

The philosophy of Greek mythology in modern Arab theater

Tawfiq al-Hakim's theater as a model

فلسفة الأساطير اليونانية في المسرح العربي الحديث

مسرح توفيق الحكيم أنموذجا

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Abstract:

This research aims to shed light on the use of Greek myths in Arab theater in general, and in Tawfiq al-Hakim's theater in particular, and to attempt to understand the symbols and evidence of myth, which can be projected onto reality in order to provide a critical vision of life and society.

Among the results reached, we find: In myth, truth is mixed with imagination. The myth contributed to the emergence of theater as an independent art. Tawfiq Al-Hakim was inspired by the myth for theatrical works in which he addressed several cultural, artistic, and philosophical issues. The play "Pygmalion" is characterized by imagination.

Keywords: The Myth, theater, Arab theatre, Tawfiq al-Hakim, the play Pygmalion .

ملخص:

يهدف هذا البحث إلى تسليط الضوء على توظيف الأساطير اليونانية في المسرح العربي عامة، وفي مسرح توفيق الحكيم خاصة، ومحاولة فهم رموز الأسطورة ودلائلها، والتي يمكن إسقاطها على الواقع من أجل تقديم رؤية نقدية للحياة والمجتمع.

ومن النتائج المتوصل إليها، نجد: في الأسطورة تمتزج الحقيقة بالخيال، ساهمت الأسطورة في ظهور المسرح كفن مستقل، استلهم توفيق الحكيم من الأسطورة أعمالا مسرحية تناول فيها عدة قضايا حضارية وفنية وفلسفية، تتميز مسرحية " بجماليون " بالخيال والعمق.

كلمات مفتاحية: الأسطورة، المسرح، المسرح العربي، توفيق الحكيم، مسرحية بجماليون.

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1. Introduction

The Theater is considered the father of the arts. Because it combines several arts, including: acting, singing, dancing, and poetry. Theater includes a literary text placed in a tragic or comedic form, or a combination of both, and is embodied in reality by a group of actors who participate in one common work to be presented on stage.

Among the tools that theater has employed since its inception: myth, in which truth is mixed with imagination, and allows the human mind to enter the world of myth, full of supernatural events. On the other hand, the myth contributed to the emergence of theater as an independent art, as the latter was inspired by rituals and beliefs - which were practiced by ancient people - artistic topics with supernatural events that the mind cannot believe or accept, but which achieve literary pleasure for the recipients.

Tawfiq al-Hakim was one of those who were inspired by the myth in theatrical works in which he dealt with several cultural, artistic, and philosophical issues, including: plays inspired by ancient Greek myths, such as: "Oedipus the King," "Pygmalion," and "Praxa, or the Problem of Governance," and from the East, tales of a thousand. One Night and One Night in the play "Scheherazade," and the religious stories in "The People of the Cave," "Suleiman the Wise," and "Isis" from the era of the Pharaohs.

The play Pygmalion is characterized by imagination and depth, full of symbols and evidence that can be projected onto reality in order to present a critical vision of life and society. Tawfiq al-Hakim was able to employ myth for philosophical issues, the most important of which is representing the conflict between art and life.

If we want to investigate the use of myth in modern Arab theater in general and in Tawfiq al-Hakim's theater in particular, we pose the following problem: How did Tawfiq al-Hakim employ the myth of Pygmalion in his theater? This problem includes a number of questions, including: What is meant by myth and theater? What are the types of myth and what are their characteristics? What are the mythological and symbolic

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dimensions in the play Pygmalion? Is the goal of the play Pygmalion to highlight the conflict between art and life?

This research aims to shed light on the use of Greek myth in Arab theater in general, and in Tawfiq al-Hakim's theater in particular, and to try to understand the symbols and evidence of the myth, which can be projected onto reality in order to provide a critical vision of life And society. As for the research methodology, I chose the descriptive and analytical method. Because I intended to describe the terms and concepts used in the research.

