

The Influence of Russian Literature in Two Twentieth Century Arabic Periodicals

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Abstract: *Between 1882 and 1914, Russia's Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society established a number of schools in the Levant with the intention of safeguarding the future of Orthodox Christianity in that region. Chief amongst these were the seminaries of Beit Jala and Nazareth, schools designed with the purpose of training Arab teachers to educate the next generation of Orthodox Arabs. Unintentionally, these schools also had a fundamental effect on the Arabic literary renaissance, instilling a passion for Russian literature amongst a group of Arab writers and journalists who would share their knowledge with the Arab world. This paper looks at two of the literary journals that were created by alumni of the Nazareth Seminary and at how they promoted Russian literature to an Arab audience.*

In 1933, Salim Qubayn published an article in his periodical *al-Ikha'a* (1924-33) that threw light most clearly on the question of why the great Russian author Tolstoy should have had such a great effect on his readership. *The Philosophy of Tolstoy (Falsafa Tolstoy)*¹ was a minor review of a radio programme given in Egypt by Dr Ahmad Farid Rafa^{ci} regarding the later essays of Tolstoy on the nature of religion, humanity and civilization. The review claims that, not only did the programme make clear Qubayn's preeminent role in bringing Tolstoy's philosophy to an Arab audience ('He is a prince amongst the princes of publishing', Rafa^{ci} claimed in his broadcast), but it also demonstrated the intellectual correlation Qubayn had revealed between the Russian's teachings and the tradition of Islamic philosophy, comparing Tolstoy's asceticism and

simple life amongst the peasants to the abstemiousness of Abu Bakr al-Sadiq. This connection between Russian and Arabic literature had been established by another alumnus of the Nazareth Seminary over three decades previously. In addition to championing new writers and introducing Russian authors to Arab readers through the establishment of the periodical *al-Nafa'is al-^oasriyyah* (1908-23), Khalil Baydas had taken an unintentional step towards the modernization of Arabic literature when, in his capacity as a schoolteacher in Baskinta, he had put Mikhail Naimy forward for a scholarship to the Nazareth Seminary. Naimy's subsequent Russian-based education and authorship of literary texts, vital to the development of modern Arabic literature and influenced by a variety of Russian writers, stemmed from Baydas's initial recognition of his intellect.

This paper investigates the approach of two periodicals, *al-Nafa'is al-^oasriyyah* and *al-Ikha'a*, to Russian literature and the way in which this Russian legacy contributed to shaping modern Arabic prose. These journals, which played influential roles in *al-nahda* (the Arabic literary renaissance),² were pivotal in shaping their Arab readers' consciousness of their own cultural identity³ and in developing the modern Arabic literary prose style. Both were conceived and edited by two men whose literary tastes and intellects had been forged and nurtured in schools created by the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society (IOPS), Russia's cultural and educational organization which was active in the Levant from 1882 to 1914. Their effect on modern Arabic literature has been significant in a variety of ways.

Historical Background

Russia had begun to establish a tangible presence in the Levant from 1843, when a need to protect the pilgrims travelling from Russia to the Holy Lands came to be seen as essential by both the Orthodox ecclesiastical authorities in the Levant and by the pilgrims themselves.⁴ Noted by Stephen Graham, who travelled with the Russian pilgrims from Odessa to Jerusalem in the early twentieth century, conditions for travelers were extremely harsh and the journey could take several weeks.⁵ Pilgrims required basic assistance, such as accommodation, provisions and medical assistance, provided by speakers of their own language. Before the IOPS made the journey easier and safer by organising transport, many pilgrims would be killed before they had left the Caucasus.⁶ By the turn of the century, the Society could provide them with safe passage, clean water, baths and beds.⁷

Safeguarding the interests of the Russian Orthodox Church against their Greek rivals and preventing proselytisation by other Christian factions of Orthodox Christians, as well as inhibiting conversion to the dominant Islamic religion, was a constant struggle for the IOPS. One of the first Russian missionaries in Jerusalem and a vital figure in the history of the IOPS, the archimandrite Porfiri Uspenski, visited Arab villages personally to fight against the effects of Uniates and Protestants (backed by French and English churches, respectively), who were persuading Christian Arabs to leave the Orthodox Church and attend their

educational establishments.⁸ Armed with little money and lacking the same kind of appeal that defined the economic powerhouses of Great Britain and France, Russia had to rely on intellectual capital in order to lure Christian Arabs, many of whom lived in desperate, dire poverty,⁹ to its schools. The IOPS schools placed the greatest emphasis upon promoting both Russian and Arabic literature to its pupils, instilling a love and fascination with the Russian language from the former, and a sense of Arab cultural heritage from the latter.

