashing, aggressive young man did not know the meaning of submission but in love. His dignity was so strong that he stood aloft from praising any *Wālis* or *Caliphs*. No one could ever say he saw Jamīl degradingly begging except in love."(42)

Such a confirmation is still questionable since the bulk of "Jamīl's poetry was lost, and only few poems were left, reproduced in certain literary sources such as *Al-Aghānī, Al-Amālī* or *Muntaha al- Ṭalab*."(43)

What Zakī Mubārak presented was only a portrait rather than a life traced from beginning to end. No light is shed on the sequence of the development of the personality and character. Instead, only his love is depicted. There might have been a possibility to analyse Jamīl's psychology and study the influence of the environment on him. Should this analysis have been done, the piece written about him might have been a modern literary biography.

Zakī Mubārak, with Kuthayyir, does not confine his presentation to depicting the character of Kuthayyir, or simply repeating what has been said of him, but tends to

psychologically scrutinise these anecdotes told about him. The traits attributed to him are related to each other in a cause and effect chain of interaction. Physical deformations produce mental qualities which in their turn are reflected in his verse.

His excessive shortness and his graphic thinness produced in him that complex of cowardice and idiocy, and it is perhaps this led him to believe in his self-reincarnation, that he would return to this world on an old horse after forty nights of his death. It is also perhaps this complex that led him to imitate and emulate the handsome, powerful celebrities among the poet-lovers, like Jamil for instance.

Perhaps the presentation would have become clearer had Zakī Mubārak given more details about Kuthayyir's descent and parentage. Zakī Mubārak thinks that Kuthayyir "suffered from real failure in his passionate drive to reach his beloved woman, hence his anxiety doubled and his excitement inflamed."(44)

Zakī Mubārak successfully presents vivid images of Kuthayyir's love affairs, attributing the latter's rise to prominence among the poets of his days to what is inhibited in his soul, spirit and heart, for Kuthayyir was a torch of intelligence, and intelligence is not created by a complex of inferiority; it is rather the food of a talented person.(45) These factors combined to mould Kuthayyir's character, not to mention the environment in which so many poets of different walks were present.

But al-ʿAbbās's portrait was a very traditional description of the poet's character which did not add any new detail to what the author of *Al-Aghānī* had already mentioned about al-ʿAbbās. Zakī Mubārak never analysis the poet's psychological depths as the poet of concealment. Secrecy is the direct antithesis of statement. Why should a prince-poet so close to *Caliphs* hide his concubine's real name and never take the path of Jamīl and Kuthayyir who, by contrast, did their best to disseminate

their love stories and reveal very delicate details of their concubines and beloved women, whether these were real or imagined?

Zakī Mubārak never touches upon the negative and positive effects the life of wealth. luxury and relaxation had on al-ʿAbbās's poetry, and the mental features that rendered him so hesitant, unable to reveal the name of his woman lover. The personality of Fawz is not investigated by Zakī Mubārak, and he did not raise the question as to whether she really existed, since so many classical narrators claimed she was the product of imagination.

If so, was Fawz a sublime ideal sought after by the poet in his everyday life, as dissolute poet? Or was she a symbol of retreat into the self, into the ideal, to escape from the triviality of actual reality?

In addition, his family life, his connections with friends and clan, his intellectual attributes and character, are all left without any thorough investigation or even a superficial survey.

In his portrait of al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, Zakī Mubārak has great admiration for his personality. Feeling that medieval writers and intellectuals had unfairly neglected al-Raḍī, he sets off to restore things to the right path. Perhaps that is why he takes al-Sharīf al-Raḍī's life in every detail, resorting to a critical method which he employed creatively. The essence of this method is that the personality of the poet is the product of the various circumstances under which he lived, and this comprises the environment, the private and general social backgrounds and the spirit of the age in which he existed. This method also specifies that the verse we come to read and enjoy is the product of this personality, moulded by these specific conditions.

To summarise the methodology employed by Zakī Mubārak in his presentation and interpretation of al-Sharīf al-Radī's biography, it could be said that it is based on the following assumption: that the genius of the poet was the natural fruit of the political, social and intellectual conditions of his era. Many factors contributed to the maturity and emergence of this genius, among which are his descent from the line of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, the fourth *Caliph* after the prophet, and, by *Shīʿī* standards, the first and sole legitimate *Imām*; and the high social and religious status of his father as the Chief of the Guild of Nobles and the Chief of Pilgrimage. That is, he was brought up in a house of prestige and high culture. On this basis, al-Raḍī considered himself a continuation of such sublime lineages and, by extension, a legitimate contender for the post of *Caliphate*. He considered himself as having the right to magnify his ego and parade his imagined superiority, to use his poetry as a political instrument to achieve his political ends, including praising various Abbasid *Caliphs* though he despised them, and to look for political marriages to accelerate his ambitious advance.

All these factors might well have contributed to the creation of this genius, but Zakī Mubārak misses the fact that the difficulties which al-Raḍī had experienced since the arrest of his father and the loss of the social status his family had (Presidency of the Guild of *Ashrāf*) left in him a deep, anti-social bitterness. His self or ego was over-inflated as some sort of defensive response. Perhaps his *Shīʿī* dogmatic belief in the *Taqiyya,* i.e. concealment of one's opinion for the sake of safety, developed in him that duality of praising, yet despising, *Caliphs* and viziers.

The poetic talents of al-Sharīf al-Raḍī are undoubtedly rich and original. He was renowned for his sincerity in agony and love, for the constant struggle in his heart which was tormented and torn between the luxury of wealth and power on the one hand and the subservience of the heart on the other. It is true that in a sense he was a

strong man, his masculinity would let him accept no less than the most honorable marriages. In a word, his psychological rebellion was a struggle between love and glory.(46) but; Among the most outstanding defects in this biography is the colossal amount of space given to quotations from his verse. Almost two thirds of the 600 pages are covered by poetry.

Zakī Mubārak's admiration for al-Raḍī hindered his critical faculty from analysing his excessive duality, notably in politics.

For the same motive, Zakī Mubārak failed to mention, even implicitly, that the *Taqiyya* principle was a main attribute in al-Raḍī's character and behaviour.

The very title of the book, *ʿAbqariyya* (i.e. genius) is completely irrelevant. It is perhaps the preference of attractive terminology that inspired this choice.

The artistic structure of the biography is utterly wanting. The book looks more like separate lectures heaped together, although the biography contains major and minor dramatic personae.

His judgements on al-Sharīf al-Raḍī's poetry are mainly subjective impressions based on his personal taste. It is the same impressionist method employed by Ṭāhā Ḥusayn.

Lastly, al-Raḍī's relations to his mother, wife, and to his father after the release of the latter from jail, his alienation from his brother, al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍa, even his sudden and perhaps untimely death, are aspects and questions left by Zakī Mubārak without any mention.

Had Zakī Mubārak abstained from looking at the subject-matter of his study as a friend, the book itself might have improved as a biography in its own right.

NOTES

1. For his life see: Maḥmūd al-Shihābī, *Zakī Mubārak, A Critical Study,* (Saudi Arabia, 1981); Anwar al-Jundī, *Zakī Mubārak: Dirāsah Taḥlilyyah li Ḥayatihi wa- Adabihi,* (Cairo, n.d); ʿIzz al- Dīn al- Amīn, *Nashʾat al-Naqd al-Adabī al-Ḥadīth fī Miṣr,* (Cairo, 1970); Zakī Mubārak, *al-Lughah wa- al-Dīn wa- al-Taqālīd,* Kitāb *al-Hilāl,* (Cairo, 1990); Karīma Zakī Mubārak (ed.) *Zakī Mubārak wa- Naqd al-Shiʿr* (Cairo, 1987).
2. Al-Shihābī, op. cit., p. 41.
3. Al-Shihābī, op. cit., p. 52.
4. Zakī Mubārak, *Al-Muwāzanah bayn al-Shuʿarāʾ,* (Beirut, n.d), p. 146.
5. Al-Shihābī, op. cit., p. 53.
6. Al-Shihābī, op. cit., p. 186.
7. ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Amīn, op. cit., p. 299.
8. Al-Amīn, op. cit., p. 301.
9. Al-Shihābī, op. cit., p. 183.
10. Zakī Mubārak, *Hubb b. Abī Rabīʿa wa- Shiʿruh*, Third Edition, (Cairo, 1928), p. 40.
11. Zakī Mubārak, op. cit., p. 44.
12. Ibid., pp. 44-45.
13. Ibid., p. 46.
14. Ibid., p. 54.
15. Ibid., p. 59.
16. Ibid., p. 60.
17. Ibid.,p. 90.
18. Ibid., pp. 96-97.
19. Ibid., p. 106.
20. Ibid., p. 107.
21. Ibid., p. 113.
22. Ibid., p. 118.
23. Zakī Mubārak, *Al-ʿUshshāq al-Thalātha,* (Cairo, 1945), p. 27.
24. Ibrāhīm al-Abyārī (ed.), *Al- Aghānī,* by Abū al-Faraj al- Aṣfahānī, Vol 8 Dār al-Shaʿb, (Miṣr, 1969), p.2837.

25. Zakī Mubārak, *Al-ʿUshshāq al-Thalātha*, p. 28.
26. Ibid., p. 29.
27. Ibid., p. 47.
28. Ibid., p. 48.
29. Ibid., pp. 50-52.
30. Ibid., p .52.
31. Ibid., p. 54.
32. Ibid., p. 110.
33. Zakī Mubārak, *ʿAbqariyyat al-Sharīf al-Raḍī* , (Cairo, 1938), Vol 1, p. 118.
34. Ibid., pp. 14-15.
35. Ibid., p. 60.
36. Zakī Mubārak, op. cit., Vol 2, p. 238.
37. Zakī Mubārak, op. cit., Vol 1, p. 163.
38. Ibid., p. 61.
39. Ibid., p. 101.
40. Ibid., p 288.
41. *Al-ʿUshshāq al-Thalātha*, p.32.
42. Ibid., p. 33.
43. Ibid., p.46.
44. Ibid., p.75.
45. Ibid., p.82.
46 Zakī Mubārak, op. cit., Vol 2, p. 140.

CHAPTER VIII

A. Muḥammad Saʿīd Al-ʿIryān (1905-1964)(1)

Introduction

A Portrait of al- Rāfiʿī

His characteristics as a biographer

Introduction

Al-ʿIryān, who is regarded as one of the prominent Egyptian writers was born in Maḥallat Ḥasan village in Al-Gharbiyya governorate. In 1930 he graduated from *Dār al-ʿUlūm* in Cairo, and worked as a teacher until 1942. He participated in editing many literary reviews and edited several books, which were historical tales (2). he wrote one biography; *Ḥayāt al-Rāfiʿī* (1939).

A Portrait of al- Rāfiʿī

The author says: "I shall write about al-Rāfiʿī, the man with whom I had close bonds of friendship for years, whose company I enjoyed, whose self I mixed with mine, whose heart spoke to my heart, and whose soul shared its inner depths with my soul. I shall write in an attempt to bring together the fragments of a life that were scattered in pieces of news, tales, anecdotes told by his contemporaries, or were hidden as secrets in the hearts of his family and special companions."(3)

The first edition of *Ḥayāt al-Rāfiʿī* (Muṣṭafa Ṣādiq al-Rāfiʿī) appeared in Cairo in 1939, exactly two years after al-Rāfiʿī's death. It is a well-known fact that al-ʿIryān was the closest follower of al-Rāfiʿī although he was was in his close company for not too long a period, around five years. Yet he was a great admirer of the master and his literature even before he first saw him. He says: "I first heard of al-Rāfiʿī's name some ten years or so ago. At that time I was a naive boy who hardly comprehended what was written. Yet the name had a special music or melody; it was like a hymn evoking echoes in my soul. I had the desire to get acquainted with him since that moment."(4)

This wish was fulfilled and: "I saw him first a few months later. In fact I saw a man looking like some of the men whom I knew. He was sitting in a coffee-house at the pavement, reading a newspaper. For a moment I stood motionless, glaring at him, hardly believing that the man before my eyes was the same man I have heard of."(5)

The bonds of acquaintance grew into deep friendship and constant companionship. With the passage of time the student came to know the pith and marrow of his master, his private life, his character, how he thought and read, when he wrote, his love stories, the first and the second and the third, how his pride in love led him to lose his beloved, whom al-ʿIryān calls "SHE", when he saw her giving a special warm welcome to one of her guests before his eyes . He also grasped his master's double standards and his endeavours to be King Fūʾād's special poet; how he "continued to send his eulogies to the monarch from 1926 to 1930."(6)

Al-ʿIryān, however, justified these vain attempts as the status of the king's poet or the prince's poet was "an old title in the realm of literature, in fact it had its own history in the annals of Arab literature since the days of al- Nābigha, al- Nuʿmān, Zuhaīr, Harim b. Sinān pre-Islamic, and al-Akhṭal of the Umayyad era; or al-Nuwāsī and Abū al-ʿAtāhiyya under the Abbasid, or al- Buḥturī under the reign of al-Mutawakkil, and al-Mutanabbī in the royal court of Saīf al-Dawla, down to uncountable poets and kings."(7)

The biography, as we have contended, is a search for the true essence of the life of a unique human being, uncovering his hidden deep-seated talents and the hidden secrets of his genius, those usually buried in the environs of his life and the events he faced and the marks he left on his generation.(8) It is a complete human life often from cradle to grave; it may dig deep even beyond that harking back to his pre-cradle history and going beyond his grave-stone to reach out for the deep marks it may leave on the next generation.(9)

The biographer has one essential job to do: to follow the life-course of the subject with a constant eye on the outward countenance and its changing appearance, on the inner, esoteric development, the psychological tensions, the motion in its full extent and the thought in its entire perspective(10).

