Chapter-VI

Conclusion

Arabic drama seemed likely to remain a problematic genre in the 21st century, but one fulfilling an important cultural function. By daring to raise issues of political and social importance in a public forum and by testing the limits of the local and the pan-Arabic worlds through experiments with language, it showed signs of illustrating many of the larger areas of concern within the Arabic-speaking countries. While the status of drama and its practitioners varied widely across the region, it remained an invaluable outlet for popular sentiment and creative energy.

Drama, if the most social of the art forms: it is, by its very nature, a collective creation: the playwright, the actors, the designer, the costume-maker, the provider of props, the lighting engineer all contribute, and so does the audience by its very presence. The literary part of drama, the script, is fixed, a permanent entity, but each performance of each production of that text is different, because the actors react differently to different audiences, and of course to their own moods.

This fusion of a fixed and a fluid component is one of the prime advantages of live theatre over the mechanically recorded types of drama—the cinema, the radio play the television play. By permanently fixing the performance as well as the text these media condemn their products to an inevitable process of obsolescence, simply because styles of acting, dress and make-up, as well as the techniques of recording, change, so that recordings of ancient radio plays or old films bear the hallmarks of the quaint and slightly ridiculous products of another epoch. Only the greatest classics, like Marcel Carne's Les enfants du paradis, or Charlie Chaplin's or Buster Keaton's comedies, can perhaps survive such an air of outdatedness.

The most important component of any dramatic performance is the actor. He is the word transformed into living flesh. And flesh in the most tangible meaning of the term. People go to the theatre, above all, to see beautiful people; among other things, actors are also people who exhibit themselves for money.
To deny a powerful erotic component in any dramatic experience would be foolish hypocrisy. Indeed, one of the theatre's-and all other drama's-greatest claims is that it operates at the same time on all level, from the most basic to the most sublime, and that in the best drama the two achieve perfect fusion. We enjoy Shakespeare's poetry in a play like Romeo and Juliet not only because that poetry is embodied by a beautiful young woman or man who arouses our desire; the enhances the poetry and the poetry ennobles the desire and thus the division between body and mind, the earthy and spiritual—which, in any case, is a false dichotomy—is abolished and the unified nature of man, animal and spiritual, reaffirmed. The actors embody and interpret the text provided by the author. And it would seem that they are entirely free to do this in any manner they like. But that is true only up to a point. For the author has at his disposal a very powerful instrument for imposing on the actors the manner of interpretation he desires. That instrument is style.

Let us assume an actor has to speak the following lines in a play.

Tell me, dear friend, what news you have to bring!

I am all ears, though tossed twixt hope and fear

And yet resolved to bear it be what may...

Modern Drama was initiated in 1958 and is the best projecting journal in English to emphasis on theatrical works. The terms, 'modern' and 'drama,' are the subject of ongoing and productive deliberation, but the journal has been celebrated by the distinction of its adjacent readings of both recognized and lesser significant dramatic texts through a range of methodological perspectives. The journal features decided articles that enrich our understanding of plays in both formal and historical terms, mainly treating literature of the past two centuries from various geo-political contexts, as well as wide book review section.

Arabic drama seemed likely to remain a problematic genre in the 21st century, but one fulfilling an important cultural function. By daring to raise issues of political and social importance in a public forum and by testing the limits of the local and the pan-Arabic worlds through experiments with language, it showed signs of illustrating many of the larger areas of concern within the Arabic-speaking countries. While the status of drama and its practitioners
varied widely across the region, it remained an invaluable outlet for popular sentiment and creative energy.

The origins of Western drama can be traced to the celebratory music of 6th-century BC Attica, the Greek region centered on Athens. Although accounts of this period are inadequate, it appears that the poet Thespis developed a new musical form in which he impersonated a single character and engaged a chorus of singer-dancers in dialogue. As the first composer and soloist in this new form, which came to be known as tragedy, Thespis can be considered both the first dramatist and the first actor. Of the hundreds of works produced by Greek tragic playwrights, only 32 plays by the three major innovators in this new art form survive. Aeschylus created the possibility of developing conflict between characters by introducing a second actor into the format. His seven surviving plays, three of which constitute the only extant trilogy are richly ambiguous inquiries into the paradoxical relationship between humans and the cosmos, in which people are made answerable for their acts, yet recognize that these acts are determined by the gods.