Although Russia genuinely wished and needed to protect the Orthodox Christians in the Levant out of a sense of brotherhood (in the same sense as Pan Slavism had led both the Russian government and people to be supportive of Slavic uprisings against Turkish rule in the Balkans), the ethical and religious considerations of the IOPS in the Levant cannot be divorced from the realpolitik that largely dictated Russian actions on Ottoman soil. Although some accounts of Russia's four nineteenth-century wars with Turkey put the Russian government in a defensive role,¹⁰ there is a general tendency to think of Russia's actions as being part of a drive southwards. This effort to expand its territory into the Ottoman domain, was thwarted by defeat in the Crimean War (1853-56), and by the Congress of Berlin in 1878 when the other Great Powers 'forced Alexander II to abandon his plans for a Balkan sphere of influence.'¹¹

The government's backing of the work of the Society, and especially the adding of the moniker 'Imperial' in 1882, must be seen in a context in which Russia

sought to exercise its influence in the Holy Lands without upsetting the Great Powers by being overtly aggressive towards the Ottoman Empire, which was still seen as essential to the balance of power in Europe. Instilling a love of Russian literature in Arab students was a surreptitious way of strengthening social ties between Russia and the Arab world by stealth, although no one could have predicted the extraordinary effect this would have on Arab literary pioneers, such as Khalil Baydas.

Khalil Baydas

Jihad Salih describes Khalil Baydas as '[t]he pioneer of the modern Arabic short story and one of the first ambassadors for Russian literature in Arabic culture.'¹² This description could be used to summarise the work of his own publication, *al-Nafa'is (Treasures)*, which was created by Baydas in Haifa in 1908 and which continued, albeit with a break in publication during the First World War, until 1923. The journal, intellectually based on Pushkin's *Sovremennik (The Contemporary)* model of the nineteenth century,¹³ was marketed as 'an intellectual and literary journal'¹⁴ and was published weekly in a sixteen-page edition, its relatively small size allowing Baydas to produce the journal quickly and cheaply, and thus reflect more directly and immediately the social and political world in which it was being created.¹⁵ This was important in a world that was in rapid flux, economically, socially and politically, and in an Arab cultural environment that had become more enlightened through the teachings of al-Afghani and Abduh, and more interrogative of its status due to events such as

the Dinshaway Incident in 1906. As the reputation of *al-Nafa'is* grew and its content expanded inexorably, Baydas switched to a fortnightly issue format and added the adjective *al-ʿasriyyah* (meaning *Contemporary*) to state explicitly how socially relevant his journal of Arabic literature was.

Baydas was born in 1875 and spent his early life in Nazareth, where he received his education at two schools run by the IOPS. Nazareth would become the epicenter of Russian educational activity for boys in the Levant when the seminary, a teaching college for Christian Arabs intended to be the first step towards them becoming teachers themselves, was built in the town in the late nineteenth century.¹⁶

In these schools, Baydas learnt to speak and write Russian to an exceptional level. After graduating from the seminary, he remained in the teaching profession, dedicating his career to the IOPS schools so as to maintain his ties to the Russian language. By 1898, at the age of twenty-three, Baydas had published his first Arabic translation of a Russian literary work, Pushkin's short story, *The Captain's Daughter*, in a single volume in Beirut.¹⁷

The Captain's Daughter was a first attempt to convey to a larger Arab reading public the beauty and sophistication of Russian literature, the maturity of which Baydas felt that Arabic literature, with its gravitation towards poetry and dependence upon inflexible form rather than style and content, lacked.

Furthermore, Arabic literature did not have a prose tradition comparable with European literature, aside from classics like *Kalilah wa Dimnah*, *Alif laylah wa laylah* and *al-Maqamat*, upon which to draw for modern forms.¹⁸ A decade after the publication of *The Captain's Daughter*, *al-Nafa'is* would be a way of bringing prose literature, and especially the short story, into the Arab cultural consciousness and of increasing cultural production.

From its inception, most of the articles published in *al-Nafa'is* were translations from Russian literature, as Baydas intended to introduce his Arab readers to the form of the short story and thus encouraged the first attempts at complex Arabic short stories which started to appear in the early twentieth century. This was similar to the Russian journal *Severniiy vestnik (Northern Herald)* which sought to promote the Symbolist movement in a comparable manner by presenting 'the latest foreign currents in literature through translated works.'¹⁹ In both the Arabic and the Russian journals, the content at the start was interesting in so much as the writings presented were not great works by authors such as Dostoevsky or Tolstoy, or indeed the Pushkin of Baydas's early days, but rather pieces that were seldom attributed to either original authors or Arab translators. Bearing in mind the challenges of introducing new works to a readership unaccustomed to complex narratives and subtle plot development, Baydas tended to include generic stories that did not introduce the reader to specificities of Russian culture or life, but rather provided entertainment. A sample of stories from the first couple of years of *al-Nafa'is* will demonstrate to the reader the kind of Russian literature

Baydas considered his audience capable of digesting.

