

**LITERARY REVIEW OF NOVEL “UTOPIA” BY AHMED KHALED TAWFIK: THE GODFATHER OF ARABIC HORROR LITERATURE****Md Abdul Hannan**PhD Research Scholar, Department of Arabic  
Jamia Millia Islamia University, New Delhi, India**Abstract:**

In the modern era, Egypt revived Arab science fiction starting from the forties of the twentieth century. The novel “Utopia” by Dr. Ahmed Khaled Tawfik achieved the best seller award in the entire Arab world when it was published in 2008. The novel was the most popular novel of that year. This sophisticated work was later translated into multiple international language, like English, French, German, Korean, Russian and others. The novel talks about Egyptian society in 2023, when the rich people of the society will isolate themselves on the northern coast from the rest of the poor people who suffer in order to get enough to survive for themselves. This paper will show the way of analyzing the society by Arab writers in Science Fiction. It will shed light in choosing characters in the novel and will show the influence of western science fiction specially horror fiction on Arab writers as most of them followed the methodology of western writers. Arab world restricted their topics either to the faded tradition of Western science fiction or to the imaginations from our popular culture, which are nothing more than myths far from scientific thinking.

**Key words:** Novel Utopia, Horror Literature, Egyptian Society, Ahmad Khaled Taufiq, Thomas More.

**Introduction:**

Among the many famous Egyptian writers for science fiction literature were Dr. Nabil Farouk, Ahmed Khaled Tawfik, Omaima Khafaji, Ahmed Swilam, Nihad Sharif, and Muhammad al-Ashry. Dr. Mustafa Mahmoud was one of the first writers in this type of literature. He published renown three science fiction novels and illusion - The Man Below Zero (1965), The Spider (1965), and Out of the Coffin (1967). Prominent Egyptian thinker and poet “Youssef Ezz El-Din Issa started broadcasting fictional drama. His literary works were distinguished by mixing fantasy and reality in a symbolic way to create an accurate analysis of our reality in which we live. He wrote topics Like, super-intelligent donkeys surpass the human race, and mysterious violet rays hit the Earth and make all humans identical. Soon after that, Arab world produced many writers who published many novels and short story collections in science fiction throughout the Arab world, such as “Tiba Ahmed Al-Ibrahim” from Kuwait, “Ashraf Fakih” from Saudi Arabia, and “Musa Weld Ibnu” in Mauritania, And “Suleiman Muhammad Al- Khalil” from Jordan, and “ Lina Kilani” from Syria.

Science fiction literature then has not been absent from the rest of the Arab world, as Morocco has caught up with this band, through some writers and novelists such as “Muhammad Aziz Al-Hababi” who wrote “The Elixir” in 1974, and also Muhammad Abdel-Salam Al-Bakali when he wrote “Blue Flood” in 1979. Science fiction grew in rapid way in renaissance of Western society. The society published valuable literature in medieval age. All time renown philosophers, writers, think tankers born in this era. The age was known by the writing of John Milton, Horace Walpole, Mary Shelley, Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoyevsky, Edgar Allan Poe, Bram Stoker, H. P. Lovecraft and Stephen King in the field of science fiction. By the turn of the twentieth century, this genre had become dominated by the translation of Western science fiction. The then Science fiction was little knowing in entire Arab world.

Tawfik was born on 9th June 1962 in the city of Tanta, the capital of the Gharbia Governorate in the Arab Republic of Egypt. He was Egyptian author and physician later turned into professional writer. He published more than 300 books, in both Egyptian Arabic and Classical Arabic. He was known to be the first contemporary writer of horror and science fiction in the Arabic-speaking world. He was the first writer to explore the medical thriller genre in Arabic literature. His influence was widely recognized in the whole Arab world specially on in youth. His legacy has influenced thousands of Arabic-language authors. Google itself recognized him by celebrating his birthday.<sup>1</sup>



