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The Popular Arabic Novel of the Nineteenth Century: A Survey

The novel is, like the drama and the short story, a late-comer into Arabic literature. Although the Arabs have always had a narrative literature of some kind, they did not write any novels until the end of the nineteenth century. It is true that narrative elements can be found in the seven pre-Islamic odes known as *mu'allaqāt*, and that other early narrative genres such as *sīra*, *qaṣaṣ*, and *maqāmāt* have had a considerable influence on the novelistic attempts made in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but in spite of this, the Arabic novel was created and developed in close imitation of its European counterpart.

At the end of the nineteenth century a group of Syrian and Lebanese writers – mostly Christian – came to settle in Cairo in order to flee the religious and political persecutions which led to the infamous Drūz and Christian massacres of 1860.[1] They founded a number of daily newspapers such as *al-Ahrām* (1876) and *al-Moqaṭṭam* (1889), or weekly magazines and monthly periodicals such as *al-Moqtaṭaf* (transferred from Beirut to Cairo in 1884), *al-Hilāl* (1892), and *al-Jāmi'ah* (1899) in which they published their writings. They began by experimenting with the novel and other literary genres unknown to the Arab world and dealt with themes and motifs unfamiliar to their Moslem countrymen such as free love, adultery, and women's emancipation. But in spite of the very modest literary and artistic merit of their adventure stories and romantic tales, these new settlers monopolized the popular book market within a very short time and led the readers away from the traditional Arabic genres which were being produced in Cairo by theologians, intellectuals, and linguists. Later, when the Egyptian authors realized that the Syrian and Lebanese writers had captured their readers, they decided to accept the challenge and imitate these imported modes, themes, and styles. But before looking at these popular literary 'imitations,' it might be advisable to examine a few of the 'traditional' prose narratives of the late nineteenth century for they would undoubtedly shed some light on the forms

1 See 'Abd al-Moḥsen Ṭāhā Badr, *Taṭawor al-Riwāyah al-'Arabīyah al-Ḥadīthah fi Miṣr* (1870-1938) (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'āref 1963) 119.

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and contents which dominated the literary scene before the debarkation of the European novel.

The best representatives of these 'traditional' Arabic narratives are Rifā'ah al-Ṭahṭāwi's two works, *Takhlīṣ al-Ebrīz fi Talkhīṣ Bārīz* (Cairo 1834) and *Waqā'i' Tilmāk* (Beirut 1867), and 'Alī Mubārak's *'Alam al-Dīn* (Cairo 1883). Other significant works in this vein, such as Muḥammad al-Muwilḥī's *Ḥadīth 'Isa Ibn Hishām* (1905) and Ḥāfiẓ Ibrāhīm's *Layālī Saṭīḥ* (1909), were written early in the twentieth century and are, therefore, beyond the scope of this survey.

In *Takhlīṣ al-Ebrīz fi Talkhīṣ Bārīz* ('The Purification of Gold in a Summary Presentation of Paris'), Rifā'ah al-Ṭahṭāwi (1801-73) depicts the educational journey of an Egyptian young man to Paris, 'the capital of European culture,'[2] and his stay in France which lasted five years (1826-31). Due to the didactic and erudite nature of this book, it has been either ignored by literary historians or simply dismissed as a travelogue that has very limited novelistic elements;[3] seldom has it been labelled 'an amusing story which depicts an unusual journey.'[4] There is no doubt that al-Ṭahṭāwi has overburdened several chapters of his book with instructive and factual information, and that he has included a very limited amount of entertaining details; but this will not change the fact that besides being an important cultural document, *Takhlīṣ al-Ebrīz* is one of the earliest *Bildungsromane* in Arabic literature, for Rifā'ah al-Ṭahṭāwi has also dealt with the protagonist's inner self and reflected upon his very intimate feelings, especially in the first two 'Essays' of his book. The theme of an Oriental young man leaving his country, facing different cultural and ideological challenges, and then coming to terms with the positive and negative aspects of another civilization was introduced here for the first time into modern Arabic literature; and for later generations of Arab writers, this theme would prove to be one of the most fertile topics.[5]

Takhlīṣ al-Ebrīz consists of three major parts: the 'Introduction' (23

2 Mahdi 'Allām, Aḥmad Aḥmad Badawī, and Anwar Lūqa, eds.. Preface, *Takhlīṣ al-Ebrīz fi Talkhīṣ Barīz*, by Rifa'āh Badawī Rāfi' al-Ṭahṭāwi (Cairo: Ministry of Culture and National Guidance 1958) 8 (my translation).