The first short story translated from Russian in *al-Nafa'is* is *The Pauper (al-Faqir)*, an ironic tale of wisdom and morality.²⁰ A chance encounter between a pauper and a rich man leads to an argument about work ethics, triggered by the rich man's refusal to give the beggar any money unless he works for it; rather the rich man insists that the pauper earns some money by chopping logs for him. Years later, when the two men meet again, the rich man is delighted that the work ethic has led to the pauper getting a job in the public prosecutor's office, whereupon the pauper admits that his first 'job' was in fact a swindle as he had got the man's servant to chop the logs for him. Nevertheless, this story demonstrated the sculpting of a *fabula* and *sjuzhet*.²¹ These are techniques that would go to shape the modern Arabic short story some years later, particularly the more intricate stories by Lashin and Haqqi.²²

As mentioned above, few stories featured recognisably Russian content, but *Peter the Great and His Wife (Butrus al-akbar wa zaujatuhu)* is an exception.²³ This very short story is an anecdote about taking the morally correct course of action in the face of bureaucratic mechanisms, given the expectations of the office of Tsar. Its inclusion provides evidence of the importance Baydas placed on the edifying purposes of literature. Rather more typical of the fare in *al-Nafa'is*, however, are the anonymously translated Russian gothic-style horror stories and absurd Gogolian tales that regularly populate the pages of the journal. Examples

of these types were *The Strangeness of Dreams (Gharabatu-l-ahlam)*²⁴ and *Joy (al-Farh)* respectively.²⁵ The first of these takes place on a tempestuous night with narrative devices such as thunder and lightning adding to the atmosphere. A public prosecutor (a common feature of Gogol's short stories) checks into a hotel for the night, and there has a horrifying dream in which a husband and wife carry out a murder. The nightmare turns out to be a premonition, as three years later he finds out that a couple have lured a rich man to the very same hotel, killed him and put his body in the stable in the same manner in which they did so in his dream. In the second story, a young man who works for the government finds joy in the fact that a newspaper's report on his public drunkenness has made him famous, or rather – as most would consider it – notorious, throughout Russia. He wakes up his sleeping family to inform them of the celebratory news.

Finally, from this small selection of translated stories from unattributed original authors, we meet another important facet of *al-Nafa'is al-^casriyyah*. *The Martyr to Paternal Love (Shahidatu-l-hubb al-walidi)*,²⁶ a heroic tale set in thirteenth-century Padua, concerning an intelligent man who was sentenced to death for defending the rights of the inhabitants of the city. The translator of this story was a graduate of the Beit Jala Seminary, Kulthum Ode.²⁷ Indeed, *al-Nafa'is al-^casriyyah* became a seedbed for literary talent from the Arab world and here again we see a parallel with *Sovremennik* in Russia, which had proved vital as a promoter of many (then unknown) talents, such as Tolstoy and Turgenev. In the case of *al-Nafa'is al-^casriyyah*, this was true especially of Arabs connected with

the schools of the IOPS, and we read many stories that have been translated by Beit Jala and Nazareth seminary graduates. In Kulthum Ode's case, publication in Baydas's journal was a primary step in a career that took her to a professorship at Moscow University.²⁸

Russian was also essential as a source language for translations of works originally written in other languages. Over the course of many weeks, Baydas published his own Arabic translation of the Russian version of a British novel by Marie Corelli (*Temporal Power: A Study in Supremacy*), which he called *Shaqqa' al-muluk, The Tragedy of Kings*. In his short introduction to the work, Baydas is frank about the fact that his translation of Corelli's novel is certainly not literal.²⁹ Baydas explains that he had 'adapted' and 'changed' the text, both adding to and deleting from it as he felt was suitable for an Arab audience, before arranging it into chapters (*tabwib*) so that the Arab reader could feel more comfortable with an otherwise alien format.³⁰ The resulting novel, with chapters that record short episodes mainly from the point of a view of a single protagonist who comes into contact with other less developed characters, thus maintaining his superiority in the narrative and therefore the primary interest of the reader. This is reminiscent of the form of the *maqamat* genre.³¹ Yet Baydas goes further than was common in that genre, recording the psychological and spiritual development of the king from disillusion with his kingship to eventual abdication.

When finally, Baydas published the first features on Tolstoy in *al-Nafa'is al-*

‘asriyyah, probably triggered by the literary reassessment of Tolstoy that took place after the author’s death, this accompanied a more general shift in literary focus, away from superficial yarns to the deeper fabric of Russian literature. In 1910, Baydas printed a remarkable story by Antun Ballan, entitled ‘The Work of God’ (*‘aml allah*).³² Ballan was a fellow graduate and teacher at the Nazareth Seminary and a voracious reader of Russian literature.³³ ‘The Work of God’ shows some maturity in the development of the Arabic prose short story. Using Tolstoy’s later works as a literary framework, Ballan sets out to explain that the true nature of God’s love can only be appreciated through a comprehension and respect for nature rather than through material possessions. The story is striking not only for its philosophical depth, but also for its intricate structure, managing to maintain a narrative unity without the overt interference of a narrative voice, and attaining a subtle level of characterization in the space of just a few pages. Ballan’s work provides an exemplar of the modern Arabic short story.

