

The Survival of Romanticism in Modern Arabic Poetry with a Special Reference to Farouk Shoosha

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Abstract: Due to contacts with the Western cultural milieu, new concepts and ideas were adopted by many European-educated Arabic poets who had been given a chance to read and translate English and French verse. The result was new generations who, influenced by the Western modernism, revolted against their accustomed literary traditions. Being influenced by the Western modernism implies an influence by its “Neo-romanticism”. It is ‘new romanticism’ because it represents a revival of the European romantic spirit which had informed the work of the Apollo Group in the 1930s. From Eliot, the Arabic poets took the theme of the ‘city’ (the ‘unreal city’) and from other modernists a variety of themes that this paper finds a continuation of the English Romantic movement. This paper tries to prove this in a number of poetic images in modern Arabic poetry with a special reference to poetry of Farouk Shoosha.

Key words: Modernism, romanticism, Neo-romanticism, modern, Arabic poetry

INTRODUCTION

It is not easy at all to draw a dividing line to separate the modernist poets from the romantics. In spite of Eliot (1986)’s attack on the English Romantics, some critics have tended to perceive a survival of certain romantic elements in the work of modernists, even in Eliot himself (Lobb: passim). In his introduction to Romanticism and Postmodernism, Edward Larrissy supports this idea stating that “Modernism is essentially a remoulding of romanticism” and that “postmodernism is also yet another mutation of the original stock” (Larrissy, 1999).

Main text: Although, modern Arabic poetry is in a very real sense a revolt against the European influence which produced the best part of the Apollo School’s poetry, it was not without its fundamental romanticism as seen in belief in absolutes, the lament of the passing away of certain ideals and lofty values and the interest in nature and the common man. The immediate source of influence may be T.S. Eliot himself who though technically a modernist, still believed in absolutes and ideals (albeit drawn from religion).

By the 1930s and due to contacts with the Western cultural milieu, new concepts and ideas were adopted by many of those who had been given a chance to read and translate English and French verse. The result was a new

generation who revolted against their literary traditions and became like “a sponge in absorbing varied western influence” (Haywood, 1971). As a leading figure of that revolting generation of poets, Al-Aqqad and two of his partners, Shukri and Al-Mazzini, founded the Diwan School. In his book entitled: An Anthology of the New Arabic Poetry in Egypt, Enani states that:

“Al-Aqqad’s revolt was romantic, pure and simple and the concepts he advocated could directly be traced to Wordsworth and Coleridge. He attacked poetic diction, personification, the oratorical tone of the preceding generation and insisted on the use of incidents from ‘common life’ in embodying the ‘primal emotions of man’ (Enani, 1995)”

The combination of the members of the Diwan School with some of the Western-educated poets led to the appearance of a “revolutionary romantic” (Faytouri, 1997) movement in the 1930s. That new movement of romanticism was called the Apollo Group which included Ali Mahmoud Taha, Ibrahim Nagui and Abu-Shadi.

The concepts of the Apollo Group of the 1930s were developed by the European-educated generation of the 1950s who have been called “the poets of the second wave” (Faytouri 1997). Many new innovations were

created in the form of the Arabic poem. Noticing the creative innovations in the form and structure of the Arabic poem, Enani explains this point saying.

The Arabic poem ceased to be an open-ended collection of lines of equal length, sharing the same rhyme, with varying themes and became the record of an emotional experience in the modern sense, in lines of varying length with a 'free' rhyme scheme and a meter relying on the repetition of the same foot rather than on the traditional metrical structure where each line consisted of a fixed number of different (but occasionally similar) feet, arranged according to an unalterable prescribed pattern (Enani, 1995).

Moreover, the European-educated poets or rather the second generation of poets of the late 1950s and those who came after them in the 1960s and 1970s, adopted new ideas such as 'organic' unity, experimentation with form, and development. They "have been stimulated by the efforts and achievements of the earlier modernists and have been made conscious of the radical changes which have overtaken all aspects of life in their society" (Khouri and Hamid, 1974).

This second generation of poets developed a new concept of romanticism which is described by Enani as "Neo-romanticism" (Enani, 1995). It is 'new romanticism' because it "represents a revival of the European romantic spirit which had informed the work of the Apollo Group in the 1930s" (Enani, 1995). Though it has certainly been developed beyond the early fascination with English romanticism, it still has a great deal to that romantic school. In other words, it can be considered an extension of that romantic spirit of the Apollo school.