3 See Badr, 54.

4 *Takhlīṣ al-Ebrīz*, Preface, 8 (my translation)

5 Some of the Arab writers who dealt with this theme are 'Alī Mubārak, Niqōla Ḥaddād, Bayram al-Tūnisī, Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm, Yaḥya Ḥaqqī, Dhun-nun Ayyūb, and al-Ṭayyib Sāleh. See Fātimah Mūsā, *Fi al-Riwāyah al-'Arabiyah al-Mu'āṣerah* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Anglo al-Miṣrīyah 1972) 232.

pp.), the 'Objective' (218 pp.), and the 'Conclusion' (15 pp.). In the 'Introduction,' which has three subsections, the author explains the reasons behind the protagonist's voyage to France, the 'center of nihilism and pertinacity,'[6] and comments on both Arabic and European cultures in general terms. The 'Objective' is divided into six 'Essays,' which are then subdivided into 'Chapters.' In the first two essays the author depicts the sea journey from Alexandria to Marseilles, which lasts thirty-three days, and records his first impressions of France and his feelings towards these unfamiliar surroundings. In the third essay he registers insipid scientific information and dull statistical data about Paris, its people, and its institutions. Being aware of the tedious nature of these digressions, al-Ṭahṭāwi often attempts to justify the inclusion of such passages and even apologizes to the reader for inserting them. The fourth essay deals with the protagonist's aspirations and describes the many intellectual and cultural obstacles he had to overcome before finishing his studies in Paris and returning home to Egypt. In the last two essays the author presents a historical and political study of France during the 1820s and 1830s, discusses the scientific and scholarly achievements of the French people, and comments on their progress in the various fields of knowledge. In the 'Conclusion' he returns to the private life of the central character and cites the intellectual gains which resulted from his sojourn in France.

The importance of this 'novel' lies in the fact that it presents 'the first complete picture of an East-West encounter,'[7] and depicts the hopes, experiences, and accomplishments of a young man, who, like the protagonists of other *Bildungsromane*, is trying to reach a certain intellectual ideal and achieve a specific educational level.

Rifā'ah al-Ṭahṭāwi's next work, *Waqā'i' Tilmāk* ('The Battles of Telemachus', 1867), is a free translation of François Fénelon's political novel, *Télémaque* (1699). Like Fénelon, al-Ṭahṭāwi keeps in the background of the novel the adventures Telemachus encounters while searching for his father, Odysseus, and he stresses the many political and moral issues he deals with. By referring to the despotic Khedive 'Abbās — who sent al-Ṭahṭāwi into exile in the Sudan — and by condemning his corrupt regime in a veiled manner, al-Ṭahṭāwi introduced the *roman à clef* for the first time into Arabic literature. His criticism of the social norms and moral attitudes of his countrymen, which was the main objective of al-Ṭahṭāwi in all his endeavours, makes this didactic story the earliest Arabic novel of manners. Due to the author's very daring

6 '... diyār Kufr wa 'inād,' *Takhlīṣ al-Ebrīz*, 59 (my translation)

7 *Takhlīṣ al-Ebrīz*, Preface, 8 (my translation)

political allusions and uncompromising ethical stand, *Waqā'i' Tilmāk* had to be published in Beirut, where it became popular and was reprinted in 1885.

Another significant novel of the nineteenth century is 'Alī Mubārak's three-volume work, *'Alam al-Dīn*, which was published in Cairo in 1883. The similarities between *'Alam al-Dīn* and al-Ṭahṭāwi's *Takhlīṣ al-Ebrīz* are striking, for both deal with the experiences of an Oriental man in Europe, and both use this philosophical and cultural confrontation between East and West to point out to their readers some of the negative aspects of the European way of life, and to urge them to retain their traditional customs and habits.

The protagonist, 'Alam al-Dīn, is – like the author himself – a graduate of al-Azhar Islamic University. When asked by an English tourist to escort him back to England in order to teach him the Arabic language, 'Alam al-Dīn accepts this cultural challenge and leaves for England accompanied by his son, Burhān al-Dīn. And although the book starts like an amusing story, the reader soon discovers that the author is more interested in discussing serious cultural issues than in depicting exciting incidents or portraying dramatic characters. The few events that take place in this work are used as a springboard for endless digressions, fervent contemplations, and ponderous discussions. And for these qualities, *'Alam al-Dīn* is now regarded as an important cultural document rather than a literary work.