In two 1911 editions, Baydas includes a biography of Tolstoy, describing the author as *al-failasuf* (the philosopher) rather than as *al-katib* (the writer).³⁴ Attempting to be comprehensive, Baydas gives the reader a literal portrait of Tolstoy’s upbringing and career. He cites some major works not available in Arabic at that time, including *The Sevastopol Sketches*. Nevertheless, the biography leans more towards the contemplation of the moral and philosophical outlook of the man, rather than critiquing his published literary works. The brief discussion of *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*, for example, focuses upon the

level of renown they had achieved for Tolstoy by the 1870s, rather than the actual content of the novels.

Where the biography is strongest is in the summation of Tolstoy's character, charting the excesses of his youth which had led – in the opinion of the author – to a vacuum of principles, before finding fulfillment in the capacity of a felicitous marriage and a sense of purpose in his struggles for education and equality of the peasant class. Baydas often emphasized this trope which also featured heavily in Tolstoy's later writing. It was Tolstoy's exposition of the inherent inequalities of Russian life, and of the need for Russian rural societies to have easier access to the benefits of education, that resonated strongly with contemporary Arab readers.

Even while still alive Tolstoy became an ambassador for the downtrodden of humanity, but his influence became ever more profound after his death. For Baydas and the readers of *al-Nafa'is al-^casriyyah*, Tolstoy revealed the plight of subaltern peoples all over the world, including those oppressed by the Ottoman and British Empires. He appeared to empathize with their desperation and incapacity to change their lot. Over and above his views on the unnecessary riches of the church and the idealism of family life, it is those articles which depict Tolstoy's conviction that all people are essentially equal that Baydas preferences in his choice of works for translation and publication. *From the Life of Tolstoy* (*Min hayat Tolstoy*) provides anecdotes that elevate further the Russian *al-*

failasuf's importance as a beacon of fairness, thus bolstering the legend that was quickly building up about him.³⁵ In one anecdote, Tolstoy visits a friend, the prince Sergius Alexandrovich, but is dismissed at the gate because the guard believes Tolstoy to be a peasant intruder begging for money. In the second tale, both Tolstoy and a genuine peasant have been caught travelling without tickets on the train and are about to be thrown out at the next station. In both cases, once Tolstoy reveals his identity, he is treated with obsequious charm. The manner in which these tales are re-told, chastising the guard and inspector as miscreants, highlights Tolstoy's relentless quest for social justice and sympathy for the downtrodden in the wider community, an aspect of his writing that was promoted consistently by Baydas.

Al-Nafa'is al-^casriyyah therefore initiated a dialogue between the Arab world and Russia in which Arab readers were able to find connections between their literary histories and so familiarize themselves with Russian literature. A biographical essay on Pushkin, written by an Arab contributor, made apparent the poet's Arabic heritage by concentrating in its opening paragraphs upon the Eritrean slave from whom Pushkin was descended.³⁶ Furthermore, an article that appeared in 1911 entitled *Productions of Tolstoy (Mu'alafat Tolstoy)* demonstrated that the Russian-Arab dialogue was finding an academic voice in Russia itself.³⁷ Written by Constantine Qutuf, the article charts Tolstoy's influence throughout the world, listing the languages into which Tolstoy had been translated and the number of different translations published in each language.

While Qutuf claimed that there existed only two translations of Tolstoy into Arabic (but neglected to detail which two they were), new evidence was put forward by the distinguished Russian scholar, Ignatiev Krachkovsky, to dispute this claim. In the *Literary Works (al-Athar al-adabiyah)* section at the back of the journal, Baydas noted Krachkovsky's studies which revealed that he had found six translations of Tolstoy's works into Arabic.³⁸

After the Russian Revolution of 1917, *al-Nafa'is al-^casriyyah* elevated a new Russian literary figure to iconic status: Maksim Gorky. A writer who communed with peasants on the Steppe and fought through his literature for fair treatment of the masses, Maksim Gorky clearly came from the same egalitarian mould as Lev Tolstoy. However, where God had been the key to essential happiness for Tolstoy, Gorky replaced religion with the Leninist work ethic, stating '[f]or whom is the future? It belongs to those who put their trust and faith in work'.³⁹ In Gorky's view, socialism would provide for the populace, not God.

Tolstoy was still venerated – as later articles such as *From the Thoughts of Tolstoy (Min mufkirat Tolstoy)* published in 1919 show – but there was now an ardent interest in the current affairs of Bolshevik Russia, together with an urgent questioning of Arab identity sparked by the Balfour Declaration of 1917.⁴⁰ With tragic irony, the same 1922 issue that featured a biography on one of the ideological forefathers of the Revolution, Karl Marx, also carried a story revealing that millions of books sorely needed by schools across Socialist Russia, lay

neglected in warehouses where they were exposed to water damage. Amongst them, were 'many written by *al-failasuf* Tolstoy.'⁴¹

Al-Nafa'is al-^ḥasriyyah had taken some important steps towards the development of a modern Arabic prose style. When *al-Nafa'is al-^ḥasriyyah* ceased publication in 1923, a new periodical conceived by Salim Qubayn who had a very similar background to Baydas, would consolidate the work of the earlier periodical.

