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Learning History from Novel: A Case Study in Arabic Literature

ABSTRACT: In studying related to the aspects of historical novel, the literature experts classified all of the historical novel into three main categories, namely: propaganda, education, and escapism. This classification is not based on aesthetic considerations, but on the issue of historical truth. Accordingly, the first and third classifications mislead or ignore the historical truth, while the second classification abuses the novel media. Propaganda historical novels generally have political or religious motives, educational historical novels aims to provide factual information to the reader, and escapism historical novels are largely intended to provide entertainment. Meanwhile, other literature experts divided the historical novel into two categories, namely: traditional historical novels and post-modernist historical novels. The traditional historical novel reached its peak popularity in the 19th century, and is often used as material for study by the critics at the time. A general characteristic of this novel, which is also regarded as a weakness, is often to incorporate elements of romantic love in addition to elements of history. Meanwhile, post-modernists' historical novels reject such forms. Based on the classification, this article attempts to examine the historical novels in Arabic literature and how they are categorized. Historical novels which are used as the case studies in this article are the works of historical novels by Jurji Zaydan (1861), Naguib Mahfouz (1911), and Gamal al-Ghitani (1945).

KEY WORDS: Historical novel, Arabic literature, category and classification, historical truth, the works of Jurji Zaydan, Naguib Mahfouz, and Gamal al-Ghitani.

INTRODUCTION

The modern form of the historical novel appeared in the last decade of the 18th century. In fact, the prose fiction that talks about the past based on the events and real figures has existed since ancient times, but in the form of a historical novel, it existed in the 18th century. At first, the historical novel has the form of mixture between something real and fiction, to depict the great historical events in the life with the fictional character and to portray the past life experiences of ordinary people's perception, not only of the achievements of kings and the army generals. The new form of the historical novel evolves as a hybrid of history and fiction that takes the realistic

elements of novels that describe a new social and cultural history in the late 18th century (Michell & Parsons eds., 2013:20).

Peter Green, in his study on the aspects of historical novel, classified all of the historical novel into three main categories, namely: propaganda, education, and escapism (cited in Belasco, 2008). This classification is not based on aesthetic considerations, but on the issue of historical truth. According to him, the first and third classifications mislead or ignore the historical truth, while the second classification abuses the media of novel (*cf* Hooper, 2005; and Belasco, 2008).

Propaganda historical novels generally have political or religious leitmotiv, educational

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historical novels aim to provide factual information to the reader, and escapism historical novels are largely intended to provide entertainment (Peled, 1983:74). Meanwhile, Lucaks mentions that things in the historical novel do not retell the importance events of history, but they are the poetic consciousness of the people depicted in these events (cited in de Groot, 2010:20)

Meanwhile, Elias divides historical novels into two categories, namely: traditional historical novels and post-modernist historical novel. The traditional historical novel reaches its highest peak in the 19th century, identified with its authors such as Walter Scott, Dickens, Tolstoy, Reade, Eliot, Shorthouse, and Pater. Conrad, Dos Passos, and others continued until the 20th century. The form of this novel has been written until now, such as the work of Peter Dexter, *Deanwood* (1986); and Thomas Flanagan, *The Tenant of Time* (1988). The traditional historical novel assumes that the end of some of the historical events that can be viewed and the basis of the latter part of that history can be truly seen by examining the figures at a particular time that is manifested in a representative human figure of that era (cited in D'haen & Berten, 1995:107).

The authors of the traditional historical novels use metanarrative forms of their writings. They restrict the flow of holes of historical records. As in the novels of Walter Scott, they assume that the presence of the ontological history as a form of cultural strength and a reality that can be accessed, considering the reality that can be identified and articulated by awareness of the author without any motivation, considering and enforcing the cultural idea and personal values that are largely derived from economic of the West bourgeois, and assuming the form of a history as linear and the motivation of the history is evolved. Departing from the perception of traditional historical novel, the history is close work, which is an artistic data, a product that is set up in the overall of structure, although considering the infinite plurality of interpretations (cited in D'haen & Berten, 1995).