In spite of the fact that works by al-Ṭahṭāwi, 'Alī Mubārak, and other traditional writers were enjoying relative popularity, the Syrian and Lebanese immigrants succeeded with great ease in attracting the readers of fiction and in controlling the mass literature market with their adventure stories and purely entertaining romances. With the exception of a very few highly educated authors such as Jirjī Zaydān and Khalīl Maṭrān, these writer-translators were ill trained and of limited talent and deserve some of the severe criticism directed at them by intellectuals such as Fatḥī Zaghlūl and Lewis Shaykhū.[8]

At the outset, these Syrian and Lebanese writer-translators published their tales, stories, and serialized novels in the already existing newspapers and magazines and in the periodicals they themselves had founded. And while the traditional and more sombre Egyptian newspapers, such as *al-Mo'ayyid*, *al-Manār*, *al-Liwā'* and *al-Jarīdah*, were gradually losing their readers, the new publications thrived and multiplied. Some of the best-known ones are: *Montakhabāt al-Riwāyāt*

8 See Badr, 118.

('Selected novels,' founded in 1894 by Iskandar Karkūr); *Silsilat al-Riwāyāt* ('Novel Series,' founded in 1899 by Bashīr al-Ḥalabī and Muḥammad Khidr); *al-Riwāyāt al-Shahīrah* (The Famous Novels,' founded in 1901 by Ya'qūb Jamāl)'; and many more.[9]

Most of the stories published in these magazines and periodicals were free and defective translations of popular European novels and romances with neither author nor correct title given. Works by Walter Scott, Alexandre Dumas (père), Victor Hugo, Charles Dickens, W.M. Thackeray, Leo Tolstoi, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, and others, were translated, abridged and imitated several times by different writer-translators. Some of the works that dominated the literary scene at the turn of the century were Arabic translations of Walter Scott's *The Talisman* (trans. Ya'qūb Sarrūf), Alexandre Dumas' *Les Trois Mousquetaires* (trans. Najīb Ḥaddād) and *Le Comte de Monte-Cristo* (trans. Bishārah Shadīd), Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* (trans. Ḥāfiẓ Ibrāhīm), Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's *Paul et Virginie* (trans. 'Uthmān Jalāl), Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities* (trans. Muḥammad al-Sibā'ī), W.M. Thackeray's *Henry Esmond* (an abridged translation was made by Wahbī Mos'ad who claimed its authorship), and Leo Tolstoi's *Resurrection* (trans. Rashīd Ḥaddād) and *Family Happiness* (trans. Bibāwī Ghāli).[10]

While a few translators claimed the authorship of the works they rendered into Arabic (Aḥmad Ḥāfiẓ 'Awaḍ, 'Abd al-Qādir Ḥamzah, and Wahbī Mos'ad), others gave their translations new titles and dropped the authors' names (Ṭanyus 'Abdoh, Shākir Shuqayr, and Niqōlah Rizq Allah); a thrid group abridged or changed the originals to a degree that made them hardly recognizable (Najīb Mikha'īl Gharghūr, Muḥammad Kāmel Ḥajāj, and Ya'qūb Ṣarrūf). However, the most curious socio-cultural phenomenon of this epoch was that some Arabic writers who did not rely on European models denied the authorship of their works and preferred to be regarded as mere translators rather than as novelists or storytellers; Niqōla Ḥaddād's *al-Ḥaqībah al-Zarqā'* ('The Blue Valise')

9 Others are: *Musāmarāt al-Nadīm* ('Confidant's Entertainment,' founded in 1903 by Ibrāhīm Ramzī); *Musāmarāt al-Sha'b* ('People's Entertainment,' founded in 1904); *al-Fukāhāt al-'Aṣriyah* ('Contemporary Humour,' founded in 1908 by 'Abd Allah Ghazālah al-Ḥalabī); *al-Musāmarāt al-Isbū'iyah* ('Weekly Entertainment,' founded in Alexandria in 1909); *Musāmarāt al-Mulūk* ('Kings' Entertainment,' founded in 1912 by Alfred Khūri); *al-Musāmarāt* ('The Entertainment,' founded in 1921 by Ḥasan Hilāl and Muḥammad Basyūnī); and *al-Nadīm al-Riwā'ī* ('The Narrative Confidant,' founded in 1922).

