

- ¹⁴ *ibidem*, p. 50.
¹⁵ *ibidem*, p. 52.
¹⁶ Sartre, J.P., *Ślowa*, Warszawa: PIW, 1965, p. 121.
¹⁷ Letter to Barbara Michalak of Aug. 28, 1992: "My work over new stories is going very slowly due to my present personal and health problems. Nor do I have enough emotional balance to work more efficiently."
¹⁸ *Koran*, Sura XXXV, Warszawa: PIW, 1986, p. 522.
¹⁹ Rudnicka-Kassem, D., *Egyptian Drama and Social Change*, Cracow—Montreal: [The Enigma Press], 1993, p. 33—4.
²⁰ *ibidem*, p. 33.
²¹ Laylā al-'Uthmān, *Min as-sira*, p. 50.
²² *ibidem*, p. 52.
²³ *ibidem*, p. 52.
²⁴ Rudnicka-Kassem, D., *Egyptian Drama*, p. 33.
²⁵ Laylā al-Uthmān, *Min as-sira*, p. 51.
²⁶ *ibidem*, p. 50.
²⁷ *ibidem*, p. 51.
²⁸ *ibidem*, p. 51.
²⁹ Proust, M., *W poszukiwaniu straconego czasu*, vol. II, p. 41.
³⁰ Święcicki J.A., *Historia literatury arabskiej*, Warszawa 1901, vol. III, p. 19.
³¹ Laylā al-Uthmān, *Min as-sira*, p. 51.
³² *ibidem*, p. 52.
³³ *ibidem*, p. 52.
³⁴ Laylā al-'Uthmān, *Min as-sira*, p. 51.
³⁵ *l. cit.*
³⁶ Laylā al-'Uthmān — from her manuscript in my possession.
³⁷ A letter to Barbara Michalak, dated Aug. 28, 1992: "The liberation brought many personal problems. My husband, Walīd Abū Bakr, was expelled from Kuwait. I had to divorce him. The children stayed with me. All that was a great experience to me. I feel grief and emptiness after the expulsion of the Palestinians. I had so many friends among them and now I am so lonely."
³⁸ A letter to Barbara Michalak, dated Aug. 28, 1992: "I am working, very slowly, on a new collection of stories under the title *Min yaumiyyāt as-sabr wa'l-murt*, that will tell about the days of the Iraqi invasion. The second one I am simultaneously working on will be entitled *Al-hawağiz as-saudā'*. Here, too, progress is slow."
³⁹ A letter to Barbara Michalak, Aug 28, 1992.
⁴⁰ Laylā al-'Uthmān, in the manuscript in my possession.
⁴¹ Laylā al-'Uthmān, *Min as-sira*, p. 46.

BARBARA MICHALAK

THE MAGIC EVERYDAY WORLD IN "THE DELUSIVE DAWN" SHORT STORIES BY NAĞIB MAHFŪZ

Nağib Maḥfūz - a writer and Nobel prize winner - is a well - known great personality of Egyptian literature. Living in Cairo, educated in philosophy, he has been an oracle of literary taste and profoundness of message for the whole circle. It may be said that there still exists anxiety whether this great personality with tranquility, inner balance and uncompromising attitude which allows reaching the full picture and expression - has not sealed his individuality on the whole literary circle, which cannot escape his influence. His works "will remain a living picture of the Egyptian society of the first half of the twentieth century, an evidence of his talent which makes him take a lead of contemporary Arabian writers".¹

Short stories by Nağib Maḥfūz, published and gathered in numerous anthologies represent a wide range of the illustrated psychological problems, and their action is closely connected with urban circles of the Egyptian society. In his short stories and early dramas the author breaks with realistic trend represented in his novels and passes to existentialism introducing symbolism and surrealist elements, keeping, however, a simple classic style, which together with the consistency of narration make his works positively universal. I am presenting here a set of short stories called "The Delusive Dawn"² from 1989 containing works differentiated thematically

A short story entitled "A Half of the Day"³ shows one of the most important days in life of a member of the Arabian society - the first school day

of a small boy, who dressed in a green pinafore with a red tarbus on his head unwillingly follows his father, full of sorrow because his hitherto life is ending. However, when the school bell rang he has been captivated by the atmosphere of "the new house", where "everything was enjoyable or advantageous, from playing through learning to religion", but the boy cannot escape nostalgia watching how competition for knowledge and ordinary ordinary changes of life cause pain and hatred. A symbolic subject of "the paradise lost" meaning here a childhood not disturbed by a real picture of life and its duties is distinctly visible in this short story. "Time of withdrawal has passed away and you will never return to Eden. In front of us there is only diligence, studies, and patience. Let the one who is allowed take a chance of joy and victory from the midst of troubles".⁴ The continuation of the story is the development of the symbolic subject. The boy will never meet his father who was to wait for him when the first day of school was over. The protagonist of the story plunges with distrust into the evil strange reality of the street buzz of his town. The meaning of this picture of the story is explicit. Action, in which, the main character entering the school is a child, and an old man leaving it, in narration takes only few hours from the sunrise to the sunset. It clearly expresses a psychological message of the hero of the story unreconciled with inevitable rush of life and a deadly touch of time, which emerges always new pictures of staring and bright life, forgetting the past without sorrow.

"In the Twinkling of an Eye"⁵ is a short story describing emotional atmosphere in life of a young couple with their everyday troubles but with always prevailing happiness resulting from commonly taken steps. A reflexive atmosphere of this story reveals a psychological characteristics of a narrator, who is a clear-sighted observer of the ambiguous reality disposed to compromise, but on the other hand able to perceive a charm of life and happiness which can occur in "a twinkling of an eye".