In 338 pages al-ʿIryān presented one of the first literary biographies. I believe. in Egypt; and he performed it as a faithful disciple to the al-Rāfiʿī out of both affection to his master and a commitment to serve the cause of Arab literature. His companionship with al-Rāfiʿī began in 1932 and lasted until al-Rāfiʿī's death in 1937. The previous period al-ʿIryān covers on the basis of what he extracted from al-Rāfiʿī's friends' testimonies, from al-Rāfiʿī himself, his private papers and correspondence.

This book is a necessary introduction for those interested in knowing the nature of al-Rāfiʿī closely.(11) It explores al-Rāfiʿī's lifespan in detail compared to the meagre and narrow details known about our deceased old notables, writers and poets.(12) Al-ʿIryān describes the sublime place he holds in his soul for al-Rāfiʿī "When I remember him at this instant, I feel as if I am not alone, as if a beloved spirit flying with wings of light is around me, as if a tender voice with soft tones is speaking to me from behind the hereafter with a voice whose music and melody I know, yet I see none, I hear none, and I am here alone, over-possessed by the memories, conjuring up what is not of this real world."(13)

Al-ʿIryān lived with al-Rāfiʿī for only part of his life, when he was plunged into his books and essays, so he knew him not only in his depths, but he also accompanied al-Rāfiʿī in his literary *ṣalūn*, and in his elite circle. Obviously, al-ʿIryān was depressed by his bereavement, the loss of his friend, when he was jotting down these passionate and warm words: "he had, in fact, hastily taken the pen to write this biography while his sorrow was still fresh, hence, he could not avoid a degree of exaggeration."(14) In other instants he gives a bold picture of al-Rāfiʿī bereft of any prejudice. He says: "When one looks at his face one would doubt that there exists behind this countenance any superiority, genius or sublime thought."(15) He even

describes how al-Rāfiʿī was so short-tempered at his work that he never met his commitment of coming to work on time, although this negligence runs counter to the values of al-ʿIryān, who looks upon him as an ideal writer. Al-ʿIryān was extraordinarily superstitious, believing, as it were, in the invisible, the supernatural. transmigration, reincarnation, metempsychosis, magic, soothsaying. Hence we come more than once across words and expressions like these flowing from his pen: "My soul told me...", "I was given command...", "a voice from behind the world said to me". And he literally meant what he wrote.(16)

Al-ʿIryān spoke of how al-Rāfiʿī benefited from his links with King Fūʾād when he was included in the royal entourage: "He had a free, first class pass to use all Egyptian trains, and he considered the acquisition of such a pass a great achievement because it enabled him to travel around the country without any barrier."(17) The kind monarch also patronised him and gave his royal consent to granting his son, Muḥammad, a scientific scholarship in medicine to study in France, where he spent years studying in the University of Lyon.(18)

Heeding to none but the truth, al-ʿIryān boldly uncovered the royal connections of al-Rāfiʿī. This may refute the allegation that due to his deep sorrow for the loss of his friend, al-ʿIryān swept the negative aspects under the carpet. He tried his best to give the clearest picture of al- Rāfiʿī, his parentage and career (his work at the Ṭanṭā Court), and to his social life, his links with the bourgeois circles interested in thought and culture. His romantic life is also covered in detail. His female liaisons were numerous and that shattered the life of his wife whom he married when he was aged 24. Al- Rāfiʿī's literary battles and the rivalries and hatred they generated are given due attention. Al-Rāfiʿī rallied so many enemies against himself during his life and after because he was a severe, aggressive critic, with a harsh tongue and void of any

partiality or courtesy in defying his rivals. He had the fiercest fights against Ṭāhā Ḥusayn al-ʿAqqād and Zakī Mubārak.

Al-ʿIryān's remarkable dexterity is at its best when he describes the way al-Rāfiʿī writes: "He would choose his subject from everyday life, from what he sees, hears, observes and feels. The idea he gets and the elements of this idea are important to him only if they have an echo in his soul, a parallel in his thought and an emotion in his heart."(19) When he dictated a text "he would never raise his eyes to cast a look at me as if he were speaking from behind a curtain to an invisible audience, or as if he was in a soliloquy without receptive ears or murmuring sounds, as if he were in a trance-like state, addressing himself in solitude."(20)

Al-ʿIryān depicts al-Rāfiʿī's self-pride, his arrogance, and his obstinacy and stubbornness: "Right from his early days, he grew up eloquent and interested in wide areas... With his excessive, literary pride, his great literary potentials, his ultra-sensitive and ultra-responsive nerve system, he was able to be what he wanted to be and to achieve the great status he assumed among the Arab literary elite."(21) He had wished to have in his career a great standing in poetry so that his fame would "pale any reputed celebrity in the realm of verse."(22)

Al-Rāfiʿī is thus the product of inherited qualities, the effects of his environment and the pulses and motives of encounters al-Rāfiʿī had with the writers of his generation: Shawqī, Ṣabrī, Muṭrān. He was, however, influenced by the pioneers of his era, namely al-Bārūdī, Ḥāfiẓ and Kāẓimī.(23)

His characteristics as a biographer

In this biography, the narration of al-Rāfiʿī's life took a form verging on the novel. The author, as a matter of fact, reviewed al-Rāfiʿī's life-story and the human passions underlying it. It was a tale depicting the life of a prominent figure, exploring his

psychological motives (psychological conflict), and how this conflict developed and changed. There is no explanatory discussion of al-Rāfi'ī's life, but rather an attempt to build up the pieces of a portrait by relying, in fact, on direct personal contact with the hero and the documents available to the student of this hero. The fact that the author was himself a short-story teller and an analyst had contributed to deepening the study. For among the essential features the successful biographer should have are the psycho- and socioanalytical faculties.

To achieve his objective, al-'Iryān employed psychological dissection of al-Rāfi'ī's motives. The fact that al-Rāfi'ī became deaf so early in his life left bitter marks on his mood and mentality. He was hot-tempered, violent in his critical remarks, too proud of himself, an egoist, never content with less than being at the focus of attention, basking in the spotlights. He would accept no less than being the poet of the king, or being the first lover, the supreme athlete, the brightest poet of all Arabs, the best advocate of the holy Qur'ān. Even within the narrow circle of his special friends he would move to assume the role of the leader, and would accept nothing less. He preferred solitude, independence of opinion, self-confidence and fanciful pride. These traits were too strong to be compromised even for the sake of courtesy with friends or prudence with his community.

He was hardly sociable, and never met any traditional obligation towards the community. He cared for nothing but his own opinion, his own needs and his interests.(24)

Al-'Iryān tried hard to reach the remotest possible limits of criticism. He advised al-Rāfi'ī of what he should and should not read: "I would spend hours with him. He used to read a text and I would be listening, whether at his place or in a private corner, or simply at the coffee-house. Sometimes we

would go to the cinema. During that phase, I had also to read books sent to him as gifts on his behalf so as to advise him of what is worth reading to save him the trouble of wasting his time on worthless writings."(25)

This might have helped al-ʿIryān to better analyze the very writings of al-Rāfiʿī himself, or even to trace back the origins of certain ideas and the influences to what al- Rafi i had read. Al-ʿIryān was also able to specify the occasion on which this or that text was written and how long it took al-Rāfiʿī to finish it.

Al-ʿIryān left certain phases in al-Rāfiʿī's life, such as his relation with the "Prince of Poets", Aḥmad Shawqī, who enjoyed great privileges in the royal court, or his rivalry with the "Poet of the Nile", Ḥāfiẓ Ibrāhīm. Were these rivalries tense? Was competition so harsh? It would have been better had al-ʿIryān mentioned this, even if only briefly. Al-ʿIryān neglects or superficially covers the period extending from the time al-Rafi i became deaf to the moment they got acquainted with each other. What thoughts al- Rāfiʿī had during this interval? Who was his companion and friend? Also, there is no mention of al- Rāfiʿī's connection with the literary *ṣāluns* and their stars, notably if the patron of one of these *ṣāluns* is a prominent lady, the well known Mayy Ziyāda.

Despite many shortcomings in al-ʿIryān's book, it represents the first nucleus of biography in Egypt. It was a mature work, comprising a novel-like literary biography based, if not consciously, then spontaneously, on modern methodologies - above all Taine's theory of studying the "great man" as being the product of his era, milieu and race, and the theory of Sainte-Beuve, which considers the great figure as being the fruit of a certain genius which has its own circumstances.

Al-ʿIryan employed the psychological method to analyze the character of al-Rāfiʿī. His deafness produced in him a strong hatred for the celebrities of his time, such as Ḥāfiẓ Ibrāhīm, ʿAbbās al-ʿAqqād and the rest. It is perhaps the reason why he broke off that bond with "SHE" - the lady who had the literary *ṣālun*.

Al-ʿIryān lacks the shining qualities which usually attract women. In his appearance he was very ordinary, and there was nothing in him that was explicitly or implicitly indicative of uniqueness in character or depth of mind, let alone genius.(26)

> He had "a flat, rectangular-like face, a bit whitish in complexion, as most of Syrian origin have, rather than the brownish Egyptian marks. His cheeks were always reddish like his lips. His eyes were queerly situated, as if he were looking at himself rather than at others. They were void of that light that moves your soul. His tone was meaningless and colourlessly harsh, as if you were listening to the screaming of a child."(27)

From this graphic description we can understand why he was deeply shy, how far he was from the requirements of genius, despite the fact that he felt deep in his heart that he was such. It is perhaps this sense of self-glorification that urged him to go to the extremes by calling for the destruction and elimination of all those who advocated ideas dissimilar to his. Al-Rāfiʿī used to go to soothsayers and fortune tellers, for he believed in magic. When he once fell in love with "SHE" and was up to his ears in this passion, he sought fortune-tellers to manufacture a talisman (charm). He got one and hung it over a post at the roof of his house.(28)

Saʿīd al-ʿIryān employed all these theories and critical methodologies to vividly depict al-Rāfiʿī's character but, shortcomings aside, this is a pioneering work in biography writing in Egypt during the first half of the twentieth century.

B. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ṣidqī (1896-1973)

Introduction

a. A Portrait of Baudelaire

b. A Portrait of Abū Nuwās

His characteristics as a biographer

Introduction

ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ṣidqī was born in al-Manṣura. In his childhood, he moved with his father to Cairo where he grew up, received his education and died. He worked at the ministry of education, and was the director of the Opera House for twenty years.(29)

a. A Portrait of Baudelaire

In his preface to his work: *al-Shāʿir al-Rajīm Baudelaire,* [The Cursed Poet Baudelaire], Ṣidqī explains that "this is neither a pure *Tarjamah* of Baudelaire's life nor a critical literary study of his poetry, but the two in one."(30)

He further adds:"We could never know the man in earnest without contemplating his poetry, but we could never thoroughly appreciate the poet and comprehend what he actually says unless we study his life and scrutinize his attitude."(31) Then he presents the poet : Baudelaire was born in 1827 to an orphaned, 27 year old, mother. She had been brought up by old intimates, a fact which might have left in her heart a sense of deprivation, or even discontent and desolation which she passed on to her son.

His father was a man of the court of the ancien regime. He was 62 years old, of a refined taste who treasured luxury, grandeur, splendour and appearances. Together with an affection for the arts, this trait was inherited by the child, Baudelaire. He developed a "propensity to sensualism and lust."(32) But he remained dutifully faithful to his patrons and comrades.

Baudelaire was influenced by these natures. With the death of his father, when he was six years old, he focuses his affection on his mother and their relation grows deeper. With her over-possessiveness towards the child, Baudelaire, she disturbed his emotional world to such an extent that the impact would remain with him. Suddenly she remarried and Baudelaire developed a sense of deep loss which he would put into verse to exact his revenge from his " first love", his mother.

Upon his step-father's instructions, he is lodged in a boarding school in Lyon. Detached and distanced, he shelters hatred against this alien invader of his life. Baudelaire becomes nervous, irritable, conceited, arrogant, sarcastic, idle and distracted.

At the age of 15, he returns to Paris to study at the Louis le Grand College but neglects his studies and shows interest in love stories and poetry reading. In 1839, he is expelled from the college. Again his step-father entrusts him to a special philosophy tutor to instruct him for politics rather than his favourite topic: literature. In Paris, the Latin quarter becomes his haven, and the company of whores and prostitutes is a source of consolation. He is driven by a desire to behave as improperly and unethically as possible, to audaciously do what is forbidden or detested, attracted always to dark hide-outs, following the example of Balzac.

In 1841 he is shipped off to India but he returns home before the voyage is completed because he is fed up with his ship mates and their narrow ways of thinking. This atmosphere and experiences are warmly reflected in his verse with penetrating force, refined glamour and sensual mysticism. The latter trait characterized his verse all along. The journey to the Orient is a turning point in Baudelaire's literary career. In February 1842 he returns to Paris only to leave his mother's mansion, receive his share of his father's inheritance and steadily indulge into the Parisian world of pleasures, keen to exhibit himself in fashionable outfits. Attending a performance at the Latin quarter, he encounters Miss Jenn Duval whose figure he admires. She reminds him of the charming, exquisite females of the Mauritius island in the Indian ocean where his ship had anchored a few years after. Jenn Duval is a half breed, with a brown complexion, dark, curled hair and a slim, tall figure. Perhaps she provoked in him that longing for nature he had experienced in Africa.

