CHAPTER-II

Impact of Diwan Movement in Modern Arabic literature

2.1. Impact of Diwan Movement

The impact of Diwan movement in modern Arabic literature by Diwan groups, the three Egyptian trio-poets, Shukri, Mazini and Al-Aqqad, they were critics, poets, novelists, journalists, short story writers and prose writers of Diwan Movement. They criticized poetry of neo-classists in their Diwan in Modern Arabic literature. Although in their writings about poetry they expressed impatience with the restrictions imposed by the classical structure of poetic form, on the whole their voice was balanced and restrained, leaving the credence of certain significant areas of their poetry to point the way to future development. A very different impact was made by three Egyptian poets of a slightly younger generation, Shukri (1886-1958), Al-Mazini (1890-1949), and Al-Aqqad (1889-1964). They rose to literary prominence during the second decade of 20th century at a time when crucial transitions were taking place in the political and cultural life in Egypt. The impact of Diwan poets, they were typically representatives of the new Egyptians who came into their own after the First World War as citizens of the new nation state. Both Shukri and Mazini were products of the secular schools that had been established in Egypt in the late nineteenth century, and both were graduates of the Teacher's Training College in Cairo. Al-Aqqad, a native Aswan, he did not complete secondary school, but he came to Cairo and began to make his living as a journalist and school teacher. After the War he and Al-Mazini became full time journalists and writers, and were active supporters of the Wafd party.[158] Shukri's career was somewhat different; he spent the period 1909-1912 in England at Sheffield University, and on his return to Egypt he

[158] Badawi. M. M, Modern Arabic literature. P-88

remained in the service of the Ministry of education until his retirement in 1944, without ever involving himself in public life in the manner of Al-Mazini and al-Aqqad. In confessions Shukri records the impact of such change on a man of sensibility. Shukri's hypersensitivity, coupled with his vivid imagination and a tendency towards self dramatization remain salient features of his poetry.[159]

Al- Mazini was the critic of Diwan movement in modern Arabic literature, he was little influenced by French culture and thought. Rather in his writings reveal the impact of Diwan Movement, to English literature and thought, with which he, like many other Egyptian writers was more familiar with poetry and criticism. From 1909-1914 he taught English translations at the Nasiriyya Teacher's school. His translations of several masterpieces of English literature, as well as mark Twain's 'innocents abroad', attest to his proficiency in English. Al-Mazini began his literary career as a poet, publishing most of his work in the daily newspaper al-Dustur (The constitution), owed by Muhammad Farid Wajdi. Eventually he leaving the teaching profession, he devoted all his time to writing and journalism until his death in 1944. Al-Mazini's writings reflect his home life, environment and physical condition. He was a complex person whose unpredictable sentiments greatly impacted his writings. Al-Mazini's psyche was especially impacted because the house stood next to a cemetery, through which he had to pass on his way in or out.[160]

The impact of Diwan poets, all three poets took it upon themselves to inaugurate a new departure, deeply influenced by English lyrical poetry.[161] They became passionate advocates of the romantic imagination in Arabic verse, and attacked loudly and bitterly the type of work written by the neo-

[159] Badawi,M.M, A critical introduction to modern Arabic poetry. P-94
[160] Mossa Matti, origins of Modern Arabic fiction. P-325-326
[161] Badawi. M. M, Modern Arabic literature. P-89

classical poets, especially the master practitioners of that style, Ahmad Shawqi. The book that gives them their name as groups is 'The Diwan a book on criticism and literature' (Al-Diwan kitab fi'l-Naqd wa'l-Adab), published in two volumes in Cairo in 1921, although by that date a bitter quarrel had arisen between Shukri and Al-Mazini so the book appeared only under the joint authorship of al-Aqqad and al-Mazini. Al- Aqqad led the attack on Ahmad Shawqi, the figurehead of the generation of neo-classical poets which he and his colleagues were determined to discredit. His most frequent method of attacking Shawqi was to take lines at random and without making any allowance for Shawqi's use of conceit or poetic license, he would force the lines to literal interpretations never intended by the poet, and expose them to scorn and ridicule. This is obviously not a work of careful critical method, but more a book of violent reaction against traditional ways of thinking. It is thus reminiscent of other books of the same period such as Taha Hussain's book on pre-Islamic poetry or Ali Abd al-Raziq's Islam and the principles of government. The impact of Diwan, like them it contains a mixture of some items of value and progress and others which demonstrate a certain lack of equilibrium, nor is it of that personal invective which was a mask of many so called critical articles written in newspapers and periodicals at that time. But it would be a mistake to imply that the book is devoid of sound literary criticism: al-Aqqad critique of Shawqi's elegy on 'Uthman Ghalib' does indeed expose the extent to which Shawqi's language could be strained and conceited so as to test the credence of the reader, while al-Mazini's analysis of the bombastic prose style of al-Manfaluti is probably the best piece applied criticism in the whole book.[162] The co-authors of al-Diwan had some very genuine points to make in their criticism of those who dominated the literary tastes of the time. Shawqi and al-Manfaluti in particular, and on occasion they expressed themselves cogently and to good effect. But too often the valuable