Meanwhile, the post-modernist historical novelist dismantles the assumptions of the

traditional historical novel in two respects, namely: redefining the history into something as an open work; and giving the space to the history, they reject the models of a conceptual history (linear) used in the traditional historical novel. Post-modernist historical novel not only shows that the official record of the history is wrong, but also implicitly, stating that the historical record itself is related to the reader in the process of its movement and formation. The post-modernist novelists approach history in many ways that are used by the approach of an open work or the readers of the previous work, which examine the given facts or parts of the composition, and then simultaneously display them in the form of work which is a historical reconstruction. The historical novels of post-modernist are against the historical record and subvert political myths (D'haen & Berten, 1995:108).

The post-modernist historical novels show the history as something open work, to revitalize the historical reconstruction and cultural assumptions of what is the fact, what is the history, and what is the boundary of reality and linguistics. The post-modernist historical novelists provide the historical space and place for political and aesthetic reasons. They reject the forms of traditional genres, because they reject assumptions about history, science, and literature that become the foundations of their genres. The post-modernist writers are suspicious of all existing systems, or something that can be used to support the functions of security of the art or power of the bureaucracy.

Right now, the post-modernist historical novels are more anarchist-minded than the alternative one, which offer some solutions to diagnosed social problems. The goal is kind of defamiliarisation and interrogation of historical records and systems that perpetuate them. Therefore, the spatialization of history is the chosen method. According to Mc Hale, the apocryphal history, the creative anachronism, and the historical fantasy are typical strategies of the revisionist post-modernist historical novels. The post-modernist historical novels are considered revisionists because of two respects. The first is to revise the content of historical record, to reinterpret historical

record, to demystify or disassemble the orthodox version of the past; and the second is to change the habits or forms of historical fiction itself (cited in D'haen & Berten, 1995:108).

In Arabic literatures, novels are largely represented in the form of historical novels, because, through novels, history can be filtered away into the depths of the human heart, the children can learn to understand Islam as a historical phenomenon and an illiterate person can see at a glance when they hear the storyteller tells in the streets. For those who can read and buy books, the novel is the most readable and extensive book can be read and bought than other Arabic books, except the Al-Qur'an.

The Arab historiography is not good as an expression of intellectual curiosity, without any historical novels, but it will be little if it is used as a tool to make history as part of Muslim intellectual experience (Rosenthal, 1968). The old Arabic historical novel has lost its identity in terms of general history, while the second phase of the historical fiction has maintained its characteristics until now. The type of this historical novel is divided into two groups, the first is *Futuh*, the story of the conquest (*maghazi*: strike) at the beginning of the arrival of Islam; and secondly, *Siyar*, the novelistic biography of a hero or someone in the history or the fake history (Rosenthal, 1968:186).

In Egypt, since the death of the traditional historical novelist, Jurji Zaydan, in 1914, historical novels has been rarely published. It can be seen since 1919, when the Egyptians had not liked the stories about the past. It was only in the thirties, historical novels began to rise again and well developed until after the First World War (1914-1918). The rise of the historical novel can not be separated from the rise of Arab nationalism and Islam. The increasing popularity of the novel in general, lead to more and more people who are interested in the historical novel, that finally creates an autonomous entity which can not be done by the political and social movements. In addition to the history of Islam and Arab, the era of Pharaoh is often used as a source for historical novels. It happens due

to the need to look at the past of the nation. At the time of oppression, historical novels often give the power to criticize the ruling regime. In the context of history, criticism can be easily expressed and understood in a hidden way, in order to escape from the surveillance (cited in Brugman, 1984:310).

LEARNING HISTORY FROM JURJI ZAYDAN'S NOVEL

Jurji Zaydan was born in Beirut in 1861, from poor Christian families who did not have a special interest in literature. His father had a restaurant in Beirut, and because of illiteracy, he entrusted his business to his son, Jurji Zaydan, both in the matters of financial and services to the customers. But, Jurji Zaydan did not like the routine works that gave only little appreciation. So, after completing his elementary school, Jurji Zaydan enrolled in Syrian Protestant College (now the American University of Beirut) in 1881 to study the medicine and continued his studies to Egypt. There, in addition to study the medicine, he also involved in the journalism activities. He became an editor of the newspaper *Az-Zaman* (Gershoni & Jankowski eds., 2002).