Tawfik completed his graduated from Tanta University 1985. Later he completed his PhD from the same University. His literary journey started in 1992 when he joined the Modern Arab Association publishing company. In January 1993, he published the first installment in his horror/thriller series Ma Waraa Al Tabiaa (Arabic: ما وراء الطبيعة). The meaning is “Beyond nature” or “Metaphysics.” His writing style appealed to both Egyptian and broader Arabic-speaking audiences, gaining him popularity in Egypt and the rest of the Middle East.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/1403772>

Dr. Ahmed Khaled Tawfik is considered one of the few who have written literary series in a specific field, such as the “Beyond Nature” series with Character Rifaat Ismael as Arthur Conan Doyle had its hero Sherlock and Agatha Christie her hero Hercule Poirot.

**Utopia novel:**

This is a science fiction novel written by Ahmed Khaled Tawfiq in 2008 AD, and he called it “Utopia” after the name of the novel “Utopia” by Professor Thomas More, the famous English writer. Thomas More was born in 1477 AD and died in 1535 AD in Britain, and his novel “Utopia” was published in 1516 AD.

**Utopia by Professor Thomas More:**

Utopia is a word taken from the Greek word “Uo” meaning “not” meaning not, and the word “Topos” means “Place” means any place, the word “Uo+Topos” meaning not in a place or not in a place. There is another word in the origin of this word, which is the word “Eu” meaning “Good” and the word “Topos” meaning “Place”, so the meaning of the word “Utopia” is “the good place” or “the perfect good place” such as Paradise, and its opposite is “Dystopia” which means the bad place and the place Malignant is like fire, and Professor Tommy Moore used this word for the first time in his novel, and called it “Utopia” in 1516 AD.

He uses the word Utopia for an ideal society that is free from corruption, strife, theft, murder, turmoil, or chaos. Rather, it is an ideal society and a complete society in which all the good things come together, and it is devoid of all the bad ones. Such a society is considered one of the finest human societies in which equality, justice, and humanity overflow as if it were a paradise on earth.

**The main idea of Thomas Moore’s novel Utopia:**

The main idea in the novel Utopia is the idea of an ideal world, earthly paradise, utopia, or utopia, an idea that has circulated in human imagination since ancient times. Sometimes the religious character, and sometimes by the way of the philosophical character. The idea was formulated in the form of dialogue and discussion, and sometimes in the form of the fictional story chosen by the philosopher Professor Thomas Moore in his novel Utopia, and examples of it are the book “The Republic” by Plato, the book “Politics” by Aristotle, and “the opinions of the people of The Virtuous City” by Al-Farabi, and “The City of God” by St. Augustine.

As for what distinguishes Utopia from those previous works, it is the fictional literary form in which Professor Thomas Moore presented his ideal world on the one hand, and on the other hand its connection to the world of reality and its problems closely. Professor Thomas Moore presented in his novel “Utopia” the vision of a virtuous and ideal city on a fictional island in the real world and dealt with the way to provide all the characteristics of humanity such as justice, equality, security, prosperity, and brotherhood in various aspects of life

such as religion, economy, politics, meeting, and unity. And other than what a person needs in his life.

**Utopia by Ahmed Khaled Tawfik:**

The word utopia is the same word that was used in Thomas Moore’s novel, but the writer Ahmed Khaled Tawfik used it and wanted against it, and for him it means dystopia, means an inverted utopia. Dystopia is a city devoid of all the values of humanity, justice, prosperity and equality that Thomas More dealt with in his book “Utopia,” Plato in his book “The Republic,” Aristotle in his book “Politics” and Al-Farabi in his book “The Views of the People of the Virtuous City.” This indicates that the city of Utopia envisioned by Ahmed Khaled Tawfik will be a city of vice that loses humanity, justice and equality, and in which the sound of looting, scandal, badness, injustice, coercion, adultery and disobedience is heard, and the strong increase in strength and the weak in weakness. The city follows the laws of the influential, the powerful, businessmen and the rich, and the poor have no law that protects their rights and provides them with justice and equality.