Salim Qubayn

Qubayn was born in Nazareth in 1870 and, like Baydas, was educated at IOPS schools, receiving his later education at the Nazareth Seminary. He was also a prodigious talent who turned his creative mind towards Russian literature. Oppressed by Ottoman censorship, his socio-political activities led him to emigrate to comparatively liberal Cairo in 1897, from where he could continue his teaching and anti-imperialist work.⁴² In 1924, he produced the first copy of his journal *al-Ikha'a* (*Fraternity*). For Arab readers, the name conjured up images of the French Revolution and implied a rallying call for self-determination to those parts of the Arab world, especially Egypt and the Levant, that had suffered for centuries under imperial and colonial rule.

Qubayn's relationship with Krachkovsky was pivotal to the success of *al-Ikha'a*.⁴³ Firstly, Krachkovsky's status in the Arab literary world was inestimable. He corresponded frequently with many of the greatest writers and literary professors

(such as Taha Hussein and Henri Peres), was highly respected in the Arab world for his vast knowledge of Semitic languages and literature, and made a great contribution to the study of modern Arabic literature in the West.⁴⁴ Thus his association with *al-Ikha'a* would increase its reputation accordingly. Furthermore, and more practically, Krachkovsky regularly sent Russian periodicals, books and other literary works to Egypt, from which Qubayn selected and translated those articles that he considered would be of greatest interest to the Arab reader and which would hold the reader's attention through their brevity and simplicity. The *al-Ikha'a's* 'Shadharat al-Ikha'a' (Fragments) section, for example, included titillating items to complement the more serious pieces. A story about a young Polish actress killing her husband with a revolver because he was dying of radium poisoning shares space with both a travel journal of a monsigneur who travelled to Tibet in the 1840's and a tale of a man who claimed he could move his heart and his intestines around his body at will.⁴⁵ Although superficial in content, these pieces show Qubayn's awareness of the need for a balance between tones in a periodical – a practice pursued by nineteenth century Russian periodicals with their *smes'* (miscellany) sections⁴⁶ – as well as demonstrating his comprehension that the purpose of the new format was to build a more personal relationship with readers. This was something that *al-Nafa'is* had dabbled in but had not fully developed. Additionally, Qubayn dedicated sections of *al-Ikha'a* to women (*sahifatu-l-mar'a*) and to children (*sahifatu-l-awlad*), thus introducing further innovative content to the Arabic periodical. These developments may have been inspired by Russian journals, which with their broader reading base

and more developed literary community, could afford to dedicate entire journals to women's (e.g. *Rassvet*) or children's (e.g. *Detskoe chtenie*) literature.⁴⁷

Al-Ikha'a was certainly innovative in some ways, such as magnifying the prominence of Arab authors to a much greater extent than *al-Nafa'is al-^casriyyah*. As early as 1925, we find that photographs of emerging Arab writers take up the inset page, reminding the reader that these Arab men were the 'stars' and disseminating their work was the purpose of the journal. However, in other regards it was very similar to its predecessor. Once again, we find Russian periodicals being used mainly as a source of superficial stories that are either historically interesting, or which pander to the readers' desires to know more about the world and its scientific exploration. Thus, *al-Ikha'a*'s variegated feature stories did have more depth than the kind of bizarre anomalies mentioned in the *Fragments* section. Amongst the longer pieces translated from Russian were stories like *Napoleon and the Beautiful Walewska*, a romanticized account of how the emperor fell in love with the Polish countess while he was marching triumphantly into Warsaw, which developed the principles of *fabula* and *sjuzhet*, as well as more detailed characterization.⁴⁸

Such concentration on Russian literature in *al-Ikha'a* led to a natural inclination to examine its turbulent political landscape, as one may have expected from a journal that had been initiated only five years after the Russian Revolution of 1917; it would also address Arab questions of subalternity six years after the

Sykes-Picot Agreement. A remarkable piece on Lenin in the second volume provided a somewhat sentimental picture of the leader as a young boy⁴⁹ before proceeding to a more balanced summary of his leadership of Soviet Russia.⁵⁰ Thus, the Arab reader certainly learned the opinions of those supporting Lenin – which predictably came from other Soviet leaders such as Stalin – but was also introduced to the criticisms of Lenin and the state of Socialist Russia more generally, in translations of articles published in Russian newspapers and magazines that had been established by émigrés all over the world after the Revolution.