In 1884, while serving as a war correspondent and translator, Jurji Zaydan joined the British expedition to go to Sudan. There, his interest on history emerged. First of all, he did the research, wrote, and popularized about the history of the Islamic world. In 1886, he traveled to London and largely spent his time in the library of the British Museum to collect materials about the Islamic civilization. There, he studied the ancient Arab manuscripts which he wrote into a monumental work of history, *Tarikh at-Tamaddun Islami* (History of Islamic Civilization) and *Tarikh al-Adab al-Lughah al-Arabiyyah* (History of Arabic Literature). After that, from 1891 until his death in 1914, he devoted his time to write a variety of literary and cultural topics (Moosa, 1997:198).

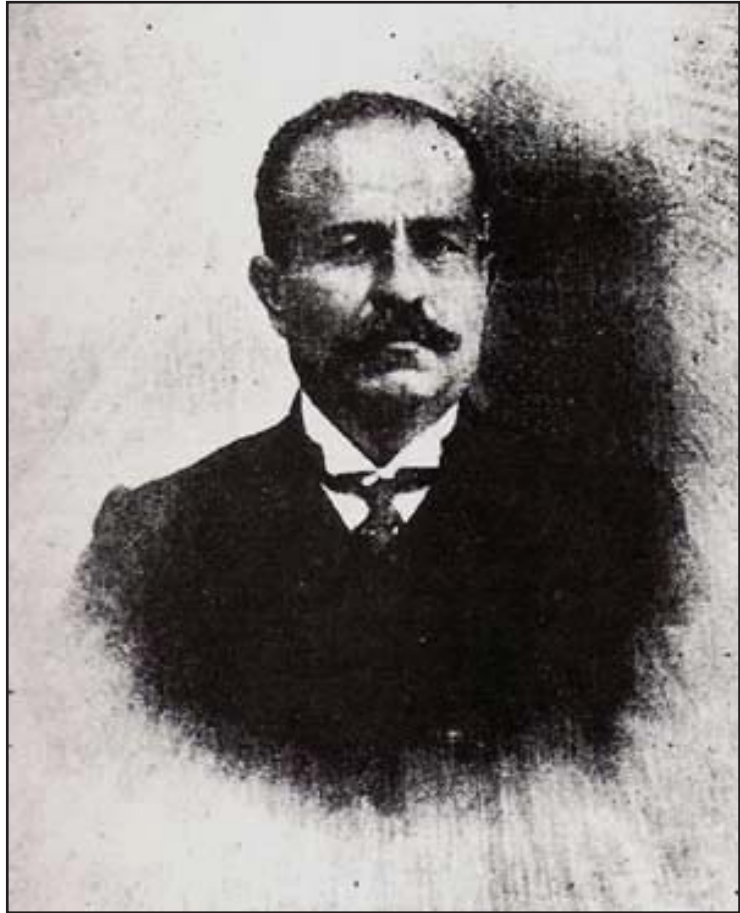
In 1892, Jurji Zaydan published the magazine *Al-Hilal* (Moon). Through that magazine, he published historical novels. He took pains to introduce his generation to the history and Arabic literature and used the historical novel to achieve his goals in

a manner that different from historical novelists in the West, such as Alexandre Dumas and Walter Scott. Jurji Zaydan wrote fictions in a style that makes his work can be read by readers at large. His vocabularies are easy to understand, his sentence structures are full with the complex imagery, and his stories flow spontaneously and easily (Badawi, 1997:188).

Of the 23 novels Jurji Zaydan, except one novel that is *Jihad al-Muhibbin* (the Struggle of the Lovers), all are taken from the Arab or Islamic history. He revived and spread as many Arab and Islamic history through the medium of fiction. His first historical novel, *Al-Mamluk as-Sarid* (Mamluks Who Fled) discussed the massacre of people by Muhammad Ali Mamluk, published 1891. Then, in 1892-1893, he wrote two novels, namely *Al-Asir Mutamahdi* (Prisoner of People Who Claim the Mahdi), which contains the Mahdi uprising in the Sudan and *Istibidad al-Mamalik* (Despotic of the Mamluks), which contains the government despot of the Mamluks in Egypt, in the early 19th century (Moosa, 1997).