**The main characters in the novel:**

**The young utopian:** He introduced himself as Alaa, and he is the son of Murad Bey and Larin from the city of Utopia. He is very rich and tired of the luxurious life. He is the main hero in the novel.

**Germinal:** Alaa’s friend who accompanies him from Utopia to the land of the Gentiles for adventure.

**Eli:** The Israeli doctor: his name is Eli, he works in Utopia with the Americans, and talks about the October War between the Arabs and the Israelis in 1967 AD and 1973 AD.

**Salem Bey:** Editor-in-Chief of Min Utopia newspaper, which focuses on information related to the city of Utopia only and has a private library.

**Jabir:** He is an educated young man who shelters Alaa and Germinal in his home in the land of the Gentiles and is the second main protagonist.

**Najat:** A woman from the land of the Gentiles who was left by her husband for poverty and wants to marry Jaber.

**Awatif:** The doctor who does not find medicine for the sick in the land of the Gentiles except what the workers steal from Utopia, and what she treats with are herbs, honey, and municipal recipes.

**Safia:** Jaber’s sister appoints Alaa and Jermilna with Jaber, as she is the second hero in the novel with Germinal.

**Mike Rodgers:** Leader of the security men, an American man who works in utopian security, and explains how they ruined Iraq and Afghanistan, and robbed the rights of their people using untrue names, and how they took control of the oil and resources of the country and made their dearest people humiliated.

**Novel summary:**

“Utopia” is a black novel, and it is in fact a dystopian novel in the name of Utopia, and its events take place in Egyptian society around the year 2023 AD, and Egypt will be divided during this period into two peoples, into two cities, and into two classes. A class that lives in the city of Utopia, and it is the class of the elite, and the children and grandchildren of the elite and influential people of the Egyptian people. This category possesses the resources and facilities that ensure the life, livelihood, and prosperity of kings. This city is characterized by prosperity and enjoys facilities in all areas of life. The writer says: “The isolated colonial utopia that the wealthy built on the northern coast to carry themselves from the angry sea of poverty outside, and which now contains everything they want...

You can see with me its features, the giant gates, the electrified wire, and the guard patrols carried out by the “Saveco” company, whose employees consist mostly of retired Marines. Sometimes one of the poor tries to sneak inside without a permit, so the helicopter chases him and kills him, as happened in that scene that I can’t imagine...”

Utopia is a colonial city on the northern coast inhabited by the rich, the wealthy, the influential, and their descendants, and it includes all the means of luxury and enjoyment that its people yearn for, and its residents long for God, such as places of worship that include a mosque, a church, a synagogue, gardens, parks, and swimming pools, cinemas, villas, a private airport, helicopters, and private planes for its residents. New Mercedes, Ferrari and other advanced cars of famous brands run through its wide streets. There are new hospitals equipped with all new technologies and modern facilities, and ambulances are waiting outside to help those who need them.

The main hero: Alaa plays the role of the main hero in explaining the ways of life in the city of Utopia, and he says that he sleeps with every girl he likes, and sleeps with every girl he desires, and likewise all utopian young men who practice illegal acts to complete their desires and do everything they imagine. And they can practice the things they desire, eat the best food, wear the most luxurious clothes, and walk in the finest places with any girl. They are free in their actions, deeds, and activities, and they are not subject to any limits, restrictions, or law.

Drugs, phlogiston, and all kinds of prohibited things are available in this city, even the new drugs that give adults the strength of youth in old age, which are produced in France and imported from it, and it is easy to obtain them in this city. These drugs are owned by the American Marines and Jews who sell them in the Egyptian society at a high price, and young people and adults use them all the time to supplement their psychological cravings and sexual desires. As for drinking, adultery, and all kinds of pleasures, they are among the excellent features that the city of Utopia is proud of.