Furthermore, where *al-Nafa'is al-^casriyyah* was preoccupied with biographies of Russian literary masters without printing much of their actual literature, *al-Ikha'a* took the bold step of translating and printing several works of Russian literature by highly esteemed writers. Turgenev has three of his very short stories printed during the journal's second year, while a piece by Chekhov was published in 1933.⁵¹ Although holding very little literary value (mainly on account of their brevity), the two pieces achieved the significant goal of introducing Arab readers to two important Russian literary figures and demonstrated how they could tackle diverse topics in literature. '*Tab^ciyah*' (Nature) by Turgenev recounted a dream in which the narrator enters a subterranean temple where a 'great woman was sat deep in thought,' apparently contemplating a flea's ability to escape danger, while Chekhov's piece is a series of witticisms that all begin with 'I': 'I hold a special commission, because my wife commissions me all day to go to the market and

buy necessities for the house,' for example.⁵²

This development shows that appreciation of Russian literature at this time was beginning to evolve into a more modern literary criticism that saw Russia not just as a ready source of tales, but as a country that had cultivated specific literary talents who expounded unique viewpoints on the world through their sophisticated narratives. In this appreciation of Russian literature, Lev Tolstoy was the central figure on the pages of *al-Ikha'a*, as in *al-Nafa'is al-^casriyyah*. In three separate issues we find articles in the children's section of the journal that are translations of Tolstoy's articles 'Magnetism' (*al-Maghnatis*),⁵³ 'Moisture' (*al-Rutuba*)⁵⁴ and 'What Causes Evil in the World?' (*Min ayna ya'ti ash-shir fi-l-alam?*).⁵⁵ Designed to be lucid and explanatory, Tolstoy was promulgating the worth of education, something on which Baydas had also written many articles.⁵⁶ Tolstoy's message of finding contentment in moderation and harmony with nature is a feature of another article in *al-Ikha'a* entitled *The Meaning of Life* (*Ma^cna al-haya*), in which Tolstoy is highlighted as a great thinker who can imbibe wisdom to readers looking for a purpose to their existence.⁵⁷ This principle had already been anteceded by *In Marriage and Love* (*az-Zawaj wa-l-hubb*), translated and published in 1925 in *al-ikha'a*.⁵⁸ Tolstoy pleads with his readers not to debase themselves by submitting to carnal desires that put them on the same level as animals, but rather to aspire to marital love of the kind that is reflected in literature.

The sum purpose – in Qubayn's mind – of these articles is the subliminal transfer

to the Arab reader of a set of moral values through the texts that proselytize the idea that a rewarding life could be achieved through education, restraint and a proximity to nature and thereby, God. Qubayn was idealistically pushing these values at a generally religious population (both Christian and Muslim) in Egypt and the Levant and hoping to find an appreciative and sympathetic audience. Once more, *Severniy vestnik* proved to be a progenitor of this phenomenon, having attracted Tolstoy through 'its emphasis on moral as well as social progress.'⁵⁹

Legacy

What we have seen, then, in *al-Nafa'is al-^oasriyyah* and *al-Ikha'a* are two periodicals that were produced at a time when modern Arabic prose literature was beginning to form and find its own distinct voice. Like so many other global literary movements, Arabic prose looked to foreign forms for guidance.⁶⁰ Russian periodicals shaped the form of their Arabic peers, providing a template that would be pursued by later journals, particularly the communist-leaning *al-Tariq*, while Russian literature would continue to be an essential inspiration for a whole legion of Arab prose writers, from Naimy to Mahfouz.

In his study of the IOPS-educated pioneers of the Arabic literary renaissance, Hanna Abu Hanna devotes one of his chapters to the main periodicals that were produced by alumni of the Nazareth Seminary.⁶¹ These include the two journals examined here plus *as-Sa'ih* and *al-Funun*, both established in New York in 1912

and 1913 respectively, by members of the Levantine *mahjar* (expatriate) community, who followed in the wake of the success of *al-Nafa'is al-^oasriyyah*. Observing the evolution of the journal in the Arab world with a Bakhtinian mindset, we can see how the initial ripples created by *al-Nafa'is al-^oasriyyah* directly influenced the content and forms of a myriad of later journals. Yet these journals did not merely attempt to imitate the original, but rather, adapted the earlier model to suit their differing *weltanschauung* or worldview.

Reflecting the early days of the Soviet Union, *al-Ikha'a* contains many articles that criticize the changes occurring in Russia at the time, particularly those related to religion and churches. Philosophically, the editorial stance was still defined by the culture of imperialism and censorship in the Arab world and a struggle for freedom and equality amongst the Arab people. In the later American journals, however, the emphasis is upon intellectual clarity untainted by emotional fervour. Thus, the American tradition gives us Gibran, Rahini and Naimy with their generally more independent analytical approach to Arabic literature. These authors were concerned with the radical reconstruction of the literature itself, rather than by an approach that is coloured in quite the same way by the effects of being subaltern.

Conclusion

Beyond their content, *al-Nafa'is al-^oasriyyah* and *al-Ikha'a* had an immeasurable effect on the development of Arabic prose by creating a literary environment in

which Arabic prose works could be taken seriously. Baydas's journal increased the reputation of Arab writers and supported literary protégés like Antun Ballan and Kulthum Ode. Qubayn took this process further. His correspondence with Krachkovsky was enough to elevate him as a serious figure in the Arab literary world, while his inclusion of original literary works by reputable Arab authors, such as Taha Hussein, alongside renowned Russian writers was indicative of the value he attached to modern Arabic literature.

