School Theatre Between Enjoyment and the Reinforcement of National Identity
AzzedineDJellaoudji's"Khoyout Al-Fajr" play as a model
Théâtre scolaire entre amusement et renforcement de l'identité nationale.
La pièce "Khoyout Al-Fajr" de Azzedine Jalaouji comme exemple.

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Abstract: School theater holds a distinctive place in the modern educational system. It is a significant medium for engaging students' intellect and emotions, and conveying ideas through its approach that blends enjoyment with learning. This study addresses the lack of scholarly attention paid to the cultural and pedagogical function of school theatre by investigating AzzeddineDJellaoudji's play "Khoyout Al-Fajr" (Threads of Dawn) as a prime model of theatrical work that embodies this integration by combining aesthetic enjoyment with the cultivation of a responsible sense of national identity. Examined through an analytical and descriptive lens that is grounded in pedagogy, the play demonstrates how the play's themes and motifs reveals that the theatrical experience for children has the ability to act as a bridge that relates creativity, moral education, and national consciousness. The study concludes that "Khoyout Al-Fajr"presents a potential tool for children's theatre that significantly relates artistic enjoyment with educational purpose and national values.

Keywords: Enjoyment; Khoyout Al- Fajr; National Identity; School Theatre

Résumé: Le théâtre scolaire joue un rôle essentiel dans l'éducation moderne, car il allie apprentissage et divertissement. Il contribue au développement intellectuel et moral de l'élève, en l'aidant à se découvrir et à s'adapter aux mutations de la société. La pièce "Les fils de l'aube" d'EzzeddineDjelaoudji illustre cette fonction éducative et formatrice du théâtre, mêlant plaisir esthétique et éveil de la conscience nationale.

Mots-clés: amusement; identité nationale; Khoyout Al- Fajr; théâtre scolaire**.**

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INTRODUCTION

Theatre is a strong indicator of a nation's progress due to its capacity for influence. It is not merely entertainment but an effective educational tool for transmitting knowledge, ideas, and all that is beneficial and successful in building the child's personality and identity on the larger scale. If the pleasure of enactment/performance (tashkhīṣ) begins in humans from early childhood and subsequently increases their capacity for creativity and spontaneity when properly guided, then school theatre, as one of the most important cultural and educational mediums combining instruction and entertainment, is the best path for proper guidance in addressing childhood. Consequently, it has assumed a prominent position in the modern school because its lessons do not rely on books but on tangible, embodied movement capable of stimulating the depths of sensation within souls, minds, and emotions.

From this idea arises the central research problem of this article: "School Theatre Between Enjoyment and the Reinforcement of National Identity", from which several key questions branch out:

1- What is the educational and cultural role of school theatre in building the learner's personality?

2- How can school theatre reconcile artistic delight and national formation? How was this convergence (between beauty and the national message) manifested in the play "Threads of Dawn" by AzzedineJlaouji?

In order to answer these questions, this study employs a literary study that relies on descriptive and analytical methods through thematic and subolic motifs that determine how well school theatre instills citizenship values, deepens the sense of belonging, and introduces the nation's heritage that is rooted in history and struggle through the selected play of AzzeddineDJellaoudji's "Khoyout Al-Fajr" (Threads of Dawn).

1. The Concept of School Theatre

It is a type of theatrical activity "that utilizes acting within the educational institution... as a pedagogical technique (to achieve the outlined objectives, whether general or specific" (Soltani, 2018, p. 800). It aims to

instill and solidify values and information in the minds of students, who themselves undertake the enactment/performance of the theatrical production under the teacher's supervision. (Belkhiri, 1999, p. 142). This distinguishes it from Children's Theatre, which is performed by actors(either children or adults) and presented in various venues like theatre halls or places where children gather, such as gardens and schools (Elias & Qassab, 1997, p. 41).Thus, education through theatre is considered an important pedagogical endeavor because it enables the learner to benefit to a degree that surpasses their gains from conventional teaching methods. Furthermore, "it contributes to creating interest in the world of theatre among young people and constitutes a step that is continued in university theatre and amateur theatre", (Elias & Qassab, 1997, p. 499) as children are most capable of immersing themselves in a role, placing themselves within the situation, and even living within the true emotional atmosphere of the artistic work as if they were the protagonists of the play.