And the Egyptian lives in a utopia with the Jews who finally achieve their dream, and control the course of affairs in it, so that the Jews and the plans they drew become the plans that the Egyptian people follow, willingly or unwillingly. And the Jews are the winners in

the race that the Egyptian people follow in their lives. And the youngsters were brought up in it on an approach in which they forget their past and history, especially the Crusades, the deception of the West and Muslims and their countries, their oppression, and the squandering of their cities, culture, pride, and honor. Young people grow up in immorality and addiction, and do not understand the meaning of human values, the future, the past, and the present.

And the owners of the people of Utopia monopolize all markets, for among them is the king of iron, the king of medicine, the king of transportation, and the king of meat. And these kings owned all the country's resources using improper methods and chose for them and their families a life of luxury, and prosperity. And they distributed poverty, misery, deprivation, despair, injustice, and reparation to those who live behind the walls of their city, "Utopia" in the land of the Gentiles.

The hero, Alaa, feels boredom in spending time in alcohol, addiction, drugs, girls, obscene desires, and debauchery. He feels that he is in a prison because of the routine matters that do not differ from day to day, and he is aided in increasing his boredom by the foolishness that he inherited from the utopian society, the foolishness that only supports immorality, lusts, and badness. And transgression of borders, so he wants to embark on the great adventure, which is hunting prey as a skilled hunter and making a sign of pride that supports his adventure.

This is what Alaa said: "Like the Roman emperors, I tried everything and knew everything... There is nothing new that arouses your curiosity or enthusiasm in Utopia... Nothing changes... Sometimes it seems to me that we are imprisoned and that those outside are the free ones... It reminds you of concentration camps." The Nazism you see in war movies."

### **Adventure and hunting:**

When Alaa got tired of luxury, debauchery, and debauchery, he wanted a great adventure. His girlfriend Germinal accompanied him. This adventure consists of infiltrating into the land of the Gentiles, hunting a poor man, then kidnapping him, and obtaining entertainment by torturing him, then killing him, and taking some of his body parts as a matter of pride.

He says: "I told her (Larin): "I want to try hunting." She gasped... She said in panic, her eyes widened: "Do you lack anything? You have enough money to buy all of Utopia and its environs..." "You have enough girls to satisfy the desires of a sultan, a stallion from the sultans of the Thousand and One Nights..." And you have the means of entertainment that apply to an army of crying orphans... and their grandchildren as well."

And he says: "When you penetrate the last limits of sanity, you feel that sanity expands to include other limits that are dominated by habit, boredom and monotony... For reasons like these, I want to experience the greatest experience."

**Land of Gentiles and Great Experience:**

The second part of the novel begins here with the name of the prey in the land of the Gentiles, and the land of the Gentiles is the area in which the second, crushed group of people resides, who represent the children of the common people and the descendants of government employees and those with limited income. This region is called the land of the Gentiles because its people do not find the legal rights that they deserve. This area is devoid of all means of luxury and well-being. Rather, it does not have the necessary facilities such as hospitals, means of transportation, ambulances, media, electricity, clear water, adequate food, offices, schools, colleges, universities, security men, and employees of management and other important matters. On top of that, there is no law that protects them from oppression, coercion, killing, and cruelty, provides them with their legal rights, and supports equality and justice in all fields of life. Their honor is permissible, and their blood is permissible, and no one takes care of them or sponsored them. These victims live by the hope of one law, which is patience. Their chests are open to the Marines' bullets, and their offer is permissible for the owners of the old generation of Utopia, and their blood is permissible for the younger generation. What is available to them is the few coins that pay them to continue serving the Masters of Utopia.

Jaber represents this group of people and the land of the Gentiles. He is an educated, lame young man who lost his eyes in a quarrel, and thus was unable to obtain the sustenance that would protect his life.

