

REPRESENTATION OF ETHICS AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN MUSTAPHA LUTFI AL-MANFALUTI'S AL-KHULQ (MORAL)

HABEEB AKANNI IDOWU

Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies,
University of Ibadan, Oyo State

<https://doi.org/10.37602/IJEBSSR.2026.4502>

ABSTRACT

Ethical virtues, moral values and social change are issues discussed in the context of reconstructing, recovering, and reviving societal norms in shaping human conduct. Religiosity or fervent religiousness, as a law guiding virtues, dictating the right or wrong aspects of behavior, imposes didactic norms on every individual. Ethics and morality, as a pair, serve as a powerful catalyst for social development. This expediency is discussed in this paper as a system of ethical principles which could apply to society as a whole. This study argues that ethics purifies the heart and guides actions, not just in worship but in daily conduct and also aims at developing husn al-khuluq (good character), promotes justice and upholds human dignity. This paper, built on Aristotle's ethical framework, known as eudaimonia, which translates to flourishing or well-being, serves as a concept of achieving good life, highlighting how Al-Manfaluti uses his work to reinstate morality in individual and societal life. While it focuses on interpretative research design, motif is employed as a core literary narrative embedded in the text. This makes the study researchable and locates social freedom in the capacity to reconstruct society through which it defines what counts as ethics, morality and social change.

Keywords: Short Story, Morality, Ethics, Social Change, Motif

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In human existence, Al-Khulq (Ethics) has a long history and plays an integral part, shaping tolerance in every society and judging individuals by their behavior within themselves and among others. Acting either individually or collectively, man cannot but face issues that are suffused with moral or ethical questions. These actions tend to challenge how individuals should be tolerated or allowed to flourish in the human community because the actions of a man determine and adjudicate how he will be associated within the society he lives. Ethics as an indispensable mechanism for institutional order, societal harmony, and administrative integrity has helped improve man's decision-making processes, ensuring that leaders act in the best interests of their constituents and uphold justice. Most often, inculcating this norms is usually didactic, unilateral, and passed down from one generation to generation. Directly telling the younger ones what is right and what is wrong has long been the most popular way of inculcating morality (Clouse, 1995). According to the new historicism approach, literary texts are explored either as representing topical events or as embodying the worldview of its contemporary culture (Ciobanu et al., 2008). This infers that literature is a system of representation, clarifying and evaluating characters, situations, and issues, and offering an illuminative view of life.

Ethics are divine moral principles that govern all aspects of life, focusing on justice, compassion, honesty, and dignity. It integrates legal requirements with spiritual virtue, aiming to perfect human character and establish a balanced, harmonious society. To purify the heart and guide actions, not just in worship but in daily conduct aims at developing *husn al-khuluq* (good character), promotes justice and upholds human dignity, irrespective of race or social status advocates for a middle path, balancing spiritual needs with worldly responsibilities and natural desires. Ethics is a lived code that manifests in the character of its adherents. Its practical manifestations are through emphasizing politeness, generosity, kindness, and respect, especially toward neighbors and elders, truthfulness and honesty. Ethical principles and behaviours are not just abstract concepts; they are refined and conceptualised via real-life experiences. Because moral norms and principles respond to actual life practices and human needs in society, the societal framework in which human activities can be studied by ethical decision-making is relevant to deliberating on the proper thing to do and what moral agents should do. This progresses us into the field of social ethics. While ethics is relevant in man's life and his society, it is unarguable that if it is thoroughly harnessed in the contemporary societies there will be huge developmental strides, social changes and betterments of people.

Social change has traditionally been associated with "development problems" that occurred in "developing countries." It is only since the late 1980s and early 1990s that social change has become a global issue (Akewula, 2024). The study of communication for development and social change has therefore been through several paradigmatic changes. This infers that to have a more just and equitable society, ethics and good moral values should be prioritized. In addition, the representation of social change in Arabic short stories often highlights the shifting societal norms and values within Arab communities. Elshahed (2020) examines how Arabic short stories challenge traditional gender roles, societal hierarchies, and cultural practices, reflecting the ongoing process of modernization and globalization in Arab societies. These stories often depict characters who defy societal expectations, paving the way for more inclusive and progressive narratives. Reflecting and shaping societal changes, Arabic literature demonstrates how narratives challenge traditional norms, question established hierarchies, and offer new perspectives on gender roles and cultural identity. Such literary works mirror societal transformations and inspire readers to envision alternative futures, making them significant contributors to the discourse on social change.

