

The Arabic Novel: An Overview of the History and Evolution of the Genre

Sayar Ahmad Najar

Research Scholar

Islamic University of Science & Technology

Awantipora Kashmir.

E-mail: sayarnajar000@gmail.com

Dr Irshad Ahmad Mir

Assistant Professor

Islamic University of Science & Technology

Awantipora Kashmir.

E-mail: irshadmira999@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

When we talk about the novel in Arabic literature, we can certainly find it in classical Arabic literature along with various other forms of literature. The Arabic novel passed through different periods such as the Pre-Islamic period, the Umayyad era, the Abbasid era, and the Modern era, but in the Pre-Islamic era, it was not known as the novel because it was not an art form. But as time passed, the concept of the novel gradually came to people's minds. Many things have been written in this form of literature, for example, the (إخوان الصفاء), Kalila and Dimna by Ibn al-Muqaffa, the Maqamat of Hamzani and Hariri, the Hadith Issa ibn Hisham by Muhammad al-Mawili etc. But it wasn't an art form. Its real development began when Rifa'a Al-Tahtawi translated the French novel "The Adventures of Telemac" by the artist Fenlon. Then a lot of Arab writers went to Europe and translated European literature into Arabic literature, for example. Mustafa Lutfi Al-Manfaluti. Then in 1913 when "Zeinab" (زينب) came to Hussein Haykal, almost all critics of Arabic literature agreed that this novel was in real form. Then, after a lot of novels, came many great novelists in Arabic literature who contributed to this form of literature (the novel), for example, Tawfiq al-Hakim, Naguib Mahfouz, Najib al-Kilani, Ali Ahmed Bakathir, etc.

KEYWORDS

Al Quran; Hadiths; Fiction; Maqama; The Adventures of Telemac; Zeinab.

INTRODUCTION

The roots of the Arabic novel are commonly found in the renaissance that reached its climax in the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the last century, and its contribution to the cultural renaissance of the nineteenth century in creating the Arabic novel genre, Roger Allen says: "Two primary forces: the

exposure to and importation of Western Literary genres on the one hand, and on the other the rediscovery of the cultural heritage of the past." (Allen, Roger 1)

Classical Arabic literature contains a rich set of narrative forms, such as Fiction, Biography, the Hadith, the Lines, the Scarcity, and the Maqama. The novel as we know it today does not exist in classical

Arabic literature, but it was introduced to the Arab world by European novels that were translated and then imitated by Arab writers in the second half of the nineteenth century. Roger Allen in his book, *The Arabic Novel: An Historical and Critical Introduction*, explains the appearance of the novel in Arabic literature in terms of a clash between the old and the new, the traditional and the modern, and this means the conflict between the West and its culture and modern sciences on the one hand, and the classical heritage and culture on the other. (Allen, Roger 2)

If we look at the literature of the Arabic language with a deep look, we can find that fiction already existed in Arab literature since the Pre-Islamic era, i.e. in the general sense for example night or evening chatting and stories such as the story of Zenobia, the Queen of Palmyra, the story of Antar, the story of Al-Zeer Salem bin Hilal etc, but not in a special sense, i.e. in the artistic form of literature. People in this era tell stories at night about their ancestors, idols, and others that they believed in the Pre-Islamic era. It was no longer possible for them to write it down, but rather they transmitted it between them in night chatting, and each transmitter was transferred according to his ability and talent, until the original words changed, and it reached us with the words of different dialects. (Al Mowafi 3)

It is known that people loved war stories in the Pre-Islamic era because Fiction is not new to all of our literature. In Pre-Islamic literature, there are many fictions that revolve around the days of the Arabs and their wars. (Daif, Shawqi 4) It is the story that revolves around the events of the war that took place in the Pre-Islamic era between tribes, such as:

يوم داحس والغبراء، ويوم الفجار والكلاب and between the Arabs and other nations such as: ذي قار Dhi Qar, and these fictions were the subject of the Arabs in their Samar in their

ignorance period and in their Islamic period.(Amin, Ahmed 5)

If we talk about the proverb in Pre-Islamic prose, it is a truncated sentence of saying, and this type of prose is known to the Arabs in their social life and their individual incidents. Many Arabs in the Pre-Islamic era were famous for setting examples, including Luqman Aad, Aktham bin Saifi and others. And the famous proverbs are:

وافق شَنْ طَبَقَةً، ولأمر ماجدع قصيرُ أنفه. ويداك أو كتنا وفوك نفخ.