In 1895, Jurji Zaydan wrote a novel about the history of Islam in general. He began with novel *Armanusa al-Misriyya* (Armanusa of Egypt) which contains the Arabs conquest of Egypt in 640 AD (*Anno Domini*), ended with the novel *Sajarat ad-Durr* (Tree of Pearls) in 1913-1914, which contains about the wife of the Ayyubid Sultan Malik as-Salih. However, the historical novels of Jurji Zaydan do not describe the history of Islam in sequence and comprehensive structures (Moosa, 1997:198).

In the preface to the first edition of his book, *Tarikh at-Tamaddun al-Islami* (Islamic Civilization History), Jurji Zaydan said that his goal to create a historical novel in order that the readers are acquainted with the history of Islam. When the readers were largely in Arab countries who found it very hard to read the history books, he thought to present another



Picture of Jurji Zaydan

(Source: www.google.com, 17/8/2014)

way to provide the educational materials. For him, the novel is the best way to attract readers. In his foreword of the novel, *Hajjaj ibn Yusuf al-Thaqafi*, he further explained that his goal of writing the historical novel was different from the historical novel in Europe. He wrote history in the form of a novel or story, because he had no desire to deviate from the history (cited in Moosa, 1997).

Some critics have examined that his novels are written by two basic elements. The first element consists of the historical backgrounds which can be divided into two, namely *time*, which usually consists of a long paragraph (sometimes with footnotes and references from the history books) written in details; and the *place*, where the Jurji Zaydan describes precisely cities or areas where the events took place. The second element of Jurji Zaydan's

novels consists of love stories between a man and a woman who are separated because of circumstances and usually they met again at the end of the story in happiness. The structure of the plot is considered tight and dominated by full of historical data (Allen ed., 2010:385).

Jurji Zaydan purposes in writing of historical novels in order to show the history of Islam through the medium of fiction as a way to attract people to read the history. To reach that goal, Jurji Zaydan sees fiction as something that is subject to the history. Unlike historical novelists in the West, which treat history as a fictional narrative, so that the reader can be misled to believe that the fictional events truly happen. According to Jurji Zaydan, the authors of the historical novel in the West do much describe the real history, but they only use historical backgrounds, including the perpetrators, to realize the goal, in entertaining the readers. The main concern of Jurji Zaydan is to bring the real history as something that actually exists in the form of a novel. He stated that the historical facts that exist in the novel as something authentic (cited in Moosa, 1997:198).

In his historical novel, Jurji Zaydan does not strictly follow the norms of historiography practices in his attempt to reproduce the past. His attention is to recall some aspects of the more prominent and entertaining to reach the general readers and to tell them about information that they do not know. This is why Jurji Zaydan's historical novels contain historical events rather than efforts reconstruct the history carefully and analyze it in depth. Jurji Zaydan portrays fictional characters with simple and mixes it with a series of determined common history, so often he had to create fictional characters and relate them with a real character, so the novel becomes excited, because he can not do this on authentic historical figures (Moosa, 1997:213).

In his novels about the Arab history and Islamic figures, Jurji Zaydan reflects his understanding of these themes as they are narrated by Arab historians. Therefore, it is difficult to judge Jurji Zaydan's novels, unless we understand that his spirit on the history is part of his strong motivation. Therefore,

Jurji Zaydan makes the history alive not from the actions of certain figures, but rather the sequence of historical events. In all his works, Jurji Zaydan always reflects the moral and social views of contemporary Arab society in careful manners. Jurji Zaydan himself was highly moralistic person and viewed the love as a pure and sacred thing that should be united through a marriage. The lovers, in the Jurji Zaydan novels, when met, they talked about love, but they never touch, hug, or kiss (Moosa, 1997:214).

To make history interesting and entertaining, his novels are usually filled with love stories that contain elements of adventures and intrigues that ended with happiness. Jurji Zaydan studied all historical facts and wrote them in accordance with the level of interest and understanding of his readers. The type of his novels is almost the same, but they are different in terms of topics and time. In his novels, Jurji Zaydan imagined a romance between a fictional character and the mysteries that are narrated in such a way with the facts of history. The plot is often weak and linear while the characters of figures in his novels are presented in simple pictures, without giving enough information about their backgrounds, viewpoints, and social status. The nature and personality of the characters are portrayed only in the first sentences, not developed further in the whole story (cited in Gu, 2014:212).