Arabic prose serves as a relevant tool for criticising social injustice and unethical behavior. It has proven its power to spark political change and organize societies toward justice and equality by challenging repressive systems, igniting political movements, and influencing public opinion. In all sense, it is a form of literary depictions that are connected to status, hierarchies, resistances and conflicts elsewhere in the culture, being a reference and revelation for a society's behavior patterns. Akewula (2015) writes that early Arabic literary scholarship often used the term interchangeably to describe both short and long stories, especially during the 19th century, when translated European narratives began to emerge in the Arab literary landscape. He further argues in his other studies that fiction, a literary form new to Arabic literature, was developed largely under the influence of the European literary works that became available in the Arab world especially in Egypt, Syria and Lebanon. This later spread to other Arab land in the early 20th century including Saudi Arabia (Akewula, 2016). Writers have inspired generations of activists by using their fictional writings to explore ethics and social change, exposing the misuses of power, inspiring resistance, and offering ideas of

alternative worlds via their works. Humans tend to make criticism of themselves in novels by exploiting the poor and powerless by the wealthy and powerful as part of human natural disposition which may lead to his downfall, thus this is the fairly part of what fiction constitutes in the developing society. This study is focused on the literary text written by Mustapha Lutfi Al-Manfaluti, titled *Al-Khulq (Moral)*. It is deliberately delimited to the good characters discussed in this text. While socio-cultural context will inform interpretation, this paper is primarily a literary-critical undertaking.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Representation of ethics and social change diagnoses failures of leadership, selfishness, decay in social values by invoking virtues and teaching morals through rehearsing those qualities in society. Social relationships are understood in terms of social processes and social interactions and social organizations. In so doing, Arabic prosaists have used their works to delve into numerous thematic thrusts like social vices, social unrests, emotional turmoil and loss and, at the same time, played profound roles in ensuring that they use their works to satirise, criticise and correct.

Several literary scholarships have been carried out on Al-Manfaluti's works, where scholars extensively make thorough investigations on simile implication, literature, syntax, rhetoric, romanticism and idealism. For instance, Anis et al. (2026) examine intellectual thought and linguistic style, figuring out how reflective, social and concrete Al-Manfaluti's writing is in *Analysis of Al-Manfaluti's Thought and Language Style in the Novel Majdulin*. In another study, Anis (2026) reads the use of comparisons in *Manhaj al-Tashbih fi Riwayah Majdulin lil-Manfaluti*, Ahmed et. al. (2024) studies cultural erosion, and the moral dilemmas of modernity in *Echoes Of Society: Exploring Social Realities In Al Manfaluti's Al-'Abarat*. Similarly, Negri (2023) discusses good morals and the relationship between brothers and sisters in *Lovers as Siblings in al-Manfalūṭī's Adaptations*. Although these scholarly interventions have profoundly influenced Al-Manfaluti's works, little attention is paid to his literary discourse on ethics and social change. Therefore, this study tends to fill this gap in *Al-Khulq (Moral)* in order to explore how ethics and social change, as thematic preoccupations for social reconstruction. Hence, it aims to analyse the intersection of ethics and social change as the embodiment of social reconstruction in *Al-Khulq (Moral)* by Mustapha Lutfi Al-Manfaluti and explore how motif is employed to depict morality, ethics and social change in the text.

2.0 REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

Studies on ethics and social change in Arabic prose have grown considerably and become a sphere where scholars discuss profoundly the need to eradicate unethical behaviour and quest for social change. Society is a web of social relations and hence social change obviously means a better change in the system of a society that has been pervaded by erroneous, irreligious, untraditional and disapproved behavior which affect humanity and humanness. Social change refers to a process responsive to many types of changes, to changes in the manmade conditions of life, to changes in the attitudes, norms, values and beliefs of men, a new fashion or mode, either modifying or replacing the old, in the life of the people, or in the operation of society, which can make him and society thrive. According to Jenson (cited in Jadhav, 2012), social

change is seen as modification in the ways of doing and thinking of people whereas Dawson (2010) asserts that, cultural change is social change.

Akewula's foundational work *Representation of Nationhood and Social Change in Bari Adetunji Arabic Short Stories* (2024) explores the ways in which Arabic short stories have functioned as a forum for discussing and critiquing issues of nationhood and social change in the socio-political and cultural landscape. He argues that Arabic short stories have served as a platform for writers to address political and social issues in a nuanced and complex manner, providing readers with insights into the complexities of contemporary Arab society. However, Akewula's view on social change gives a clue to the incidental moral decay in the past and present societies. To work towards a more just and equitable society, Al-Fadil (2018) emphasizes the need to promote social change and mobilising communities around shared values and aspirations through their depiction of everyday struggles and good morals. The representation of social change often highlights the shifting societal norms and values.