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points made in the books are obscured by passages that are both extreme and misguided, which concentrate more on the personality of the author who is being criticized than on the text of his work to the development of Diwan Movement in modern Arabic literature.

The impact of the Diwan movement of the critical theory on poetry was written in Egypt, in the second and third decades of this 20th century. One cannot help but regret, however, that the poetic field in Egypt during that time was so lacking in real avant-garde talents to give expression to all the enthusiastic outpourings of critical theory and protest. The theory was learnt first- hand from western sources, mainly English. The protest was mainly directed against the neo-classical school, particularly against Ahmad Shawqi and to a lesser degree, against Hafiz Ibrahim. The most important protagonists of this critical movement and Diwan movement in poetry were three friends who felt the urgent need for Arabic poetry to undergo a drastic change. They were Abdur Rahman Shukri (1886-1958), Ibrahim Abdul Qadir Al-Mazini (1890-1949) and Abbas Mahmud Al-Aqqad (1889-1964). Abdur Rahman Shukri and Ibrahim Abdul Qadir al-Mazini met at the Khedive Training College from which they both graduated in 1909, Al-Mazini going to teach and Shukri going to Sheffield University to study English literature. Shukri returned in 1912, and with Al-Mazini met Al-Aqqad. These three poets began writing simultaneously in the journal Al-Bayan as well as in the newspaper Al-Jarida and from that time the outlines of the new way in poetry and criticism began to appear.[163]

The three poets came to be referred to as English school, but the name by which they are now known is the Diwan group. They were well versed in English literature and were acquainted with the literature of other Western countries. However, they might have benefited more from English criticism

[163] Salma Khadra Yayyusi, Trends and Movements in Modern Arabic poetry, Volume-I P-152

than from poetry and other genres of literature. This school, al-Aqqad declares, was profoundly influenced by Hazlitt and his ideas on poetic theory. These three writers laid the cornerstone of modern poetic criticism in Egypt, and Nuaima can be safely termed the first major writers on modern poetic theory in Arabic, though this is not to ignore the modest but well-guided contribution to literary criticism by Mutran in the preceding decades.

The impact of Diwan movement in the criticism of poetry, Abdur Rahman Shukri published his writings on the poetic concept in Al-Bayan, Al-Jarida, and Al-Muqtataf and afterwards in Apollo. He also wrote a forward to most of his Diwans in which he discussed poetry and poetic standards. Abdur Rahman Shukri's critical impact as well as his poetic activity was at its strongest in the second decade of this century. Between 1909 and 1918 he issued seven Diwans. In the third decade he suffered a relapse as a result, perhaps, of al-Mazini's bitter attack on him in Al-Diwan, the result, in turn of Shukri's accusation of al-Mazini of plagiarism in the introduction to his fifth Diwan. In this revenge on Shukri, al-Mazini not only reversed the high praise he had showered on him in an earlier book entitled Shir hafiz (1915), but went so far as to accuse Shukri of madness and to call him "Sanam al-Ala'ib" (idol of tricks). After his prolific start, Shukri's poetic energy seems to have waned considerably during the rest of his long life.[164]

Al-Mazini was of a different nature of poetry in criticism. His poetry as well as his early prose works reflects an erratic and fiery temperament. Gradually, however, this gave way to the sarcastic, humorous writings which made him deservedly famous among Arab readers for several generations. His Diwan, entitled Diwan al-Mazini, was published in two parts. The first part appeared in 1913 with a preface by al-Aqqad. The second part appeared in 1917. It was in 1915, however, that he published two critical works. The first

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worked was a treatise on poetry entitled Al-Shir Ghayatuhu wa Wasaituh in which he discussed the methods and aims of poetry. The second worked was a little book of applied criticism entitled Shir Hafiz. In 1921, in collaboration with al-Aqqad, he published his most famous critical work, the above mentioned Al-Diwan, which appeared in two consecutive volumes. Other critical works by him were two collections of articles, in 1924 and 1927, under the titles of Hasad al-Hashim and Qabd al-Rih respectively.

