

“Tradition” in T.S. Eliot’s *The Family Reunion* and Mikhail Na’ima’s *Aba’ wa al Bnun (Parents and Sons)*

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Abstract: *This study examines the analogous qualities between T. S. Eliot and Mikhail Na’ima’s definition of “tradition” and how the concept is applied in *The Family Reunion* (1939), a play in verse written by Eliot and *Aba’ wa al Bnun (Parents and Sons)* (1917), a colloquial drama composed by Na’ima. As influential critics, both writers used “tradition” as a vehicle for the promotion of a new definition of culture. Therefore, Terry Eagleton’s *Idea of Culture* and Eliot’s *Notes towards a Theory of Culture* provide an additional theoretical framework that reveals how both critics/dramatists have focused on the concept of “tradition” as a means for cultivating a modernist identity seeking high culture and as a crucial tool in the pursuit of distinctive styles and original thematic ideas. The theoretical concept of “tradition” evolved as a result of unique circumstances that both writers experienced. However, the reflective writing on their own plays testifies to the difficulty of applying theoretical frameworks in dramatic works. In conclusion, Eliot and Na’ima experimented with the genre and decided to keep their plays as examples for future playwrights.*

Critics and playwrights agree on the distinctive nature of drama as a composite art form demanding social and artistic collaboration to achieve its goals of instruction and delight. Thornton Wilder (1941: 886) in “Some Thoughts on Playwrighting” considers the four conditions of drama that distinguishes it from other arts. The first stipulation states that “The theatre is an art which reposes upon the work of many collaborators.” Wilder was basically referring to the nature of dramatic performances that rely on the effort of artists, directors and various people involved in the stage productions of plays. T. S. Eliot and Na’ima as critics and dramatists acknowledged the universal concept of a drama on stage as a process involving multiple participants, but their critical contribution lies in their deeper understanding of the collaborative nature of the creative process. Eliot and Na’ima’s critical ideas resonated with writers of their generation and extended beyond national borders. Eliot’s critical concepts influenced many American writers abroad and Na’ima’s ideas resonated in the Arab American community and the Arab world. Eliot changed critical opinion of his time and influenced the school of New Criticism. Na’ima also influenced the new school of Arabic poetry and introduced along with Gibran free verse. Na’ima, a major writer of the Pen League, was inspired by Walt Whitman’s poetry and his enthusiasm for a writer’s involvement with the general public. Eliot, however, was not a self-proclaimed democratic advocate, but his ideas reveal a similar attitude (Tamplin 1988: 69). Both writers, though coming from different sympathies, formulated a definition of “tradition” and considered the

notion as an integral component in any literary composition. As critics, Eliot and Na’ima focused on the importance of ‘tradition’ especially for playwrights and wanted to provide practical examples on its application by choosing to write dramatic works. The present article focuses on how both writers defined “tradition” and applied the concept with its wider cultural connotations in their plays; namely, T.S. Eliot’s *The Family Reunion* (1939) and Mikhail Na’ima’s *Parents and Sons* (1917).

Eliot’s seminal essay, “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” (1920) influenced critics and writers in America and abroad. The essay’s major theme states that “No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone” (Eliot 1920: 1302). This new definition of “tradition” discourages resort to “following the ways of the immediate generation” in “a blind or timid adherence to its success.” Furthermore, the concept of “tradition,” which is often used in the essay with double quotations is “a perception not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence” (Ibid 1301). Eliot’s definition of “tradition” became commonly applied in Western literary criticism and it had come to be understood as a writer’s process of being shaped by and at the same time altering tradition. The term gained aesthetic appeal among writers because it was synonymous with seeking a new definition of a modernist identity, which was enticing to innovative Western writers of the early twentieth century. The summation of Eliot’s criticism affirms an “impersonal theory” of poetry that entails using tradition as a means of finding a personal mode of expression and not to be blindly imitating the works of previous generations. Moreover, Eliot applied his critical notion in *The Waste Land* (1922) to show how relevant and applicable the term is in poetry. Na’ima also believed in the concept of “tradition” as one that relies on finding a writer’s path and salvaging tradition from other writers who contribute negatively to literature by refusing to cope with current changes in their environment. For Eliot and Na’ima having a sense of “tradition” entails that a writer’s social duty is to inoculate a sense of tradition extending beyond a limited vision of merely mimicking writers of antiquity and celebrating their successes. Instead, ‘tradition’ means that borders of time and place are eliminated in favor of an all-inclusive culture of humanity. Their comprehensive view of the art of literary production and its cultural connotations gained both writers critical attention, and it is precisely the romanticized view of a higher cultural by-product in engaging in ‘tradition’ that Na’ima and Eliot both share.