Medieval drama, when it emerged hundreds of years later, was a new creation rather than a rebirth, the drama of earlier times having had almost no influence on it. The reason for this creation came from a quarter that had traditionally opposed any form of theater: the Christian church. In the Easter service, and later in the Christmas service, bits of chanted dialogue, called tropes, were interpolated into the liturgy. Priests, impersonating biblical figures, acted out minuscule scenes from the holiday stories. Eventually, these playlets grew more elaborate and abandoned the inside of the church for the church steps and the adjacent marketplace. Secular elements crept in as the artisan guilds took responsibility for these performances; although the glorification of God and the redemption of humanity remained prime concerns, the celebration of local industry was not neglected.

Apart from the above definitions of literature, it could be firmly said that the literature of any language reflects the whole picture as well as history of its age. The educational standard and beliefs and the practical powers of an age could be guessed completely by studying the literature of that age. If the literature of any particular era of Arab be studied a whole outline of the time would emerge before us thereby making it easy to go deeper into the insight of the people.
Al-Daklm was one of the favourite authors of Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser, who had come to power during the revolution of 1952, and he was perhaps the major Egyptian cultural figure in the following decades. The enormous process of social and political change in Egypt provided a rich backdrop for the development of a new tradition of theatre, and the cultural apparatus of the government provided abundant funding for that process. Theatre was apparently regarded as one of the few allowable outlets for the expression of public concerns and doubts that were rigorously controlled elsewhere. In retrospect, the two decades after 1952 have come to be regarded as a kind of “golden era” for not merely Egyptian drama but Arabic drama as a whole. Virtually every aspect of the theatrical community—the cultural apparatus of the state, a relatively large cluster of playwrights, a cadre of producers and directors (many of them trained in Europe and, most notably, the Soviet Union), and a group of well-qualified and involved critics—seemed to be working toward common goals. Beginning in the 1950s and ’60s with Nuːmān ˓Āshūr, who used a series of plays to present the Egyptian public with insightful analyses of its own class structure and values, a series of dramatists, among them Saːd al-Dīn Wahbah, Maːmūd Diyāb, and ˓Alī Sālim, penned in the colloquial dialect of Cairo dramatic texts that were highly successful on stage. Another contributor to this rich period in Egyptian theatrical life was Yūsuf Idrīs, whose celebrated play Al-Farafir (1964; The Farfoors, or The Flipflap) combined elements of traditional comic forms of dramatic presentation with such Brechtian effects as the presence of an “author” as a stage character and the use of theatre-in-the-round staging. Alfred Faraj took a somewhat different course, invoking tales and incidents from history and folklore (and especially from The Thousand and One Nights) in order to illustrate contemporary political and social realities. Faraj chose to follow al-Daklm in selecting as his language medium a more literary level of Arabic than that adopted by his fellow dramatists and yet one that was readily adaptable to acting onstage. This gave him the additional advantage of affording his plays a broader audience throughout the Arabic-speaking world. Even within the less-fertile environment of the 1980s and ’90s, a younger generation of Egyptian dramatists made notable contributions to the genre. Of these, Muːammad Salmāwī and Lenīn al-Ramlī were the playwrights whose works were most often performed.

These patterns of development in Egypt were echoed elsewhere in the Arab world, albeit within differing time frames. Following the early stages that have been sketched above, further developments were, more often than not, tied to the processes of nation building that...
followed the achievement of independence during the 1950s and '60s. In Syria, Sadallah Wannús made use of his strong interest in the theory of drama, and particularly in the relationship of stage to audience, to compose a series of works that made important contributions to the development of experimental theatre in the Arab world. Staged in the aftermath of the Arab-Israeli Six-Day War of June 1967, *Aflat samar min ajl al-khāmis min uzayrān* (1968; "Soirée for the 5th of June") was a devastating commentary on the Arab defeat and on the Arab leaders who for several days had used the media to claim that victory was at hand (leading, almost automatically, to the play’s being banned). *Mughāmarat raūs al-mamlūk Jābīr* (1971; "The Adventure of Mamlūk Jābīr’s Head") and *Al-Malik huwa al-malik* (1977; "The King’s the King") continued his ongoing experiments with theatre dynamics through what he termed *masra fi al-tasyīs* ("theatre of politicization"). Because Wannús was such a crucially important figure, other Syrian and Lebanese dramatists of the latter half of the 20th century operated somewhat in his shadow, but Muhammad al-Māghūrī, Muḥammad Maṭbūʿī, and Mamduh Adwan wrote significant plays that were successfully performed at theatre festivals.