1.1Theatre and Childhood Stages

- Early Childhood Stage: (Second childhood, 3 to 6 years)

This stage is characterized by intuitive intelligence, where the child possesses direct knowledge of things without the intervention of reason or logic. Children here do not need their world theatricalized, as they are still connected to home and close relatives; their play is a means to develop motor and perceptual abilities. Nevertheless, plays focusing on movement, the animal world, and puppets can be presented to them (Abu Al-rida, 1993, pp. 31-32).

- Middle Childhood Stage: (Third childhood, 7 to 9 years)

During this stage, the child's ability to concentrate develops, and their attention span gradually lengthens. They can acquire new skills that may become hobbies. Additionally, they are receptive to listening to stories appropriate for their age. (Elias & Qassab, 1997, p. 36)

-Late Childhood Stage: (9 to 12 years)

This stage is an extension of the previous one in terms of varied rates of physical growth and diversifying interests between boys and girls. An inclination towards reading emerges, particularly material connected to their interests at this stage (Belkhiri, 1999, p. 142).

-Adolescence and Youth Stage: (12 to 18 years)

This stage is characterized by diverse changes in both body and mind,

with a strong tendency towards reasoning and logical thinking. Therefore,the youth need theatre that satisfies these inclinations; theatre with humanistic goals and noble values that nurture their ethical sense and help them achieve harmony with their environment, society, and nation.

The students' age is within the childhood range, which makes school theatre a form of children's theatre. This necessitates that the playwright considers the nature of his students by carefully selecting the subject matter and employing appropriate methods, as children recoil from works that exceed their mental capacities. Writing for children is a difficult task, and this difficulty stems from numerous aspects, most notably the simplicity characteristic of children's literature. It is well-known that the literary art, which is simple for the reader, is the most difficult for the writer. Consequently, the following conditions are stipulated for this theatrical genre:

-The use of simple language that children can understand, characterized by a tone of joy and delight.

-Simplicity and clarity of the central idea.

-Infusing the performance style with an element of suspense, which ensures enjoyment.

-The necessity for the subject matter to have an educational dimension that children understand and respond to.

-It is distinguished by color and movement that entertain the learners.

-It emphasizes lofty ideals with educational objectives and incorporates specific information that addresses the mind and is appropriate for the target age group.

-It includes an element of humor to engage the learners' emotions. (Abdulaziz & Badeer, 1993, p. 60)

As a result of these conditions, the writer's responsibility is immense. This, in turn, necessitates an understanding of the child and a comprehensive grasp of the environment they live in to achieve the desired goals.

1-2 Types of School Theatre

a) Educational Theatre:

In its broadest sense, educational school theatre represents that theatrical activity which carries cultural, social, and educationalcharacteristics. It requires the prior preparation of texts to be performed. Its aim is to build religious, social, behavioral, and national values. It is an effective communication medium that influences the formation of the child's attitudes, inclinations, values, and personality

patterns. It contributes toconveying educational ideas and achieving purposeful educational impact, which is what attracts learners to it. Thus, it becomes a means to develop their linguistic abilities, strengthen their problem-solving skills, boost self-confidence, and enhance their social awareness and empathy for others. (Latrouche, 2020, p. 74)

b) **Spontaneous School Theatre:**

This is improvisational theatre that does not rely on written scripts, nor does it require a stage or an audience. Instead, it is based on play, through which the door to imagination and creativity is opened for the child. They write, act, and even direct, with gentle guidance from the teacher. The goal of this improvisational activity is to make children freely perform and choose their own words to express their ideas through play and imagination. Thereby, they assert their identity, their fears dissipate, and their language and performance skills are enhanced. (Latrouche, 2020, p. 74)