2. The Myth and the theater

2.1 Definition of myth and the theater

A - Definition of myth

The legend of the two Greeks is known as the term "mythology" and this term is divided into two parts of "mythos" meaning: legend, hadith or myth, and 'Logos' in the sense of: saying, statement or hadith, and when we collect the two sections we mean with it Fantasy stories. This term is also called the group of myths (mythology) that is concerned with the study and interpretation of myths. It also indicates a group of myths of a people, such as Egyptian mythology, Phoenician, Greek and others. (Al-Kilani, 2010-2011, p: 18)

The Myth among the Arabs: It is a collection of stories and tales that children inherited from their parents, generation after generation. The source is unknown - that is, its author is often unknown. The supernatural is mixed with facts in the myth, and imagination is the master of the situation in it, so many heroes participate in it, such as Gods, demigods, powerful heroes, talking animals, and more. (Studies and Research Department of the Social Cultural Renewal Society, 2009, p: 25-26)

B - Definition of theater

The theater is one of the forms of human intellectual activity that is specific to expressing human feelings, motives, relationships, history, values, inclinations, and the wills of its individuals as private selves... Theater is an expressive creativity presented in a state of present performance to recipients who are present in body, mind, and feelings.

(salam, 1993, p: 19)

2.2 Types of myth and their features

A - Types of myth

The Myth is not one type, and varies from one world of mythology to another, and we can mention the most important of them:

1 – The Ritual myth: which is linked to the rituals of worship practiced by primitive society, such as rites of passage within a framework that outlines the steps that should be followed for a boy to emerge from childhood to youth. (Zaki, 1967, p: 43). This type of ritual mythology has appeared in all times and places in which man has lived, whether he is a pagan in faith, a changer of revelation, or a distortion of the Book. (Ghaloush, nd, p: 14)

2 – The Explanatory myth: It is through which a person tries to explain or explain a phenomenon that attracts his attention, and when he does not find an explanation for it, he creates a legendary story that explains the secret of the existence of that phenomenon. The explanatory myth enabled the priests to control the minds of the Greeks with myth. (Ghaloush, nd, p: 14-15)

3 – The Symbolic myth: which uses symbols, in which ambiguity and concealment abound, and which appears complex in composition and understanding, and expresses in a metaphorical way a religious or cosmic idea. (Ghaloush, nd, p: 16)

4 – The Historical myth: which is mixed with history, as it is: history and myth. In historical myth, the hero must be a priest, whether he has the rank of a saint or a shepherd. This legend includes historical elements and elements of supernatural heroism that take the framework of the story. (Ghaloush, nd, p: 17)

5 - The Genesis Myth: It is concerned with the process of creating the universe by contemplating the system of the universe and trying to explain it. This contemplative view made man search into the most mysterious and difficult issues. He looked at the universe and wondered how it happened, and discussed the beginning of life and the stages it went through, and how it was. Then it was completed until it took the form of a human, animal and

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plant. (Ben Mansour, 2014-2015, p: 39)

6 - The civilizational myth: It is the one that reveals man's struggle with life due to his insistence on moving from the natural stage to the civilized stage. A person who has been preoccupied with the system of the universe for a period of time has not neglected to think about himself and the function of his existence on earth, and his thinking has guided him to have a system for his life similar to the system of the universe. (Ben Mansour, 2014-2015, p: 39)

7 – The Educational myth: which carries contents with educational purposes. Myths were a means used by the first humans because of the sacred nature they possess and qualities that help their listeners to believe them and interact with them. (Studies and Research Department of the Social Cultural Renewal Society, 2009, p: 51)

8 - The preaching myth: whose topic revolves around urging the building of values, wisdom, and commitment, and establishing a healthy relationship between man and his Creator, and warns against the consequences of rebellion against him, disobedience, or disputing his abilities. (Studies and Research Department of the Social Cultural Renewal Society, 2009, p: 60)

9 - The myth of the deified hero: It depicts to us a hero trying to reach the meanings of the gods, but his human qualities pull him to the earthly world. The hero here is a human and a god at the same time, and he must not exceed his limits in the struggle with the gods, and if he exceeds his limits, eternal damnation will fall upon him. (Shekshak, 2008- 2009, p: 32)

10 - The myth of the good guys: It talks about a person doing good and altruism, as he prefers others over himself in the service of virtue and heroism at the same time. (Shekshak, 2008- 2009, p: 33)

11 - The Myth of the Bad Guys: It is the opposite of the myth of the good guys. It talks about the bad guys who challenge the universe in order to satisfy their whims and satisfy their material desires. This myth is told at the beginning of winter. To make the recipient feel afraid. (Shekshak, 2008- 2009, p: 34)

B - Features of the legend

The legend is characterized by several features, including:

- In terms of form, a myth is a story, governed by the basics of storytelling (characters, plot, complex), and the myth is in a poetic form that helps it be recited on ritual occasions and holidays.