Regarding Tawfiq al-Hakim it can be stated that his father led him to see a performance of *Shuhada‘ al-Gharam*, the Arabic version of *Romeo and Juliet*, in the provincial town of Dusuq which left indelible mark on his impressionable mind and to which he traces back his interest in the theatre. This memorable experience developed in him a keen interest in the theatre while he was still a schoolboy. After finishing school, he left for Cairo to join the Law College. During his stay in Cairo he kept going to the Opera House whenever he could afford the price of a ticket, to see his favourite Jurī ‘Abyad perform the leading role in the Arabic translations of *Oedipus Rex*, *Orthello* and *Louis XI*, from which he says he could recite from memory whole pages to his fellow theatre fans.

This routine further whetted his interest in drama and the theatre and eventually inspired him to try his hand at play writing in 1918-19. His first venture was *Dayf al-Thaqil* (The Unwelcome Guest), a satire allegory in which the British occupation of Egypt was specially targeted.

In 1924 he left Egypt for Paris (France) at the behest of his parents in order to pursue higher legal studies. But, instead of taking interest in his studies, he immersed himself totally in acquiring the knowledge of classical and modern European literature in general and that of the
French stage in particular. His refined penchant for drama and the theatre led him to embark on his sixth play, 'Ali Baba, in 1925. He managed to complete it even during his sojourn in Paris in 1926. This play was produced on the stage by the 'Ukasha Brothers in the same year, while al-Hakim was still in Paris. In France he got influenced by Sophocles, Ibsen, Pirandello, Maeterlinck, Bernard Shaw, Georges Pitoeff, Andre Gide, Wilde, Moliere, Goethe, etc.

Though he stayed in France for four years, he could not complete his doctorate in Law because of his deep involvement in theatrical activity. Disgusted at his failure his father ordered him to return to Egypt at once. This unexpected order might have upset al-Hakim no end, but he had no alternative except to obey it. So, he readily decided to say goodbye to his lovely France and came back home to join his disturbed family in 1928.

On his return when he took stock of theatrical activity in Egypt, he found that the Egyptian theatre which was once full of activity, was almost dead and several troupes including the Ukasha Brothers had ceased functioning. He also came to know that his close friend Mustafa of Sulayman’s Ring, had deserted play writing and in despair moved to alchemy. According to al-Hakim, there were two reasons for this such as firstly the squabbles had struggle for power between the various political parties, which made politics and political journalism occupy the forefront of people’s attention to the exclusion of the arts and secondly the growing world economic crisis, with its impact on the Egyptian economy.

This was the situation when al-Hakim decided to resume writing plays on his return from France. He wrote five plays one after another. These included Khuruj min al-Janna (Expulsion from Paradise, 1928); Bad al- Mawt or Sirr al- Muntahira (After Death or The Suicide’s Secret, 1929, staged by the National Troupe in 1937) al-Zammar (The Piper, 1932). The first two were in classical or literary Arabic, and the other three were written in the Egyptian colloquial. A Bullet in the Heart was actually written for an amateur society known as the Society for the Promotion of Acting, but unfortunately, that society did not survive long enough to put it on the stage. So, al-Hakim had to content himself with writing plays – often short, one act plays for publication in newspapers.
The above five dramas were followed by the celebrated 'Ahl al-Kahf (The Sleepers in the Cave) based on the Quranic version of the Christian legend of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus. Next to it was Shahrazad which consists of seven scenes and is inspired by the Arabian Nights.

Al-Hakim’s next important play was Muhammad (1936). It is a dramatization of the Prophet’s life. The play which comprises more than ninety scenes, was written only to be read and not to be acted.

In 1939 al-Hakim wrote a three-act play Praxa or The Problem of Government. In it the failure of the democratic government in Egypt was indirectly attacked by the author.

Al-Hakim’s yet another popular play was Pygmalion which was written in 1942.

When Pygmalion marries Galatea, in al-Hakim’s play, the artist in him reasserts and the call to art eclipses the love for his wife. His devotion to art, to the exclusion of all else, including his wife, that may come in the way of his full realization, causes him to neglect Galatea who then falls in love with Narcissus and runs away with him.

Praxa was followed by Sulayman al-Hakim (Solomon the Wise, 1943). The play contains details provided in the Quran about supernatural powers, such as his knowledge of the language of arts and birds like the hoopoe and his command of the genie.