Ethics, as a core concern in philosophy, is seen as a science of correct conduct that guides us toward the goal of achieving human excellence (Lawhead, 2015). This insights will effectively drive us to accomplish our desires of being a moral driving personality not only in our within self but among others. The purpose of ethics is to make us checkmate individual dignity since it has been rightly observed that 'morality and human dignity go hand in hand' (Sacks, 2021). Ethics specializes in human behavior, not actually in terms of how humans live as described but in terms of how humans ought to live rightly; failing which the human person is said to have lived wrongly. The meaning of ethics covers not only how the individual human person should conduct their affairs but also how groups, professions, communities, whole societies and even regions should approach the moral life. In one sense of it; 'ethics studies the general nature of morals and of the specific moral choices to be made by a person' (American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 2016). Ethics studies morality in human conduct and of the rules which ought to govern it' (Dictionary of Unfamiliar Words, 2008). As a moral being, the human natural inclination is towards good conduct which defines relationship with the wider society (Mozia, 2000). Similarly, Omoregbe (2008) looks at ethics as the systematic study of the fundamental principles of the moral law; or the normative science of human conduct. Importantly, this stresses that the human behavior is a centeredness. Macintyre (1967) argues that ethics is essentially the knowledge of what is right and wrong:

...the essence of man is his functioning well as a man... To function well as a man is to be successful... To be successful is to conform to prevailing conventions as to what is just, right and fitting.

Similarly, Frankena (1993) contends that ethics is that which is primarily concerned with providing the general outlines of normative theory, so as to help us in tackling problems about what is right or ought to be done. Ayantayo (2000) views ethics as a systematic reflection upon human behaviour with expectation on how they ought to behave and what they ought to do. The concept of ethics from above positions rest on the proposition of what should be applied rightly and discarded the other (bad beahviour) as a wrong assertion. While religion also encourages everyone to be ethical and morally upright, the belief is that God loves those who equip themselves with it as Ayantayo asserts:

Ethics or morality is basically the fruit of religion and, to begin with, it was dependent upon it. Man's concept of the Deity has everything to do with what is taken to be the norm of morality. God made man; and it is he who implants in him the sense of right and wrong. The sense of obligation to do that which is believed to be right, in fact, the pressure of God upon every human life...

The above assertion is persuasive, imperative evidence in religion for building a foundational uprightness. Even though it is convincing and valid, through mutual interaction human beings find it easy to achieve the goals they have set for themselves. Again, a diminution or discarding of morality in any form will weaken human interaction and lessen the capacity of the institutions of society to meet the needs of its members, its progressive agenda. For Famoroti (2007), every society requires a minimum standard of behavior for its growth and survival as this paper is hinged on the argument that morality, ethics and social change help in promoting interaction among people, aiding them in achieving societal growth and development.

3.0 METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The text, *Al-Khulq (Moral)*, treats a serious societal survival: morality and change, which are analysed and summarised in this paper, using a qualitative method and interpretive research design. The primary text is subjected to literary analysis of the text. The text, imploring human beings to possess good characters and do good, was selected because of the need to reconstruct moral virtues ranging from honesty, perseverance, dignity of labour, industry, and good neighbourliness to patriotism. This makes the text an outstanding significance of Egyptian contribution to literary fiction. The sampling depicts human relationships, good characters, love and social order.

Using Aristotle's ethical framework, known as virtue ethics, this paper focuses on the concept of achieving the good life, or eudaimonia, which translates to flourishing or well-being. Aristotle posits that the ultimate goal of human life is achieved through the practice of virtue. It is not simply a state of happiness but a holistic sense of fulfillment that comes from living well and realising one's potential. According to him, virtues are habits or dispositions that enable individuals to act in accordance with reason and to find a balance between extremes (this is known as the Doctrine of the Mean). Aristotle (350 BC) emphasized that humans are social beings. The cultivation of virtues often occurs in the context of relationships and society. Participating in a community allows individuals to practice virtues and contribute to the common good. This framework is not merely about knowing what is right but emphasizes the importance of developing good character through repeated actions. In analyzing Manfaluti's *Al-Khulq (Moral)* through Aristotle's theory of ethics, one can discern the writer's use of narrative structure to emphasize social changes.

3.1 Al-Manfaluti: His Life and Literary Landscape

Mustafa Lutfi al-Manfaluti (1876–1924) was a leading figure in modern Arabic literature, particularly in emotional prose and Romantic writing. Born in Manfalut, Egypt, he grew up in a religious and intellectually oriented family that shaped his linguistic sensitivity and literary thought from an early age (al-Zarkali, 1999). He later studied at Al Azhar University, where he developed a strong foundation in Arabic language, rhetoric, literature and Islamic studies. His intellectual outlook was greatly influenced by Muhammad Abduh, who inspired him to

regard literature as a medium for social awareness and moral reform rather than merely artistic expression (Hasan, 2012). Al-Manfaluti was also active in journalism and essay writing, producing numerous literary works in prominent Egyptian magazines.