Being influenced by western modernism implies an influence by its "Neo-romanticism". From Eliot, the Arabic poets took the theme of the 'city' (the 'unreal city') and from other modernists a variety of themes that this paper finds a continuation of the English romantic movement. This study tries to prove this in a number of poetic images in the modern Arabic poetry with a special reference to poetry of Farouk Shoosha.

The revival of romanticism in the Arab world has passed through several stages. These different developmental stages are so overlapping that it may be said to complement each other. The first stage of neo-romanticism witnessed the appearance of the modernist-romantic poetry. This can be seen in the poetry of Salah Abdul-Saboor. The second stage is considered the acme of the neo-romanticism developing process. It is called the stage of "Neo-Romantics" and it can be found in the poetry of Farouk Shoosha and Farouk Guwaida (Enani, 1995). The third one is that which is characterized by a romantic-modernist trend, not a modernist-romantic

trend. The difference between them is that while the first trend is dominated by a modernist mood with the existence of some romantic traits, the second is dominated by a romantic mood with the existence of some modernist traits. This trend is clearly noticeable in the poetry of Amal Donqol.

Salah Abdul-Saboor, whose collections of poetry include: *This I Say to You* (1961), *Dreams of the Ancient Knight* (1964), *Night Trees* (1974) and *Sailing into Memory* (1979), reached full maturity and began to occupy a distinguished position in the cultural milieu in the early 1950s. In her introduction to Abdul (1986), now the King is Dead, Nehad Selaiha states that Abdul Saboor "remains Egypt's most prominent and influential contemporary poet" because he "created a new poetic idiom and fashioned a new sensibility" and advanced courageous steps "towards the rejuvenation of Arabic poetry" (Abdul, 1994, 1999). Selaiha adds in the same introduction.

"Having fought and won his battle for a freer and more pliable verse form to work within, a battle which reached its fiercest stages in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Abdul-Saboor concentrated all his creative efforts on introducing into the Arabic poem the concept of organic unity, thus completely transforming the face of Arabic poetry, at least in Egypt" (Abdul, 1994, 1986, 1999)"

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Thoraya Allam (1986) states that Abdul-Saboor "championed the school of Neo-Romanticism". In addition, Maher Shafiq Farid describes him as one of those who have written "some of the most poignant elegies and satires of our time" (Abu, 1993). His poetry has the traits of both modernism and romanticism. He managed to "establish a fruitful dialectic between the past and the present, the inherited eastern sensibility and the acquired western one, both on the levels of historical and artistic experience" (Abdul, 1986). Abdul-Saboor's poetry is as Samir Sarhan says in his introduction to Abdul (1999)'s *Night Traveller*, "rich, varied and influential". He adds that it "marked a break with rigid verse forms of classical Arabic poetry".

Though Abdul-Saboor's poetry bears many similarities with that of T.S. Eliot and W.H. Auden, it still has many ones with that of William Wordsworth and Percy Shelley. In returning to the past, Abdul-Saboor tries to "revive the past glory of the nation, primarily the 'pure' passions, the lofty ideals and the cherished values

of the forefathers". Nonetheless, the features of Neo-romanticism can be seen clearly in the poetry of Farouk Shoosha. He belongs to "the second generation of Modernist poets" (Enani, 1995). Again, in his introduction to Izz El-Din Ismail (1985)'s *The Trial of An Unknown Man*, Enani states that Shoosha as one of these poets "turned to nature, celebrated the powers of the individual mind."

Shoosha was born in Damietta in 1936. After graduating from Dar Al-Uloun, Cairo University in 1956, he managed to obtain a Teacher's Training Diploma from Ain Shams University in 1957. After teaching Arabic for a short time, he moved to work at the Egyptian Broadcasting Station where he became a well-known broadcaster.

Shoosha built his reputation in the cultural milieu of the Arab world through his famous radio programme "Our Beautiful Language". Through this programme, he has managed to introduce the beauties of classical Arabic to the audience around the whole Arab World. Besides, he is considered as "a major figure in the second wave of the 'New Poetry' movement in Egypt" (Enani, 1995). Among his poetic volumes are *To a Departing Love* (1966; *Waiting for what Never Comes* (1979) and *An Ebony Face* (2000). Also, Shoosha edited several anthologies of poetry, *The Most Beautiful* and *The Most Beautiful Twenty Poems of Divine Love* (1983) are among others.