- The mythical text maintains its stability over long periods of time.

- No The myth has a specific author. It is not the product of an individual's imagination, but rather a collective phenomenon that shares imagination, emotions, and contemplations.

- The main roles in the myth are played by the gods and demigods. If a person appears on the scene of events, his appearance A complement, not a main one.

- The themes of the myth are characterized by dialectic and comprehensiveness, such as: formation, death, the meaning of life, the secret of existence, and the other world.

- The events of the myth take place in a sacred time other than the present time.

- The myth is linked to a specific religious system, and works to Clarifying his beliefs and entering into his rituals.

- Legend has great sanctity and power over people's minds and souls. The power that myth enjoyed in the past is only matched by the power of science in the modern era. (Al-Sawah, 2001, p : 12-14)

3. Employing myth in the play Pygmalion by Tawfiq al-Hakim

3.1 Introduction to the play Pygmalion:

The play Pygmalion by Tawfiq al-Hakim, a mental play (in which a mental event is difficult to represent theatrically), was intended to highlight the idea of the conflict between art and life, and to embody it in order for the reader to realize the conflict that the artist is experiencing. Art and life are in a constant, never-ending conflict, as their strength Equal and their importance is equal.

The story of "Pygmalion" is based on a Greek myth, and perhaps the first to reveal its beauty by Tawfiq al-Hakim was the oil painting

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“Pygmalion” and “Galatea.” Painted by the artist Jean Raux, displayed in the Louvre Museum. (El hakim, nd, p : 16)

Tawfiq al-Hakim divided the play “Pygmalion” into 4 chapters, and the events of the play take place in one scene, which is a foyer in the “Pygmalion” house, and the most important thing in it is a large window that reveals a forest with strange trees and flowers behind it, then a door leading outside, and another leading to Into the house, and in one corner there was a white silk curtain. This view is constant throughout the four seasons. (El hakim, nd, p : 19)

As for the characters, they are as follows:

- Pygmalion: She is the main character. He is a sculptor, and he refrained from approaching women because of the bad morals he met.

- Galatea: The statue that the hero Pygmalion carved from ivory, of overwhelming beauty, and which at the end of the play turned into a woman with a soul for the hero to marry. Pygmalion.

- Venus: The god of beauty and love, and she is responsible for breathing life into the statue that Pygmalion sculpted.

- Narcissus: He is in the position of a friend or The son of the hero Pygmalion, who was devoted to his upbringing and upbringing.

- Apollon: Goddess of wisdom, strictness, reason and art.

- Ismene: Narcissus' wife, representing a symbol of a wise and well-behaved woman.

- The Chorus: A group of beautiful dancing women, numbering 09, and their role is to show the features of Characters. (El hakim, nd, p : 21-59)

3.2 Employing myth in the play Pygmalion

Tawfiq Al-Hakim used the myth symbolically and tried to find many explanations for the philosophical meanings associated with the conflict between art and life. Among the myths that the writer employed:

1 - The Myth of Narcissus:

The myth of Narcissus in ancient Greek mythology refers to a handsome young man in his prime who is loved by beautiful girls. But he did not meet them with love and admiration, because he was arrogant and

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admired himself, and one day he passed by a river to drink from it, and he saw his face on the surface of the water. He admired his face and fell in love with himself, so the gods punished him by falling into the river, and a narcissus flower grew in its place. As for the play *Pygmalion* by Tawfiq al-Hakim, he used the myth of Narcissus by making him a guard guarding the statue of Galatea, which he fled with after it came to life, and he betrayed the friend of the hero *Pygmalion*, who was like his father. (Mandour, 2020, 60-62)

2 - The Myth of Venus:

“Aphrodite” is called the Roman goddess of beauty and love. Tawfiq Al-Hakim used the Myth of Venus to fulfill the wish of the hero “*Pygmalion*”, which is to breathe the soul into the statue he carved, which is Galatea, and who became his wife after he fell in love with her. Here begins the stage of conflict between the human side, which is represented by the hero *Pygmalion*, and the side of the gods, which is represented by the goddess of beauty and love, Venus. The scene ends with Venus ruining the life of the hero *Pygmalion*, and destroying the places of beauty in his fantasies. (El hakim, nd, p : 29-59)

3 - The Myth of Apollon:

Apollon is the Greek god of wisdom (Tilouine, 2011, p: 68), strictness, and reason. It was used by Tawfiq al-Hakim as a symbol of the gods of art, who did not want to turn the statue of Galatea into a human being with a soul, because he wanted to preserve it as an immortal work of art. The struggle continues between the gods of art, Apollon, and the goddess of beauty and love, Venus, until the latter triumphs and decides the artistic death of the hero *Pygmalion*, and the elimination of his art and creativity. (El hakim, nd, p : 34-59)

4 - The Myth of Ismene:

Ismene, wife of Narcissus, represents a symbol of a wise woman who behaves well and offers others her wisdom and advice. She was known in ancient Greek literature for nobility and wisdom. In the play (Mandour, 2020, 60-61) , she seems keen to understand what is happening, in order to offer her assistance to Narcissus, who fled with Galatea, and she gave him

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advice after he lost the trust of the hero Pygmalion, but Narcissus was living in a struggle of remorse and remorse for what he had done and his betrayal of the hero Pygmalion. (El hakim, nd, p : 24-33)

Examples of texts from the play "Pygmalion":

Tawfiq al-Hakim portrays some of the play's characters as in myths, with their beauty and foolishness, like what he did with the character "Narcissus" in the following dialogue:

- Ismene: His delicate nose cannot tolerate the smell of smoke, and his delicate temperament cannot bear the sight of blood

- Chorus: (To Narcissus): Tonight you are ours, so choose from among us...

- Ismene: He does not choose... Are you sure it is Narcissus?... He is accustomed to seeing beautiful women carrying his love, just as vine trees carry clusters...

- Narcissus: I cannot go with you... Don't you see that I am busy for you?... Can I? Should I leave her alone? (He turns to the curtain)

- Chorus: Who is she?...Who is she?

Narcissus: His wife....

Chorus: (with laughter): You are a fool

- Ismene: Have you forgotten that he resembles the Narcissus of mythology?...He has his beauty and his foolishness...But he is not his..(For Narcissus) Is he also released? You have this name." (El hakim, nd, p : 24-25)

Tawfiq al-Hakim describes the character of "Pygmalion," and highlights his suffering and torment with his wife, "Galatea," whom he saw as an ordinary woman when she did housework. She was no longer the ideal woman in his mind, and when they separated, his struggle and torment increased. Because he was accustomed to it, and every night, he would go out to a hut next to Ghadeer, where his wife, Galatea, used to go, and he would face the frost of the forest, until he was struck by a cold, and he refused to stay in bed, to finally surrender to death, and this surrender was like a slow suicide, as in the dialogue. The following:

- Pygmalion: (looking around in distress) Ugh... I'm tired of this place

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- Narcissus: It's not good for you to leave your bed so quickly when the night is cold and the wind is shaking the trees warning of a storm ...You need peaceful sleep and a warm blanket to move toward recovery

- Pygmalion: Why are you addressing me as if I were sick?

- Narcissus: Have you been like that for days?

- Pygmalion: What a fool you are

Narcissus: I am no longer a fool... I went too far Going out at night,
Pygmalion

- Pygmalion: Did I not forbid you to interfere in my affairs?

- Narcissus: Trust that nothing concerns me now about your affairs except your health. (El hakim, nd, p : 132)

Tawfiq Al-Hakim used the myth of “Venus” (the Greek goddess of love) and the myth of “Apollon” (the Greek god of thought and art) to show the intensity of the conflict existing in the play between love and art. If the character of “Narcissus” helped to show some aspects of the character of Pygmalion,” Tawfiq al-Hakim made the characters “Venus” and “Apollon” the center of a cosmic conflict between them, and their vision of man overcoming them and challenging them despite their supernatural powers, as in the dialogue The following:

- Venus: I can hardly believe that this work comes out of mortal fingers...

- Apollon: These are humans, Venus. They are distinguished from us, the gods. This distinction in their energy sometimes transcends themselves... As for us, we cannot transcend ourselves. ...the power of art or the faculty of creation among these people is sometimes capable of creating beautiful creatures whose likes we, the gods, cannot bring forth and keep up with them...because they are free in transcendence and we are imprisoned. (El hakim, nd, p : 35-36)

Tawfiq al-Hakim was able, through the character of “Pygmalion,” to define his position on art and life, and he cannot mix them. “Pygmalion” loves the statue “Galatea” because through it he expresses his ability to create and innovate, and he loves “Galatea” the human being because he is accustomed to it and cannot To live alone without her, and this conflict was

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highlighted in the words of the character "Apollon" while he was interviewing "Venus" when she asked him to return the statue of "Galatea" as a human for the second time. But Apollon believed that what had happened previously would be repeated again. Pygmalion would go to Galatea, the human, but soon he would see her as less beautiful and perfect than Galatea, the statue. He would return to demand that they return her, as in the following dialogue:

- Venus: Don't you think we should do something for him?...