c) **Puppet Theatre:**

It is a form of performance that relies on puppets being manipulated by the child. These can be gloving puppets worn by the child or marionettes controlled by transparent strings that aid their movement. Its importance lies in the fact that puppets are often more effective than a human actor because they contain elements that captivate the child's psyche and engage their mind (Elias & Qassab, 1997, p. 210)

d) **Instructional Theatre (Theatre in Education):**

This is a "theatre that simplifies the educational content presented to children according to their age group." (Naim, 2011, p. 20) It is also referred to as "Curriculum-Based Theatre" or "Theatre of the Curriculum." It presents educational material in a purposeful, performative format that helps the child understand. It is considered a method for providing learners with knowledge sources by positivelyintegrating them into the subjects they study within a framework beloved to their hearts, combining acquisition with enjoyment. (Hamed, 1988, p. 52)

This type of theatre is used to present various subjects and curricula in a way that connects the child to their school, due to its positive role in the learning process. In addition to the scenes performed by the children themselves, films and a narrator can also be utilized within it. (Al-Sharouni, 1986, p. 172)

3.1 Elements of School Theatre:

School theatre is founded upon five fundamental and functionally integrated elements, which we outline as follows:

a- Movement: This is "one of the visual components that delineate the aesthetic of the theatrical performance through the kinetic formations it creates… (Elias & Qassab, 1997, p. 169) It either accompanies speech or serves as a substitute for it, possessing its own semantic role in expressing actions, emotions, and reactions." It is intrinsically linked to the actor's body and facial expressions.

b- Expression: Expression is associated with the art of elocution. It is connected to the voice and physical gestures and is "a means of communication between the self and others, also fostering closeness, connection, and affection."(Soltani, 2018, p. 801)

c-Characterization: This is the "individual, duet, or collective performance, based on embodying a role, fully inhabiting it, living within it, and expressing what it conveys. Its tools are elocution, the spoken word, gesture, and movement."(Kanaan , 2011, p. 114)

d- Dialogue: A fundamental element in dramatic writing and one of the overarching goals of education in general, dialogue is based on role-playing and improvisation. Consequently, it serves as a complement to characterization.

e- **Mime (al-Meem / Silent Expression):** This is a self-contained state that carries significances as potent as speech, and often more so.(Kanaan , 2011, p. 114) Its importancestems from being a psychological stimulus that affects mostpeople through observation. It relies on highlightingtheappropriateemotion using facial expressions, dance, and gesture...

1-4 Aims of School Theatre

The importance of school theatre is not different from the importance of theatre in general, as it is a space that offers the spectator sensory pleasure by removing certain psychological and social barriers. It does this by refining the learner's behavior, unleashing creative energies, and allowing them to experiment with the ability to perform, write, or act. Furthermore, it contributes to achieving intellectual pleasure by conveying an idea in an enjoyable and engaging format, given that role-playing has the

deepest and most lasting impact on the child-learner's psyche.

This learner is often required, in one way or another, to comply with and respond to the demands and orders of the teacher, and even members of the educational staff and the institution's pedagogical system in general. The competent learner "is one who has a desire, inclination, and motivation towards learning, is capable of integrating all different subjects, and seeks to apply their knowledge and utilize their education in daily life," characterized by humility and obedience while avoiding arrogance towards knowledge and futile argument.

Ahmed Saqr summarizes the aims of school theatre in the following points: (Saqr)

- It assists students throughout all stages of their studies in achieving sound development and increasing their capacity for expression and public speaking with quick wit and intellectual courage.
- It directs students towards a spirit of cooperation, perseverance in work, and constructive action; this is because the success of theatrical work depends on the concerted efforts of every participant to create an enjoyable and beneficial artistic production.
- It increases students' cultural knowledge in various fields, as school addresses different aspects of life.
- Through school theatre, students learn many skills and life matters they might not find in the standard academic curriculum.
- School theatre enhances students' experience in practical and technical matters as a result of their handling of electrical and sound equipment, and their practice of applying systems, discipline, commitment, and leadership.
- School theatre works to develop students' artistic taste and aesthetic sense, which contributes to their physical and mental nurturing.
- It helps strengthen the connection between the school and the community and offers solutions to many social problems.

