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al-Idilbī, Ulfat 'Umar

also found in the *Alf layla wa-layla*, the overall flavour of al-Ibshihī's anthology is more naïve and pietistic. Al-Ibshihī made some use of *adab* works, but his book is more important as a source on folk culture (see *folklore*), the **proverbs** of medieval Egypt and colloquial forms of expression. He also produced two collections of poetry.

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R. IRWIN

al-Idilbī, Ulfat 'Umar (1912–)

Syrian novelist and short-story writer. Born in Damascus, she read Arabic classics in her father's library as a child. Her maternal uncle, the sociologist Kāzīm al-Dāghistānī, introduced her to modern Arabic literature.

She married Dr Ḥamdī al-Idilbī when she was 17 and had three children. Her first stories were published in the journal of Jam'iyyat al-Nadwa al-Thaqāfiyya al-Nisā'iyya in Damascus. In 1948 the BBC Arabic service awarded her a prize in an Arabic short-story competition.

Qīṣaṣ Shāmiyya, her first book, was published in 1954, with an introduction by Maḥmūd Taymūr. This was followed by three more collections of short stories, two collections of lectures, a study of popular literature and two novels: *Dimashq Yā baṣmat al-ḥuzn* (1980) and *Ḥikāyat jaddī* (1990).

Ulfat al-Idilbī is Syria's leading woman writer. She writes chiefly of Damascus women – their ambitions and frustrations, and the pressure on them from family and society. Her stories and novels rely more for their momentum on narrative and description than on dialogue. Awakening women's consciousness is mingled with awakening national consciousness – primarily Syrian, but extending to Palestine and Algeria. Her women suffer, operate and manipulate within a limited private world.

Text edition

Sabriya, Damascus Bitter Sweet, Peter Clark (trans.), London (1995).

P. CLARK

Idrīs, Suhayl (1923–)

Lebanese novelist, short-story writer, journalist and translator. Born in Beirut, Idrīs studied at the Islamic Maqāṣid College, then at the Institute of Oriental Studies of St Joseph's University there. He then moved to the Sorbonne in Paris where he earned a doctorate. On his return to Beirut in 1952, he founded *al-Ādāb*, a monthly literary journal that became one of the leading periodicals of its kind, playing an important role in encouraging **commitment** in literature, in promoting the Arab Left and Arab nationalism, and in legitimizing the **free-verse** movement. Its publishing house, Dār al-Ādāb, published many young fiction writers, poets and literary critics from various parts of the Arab world, in addition to publishing translations from Western literatures, Idrīs himself translating most of Sartre's and Camus's works.

Idrīs's first collection of short stories, *Ashwāq*, appeared in 1947, since when he has published five other collections. His highly acclaimed novel *al-Ḥayy al-Lātīnī* (1954) has autobiographical elements, portraying the emotional and cultural conflicts experienced by Arab male students in Paris before returning home. His other novels, *al-Khandaq al-ghamīq* (1958) and *Aṣābi'unā allatī tahtariq* (1962), also contain autobiographical elements, the former chronicling the revolt of a young Muslim seminarian against his religious training and background, the latter describing the struggles of a young literary journalist whose magazine espouses Arab nationalist causes and encourages 'commitment' in literature.

Further reading

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I.J BOULLATA

Idrīs, Yūsuf (1927–91)

Egyptian novelist, dramatist and short-story writer. Born in a village in the Nile Delta, Idrīs ascribed his sensitivity to the plight of his fellow human beings to a miserable childhood and to a training and early career in medicine. It was during his period as a medical student in

also undertook the construction of a surrounding wall that enclosed some of the neighbourhoods of the capital, whose population had grown significantly. Finally, he opened the gates of the capital to dignitaries in trouble with other western Islamic courts, guaranteeing them asylum. Here the scholar Ibn Marzūq (d. 781/1379) found a peaceful shelter: Ibn Tāfrājīn entrusted him with preaching in the Almohad mosque, where he officiated from 764/1362–3 until 771/1370.

Ibn Tāfrājīn's son Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad was supposed to succeed him. Abū 'Abdallāh was, at the time of his father's death, on a mission and at first came under the protection of the Ḥakīm (of the Banū Sulaym), but his secretary, Muḥammad b. Abī l-'Uyūn, persuaded him to return to the good graces of the sultan, who confirmed him as *ḥājib*. However, the rights and powers of the chamberlain declined, returning to their initial symbolic function. Realising that the sultan was unwilling to share his crown, he took umbrage, and, feeling threatened, left Tunis with his son Abū 'Abdallāh al-Miṣrī on Tuesday 18 Shawwāl 766/8 July 1365 and was replaced by Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm al-Mālaqī. Escorted by the Awlād Muhalhil, he took refuge in Constantine in early 767/autumn 1365, in order to serve Abū l-'Abbās. When Abū l-'Abbās overthrew the short-lived Abū l-Baqā' Khālīd (r. 770–2/1369–70) in Tunis, Abū l-'Abbās appointed Ibn Tāfrājīn to serve his brother Abū Yaḥyā Zakariyyā', whom he had just made his chamberlain. However, accused of collusion with the Banū Ḥamza, who had rebelled against the centralising power of the new sovereign, Abū 'Abdallāh b. Tāfrājīn was captured and transferred by ship to Constantine, where he died in prison in 778/1376–7.

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STUDY

Robert Brunschvig, *La Berbérie orientale sous les Hafsiides des origines à la fin du XVe siècle*, 2 vols., Paris 1940–7, 1982²;

SÉBASTIEN GARNIER

Idrīs, Yūsuf

Yūsuf Idrīs (1927–91) was an Egyptian writer and one of the most significant contributors to the development of the short-story genre in Arabic. He also wrote a number of plays and novels, and was a major and often controversial participant in the cultural life of his homeland. His childhood autobiography (composed in English and published in *Critical perspectives on Yusuf Idrīs*) describes in considerable detail the miserable existence of a boy sent by his mother to live with his grandparents in the Nile delta region. His two-hour daily walk to school across the agricultural fields was to serve him