Many researchers have tried to collect and explain these proverbs, the most famous of which is al-Maidani. He collected his book "Majma' al-Amthal" "مجمع الأمثال" from about fifty books. (Al Zzyat 6) And the Pre-Islamic people excelled in this type of literature and left us with more evidence of their mentality and morals than poetry and fiction because proverbs are the words of people in all their classes, they consider them about their different conditions and their own mentality. (Al Fakhoury' Hanna 7) As for "Al Hikmah" (الحكمة) it is a saying that is high, good, great and wonderful. As Ahmed Hassan al-Zayyat says: "Al Hikmah (Wisdom) is a wonderful saying that agrees with the truth and is safe from tampering. It is the fruit of wisdom, the result of the expert and the summary of experience, as they say: من الخطأ زاد العجول. من سلك الجدد أمن العثار. عي صامت الخير من عي ناطق". (Al Zzyat 8) (Translated from Arabic)

As for "الخطابة" (Sermon) in the Pre-Islamic era, it depended on Bedouin because the Arab tribes were Bedouin, and were not subject to written laws or governmental regulations, so the sermon was innate in the Pre-Islamic era. And the preacher pushes himself and his people through the sermon, in attitudes of bragging and incompatibility, defending honour and loyalty, reconciling it between neighbourhood and neighborhood or between tribe and tribe, and calling for understanding and reconciliation, for all of these many preachers had a great affair.

However, he did not tell us about their sermons, but something a little messed up in the historical books. (Al Fakhoury' Hanna 9) Concerning the definition of Sermon, Ahmad Hasan al-Zzyat says:

Sermon is like poetry, bound by imagination and filled with eloquence. It is a manifestation of freedom and chivalry, and a way of influence and contentment. It requires a subtlety of tongue, clarity of statement, elegance of dialect, and intuition. (Al Zzyat 10)
(Translated from Arabic)

As for the style of sermon, it was a wonderful pronunciation, a clear approach, a fascinating phrase, many proverbs, and a short rhyme. The most famous Pre-Islamic preachers are Qays ibn Sa'd Al-Ayadi, Amr ibn Ma'adi Yakrib, Amr ibn Kulthum Al-Taghlibi, Aktham ibn Sayfi and so on. (Al Fakhoury 11)

Then, when Islam appeared, the Arabic language expanded with the light and help of Holy Qur'an, and people were busy reciting it and learning it. The word "Qassis" (قصص) has been used in the Holy Qur'an, and it contains a noble surah on this name i.e., 'Surat Al-Qasas', and the Holy Qur'an itself confirms these stories, as a verse came in 'Surat Yusuf' as Allah says: "We do relate unto thee the most beautiful of stories, in that We reveal to thee this (portion of the) Qur'an: before this thou too was among those who knew it not." (The Holy Qur'an 12)

But the Noble Qur'an did not tell these stories for the sake of people's taste, but rather to advise people. There are many stories in the Holy Qur'an, such as the historical, representative, mythical, and so on. As for the historical story, it may revolve around personalities from the past, for example, the Prophets and Messengers, their ages and their facts. It uses history, but it is not a presentation of it. It means other than what is intended, and presents other than what is presented. It may intentionally omit specifying the time,

mentioning the place, naming the characters, and the familiar definition for people named or rearranged in such a way that the forest achieves storytelling, it demands influence and seeks persuasion. (Dr. Makki 13) Imam Sheikh Muhammad Abduh comments when explaining this type of story and says:

Many of the enemies of the Qur'an blame the lack of order in the stories... The answer to this suspicion is understood from what we have repeatedly said about the stories of the Prophets and nations mentioned in the Qur'an. This is that he did not mean by history and narration and the facts are arranged according to the times of their occurrence, but rather what is meant by consideration and exhortation, the statement of blessings related to their causes to ask for them. And the statement of resentment Balalha to pious part. And when this is the purpose of the context, then the arrangement of the facts in the dhikr must be in the manner that is more eloquent in remembrance and more effective (Tafseer Munar 14)

As for the representative story, it may mean the statement and clarification, or explanation and interpretation, it is not necessary in the events to be time, or in the persons to be present, or in the dialogue that will be issued, but it is sufficient in all this imposition and imagination. As Sayed Rashid Rida says in his interpretation: "The Qur'an often depicts meanings by expressing them in the form of a question and answer, or in the manner of narration because of the elucidation and influence that it has, as Allah says: The Day We will ask Hell, "Art thou filled to the full?" It will say: "Are there any more (to come.) (Al Qur'an 15) What is meant is not that Allah asks questions from it and it responds to him, rather it is a representation of her sting, and that it does not narrow the

criminals, no matter how many they are. And towards His saying, the Almighty, after mentioning the equator to the creation of the heavens: "He said to it and to the earth: "Come ye together, willingly or unwillingly." They said: "We do come (together), in willing obedience." (Al Qur'an 16)