Reading Shoosha's poetry, one can easily notice its numerous romantic features. Concerning the form of his poetry, Shoosha prefers to use the form of long poems whose prevailing mood is supported by his distinguished use of the musical technique of theme and variation (Enani, 1995). This can be seen in many of his poems such as "A Poetess in Love: An Elegy", "Words about Peace", "Fission", "A Face that Grants me Forgiveness", "A family Toast" and "The Martyr". Moreover, Shoosha (1990) has attempted to use "experimentation with form". This can be seen in "Tablet lines" in which he uses quartettes and other forms at the same time.

Thematically, Shoosha's romantic poetry includes several themes such as those of departure, alienation and solitude. It also deals with a feeling of melancholy that prevails in many of his poems. In more than one of his poems, we can find the speaker departing to find other places, searching for a better life and a new meaning. Thus, the theme of departure is a prominent aspect of his poetry. Like other Arab poets, Shoosha has to do this because romanticism is, as Jayyusi comments, "connected with a growing awareness of cultural and social conditions" (Jayyusi, 1977). Thence, the departure is due to the awareness of changes in the surroundings. Departure in Shoosha's poetry takes several forms. In one of his poems, Shoosha's speaker departs from one language to another. He says:

"Sailing into a language; Not mine; Out of a; language; No longer mine; I jettison a burden; That had weighed me down; And paralysed my tongue; A voice that never was mine; Not any part of its rhetoric; But rather the shock; Of a language heuristic; Was the self I had; Not what my inner soul had; painted; To my soul? (Shoosha, 1990)"

When reaching his new destination, the speaker finds that he is in need to depart again for a new destination:

"Did I when the mask fell; Stand all exposed?; Carried by a tremulous wonder; Dropped by the words down; On an infinite horizon?; I feel estranged; Having totally missed; My range and direction. (Shoosha, 1990)"

In another form of departure, the female speaker is found alone after being left by her father. She had thought that they would never separate. But, unexpectedly, she finds herself saying:

"How did you delude me; Into believing that you'd live on; And that the time of your life will for ever be; Extending into an infinite horizon; You were slipping away; With arms too feeble to hug me; But I hardly realized; That you were getting farther; And farther away; Day after day; That little by little; And insidious ebb pulled down; Such awesome; grand splendor (Shoosha, 1990; Faruq, 2000; Faruq and Muammad, 2003)"

Shoosha connects the theme of departure to the image of the train. The train is a means of transport. It stops for a while and then resumes its trip. It separates people and enforces the idea of departure:

"Who will secure; An ambiguous promise borne; By time to come?; Is it enough for us to stick together; And so ensure; The approach of the train of time; Which runs so fast; Like a galloping horse; Tempted by the space; Of the wilderness; Stopping a while then departing; Turning us again into strangers? (Shoosha, 1990)"

Departure seems to be a principle of life itself; it is not confined to man. It can be found in the world of birds:

“A bird sat on a branch, only to fly; Keeping in his breast the reason why; Perhaps he’s looking for the face of day; A dream to enliven his muted lay (Shoosha, 1990)”

Solitude Is one of the themes that can be found in Shoosha’s poetry. It is a theme that could simultaneously be traced back to the romantics and read in many modernists; it has an ironic inflection connecting it to the human condition, though apparently related to our ‘age’:

In the age of fission; You turn into a lost vision; Frittered away in your orbit; Whenever the eye, to unfurl a sail; Is turned, extending a hand; Into the heart of the dream; A vertiginous fit ensues; Has certainty thus been all’; To no avail? (Shoosha, 1990)

Born out of a ‘modernist’ uncertainty this peculiar solitude seems to be based on a paradox as the image is further elaborated into indecision that looks ‘natural’ enough in today’s world:

You reject what you would like; And like what you dislike; Or what goes against the grain; You’re in between the twain

“The ecstasy of madness; And the defeat of nothingness; Is your wisdom double; And each step a couple; Never happy with an end, Never taking you to a definite break; To save you from hesitation; From confrontation? (Shoosha, 1990)

Romantic poetry is characterized by its frequent use of images drawn from nature. The use of such images as found in modernists is however, different. An impressionist painting of a natural scene is used to reflect the inner turmoil of the soul, where the correspondence between inner and outer realities is complete. In one of his poems, Shoosha writes:

“Surprised by the cold hour; I see the gate of heaven; Drawing too close; And, cowering in a cold nest; The bird of rainy nights; The wind is howling; The trees undressing; The palms kneeling; Whilst ascending; Is the raucous note of a flute; Which I had thought; Had only started; Have you anything to help me recover; An intimation torn asunder (Shoosha, 1990)”