It is in this context that we must view *al-Nafa'is al-^casriyyah* and *al-Ikha'a* as two periodicals that assisted in the formation of an entire literary movement in the Arab world. Just as *Sovremennik* and other literary journals built up the reputation of many hitherto unknown Russian authors, *al-Nafa'is al-^casriyyah* and *al-Ikha'a* would provide a vital foundation for the new Arabic prose literary movement.

¹ *Al-Ikha'a* (8/IX, 1933).

² The origins of *al-nahda* are the subject of much academic debate. While many Arab and Western scholars have taken the Napoleonic invasion of Egypt as a starting point for a general literary renaissance (see Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1798-1939*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1983, for example). Others, such as Peter Gran in his *Islamic Roots of Capitalism: Egypt, 1760-1840*, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1979, have traced its origins back further. The emergence of Arabic narrative prose in a modern form (rather than in early forms by al-Tahtawi and Shidyaq), however, starts to take place in the early twentieth century (see Roger Allen, *The Arabic Novel: An Historical and Critical Introduction* Syracuse, New York, 1995 for example).

³ At its core, this identity should be considered Arab rather than Muslim on account of its unity through language, although political events led both journals to contribute to the formation of their respective nation-states' identities (see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, Verso, London, 2006).

⁴ Derek Hopwood, *The Russian Presence in Syria and Palestine 1843-1914*, Clarendon, Oxford 1969.

⁵ Stephen Graham *With the Russian Pilgrims to Jerusalem*, Macmillan, London, 1913.

⁶ Stephen Graham, *With the Russian Pilgrims to Jerusalem*, p.86. Anti-Christian sentiments ran high in the Caucasus, which had a high Muslim population in the nineteenth century but were

nevertheless subject to Tsarist rule. (See John F. Baddeley, *The Russian Conquest of the Caucasus* Curzon, Richmond, 1999 and Moshe Gammer, *Muslim Resistance to the Tsar: Shamil and the conquest of Chechenia and Daghestan*, Frank Cass, London, 1994).

⁷ Stephen Graham, *With the Russian Pilgrims to Jerusalem* pp.89-90.

⁸ Derek Hopwood, *Russian Presence in Syria and Palestine*, p.43.

⁹ See Mikhail Naimy, *Sab^cun*, Dar Sader, Beirut, 1967, for a vivid description of life in a poor Lebanese village, Baskinta.

¹⁰ See, for example, David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye's chapter, 'Russian Foreign Policy: 1815-1917,' in *The Cambridge History of Russia (Vol.II)*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2006.

¹¹ Robert V. Daniels, *Russia: The Roots of Confrontation*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1985, p.60.

¹² Jihad Salih, *Ra'id al-qussah al-qasirah al-hadithah fi falistin wa awl safir li-ladab ar-rusi fi-thaqafah al-arabiyah*, al-markaz al-falastini li-dirasat wa-nashr wa-l^calam, Ramallah, 2005.

¹³ Sabry Hafez, *The Genesis of Arabic Narrative Discourse*, Saqi, London, 1993, p.152.

¹⁴ Cover: *al-Nafa'is* (Edition 1/Year I, 1908). Russian 'thick' journals of the nineteenth century were invariably marketed in a similar fashion, as 'Literary-Political' or 'Historical-Literary' or some other such permutation. See Deborah A. Martinsen (ed.), *Literary Journals in Imperial Russia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge UK, 1997, p.97.

¹⁵ Figures for distribution for pre-WWII Arab journals are notoriously difficult to gather, but Rashid Khalidi suggests that *al-Nafa'is al-^casriyyah* was 'popular' with prints running to hundreds, perhaps thousands, for each edition (*Palestinian Identity*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1997, p.56).

¹⁶ A sister seminary for the teaching of girls was established by the IOPS in 1886 in Beit Jala.

¹⁷ Sabry Hafez, *The Genesis of Arabic Narrative Discourse*, p.95.

¹⁸ Jihad Salih, *Ra'id al-qussah al-qasirah al-hadithah*, p.57.

¹⁹ Deborah Martinsen, *Literary Journals in Imperial Russia*, p.221.

²⁰ *Al-Nafa'is al-^casriyyah* (11/I, 1909).

²¹ Two Russian formalist terms: *fabula* refers to the chronological sequence of events which forms a basis for a story, while *sjuzhet* means the way in which these events are reordered and revealed in the narrative of the same story.

²² See Hafez, *The Genesis of Arabic Narrative Discourse*, chapter 7 and appendix for a detailed consideration of these Bakhtinian terms at work in an early Lashin short story from 1929.

²³ *Al-Nafa'is al-^casriyyah* (13/I, 1909), trans. Sulayman Bulus.

²⁴ *Al-Nafa'is al-^casriyyah* (17/I, 1909).