Al-Aqqad was the strongest and most versatile literary personality of the three poets, and his interest in poetry remained with him all his life. Between 1916 and 1958 he issued ten collections of poetry, attempting in some of them experiments in poetry to demonstrate his theories. His writings on poetry began earlier. It has been said that he had written on the unity of a poem as early as 1908. In 1912 he issued Khulasat al-Yaumiyya in which he collected his articles on literature and life. In 1913 the second Diwan of Shukri and the first Diwan of Al-Mazini appeared for which he had written the introductions, entitled “Al-Shir wa Mazayah” and “Khawatir an al-Tab wal-Taqlid” respectively. In these the impact of criticism of Al-Aqqad introduced the new poetic theories which he was to expound over the years. His other articles on poetry and the poetic criticism and theory continued to appear either as introductions to his own Diwans or as separate articles. His above mentioned book, Al-Diwan, was succeeded by several other collections of essays which often included articles on poetry. These collections include Al-Fusul, 1922; Mutala’at fil-Kutub wa’l-Hayat, 1924; Muraja’at fil-Adab wa’l-Funun, 1925; Sa’at bain al-Kutub, 1927. His interesting book, devoted to the history of modern poetry in Egypt, Shu’ara Misr wa Bi’atuhum fi’l-Jil al-Madi (1937) has already been discussed. Later on, in 1955, another collection of articles on poetry and literature appeared under the title of Ashtat Mujtami’at fi’l-Lugha wa’l-Adab, and in 1960 he published Al-Lugha al-Shaira. In addition, al-Aqqad, true to the fashion of his generation, wrote on

some of the classical poets. A book on Ibn al-Rumi appeared in 1931, another on Umar Ibn Abi Rabia in 1943, and a third on Jamil Bathaina in 1944. Writings on other classical poets were also included in his several collections.[165]

The revolution in poetical criticism brought about by these three poet-critics was marked by two main features. Firstly, it was timely. The neo-classical school had been confirming a concept of poetry which left unopposed would have entrenched itself so strongly that to arrive at modernity would have become an extremely arduous task. Backed by Shawqi's talent, it had acquired a great hold on the minds and hearts of the Arabs. The issue of the movement was the introduction of tools that would be able to destroy the trenches of the neo-classical school and form the basis on which a more gifted generation of poets might build a new poetic structure. With ridicule, with bitter unrelenting argument and an enthusiasm for poetry bordering on veneration, this trio poet was able to draw the attention of their contemporaries to the vital issues at hand.

The impact of the poetical criticism of the Diwan movement is secondly, the rebellion of the three critics seemed startlingly sudden. The famous Diwan poet Mutran's gentle theorizing about poetry was nothing compared with the dramatic and complete break away from the oppressive, old-fashioned ruling ideas on poetry expressed in their critical writings. To them the neo-classical poetry lacked all the prerequisites of good poetry, and the work of Shawqi and Hafiz, the two greatest protagonists of neo-classicism in Egypt (and, in the case of Shawqi, in the whole of the Arab world) received their strongest attacks.

But however decisively they spoke about the "ideal" poetry, in their own poetry they were unable to avoid some of the worst defects of the

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traditional verse which they themselves criticized (the dogmatic expression, the parceling of thoughts and ideas into geometric divisions, the sudden introduction of aphorisms that end with the two hemistich verse, etc.). The two factors may account for this: firstly, the limitations of their own poetic talents, and secondly, the force of poetic tradition preventing them from putting into practice the critical ideas they read and propagated. The forces operating within the art itself do not always coincide with the growth of the theoretical knowledge about that art. In a living art, there is always a process of development and deterioration that prompts change and progress, a perpetual search for forces of renewal and restoration. When it reaches a point of saturation and rejection, the need for new methods and attitudes appears. Two things, which are not necessarily interdependent, can hurry the process of growth: the appearance of a genius in the field, and the knowledge of new artistic tools and methods. But the process, nevertheless, cannot be hurried on before the art is ready to assimilate the new concepts in natural form.