LEARNING HISTORY FROM NAGUIB MAHFOUZ'S NOVEL

Naguib Mahfouz was born in 1911 in Gamaliya, the downtown of Cairo. Naguib Mahfouz's career as a novelist began from his three novels that used the setting of the ancient Egypt. His interest in the history began in 1931, when he was in high school. He translated English books entitled *Ancient Egypt* (London, 1912), written by James Baikie. He gave the title of his translation *Mir Qadima*, published in the magazine called *Al-Jadida*, by Salama Musa who was an important figure in the Naguib Mahfouz's next career (cited in al-Enani, 1993).

The book illustrated a variety of the ancient Egyptian life with a simple narrative style. The

translation then was very influential historical novels that he had ever written. The detailed everyday life can be easily traced its source in his book. The entire structure of his first historical novel, entitled *Hikmat Khufu* (the Wisdom of Fates), is taken from the chapter 7 of his book that tells about some of the legends of ancient Egypt. His first historical novel, *Hikmat Khufu* (the Wisdom of Fates), was published in 1939, uses the historical background during the reign of Khufu (Cheops), the builder of the Great Pyramid and the second king of the forth dynasty of the Ancient Kingdom (al-Enani, 1993).

His second historical novel is *Rhodobis*, published in 1943, take the historical setting of the shortest reign of Miri Nura, the last of the sixth dynasty of the Old Kingdom. His third historical novel is *Kifah Tiba* (the Struggle of Thebes), published in 1944, which contains about the struggle of the Egyptian people against the ruling foreigner of the Hyksos, the invader from Asia, who ruled Egypt about a hundred years in the 16th BC or Before Christ (cited in al-Enani, 1993:35).

Naguib Mahfouz wrote the history of ancient Egypt in the form of fiction, as he saw Walter Scott who wrote historical novels about the history of his country. To achieve his objectives, Naguib Mahfouz chosed forty themes of his historical novels he hoped that he might complete during his lifetime; however, he could only finish three novels, because after that, he was more interested in the issues of social realism. His first historical novel manuscript, entitled *Hikmat Khufu* (the Wisdom of Cheops), he brought to Salama Musa, but Salama Musa found the title was not interesting, and he replaced it with the title of *Abath al-Aqdar* (Ironies of Fate).

Many authors have commented Naguib Mahfouz as a historical novelist. Ahmad Haikal said that *Abath al-Aqdar* is regarded as a good beginning of a nationalistic historical novel.



Picture of Naguib Mahfouz
(Source: www.google.com, 17/8/2014)

The novel does not teach history, but tends to glorify it. It aims to deepen the feelings about the past of the glorious Pharaoh. The work of Naguib Mahfouz is not the first nationalistic historical novel or the first Egyptian historical novel, but he deserves to put in a respectable place among the writers of historical novels in Egypt (cited in Moosa, 1994:22).

The first historical novel of Naguib Mahfouz is *Abath al-Aqdar* (Ironies of Fate). This novel takes the theme of the ancient Egypt. As it is stated in its title, the fate plays an important role in this novel. This novel tells the story of the struggle between the strong desire of Pharaoh and the fate of God that ended with the succes of the fate to defeat the disobedience of Pharaoh. In this novel, it is clear that the novel is based on the legends of ancient Egypt, which were largely taken from

the book of James Baikie, the *Ancient Egypt*, which aims to provide information to the readers about the daily life of ancient Egypt by depicting the journey of a boat that sailed over the Nile to Thebes (cited in Moosa, 1994).

Naguib Mahfouz uses several names, the description of the family of Pharaoh, and the main characters that are in fact the same with the book of *Ancient Egypt*. But, he changes the ancient prophecy of Pharaoh's successors to make the novel more dramatic. Basically, this novel contains conflicts between the man and the fate (cited in Moosa, 1994:37).

The second historical novel of Mahfouz is *Radobis*. The focus of this novel is that love is subject to fate. Basically, this novel is a romance with the theme of love between Pharaoh Mernere II and Radobis that is not accidental, but determined by the fate. The setting is located in southern town of Abo, where the Festival of Nile held that attract many people. In this novel, fate, as thought by most Egyptian people, is not a coincidence or the matter of luck, but it is something that had previously been determined by God (Moosa, 1994).