10 Among the favoured translators one also finds Nasīb al-Mash'alāni, Ricardo Ṣolbār, George Ṭannūs, Muḥammad Luṭfī, Na'ūm Mikarzil, Rashīd Khalīl al-Shibāni, Sāmi Qaṣīri, and Labībah Hāshim, the only woman among them.

and *'Ayn bi 'Ayn* ('An Eye for an Eye') are only two examples. Another peculiar practice was avoiding the Islamic environment completely and dealing with foreign or Christian characters: Muḥammad Mas'ūd's *Ghādaht al-Ahrām* ('Maiden of the Pyramids') and Ya'qūb Ṣarrūf's *Fatāt Miṣr* ('Maiden of Egypt'), or moving the whole story to a faraway country: Ḥusayn Riyāḍ's *al-Fatāh al-Yābāniyah* ('The Japanese Maiden') and Khalīl Sa'ādah's *Asrār al-Thawrah al-Rūssiyah* ('Secrets of the Russian Revolution'). The reason behind this trend was that, at that time, love, which is at the centre of these early novels, was not an accepted topic in Islamic societies. It was, therefore, less objectionable to read about the sins and fleshly desires of licentious Christians and decadent Europeans than to admit that similar customs existed in the Arab world.

However, a few independent authors introduced Oriental characters, dealt with topical issues, and depicted the local environment. The best-known novels in this vein are Sa'īd al-Bustāni's *Dhāt al-Khidr* ('The Maiden behind the Curtain,' Cairo 1884), Muṣṭafá Ibrāhīm's *Shuhadā' al-Ābā'* ('Fathers' Martyrs,' Cairo n.d.), Ḥāfiẓ al-Damanhūri's *al-Yatīm aw Tarjamat Ḥayāt Shāb Miṣrī* ('The Orphan, or the Biography of an Egyptian Young Man,' Cairo 1898), Maḥmūd Khayrat's *al-Fatāh al-Rīfiyah* ('Country Girl,' Cairo 1905), and, above all, Salīm al-Bustāni's two sentimental novels *Asmā'* (Beirut 1875) and *Fātinah* (Beirut 1877).

Before publishing these two novels – which appeared in his own periodical *Jinān* – Salīm al-Bustāni wrote two other romances, *al-Hiyām fi Jinān al-Shām* ('Passion in the Gardens of Syria,' Beirut 1870) and *Zinōbia* (Beirut 1871), which are regarded by several scholars and critics as the first Arabic historical novels.[11] In spite of the relative popularity they enjoyed, these two pioneer works – along with Jamīl Nakhlah's historical novel, *Ḥaḍārat al-Islām fi Dār al-Salām* ('The Civilization of Islam in Dār al-Salām,' Cairo 1888) – were soon eclipsed by the twenty-two more sophisticated historical romances of another Lebanese author, Jirjī Zaydān (1861-1914).

Jirjī Zaydān, who emigrated to Egypt in 1883 to study medicine, pursued quite a different career. After working as managing editor of the Cairo periodical, *al Moqtaṭf*, he spent a few years as teacher and printer before founding his own publishing firm, Dar al-Hilāl, in 1892, which printed all his belletristic and scholarly works.

It has been proven that Zaydān's novels were influenced to a great

11 Among these scholars one finds Muḥammad 'Abd al-Ghanī Ḥasan, Marūn 'Abbūd, Muḥammad Yūsuf Nijm, and 'Abd al-Moḥsen Ṭāhā Badr; see Muḥammad 'Abd al-Ghanī Ḥasan, *Jirjī Zaydān* (Cairo: al-Hay' ah al-Miṣriyah al- 'Āmah Lil-Ta' līf wa al-Nashr 1970) 99-100.

degree by the romances of Walter Scott[12] and that he was inspired by the Islamic prose narratives known as *sīra;*[13] it remains to be confirmed, however, that the striking similarities between Zaydān's works and the historical novels of the German Egyptologist Georg Ebers (1837-98), which were known, admired, and imitated in Egypt, are not based on coincidence only. Zaydān's novels – the first one, *al-Mamlūk al-Shārid,* was published in 1891, his last one, *Shajarat al-Durr,* in 1914 – enjoyed an enormous popularity in the Arab world;[14] a few of them were translated into Farsi, Turkish, and several other Asian languages, as well as into French and German;[15] it is beyond any doubt that they had a considerable influence on the following generation of writers.[16] Seventeen of his twenty-two historical novels deal with the early days of Islam up to the twelfth century A.D., four have modern Egypt as their setting, and one has the reign of the Turkish Sultan 'Abd al-Ḥamīd II, which lasted from 1876 to 1909, as its subject matter. *Jihād al-Muḥibbīn,* 1893, is Zaydān's only novel which is not based on historical facts; it has, nevertheless, enjoyed the same immense popularity as the others.[17]