Characterised by emotional depth, poetic language and rich rhetorical imagery established him as a pioneer of modern Arabic prose that successfully combined classical Arabic *balaghah* with modern Romanticism (al-Mawsu'ah al- 'Arabiyyah, 2011). While his emotional approach in portraying human suffering is occasionally perceived as excessively melodramatic and insufficiently realistic, his greatest strength lies in his ability to transform language into a medium for constructing emotional experience, imagination, and humanitarian consciousness within readers. The distinctiveness of Al-Manfaluti's writing lies in his ability to combine classical Arabic linguistic beauty with modern emotional sensitivity. His works continue to attract scholarly attention for their strong psychological impact and significant contribution to the development of emotional prose and humanism in modern Arabic literature (Mahfuz, 2001). Among his most notable works are *al Nazar* and *al 'Abarat* (collections of essays). He became well known for adapting Western literary works into Arabic. His work, *Majdulin*, was adapted from *Sous les Tilleuls* by Alphonse Karr. He also produced works such as *al Fada'il* and *al Sha'ir*. Although his adaptations were not literal translations, they involved cultural adaptation and literary reconstruction based on Arab literary taste and his own intellectual vision (al Jalil, 2015).

Prominently, his strength lies in the ability to establish psychological relationships between text and reader through emotional language characterized by sentimentality and reflection. In many instances, readers not only understand the conflicts of the characters intellectually, but also experience the emotional suffering and anxiety constructed through linguistic structure and artistic imagery. From the perspective of literary psychology, this approach demonstrates that language in al-Manfaluti's works possesses a strong affective function because it is capable of evoking empathy and emotional engagement with the experiences of the characters. In most cases, he reconstructed and captivated the level of morality through his blended literary techniques. This explains why his works continue to affect readers despite changes in social and historical contexts.

3.2 Synopsis of the Text

This text, *Al-Khulq* (Moral) captures central messages that are prominent to success in life and hereafter. Being a text written to teach good behavior in the society, it depicts responsibility of man for his flaws. Because true morality goes beyond mere actions, it encompasses a deep sense of responsibility toward others. When a person exhibits good manners and actively engages with the struggles of fellow humans, offering assistance, it demonstrates strong ethical values and good intentions. The writer sets forth a clear benchmark where he believes that conscience is the ultimate evaluator of our actions. To know that a merciful individual is not genuinely merciful until their heart feels sorrow before their eyes do, the same thing applicable to a just person who is not authentically just until they apply the same rigorous standards to themselves as to others.

In the same sense, the text pictures how Al-Manfaluti differentiates between authentic morality and superficial morality. He makes it vivid that avoiding wrongdoing out of fear of punishment,

whether it be from Hell, legal repercussions, or societal judgment, holds no true merit. A truly, ethically upright and moral person follows the guidance of their own conscience, which acts as a beacon illuminating the correct path in life. One of the ways to teach people morals is to revive their souls and make them move away from depravity. This text emphasises the need to reconstruct our morality, imploring us to be pure in actions and in appearance as the writer presents three striking metaphors of morality. First, it is the tear that sparkles in the eyes of a compassionate individual witnessing suffering. Second, it is the perspiration that beads on the brow of a humble man who feels embarrassed when a person in need approaches him while he has nothing to offer. Lastly, it is the passionate shout of a courageous individual defending their homeland and the dignity of their people when they are insulted. Using motif, repetition and visual imageries, Al-Manfaluti stresses the importance of morality in human; defining it as a part of human existence.

4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

(a) Ethics and Social Change as the Embodiment of Social Reconstruction

The only viable prerequisite and relevant yardstick to make the society thrive much better than it is is inculcating and imbibing ethical values. Ethical values as observed by Patterson (2002) is succinctly captured by the saying, “do unto others as you would have done unto thyself”. The author, in the opening of the text, asserts:

إذا تحلى الإنسان بالخلق الكريم، وتمسك بالفضائل استطاع أن يشق طريقه في الحياة بنجاح، ولو اقترن بهذا السلوك الطيب إحساس بمشاركة الناس في مشاكلهم، و مساعدتهم، كان ذلك دليلاً على سمو الأخلاق ونبل المقاصد

If a person adorns himself with noble character and holds fast to virtues, he will be able to make his way through life successfully, and if this good behavior is accompanied by a feeling of sharing in people's problems and helping them, that is evidence of lofty morals and noble goals.

In this extract, the conditional statement makes it more emphatic that success can be achieved by possessing not only excellence but good virtues and social change: being selfless, trying to value people's needs and upholding the tenet of “living together” as Aristotle emphasized that humans are social beings, and their being is to enable them existential and essential: relevant, toward the goals of achieving a better society. Ethical behavior is characterized by honesty, fairness, and equity in interpersonal and other relationships. It strengthens social relations, dignity, diversity, and the rights of individuals and groups of people. Similarly, Lillie (1966) argues that it is worthwhile to include a reference to society in the definition of ethics to remind us that, without social context, a human being would not be a real human being capable of right and wrong actions. This makes human beings responsible for their actions: either good or bad, right or wrong, godly or devilish, as Aristotle is said to have expressed this by saying, “He who is unable to live in society, or who has no need because he is sufficient for himself, must be either a beast or a god.”