She conquerors his emotions and imagination and he soon finds himself a captive of love, but she proves unfaithful and they part. Leading an extravagant life. he lives beyond his means and soon runs into debt and is obliged to win his bread with his pen, trading the fruits of his mind and heart for money. The verse he writes in this period is so fraught with these hardships that he calls it the dark period.(33)

A sudden change in his thirties: he is active "The stimulus behind this abrupt burst of exertion and liveliness is the work of the American poet E.A. Poe and the Swedish mystical philosopher Swedenburg. Both deeply influenced Baudelaire."(34) Another inducement is his romance with Mrs. Sabatier, which traps him in a blend of platonic love and Hamlet's grudge for the rest of his life. In his last years, however, he is in constant melancholy and repentance looking back at bygone days. He died in 1867.

b. A Portrait of Abu Nuwas

In his *Abū Nuwās Qiṣṣat Ḥayātihi wa-Shi'rihi,* (1944) [Abū Nuwās, the story of his life and poetry], Ṣidqī writes that this book, "is a connected, chain-like *Tarjamah* of Abū Nuwās which depicts his life from birth to death one phase after another."(35) He explains his method in this biography saying: "Besides depicting his life and external circumstances, our main concern is to study the manifestations of his emotional life and the revelations of his psychological demeanour."(36)

Ṣidqī gives details of Abū Nuwās' parentage. His mother, he says, is Jullobān, a charming Persian slave from the Ahwāz who wove stockings and made saddle-bags. His father, Hā ni', was a foot-soldier serving in the Ahwāz region, between Baṣrah and Persia under the Umayyad *caliph*, Marwan b. Muḥammad. His regiment was in charge of challenging any potential surprise onslaught coming from Persia or Khurāsān.When the Umayyads were defeated by the Abbasids at the Great Zāb

battle (132 A.H.), his regiment was disbanded and he became a shepherd. His son al-Ḥasan, nicknamed Abū Nuwās, was born during the reign of the second Abbasid *caliph* Abī Ja'far al-Manṣūr in (141A.H.)(37) The boy al-Ḥasan "was very handsome, of white complexion, slim, tall, with a long, soft forelock. He lisped with a husky voice, pronouncing the (R) more like a (Gh). He was tender, lenient, delicate, witty and intelligent."(38)

The family moved to Baṣrah when al-Ḥasan "was an orphan at the age of six."(39) In line with the customary practice "the boy was sent by his mother to the *Kuttāb* (traditional schooling) to learn writing, reading and reciting the Qur'ān."(40) His poetic leanings made themselves so manifestly felt that his mother was afraid they would jeopardize the career she thought would suit him best: to become a druggist. He would work in a drugstore as an apprentice during the day, but would go to the mosque in the evening to attend lecture circles in linguistic sciences (syntax, grammar) and theology at the hands of his sheikhs. (41) While he was busy labouring and educating himself, his mother was having an affair and in the end got married, "neglecting him altogether, leaving him to his fate with his master, the drug store keeper. The boy and the mother parted ways, and he never mended fences with her to the last moment of his life." (42)

This was a moment of emancipation for him as well. He could indulge both in knowledge and lust seeking both without any hindrance. The city of Baṣrah was the appropriate setting for this behaviour. It was a centre of advanced learning of the time, but it was also a den of lust, sensuality and wild liberality.

Abū Nuwās got acquainted with Wāliba b. al-Ḥubāb al-Asadī "a jesting, liberal, sensual person, notorious for squandering money on female-slaves and gay boys."(43) Wāliba was seldom seen sober, and "he initiated his novice, Abū Nuwās.

into this wild life until every moral scruple or ethical constraint was removed from the young Abū Nuwās' conscience."(44) He went with his patron to the city of Kūfa, remained there for a while, but departed for a new destination: to live among the desert bedouins in order to learn the Arabic language in its purest forms of unadulterated eloquence, forms of expression and pure vocabulary. He spent a year or so in the desert, and then returned to Baṣrah and met his second patron, Khalaf al-Aḥmar who played an important role in "educating and developing the skills Abū Nūwas longed for." (45)

In his new life, Abū Nuwās encountered a multi-cultural society, a blend of different religions, civilizations and cultures. He attended "the councils of various Muslim theologians without much inclination to their dogma. On the contrary he amused himself in displaying his infidelity so as to tease them."(46)

In Baṣrah he would fall in love at first sight. His beloved was a female-slave, Jinān. But "Jinān was different from the usual type of female-slaves. She was prudent, wise, shy, virtuous, high-minded, not so much inclined to talk, attractive and sweet."(47)

To him, loving her was a destiny he could not avoid, and he kept his affection for her. But she did not respond. His passionate incessant calls convinced her, at last, to meet him. The liberal, jesting uninhibited poet became a passionate, true platonic lover.(48) They had different characters. Jinān soon broke off her relationship with him much to his disbelief and dismay. But neither his passions, nor his hopes to regain her, withered. When he knew she decided to go on pilgrimage to holy Mecca with her Lady, he hurried to Mecca to meet her at the site of the Black Holy Stone in the shrine. His wild passion moved no chord, it seems, in her heart. To avoid his company, she moved out of Baṣrah. Abū Nuwās tried to find out her whereabouts

but in vain. In anguish, he left to Baghdad wretched and depressed. Under the reign of Hārūn al-Rashīd the city was the centre of the Arab-Muslim civilization, with its glittering monuments, large palaces, organized canals and formidable walls, "The artifacts of Persian civilization were so overwhelmingly present in every aspect of social, cultural and political life, even in the insignia and the processions of the *Caliphate*." (49) This new civilized Persian spirit was suffused with sensualism (wine, music, singing festivals or love gatherings). As if this environment was made for him, Abū Nuwās not only indulged in every manifestation of this new life, but took it upon himself to become its mouthpiece, advocate and representative.

His ambitions were so high that he declined to remain an underdog, feeble and poor. In his search for fame and wealth, he managed to have access to the royal court but without debasing or degrading himself. He achieved his goal, and indeed Hārūn al-Rashīd not only admitted him in his entourage but found his verse fascinating. Aspiring for more fame and wealth, he travelled to Egypt; the Egyptians, however, did not show the expected generosity and he returned to Baghdad angry with them. He expressed this indignation in satirical poems which ridiculed the Egyptians. Back in Baghdad, he again indulged in libertine conduct in public.

Upon orders from the *Caliph*, Hārūn al-Rashīd, Abū Nuwās was incarcerated on charges of infidelity. He could not secure a pardon from *Caliph* al-Rashīd and remained behind bars until the inauguration of his successor, *Caliph* Muḥammad al-Amīn in (193 A.H.).

The new *Caliph* was liberal in character. Wine, music, comedy and humour were his favourite topics, and singers, poets, jokers, belly-dancers and gays were in his company. In this new atmosphere, Abū Nuwās became the poet of the court. The

Caliph and the poet had much in common and the two developed a strong relationship, caring little for concealing their drunkenness or rakish conduct.

For the poet, this was a blessing, for the *caliph* a political fault. As differences grew between the *Caliph*, al-Amīn, and his brother, al-Ma'mūn, then the governor of Khurasan, the Baghdad-based supporters of the latter attacked the *Caliph* for his debauchery, accusing him of retaining a court of debased, sinful elements such as Abū Nuwās and his likes.

To avoid such grave accusations, al-Amīn decided to distance himself from his favourite poet. In fact, Abū Nuwās was apprehended and incarcerated together with irreligious disbelievers. He spent much of this period in a vicious circle of arrest, detention, pardon, new arrest, new detention, and new amnesty.

At one point, the idea whether or not it was more advisable to have Abū Nuwās executed, crossed the mind of the *caliph*, al-Amīn. The escalation of the political crisis led to a fratricidal war with al-Amīn defeated at the hands of his brother al-Ma'mūn who successfully seized the seat of power, Baghdad. Poets flocked to the court to recite their eulogies. Abū Nuwās, on the other hand, remained faithful to his previous patron. At the age of 59 he died, and was buried in Baghdad.

His characteristics as a biographer

In both Baudelaire's and Abū Nuwās's biographies, Ṣidqī employed the necessary requirements deemed essential by Taine, who premised his study on the fact that the great man is the product of his era, environment and race (50), Sainte Beuve who predicated the great personality on specific genius (51), and Freud who postulated conduct on the libido, the trouble-maker, and the sub-consciousness, the repository of suppressed past experiences.(52)

These three methods were employed by Ṣidqī to dissect both Baudelaire's and Abū Nuwās's personalities, propensities, and psychological transformation as reflected in their behaviour among their relative milieux. Perhaps Ṣidqī chose these two poets because, to his mind, they had much in common, particularly the curious blend of sensual liberality and mysticism. Unlike his meagre portrayal of Baudelaire's life, Ṣidqī's analysis of Abū Nuwās is deep, thorough and investigative. A contrast between the two is instructive.

In his biography on Baudelaire, Ṣidqī depicted the image of a child agonized by negligence shown by the mother, the first love, tortured by an emphatic, commanding step-father, self-insulated in his own literary world, his only means to hide away from cruel reality. But the complex of the unfaithful, betraying mother made him fearful for the rest of his life.

The climax occured in the Latin quarter in Paris where he was betrayed again by his black mistress. Both betrayals interacted to strengthen his desire for revenge. He acted against his lofty ideals, displaying his anti-religiosity, breaching ethical standards. He "experienced Hamlet's wild jealousy which engulfed his existence."(53) In his thirties, he experienced a transformation to the opposite, to mysticism, repentance and love, to the last breath.

Baudelaire appears here more like a character in a novel, whose make-up is gradually formed. It is the result of interactive elements, the qualities inherited from his father, the responses triggered in him by the cruelty of his mother. Both ingredients blend, breeding a sensitive poet, an outsider with great passion for life.

In analysing Baudelaire's character, Ṣidqī's approach was predominantly psychological. The environment, in the social sense of the word, was missing if the Latin quarter is exempted. The social and political conditions under which

Baudelaire lived and acted were also absent. Ṣidqī never specified whether or not Baudelaire was a psychopath (Ḥālah Maradiyah), or what trademarks this specific mentality and psychological composition had left in his poetry. Perhaps it is Ṣidqī's reliance on translated sources on the poet's life which prompted him not to deduce the poet's disposition from his verse. Generally, this is more of a psychological biography.

By contrast, in the Biography of Abū Nuwās, Ṣidqī reveals a more confident, masterly analysis of the poet's personality. Ṣidqī paces untrodden paths to graphically and vividly depict Abū Nuwās in his living reality, in Baṣrah, Kūfa, the bedouin habitat, Baghdad, influenced by the luminous manifestations of the Persian civilization in the heyday of Hārūn al-Rashīd, or in the magnificent royal court of al-Amīn. He carefully studies the poet's family origin, "his Persian mother"(54) and his protectee father "from the Ḥakam Yemen tribe"(55), [a servile lineage by the norms of the day] as an important factor in his later development. He brings into bold relief the contradictory attitude that distinguished his life, as a dissolute, skeptical adulterer who lived in the age of scepticism, on the one hand, and a believer at the bottom of his heart on the other (56), or as a gay lover, and a passionate female seeker in one.

In all these detailed narratives, Ṣidqī combines the influences the family and environment had on Abū Nuwās' demeanour. Ṣidqī shows how the very Abbasid era, with its people, leaders and pioneers, had determined not only his rakish debauchery and atheism but also the flagrant modes of displaying them. Ṣidqī also goes down to minute details to explain how Abū Nuwās could combine his alcoholism and infidelity with belief in divine mercy. For example, Abū Nuwās was not only influenced by liberal poets but also by the Baṣrah theologians. And it is from the latter that he borrowed the doctrine of *Irjā'*, postponement, which postulates

that the punishment of major sinners shall be postponed until the day of judgement when the matter would be settled by divine grace either way, i.e with or without punishment. Like Baudelaire, he developed a traumatic sense of being deserted by both his mother and his beloved. But unlike the French poet, he resorted to spirits and gay-sex to forget these macabre experiences.

Ṣidqī portrays him like a character in a novel, developing clearly, influenced by changes, reacting and acting in response to his environment, driven by an intrinsic catalyst and sensitive temper to hoist aloft the banner of rebellion.

Perhaps rebellion or mutiny is the key to the understanding of his personality, his drive to seek new horizons, new life, new literary modes of expression. He rejected the career his mother wished for him, he rebelled against his first tutor Wālība, he abandoned Kūfa.

Ṣidqī's approach here was predominantly social. His mainly social approach leaves so many unanswered questions and gaps, such as how and why mysticism and atheism could blend in the mind and soul of one and the same person, or how could passionate love meet with impudence, unless the agent is a psychopath or is plagued by a crippled will, or even by a schizophrenic nature.

It is also unclear why should Ṣidqī skip over Abū Nuwās' pornographic poetry on his flirting with the gay boys, although these pieces constitute a volume in their own right. We are also left in the dark as to whether or not Abū Nuwās ever got married.

The work, however, is an attempt at literary biography which combines narratives and criticism in one. In Ṣidqī's own words, in this biography we may feel that "Abū Nuwās returns to live as a real human being after more than 1100 years or so." (57)

NOTES

1. Khaīr al-Dīn al-Zirikli, *Al- A ʿlām*, Vol. 6, 9th Edition, (Beirut, 1990). pp. 144- 155.
2. Al-Zirikli, op cit., pp. 144-145.
3. Muḥammad Saʿīd al-ʿIryan, *Ḥayāt al-Rāfiʿi*, 3rd edition, (Cairo, 1955), pp. 18- 19.
4. Al-ʿIryān, op. cit., p. 11.
5. Al-ʿIryān, op. cit., p. 11.
6. AL-ʿIryān, op. cit., p. 169.
7. Al-ʿIryān, op cit., p. 168.
8. Ḥusayn Fawzī al-Najjār, *Al-Tārīkh wa-al-Siyar*, al- Maktabah al-Thaqāfiyyah, Vol. 121, (Cairo, 1964), p.14.
9. Al- Najjār, op. cit., p.45.
10. Māhir Ḥasan Fahmī, *Al-Sīrah Tārīkh wa-Fann*, 2nd Edition, Dār al-Qalam, (Al-Kuwait, 1983), p.82.
11. Muhammad Sa id al- Iryan, *Hayat al-Rāfi ʿi*, 3rd Edition, (Cairo, 1955), p. 4.
12. Al-ʿIryān, op. cit., p. 4.
13. Al-ʿIryān, op. cit., p. 13.
14. Iḥsān ʿAbbās, *Fann al- Sīrah*, 2nd edition, (Beirut, 1967), p. 62.
15. Muḥammad Saʿīd al-ʿIryan, *Ḥayāt al-Rāfiʿī*, 3rd Edition, (Cairo, 1955), p. 21.
16. Al-ʿIryān, op. cit. p. 331.
17. Al-ʿIryān, op. cit., p. 330.
18. Al-ʿIryān, op. cit., p. 171.
19. Al-ʿIryān, op cit., p. 221.
20. Al-ʿIryān, op. cit., p. 224.
21. Al-ʿIryān, op. cit., p. 43.
22. Al-ʿIryān, op. cit., p. 43.
23. Mahmūd Sāmī al-Bārūdi, Ḥafiz Ibrāhīm and ʿAbd al- Muḥsin al-Kāzimī.
24. Al-ʿIryān, op. cit., p. 325.
25. Al-ʿIryān, op. cit., p. 208.
26. Al-ʿIryān, op. cit., p. 21.
27. Al-ʿIryān, op. cit., p. 21.
28. Al-ʿIryān, op. cit., p. 332.
29. Khaīr al-Dīn al-Zirikli, *Al-Aʿlām*, 9th edition, Vol. 3, (Beirut, 1990), p. 366.
30. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ṣidqī, *Al-Shāʿir al-Rajīm Baudelaire*, Iqraʾ, No. 7, Mat. Dār al-Maʿārif, (Cairo, 1943), p. 7.