As found in *Abath al-Aqdar* (Ironies of Fate), Naguib Mahfouz does not exactly follow the history. He wrote a romance, not a historical novel. First, he set the time four thousand years ago. Then, he mentioned that the event occurred at the end of the sixth Dynasty that marked the end of Old Kingdom. In fact, the sixth Dynasty ended in 2475 BC and Old Kingdom ended until 2300 BC (Before Christ). Even though, the history of the ancient Egypt did not mention anything about Mernere II beyond the fact that he reigned only one year at the end of the sixth dynasty. Naguib Mahfouz seemed to use the figures and historical events out of context in order to create a novel framework (cited in Moosa, 1994:37).

Kifah Tiba (the Struggle of Thebes), in 1944, is the third and the last of Naguib Mahfouz historical novel; in essence, is an epic that depicts the resistance of people in the southern city of Thebes against the Hyksos. This event is the final expulsion of the foreign domination in Egypt which makes it independence and transfers it into a kingdom.

Unlike his previous novels, in which history is placed lower than the philosophically discussion about the fate, this novel focuses directly on the events that occurred in certain places and times, while the love story between Pharaoh Ahmose and daughter of the Hyksos king was placed second (Moosa, 1994).

However, Naguib Mahfouz does not strictly follow the historical facts; even he by force manipulated it to support his attitude on certain things, such as the distribution of Ahmose in the State that did not exist in the reality. Naguib Mahfouz may be forgiven, because he did not follow the history exactly, but the original source and data about the Hyksos and Theban dynasty's war is incomplete and confusing. For example, in the novel, it is stated that Apophis is the king of the Hyksos and Sekenenre is the ruler of Thebes, but in the history, the king of Hyksos is not only Apophis and the ruler of Thebes is not only Sekenenre (cited in Moosa, 1994:41).

According to Naguib Mahfouz, in fact, there are two types of historical novels. The first type is a novel that reminds us to the history, with all its details and rituals, as if it is embraced in a past life of history or to revive the movement of the death limb. The second type is a novel that only evokes the atmosphere of history, and then it gives it a relative freedom force in its outline and the writing of Mahfouz is closer to the second type (cited in Mehrez, 2005).

LEARNING HISTORY FROM GAMAL AL-GHITANI'S NOVEL

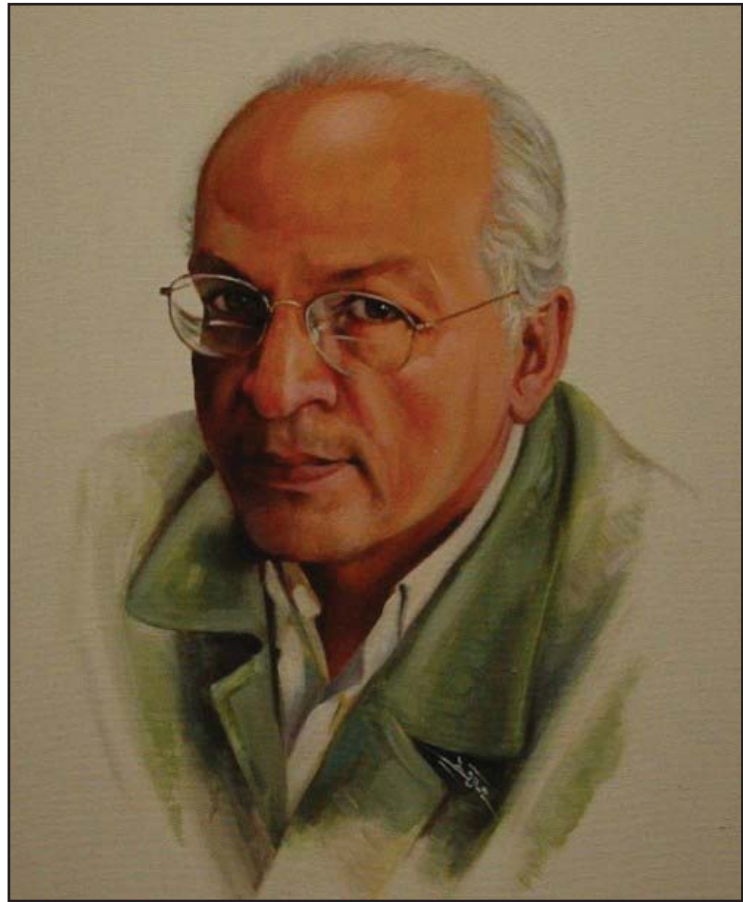
Gamal al-Ghitani was an Arab novelist from the younger generation. He was born in 1945 after the World War II (1939-1945). He was a member of what is called the "children of the Egyptian revolution". His writing reflects a kind of fictional reaction against the historical condition, particularly the status of novelists created in the society. Gamal al-Ghitani, who was highly committed and self-taught in studying the Egyptian history and the local culture of Cairo, gave us guidances about the motivations that are not mentioned in the writings of historians, newspaper pages, and almanac. He was a highly specialized historian, since he was in charge of maintaining the