12 See Ṭāhā Wādī, *Madkhal elá Tārīkh al-Riwāyah al-Miṣrīyah,* 1905-1952 (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍah al-Miṣriyah 1972) 19; Muḥammad Ḥasan, 'Jirjī Zaydān,' *al-Hilāl* (May 1972) 5-17; Martin Seymour-Smith, *Guide to Modern World Literature* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls 1973) 171.

13 Ḥasan, *al-Hilāl,* 8; Badr, 98

14 See Ḥasan, 95, 96, 103 and 104; see also C. Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Literatur* (Leiden: E.J. Brill 1942) III, 187-8.

15 His novel *al-'Abbasa,* 1906, was translated in 1912 into French: *Al-Abbassa; ou, La sœur du calife,* trans. M.Y. Bītār and Ch. Moulié with a preface by Cl. Farrère (Paris: Fontemoing 1912); *al-Mamlūk al-Shārid* was translated in 1917 into German: *Der letzte Mameluck und seine Irrfahrten,* trans. M. Thilo (Barmen: Klein 1917); and *al-Inqilāb al-'Uthmānī* was translated in 1924 into French: *Allah veuille! roman de la révolution turque,* trans. M.Y. Bītār and Thierry Sandre (Paris: Flammarion 1924).

16 Badr, 89-90; Wadi, 21

17 Due to the importance of Zaydān's work for present and future studies on the Arabic novel, and in view of the problems facing some scholars in establishing the total number of his novels and the exact dates of their publication (see Ḥasan, 96-7), it might be advisable to list all of his romances and to give the definitive year of publication: 1 *al-Mamlūk al-Shārid,* 1891; 2 *Asīr al-Mutamahdī,* 1892; 3 *Jihād al-Muḥibbīn,* 1893; 4 *Istibdād al-Mamālīk,* 1893; 5 *Fatāt Ghassān,* 1898; 6 *Armānūsah al-Miṣriyah,* 1899; 7 *'Adhrā' Quraysh,* 1899; 8 *Sab'at'ashar Ramadān,* 1899; 9 *Ghādat Karbalā',* 1901; 10 *al-Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf,* 1902; 11 *Fatḥ al-Andalus,* 1904; 12 *Shārl wa 'Abd al-Raḥmān,* 1904; 13 *Abū Muslim al-khurāsāni,* 1905; 14 *al-'Abbāsah Ukht al-Rashīd,* 1906; 15 *al-Amīn wa al-Ma'mūn,* 1907; 16 *Muḥammad 'Alī,* 1907; 17 *'Arūs Farghānah,* 1908; 18 *Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn,* 1909; 19 *'Abd al-*

In 1897, while Zaydān was working on his fifth historical novel, the Egyptian poet Aḥmad Shawqī (1868-1932) published his first romance, *'Adhrā' al-Hind* ('The Maiden of India'), which – in spite of its continual reference to historical incidents and figures – resembles a fairy-tale rather than a novel. The story of the Egyptian prince 'Azīm and his love for an Indian princess is full of fantastic adventures and bizarre events which lead, after a long series of fights, intrigues, kidnapping, and killings, to the death of both lovers.

However, Shawqī's second narrative work, *Ladyās*, which appeared in 1899 in the magazine *Mijalat al-Mawsū'āt* and later in book form, is a true historical novel.[18] In his introduction to a later undated edition of this story, Muḥmmad Sa'īd al-'Iryān implies that Shawqī has, consciously or subconsciously, used the story of the soldier king Amasis, his revolt against the corrupt pharaoh Apries, and his ascent to the throne (569 B.C.) in order to condemn the reign of Khedive Tawfīq and to glorify the aborted military revolt of 1882 which was led by the Egyptian officer Aḥmad 'Urābi.[19]

Ladyās consists of two parts: the first one (90 pp.) narrates the adventurous story of Ladyās, the daughter of King Polycrates of Samos, her kidnapping by her cousin Peros, and her rescue by Ḥamas (Amasis), a young Egyptian soldier on a hunting trip to Samos (to whom she is later engaged). The second part (26 pp.) begins with the return of Ḥamas to his homeland where he is arrested by King Apries, condemned to death, but then pardoned only minutes before his execution. Although he has promised the king to obey all his orders and never to betray him, Ḥamas refuses to suppress a military revolt when asked to do so; he leads the rebellion himself, removes Apries from the throne, and is proclaimed King of Egypt. He then sends a mission to his bride Ladyās to accompany her from Samos to Egypt.