Mikhail Na’ima in his writings, especially, in *Al-Ghrbal* (1927) formulated a belief that the artist should aim at building a hefty sense of “tradition.” Na’ima, who was an influential critic and writer in Arab American and Arabic literature, articulated a notion of “tradition” that emphasized its role as a promoter of a populist reformation and as a necessary step in formulating a new conception of culture. Moreover, Na’ima saw in the engagement of “tradition” as the only option available, and he was also motivated by the urgency of this commitment because “tradition” plays an important role in the formulation of a cultural identity at times of political predicament. Na’ima’s

main literary concepts were influenced by Walt Whitman's democratic nationalism, which favored the artist's participation with the social and political milieu of his times and the Arab world at the turn of the twentieth century was in desperate need for reformation. Na'ima's ideas resonated with contemporaries and created a standard for later generations of Arabic critics and writers (Tarbeh 2004: 175). Unlike Na'ima, Eliot expressed his displeasure of the populace and of Walt Whitman, but he held a vigorous conviction that "tradition" is essential for a writer. Moreover, Eliot emphasized this step as a necessary prelude for approaching a higher "spiritual" goal and a new definition of culture.

Terry Eagleton in *The Idea of Culture* considers T. S. Eliot and Henry James as examples of writers who have abandoned the "inorganic" society of their native country for a culture that is "quasi-religious" (Eagleton 2000: 24-25). As Eagleton points out in his analysis of Eliot's view on culture, the modern period provided a fertile ground for a redefinition of culture because at times of political crisis it becomes "the only apparent alternative to degradation" (Ibid 112-115). In Eliot's *Notes Towards a Definition of Culture* (1948), which is extensively quoted in Terry Eagleton, Eliot tried to promote a high culture of spiritual superiority, but Eliot remained in spite of his ideals a populist and considered a unity of belief and behavior as the only alternative available for the general public (Ibid 115). Eagleton concludes after surveying different critical opinions that culture is what "we live by" and more important "what we live for" (Ibid 131). Eagleton, therefore, expresses Eliot's humble suggestion that one can only seek "notes towards a definition" of culture. The theosophical preoccupation with culture could possibly be argued as the most recurrent theme in Eliot's work and that "his whole concept of literary tradition is based on his view of culture" (Moghni 1987: 3). For Eliot and Na'ima, the first step in understanding culture begins by engaging in "tradition," and both writers, who were originally from different nationalist backgrounds before they became citizens of another country, shared an idea of culture as one rooted in "tradition." However, they believed "tradition" had to be redefined for the writer in order to achieve its intended results.

A survey of the biography of Eliot and Na'ima reveals how "tradition" evolved as a result of living a modernist existence. They each led a unique and industrious life that influenced their critical and dramatic works. The American born T. S. Eliot spent most of his time abroad and afterwards received a British citizenship. Similarly, Mikhail Na'ima (written with variations which include Nu'aymah, and Naimy) was born in Baskinta, Lebanon and later became a United States citizen. More important is their status as educated individuals: Eliot studied philosophy at Harvard and Na'ima became a lawyer. As intellectuals they shared the belief in the writer's obligations towards his society at times of crisis. Moreover, both writers were involved in poetic circles and developed a deep understanding of the artistic and social problems of the era.

Most of Na'ima's critical books discuss the common practices among Arab intellectuals of his time and their narrow-minded definition of a poet as an imitator of classical poetry and following "tradition" in literary productions.

Na'ima as major writer and a critical leader of the Pen League exerted immense influence on his contemporaries of Arab American background. He was one of the few Arab American writers anthologized in Orfalea's *Grape Leaves: A Century of Arab American Poetry*. (Orfalea 1988: 19). His acclaimed major critical theories were put forth in *Al-Ghrbal* (1927), a critical book that solidified his reputation as the driving force behind the New York Pen League, a group of Arab American writers who changed modern Arabic literature in the Arab world. Na'ima wrote extensively and his thirty books cover philosophical, literary and critical works which were also anthologized in Arabic literature (Goash 1999). His major philosophy was introduced in *Mirdad* (which he composed in English in 1948) and his poetry in *Hamas Al-Jofoon* (1945). In his philosophical and poetical work Na'ima had tried to give practical examples of his theoretical concepts and to provide a humble definition of culture that despises imitation and favors innovation.