- Apollon: Wow... It seems that the sight of a man crying is something that moves every heart of a woman... and a goddess..

- Venus: Not It is a shame for me to have a heart that is affected...

- Apollon: Too quickly?...

- Venus: What do you think, Apollon, if we breathed life into his statue, and gave him his wife again?

Apollon: Do you know what would happen if we did that? ?..

Venus: What?...

- Apollon: Same as what happened the first time... He approaches the living Galatea, admiring her at first... Then he soon sees her less beautiful and perfect than the ivory Galatea... So he demands that we return her as she was shouting in our faces with the most insulting words... and so on. And so on, he will not be able to make a decision... and he will not be reassured... because neither the beauty of life satisfies him nor is the beauty of art enough for him... and he will not stop pursuing beauty and perfection in various situations and images. And various forms and circumstances." (El hakim, nd, p : 151-152)

The conflicts in the play "Pygmalion" were numerous and intertwined, and did not only include human beings (Narcissus and Ismene), but even included the gods (Venus: the goddess of love, and Apollon: the god of thought and art). This conflict increased the suggestion of beauty. The statue of Galatea, and the artistic ability of Pygmalion; that made two gods marvel at it, was at the same time a challenge, as Apollon points out, that man is by nature not satisfied with either reality or... In the highest ideal, life and art are nothing but two systems that attract a person and mutually

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influence his life, and a person needs them both.

4. Conclusion

Since ancient times, myth has been considered a source of inspiration for many poets and writers. It is rich in topics that have preoccupied mankind for ages. Poets and writers have tried to cast it in a creative, artistic literary form. They aspired to use it to entertain the receiving audience artistically and address philosophical and civilizational issues culturally.

Among the writers The Arabs who employed the legend artistically and culturally, the writer Tawfiq al-Hakim, who combined Arab and Western culture, and through it he tried to address philosophical issues. Artistic and cultural, relying on the legendary symbol and the moral and sensory connotations it carries.

As for the results reached, we find:

- The Myth: It is a group of stories and tales that children have inherited from their parents, generation after generation. The source is unknown. The supernatural is mixed with facts in the myth, and imagination is the master of the situation in it. Many heroes participate in it, such as gods, demigods, powerful heroes, talking animals, and so on. .

- The legend contributed to the emergence of theater as an independent art.

- Tawfiq al-Hakim was inspired by the legend in theatrical works in which he addressed several cultural, artistic, and philosophical issues.

- The play is distinguished by “ Pygmalion “with imagination and depth, full of symbols and evidence, which can be projected onto reality in order to present a critical vision of life and society.

- Tawfiq al-Hakim was able to employ myth for philosophical issues, the most important of which is representing the conflict between art and life.

- The Myth has many types, including: the myth of formation, the ritual myth, the explanatory, the symbolic, the historical, the cultural, the educational, the preaching, the myth of the deified hero, and the myth of the

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good guys and the bad guys.

Among the features of the myth: it is in a poetic form, it maintains the stability of the mythical text, the myth does not have a single author, the main roles in the myth are played by gods and demigods, the themes of the myth are characterized by dialectic and comprehensiveness, the events of the myth take place in a sacred time other than the present time, the myth is linked With a specific religious system, and works to clarify its beliefs, myth has great sanctity and authority over people's minds and souls.

- The play Pygmalion by Tawfiq al-Hakim, a mental play (in which a mental event is difficult to represent theatrically), the aim of which was to highlight the idea of the conflict between art and life.

- Tawfiq al-Hakim divided the play "Pygmalion" into 4 chapters, and the events of the play take place in one scene, which is a foyer in the "Pygmalion" house.

As for the proposals, they are as follows:

- Establishing a cultural institution bearing the name of Tawfiq al-Hakim, concerned with printing and publishing his works.

- Holding periodic forums on Tawfiq al-Hakim and his works every year or two.

- Encouraging researchers and students at all levels. Educational studies on studying the works of Tawfiq al-Hakim in their university dissertations and dissertations.

- Activating radio and television sessions on the personality of Tawfiq al-Hakim.

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