31. Ibid., p. 7.
32. Ibid., p. 16.
33. Ibid., p. 124.
34. Ibid., p. 125.
35. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ṣidqī, *Abū Nuwās Qiṣṣat Ḥayātihi wa-Shiʿrihi*, Silsilat Aʿlām al-Islām, Dār ʾiḥyāʾ al-Kutub al-ʿArabiyyah, (Cairo, 1944), p. 4.
36. Ibid., p. 4.
37. Ibid., p. 13.
38. Ibid., p. 19.
39. See Shawqī Ḍaif, *Al-Fann wa-Madhahibuhu fī al-Shiʿr al-ʿArabī*, he says that Abū Nuwās was two years old.
40. Ṣidqī, *Abū Nuwās*, p. 17.
41. Ibid., p. 18.
42. Ibid., p. 21.
43. Ibid., pp. 29-30.
44. Ibid., p. 31.
45. Ibid., p. 43.
46. Ibid., p. 68.
47. Ibid., p. 82.
48. Ibid., p. 87.
49. Ibid., p. 115.
50. See Hippolyte, A. Taine, *History of English Literature*, (2 vols), (Edinburgh, 1873).
51. See Muḥammad Ghunyamī Hilāl, *Al-Adab al-Muqāran*, pp. 52-55; ʿAlī Adham, *Fuṣūl fī al-Adab wa-al-Naqd wa-al-Tārīkh,* p. 166.
52. ʿAlī Adham, op. cit., p. 95.
53. Ṣidqī, *Al-Shāʿir al-Rajīm Baudelaire*, p. 122.
54. Ṣidqī, *Abū Nuwās*, p. 50.
55. Ibid., p. 48.
56. Ibid., p. 184.
57. Ibid., p. 4.

CHAPTER IX

Muḥammad al-Nuwaīhī (1917-1980)

Introduction

a. A Portrait of Ibn al- Rūmī

b. A Portrait of Bashshār b. Burd

c.A Portrait of Abū Nuwās

His characteristics as a biographer

Introduction

Muḥammad al-Nuwāihī was born on 20 April 1917 in Mīt Ḥibais near Ṭanṭā/Egypt. He was the eldest of the seven children born to a poor but literate judge's assistant who aspired for his four sons to become lawyers. Because a school had not yet been established in the village, Muḥammad daily walked the six-mile round trip to and from Ṭanṭā. His daughter, Majida, summarised the experience of her father's primary and secondary education there: Quite soon he excelled in Arabic and English and gained the admiration of his teachers. By the age of ten he was spending most of his pocket money on literary magazines. His father's heart was set on sending him to law school, but he insisted on the Faculty of Arts.

During his four years in the Department of Arabic Literature at Cairo University, he attached himself to the liberal iconoclast Ṭāhā Ḥusayn who came to regard him as his best student of that time and who became something of a patron to him.

He travelled to England in the first year of the war and he earned his doctorate from SOAS in 1942. In 1944 he married Ruth Hiller, a German born girl, who was completing her nursing education in England.

Having failed in his efforts to secure a position at one of the Egyptian Universities by 1947 when his lectureship at SOAS expired, he accepted the challenge to create a department of Arabic in the capital of the Sudan where Gordon Memorial College was being transformed into the University of Khartūm.

Al-Nuwaihī was associated with the University of Khartūm from 1947 until 1956.

After returning to Egypt (1956) al-Nuwaihī took another wife named Feryal. This second marriage was contracted without ending the first one until they were officially divorced in 1971, after which his first wife returned to England.

In 1957 he lectured at the American University in Cairo, but this period was broken during 1967-68 by his first sabbatical leave, which he spent as a visiting professor at

Harvard University. His second sabbatical leave, was during 1972-73 as a visiting professor at Princeton University. He passed away on 13 February 1980.(1)

Al-Nuwaihi took three classical, literary figures for his biographical writings. These figures were: Ibn al-Rumi, Bashshar b. Burd and Abu Nuwas. In the strict sense of the word, these works were far from being literary biographies but were, in point of fact, mere psychological analysis of character; that is studies focusing mainly on the personality of the man of letters concerned, his psychological features, his motives and the factors that had the greatest influence upon this human personality.

> As al-Nuwaihi says:"The student of the literary figure should know how to understand this figure, how to dissect him, how to distinguish the various, contradictory aspects of its inner realms, how to explore the incentives and driving forces which, combined together produced the heterogeneous and conflicting elements in this personality, how to deduce from these antagonistic elements and factors a vital, living, integrated unified system."(2)

He arrives at these conclusions in the wake of reading the anecdotes about and the verse of the poet in question. He would meticulously and gradually follow the sequence of details, combining the pieces of the jigsaw to reach the full image of the character.

The first celebrity al-Nuwaihi studied was Ibn al-Rumi. This was done in his book entitled: *Thaqafat al-Naqid al-Adabi* [The education of the literary critic], Cairo, 1949.

In it, he stressed the need for the literary critic to have a scientific education, because, he says, "mere reading of literature or mere literary education is

insufficient for the literary critic and researcher. They [critics and researchers] should have a wider horizon, encompassing the core of scientific facts at which the various scientists from the various disciplines have arrived. We should digest these scientific achievements, and on their light we ought to study any subject we wish to approach without confining ourselves to abstract, theoretical thinking. Certain works of the men of letters shall be incomprehensible unless we conduct a thorough, physiological and psychological research in earnest."(3)

In his somewhat lengthy preface to the above mentioned book, al-Nuwaihi outlines the theoretical framework he would apply and upon which he would rely to analyse the literary figures he was about to approach.

a. A Portrait of Ibn al-Rumi

Al-Nuwaihi presents Ibn al-Rumi in the following manner: "His mind was suffering from neuropathy, his sexual system from disorder, perhaps his glands were in a similar condition."(4)

To further explain why Ibn al-Rumi was what he was, the latter describes the environment in which Ibn al-Rumi lived, that is "the time and place where he grew up, the political, economic, social and cultural circumstances under which he lived, his parents, the familial atmosphere that enveloped him, the kind of instruction and education he received, the kind of traditions, norms, ethics and morals he absorbed, the course along which he travelled, the experiences and events and persons he encountered in his life ... all these are the factors that would have their say in moulding his personality."(5)

This is the first aspect. The second, as al-Nuwaihi sees it, is the physical structure of the person, his body, the genetic units he had inherited from his parents by dint of specific factors that influenced him in his early moments of being; that is, as he was

still in the embryonic stage of his existence, or at the moment of birth. Such influences would produce a certain structure, and this structure has a great, if not decisive, impact on his mentality, mood and behavioural qualities (his brain, nervous system, sexual system and ductless glands).

Hence Ibn al-Rūmī was a pathetic study case, a case of disorder, "The decisive factors which affected him were not anchored in his epoch, family, home-town, education and instruction, but were deeply rooted, imbedded in the physical factors. Everything in his body was abnormal, his nervous system, sexual system and glands. Hence it is not in the least surprising to find that his brain, his mental faculties are abnormal as well." (6)

As was known, Ibn al-Rūmī was pessimistic, believing that evil was associated with various things in nature. In short, any physical deformation of whatever nature would scare him in earnest. He was utterly moody and extremely unsociable and unpopular. Yet, he was a food lover and an eater with a great appetite. He would stuff his mouth with great quantities of food and sweets.

These are among his outstanding qualities and characteristics. His genius, al-Nuwaihī thought, was not bequeathed to him by dint of his Greek origin, as al-ʿAqqād and al- Māzinī earnestly believed, but is "due to his individual nature produced by his queer physiology and the specific mentality emanating therefrom and enhanced by his life circumstances."(7) Ibn al-Rūmī's culture was the product of the Abbasid civilisation, "He absorbed its philosophy, both the translated and the newly authored, digested its logic, came under the influence of its sciences, rational dialectics, intellectual practices and all the productive thought which lend the Abbasid that quality of deep thinking and the faculty of analysis and mental abstraction." (8)

But, as al-Nuwaīhī says, Ibn al-Rūmī remains one of the greatest poets in the history of Arab verse. His character is one of great renovation, his literary taste is uniquely independent. These literary talents are but the combined work of his specific physiological and mental composition and the conditions of his epoch and society. This is the general portrait of Ibn al-Rūmī as al-Nuwaīhī presented it. We shall later return to his presentation with several critical remarks.

b. A Portrait of Bashshār

The second poet studied by al-Nuwaīhī is Bashshār b. Burd in his book entitled *Shakhsiyyat Bashshār* (Bashshār's Character). The reason why al-Nuwaīhī studied Bashshār is, in his words, that Bashshār constituted a personality of great maturity and thorny complexity governed by a plethora of contradictory elements. Another reason is that the contemporaries of the poet himself, as well as our present day modern critics misunderstood him.

Bashshār "was not an ordinary blind person but an excellent man, a great and deep thinker, with wider intellectual horizon and keen, refined and extremely sensitive, even first class, poetical conception."(9) Bashshār's portrait is strictly based on his own poetry, a procedure already adopted by al-ʿAqqād and al-Māzinī (the life of the person lies in his poetry).

He says that Bashshār was born blind to a family of the *Mawālī* (a weak alien tribe protected by a strong Arab one, usually considered part of the ruling military-aristocratic Arab rulers). Very ugly, downtrodden, disenfranchised, aggressive and quarrelsome, fighting for his dignity. When he was rebuked or taunted for his blindness he would boast of his humanity, and overstate his pride in his liberal sexuality. In the end, he would not go to the extreme of scepticism and hesitation. He was one of the great minds of his era.

Bashshār "had also a great deal of tenderness. compassion and goodness. He was helpful to his family, very caring towards his servants. generous and liberal with his friends and strangers alike, faithful to his companions and comrades, highly appreciative of the value of friendship, patient, a person of great tolerance, witty, humorous, nicely sociable, a man with great literary courage that deserves no less than our full admiration no matter how far we disagree with his views and positions."(10)

Al-Nuwaihi would trace in detail every single word uttered about Bashshār, commenting on it in order to support his point of view. He says "Bashshār was not evil by nature, nor was he cruel or a man full with hatred by his very essence. What created in him that kind of evil, cruelty and hatred towards others was a multitude of factors encompassing social conditions and life, traumatic experiences."(11)

Taking Bashshār's well-known poem, the *Rā'iyya* (11.A*)* al- Nuwaihi would justify the obscene vulgarity in it by saying: "The obscene whoredom in this poem is to exact vendetta and show extreme cruelty, a deliberate exaggeration to revenge or to cause mischief." (12) The majority of his behavioural qualities and features "were formed under the influence of social environment rather than the compulsion caused by the elements of physical composition."(13)

The Umayyad and Abbasid epochs drove Bashshār to the brink of the anonymous. Had not these factors been at work, his blindness, ugliness and aggressive lust would have been as common as what we may find in a multitude of the blind and the ugly among men. Had not society and people at large been merciless towards him he would not have gone too far in his sharp, obscene satire.

In this manner, al-Nuwaihi goes on to raise questions and gives answers about Bashshār's poems. Repetition becomes the rule in the first half of the book, the second half is reduced to mere analysis of most of his poems.

notably those which the author thinks would suit his purposes: "Bashshār was a womaniser. He was far from being a mere aggressive and 'wild animal' with no desire but to have the female into his arms to quench his physical thirst. In fact he wanted what a passionate and sentimental man would also seek, namely feminine softness, tenderness, compassion, affection, love, care and warm-heartedness."(14)

Bashshār was killed, al-Nuwaihī says became the *Caliph*, al-Mahdī, gave orders to punish Bashshār to avoid public pressures. The *'Ulamā'* (religious scholars) strongly criticised the *Caliph* for his friendship with Bashshār b. Burd. Al-Nuwaihī would attack al-Mahdī, the *Caliph*, saying he was cowardly and unfaithful. By contrast, Bashshār is a martyr, in the philosophical sense of the word, in that he died for holding firm to his opinion, that he was faithful to the end to what he thought was right and truthful.

c. A Portrait of Abū Nuwās

The third personality which al-Nuwaihī takes as a case study of psychological analysis is Abū Nuwās, in his book titled: *Nafsiyyat Abī Nuwās* (The Psychology of Abū Nuwās). In his second edition, 1970, al-Nuwaihī believes that we need the psychological analysis to understand Abū Nuwās's Character.(15)

Right from the start, al-Nuwaihī decides that the character of Abū Nuwās is incomprehensible unless it is approached in line with the modern science of psychology. The reason is because Abū Nuwās was psychopathic (Hālah Maradiyah), hence he is worth studying and explanation. The key to his psyche is his relationship with his mother. The untimely death of his father left him to his careless mother, who remarried soon thereafter, and the child, Abū Nuwās, lost the motherly care and tenderness so much needed in those early years of childhood. He developed

a hostile or aggressive attitude towards his mother. Perhaps it is this kind of aggression towards the mother that deprived him from extracting any natural pleasure from intercourse with females, hence his preference for male sodomy. As this again would not satisfy him, he turned alcoholic, imagining the burning liquid a female with which he was in sensual contact, "some sort of compensation for the lost mother who deprived him, by her early remarriage from motherly compassion."(16)

It is this complex that al-Nuwaihi takes as a starting point and an ultimate end, to the validity of which he would dedicate his utmost energetic power to prove, the same as with the cases of Ibn al-Rumi and Bashshar, by means of uniting the effect of biological factors = individual composition and the impact of the surroundings in building the personality. Abu Nuwas rejects women because they remind him of the motherhood that brought him agonising experience. The very sight of the female sexual organ would fill him with awe and horror, because it leads to the womb, the symbol of the unfaithful mother. Young males constituted an alternative. He would court males until he got a woman slave who would let him sodomize her.