The transference of inner to outer reality helps Shoosha to create his own brand of modernist romantic strain and the complete imagery confirms the transference synaesthetically:

“An ebony face; Braiding the neck of night; With the sun glare; Pours into the wells of a thirsty soul; A dream of water; And a forest odour; Where scents of burning horizons swim; And bamboo shoots break at the brim! (Shoosha, 1990)”

The same brand of synaesthesia can be found at the following lines that describe a sketch of the poet’s trip with his poem in London’s nature and here we find that treating one sense in terms of another is intensified:

“The poem escorted me to a rare concert; Between me and the music ran; A little stream; Across which there was a bridge; That the players crossed; Before taking their seats; On the bosky stage; On a green lawn in a luxuriant garden; In the heart of which stood; A historical palace; The music about us is a drunken space; And a sky quite low (Shoosha, 1990)”

This is not a mixed metaphor, pure and simple but an aesthetic merger of ‘romantic; nature with a modernist, highly complex poetic vision; the following image forcefully illustrates this:

“But when her hair was down; And the willow tresses; Gently o’er spread those shoulders; I realized how the space; Between the somber clouds and the lightning; The glow of sunset and sunrise; The drink of morning; And evening ecstasy; Was filled with a jouissant wisdom; Weighted down by luxury (Shoosha, 1990)”

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The ‘Romantic’s, English and Arab alike, often deal with suffering which they seem to enjoy as if it was their fate to suffer for the sake of their art “the more bitter the taste, the more abundant the enjoyment” (Subhi, 1984). As Kermode (1996) puts it, “Romantic sensitivity drags the poet into that mood of agony and encourages in him the tendency to feel alienated and isolated from his society”. As a romantic poet, Shoosha’s feeling of melancholy can be felt and conveyed in modernist images that re bold in their flights of fancy and redolent of a sense of suppressed joy:

“No longer will the firmament; Appear white, black to your eyes; Nor the earth be arid; Nor the breezes be pent up; Throttled in the ink; For a certain colour is now beaming; And a certain storm is gathering; As one heart is abroad; Leaving its old rib-home; And is at large, alone (Shoosha, 1990)”

The same feeling of melancholy can be found but in a different more straightforward key: it is not enjoyable far from it, in fact but felt to be a natural outcome of consciousness of what the poet’s world has turned into. Asking Shawqi to tell him what happened to the orient, Shoosha says:

“O Shawqi; In the orient the sun is put out; And a race of serpents; Have turned into a pride of lions; A wall of fear is rising; And a night of terror descending; Shall we give in to sorrow; Make peace with the night; Of stark humiliation And make wine from its grapes? (Shoosha, 1990)”

The paradox of night-in-day may be modernist in provenance but the essential emotion conveyed may be easily traced to the English romantics, not entirely free from paradox themselves. This emotion, thus channeled, appears both romantic and modernist at once, producing a unique amalgam of both strains:

“If night-time was real night; It should fill us with fright; If day-time was day-bright; We should live it as well as we might; But neither is; And in the space within; There's a labyrinth yawning; Whose reflections control our action; A shadow on the horizon; Extending, quivering; A heart burning; The night is no longer a space; For repose, where a lounge, a fireside; And a round of friends and tales; Are all in place (Shoosha, 1990)”

This paradox can, however, engender a straightforward image, as the one we have here where the absence of the beloved ‘puzzles the will’ as Hamlet says, and results in a strange inertia:

Your absence now stands awful; An impregnable tall wall; I cannot penetrate it; I cannot advance to it; I cannot go back to you; I cannot get away from sorrow; I cannot have access to you (Shoosha, 1990)

In a different situation, a feeling of melancholy can be a result of a mysterious fate that is indecisive and undecided:

You see your destiny; In the ring of a ring-dove Buried in a whale belly; Or roaming where the storm above; Wanders over deserts; Or where the specks float in air; Consider your fate; And follow that lost star; Setting or rising (Shoosha, 1990)

One of the main features of romanticism is the belief in imagination. Subhi (1984) explains: Romantics on the whole, live every moment in their life through the dynamic and powerful glass of their creative imagination. According to that tendency, all that is before their penetrating eyes is of highly significant meaning that motivates them to consider life great and eternal.