²⁵ *Al-Nafa'is al-^casriyyah* (23/I, 1909).

²⁶ *Al-Nafa'is al-^casriyyah* (5/II, 1910).

²⁷ Although clearly taking an important step towards gender equality through the equal status of men and women writers in *al-Nafa'is al-^casriyyah*, it should be stressed that Baydas was building upon a re-evaluation of Islam and Arab society initiated by such writers as Muhammad ^cAbduh, Rashid Rida and Qasim Amin (see Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*, and Judith Tucker, *In the House of the Law: Gender and Islamic Law in Ottoman Syria and Palestine*, University of California, Berkeley CA, 1998).

²⁸ Later Kulthum Ode-Vasilyeva after her marriage to a Russian doctor. See D. Umar Mahamid's work *Brufisur kulthum ode: min an-nasr ila sant bitirsburg*, dar al-hady, Karim, 2001 for a study of this remarkable woman's life and work.

²⁹ The first part appeared in *al-Nafa'is* (2/I, 1908) and continued to be serialised for the remainder of the first year.

³⁰ Baydas jettisoned many of Corelli's more whimsical digressions. (See Allen's *The Arabic Novel* regarding the alien nature of the novel format).

³¹ See Roger Allen's study and translation of *Hadith Isa ibn Hisham* by Muhammad al-Muwaylihi, *A Period of Time*, Ithaca, Reading, 1992 for an example of this genre in Arabic literature.

³² *Al-Nafa'is al-^casriyyah* (7/II, 1910).

³³ Ballan's influence on the young Mikhail Naimy, a short story pioneer himself, was recorded in his autobiography *Sab'un*, where he credited Ballan for instilling in him a pride in Arabic literature and Arab nationalism.

³⁴ *Al-Nafa'is al-^casriyyah* (1-2/III, 1911).

³⁵ *Al-Nafa'is al-^casriyyah* (9/III, 1911).

³⁶ *Al-Nafa'is al-^casriyyah* (8-9/IV, 1912).

³⁷ *Al-Nafa'is al-^casriyyah* (3/III, 1911).

³⁸ *Al-Nafa'is al-^casriyyah* (9/III, 1911). Krachkovsky, who had advised Baydas of his research into Tolstoy Arabic translations, had also been active on the board of the IOPS during his stay in the Levant between the years of 1908 to 1910. Later in the same year of *al-Nafa'is al-^casriyyah*, Baydas wrote a column to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the IOPS (10/III, 1911).

³⁹ From the article *Maksim Gorky (al-Nafa'is al-^casriyyah)* (6/VII, 1919).

⁴⁰ *Al-Nafa'is al-^casriyyah* (9/VII, 1919).

⁴¹ Both articles from *al-Nafa'is al-^casriyyah* (1/IX, 1922).

⁴² Umar Mahamid, *Rossiya-Palestina: Dialog na rubyezhe XIX-XX vekov*, Liki Rossii, Saint Petersburg, 2002, p. 66.

⁴³ Evidence of the letters sent to Krachkovsky by Qubayn are stored in the St Petersburg Academy of Sciences archive (Ph. 1026, O. 3, E. 402).

⁴⁴ See Ignatii Krachkovsky, *Among Arabic Manuscripts*, Brill, Leiden, 1953 for an introduction to his many academic works.

⁴⁵ *Al-Ikha'a* (1/II, 1925).

⁴⁶ Deborah Martinsen, *Literary Journals in Imperial Russia*, p.97.

⁴⁷ Deborah Martinsen, *Literary Journals in Imperial Russia*, p.97.

⁴⁸ *Al-Ikha'a* (7/II, 1925).

⁴⁹ The published anecdote, which reads more like an idealized imagining of the quintessential Russian patriot, describes Lenin diligently pursuing his studies at school, playing with his comrades outside, and returning home to read Tolstoy.

⁵⁰ *Al-Ikha'a* (3/II, 1925).

⁵¹ *Al-Ikha'a* (4/II, 1925).

⁵² *Al-Ikha'a* (8/IX, 1933).

⁵³ *Al-Ikha'a* (4/II, 1925).

⁵⁴ *Al-Ikha'a* (7/II, 1925).

⁵⁵ *Al-Ikha'a* (8/II, 1925).

⁵⁶ Baydas' absorption with education is a subject more comprehensively studied by Salih, op. cit.

⁵⁷ *Al-Ikha'a* (3/II, 1925).

⁵⁸ *Al-Ikha'a* (2/II, 1925).

⁵⁹ Deborah Martinsen, *Literary Journals in Imperial Russia*, p.219.

⁶⁰ Franco Moretti, 'Conjectures on World Literature, from Christopher Prendergast (ed.) *Debating World Literature*, Verso, London, 2004.

⁶¹ Abu Hanna, Hanna, *Dar al-mu^calamin ar-rusiya fi-n-nasira "as-siminar" (1882-1914) (An-nasira: asdar da'ira ath-thaqafa al-^carabiya*, 1994).