His lust for spirits is more than "mere having drinks. Intoxicating beverages were, for him, a living creature, an ego endowed with life, a being which would unite with Abu Nuwas' self and reaches out for the inner depths of his psyche."(17) He considers spirits an integral part of his self, he would court "her", long for "her", desert "her" for a while only to passionately miss "her" and go back into "her" arms. To sip "her" is a mime of kissing "her", to mix "her" with water would be tantamount to undressing "her", to drink "her" would mean to remove "her" virginity, and the coming of spirits in a cup is but the coming of a virgin bride in "her" wedding dress, and so on and so forth.

Intoxication, al-Nuwaihi says, arouses in him the feelings of supplication and sacred rituals. His alcoholism intensified his psychopathic condition and led him further into the realm of mixing in one cup both religiosity and fornication [Indeed, al-Nuwaihi describes Abu Nuwas as being a solemn worshipper of God and an indecent adulterer. This duality, he confirms, is the product of the complex caused by his mother.]

On the other hand, the environment in which he lived completed the second half of his tragedy. That is because "Abu Nuwas did not introduce into his epoch some sort of immorality which was not already in existence."(18)

> Spirits, alcoholism, fornication, sodomy, homosexuality, hypocrisy, vulgarity and disturbances were so common in his era, "had not these effects emanating from the surroundings been at work, Abu Nuwas' character would not have taken this specific shape. What actually happened is that his extremely sensitive soul received all the influences beamed by his epoch and deeply absorbed them. These effects remoulded himself, increased it's aggressiveness and wildness, then threw it back endowed with sharpened delicacy."(19)

This is the image which al-Nuwaihi tries to draw of the personality of Abu Nuwas on the basis of psychoanalytical methodology.

His characteristics as a biographer

In analysing the characters of Ibn al-Rumi, Bashshar b. Burd and Abu Nuwas, al-Nuwaihi applied two methods complementing one another, the social-historical method and the psychoanalytical method. The social-historical method was pioneered by the well-known French critic Taine. The essence of this method is to study the surroundings and the epoch to reach for the explanation of the man of letters. In his

preface to the *History of the English Literature*, he says: "Three different sources contribute to produce this elementary moral state - Race, Surroundings and Epoch."(20) Perhaps it was Ṭāhā Husayn who first applied this concept in his study of the great classical Arab poet, al-Maʿarrī.

The second method introduced by al-Nuwaihī is the psychoanalytical which he extended, as was obvious, to the extremes. This school uses symbols to infer individual behaviour. Long before al-Nuwaihī many writers in Egypt advocated this method, but perhaps he was the first one to apply it in this extraordinary manner that took us, in the words of Leon Edel (21), to analytical laboratories. The only exceptions are M.A. Khalf Allah (22), Amīn al-Khūlī(23), and perhaps Anwar al-Maʿadāwī, who argued for the introduction of psychological concepts and categories into literary studies during the first half of this century.

A comparative look at al-Nuwaihī's studies might well lead us into saying that in the case of Ibn al-Rūmī, al-Nuwaihī laid more stress on the physiological structure of the poet than on his epoch. In the case of Bashshār, the opposite may seem true. Emphasis here was laid more on the influences of the epoch rather than on the specific structure of the person in question. Lastly, in the case of Abū Nuwās, both factors, the epoch and specific personal structure, seem to have equal weight. In these three cases we find a subjective inclination to accommodate realities with the conceived psychological categories. This led al-Nuwaihī to:

Over interpret the text, to read into them more than what they actually carried, not to mention, of course, the "scientific" tautology on the effects of glands, nerves, psychosis and neurosis.

At points, it seems as if al-Nuwaihī has gone astray into irrelevant digressions, explaining the texts as his taste deems fit. This would get him in trouble, as in the case of reflexive deduction.

He criticises both al-ʿAqqād and al-Māzinī for what he sees as their inadequate differentiation between Roman and Greek but he commits the same error.(24)

His assertions that Arabs oppressed all the *Mawālī* (non-Arab protectees). trampled them underfoot and treated them like dogs and mules are in need of historical verifications. In fact the "unbiased reader should guard against the inconsistent judgements which al-Nuwaihī introduced. They are inconsistent with historical facts in so many cases."(25)

Is it also true that "sexual deviation prevailed in society for three centuries, starting from mid-second century of *Hijra*"(26)?

Al-Nuwaihī's interpretations of the texts produced by the poets he studied took him off on a new trajectory, far away from the realm of concretely analysing the personality to the abstract realm of psychoanalysis. And "the general feature of al-Nuwaihī's writings is absolute judgement and reading into the texts things they do not contain."(27) On the whole, al-Nuwaihī "seems so fanatically supportive of the conclusions of the science of psychology, even more than Sigmund Freud himself."(28)

However, al-Nuwaihī presented studies of three classical poets in a manner that would incorporate this work in the genre of psychoanalytical biography, which "attempts to depict its subject on the basis of his writings and may picture the mind or the creative personality behind it."(29)

NOTES

1. A.H.Green (ed.), *In Quest of an Islamic Humanism*, (The American University Press in Cairo, 1986), pp. xi, xii, xiii, xiv, xv, xvii; Robert Campbell, *Aʿlām al-Adab al-ʿArabī al- Muʿāṣir Siyar wa-Siyar Dhātiyyah*, 2nd Vol., (Beirut, 1996), pp. 1345- 1347.
2. Muḥammad al-Nuwaihī, *Shakhṣiyyat Bashshār,* (Cairo, 1951), p.d.
3. Al-Nuwaihī, *Thaqāfat al-Nāqid al-Adabī,* (Cairo, 1949), p.79.
4. Ibid., p.79.
5. Ibid., p.80.
6. Ibid., pp. 128-129.
7. Ibid., p.177.
8. Ibid., p. 246.
9. Muḥammad al-Nuwaihī, *Shakhṣiyyat Bashshār*, p.9.
10. Ibid., p. 86.
11. Ibid., p. 194.

11A. The poem rhymed with a word ending with R, a classical method of classifying the poems, a way of giving them identifiable title.

12. Muḥammad al-Nuwaihī, *Shakhṣiyyat Bashshār* p. 195.
13. Ibid., pp. 149-150.
14. Ibid., p. 217.
15. Muḥammad al-Nuwaihī, *Nafsiyyat Abī Nuwās*, 2nd revised and enlarged edition, (Cairo, 1970), p. 10.
16. Ibid., p. 95.
17. Ibid., p. 12.
18. Ibid., p. 162.
19. Ibid., p. 169.
20. Hippolyte Taine, *History of English Literature*, Vol 1, (Edinburgh, 1873), p. 17.
21. Leon Edel, *Literary Biography,* (Arabic Translation - Ṣidqī Ḥaṭṭāb), (Beirut, 1988).
22. Muḥammad Khalf Allah, *Min al-Wujhat al-Nafsiyyah Fī Dirāsat al-Adab wa- Naqdihi,* (Cairo, 1947).
23. Amīn al- Khūlī, *Raʾī fī Abī al-ʿAlā,* (Cairo, 1944).
24. Al-Nuwaihī, *Nafsiyyat Abī Nuwās,* (Cairo, 1970), p. 89.
25. ʿAbd al-Wāhid ʿAllām, *'Ittijāhāt Naqd al-Shiʿr fī Miṣr, (1940-1965)*, (Cairo, 1979), p. 310.
26. ʿAllām, op. cit., p. 301.
27. ʿAllām, op. cit., p. 303.

28. ʿAllām, op. cit., p. 303.
29. Leon Edel, *Literary Biography,* op.cit., pp. 200-201.

CHAPTER X

A Comparative analysis of five literary personalities as reflected by leading Egyptian biographers

Introduction

a. Bashshār b. Burd (95-167/ 714-783)

b. Abū Nuwās (140-200/ 757-815)

c. Ibn al-Rūmī (221-283[284]/ 836-898)

d. Al-Mutanabbī (303-354/ 913-965)

e. Al-Maʿarrī (363-449/ 973-1058)

Introduction

This chapter might appear to be a mere repetition of what has been said, but it is important, and, perhaps more interesting, in biographers terms of the contradictory views it presents on controversial personalities, old and new. In as much as medieval writers disputed over the true characters of Bashshār, Abū Nuwās, Ibn al-Rūmī, al-Mutanabbī and al-Maʿarrī, lending them paradoxical attributes which are re-introduced by some of our contemporaries to this very moment, modern critics debated and argued different interpretations of the characters of these poets and the significance of their verse.

I have comparatively presented the personal images of those poets in the manner they were analysed by modern Egyptian critics explaining to what extent they have succeeded in their portrayal of the characters concerned, what critical methodology they employed and how these presentations only narrowly differed.

There were five poets, Bashshār, Abū Nuwās, Ibn al-Rūmī, al-Mutanabbī and al-Maʿarrī, who have been selected because they were placed at the centre of attention by most modern critics who analysed these personalities using modern, literary methodologies. These methodologies were brought to them through the works of orientalists, who took credit for shaking the dust off the lives of these Arab, classical poets.

Let me first examine the methods applied in the analysis of these characters.

The first is the social-historical method which investigates the extent to which literary works or their creators are influenced by or influence their environment.(1) It is anchored in the close relation between literature and history, because "the literature of a nation is a true expression of its political and social life and one of the refined sources of its history."(2) This methodology reached its peak with Taine who specified that "three different sources contribute to produce this elementary moral state - Race, Surroundings and epoch."(3)

The second is the personal method which utilizes the writer's biography as a means for critically comprehending and assessing his works (4) That is, it concentrates on studying the writers personal, familial and professional life, his mates, tutors and disciples, their papers, customs, views and traditions. The pioneer of this method is Saint-Beuve.(5)

The third is the impressionist method which is occupied with, "defining and explaining the impressions we have from a literary text when reading it."(6) It demands that "no scientific rules or theories should ever be applied to literary creation."(7)

Fourthly, we have the artistic method which investigates the literary text itself, seeking to extract the aesthetic and imperishable elements inherent therein, employing to this end objective, literary standards derived from rhetoric, linguistics, style and intellectual experience.(8)

Lastly, there is the psychological method which examines the process of literary and artistic creativity from a psychological point of view, investigates how far conscious and sub-conscious elements are fed in this process, what role internal and external catalysts play in it, and lastly whether or not the literary creation reflects its creator's psyche.(9)

The modern biographers in question differed in their approach and methodologies, but we can conclude, in Gibb's words, that, "The majority of modernist Egyptian writers fall naturally into two groups, one composed of writers whose Western background is mainly French, the other of writers who have been more strongly influenced by English literature."(10)

Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, "introduced the modern French methods of critical study into Egypt."(11), but with al-ʿAqqād and al-Māzinī we find that, "one of the main features of their work, consequently, is a careful study of such poets, as Ibn al-Rūmī

and al-Mutanabbī and the valuation of their productions somewhat on the lines of Hazlitt."(12)

This does not imply that al-ʿAqqād did not make use of the French method, on the contrary he utilized it to a great extent, in as much as al-Māzinī made use of the German method.

In this chapter, I encountered a thorny problem: I could not lay my hands on all the texts written by the critics under consideration, either because the copies available are very few, or they are out of print.

a. Bashshār b. Burd*

Undoubtedly, Bashshār b. Burd is conceived of as the most controversial personality past and present. With few exceptions, his contemporaries raised great question marks about him, abhorred him and belittled him. Modern critics, in particular those under consideration (Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, al-ʿAqqād, al-Māzinī, and al-Nuwaihī), were somewhat tainted by these views.

Their point of departure was the analysis of his poetry as a means to analyse his personality. Although his poetry was limited in volume, it was interpreted to suit the image each critic had in mind. Their methods hardly differed. While, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn openly declares that he dislikes Bashshār whom he considers abusive, malicious, chauvinistic [anti-Arab], cowardly and atheistic, al-Nuwaihī regards him as the first martyr in the history of Islamic thought (13), because the *caliph*, al-Mahdī, put him to death "to eschew public criticism."(14)

Al-ʿAqqād and al-Māzinī, on the other hand, were moved by Bashshār's individualistic make-up. For al-ʿAqqād the key to Bashshār's character is his huge body and his lust-seeking nature; for al-Māzinī, the key lies in his rebellious aptness.

They took his satirical and love poems to examine his nature. Satire was Bashshār's favourite speciality in which he showed powerful skill. His sarcastic satire was so vigorous that people complained about him to his father.

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* **For the life of Bashshār see:**

Carl, Brockelmann, *Tārīkh al-Adab al-ʿArabī*, Vol. 2, p. 13.

Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-Aʿyān*, Vol. 1, p. 271.

Clement, Huart, *A History of Arabic Literature*, pp. 67-69.

R. Blachere, *Bashshār b. Burd*, in EI^2, Vol. 1, pp. 1080-1081.

G. Schoeler, *Bashshār b. Burd*, in *Abbasid Belles-Lettres*, Cambridge, 1990, p. 276.

Shawqī Ḍaīf, *Al-Fann wa-Madhāhibuhu fī al-Shiʿr al-ʿArabī*, p. 148.