Imagination can give the poet the ability to see and imagine inner relationships. Also, it can enable him to acquire a sense of intuitive perception of higher truths. The imagination enables the poet to find what can be called windows through which he can look at different worlds. Through imagination, a poet can create an ideal world. This is why “romantic idealism appears most vehemently in a sense of hope”(Enani, 1995) that can enliven the world of poetry. So, through imagination, a poet can achieve what is beyond his power in the real world. Shoosha imagines that he has an inner relationship with his memory. In one of his poems, he says:

“I wander about in my memory; Is it retreat? I do not intend to retreat; The cooings I hear; Are sounds of fear; The wings beating; Of birds vanishing; Then a ray goes west; Totally lost; Though not intending to fly; From the rottenness of the universe; The taste of the moment; The flavor of disappointment; Or the feeling of loss (Shoosha, 1990)”

In this inner relationship, there is a series of movements back and forth. At the end of the poem, the speaker realizes that he is going to retreat. He is going to lose this relationship with the real world forever because he is going to lose his memory. In another poem, Shoosha imagines that he has a relationship with the moon and birds. The speaker tries to imagine this kind of relationship because he fails to find it in the real life. Here is his apostrophe to the moon:

O moon; Will thinking about justice; Continue to make you sleepless?; Leave your place and come down; To where the birds nestle, breathlessly; And crash-land in their realm; For that which now takes shape; Down the path of your light; Is a furnace of embers; A fossil of nebulae (Shoosha, 1990)

The deliberate mixed metaphors are distinguished by their modernist technique but the apostrophe itself recalls the romantic odes and the traditional handling of the 'moon theme'.

Through his imagination, a poet can create an atmosphere of specific features reflecting a specific mood. Thanks to these, the poet and his readers can have an intuitive perception of certain truths. Shoosha says:

"There is a blood-stained front; Between me and the sea; A horizon of bullets; The smell of gunpowder persists; The echoes of battle; With the mines planted underneath; The cellars of robbers wallowing; In their guilt, planting; A homeland in our flesh; For the feuds of times gone by; As the usurpation of the world; And the times, signal the moment; Of retribution (Shoosha, 1990)"

Again, it is paradox that helps the poet maintain his modernist vision, relying on mixed metaphors, now common in modernist Arabic poetry but whose elements are romantic. Sometimes a Shelleyan sentiment comes to the surface, quite plainly, the paradoxes notwithstanding:

"This is the road of death; Opening into a language; Whose dwellers are naked; Degradation is called eloquence and; To keep the tide of grandeur; At a low ebb; Is called leadership; And to betray the dead; Is now the road to salvation (Shoosha, 1990)"

The image of windows in Shoosha's poetry stands for the ability to look at different kinds of worlds. For example, they can allow him to look at the world of certainty. Though the world of certainty should be dominated by what is certain, it is still full of contradictions:

"Advancing in certainty; The farther he proceeded; The greater the bounty; His heaven showered; And words radiate, reflecting his light; And gleams pulsate; Like embers glowing, His flames rose higher, within; The womb of the earth; Though his dwelling is distorted (Shoosha, 1990)"

The speaker becomes unsure of what he sees and deals with. He asks himself at the end of the poem about the possibility of having certainty at all:

"I would release; My pent-up words; Causing dams to collapse; With my words soaring high; Vultures preying on the slanderous gang; A deluge of shooting stars; To wipe out such calamities; How I wish I would; How I wish I could; Have I now the certainty you had; Tyrannical words; A coast and end? (Shoosha, 1990)"

For Shoosha, night is a window through which he can look at many different things in life. Through dreams, he can see what cannot be seen in real life. He says:

"It is the night that is; My voice; My utterance, my silence; And the bird of my time; When my vanity takes off; And a vast hall expands within myself; Vast enough for all existence; Oh then I play my game of life; And death; The season of abundance; And that of indigence; A fresh lifetime rhythm (Shoosha, 1990)"

He continues to describe the world of night as a desired thing, in terms of fruit and beautiful faces, all of which eventually disappointing:

"It is the night; Sail unfolded for the moment; Of departure; A fruit so much desired; And a beautiful face getting farther; With nothing to; guide the traveler (Shoosha, 1990)"

As a romantic-modernist, Shoosha frequently uses a persona that can be seen in the figure of a man who is in trouble all the time, suffering from many social ills around him and so exhausted and frustrated that he rejects the entire modern life and age (Larrissy, 1999). The line of distinction between the speaking voice (the persona) and the poet can be so tenuous that the reader may easily confuse the one with the other or actually ignore the persona altogether as lyricism takes over as in:

"About to fall in labyrinthine words; In abysmal sorrow; So vast, in deserts of the spirit; I drift, am carried long; By a stupendous stream of our age's excrement; I am pulled up by the roots; Thrown in the face of time; A trembling shadow, defeated; Cold-whispered and-stabbed; Defeated, exhausted and thoroughly crushed; In the embittered night (Lobb, 1981)"

In another poem, Shoosha's persona forces 'himself' on the poet, identifying himself with his family, however inimical he may be to the poet-the confusion is complete:

“Oh! What persistence; You expect me to do what I cannot; You knock on the door; The door opens; You become a member of the family; Wearing a mantle of security; Mingling with the innermost whispers; Reclining where my grandfather once sat; To slip our coffee; And sing our tales; Then bear our names, vying with us in expressing; The indefatigable nostalgia; The morning dew that is never sober; You expect me to do what I cannot; Now, you’re inside our home (Shoosha, 1990)”

The political implication may not be so obvious in the above-quoted lines as the poet, in a modernist view, apts for ambiguity but as the theme is elaborated, the political message clearly emerges. References to ‘killing’ and the dividing ‘wall’ (in Palestine) spell out the poet’s intention:

“How could we believe that you are the face; Of such alternative times; Whilst the blood shed in the space; Between us continues to flow apace; Of the killed and their killers; Traps of mutual suspicions, a wall erected; And a chart extended; But you still expect me to do; What I cannot possibly do; With arms extending; Or eyes smiling; The glint of love glittering; On your brow and a cup of tea; Now the subject for a bland chat; You’re now ensconced; Within the home of my people; Making peace appear pleasurable; Which is impossible (Shoosha, 1990)”

The suffering of the speaker of the poem is represented in that what is said and done cannot be believed and accepted. The same technique is used again by Shoosha when condemning the unsuccessful trial of the man who tried to kill Naguib Mahfouz:

“Shall we cut his throat?; We, a bunch of hypocrites, rogues and robbers; Complacently wallowing; In fantasies, in hallucinations; Who issue ruling after ruling; Tampering, corrupting, negotiating; The dark alleys of words, burning; The incense of defunct texts, looking; For a chop of the nation’s body; To feed the wolves; And fill a hungry belly; There are the silent among us; Who made no defence; Never broke the silence; But all are placing their bets; In the beginning was the knife; Making a slit in the throat; And in the end, the blood is shed; Our blood, now stabled and bled (Shoosha, 1990)”

The incident is here placed in a wider frame of reference: the world-be assassin is no other than society at large, wallowing in spurious certainties and amazing self-complacency. The poet’s passion is genuinely romantic, predicating a possible ideal society and a potential cure, insofar as man is ‘good by nature’ but the handling is more modernist in technique. Images qualify one another and through, accumulation, a final impression is created. The persona’s wistful melancholy now has a target, and is often spelt out in no ambivalent terms as the following pattern of images amply show:

“I see sparks advancing; In columns of fire, flying; Dropping infernal fruit; I see hungry people, their eyes galloping; After some bread crumbs; Their stomachs rumbling; In anticipation of alms; The eyes are clouded over; With a haze of despair; As the face of barren times darkens (Shoosha, 1990)”

According to Eliot’s ‘objective correlative’ principle, now with a *Locus Classius*, a balance should be maintained between the emotion and the ‘character, situation, or chain of event’s embodying it (Eliot’s *Essay on Hamlet*). This has been accepted as a modernist view, so that the dominance of one over another may lead to vagueness or to sentimentality (Enani, 1995). This balanced situation is not kept all the time in Shoosha’s poetry, resulting in an important feature of his poetry, which is the ability to create a strong feeling of mysterious worlds.

Looking at his poem entitled “A Poetess in Love: An Elegy”, one can find that though the poem is an elegy, Shoosha manages, through a sequence of images, to turn it into a love-song. The opening lines of the poem says:

“Was he a painter; Drenching in colour; The face of sad times?; Did he use for his oils; The heavy and weary hours; Until black merged; Into white and white merged; Into black, together projected; In forms and shapes uncouth?; Did he opt in the end to leave; In search of a prophecy; That played in the eyes; Of the day-crowned young?; Was it a prophecy of children; Yet to be born; Who would perforce be born at dawn; Not night-orphan but a real breed of men; To foster his dream and unfold his tale; The story bizarre; Of how he wore a cloak of grandeur; And destroyed his painting kit; When his colours could not; Blot out the sorrow of the land; Or over paint the blackness; Wherein human clay; In darkness lay? (Enani, 1995)”