الخلق هو شعور المرء بأنه مسئول أمام ضميره عما يجب أن يفعل ، لذلك لا أسمى الكريم كريماً حتى تستوي عنده صدقة السر وصدقة العلانية، ولا الرحيم رحيماً حتى يبكي قلبه قبل أن تبكي عيناه، ولا العادل عدلاً حتى يقضى على نفسه قضاءه على غيره، ولا الصادق صادقاً حتى يصدق في أفعاله صدقه في أقواله لا ينفع المرء أن يكون

زاجره عن الشر خوفه من عذاب النار، أو خوفه من القانون، وإنما ينفعه أن يكون صميّره قائده الذي يهتدي به ومنازه الذي يستنير بنوره في طريق حياته

Morality is the feeling that a person is responsible before his own conscience for what he ought to do. Therefore, I do not call the generous person truly generous until secret charity and public charity are equal in his eyes, nor the merciful person truly merciful until his heart weeps before his eyes weep, nor the just person truly just until he judges himself as he judges others, nor the truthful person truly truthful until his truthfulness in his deeds matches his truthfulness in his words. It does not benefit a person that what deters him from evil is his fear of the punishment of Hellfire or his fear of the law. Rather, what benefits him is for his conscience to be the leader by which he is guided, and the lighthouse by whose light he illuminates his path in life.

Al-Manfaluti sees ethics and morality as a feeling of conscience. He nearly categorises people whose conscience justifies how ethical they are. The four people are: the generous person, the merciful person, the just person and the truthful person. The generous person cannot be called generous until the public (people) are ignorant of the charity he gives to the private and the private are unaware of how charitable he is to the public. This is the ethical way of valuing people over flattery or wanting excessive admiration or praise. This emphasises Aristotle's assertion that generosity arises from a compassionate character. This person understands the value of helping others and derives joy from making a positive impact in the community, showcasing the virtue of generosity. While the just person judges people according to the way he judges himself, and the truthful person's words are not opposite to his actions, society will continue to experience rest and yielding growth. The conception of morality as articulated in the provided text posits that true moral character is intertwined with one's conscientious reflection and genuine emotional engagement in ethical behavior. The author suggests that the essence of generosity, mercy, justice, and truthfulness transcends mere actions or external compliance with societal norms; instead, it must embody an alignment between one's inner convictions and outward expressions.

This introspective view of morality emphasizes that authentic ethical behavior arises when individuals are guided by a profound sense of personal responsibility and integrity. Specifically, the notion that secret charity should hold equal weight to public charity illustrates a deeper understanding of altruism; true generosity is not merely about the visibility of one's actions, but rather about the sincerity and motivation behind them. Similarly, the assertion that a person is not genuinely merciful until their empathy resonates with their own emotional experience underscores the requirement for a heartfelt connection to the plight of others. Thus, moral authenticity necessitates a holistic integration of thought, feeling and action. While illustrating the concept of morality and ethics, Al-Manfaluti positions himself at this centre, using metaphorical expressions to capture this concept. Therein, he asserts:

الخلق هو الدمة التي تترقرق في عين الرحيم كلما وقعت عينه على منظر من مناظر البوس الخلق هو العرق الذي يتصبب من جبين الحي خجلا من السائل المحتاج الذي لا يستطيع رده، ولا يستطيع معونته. هو الصرخة التي يصرخها الشجاع في وجه من يجترىء على إهانته، أو العبث بكرامة قومه

Morality is the tear that glistens in the eye of the merciful person whenever his eye falls upon a scene of misery. Morality is the sweat that pours from the forehead of the modest

person out of shame from the needy beggar whom he cannot turn away, nor is he able to help. It is the scream that the brave man hurls in the face of whoever dares to insult him, or to tamper with the dignity of his people.

This quotation illustrates the profound nature of morality as an intrinsic quality that manifests through emotional and ethical responses to the hardships and injustices faced by others. Al-Manfaluti's use of metaphorical figures helps paint a vivid picture of how ethics operates within individuals in various contexts, emphasising the relationships between emotional awareness, societal responsibility and personal values. His use of "the tear that glistens in the eye of the merciful person" suggests that genuine compassion arises naturally when one encounters the suffering of others. This aligns with the concept of empathetic morality, where the emotions prompted by the sight of misery drive individuals toward compassionate actions (Kant, 1785). Symbolically, the tear is a recognition of shared humanity and the moral obligation to aggravate suffering. While he tries to compare morality to something visual, he metaphorically relates it with "the sweat that poured from the forehead of the modest person out of shame", highlighting the emotional discomfort that arises from witnessing poverty without the capacity to assist.

The "scream that the brave man hurls" symbolises the moral indignation that arises in the face of insult or injustice. Aristotle (350 BCE) argues that this notion aligns with the views of those who valued bravery as a cardinal virtue. The brave person's response is a defense of dignity, suggesting that true morality often requires courage to confront wrongdoing and advocate for social justice. This can be seen as an assertion that morality is not merely an abstract principle but is deeply rooted in emotional responses to societal issues. This why the author continues to say:

أن الخلق هو أداء الواجب لذاته، بقطع النظر عما يترتب عليه من النتائج ، ومن أراد أن يعلم الناس مكارم... الأخلاق فليحي ضمائرهم، ويبث في نفوسهم الشعور بالرغبة في الفضيلة والنفور من الرذيلة

...That morality is performing duty for its own sake, regardless of the consequences that result from it, and whoever wants to teach people noble morals should revive their consciences and instill in their souls the feeling of desire for virtue and aversion to vice.