In his profile of Bashshār, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn singled one element, untruthfulness in the poet's behaviour. He questioned Bashshār's intentions, morals and honesty. In his opinion, Bashshār was neither faithful in his love poems, nor truthful in his pride. He was an apostate, irreligious, anti-Arab, lustfully interested in women, deceitful in his love, suspicious and dubious towards people at large. To prove his point, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn ignored the various good qualities in Bashshār, his generosity, tenderness, humour, forgiveness and even faithfulness. This deep rooted bias on the part of Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, who starts his study with an outright declaration of repugnance, is inexplicable indeed. It had been more in line with literary standards to start research with an examination of Bashshār's blindness, his environment, the political conditions obtaining at the time. In his judgement on Bashshār, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn's approach was impressionist. Perhaps it is his animosity towards Bashshār that prompted various responses in defence of the latter and a different reading into his poetry.

If, perhaps, Bashshār's satirical verse was the reason why Ṭāhā Ḥusayn loathed him, this satire, according to al-ʿAqqād and al-Māzinī, was a product of the poet's multi-faceted make up: being blind, a protectee, hard-featured, ugly, oppressed, and living in an environment hostile to such human creatures. Hence, he had to equip himself with the necessary defensive weaponry, and satire was both his protective shield and his weapon to intimidate others and extract cash tribute.

Al-ʿAqqād reiterates that Bashshār was not truthful in his satire, neither was he repugnant, on the contrary he was a man of a worldly demeanour and animal spirit. Al-Māzinī stresses an inferiority complex originating in Bashshār's blindness, ugliness and servile origin (being a protectee) which drove him to rebel.

Bashshār's sexual fetishism is another point of controversy. He was obscene and vulgar in his sexuality, according to Ṭāhā Ḥusayn; but he was a passionate female-

seeker and a sensual depicter of love in the eyes of al-ʿAqqād. Al-Māzinī. again. attributes Bashshār's wild, excessive overindulgence in his attitude towards women to his inferiority complex which keeps his imagining of the female in the realm of primitive sensuality.(15)

Al-ʿAqqād's portrait of Bashshār is primarily psychological. Al-Māzinī applied the same method but in a more subtle and flexible manner, notably his emphasis on the effects of the environment and the epoch, combined with the psychological sway of Bashshār's physical impairment, which deformed his liaisons with society. Hence al-Māzinī occupied a middle position between literary biography and literary criticism.

Al-Nuwaīhī agrees with both al-Māzinī and al-ʿAqqād on the impact these factors usually have, but he arranges them in an inverted manner. The environment, he maintains, is the supreme and decisive factor which drove Bashshār to stand in a position of constant offensive, to over-focus his senses on his physical deformity. Had he lived in a different society, al-Nuwaīhī maintains, Bashshār would have probably been a normal man and an ordinary poet, but he was victimized by repressive society and he did his best to contain his grievances but he failed; and it is this failure that led him to loathe Arabs.

Unlike his predecessors, al-Nuwaīhī took the bright side in Bashshār, his compassion, kindness, sympathy, humour and reverence. Al-Nuwaīhī utilized the concept of compensation in his analysis of Bashshār's psychological make-up: his attachment to his Persian ancestry was a compensation for him being despicable in the eyes of Arabs; his deliberate boasting of his sexuality was a compensation for the agony his deformity caused him and the pain of being scorned by others. His religious and intellectual scepticism urged him to seek in sexual pleasure a kind of consolation, solace and comfort. His brutality and intolerance were but a reflection of the harm done to him by others. His human dignity and pride were only a

response to the disdain shown by the others. His pornographic love-poems were meant to exact revenge on men by symbolically stripping naked and raping their women.

The extreme lengths (rather than overstatement) to which al-Nuwaīhī goes in his interpretation of Bashshār's poetry to suit his psychological theorization is not unclear. But in the end, al-Nuwaīhī seems to restrain his reading into a more moderate position. His sympathy for Bashshār leads him to blame society, and Bashshār is what he is because of that society itself. He looks more like "an attorney" taking the floor in defence of his client Bashshār.(16) His is an analytical biography.

As Bashshār was differently conceived of by his contemporaries, according to their dogmatic preferences and prejudices, so he is by our modernists who conceived of him according to their literary tastes; in all cases his character remained controversial as ever. Perhaps Bashshār was after all a psychopath, a mentally disordered person who so wildly indulged in obscenity.

b. Abū Nuwās*

In this section, we shall examine four different interpretations of the life, poetry and personality of Abū Nuwās, one by Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, who focuses on his poetic creativity, a second by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ṣidqī which covers the poet's life passage. i.e from birth through different stages down to death; the third and fourth by al-Nuwaīhī and al-ʿAqqād. The former considers him a mentally disordered personality whose relationship with his mother is the key to his psychopathic state, the latter diagnoses narcissism as the key to understand the poet's psyche.

Abū Nuwās' character is analysed here by means of modern methods in order to reach out for his inner depths. These methods were contradictory and/ or complementary. Whereas the artistic and historical methods were manifestly apparent in Ṭāhā Ḥusayn's work on Abū Nuwās, psychoanalysis was predominant in al-Nuwaīhī's and al-ʿAqqād's works, partly supported by a historical approach. Ṣidqī's, however, was more of a literary *sīrah*/ biography because of the narrative techniques of the novel which he employed to portray his hero, Abū Nuwās. He combined both the historical and psychological methods in his study of the environment which influenced and formed Abū Nuwās, and of the poet's relationship with his mother.

*** For the life of Abū Nuwās see:**

R.A. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arab*, pp. 285-296.

C. Huart, *A History of Arabic Literature*, pp. 71-72.

C. Brockelmann, *Tārīkh al-Adab al-ʿArabī*, Vol. 2, p. 24.

E. Wagner, *Abū Nuwās*, in EI^2, Vol. 1, pp. 143-144.

D. O'Grady, *Ten Modern Arab Poets*, p. 13.

G. Schoeler, *Abū Nuwās*, in *Abbasid Belles-Lettres,* Cambridge, 1990, p. 290.

Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-Aʿyān*, Vol. 2, p. 95.

Shawqī Ḍaīf, *Al-Fann wa-Madhāhibuhu fī al-Shiʿr al-ʿArabī*, pp. 99, 157.

Ṭāhā Ḥusayn stresses the importance of Abū Nuwās's verse. splitting it for his purposes into wine-poetry, ascetic-poetry, and love-poetry. The latter is again divided into gay poetry and female love poems. Lastly there are his satirical poems. Ṭāhā Ḥusayn arranges these types on a differential scale, according to what he deems their literary value. His best, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn contends, are gay poems, his female love poetry betrays how false, untruthful(17), conceited and pompous he is; his eulogies are artificial and pretentious, his obituaries are the weakest of his poetry, whereas his satirical pieces are manifestly political. Ṭāhā Ḥusayn maintains that Abū Nuwās "hated and despised life, only overcoming it through sex-fetishism and joy-seeking, whereas Abū al-ʿAlā detested life but defeated it by means of asceticism and self-inflicted deprivation."(18)

It is clear from these assessments that Ṭāhā Ḥusayn utilizes his personal, literary taste to distinguish and classify Abū Nuwās' poetry. The poet's fascination with and majestic exaltation in wine is interpreted by Ṭāhā Ḥusayn as evidence testifying that Abū Nuwās is an innovator, because he deserted the format of the classical poem which traditionally begins with "remembrance of the past". Abū Nuwās disdains this opening theme, replacing it with exaltation of spirits. Al-ʿAqqād on the other hand reads this change in the structure of the poem as an expression of an inferiority complex caused by the poet's servile parentage, hence his desire to rebel against the traditional format simply reflects his desire to ridicule traditions and satirize them.

Ṭahā Ḥusayn accounts for the work of this poet (Abū Nuwās) entirely by the cultural depression of this period, by conjunction of time (*ʿaṣr*) and the social environment (*bīʾah*), particularly the transition from the Umayyad era to that of the Abbasid (19). Abū Nuwās reflected in his poetry the spirit of his own age.(20)

Al-Nuwāihī, on the other hand, begins his analysis of the personality of Abū Nuwās with a self-evident confirmation that personality is formed under the combined influence of the individual make-up and of the environment. Being deserted by his mother at an early stage of his boyhood, Abū Nuwās's deprivation of motherly care and affection causes him to reject females, seek pleasure with young gays or turn to wine which, to him, becomes a figurative sexual partner. He suffers from psycho-neurosis which inflicts upon him distraction and destroys his ability to behave properly. This neurosis is the manifestation of an Oedipus complex (his relation to his mother). Al-Nuwāihī brings almost every psychological term available to him to prove this point, which we have already discussed in the previous chapter. The sum-total of al-Nuwāihī's analysis is anchored in "revealing the sub-conscious side in Abū Nuwās' character, attributing it to an abnormal relation with his mother in line with psychoanalysis."(21)

Al-ʿAqqād construes the case of Abū Nuwās as one of narcissism. He maintains that Abū Nuwās's nature harboured a latent femininity (22), whereas his exhibitionism is simply a defiance coded in the expression of singularity and difference, his alcoholism is a means of a peacock display of the self. His is a case of regression as well. Regression is the case where the narcissist falls for another who is similar to him in appearance and demeanour but different from him in potency and power. The *caliph*, al-Amīn, is this powerful alter ego.(23) Abū Nuwās, then, is a natural born deviant whose delinquency is reinforced by the influences of family, society and epoch. In his approach, al-ʿAqqād reiterates what al-Nuwāihī describes as the dual interaction of both individuality and environment.(24)

Al-ʿAqqād portrays the natural born physical qualities of Abū Nuwās, his soft, long hair, tender body, his lisping, coarse voice, on the one hand, and he describes how

this individual interacts with his Abbasid society and epoch, on the other. For him Abū Nuwās is a "typical character" (Shakhṣiya Numuzajiya)(25), whose drunkenness reflected a desire to forget his debased lineage, to relieve the agonies caused by this complex of inferiority. In a sense, intoxication is a symbolic act of self-glorification, because, in his own words, he "sips what Persian Caesars and royals before him drank."(26) But this inferiority complex would act upon his verse. That is why, contrary to Arab poets, he rejects the traditional remembrance of the past, simply because he does not belong to this ancient past. Al-ʿAqqād maintains that Abū Nuwās' sexual fetishism is a natural outcome of his narcissism, he is not a homosexual, but simply loves young boys because they look like girls, and loves young girls because they resemble young boys.(27) Lastly his repentance is a manifestation of the last, weak phase of sexuality, the so-called climacteric period.

In the end al-ʿAqqād declares he has no intention of writing a biography of Abū Nuwās, yet, I presume, he studied him from a psychological point of view without neglecting other factors. He incorporates both Freud's narcissism and Taine's historical determinism. Al-ʿAqqād's work is more of a psychological portrait, very near to what al-Nuwaihī had presented. Both al-ʿAqqād and al-Nuwaihī, however, are severely criticised by Ṭāhā Ḥusayn who says that al-Nuwaihī "mixed the miscellaneous extracts form Abū Nuwās, Freud and other thinkers, to produce a freak whom he displayed in his book under the name of Abū Nuwās."(28) He also adds, "He [al-Nuwaihī] went too far and simply deformed Abū Nuwās."(29)

Ṭāhā Ḥusayn has the same opinion of al-ʿAqqād's study: "He [al-ʿAqqād] exceeded the proper bounds in his utilization of the concept of narcissism, usually applied by psychiatrists in their therapy of the living patients, to dissect the character of an ancient poet."(30) Ṭāhā Ḥusayn dismisses this method because it concentrates in his opinion on the poet not poetry.

The fourth, and last, study of Abū Nuwās come in a different context, combining all these methods and applications. This is the case with ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ṣidqī who anticipates both al-ʿAqqād and al-Nuwaihī. He reveals a conscious understanding of the basics of biography writing which he aptly expounds in the preface.(30.A)

To sum up, in Ṭāhā Ḥusayn's view, Abū Nuwās is a normal, thoughtful poet like any other poet of his era. In the eyes of al-Nuwaihī and al-ʿAqqād, Abū Nuwās is an abnormal pervert whose verse can only be examined in the light of its creators neurotic disorder. With Ṣidqī, a third interpretation is offered: Abū Nuwās is a moody lust-seeker whose obscenity is artistic, potential rather than actual, because he is more often than not powerless. And Ṭāhā Ḥusayn's attacks on the psychological method applied by al-Nuwaihī and al-ʿAqqād are a personal retreat from this method which he had applied in his study on Abū al-ʿAlāʾ al-Maʿarrī .

Abū Nuwās's character had been controversial in his time. The ancients wove anecdotes and myths around him. The modernist created no less controversy, at least in their application of different European literary methods. In varying degrees, they managed to produce an image of the poet which mainly reflects their intellectual leanings and different tastes. To apply a mono method is, I believe, insufficient to build a literary biography or depict the image of a literary persona.

A comprehensive, complementary method, based on artistic, historical and psychological approaches, is necessary. Neither the individual nor his production should have priority over the other. That is because, "no single school can single-handedly analyse a certain character, and shed light on its ins and outs, whether or not the character in question is normal, deviant, rebellious against, or submissive to the political, social and literary realities." (31)

c. Ibn al-Rūmī*

There are two considerations, al-ʿAqqād contends, behind the renewed interest in and focus on Ibn al-Rūmī by the aforementioned four modern critics. The first consideration is that the poet has deliberately or otherwise been neglected by both classical and contemporary critics, the second is that Ibn al-Rūmī represented a unique psychopathic case which was well reflected in his poetry. Perhaps this is why modern biographers attempted to apply their theoretical approaches on his case, notably psychological methods which were extensively used, as has already been outlined in chapter four.(32)

Al-Māzinī and al-ʿAqqād are of the same opinion; that the key to understanding Ibn al-Rūmī's character is his Greek creative genius. His love of nature, his cult of life, his faculty of personification and portrayal and his keen sensibilities were all qualities bestowed on him by dint of his Aryan-Roman ancestry. Later on, however, al-ʿAqqād dropped this lineage-based reading.(33)

Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, on the other hand, attributes the classical poet's brilliance to his cross-cultural composition anchored in the Arabic-Islamic culture.