Aḥmad Shawqī's next romance, *Dall wa Taymān, aw Ākhir al-Farā'inah* ('Dall and Tayman, or the Last Pharaohs,' Cairo 1899), is a free treatment of Georg Ebers' novel *Eine ägyptische Königstochter* ('An Egyptian King's Daughter,' 1864) which he had read in Arabic translation. Among the many changes Shawqī made, one notices that he gave the heroine another name (Dall instead of Nitetis), created new

Raḥmān al-Nāṣir, 1909; 20 *al-Inqilāb al-'Uthmānī*, 1911; 21 *Fatāt al-Qayrawān*, 1912; 22 *Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn wa Makāyed al-Ḥashāshīn*, 1913; 23 *Shajarat al-Durr*, 1914.

18 Aḥmad Shawqī, *Ladyās* (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Ādāb wa al-Mu'ayed 1899)

19 Ahmad Shawqī, *Riwayat Ladyās aw Ākhir al-Farā'inah* (Cairo: al-Maktabah al-Tujāriyah al-Kubrā n.d.) 6

characters (such as Taymān, Nitetis' lover), invented several episodes (the story of Munjāb and his son Jādī), and gave the love-story of the Egyptian princess Nitetis and the Persian king Kambyses a completely different ending (Shawqī's young lovers, Dall and Taymān, die on the battlefield). Stylistically, Shawqī has also tried to increase the poetic merit of his adaptation by using a rhythmical and highly lyrical prose. But in spite of all these intrinsic and extrinsic changes, his version of Ebers' historical novel is much inferior to the original, for it lacks the beguiling narration and the vivid description which are the hallmark of Ebers' romances.[20]

Shawqī's last historical novel, *Waraqat al-Ās* ('The Myrtle Leaf,' Cairo 1914), is undoubtedly his best narrative work. Based on an old Arabic legend, this tale had been treated before by several writers (Ibn al-Muqaffa', 'Adi Ibn Zayd, and Ibn al-Kalbī) and historians (Ibn Hishām, al-Ṭabari, and al-Mas'ūdī). The story of the Arabic princess, al-Nāḍīra, who betrays her father, King al-Ḍayzan, and helps her lover, the Sassanian king Shāpūr I (241-72 A.D.) to destroy her own country, has, like Shawqī's two other novels, a sad ending. After he marries her, Shāpūr realizes that al-Nāḍīra had committed an unforgivable crime by betraying her own father (the man who loved her and fed her 'honey and gazelles' brains' and who helped her grow up to be so tender that she wakes up from the deepest sleep if a myrtle leaf falls on her body); he orders his men to tie the woman whom he loves to the tail of a horse and to drag her round the streets till she dies.

Although these popular novels and romances of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries may now appear artless and awkward, they undoubtedly deserve to be examined closely,[21] not only for their historical and sociocultural significance, but also for their literary qualities – positive as well as negative – for they had a considerable influence on the more sophisticated novels of the following generations.[22]

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20 For a further study of Ebers' novels, see Saad Elkhadem, 'Georg Ebers und sein Werk' and 'Der Einfluß des spätgriechischen Romans auf die Werke Georg Ebers,' in 6 *Essays über den deutschen Roman* (Bern: Herbert Lang 1969) 26-34.

21 For a discussion of other popular novels of the twentieth-century, see Fatma Moussa-Mahmoud, *The Arabic Novel in Egypt, 1914-70* (Cairo: The Egyptian General Book Organization 1973); see also Saad Elkhadem, 'On the Rise of the Egyptian Novel,' *International Fiction Review*, 5 (1978) 25-34.

22 For a thorough examination of these pioneer works and their influence on modern Arabic fiction, see Ḥusayn Fawzī, *Sindibād fi Riḥlat al-Ḥayāh* (Cairo: Dār

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