It may also be stated that the play produced by al-Hakim between 1918/19 and 1949 can be divided into two main categories such as social plays and abstract or intellectual plays. In his social plays al-Hakim deals with social themes, criticizes the lives of individuals and satirizes corruption of politics.

Ahmed Shawqi (1868-1932) was also an Egyptian Arabic pronunciation whose nicknamed Amir al-Sho'araā (which literary means the prince of poets), was one of the greatest Arabic poets laureate, an Egyptian poet and dramatist who pioneered the modern Egyptian literary movement, most notably introducing the genre of poetic epics to the Arabic literary tradition. On the paternal side he was of Circassian, Greek and Kurdish descent, and on the maternal side of Turkish and Greek descent.
Raised in a privileged setting, his family was prominent and well-connected with the court of the Khedive of Egypt. Upon graduating from high school, he attended law school, obtaining a degree in translation. Shawqi was then offered a job in the court of the Khedive Abbas II, which he immediately accepted.

After a year working in the court of the Khedive, Shawqi was sent to continue his studies in Law at the Universities of Montpellier and Paris for three years. While in France, he was heavily influenced by the works of French playwrights, most notably Molière and Racine. He returned to Egypt in 1894, and remained a prominent member of Arab literary culture until the British forced him into exile in southern Spain, Andalusia, in 1914. Shawqi remained there until 1920, when he returned to Egypt. In 1927 he was crowned by his peers *Amir al-Sho'araa* (literally, "the Prince of Poets") in recognition of his considerable contributions to the literary field.

He used to live in ‘Karmet Ibn Hani’ or Ibn Hani’s Vineyard at Al-Matariyyah area near the palace of the Khedive Abbas II at Saray El-Qobba until he was exiled. After returning to Egypt he built a new house at Giza which he named the new Karmet Ibn Hani. He met Mohammed Abdel Wahab, and introduced him for the first time to art, making him his protégé as he gave him a suite in his house. The house later on became Ahmed Shawki Museum and Mohammed Abdel Wahab became one of the most famous Egyptian composers.

Shawqi’s work can be categorized into three main periods during his career. The first coincides with the period during which he occupied a position at the court of the Khedive, consisting of eulogies to the Khedive: praising him or supporting his policy. The second comprised the period of his exile in Spain. During this period, his feeling of nostalgia and sense of alienation directed his poetic talent to patriotic poems on Egypt as well as the Arab world and panarabism. The third stage occurred after his return from exile, during that period he became preoccupied with the glorious history of Ancient Egypt and Islam. This was the period during which he wrote his religious poems, in praise of the Prophet Muhammad. The maturation of his poetic style was also reflected in his plays, the most notable of which were published during this period.

The aristocratic poet of Cairo, Ahmad Shawqi was a mixture of Arab, Turkish, Circassian, Kurdish and Greek lineage. His education was secular and European as opposed to the
traditional schooling of Al-Azhar. He joined the Law School and graduated in 1887 from its department of translation with a mastery in French.

Royal patronage governed Shawqi’s life for almost half a century. First the Khedive Tawfiq appointed him at the palace secretariat and later sent him to study law and literature in France, where he spent six years. Shawqi travelled widely in Europe acquiring all aspects of its culture. “I found from the first day the light that should illuminate my path,” he said, referring to this period.

Back in Cairo, Shawqi enjoyed the confidence of Tawfiq with great skill. He became the chief spokesman of the next Khedive, ‘Abbas II, gaining an envious position of authority. He married a rich woman and lived a luxurious life which is reflected in his wine and love poems.

When Abbas II was deposed, Shawqi, because of his involvement with the palace, was asked to leave Egypt. He went to Barcelona in 1914 and lived there throughout the war. Exile weighed heavily on Shawqi. He missed the protection of the palace and its carefree life. Most of all, he missed Egypt. For the first time he had to face pecuniary problems and it was wartime too. He saw human cares and suffering-things unknown to him earlier.

The period of exile (1914-1919) also put an end to his ties with the court. When Shawqi returned to Cario, the country was in the grip of the 1919 revolution. He responded to the mood of the nation and turning away from the themes that pleased the rulers, he took up the cause of the common man.