Mikhail Na'ima was rebellious against the traditional Arab conviction that a poet should seek the imitation of writers of previous generation of Arabic literature because he believes it deprives Arabic literature from cultivating a culture necessary for allowing Arabic individuals and society from achieving a sense of unity. Na'ima found in his contemporaries' adherence to closely following stagnant traditional forms and subjects in composing literature in general and poetry, in particular, as one of the main reasons for not only a setback of Arabic literature but also of Arabic society. In *Al-Ghrbal*, Na'ima believes that an individual is the center of literature and the purpose of literary productions is to reform society. Therefore, literary productions should be an honest expression and free of all constrictions even traditional ones. Na'ima focused on the use of "free verse" as the preferred stylistic method of composition in poetry and extended this freedom from constraints to other genres in Arabic literature. He was equally frustrated with the fifteen scales of poetry laid down by Khalil ibn Ahmad Al Farāhīdi because according to Na'ima the adherence to the fifteen scales of poetry stopped Arabic poetry from achieving any originality in form or subject matter. He also broadened his definition of "tradition" so as to include other national literatures following in his belief that a poet should expand his knowledge and experience beyond the limitations of a specific national literature.

The resort to multiple genres and other national literatures by Eliot and Na'ima was a practical way of demonstrating the comprehensiveness of the theoretical concept of "tradition." Both writers by using unconventional methods illustrate that a writer's purpose is to build a sense of culture in the modern individual. Eliot frequently employed and extensively alluded to classical works in his literary oeuvre. Na'ima and other Arab American writers of his time also studied other national literatures and experimented with different genres. As an example, the writers of the first wave of Arab immigrant writers experimented with the novel as a new genre in Arabic Literature. Gregory Orfalea in "The Arab American Novel" discusses the novel form that was received by the Arab American community and Arabic speaking countries at the turn of the twentieth

century and then gained importance among Arab American in the 1950s. Orfalea realized that Arab American novelists, such as Amin Rihani and Mikhail Na'ima, were using the novel form as a mode of expression to get into a dialectic engagement with Melville and Twain (Orfalea 2006: 115-13). Na'ima, furthermore, emphasized the knowledge of other literatures as a way of gaining insight into the life of other people and extending one's cultural knowledge (Muneer 1992: 83). Moreover, Na'ima believed that a writer should also be influenced by other philosophies and religions (Shaba' 1979: 313-325). Hussein Dabbagh in the Introduction to *Mikhail Naimy: Some Aspects of his Thought as Revealed in his Writings* states:

Born an Orthodox Christian, Mikhail Naimy's beliefs became unorthodox, for his interest in Buddhism, Hinduism, metempsychosis, and Sufism so widened the horizons of his outlook that he almost evolved a "faith" of his own which embraced elements from all the great Faiths that humanity has known

Eliot and Na'ima believed that drama because of its social nature is more important as a tool in extending ideas to the general public. In terms of dramatic work, T. S. Eliot chose to write the plays in the manner of Elizabethan and Jacobean verse drama because he believed that saving a tradition might begin by employing poetry in its proper context which is in dramatic works (Dabbagh 1).

Eliot and Na'ima found in the theater a fertile ground for the application of their theories, especially the one on the concept of tradition in literature. Na'ima in *Al-Ghrbal*, for example, praised "narrative drama" which he regarded as well established in the West by the turn of the century while the theater at that time in the Arab world was frowned upon (Na'ima: 31). For Na'ima, the theater's importance lies in the characters' dramatic performances that enact a sense of empathy and because it is a place where emotions can be elevated (Ibid 32). In his analysis of Western drama, Na'ima observed the western emphasis on drama as a sign of its aesthetic and social value and, therefore, the West generously pays artists, while the actor in the Arabic theater appears as a clown. In *Al-Ghrbal* Na'ima calls for a national theater and discusses the obstacles that face the establishment of the theater as an institution. The first is the common misconception among the Arab public of regarding the theater as an immoral place and the other is the insistence that any reputable play with a sound sense of instruction and delight should not use the colloquial (Ibid 36). A closer inspection of the present deplorable status of the theater in the Arab world reveals the same problems Na'ima pointed out concerning Arabic theater of his time. According to Salih Altoma, in *Modern Arabic Literature in Translation*, the translated works in Arabic drama are very minimal. Altoma attributes its under-representation to the genre, which was first introduced in Lebanon around the mid-nineteenth century, and which has always been a target for all sorts of criticism more than other literary genre. He summarizes them into three major points:

the absence of a well-defined and developed dramatic tradition in Arabic; the linguistic dichotomy between the unified and unifying classical language on the one hand and the various naturally spoken varieties of Arabic labeled as dialectics, colloquial speech and vernaculars; and the generally intolerant and often repressive political climate, which restricts the playwrights freedom to present his or her works to the public. (Altoma 2005: 151)

Any current observer of the political scene agrees that there is a hostile environment to political engagement in the Arab world today which is similar to the one Nai’ma keenly pointed out. The repressive social and political atmosphere which motivated Arab American literary production at the turn of the century set some recurrent themes among later generations of Arab American writers.

However, the most important thematic concern in Arab American literary output from the turn of the turn of the twentieth century until now focuses on the generation gap and on finding a new sense of identity amidst two different cultures. Susan Darraj in the “Introduction” to *Sheraerzade’s Legacy: Arab and Arab American Women on Writing* states that a common theme found among the new generation of Arab American women writers is in how “The relationships between the writers and their mothers and grandmothers- and for some, with their fathers- is another prominent theme, one that explores how they trace their affiliation with their Arab culture, how Arabic words, gestures, family traditions, and sayings create and reinforce their identity” (Darraj 2004: 3). The disparity between generations, though not conclusive of Arab Americans, is a favorite subject among writers because an immense gap exists that separates them from their parents and also from other writers in the Arab world. Therefore, Arab American intellectuals have tried to bridge that gap by resorting to novel approaches to topics previously introduced by earlier writers.

The perseverance in seeking a new individuality from previous material does not pertain to Arab Americans, but it is a driving force behind all forms of modernity in Europe and the United States. This process of excavating the past and recovering ancient myths and literary allusions was a common practice among modern writers. In *The Family Reunion*, for example, Eliot chose the Orestea as a model of an ancient myth in a modern setting. This Aeschalyean play depended on several classical elements which Eliot tried to implement as an example to be introduced in the genre.

In *The Family Reunion*, Eliot portrays an upper class family and the need for spiritual atonement. The fragmented family is revealed from the exposition of the play as a desperate case and its malady is represented by Harry, Lord Monchensey, who has come to his family estate after eight years of absence. However, Harry’s mother has high expectations and keeps Wishwood, a pristine upper class existence, in hopes that her son may reclaim it. In accordance with the load of prospects placed on Harry, *The Family Reunion* displays more psychological tensions. Harry, the major character, is disturbed by

the suicidal death of his wife and by his belief in the role he played in her early death. However, Eliot did not extend his sympathy to Harry, who chose to walk out on the family unit, which Eliot believed as an essential building block in achieving culture. Some critics consider the use of the classical myth as a successful trope because the play focuses on “conclusion, mercy, and persuasion” and through the symbolism of “patriarchal divinity” the play becomes unified (Carpentier 1989: 40).

Similarly, Na’ima’s major theme of *Aba’ wa al Bnun* focuses on the life of the upper class as a background for individual rebirth. Na’ima, who was well versed with Russian literature, was influenced by Turgenev’s novel *Fathers and Sons* (1862) thematic emphasis on the generation gap as initiating a discussion on the involvement of individual identity. Na’ima states in the Preface to *Aba’ wa al Bnun* that the generation gap is a theme pertaining to all times and is applicable in many cultural contexts. The Russian novel’s literal translation is “Father and Children” and Na’ima’s play also includes the strife between two generations. The play narrates the intellectual struggle between Elias and his widowed mother, who stands for upper class pretensions. However, unlike Amy, Um Elias has no expectations for her son. The stage directions indicate that the family patriarch, the late Butrus Samaha, is part of the oppression Elias is currently facing and his gilded portrait is surrounded by odd objects and pictures of saints that remind a spectator of earlier times. The elder son appears in the mis-en-scene writing and is surrounded by papers as if to show his intellectual detachment. In the exposition, Elias greets his friend Dawood and bewails the dominance of his widowed mother, who is the reigning patriarch of the family. The setting is a symbolic one and proves to be the reason for Elias’s dismay of his family. He states “I live in a suffocating world living in its past and its eyes are blind to the present and the future” (25). Even though Elias attributes the oppression to his mother’s stubbornness, his friend informs him that disagreements among mothers and sons is not an individual case because it is a natural phenomenon and without it “there will be no progress” (34). Throughout the play, Elias flaunts with the idea of suicide. As events unravel, Elias is disappointed by his mother’s choice of a suitor for his sister Zeina. His torture is provoked because of his helplessness, and Dawood and his sister, Shaheeda, aid him in choosing a more constructive method of fighting domination by playing a more active role in his family’s affairs.