Shoosha's bold use of language decidedly modernist helps him to turn the atmosphere of grief in his elegy into a poetic vision through which he looks at the whole contemporary world. The use of the pronoun 'he' in the opening lines of the poem refers to a specific mood of grief. When reading the following lines of the same poem, one can feel that the poet manages to depict life in our age at large:

"I dream of sands, of deserts, of fertile worlds;
Of grand oriental cities; Grown into fantasy, into
magical casements; Opening, to a tremor of
frenzy; On a wonderland; I dream of going back
to your age; A thoughtless youth, dreaming like
fond lovers; Of an audience with you; O queen
of all women; Commanding, expostulating;
Forgiving, granting your precious love; To
whomever you choose; Brooking the levity; Of
bold aspirers (Muammad, 2003)"

Though these lines give a vision that takes the form of dreams, they still give an impression that they are different from those found at the beginning of the poem. In another poem, Shoosha tries to depict a picture in which the speaker meets a crying man. He is not sure of the reasons for his crying. He seems to protest at something. He gives a detailed description of his situation:

"He yesterday disappeared; Never came back;
Is he dead?; Nobody knows; Perhaps his
cracked voice was blocked; And is now
locked; As though his protracted protests;
Had been in vain; As obviously he failed;
To track the world; Perhaps some policemen
on the beat; Had him jailed to keep the city
clean; Which however her disgrace; Must
give birth to more, even; If it meant
going hungry; Whatever the case may be; His
voice is still there; In the suppressed shot
hidden; In the mysterious cry; Dreaming of
jerking the country; Into action (Shoosha,
1990)"

"I met him, crying in the wilderness; Invoking
death and destruction; His eyes were balls of
fire; His mouth filled with particles; Of the lava
from fury furnaces; With the head thrown back;
I met him, crying in the wilderness; Invoking
death and destruction; His eyes were balls of
fire; His mouth filled with particles; Of the
lava"

"With the head thrown back; He was about to;
stumble in his own shadow!; With steps
unsteady; And language too heady; The throng
eruption now rose; Now subsided, though he
Without apparent cause; Handled questions of
great moment (Shoosha, 1990)"

But unexpectedly, the crying man disappeared. The speaker again does not know what exactly happened to that man. Even his voice is no longer heard. The imagery used by Shoosha in this poem helps in creating a mysterious world in which we do not know what happened to the crying man. Though the mystery forcefully connects the poem with the Gothic elements defined as "romantic" by Brooks (1957), it is close enough in structure and in its hope of revival to the modernist mode, alive in the hands of Eliot and his successors. The poem gradually brightens up and towards the end looks forward to a brighter future.

Another kind of mysterious world is created through a sequence of images depicting man's inner life at various stages. The image of mirror contributes to the mystery in calling into question the reality of vision, thus confounding substance with shadow, a favorite theme of Wordsworth as well as Eliot:

"The night sapphire glowing; And a ruttish river
galloping; In a visionary wilderness; And a time
with desire neighing; You're in the mirror; The
mirror in your eyes; Is there a difference; A
concurrence?; Then lend it all that the wind;
Could lend to anarchy; An embrace for embrace;
There's a spell cast on this towering ruin; And
in the icon of lifetime; A life seeks youth; A
necrosis (Shoosha, 1990)"

Enani (1995) comments on the point saying that "the mirror, alternatively rendered as 'reflection's (in 'It is the night') provides the key to the nature of this persona; it is as though the poet is contrasting and equating the two sides of the position". Like life, man himself and his desires should change. He cannot continue without changes. Looking at the mirror from time to time can help in this. The poet gives some images that support his point of view such as that of the passing of 'dawn of doubt' through 'the chart of illusion', the dawn and the night, the river and its waves and the palm tree and its head. The poet elaborates his idea until a point is reached where the image of death reigns supreme:

"The death we here shall find; Is full, complete
and utter; So put on your warmest grab; Before
the winter of life creeps; Into the heart; And into
life the night seeps (Shoosha, 1990)"

At the end of the poem, the speaker refers to the process of time-snatching and reevaluating the situation:

“This is the time to catch time; To unleash the black steeds; Into the heart of wayward desire; And look round you; What you demand is not there about you; And the winner in this race; Is impotent; To whom all words are driven (Shoosha, 1990)”

The poet’s ability to create different but integrated images helps in creating such mysterious worlds. The reader may be perplexed by the many individual images of the poem which lead, at the end of the poem, to create an unexpected climax.