This emphasizes the intrinsic value of morality, suggesting that true moral behavior is about fulfilling one's duties purely for the sake of doing what is right, rather than for any external reward or recognition. This perspective aligns with a deontological view of ethics, where the rightness of an action is determined by adherence to rules or duties, rather than its outcomes. The author highlights the importance of nurturing an individual's conscience and moral sensibility. This implies that to effectively instill noble morals in others, one must awaken their awareness of right and wrong, fostering a genuine yearning for virtuous behavior while encouraging a strong aversion to immoral actions. This, with the teachings of Al-Manfaluti, instructs in ethical ideals and cultivates a deep emotional connection to those ideals, promoting a society where ethical behavior is rooted in personal conviction rather than mere compliance or fear of consequences.

b) Motif as a Core Literary Narrative for the Depiction of Morality and Social Change

Literary narratives or narrative techniques refer to the methods and devices employed by an author to convey a story, focusing on how a story is told rather than what it is told (Genette, 1980). According to Mark Willies' Dictionary of Literature, it is a technique employed by a literary writer to tell or narrate his story in a prose work. These techniques can be used as a technique of characterisation that approaches basics of naming, telling or showing and also point to a particular angle from which a story is told. In Manfaluti's work, various narrative techniques are embedded to examine the level of literary appreciation, narrative representation and prosaic style.

A recurring phrase in a literary text defines exactly what the thematic thrust of the text is and on what subject matter the story centres. The main purpose of motif is to draw attention to a theme, engaging readers' attentiveness on an intuitive level. Most often, it helps enhance mood of the characters and gives readers insight into the larger message the author is alluding to. In comparative literature, the term "motif" occurs in a diachronic sense, referring to a repeated element within a single work (Morgan, 2015). Imageries can also be used to mean motif as a subject of discourse in a literary work knowingly that images and symbolic imagery motifs are used to present a concept in order to evoke a perception (Jahn, 2021). Despite its crucial role as a literary technique, the employment of motifs in this study is relevant and gives the text its literary appreciation. The author asserts:

الخلق هُوَ شُعُورُ المرءِ بَأَنَّهُ مَسْئُولٌ أَمَامَ ضَمِيرِهِ عَمَّا يَفْعَلُ ، لذلك لا أَسْمِي الكَرِيمَ كَرِيمًا حَتَّى تَسْتَوِي عِنْدَهُ صَدَقَةُ السِّرِّ وَصَدَقَةُ الْعَلَانِيَةِ، وَلَا الرَّحِيمَ رَحِيمًا حَتَّى يَبْكِي قَلْبُهُ قَبْلَ أَنْ تَبْكِي عَيْنَاهُ، وَلَا الْعَادِلَ عَدْلًا حَتَّى يَقْضَى عَلَى نَفْسِهِ قَضَاءَهُ عَلَى غَيْرِهِ، وَلَا الصَّادِقَ صَادِقًا حَتَّى يَصْدُقَ فِي أَفْعَالِهِ صَدَقَتُهُ فِي أَقْوَالِهِ لَا يَنْفَعُ الْمَرْءَ أَنْ يَكُونَ زَاجِرُهُ عَنِ الشَّرِّ خَوْفُهُ مِنْ عَذَابِ النَّارِ، أَوْ خَوْفُهُ مِنَ الْقَانُونِ ، وَإِنَّمَا يَنْفَعُهُ أَنْ يَكُونَ صَمِيرُهُ قَائِدَهُ الَّذِي يَهْتَدِي بِهِ وَمَنَارُهُ الَّذِي يَسْتَنِيرُ بِنُورِهِ فِي طَرِيقِ حَيَاتِهِ

Morality is the feeling that a person is responsible before his own conscience for what he ought to do. Therefore, I do not call the generous person truly generous until secret charity and public charity are equal in his eyes, nor the merciful person truly merciful until his heart weeps before his eyes weep, nor the just person truly just until he judges himself as he judges others, nor the truthful person truly truthful until his truthfulness in his deeds matches his truthfulness in his words. It does not benefit a person that what deters him from evil is his fear of the punishment of Hellfire or his fear of the law. Rather, what benefits him is for his conscience to be the leader by which he is guided and the lighthouse by whose light he illuminates his path in life.