2- Threads of Dawn "Khoyout Al-Fajr" byAzzedineDjellaoudji: Between Dramatic Pleasure and the National Message

AzzedineDjellaoudji is considered one of those authors who ventured into writing for children in the final years of the last century (1984-1990). He wrote "Forty Plays for Children," motivated, by his own

account, by "the high demand... from teachers and professors across all educational levels, as well as educators and theatre animators in cultural centers" (Azzedine, 2008, p. 05). Proceeding from the principle that children's theatre is generally among the most important creative productions reflecting an awareness of the importance of culture and its representation through its aesthetic and educational values that contribute to guiding a child's behavior, his play "Threads of Dawn" "Khoyout Al-Fajr" emerges within this endeavor as a living model for how to employ the theatrical art within the school environment to serve national identity.

The play derives its material from the glorious national history, with its educational dimensions and a nationalistic framework, within an exciting plot devoid of dry, direct discourse. Indeed, it transfers the audience to the era of the founding of the Association of Algerian Muslim Scholars.
This institution contributed significantly to the reformist and social transformation witnessed by Algerian society during its most dire historical circumstances and played a major role in sowing the seeds of militant consciousness among all strata of society.

Through its various religious institutions; mosques, *Zaouya* (Sufi lodges), and cultural clubs, it had a tremendous impact on resisting French colonialism and its attempts to erase the Algerian identity. Its primary weapon was education; through it, the Association succeeded in creating a new generation, conscious of the components of its identity and believing in its right to freedom. This was the generation that would later take up the arms of the revolution and lead it to victory.

The play "Threads of Dawn" unfolds in five scenes. The first alludes to the historical context of the Association's birth, following the suppression of most armed popular revolts led by prominent figures such as Emir Abdelkader, Ahmed Bey, LallaFatmaN'Soumer, El Mokrani, Bouamama, and others. This marked a continuation of the national struggle but through a new method: intellectual, religious, and cultural resistance, serving as an alternative to armed struggle at that stage. It sought to protect the nation's fundamentals, paving the way for the eventual launch of the liberation revolution, especially after the political parties of the time had proven incapable of achieving national aspirations. This is revealed in the dialogue between friends Ali, Mohamed, and Karim in a popular café in the city of

Constantine:
"Karim addressing Mohamed: Tell us of the burdens that weigh heavy on your shoulders, that we may share them.
Mohamed: As if you two do not feel the nation's wound, widening day by day.
Ali: And is there anyone on earth who does not feel this great calamity?
Karim: No, my friend, do not let despair seep into your soul.
Mohamed: is there anything that gives cause for hope?
Ali: This land that gave birth to the Emir Abdelkader, to Bouamama, to LallaFatma cannot die. Kam: It is rather like a volcano, dormant for a time, regaining its strength, then erupting, and its judgment is decisive.
Mohamed: But I have not seen this decisive judgment... For many long years we have heard of no revolution or resistance. Everything has been extinguished, we have knelt before our enemies, and I see only that we are lost and our land is lost...
Ali: If armed resistance has been extinguished, the resistance of the word has ignited.
Mohamed: (Scoffing) You speak to me of those deluded parties, skilled only in pompous speeches and ornate words!" (Azzedine, 2008, pp. 21-22)
To clarify the Association's role in this sensitive juncture of Algeria's history, the writer leaned on its scholars and assigned them heroic roles in the play, aiming to deepen national consciousness.
"Abdelhamid: We must teach the nation, reform its religion and its language, acquaint it with itself and its history, and instill within it a spirit of elevation. For if it knows these things, it will refuse to submit to a foreigner...
Mohamed: So, you want to prepare the people for revolution through their upbringing and education?
Elibrahimi: Precisely" (Azzedine, 2008, p. 23).
In the second scene, Djellaoudji announces the establishment of the Association at a time when deviations, heresies, and fractures were rampant in the cultural milieu:
"In one of the Association's clubs, the young men from before appear.