The play’s emphasis on the necessity of seeking an identity rooted in tradition is manifested by the positive outcomes of Elias’s throwing off his passivity and becoming more involved. Elias’s decision to help his sister Zeina escape a loveless marriage, which her mother’s adoration for titles forced her in, provided a sense of self-gratification for Elias. It also broadened his horizons on the importance of struggle and the assertion of an individual identity. All the characters enjoy the consequences of being active participants because their decision is reinforced by Naisef’s arrest, the confiscation of his belongings and a happy ending for all the young characters now joined in marriage. Na’ima’s thematic reinforcement of identity rooted in tradition is also manifested in

Eliot's *The Family Reunion*, which also discourages rebellion against traditions, and especially those acts targeting the family unit.

Eliot and Na'ima believed that a writer should seek along with new themes creative styles and the persistence in doing so as consistent with finding in tradition a new form of individual expression. In *The Family Reunion*, T. S. Eliot used poetic drama and the weaving of other literary works as part of salvaging tradition. In the opening scene of the play the use of verse seems to justify the heightened emotions of an all too familiar theme of the generation gap. In light of his searching for a drama that moves beyond a realistic portrayal of a domestic struggle, Eliot used verse drama as the mode of expression. The opening lines of the play echoes lines found in Greek tragedies that evokes intensity and tries to impose order on a chaotic existence.

DENMAN enters to draw the curtains

AMY

Not yet! I will ring for you. It is still quite light.
I have nothing to do but watch the days draw out,
Now that I sit in the house from October to June,
And the swallow comes too soon and the spring will be
over
And the cuckoo will be gone before I am out again.
O Sun, that was once so warm, O Light that was taken
for granted
When I was young and strong, and sun and light un-
sought for
And the night unfeared and the day expected
And clocks could be trusted, tomorrow assured
And time would not stop in the dark!
Put on the lights. But leave the curtains undrawn.
Make up the fire. Will the spring never come? I am
cold.

Similarly, the classical themes used in *The Family Reunion* can be detected in Na'ima's play. However, an observation of the opening scene of *Aba' wa al Bnun* portrays the emphasis on upper class society and their classical heritage as arising from using the colloquial:

Elias-Dawood

Elias: Come in. Come in.

(Walking toward the door and opening it and sees Dawood)

Welcome, welcome my friend Dawood. Thank God that you have
condescended and gave us a visit. It is about time that the house gets to
know you and you to know it.

Dawood(Walking in slowly and looking about him)

House?! This is a Museum of Antiquity.

Elias: And I am one of them.

(Faking a laugh)

The setting of upper class homes in Eliot and Naima raises mundane topics such as domestic family struggles to a higher intellectual level because reform targets the elite, who are necessary in the development of any society. *Aba' wa al Bnun* uses allusions to western classical references because of Na'ima's insistence on the incorporation of other national literatures as part of reformation in literature. As Sulaiman Jubran pointed out the allusion to classical works is commonly employed by the writers of the Pen League because it indicates the absorption of tradition (Jubran 2007: 67-77). Peter Pormann argued Arabic literature was continuously borrowing from classical traditions even before the Arab Renaissance and it was a common practice by many Arab writers even those who were not part of the Pen League (Pormann 2006: 4-20). This engagement of tradition and the relationship with western influences is also discussed in Al-Musawi, who emphasized the ongoing process of Arab writers' borrowing of western myths as a method of combating decay in society (Al-Musawi 2002: 172-200; Skaf 1985: 50-75). The upper class elite represent a way of life in a hierarchical structure of institutions through which individuals communicate and its disintegration is indicative of a malady in society. Consequently, both writers saw the importance of the thematic emphasis on social reformation should be accompanied by a suitable style.