Al-Nuwaīhī for his part focuses on Ibn al-Rūmī's individuality generated by his unique physical stature and the matchless disposition such uniqueness usually carries with it. Genetic units inherited from his parents, according to al-Nuwaīhī, first formed his mentality, temperament, character, mind, nervous and sexual systems and

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* **For the life of Ibn al-Rūmī see:**

Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-Aʿyān*, Vol. 3, p. 351.

C. Huart, *A History of Arabic Literature*, pp. 82-83.

C. Brockelmann, *Tārīkh al-Adab al-ʿArabī*, Vol. 2, p. 44

S. Bustāny, *Ibn al-Rūmī*, in EI^2, Vol. 111, pp. 907-908.

R. Guest, *Life and Works of Ibn ER Rūmī* [al-Rūmī], London, 1944.

Shawqī Ḍaīf, *Al-Fann wa-Madhāhibuhu fī al-Shiʿr al-ʿArabī*, pp. 200-214.

his endocrine glands, and the environment came second to sustain and aggravate these defects.(34)

The epoch, in al-ʿAqqād's view, was crucial in defining Ibn al-Rūmī's disposition and behaviour, because for a weak person like Ibn al-Rūmī, that epoch of cunning, deceit, corruption, indulgence and rebellion was extremely unfavourable.

As to what constituted his qualities and characteristics the four biographers widely agreed, but as to their causes they widely disagreed. For them Ibn al-Rūmī was intelligent, witty, discontent, pessimistically paranoid, harshly satirical, self-insulated, physically ill, moody, obsessed with sexual organs, a heavy eater and haunted by fear of death.

His paranoid pessimism, according to al-ʿAqqād and al-Māzinī, is the product of a disorder in his nervous system which kept him haunted by a constant sense of being victimized and targeted. His satire, on the other hand, is but the outcome of his failure and vulnerability, a shield to face the bitter reality and a cover up for the loss of fame and wealth he thought he should have been entitled to. His rakish obscenity and vulgar satire are but manifestations of his sensuality and lust-seeking, his recurrent reference to genitals is spurred by his suffering from a sexual disorder. Yet these symptoms would have not taken the sharp forms they had assumed, had not his society and environment been so inimical.

Al-Nuwāīhī takes a different line of argument and stresses that the original cause is the very physical disorder of the poet. Attacking al-ʿAqqād for his confusion of Roman with Greek origins, al-Nuwāīhī reiterates that Ibn al-Rūmī's genius is the result of all these factors combined: his physical and mental set-up as well as the conditions and the environment under which he lived. Al-Nuwāīhī maintains that Ibn al-Rūmī's self-insulation is the outcome of the new, complex, multi-cultural and multi-ideological civilization. Ibn al-Rūmī's failure, however, is contrary to what al-

ʿAqqād and al-Māzinī hold, not caused by social injustices, but by the poet's paranoid mind and mental disorder .

To sum up, al-Māzinī provided a psychological portrait of Ibn al-Rūmī, al-ʿAqqād gave a psychological biography which surpassed Ṭāhā Ḥusayn's piece on al-Maʿarrī in that al-ʿAqqād was more of a critic and psychoanalyst than a historiographer, since he portrayed both Ibn al-Rūmī's environment and character in one unified context, dissecting the latter's behaviour on the basis of his method. Yet, together with al-Māzinī, al-ʿAqqād over-emphasized the Greek nature of the poet's genius. Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, however, challenged their approach and accused them of taking the poet rather than the poetry. Yet he agreed with their definition of Ibn al-Rūmī's psychological traits.

Al-Nuwaīhī presented a psychoanalytical biography with more of a laboratory-like analysis than a literary study. In this, he over-stretched the interpretation of the texts of Ibn al-Rūmī to suit his ends. His explanation of the forms, functions and operation of the glands in the human body is clear evidence of this aspect.

d. Al-Mutanabbī*

The poet Abū al-Ṭayyib al-Mutanabbī is renowned for being the figure who overwhelmed the horizons and bewitched people at large. This is how classical critics defined him. Now we shall see him through the eyes of al-Māzinī. al-ʿAqqād and Ṭahā Husayn.

Al-Māzinī produced no more than a biographical sketch based on the same method he adopted, seeking the key to the personality of the person under consideration.(35) I have introduced him here because he applies the same method engaged by al-ʿAqqād in that he selects figures renowned for their individuality and unique brilliance. In the eyes of al-Māzinī, al-Mutanabbī is a man with a calling or purpose in life, fighting for his quest with every means, making money for this end. He is strong in terms of character, he is also self-composed and self-confident, yet he changes colours like a chameleon to achieve his ends without feeling the slightest sort of guilt or regret. In this, al-Māzinī turns a blind eye on dissecting al-Mutanabbī's psyche to dig out the motives behind his opportunistic, unprincipled greed and ambitions.

In their study of al-Mutanabbī's character, both al-ʿAqqād and Ṭahā Ḥusayn used certain methods which were similar in content, but were different in form.

Al-ʿAqqād tries his best to convince his readers that al-Mutanabbī was what he was, a lust-seeker who took pleasure exactly in "what the others conceive as sin or lapse."

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* **For the life of al-Mutanabbi see:**

Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-Aʿyān*, Vol. 1, p. 120.

C. Brockelmann, *Tārikh al-Adab al-ʿArabī*, Vol. 2, p. 81.

R.A. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arab*, pp. 304ff.

C. Huart, *A History of Arabic Literature*, pp. 90-91.

R. Blachere, *Al-Mutanabbī*, in EI^2, Vol. VII, pp. 769ff.

Shawqī Daīf, *Al-Fann wa-Madhāhibuhu fī al-Shiʿr al-ʿArabī*, p. 303.

A. Hamorī, *Al-Mutanabbī*, in *Abbasid Belles-Lettres*, Cambridge, 1990, pp. 300ff.

(36) Supremacy, to him, was the ultimate end in life, but power was the source of ethics, virtues, merits, fame and glory.(37)

Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, by contrast, presents al-Mutanabbī's biography, "within a historical and psychological context reminiscent of that applied by Saint-Beuve in his well known literary critical studies."(38) That is why Ṭāhā Ḥusayn divides the poet's life into five temporal and psychological phases, taking the latter's verse as a means to depict each period and extracting his supporting evidence from the various environments under which the poet lived and laboured, linking both aspects in this study of al-Mutanabbī's life.(39)

Both al-ʿAqqād and Ṭāhā Ḥusayn accede to the fact that the environment and the epoch had a crucial influence on al-Mutanabbī's personality; they are also of the same mind on his subjective qualities, such as his strong character, over self-confidence, magnified self-esteem, keen sensibilities, sensitive composure, creative fantasy and piercing intellect. Al-ʿAqqād lays stress on the poet's natural instinctive tendencies: he never fasts, never prays, has no respect for prophets, does not recite the holy Qurʾān, harbours scepticism derived from Greek philosophy and other texts by the materialists and heretics. By contrast, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn singles out "the debased lineage and parentage of al-Mutanabbī as the prime factor which defines the poet's personality and renders him abhorrent in the eyes of his contemporaries. This is what made him conceive of his life as one plunged in ambiguity and eccentricity."(40)

The key concept in al-ʿAqqād's psychoanalysis of al-Mutanabbī is megalomania. This is very evident in "his over-confidence in the self, his strong character, his multi-faceted experiences and the inclination of the people to quote his aphorisms and maxims."(41) The diminutive forms he recurrently uses in his verse are but a manifestation of his self-magnifying aptitude, his propensity to portray himself in

great stature to lend the others a lower standing. He is "so preoccupied with expressing this subjective sense of greatness." (42) Al-ʿAqqād calls these traits as the internalized or inner factors on which he builds his conclusion that, given such qualities and having such environment and circumstances, it is not extraordinary for the ambitious poet to claim holy prophethood.

To servile birth, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn adds poverty and the conversion to the *Qarmaṭī* heresy as the constituent factors and elements of his complex psyche where the feeling of servility coexists with the feeling of power derived from his egoistic belief in his own self; al-Mutanabbī's poverty is the spring of his vindictive, malicious attitude towards the wealthy, and the source of his being bent on extracting money with every possible means, because wealth is cornerstone of power and glory. Ṭāhā Ḥusayn presents the facts and details supporting this view .

With less emphasis on the historical approach, al-ʿAqqād confined his presentation to the analysis of certain aspects of al-Mutanabbi's personality. His is more of a psychoanalytical portrait. Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, by contrast, brings into play integrative, literary methods, a combination of the naturalistic, impressionist and psychological methods. With these tools, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn explaines how the intellectual environment has its influence on al-Mutanabbī's character and verse. In Kūfa (Iraq), the city of plunder, pillage, killing, outrage, disdain of traditions or values and customs, al-Mutanabbī came under wickedly disruptive influences which bred in him wild desires for rebellion and mutiny.

In Aleppo (Syria), al-Mutanabbī finds an advanced intellectual haven where he enjoys wealth and power and sees his ideals embodied in the triumph of Arabs over aliens. Yet Aleppo is also the seat of disturbances and chaos, of Arab-Roman wars, of tribal mutinies against the rule of the Hamdān dynasty. It is an environment which requires improvisation and bravery, hence we see al-Mutanabbī in his war poems, rise, in artistic terms, to perfection, and his ambitions and expectations become great.

In Egypt, the poet encounters a precarious environment which demands vigilance and caution. He arrives there broken, humble, sycophantic and hypocritical. but soon leaves it, a chased fugitive, deceived by the cunning politician, Kāfūr, consumed by his unfulfilled political ambitions.

Ṭāhā Ḥusayn links the changes in al-Mutanabbī's temper and psyche with the changing context of the environment. He observes al-Mutanabbī's changing psychological phases during his career: he is always miserable, he praises today the prince whom he had ridiculed yesterday; one day he is a sycophant, the next he is paranoid; a rebellious *Qarmaṭī* in his youth, a conformist years later, always running for the unknown "unable to settle down and lead a normal life of a creative, productive, progressing poet unless he is under the protection of a noble or princely patron as if he is a parasitical plant only capable of growth and maturity under the shades of giant trees." (43) Being a slave to gold and a servant to princes and driven by his ambitious enterprises and greed, he meets his end. His restless changes of place from Kūfa to Baghdad to Aleppo to Egypt to Shīrāz is a fact which reveals a complex self tormented by a desperate search for that unattained glory.

In this biography which resembles a novel-type narrative, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn relied on al-Mutanabbī's poetry and his life circumstances.(44) The hero in this novel-like biography is al-Mutanabbī himself, the supporting characters are the princes, rebels and slaves of the time. The major character develops in space and time gradually and logically in different social spaces.

In his childhood, he was in great pain caused by his poor lineage; in his youth he was a radical rebel seeking social justice but ended in gaol; in his manhood he was fighting with poetry in the service of his prince, Saīf al-Dawla. When he became the target of palace conspiracies and fled for his life, the stage was set for the climax of the plot. His flight to Egypt, his failure with Kāfūr and his death after the Shīrāz trip

sets up the final chapter of the novel. The secondary characters in the drama become symbols signifying the political turmoil in that era.

Yet, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn's narrative was interrupted by digressions on the various views of old and contemporary critics and historians, or on different readings into the aesthetic values of al-Mutanabbī's poetry. These digressions spoiled the continuity and fragmented the flow of episodes, shifting the whole text into a literary textual criticism of poetry. Yet, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn succeeded in bringing into bold relief the psychological features of al-Mutanabbī on the basis of Saint-Beuve's methodology, and in portraying the environment and its influences on the basis of Taine's approach. He also engaged his literary taste to explain and read into al-Mutanabbī's verse, following the line of Jules Lemaitre's impressionist method. Unlike his predecessors, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn masterfully used a multi-methodological approach to unveil the hidden depths of al-Mutanabbī .

e. Al-Maʿarrī*

The blind, philosophical poet, Abū al-ʿAlāʾ al-Maʿarrī is one of the most anxious, disturbed classical personalities, and may have not been done justice in the past or the present. Classical scholars studied al-Maʿarrī either graciously or abominably according to their subjective preference. Modernists, including Orientalists, explained al-Maʿarrī with no less subjective criteria. Modern biographers under consideration viewed al-Maʿarrī's personality in the light of the methodologies they borrowed from their European Orientalist masters.

Al-Maʿarrī was the first figure to attract wide attention and interest from the pioneers of Arab renaissance. For Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, al-Maʿarrī is an idol, perhaps, he postulates, because they both have much in common. As for al-ʿAqqād, al-Maʿarrī is a case which merits psychoanalysis.

Ṭāhā Ḥusayn tries to reconstruct al-Maʿarrī's life story, whereas al-ʿAqqād attempts to depict a section of the poet's character: his temperament .

Al-Maʿarrī, according to Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, has a unique personality which develops under circumstances of social degeneration, hence he is the product of two sets of factors, internal and external. Internally, there are his sightlessness, bashfulness, timidity, disdain, sense of honour and compassion for the weak. Externally, there are his poverty, the untimely death of his father, the corruption of political, social and

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*** For the life of al-Maʿarrī see:**

Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-Aʿyān*, Vol. 1, p. 113.

R.A. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arab*, p. 313ff.

C. Huart, *A History of Arabic Literature*, pp. 88-89.

C. Brockelmann, *Tārīkh al-Adab al-ʿArabī*, Vol. 5, p. 35.

ʿĀʾishah ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, *Abū 'l-ʿAlāʾ al-Maʿarrī* in *Abbasid Belles-lettres*, Cambridge, 1990, pp. 330ff.

Shawqī Ḍaīf, *Al-Fann wa-Madhāhibuhu fī al-Shiʿr al-ʿArabī*, pp. 376ff.