Like any typical romantic poet, Shoosha searches for a meaning that cannot be found beyond the human heart. The speakers of many of his poems hope to find a particular kind of life that depends on unity at different levels. This is how Shoosha puts it:

“I dream of a beach; Where the strand still bears; The footprints of a couple merged into one; A couple of words in a verse (Enani, 1995)”

In another poem, the speaker tries to find the reasons beyond searching for a new life with a new meaning:

“Is it because you’re different; You would not submit to such a callous; Lethargy as does engulf us; And so decided to leave?; Is it because your hands; (Embodied in the vacancy of temptation; And following extremities to possess you); Have preoccupied you; And caused you to fly; In search of the beautiful vision; Of absolute stasis? (Shoosha, 1990)”

It seems that in his search for ‘a harbor’ or ‘a haven’, the speaker does not find what he hopes for:

“I had thought that our desire; Lodged in time measureless; That our intention; Did a saeculum cover; When you gave yourself to the wind; Soon to be swallowed up by the distance; Were you then a stranger; Even though in our midst; And had to mount infinitude; Looking for an alternative? (Shoosha, 1990)”

This is why the speaker tries to find another alternative. He continues his quest for meaning:

“As you soar higher and higher; With ascension revelations; And sun revolutions; Can any one catch up with you?; You’re still absorbed in the elements; Merging though scathed by beauty; And resurrected in the seasons (Shoosha, 1990)”

In another poem, Shoosha may find his resort in a poem where he may find what cannot be found in real life:

“At London’s gate; A poem was waiting for me; A warm, tall poem; Took me arm in arm; Wafted me under a grey sky; From which tepid drops fell; Almost like dew; And so I said to myself; O soul of mine! You won’t feel lonely; Unfamiliar, or lost; You’re supported by an honest arm; Capable of negotiating London fog; And giving the grey a sweet luster; Capable, too, of talking to the trees; In their own language; And distilling the dialogues; In a perfume phial (Shoosha, 1990)”

The speaker creates rather than describes the situation. Projecting his state of mind on adjective realities helps in finding a meaning. In another poem, the speaker says:

“Circles of diffidence; Do not try to cover up; What you take to be scandalous; For everything you do; Is done by everybody else; You’re not the only fugitive; Nor the only one with eyes; Fixed on heaven and hell at once; All others are the same as you may guess; Each one is hollow, split up, false; And wallows in obscene virtues; They work as hard as you; To devour the killed animal; And gain the forbidden pleasures; Who is so chaste? None; And the helpless surrender; To the wisdom of convenience (Shoosha, 1990)”

The speaker dwells on common characteristics shared by all. There is a feeling of unity in these shared common characteristics. Shoosha’s images help in creating a world that is full of paradoxes, essentially modernist such as ‘obscene virtue’s and ‘wisdom of convenience’. The display of such a world shows the extent of the difficulties that the speaker faces in his quest for a real meaning even if it is only in his heart. The excessive expression of feelings by the neo-romantic poets often causes a problem, making it difficult to distinguish the romantic from the modernist elements.

Abdul-Qadir Al-Qitt believes that “The ‘cult of feeling’ of the New poets sometimes leads to the occlusion of the true modern qualities in their poetry”.

Also, there are other poets who have used other varieties of neo-romanticism or what I have called a romantic-modernist blend. Wafaa Wagdey is an example, especially in her use of allegory. There is also Ahmed Suwailam who is fond of the external reality invading man’s senses. He creates as Enani (1995) says, a ‘neo metaphysical’ theme of subject-object relationship”. What occupies the minds of most these poets is their society. This recalls [confirms] what Badawi (1975) said about what concerns the new poets. He says that “the poet thinks of himself as Noah or Christ the Redeemer, Sindbad the explorer, the poet is no longer the passive sufferer but the active savior, the one who performs a heroic act of self-sacrifice to save his people”.

CONCLUSION

There has been a return to romanticism during and post Abdul-Saboor’s era. The landmarks of this return began to be seen clearly in the late verse of Salah Abdul-Saboor through his modernist-romantic amalgam. This was followed by the verse of the Neo-romantics, represented by Farouk Shoosha and Farouk Guwaida. Though their poetry is sometimes tinged with modernism, it is primarily dominated by a romantic spirit.

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