As for the mythical story (القصة الأسطورية), it may contradict both of the previous two colors. It is not from the realistic historical events that the Qur'an intends and arranges in order to achieve the purpose of its presentation. And it is not a representative story or imposed or imagined events, but rather an entire story, a name that some scholars dislike, and others permitted. (Dr. Makki 17) And Imam Muhammad Abduh says in the interpretation of Al-Manar when interpreting the story "Harut and Marut" ((هاروت وماروت)) :

We have shown more than once that the stories came in the Qur'an for the purpose of admonition and consideration, not to clarify history or to induce belief in the details of the news of the bygone, and that it is narrated from their beliefs, truth and falsehood, Among their true and false traditions, and among their beneficial and harmful habits, for the sake of admonition and consideration, the tale of the Qur'an does not go beyond the place of the lesson and does not go beyond the place of guidance, and it must come in the phrase or the context and the style of the system that indicates the approval of the good and the disapproval of the ugly. In the narration, he may come up with expressions used by the suitors or told about them, even if they are not true in themselves, as Allah says: "Whom the Satan by his touch hath driven to madness." (Al Qur'an 18) And he says: "Until, when he came to the rising of the sun." (Al Qur'an

19) This method is familiar, as we see many Arab repenters and writers of the Franks mentioning the gods of good and evil in their sermons and articles, especially in the context of their talk about the ancient Greeks and Egyptians, and none of them believed any of these pagan myths. (Tafseer Munar 20)

There may be many stories in the honourable events that were written down and collected after the departure of the Prophet, peace and blessings are upon him, as mentioned by Dr. Abdul Razzaq Al-Mawafi:

In the noble hadith there are many stories, but nonetheless, they were memorized and written down as they were said - it was closer to the written text, and for this reason, it contained narrative techniques, and from Examples of these stories: the story of the three who were imprisoned in the cave, the story of the penitent and the monk, the story of the owners of the groove - and so on. (Al Mowafi 21)

Fiction was present in the Umayyad era, although it was not yet mature in terms of art. We find there is fiction that also exists, such as "مجنون ليلي", "جميل بثينة", and "قيس لبنى", and these stories depend on history. The theme of these stories is "Virgin Love or Platonic Love" (الحب العذري). We find there is another type of story, which is "The Rake's Love" (الخب الخليع), and a pioneer of this type of fictions is "Omar bin Abi Rabia", but it is less important than the first type in terms of virginity and virginal technique.

And after that comes the Abbasid era, which is known as the Golden Age, and we find there in the fourth century AH the book "الإنسان والحيوان" written by the "إخوان الصفاء" and this book is an example of the type of Fictions that are being presented. As for "Kalila and Dimna" by Ibn al-Muqaffa, this book is an example of

transmitted stories. Arabic literature has been greatly influenced by this book so that we can look at how the "إخوان الصفاء" composed "The Man and the Animal", so it takes them a great impact from Kalila and Dimna. After that, if we talk about the "Maqams" (مقامات) of Badi' al-Zaman al-Hamadhani and al-Hariri, and al-Zamakhshari, these Maqamas were the first stages of the Modern Arab Fiction, and all of the writers take a trace of this art, so this type of art spread widely. Sheikh Nassif Al-Yazji also wrote the "Majm ul Bahrain" (مجمع البحرين), which is a collection of Maqamas, After that, Ahmad Faris al-Shidyaq composed 'Al-Fariq' (الفريق) as he was greatly influenced by the Maqamat environment. Then comes the great writer Muhammad al- Muwaylihi's (1858-1930), who wrote the "Hadith Isa bin Hisam," (حديث عيسى بن هشام) as Abdul Mohsen Taha Badr says about him:

closer to the erected than to the novel, and instead of Hafez trying to portray society and its flaws through the behavior of individuals, their movement and their behavior, as Al Muwailihi did, we see him suffice By passing judgments on society through these problems which he presented to "Sateeh" and asked for his opinion on them." (Badr 22) And Hafez Ibrahim wrote, "Layali Satih" (ليالي سطيح), both of which are also in the style of the Maqamat. As for "Risalat ul Gufraan," (رسالة الغفران) this Risala also takes place according to the pattern of the Maqamat, because al-Ma'arri died after al-Hamadhani. (Taimur 23)

After that, if we talk about another stage, i.e., the translation stage, Mustafa Lutfi Al-Manfaluti knew at this stage, who translated many novels such as "Cyrano de Bergerac" under the name "The Poet or Cyrano de Bergerac" and "Paul and Virginia" under the title "Al Fazila or Paul and Virginia" etc. (Al Adab 24)

It is known that the first step of contemporary Arab Fiction is the fiction of "Zenobia", which was written by Salim al-Bustani (1848-1884) in the year 1781 AD. As Anwar al-Jundi said in his famous book: These steps were a prelude to composing the contemporary Arab story, and the consensus of historians and researchers is that Salim al-Bustani was the first to write the fiction in 1781, which is the story of "Zenobia". It revolved around the conflict that took place between the queen of Palmyra and the pomegranate in the third century. It was published as a series in Al-Jinan magazine. (Algendy 25)