A short story called "Happiness Disease"⁶ is a psychological masterpiece presenting a narrator's state of consciousness. He achieved the top of social and individual prosperity, but at the end of his days overcame with nostalgia difficult to understand and explain. This story is outstanding because of its very concise and at the same time sound and rich language. A reader taken into the narrator's world can easily imagine life of an Arabian citizen who pushed by his ambitious dominating father - a merchant in cotton, avoids all inconveniences which might weaken his position and disturbed his career (as e.g. political riots). He always chooses things which are functional irrespective of difficult public and spiritual matters.

He was a leader in science, sport, culture and art, with his British doctorate in medicine, honorable marriage with minister's daughter, and healthy educated sons - doctors of medicine. Everything that happened later, after he had retired he accepted quietly, demonstrating the uprightness of his conscience, which could not agree with his success remembering his modest forgotten childhood balanced those reflections with a visible sadness of the heart.

A short story called "Whisper"⁷ is kept in individual narration form. It seems that its hero represents an average type of a member of Arabian society. Psychological suspense with two extremes in mutual relationship of the main character and his partner in life, and a vague person closely related to him, domineering and older, maybe the father or an elder relative, is a way of creating the suspense in this story. Ambivalent feelings of the narrator towards that person are prevailing, however, extremity, ambivalency and some warmth of emotions make the story a plastic construction with a tangle of contrasting lines catching the attention and bright master phrases of reconciliation. The narrator openly demonstrates in a monologue and partly in a dialogue his own immaturity and necessity of permanent but sometimes painful stand-by even if it is an odious authority. Yet, the climate of the story is not dramatic. The last sentences bring confidence in fate: "I have come back - I'm whispering - feeling homesick and I want you to judge me".⁸

A woman is a main character of the story called "From the Bottom to the Top",⁹ which is exceptional in this set of short stories. Naime works like Cinderella being a servant of the whole family without payment or thanks. Hard-working, condemned to her fate by the father who strictly obeyed her mother-in-law. Naime got used to her fate, poverty and lack of education. Her beauty, almost absent in untidiness cannot have been seen by anyone who, as she dreamt, would like to share life with her. Later, encouraged by the housekeeper's wife, Naime resists the helplessness of her father, cruelty of her mother-in-law, and egoism of her sisters, and she runs away. She finds a new job. She is better now. At last she reaches her utmost happiness - wearing smart clothes she comes back home escorted by her loving husband.

A short story entitled "The Man"¹⁰ presents a studium of extremely strong character and, if I can say so, effective personality of Sawfat - an outstanding retired sportsman, engineer and politician. Having read an incidental and superficial newspaper article about himself he learns that his life is a wretched existence of lonely man who can find some comfort only

in remembering his old successes. When Sawfāt meets a journalist in the street, he starts a discussion and tells him about the real condition of his mind. He tells about his ups and downs, about his life full of prosperity and great shocks to which he did not surrender. Contusion does not allow him to continue his sport career, he is stricken by a shock of unfulfilled passion. But his energy remains untouched. "I am always strong and I always win".¹¹ Though he was strongly experienced by fate he always turns to work. Facing the tragedy, thanks to his strong will, he releases in himself a desire of success. "In the light of that fight I have discovered work - the substance of my power - not not winning and not surrendering".¹² Even when he had lost two children and a wife, he preserved his courage. It is difficult not to be attracted by the hero of this story, who knows the pain and the sorrow, but who does not resist his fate: "I know that the worst disgrace of life is disgrace of defeat".¹³ The story proves that a trivial opinion of a journalist about a condition of the lonely man is wrong. This man is a whole - from childhood till the end of his days, and his spirit is always above all the ups and downs that fate may bring. Supposedly lonely man is a vivid geysset of a true life experience and his courage somehow makes him immortal.

Psychological and artistic vision of reality comprised in Nağīb Maḥfūz's short stories and his literary mastery and originality put him in the galaxy of outstanding contemporary writers.

NOTES

- ¹ J. Bielawski, K. Skarżyńska-Bocheńska, J. Jasińska - Nowa i współczesna literatura arabska IX i XX w., PWN, Warszawa 1987, page 486.
- ² Nağīb Maḥfūz, Al-fağr al-kāzib (The Delusive Dawn) Dār al-Miṣr at-ṭabā'a, Cairo 1989.
- ³ Nağīb Maḥfūz, Niṣf jawm from Al-fağr al-kāzib (A Half of the Day), Cairo 1989, page 31-37
- ⁴ ibid., page 34.
- ⁵ Nağīb Maḥfūz, Fī ḡamada 'ajn from Al-fağr al-kāzib (In the Twinkling of an Eye), Cairo 1989, page 51-56.
- ⁶ Nağīb Maḥfūz, Maraḍ as-s'āda from Al-fağr al-kāzib (Happiness Disease), Cairo 1989, page 57-60.

⁷ Nağīb Maḥfūz, Al-hamas from Al-fağr al-kāzib (Whisper), Cairo 1989, page 43-49.

⁸ ibid., page 49

⁹ Nağīb Maḥfūz, Min taht li fawq from Al-fağr al-kāzib (From the Bottom to the Top), Cairo 1989, page 61-66.

¹⁰ Nağīb Maḥfūz, Rağul from Al-fağr al-kāzib (The Man), Cairo 1989, page 67-87.

¹¹ ibid., page 69.

¹² ibid., page 72.

¹³ ibid., page 74.