While Eliot considered verse drama as the medium of expression, Na'ima chose the colloquial as the more natural medium for drama. The gap between language and expression is a modern problem and both writers decided to experiment with a new style. For Na'ima, the problem is manifold because the tendency in Arabic poetry is to "eradicate or conceal the gap between language and the reality it purports to embody" (Huri 2005: 1-16). As an immigrant writer, Na'ima regarded language as an important tool in spiritual salvation (Mohamed 1999: 67; Kubaein 1987; Tansi 1988). Na'ima in *Al-Grbal* argues for the necessity of using spoken language in drama even though choosing a particular dialect is not totally representative of all dialects used in Lebanon. In the Preface to the first edition, which is repeated in several sections of the book, Naima considers the colloquial as the appropriate method because it is a more honest representation of emotions (Na'ima 1927: 17-18). Even in the play Na'ima argues for more honesty of expression in poetic composition. Naseef, Zaina's fiancé, is mocked by Elias and his friends for being imitative of classical Arabic poets. Naseef's attempts at composing Arabic poetry is being ridiculed by almost all the characters, including his father, who is continuously scolding his son for wasting time and deconstructing his efforts at acquiring a marriage of convenience. Furthermore, his attempts at winning Zaina, after her mother forces a reconciliation between them, reveal Naseef's shallowness as a person and as a self-proclaimed poet (Act III, scene viii, 107-108). Na'ima, therefore, indirectly emphasizes that any literary composition should first seek the self reformation of the artist as a prelude to the well being of society.

However, both writers struggled with the plays they wrote because drama is a demanding genre and is governed by commercialism. Therefore, unlike poetry and the novel, dramatic performances had to attract audiences and

Eliot in writing for the theater had to overcome the standard set down in commercial theater. *The Family Reunion*, for example, ran for only five weeks (Bolton 2006: 1). Smith Carol points out several expectations that Eliot had in mind when composing *The Family Reunion* and which he failed to achieve (Sullivan 1996: 93-98). According to Ward, Eliot’s failure in the play had to do with the time-experience which he wanted to communicate in Harry’s pilgrimage (Ward 1949: 21). This view is shared by John Zilcosky (2005: 22) in “Modern Monuments in T. S. Eliot, Nietzsche, and the Problem of History.” Zilcosky considers that both Eliot and Nietzsche have failed in seeking an aesthetic contradiction in cultural criticism or in other words have encountered the philosophical “paradox” of creating the “new” from the “old.” The play did not gain appeal and the first audiences did not approve of it. In an unsigned review in the *Times Literary Supplement* on March 25 1939 entitled, “Mr. Eliot in Search of the Present” the reviewer states:

Mr. Eliot is perhaps an illustration of the Orpheus legend. He has visited the world of the dead and is bringing back what he needs to enrich the modern time. But it is ordained that the poet must keep his eyes well on his own brief day lest, ironically, the world of the dead should cease to help him. (Grant 371)

Similarly, in *A-Ghrbal* and in both prefaces to the play, Na’ima stated that he had difficulties with the staging of the play. He acknowledged his inability to be of a major aid in that respect and did not write another play except *Job* (Au’b) written in 1967.

In conclusion, Eliot and Na’ima wrote plays to set an example for how “tradition” should be factored in a writer’s work and especially in a drama, a social art by definition. Eliot wrote several plays that incorporated his theories on tradition and Na’ima was satisfied with only two. The two critics/dramatists have sought in their critical and literary output to emphasize a writer’s engagement in tradition for a populist benefit, namely, of seeking an inclination towards a “definition” of culture. Both writers believed that employing “tradition” begins with seeking new methods of dramatic expressions and engaging in themes that reflect a writer’s preoccupation with the general public. *The Family Reunion* and *Aba’ wa al Bnun* as evident from the titles portray the social concerns the writers had for the family unit and the emphasis on “tradition” as a guiding literary concept. In spite of the unpopularity of the plays, Eliot and Na’ima believed in taking the initiative and starting a new ‘tradition’ of employing their critical views in drama.

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