But to these writers, the Fiction did not appear as artistic, even until the First World War, and after that many writers and thinkers gathered, including Ahmad Dayf (1880-1945), Hussein Heikal (1888-1956), Taha Hussein (1889-1973), Mansour Fahmy (1886-1959), Mustafa 'Abd al-Raziq (1885-1947) and others who felt that the artistic fiction is present in Western literature Not in Arabic literature, so they called for renewal in various types of literature which resulted in the appearance of the novel "Zainab" (زينب) in 1913 AD, but its author first published it under the title "مناظر وأخلاق ريفية للفلاح" "المصري", and its theme was love, and it is the first work of artistic fiction in Arabic literature. After that, "Mahmoud Taymour (1894-1973)" returned from France and wrote artistic Fictions and Drams on color skits. After that, many novels appeared in terms of art, such as "ثريا" (1922 AD) by Issa Obeid and "رجب أفندي" (1928 AD) and "الأطلال" (1934 AD) by Mahmoud Taymour and "حواء بلا آدم, Eve without Adam" (1933 AD) by Mahmud Tahir Lashin etc. (Al Baarodi 26)

After that, Muhammad Farid Abu Hadid wrote the historical novel "إبنة المملوك" in 1926 AD, Abbas Mahmoud al-Aqqad wrote the novel "سارة" in 1938 AD, and Ibrahim al-Mazini wrote a novel under

the name "إبراهيم الثاني" and "إبراهيم الكاتب" and "عود على بدء" (1943) etc.

After that, many writers turned to this art and contributed to the development of the novel until they established its bases in Arabic literature, such as Taha Hussein, who wrote "الأيام" (1929 AD), "The Tree of Misery, i.e. شجرة البؤس" (1944 AD), "دعاء الكروان" (1934 AD) and "أديب" (1955 AD). Tawfiq al-Hakim, who wrote many novels, including "The Return of the Spirit, i.e. عودة الروح" (1927 AD), "A Bird from the East, i.e. عصفور من الشرق" (1938 AD), "Diary of a Representative in the Countryside, i.e. يوميات نائب في الأرياف" (1938 AD), "حماد الحكيم" (1940 AD) and "The Holy Rabat, i.e. الرباط المقدس" (1944 AD). etc. And the famous novelist Naguib Mahfouz, who won the International Nobel Prize in 1988 for his novel "أولاد حارتنا". He wrote many historical and social novels, such as "Mockery of The Fates, i.e. عبث الأقدار" (1939), "خان الخليلى" (1945), "Cairo Modern, i.e. القاهرة الجديدة" (1946), "Midaq Alley, i.e. زقاق المدق" (1947), "The Beginning and the End", "بداية ونهاية", "The Mirage", "السراب", "The Trilogy {قصر الشوق، السكرية}" (1956-1957) and "أولاد حارتنا" (1959) and etc. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Naguib_Mahfouz 27)

These are also the most important novelists who devoted themselves to the art of the novel, Yusuf Sibai, who wrote "إني راحلة, i.e. I am going away" (1950) and "بين الأطلال, i.e. In the ruins", "رد قلبي, i.e. Give back my Heart" etc. and Ali Ahmad Bakathir who wrote "وا إسلاماه, i.e. Oh Islam", "سيرة شجاع, i.e. The Biography of The Brave", "ليلة النهر, i.e. The Night of the River," etc.

Conclusion

The conclusion came out from the said article that the Novel was already present in Arabic Literature but not in the form of Art. So, this type of literature in the Arabic language became art when it passed through the different periods and when the Arab writers went to the West and got influence from the west writers and literature, and after that they translated lot of work from Western Literature to Arabic Literature whether from English literature or from French Literature. Now they become able to write this kind of literature which was fully in Aratistic form. Then they classified it in different kinds of literature. i.e. Novel, Short Story, Drama etc. Hence after that lot of Novels had been written in Arabic Literature which became so famous that they were translated into different languages of the world whether in English Language or in French or in Urdu.

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Mr Sayar Ahmad Najar did his MA in Arabic language and literature from IUST Awantipora Kashmir. He qualified JK SET from J&K Set agency, Kashmir University. He is pursuing PhD from IUST Awantipora Kashmir. He has written more than six national and international research papers and participated in many national and international conferences and Seminars.

Dr Irshad Ahmad Mir did his post-graduation from AMU Aligarh and M Phil and PhD from EFLU Hyderabad. After completion of PhD, he was appointed as Assistant Professor on substamtive position at IUST Awantipora. He has written more than twenty national and international research papers and has participated in many national and international seminars.