forgotten essence of a particular period and the temporal, of the brutal annihilation process that terrifying the cosmic emptiness of a time (Allen, 1995:196).

One of the Gamal al-Ghitani historical novel is *Al-Zayni Barakat*, contains an overview of Cairo in the 16th century, during the reign of the Mamluk Sultan Al-Ghuri, before the Ottoman invasion of Egypt in the year 1517 AD (*Anno Domini*). The main source of Gamal al-Ghitani about Egypt in the 16th century is taken from the medieval history written by Muhammad Ibn Iyas, *Bada'i Zubur fi Waqa'i Dubur*. At that time, the Mamluk rule in Egypt was characterized by constant instability. Indeed, this was a period in the history of medieval Egypt that symbolized the police state (Allen, 1995).

As mentioned in some of the criticisms and reinforced by Gamal al-Ghitani, indeed there are similarities between the police state in the medieval times portrayed in the novel with Egypt during the reign of Gamal Abdul Nasser in 1950s and 1960s. *Al-Zayni Barakat* was published in Damascus, Syria, in 1974. The novel parodies the police state of Egypt in the 1960s with an overview of Egyptian Mamluks in the 16th century; it is a legitimate and effective strategy to bypass the censorship and direct confrontation with the politics in the 1960s (Allen, 1995:95).

Al-Zayni Barakat is a kind of novel about the history, a work of fiction that uses historical documents, but its writing is different from the other historical novels. It is well recognized as a novel in the history of modern Arabic literature. There are some innovations in this work, but the most important thing is the use of a form of historical novel whose purpose is to comment the events that occurred at that time. Although the book takes the form of the historical novel, but almost all of the characters come from the imagination of Gamal al-Ghitani. The work of Gamal al-Ghitani



Picture of Gamal al-Ghitani
(Source: www.google.com, 17/8/2014)

uses the form of a modern novel by using the historical materials and sources equipped with the indirect techniques that content some comments of events that happened in his time then reinforced by similar situations that happened in the past (Mehrez, 2010).

The lack of figures which can be found in the historical record is an indication that this is a fictional text that describes the present state in an indirect form. There is only one character that really existed in the history, namely the historical figure of Zayni Ibn al-Musa. The information about him is taken from Muhammad Ibn Iyas, a leading historian of the Egyptian Mamluk. Muhammad Ibn Iyas mentions in his account that Mamluks was defeated by the Ottoman and at that time he held the positions as *muhtasib*, or market supervisor, whose function is similar to the treasurer or comptroller, of the Governor of

Cairo and the border of Giza province. Zayni Ibn al-Musa was a person who survived during the era of unrest and politically turbulent. He served more than 40 years in office, despite the many challenges that he had (Meyer, 2001:55).

In his novel, *Al-Zayni Barakat*, although Gamal al-Ghitani described the backgrounds of Cairo at the time of Mamluk, it is clearly a comment that is addressed to the people of Egypt right now. Likewise, the selection of the historical period is not a coincidence because there are similarities between the last years of Sultan Qansuh al-Ghuri on the eve of the Ottoman conquest of Egypt with the period of the lost of Gamal Abdul Nasser's government in 1967. There are four main characters in this novel that play significant roles, namely: Said al-Juhayni who acts as a student of Al-Azhar, Ibn Amr Adawi as the poor person, Zakariya ibn Radi as the head of the secret police, and Al-Zayni who works as a *muhtasib* (Badawi, 1997:265).