In this excerpt, the author uses the motif of conscience as the central motif of authentic morality, presenting morality not merely as obedience to external rules, religious punishment, or legal authority but as an inward responsibility before one's own conscience. In this sense, ethical conduct becomes genuine only when it arises from internal conviction rather than fear or social pressure. The repeated structure, "the truly generous," "the truly merciful," "the truly just," and "the truly truthful," creates a moral framework. Each virtue is measured by selflessness, emotional sincerity, impartiality, and integrity. The passage suggests that morality/ethics is not defined by occasional good deeds but by the harmony between intention, feeling, speech, and action. Al-Manfaluti uses the images of the conscience as a leader and a lighthouse to stress its guiding function. The leader suggests authority and direction, while the lighthouse symbolises illumination amid the uncertainties of life. Together, these images show

that conscience enables individuals to distinguish right from wrong and to pursue ethical conduct independently of external surveillance.

As a motif, conscience also connects the passage to social change. A society cannot become morally sound merely by imposing laws or threatening punishment. Social transformation must begin with individuals who possess inner ethical awareness and practise justice, mercy, generosity, and truthfulness consistently. Pinto (2021) notes that writers can use motifs to evoke a specific mindset, illuminate major subject matter, and initiate a pattern of ideas. Al-Manfaluti, therefore, presents moral reform as the foundation and idea of social reform, where conscience governs individual behaviour, ethical values can extend into public life and produce a more just society. While motifs can be used to instil and reinstate a central mood throughout a story (Kieffer, 2019), Al-Manfaluti's emphasis on morality is reinstated throughout the text, calling for charity, generosity and truthfulness. These core ethical values are foundations that can make societies strive for progress and thrive in all spheres.

In another instance, the author uses the visual description of Al-Khulq (Morality) to show the reoccurrence of this technique in his author. He writes:

الخلق هو الدمعة التي تترقرق في عين الرحيم كلما وقعت عينه على منظر من مناظر البوس الخلق هو العرق الذي يتصبب من جبين الحي خجلا من السائل المحتاج الذي لا يستطيع رده، ولا يستطيع معونته. هو الصرخة التي يصرخها الشجاع في وجه من يجترى على إهانته، أو العبث بكرامة قومه

Morality is the tear that glistens in the eye of the merciful person whenever his eye falls upon a scene of misery. Morality is the sweat that pours from the forehead of the modest person out of shame from the needy beggar whom he cannot turn away, nor is he able to help. It is the scream that the brave man hurls in the face of whoever dares to insult him, or to tamper with the dignity of his people.

The striking repetition of morality in the excerpt illustrates how motif really works in this study. Motifs can be symbolic at times, representing a major information which the author intends to pass across to the readers. In line with this, the writer makes it noticeably informed in three different ways that morality is a symbol of tear, sweat and scream. As a motif, this quotation presents morality as an active emotional and social force rather than a set of abstract rules. Through recurring images of the tear, sweat and scream (visual, kinesthetic and auditory imageries), Al-Manfaluti shows that moral consciousness manifests physically in people who respond sincerely to the suffering, poverty, and humiliation of others. As the tear symbolises compassion, meaning the merciful person does not remain emotionally detached from misery but another person's suffering becomes a personal experience that produces grief, the "sweat" represents shame and moral discomfort. This symbolically means the modest person feels ethically troubled when confronted with a needy beggar whom they cannot assist, revealing that morality involves both sympathy and a sense of responsibility. The "scream", however, introduces a more forceful dimension, symbolising courage, resistance, and the defence of personal and collective dignity against insult or oppression.

Embodying symbolic response, each of these imageries corresponds to a different ethical virtues which are compassion, humility and courage while their repetition emphasises that true morality must be felt and expressed through action. It also connects private emotion with social responsibility: pity for the suffering, concern for the poor, and resistance to injustice all become

foundations for social change. Al- Manfaluti substantiates that morality is not passive goodness but a force capable of awakening individuals and challenging the conditions that produce misery, humiliation and oppression.

5.0 CONCLUSION

This study has tried to examine the representation of ethics and social change in Mustapha Lutfi Al-Manfaluti's Al-Khulq. The analysis demonstrates that morality is presented not merely as a collection of external rules or socially imposed obligations, but as an internal quality rooted in conscience, empathy, sincerity, and personal responsibility. For Al-Manfaluti, authentic morality is revealed through the harmony between a person's thoughts, emotions, words and actions. The study has also shown that Al-Manfaluti employs vivid symbolic images to communicate the practical nature of moral behaviour. Through the use of these images, morality is transformed from an abstract concept into an active emotional and social force. Al-Khulq is not only a literary reflection on ethical behaviour but also a call for moral and social renewal. Through imagery and motif, Al-Manfaluti encourages readers to develop compassion for the oppressed, responsibility towards the needy, courage in confronting injustice, and integrity in both private and public life. His work remains relevant because it presents morality as a transformative power capable of shaping individuals and reforming society. The analysis of the text arrives at the conclusion that morality is relevant for any social and communal progress.