P.Smoor, *Al-Maʿarrī*, EI^2, p. 927ff.

economic life, the waning influence of religion, the spread of deception, cunning, hypocrisy, slander, defamation and self-interest together with the progress of intellectual life. In this context, al-Maʿarrī's true image, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn contends, merits an accurate reconstruction which makes the study of his character a study of his age and vice versa. To this end, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn examines al-Maʿarrī's life and the powerful factors that influence his life using the analytical tools of historical and psychological methods .(45)

Al-Maʿarrī is the product of his epoch, matured by certain political, social and economic conditions.(46) His demeanour and composition are objectively moulded by these factors.(47) Ṭāhā Ḥusayn goes into ramified details to explain the working and mechanisms of these factors in formulating al-Maʿarrī's character. Al-ʿAqqād stops short of biographical narratives, confining his presentation to the poet's melancholic, or depressed mood, as he calls it, searching for the causes behind this downcast pessimism. Al-Maʿarrī's genesis lies in internal (psychological) and external (environmental) realities. Perhaps al-ʿAqqād reproduces these factors from Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, only adding to them that al-Maʿarrī has "a masochist temper, [i.e a tendency to inflict self-torture] like any mentally disordered psychopath."(48) Al-ʿAqqād adheres to the same approach: his characters are complete and mature for they neither develop nor mutate, and he is concerned mainly with finding out the "key" to the character, a method which is shared by al-Māzinī .

In more than one hundred pages, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn studies the environment of al-Maʿarrī in such detail that it gives the impression that the author is presenting a text of Muslim history. He also reviews al-Maʿarrī's verse, prose, thought and philosophy. This part also covers some hundred pages in which Ṭāhā Ḥusayn appears more of an editor who is concerned with registering and criticising all the opposing, classical views on al- Maʿarrī. These detailed historical and literary departures steer the work

beyond the limits of biography proper into a literary history of that era. There are only one hundred pages dedicated to al-Maʿarrī's life, divided into three phases during which his soul is suffused with sorrow and agony. This gloomy mood is all the more aggravated by his failure to communicate with the others or deal with them; ultimately he is driven by this alienation into self - imposed solitude.

Ṭāhā Ḥusayn's portrayal of al-Maʿarrī's life is reminiscent, so to speak, of the novel's narrative techniques: a talented boy, born to a poor family, orphaned prematurely, loses his eyesight, migrates to different cities, Aleppo, Anṭākiya, Tripoli and Baghdad, seeking learning, good income and fame, but, being thwarted and frustrated, he retreats to his hometown to spend his life in seclusion and privacy to the last breath. The tragedy of the hero is caused by his unique psychological set-up moulded, as it were, by the circumstances under which he lived. With the journey to Baghdad, the story arrives at its sudden climax. Ṭāhā Ḥusayn is keen on explaining every single piece of behaviour and action al-Maʿarrī performs. His paranoid timidity is caused by his blindness, his compassion and sympathy for others is the source of his discontent towards human behaviour and existence; his powerful talent in writing poems of condolence (*Marāthī*) is embedded in his agony-ridden life; his self-insulation is motivated by his ascetic and puritan propensities and by the distaste he harboured for the corruption surrounding him; his concealment of his own views is prompted by the desire to avoid hostile reactions.

The narrative mould, however, lacks various elements, particularly the temporal sense of progression and sequence of events and developments which may justify al-Maʿarrī's maturity and psychological mutation. The chain of events is constantly broken by the author's commentary or by quotations of commentaries from other writers.

It seems that there is a strong reason, although yet unclear. which urges most students of Ṭāhā Ḥusayn's works to consider his *Tajdīd Dhikra Abī al-ʿAlā'* as being the first literary biography in modern Arab times.(49) In my opinion, it is an attempt to write a literary biography.(50)

Nowhere does Ṭāhā Ḥusayn seem as influenced by historical determinism as in this work. Every single phenomenon or trace is attributed to its source and genealogy. In this work on al-Maʿarrī, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn looks more of a historian. He himself admitted this fact, saying "This is a book we authored on history."(51)

In a second book, *Maʿa Abī al-ʿAlā' Fī Sijnihi*, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn shifts to another aspect of the classical poet's life: his intellectual biography, the development of his mind, his thought. Here, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn conducts what amounts to a philosophical dialogue to unravel the inner thoughts of the blind poet.

A similar philosophical reading into the mind of Abū al-ʿAlā' is also attempted by al-ʿAqqād in his *Rajʿat Abī al-ʿAlā'*.

Both Ṭāhā Ḥusayn and al-ʿAqqād sought to study and analyse the character and behaviour of al-Maʿarrī, applying two intertwined methodologies, the psychological and historical approaches. The literary scholars of the second generation in Egypt, such as Ḥamdī al-Sakkūt and jābir Qumaiḥa simply copied their example .

NOTES

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3. Hippolyte, A, Taine, *History of English Literature*, Translated from French by H. von Laun (2 vols), p. 17.
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5. M. G. Hilāl, *Al-Adab al-Muqāran*, (Cairo, 1977), pp. 52, 53, 54.
6. ʿAṭiyya ʿĀmir, *Jules Lemaitre wa-Madrasat al-Naqd al-Taʾaththurī*, Mak. al-Anglo al-Maṣriyyah, (Cairo, 1991), p. 64.
7. Ibid., p. 64.
8. J. Qumaīḥa, *Manhaj al-ʿAqqād*, p. 264; S. Quṭb, *Al-Naqd al-Adabī*, p. 115.
9. S. Quṭb, op. cit., p. 182, ʿAbd al-Wāḥid ʿAllām, *Ittijāhāt Naqd al-Shiʿr fī Miṣr 1940-1965*, (Cairo, 1979), p. 272; ʿAṭāʾ Kafāfī, *Al-Nazʿah al-Nafsiyyah fī Manhaj al-ʿAqqād al-Naqdī*, (Cairo, 1987), p. 135.
10. H. A. R. Gibb, *Studies in Contemporary Arabic Literature*, in *Bulletin* of the School of Oriental Studies, London , 1964, p. 450.
11. Ibid., p. 454.
12. Ibid., p. 461.
13. Muḥammad al-Nuwaīhī, *Shakhsiyyat Bashshār*, (Cairo, 1951), p. 144.
14. Ibid., p. 140.
15. Ibrāhīm A. al-Māzinī, *Bashshār b. Burd*, (Cairo, 1971) [first edition 1945], p. 61.
16. J. Qumaīḥa, op. cit., p. 313.
17. Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, *Ḥadīth al-Arbiʿā'*, Vol. 2, (Cairo, 1981), p. 103.
18. Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, op. cit., p. 137.
19. J. Brugman, *An Introduction to the History of Modern Arabic Literature in Egypt*, (Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1984), p. 368.
20. Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, *Ḥadīth al-Arbiʿā'*, Vol 2, p.44 [This quotation has been taken from D. Semah, *Four Egyptian Literary Critics*, p. 114].
21. ʿĀṭāʾ Kafāfī, op. cit., p. 348.

22. ʿAbbās Maḥmūd al-ʿAqqād, *Abū Nuwās al-Ḥasan b. Hāniʾ*, (Cairo, n.d.). p. 31.
23. Ibid., p. 40.
24. Muḥammad al-Nuwaihi, *Nafsiyyat Abī Nuwās* [see pp. 199-201].
25. Al-ʿAqqād, *Abū Nuwās*, p. 88.
26. Ibid., p. 106.
27. Ibid., p. 129.
28. Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, *Khiṣām wa-Naqd*, (Beirut, 1973), p. 679.
29. Ibid., p. 681.
30. Ibid, p. 690.

30A. See the chapter on ʿAbd al- Raḥmān Ṣidqī pp. 179-189.

31. J. Qumayḥa, *Manhaj al-ʿAqqād*, p. 471.
32. See Ibn al-Rūmī as represented by al-Māzinī, pp.133-135, al-ʿAqqād, pp.110-126112 , al-Nuwaihi, pp.195-197, and Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, pp.89-90.
33. See Al-ʿAqqād, *Athr al-ʿArab fī al-Ḥaḍāra al-Gharbiyya* and al-Nuwaihi, *Thaqāfat al-Nāqid al-Adabī*, (Cairo, 1949), p. 198.
34. See al-Nuwaihi, Portrait of Ibn al-Rūmī, pp.195-197.
35. See al-Māzinī, , Portrait of al-Mutanabbī, pp. 135-137.
36. ʿAbbās Maḥmūd al-ʿAqqād, *Muṭālaʿāt fī al-Kutub wa-al-Ḥayāh*, (Cairo, 1924), p. 150.
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39. Ibid., p. 11.
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41. Al-ʿAqqād, *Muṭālaʿāt*, op. cit., p. 143.
42. Ibid., p. 130.
43. Ṭaha Ḥusayn, op. cit., p. 161.
44. Ibrāhīm ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Muḥammad, op. cit., p. 27.
45. Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, *Tajdīd Dhikra Abī al-ʿAlāʾ*, (Cairo, 1937), p. 13.
46. Ibid., p. 17.
47. Ibid., p. 16.
48. Al-ʿAqqād, *Al-Fuṣūl*, (Cairo, 1922), p. 23.

48. Al-ʿAqqād, *Al-Fuṣūl*, (Cairo, 1922), p. 23.

49. Ḥamdī al-Sakkūt and Marsden Jones, *Aʿlām al-Adab al-ʿArabī al-Muʿāṣir fī Miṣr, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn*, Vol 1, (Cairo, 1975), p.28, and J. Qumeiha, op. cit., p.69.

50. See Chapter 4, Ṭahā Ḥusayn.

51. Ṭahā Ḥusayn, *Tajdīd*, op. cit., p. 291.

CONCLUSION

This thesis is an attempt to fill a lacuna in modern Arabic literature. The majority of the studies in this field have concentrated on genres such as poetry, prose and the theatre, which flourished more or less at the same time with the beginning of this century.

Biography in general was a pivotal subject in classical Arabic literature, e.g. Ibn Khallikān and his book, *Wafayāt al-Aʿyān wa-Anbāʾ Abnāʾ al-Zamān* (*Obituaries of Eminent Men and Notices of the Sons of the Epoch*). This book is a good example of Arabic biographical dictionaries. Some Orientalists (M. Young), however, have considered this book a combination of the features of *Who's Who* and a *Dictionary of National Biography.*

Literary biography in Egypt is, relatively, a new literary genre, which has been dealt with in a very scanty way by mainly non-professional critics. Added to this, there has been confusion in general terms in the conception itself, which resulted from mixing between literary, political and historical biography. I have therefore tried to offer the reader a more academic dimension, as it is normally found in European literature.

Compared to other genres, literary biography has not been given due attention within the general framework of the modern thought.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the first attempts to write literary biographies were initiated by members of an enlightened elite, basing themselves on the introduction and employment of methodologies which were, perhaps, archaic or well-known in their country of origin, but which were totally novel in Arab thought in general.

Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, al-ʿAqqād, al-Māzinī, Zakī Mubārak, al-ʿIryān, Ṣidqī and al-Nuwaihī, leaned in their biography writing on European methods. Of course, embracing a method theoretically is one thing, and applying it successfully is another. Hence, Egyptian applications were of divergent value in terms of skill, style and artistry.

A case in point is the application of psychoanalysis by al-Nuwāihī in his research on Bashshār, Abū Nuwās and Ibn al-Rūmī, or by al-ʿAqqād in his study of Abū Nuwās and others.

By dint of his academic training and direct contact with the West, i.e. France. Ṭāhā Ḥusayn was the most prominent initiator of this trend. He adopted and introduced the various methodologies of French critics and thinkers like Saint-Beuve, Hippolyte Taine, Brunetiere and Lemaitre. At times he employed their respective methods in combination irrespective of whether or not, or to what extent he was or was not, successful in this application or combination.

In addition to the role played by Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, the greatest contribution in this respect was made by Cairo University. It is this institution that invited and delegated orientalist scholars to assume an enlightening role in accordance with a wider plan envisaged to put the Egyptian society on the road of scientific progress.

Al-ʿAqqād on his part tried to continue the efforts initiated by his contemporary, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, and consolidate the theory of biography in Arabic literature. His vast readings and knowledge of English gave him access to wider European methodologies from French, German and English schools. He digested these systems and yielded a deep, comprehensive method although it was unsuccessful in certain applications. Al-ʿAqqād was prolific in producing every kind of biographical essay. Unlike Ṭāhā Ḥusayn who was confined to the French literature, al-ʿAqqād fell under different influences from Carlyle, to Strachey, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, Beuve, Taine and Freud. And his short or long, literary biographies constituted thoughtful attempts to lay the foundations of this art.

Al-Māzinī's method echoed that of al-ʿAqqād. This similarity may well be attributed to the strong friendship between the two men and the English education al- Māzinī had. Al-ʿIryān, on the other hand, produced one work, *Ḥayāt al-Rāfiʿī*, which followed the example of Western novel-biography, or what is called a rounded biography. To

a great extent, al-ʿIryān's text resembles the work of Mīkhāʾīl Nuʿayma on the life of Jibrān Khalīl Jibrān. *Ḥayāt al-Rāfiʿī* should be put in its right place on the literary map in Egypt .

Lastly, al-Nuwaihī was so entangled in the web of the laboratories of psycho-analysis that he overstretched the application of their concepts beyond any reasonable limits.

On the other hand, there appeared traditional biographers whose texts were set within the limits of collecting and presenting the good deeds of their subject, supplemented with life details like date and place of birth and death, together with selective texts (e.g. chapter three)

Examples of both the modernists and the traditionalists have been supplied and reviewed in an attempt to deduce the method of biography writing in Egypt during the first half of the twentieth century. In general, these attempts wavered between modern thoughtful creations and shallow traditional ones .

Biography is not only the art that deals with lineage, date of birth and death, childhood, education and travels, achievements, appointments and hobbies. It is a penetration into the soul and private life of the person studied offering the reader an analysis of a character by assessing the biographee's personality. A biographer has, therefore, great responsibility because he often has to expose and highlight areas which are either unknown or deliberately hidden from the public eye. It seems to me that the Egyptian biographers I dealt with have met in part some of these criteria.

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