Mohamed: (Joyfully) The years pass, and lo, the Association of Scholars has become like a blessed tree, its roots firm and its branches reaching the sky, yielding its fruit every season by its Lord's leave.

Ali: (Emphatically) Schools radiating light... Knights spreading guidance... Minarets proclaiming the call to Truth... Magazines enlightening the people... And victory is near... Victory is near" (Azzedine, 2008, p. 23) .

The author presents the Association in a sanctified light, likening it to the blessed tree mentioned in the Holy Quran. Through this simile, the audience can grasp those enlightened reformist ideas that the Association worked to entrench in society. The writer's scenic amalgamation into a single image (schools radiating light, they spread guidance, minarets proclaim the call to Truth) is an expression that contributed to the symbolic framing of the Association and deepening its role in the national struggle by connecting the people to their revolution, rallying their resolve for the sake of their freedom, and moving them beyond the traditional pattern of solely bearing arms to possessing both arms and the word.

Amidst this new situation, brimming with meanings of identity and belonging, France sensed the danger threatening its entity and resorted to sowing discord among the components of Algerian society, particularly the Jewish minority. This group had been part of Algeria's social fabric with its own economic and cultural dynamism. The writer points to some episodes of conflict between Algerian Muslims and Jews, perhaps the most notable being what was historically known as the "Rahbat al-Souf" sedition in Constantine, which IbnBadis addressed with great wisdom, warning his followers that it was among the colonizer's plots to strike the Association and eliminate it.

"Karim: I left a violent quarrel in Rahbat al-Souf between Muslims and Jews.

Ali: (Angrily) The vipers are back... God's curse upon them, they keep neither covenant nor pledge.

Karim: This time the Muslims lost their patience; they fell upon the Jewish shops, burned them, and killed more than twenty Jews.

Mohamed: They deserve nothing from us but death, ever since they saw the

Association of Scholars knocking at their doors, and resentment wrings their hearts" (Azzedine, 2008, pp. 23-24).

The policy pursued by Algeria's Jews; their voluntary submission to the French occupier and their renunciation of the deep-rooted history shared with the Algerian people since the Ottoman era characterized by peaceful coexistence, ultimately led them to ally with France. France co-opted them to its advantage, considering them an existential and authoritative partner in Algeria, bringing them close to its administrations, governance, councils, and conferences. France entrusted them with the mission of assassinating IbnBadis, a mission that failed before the faith in the justice and truth of the Algerian cause:

"The Jew: (Obsequiously) Sincere greetings to you, sir, Commander. The Commander:(Angrily) Your plot has failed.

The Jew: But sir...

The Commander: (Angrily) But what? You were defeated by a weak man with no power or strength" (Azzedine, 2008, p. 24).

Faced with the Jews' failure to achieve this aim and the Association's national expansion within Algerian circles, France felt its entity was under threat. It thus turned to the Tariqa followers (Sufi orders) to achieve its vile goals, exploiting their disagreement with the Association over the methodology of reform work in Algeria; a situation Jlaouji embodied in the third and fourth scenes in an engaging theatrical guise:

The Commander: You are useless. We will assign the matter to the men of the Tariqa... They are our loyal men, and their influence on the people is strong.

"TheJew:Soundjudgment,sir.

The Sheikh: (Entering) Loyalty to my lord the Commander and to great France.

TheCommander:(Welcominghim)Welcome,Sheikh.Welcome…

TheJew:His lordshiptheCommanderwasjusttelling meof yourgreatness and your barakat.

The Sheikh: And we are the servants of France" (Azzedine, 2008, p. 25).

Through this theatrical scene, the threads of integration with the 'Other' emerge through the character of the Tariqi. This historical evocation of the character serves to reinforce the idea of identity naturalization that afflicted the Algerian individual's entity during a sensitive historical phase of the national struggle, carrying many national messages.