The novel is regarded as one of the important works in the Arab world at the time. Both texts, either in Arabic or French translation, generates the enthusiasm of literary critics in the world. Al-Zayni succeed, because the perfect arrangement of the narrative and its relevance to the contemporary political situation in the Middle East. This novel tells the story of a period in the history of medieval Egypt (1507-1518) that is similar to the reality of contemporary Egypt (1952-1967). *Al-Zayni Barakat* was a silent statement of a strategy and political ideology of the author (Mehrez, 1986:120).

Gamal al-Ghitani is a prolific writer. He was a chief editor at the weekly *Akhbar al-Adab*, a leading literary media in Egypt. Because he had life experiences during the period of recent Egyptian, including the years of war in 1967-1973, therefore it is not surprising that his works enriched with history and his personal conscience, and his fiction successes to put social, political, and psychological issues in the front position. *Al-Zayni Barakat* perhaps was the most famous novel of Gamal al-Ghitani. The setting was Egypt in the Mamluk era. It was first published in a serial form in the independent weekly *Rose el-Youssef* in

1970-1971. In 1990, it became the first Arab novel published in the English version by Penguin (Nkrumah, 2005).

After the work of Naguib Mahfouz, *Al-Zayni Barakat* comes to strengthen the position of the historical novel at post-colonial era, both in the Arab world itself and in the West. Since this novel is used in the syllabus of Western universities, it is known as part of the work of the world literature. The work was written shortly after the death of Gamal Abdul Nasser. Gamal al-Ghitani has received numerous awards, both nationally and internationally for his fiction, and he became an established figure in the Egyptian culture. He continued to publish political and cultural commentary in a regular column in the state newspaper *Al-Akhbar* as well as in newspapers and other journals and television (el-Shamsy, 2013).

CONCLUSION

In 1760, the early-years of the rise of the historical novel in the West countries, the novelists and the reviewers describes the process of reading this kind of novel in various ways. There are those who read it as a work of history and there are also someones who read as a work of fiction. After that, it gradually evolves into a mixture of both tendencies, namely reading the historical fiction as a historical fiction, a genre that combines the characteristics of a novel with the characteristics of a historical work. The historical novelists use a variety of strategies in making their work they do not emphasize on fact, but on the moral dimension or fictional of their works, they do not emphasize on fictional, but the didactic elements in their works, they emphasize the fictional aspects that are inseparably linked with the history of the work, and many others.

The historical novel should provide lessons. It should be able bring the readers carefully and naturally to return to the past. The more accurate is better, the more natural, gentle, and fun also is much better. This means that the didactic aspect of a historical fiction should be well integrated into the plot. The detailed history should be supportive instead of messing up the story. A successful historical novelist is novelist who not only do

a simple research, but they should conducted a thorough and comprehensive one and do not pretend to give a lecture to the readers about the discovery of the information.

Meanwhile, a failed historical novelist is novelist who throws a large amount of the research, but the information has not been processed into a narrative. Most of the themes of novels are drawn from life and social phenomena, while the main sources of historical novels are drawn from the history itself. Although, there are several types of novels that incorporate elements of history, but the historical novel more emphasizes on the element of history than others. When reading the historical novels, we will find the events, characters, settings, and languages.

In the Arabic literature itself, the development of historical novels are seemingly not much different from those in the West. When viewed from its form, the literature forms which are used by Jurji Zaidan and Naguib Mahfouz are more traditional like that of the 19th century, while the form that is used by Gamal al-Ghitani is post-modernists, like the form of in the 20th century. Likewise, if viewed from their functions, the historical novels of Jurji Zaydan categorized as the type of education, as they mainly contain the factual information about the Arab and Islamic history to the readers; whereas the historical novels of Naguib Mahfouz can be classified into the type of escapism, as they consist of more elements of romance than history; and the novels of Gamal al-Ghitani can be considered as propaganda novels, as they talk about political issues.

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