Jaber, through the mouth of the narrator, explains the situation that society has reached at that imaginary stage, that young people are ravaging poverty in their guts and bodies, and they suffer from a very difficult problem, while they are in despair, their hopes have been disappointed, and they do not see any hope in life. He can't dream of anything, and he doesn't desire any great thing. He is educated, but the nightmarish reality and immoral conditions have killed his feelings, and aspirations, so he moves randomly like stray animals, waiting for food to satisfy his hunger and cool his fire.

Alaa and Germinal begin traveling to the land of the Gentiles, saying: "It was ten o'clock in the evening and it was time to act... I drew the plan carefully... At eleven o'clock the car arrives that transports the workers to their slums... Yes, there are workers in Utopia because there are jobs that we cannot do." They come in the morning by a private bus, and return by night, and they are under surveillance in all circumstances. They do not speak or raise their eyes, but you smell from them a disturbing mixture of hatred, malice, flattery, pent-up anger and a foul smell. Years of oppression have made them closer to monsters. Day by day they are losing part of their humanity until they became truly horrible beings."

Thus, Alaa and Germinal began traveling to the land of the Gentiles, and when they got into the car, Germinal sat with a woman from the land of the Gentiles, so the woman asked about food, so Germinal took out a sandwich and gave it to her, and she said, do you work for Hamzawi Bey? Then she started cursing that he was a scoundrel, a thief, and the son of

a dog. Hamzawy Bey was a friend of the father of the hero (Alaa), so the hero agreed with every letter because all these evils are among the characteristics of the utopian society. Then the woman added, "He loves young women who are beautiful... He has an army of slave girls... The son of an adulteress sometimes sleeps with three girls in one bed... Although he is over sixty, he does not eat them... Lobster and drugs are capable of performing miracles... That is why men do not repent." Utopia never... They never grow old or age, and their lust for women is eternal like the Greek gods, but adults only find their chance with Gentiles, unlike young men. The son of an adulteress sleeps with three girls every day, but he has not touched his wife in ten years... You ask me how do I know all this .. There are no secrets here, my love... What goes on between the walls is our entertainment..."

This is what the writer interpreted in the words of the workers of the land of the Gentiles, which reflects the bad bad morals that have become an integral part of the lives of the influential people in the utopian society.

And when Alaa and Germinal arrived in the land of the Gentiles, they found despair, hatred and anger evident in their eyes.

**Alaa says:**

"Only now do I understand why we have isolated ourselves in a utopia... There is nothing left in this world except for poverty and only the pale faces that stare out with bulging, hungry, savage eyes... Thirty years ago, these people had some rights, but today they are completely forgotten... Even electricity and water are a problem. Individual for each of them... Whoever is able to obtain a generator or dig a well, then it is a blessing, otherwise he has to bear it..."

In the land of the Gentiles, one can live without shelter, without food, without drink, without clothes, without a roof, without a lover, without dignity, without a family, without a refrigerator, without a phone, without a TV, without a tie, without friends, and without shoes. No panties, no phlogiston, and no headache pills. This arrangement reflects how disappointed they are in their lives. Jaber says: He will die in two days or more, because the boy who came from Utopia will inevitably win him, and that is why he remembers things and places for the last time, and he remembers Azza, the fat.

**Conclusion:**

So, at the end of our article, we can say that the dawn of science fiction literature has become evident in the circles of Arab literature, led by prominent writers like Dr. Ahmad Khaled Taufik, Naval Sadwi, Yousuf Idris, Khalel Jibran, Nagib Mahfuz, Taha Hussai and Dr. Nabil Faruk. Ahmed Tawfik's explores the grim and dark side of the Egyptian society, where the middle class collapsed as did the apparatus of the state, leaving only the extremely poor and the extremely rich. Tawfik suggests that the rich will do whatever at their disposal to secure as much of the world's wealth for themselves, while the poor could

only take to the streets and fight the thugs protecting the rich. The novel describes how the ugly and desperate life of the poor has become: its filth, despair, hunger, violence, viz. that sort of violence against women, including rape.

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