The period from 1919 to 1932 was highly productive for Shawqi, whose house at Giza
glittered with intellectuals and where great singers like Abdul Wahhab set verses to music.
Famous poets from all over the world visited him including Tagore in 1926.
When Shawqi’s diwan was reprinted in 1927, he was acclaimed Amir al-shu ‘ura {Prince of poets} by a general consensus of eminent poets.
A prolific poet, Ahmad Shawqi has written more than any of his contemporaries. His diwan entitled al-Shawaggyyat was published in two volumes in 1898. The third and fourth volumes appeared posthumously.
The bulk of Shawqi’s verse consists of social poetry and includes eulogies, elegies, descriptions and occasional poetry. Shawqi also wrote verse plays numbering six, of which the more famous are: Masra ‘Kilubatra {The fall of Cleopatra} and Majnum Layla.
Shawqi’s chief impulse to write poetry came from Arab sources. Inspired by his professor, the poet al-Shaykh Muhammad al-Baysuni, Shawqi wrote his first poem when he was fourteen. It was an eulogy to Tawfiq and earned him a place at the palace.
Shawqi’s main guide was al-Barudi whom he followed closely in style. He also read with reverence the works of classical poet.He had a close affinity to Al-Mutanabbi, the poet laureate of the Hamdanid prince Saif-ad-Dowla, and the greatest Arab eulogist. He praised his patron in the same way and used similar constructions.
The other ‘Abbasid poets who fascinated Shawqi were Abu Nawas, Abu Firas and al-Buhturi. The impact of Abu Nawas is clearly seen in Shawqi’s wine poems, use of lighter metres and short verses. Al-Buhturi’s influence was perhaps greater. Shawqi says he made conscious efforts to copy the rhyme and metre of al-Buhturi, so much so that it became
second nature to him. Whenever the wind rustled or the water flowed, he would hear al-Buhturi’s tune accompanying it.

Shawqi’s travels abroad stirred his imagination with their variegated scenes and are reflected in his poems on natural and monumental splendours as in Bois de Boulogne.

Though the influence of French literature was weaker than that of Arabic, it could not fail to leave an indelible mark on the poet’s compositions. It is felt in the fables modelled on La Fontaine in verse form, and in short descriptions within poems, as well as in verse about modern inventions. Some echoes of the French romanticists: Alfred de Musset and Lamartine are also perceptible. But the most important influence is that of Victor Hugo.

La Legende des Siecles of Hugo inspired Shawqi to compose an equally immense fresco on Egyptian history called Kibar al-Hawadith fi Wadi ’l-Nil {Great Historical Events of the Nile Valley}, which he recited at the Conference of Orientalists in Geneva in 1894. In the same strain he wrote his famous series on the Pharaohs, and even extended Hugo’s style to Islamic themes, e.g. al-Hamziyyat al-Nabawiyu.

The turning point in Shawqi’s poetical career occurred on this return to Egypt, when, emboldened by his freedom from the palace, he was able to express the travails of his nation in fiery patriotic poems.

But although Shawqi found more individual liberty in the 1920s than ever before, he was increasingly assailed by critics such as al-Mazini, al-‘Aqqad and Taha Husayn for carrying on a blind tradition and not daring to innovate. Shawqi, who was meticulous about his verse, took extra pains and carved out almost flawless verses that charmed the majority of his
Like the neo-classicists, al-Barudi and Hafiz Ibrahim, Shawqi also projects his new ideas and contemporary values in the framework of the Arabic qasida. His compositions are in the best tradition of Abbsid poetry, characterised by an elegance of form \{al-rasana\} and purity of style \{al-jazala\}. His constructions are powerful and smooth flowing.

Shawqi selects his words with care. Realizing that the vocabulary that had emerged during the renaissance fell short of his poetic requirements, Shawqi revived a number of forgotten words from old Arabic and employed them in new shades and meanings.

Shawqi’s forte is imagery. He draws freely from the vast repertoire of similes and metaphors of classical poetry and deploys them such as an artist would use lines and colours in a painting. An example of his superb skill is his poem on the palace at Aswan, Qasr Anas al-Wajud.

The asset of Arabic literature holds very much importance on many accounts. It had generously braced up the learning of all the developed nations of the world. Similarly, even today it holds the same capacity being more enriched in literature than the other ones, for the reason that it is as old as the human himself and of decline will occur only with the end of the world civilization.

Form this study we can come to the conclusion that the Drama is the most social of the art forms which reflects the true picture of the society in the perspective of socio, political, economica and culture. The Arabic drama has occupied an important position in bringing about the social changes since time immemorial in which Tawfiq Al-Hakim and Ahmed Shawqi have contributed a lot in this field.