France worked diligently, alongside fierce military campaigns, to understand the structure of Algerian society and implant French culture through subtle means. The most famous of these was recruiting some Sufi orders and some of their sheikhs, due to their significant influence on the Algerian people and the cultural role they enjoyed in the religious sphere, to achieve what the Jews had failed to do:

"Scene Four: Two Tariqis in a street in Constantine where darkness is thick.
First Tariqi: We'll hide here... This is the street he passes through... Be brave... Strike him on the head, and if he falls, plunge your dagger into his chest.
Second Tariqi: (Fearfully) And where will you be? Don't you dare run away.
First: (Angrily) Why would I run? Do you accuse me of cowardice and fear?
Second: (Fearfully) Don't you dare run and leave me alone.
First: (Reassuringly) I told you, fear nothing... Here he comes, hide... hide... (They hide... Abdelhamid passes by, the Tariqi jumps out at him, strikes him on the shoulder, he falls and lets out a cry).
First: I will eat your heart, O formidable enemy." (Azzedine, 2008, p. 26)

The scene carried multiple images, including the dangers of collision between sons of the same nation and their rejection of each other—a policy France employed, and still does, to create an Algerian individual with a hidden face, hostile to and rejecting his own identity. Through this dialogue, the writer alerts the youth, as future men, to the dangers and repercussions of internal conflict that weakens national unity by fragmenting the societal fabric, undermining the sense of belonging to the homeland, and fueling feelings of bigotry and hatred among different groups, leading to destabilization and threatening the safety and security of society, and undermining its structures.

In the fifth and final scene, Djellaoudji transports us to a tragic dramatic moment: the death of the eminent scholar AbdelhamidIbnBadis. It is a

moment filled with many national lessons and messages, incorporating an introduction for the youth to the landmarks of the reform activity that occupied a vast part of Imam IbnBadis's life. This activity was, in truth, nothing but a prelude and preparation of souls for embarking on the resistance and reclaiming stolen freedom—a program entirely geared towards preparing for revolution against colonialism. As stated in a famous segment from one of his poems:

ThepeopleofAlgeriaareMuslim And
to Arabism they belong.
Whoeversaystheyhavestrayedfromtheirorigin, Or
says they have died, has told a lie.
Oyouth!Youareourhope,
Andthroughyouthemornhasdrawnnear. Take
for life its weapon,
Andfacecalamities,donotfear (Azzedine, 2008, p. 28).

This program, which shook the foundations of France and undermined its confidence, is revealed by the French commander through the dialogue between him and some Jews and collaborators:

"The Commander:
(Angrily) And we have failed again... and we will failforever**...**
for eternity.
The Jew: Do not be angry, sir.
The Commander: How do you expect me not to be angry, how...? We see a weak man threatening the glory and greatness of France and we can do nothing.
The Jew: But we will act.
The Commander: What will we do? Schools... Mosques... Newspapers... Poets... Writers... Orators... All the people have awakened after a century of deep slumber.
The Sheikh: IbnBadis is dead... IbnBadis is dead.
The Commander: (Mockingly) IbnBadis is dead? And is this something to make you happy?? Do you think IbnBadis is one man? IbnBadis is this people who have awakened... IbnBadis is these ideas he planted in hearts

and minds" (Azzedine, 2008, p. 27).

IbnBadis lived for the idea and the principle, and died proclaiming, "And if I perish, my cause lives on: Long live Algeria!" His life is proof that the power of ideas is greater than the lifetimes of men. His departure did not extinguish his light; rather, it illuminated the path of liberation and renaissance. And thus, history remains a witness: men may depart, but the message endures as long as the nation carries it and lives by it.

Conclusion:

School theatre is an effective educational medium that combines instruction and entertainment, contributing to building the learner's personality and enhancing their national identity. Through the analysis of the play "Threads of Dawn" by AzzeddineDjelllaoudji, it is evident that school theatre can successfully reconcile artistic enjoyment and national values, presenting history in an engaging theatrical form that instills in children a sense of pride in their identity and national belonging

Recommendations

To address the issues identified in this study, it is recommended to encourage the production of more theatrical works that combine artistic enjoyment and the reinforcement of national identity. In this spirit, incorporation of school theatre into educational curricula as an effective tool for teaching national history and values is highlighted. Guidance would be enacted through training teachers and educational supervisors on howto employ school

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