REFERENCES

1. Akewula, A.O. (2024). Representation of Nationhood and Social Change in Bari Adetunji Arabic Short Stories. *Al-Hikmah International Journal for Islamic Studies and Human Sciences*. <https://doi.org/10.46722/hikmah.v7i2.474>.
2. Akewula, A.O. (2015). Between the East and the West: Islam and the Postcolonial Arabic Novels in Libya. *Orita: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies*
3. Akewula, A.O. (2016). Gender, Women and Word in Fawziyyah Al-Bakr's Hayatu min Waraqin. *Ibadan Journal of Humanistic Studies*
4. Al-Fadil, S. (2018). Mobilizing for change: The role of Arabic Short Stories in Promoting Social Change. *Middle Eastern Literary Studies*, 20(2), 112-129
5. Al-Manfaluti Lutfi, M. (1923). *Al-Khulq*. *Al-Ilal Magazine*
6. Al-Jalil, S. (2015). *al-Khitab al-Wijdani fi Riwayat al-Manfaluti: Dirasah Tahliliyyah*. Beirut, Lubnan: Dar al-Yusur.
7. Al-Zarkali, K. (1999). *al-A'lam: Qamus Tarajim li-Ashhar al-Rijal wa al-Nisa'* (Jil. 7). Beirut, Lubnan: Dar al-'Ilm lil-Malayan
8. American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language. (2016)
9. Anis, A. S. B. (2026). *Manhaj al-Tashbih fi Riwayah Majdulin lil-Manfaluti: Dirasat Naqdiyyah wa Tahliliyyah* (Tesis Ijazah Sarjana Muda Bahasa Al-Quran dan Sunnah, Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin)
10. Anis, S.; Mazlan, Shuhairimi A.; Nurul, N. (2026). Analysis of Al-Manfaluti's Thought and Language Style in the Novel Majdulin
11. Andrea, M. (2023). Lovers as Siblings in al-Manfalūṭī's Adaptations. *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*. DOI:10.1163/3050760x-04301003
12. Aristotle. (350 BCE). *Nicomachean Ethics*

13. Ayantayo, J.K. (2000). The Yoruba Traditional Economy in Ethical Perspectives, Nigerian Journal of Economic History. No. 3, Deji Ogunremi et al eds. Ibadan: Quantum Publisher
14. Ciobanu, C. & Golban, P. (2008). A Short History of Literary Criticism.
15. Clouse, B. (1995). "Moral Education" In International Encyclopedia of Ethics, ed. Roth J. K. London: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers
16. Dawson, B. (2009). Women, law, and social change: Core readings and current issues. Ontario: Captus Press.
17. Elshahed, H., et al. (2020). Social Change and Gender Dynamics in Contemporary Arabic Short Stories. Journal of Middle East Women's Studies, 16(1), 45-62.
18. Famoroti, T. (2007) The Nexus Between Education, Religion and Moral Transformation: The Nigerian Experience. Lagos Organization Review. Vol. 3, No. 6.
19. Frankena, W.K. (2000) Ethics (2nd Edition). New Delhi: Prentice-Hall. Gilbert, M. 2006. Theory of Political Obligation: Membership, Commitment and the Bonds of Society. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
20. Genette, G. (1980). Narrative Discourse. Cornell University Press
21. Hasan, A. (2012). Al-Uslub al-Romansi fi al-Adab al-'Arabi al-Hadith. Kaherah, Mesir: Dar al- 'Ilm
22. Jadhav, J. R. (2012). Role of Education in Social Change. International Educational E Journal, 1(2): 74-79
23. Jahn, M. (2021). Narratology 2.3: A Guide to The Theory Of Narrative. English Department, University of Cologne. www.unikoeln.de/~ame02/pppn.pdf
24. Kieffer, K. (2019). How To Utilize Motifs In Your Fiction. Well-Storied (Blog). <https://www.well-storied.com/blog/how-to-utilize-motifs-in-your-fiction?rq=motifs>
25. Lillie, W. (1966). An Introduction to Ethics. New York: Barnes and Noble.
26. Machyntre, A. (1967). A Short History of Ethics. London: Routledge and Kegan. Paul Ltd
27. Mahfuz, M. (2001). Al-Lughah al-Sha'iriyah fi al-Nathr al-'Arabi. Kaherah, Mesir: Dar al-Fikr al-'Arabi.
28. Morgan JM (2015). How Do Motifs Endure and Perform? Motif Theory for The Study of Biblical Narratives. Revue Biblique 122(2):194-216.
29. Mozia, M.L. (2000). Christian Morality and Charism. Shaneson C.I. Limited
30. Noor Uddin, A.; Abu Bakkar, S.; Rahul, A. (2024). Echoes of Society: Exploring Social Realities in Al Manfalûti's Al-'Abarât
31. Omoregbe, J.I. (2008). Ethics: A Systematic and Historical Study. Joja Educational Research and Publishers Limited
32. Patterson, A. (2002). A Definition of Ethical Behaviour. <http://www.vision.net.au/~apaterson/social/ethics.htm>.
33. Pinto, S. (2021). An explication of motifs in select novels of J. M. Coetzee. Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research 8(8):a712-a716. <https://www.jetir.org/papers/JETIR2108093>