This theory by no means ignores or belittles the relationship of poetry to social and political changes. This is where the expression “living art” finds its meaning and emphasis. For an art is alive only when it thrives within a living society, a society that itself yields to change and development and is open to new ideas and influences. Yet the relationship, the interaction between social change and poetic development is not the only factor in artistic change, for aesthetic standards, especially those which have become deeply rooted in the aesthetic concept of a people, are very slow to undergo change, as we have seen. The writers on modern Arabic poetry have tended nearly always to link it exclusively with political and social happenings. In doing this they have overlooked the fact that the process of creativity and the use of artistic tools do not yield immediately to every change in the environment, but are rather more slow in their adaptation to such changes. The division of the history of the Arabic poetry in Egypt, for example, into well defined periods and turning

points at such dates as 1882, 1919 and 1952 would be an absurd and sweeping packaging of artistic growth. The revolutions do awaken the emotional impulses of a people, but the immediate activity that might be seen in art as a result of the political upsurge need not be linked directly with real artistic growth. And although it might help at times to make definite changes in poetry, these might be sometimes limited to an increase in the quantity of poetic production on the one hand, and to the introduction of new themes on the other. In fact, the political promptings in modern Arabic poetry have sometimes contributed towards its leveling down, the nationalist theme often becoming a passport by which the mediocre are admitted to the poetic field with a resultant lowering of the standards of aesthetic appreciation.

The poetry of the three Diwan poets is characterized by its subjective elements. Their verse is the expression of their personal feelings and ideas and there is a genuine attempt to avoid the neo-classical poet's involvement with the "public event" and the outer periphery of life. The introduction of this emotional, subjective element into poetry by these poets was their most important contribution to poetry and brought it a step nearer to the poetry of experience to be written a little later. Although their poetry had no real success and was of no lasting value, this does not diminish its importance as a stage of development between the neo-classical and Romantic poets.[166]

The Romantic mood, which had began to take hold of society, was expressed by these three poets, but only to a limited degree. They are described as an angry, hesitant and self-centered group, afflicted with anxiety and with the feelings of alienation, rebellion and sorrow. Shukri, who was the most genuine poet of the three poets, depicted the state of mind of the Egyptian youth of his class in original and interesting prose works such as his Al-I'tiraf (The confession) which he published in 1916, and another prose

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work is Mudhakkarat Iblis, (Memories of Satan), published in 1917. The Egyptian critic Mandur believes that Al-Itiraf is one of the deepest, most beautiful and important psychological documents in modern Arabic literatures. In this book Egyptian youth is depicted as a collection of day dreamers. They are described as spineless, self-conceited, impatient, suspicious and plaintive. They suffer from feelings of despair and are incapable of systematic thinking. The world itself is depicted as a place of trouble and boredom. In fact, the book is a document of the social and psychological state of the country, reflecting the feelings of despondency and despair which Egyptian youth was experiencing at the time.

Yet despite this, these poets were not able to establish the Romantic mood in poetry. Al-Mazini and Shukri did indeed portray the Romantic mood in most of their poetic works, but it was done rather crudely, for their technique was inadequate for its successful translation into art. Their expression remained analytical and direct, lacking the evocative power and infectious warmth of later romantics. It was very emotional but seemed, nevertheless, to reflect a pose, a sort of acquired attitude not rising spontaneously from experience. This is significant, for the life of these two poets and their personalities proclaim the truth of the mood they were trying to so hard to reflect in their verse. Partly from lack of genuine talent, and partly because of the resistance of the tools of Arabic poetry at the time, their genuinely unhappy mood could not be successfully expressed in poetry.

However, it was their persistent writing on poetry that attracted attention, ever since the days of the Syro-Egyptian writers, an atmosphere of general esteem had grown for Western critical standards. It was the Diwan group who, in the name of modern concepts borrowed mostly from the West, opened the campaign against the old poetic concepts and came out with new ideas on poetry, it essence and value. According to them, there were several

requirements for poetry but the most important was that poetry should probe deep into the self and derive its inspiration from human experience. Poets should search for the essential in thing and abandon, in theory, the poetry of occasion and of public events. Above all they insisted on the unity of the poem.[167]

Shukri started off as the leader and his ideas were adopted and expounded by the other two in numerous articles that were written on the poetic theory. In the introductions which he wrote to his various Diwans, Shukri raised many interesting and important points, especially in the introductions to the third, fourth and fifth Diwans. However, it is in his introduction to his fifth Diwan, published in 1916, that he expounds in full his theories on poetry. The greatest importance of these theories lies in their modernity, for one can recognize in Shukri's ideas the basis of many of the ideas advocated by contemporary critics in the Arab world. This, however, should not be taken as proof of wide influence of Shukri's writings on poetry but rather as evidence of his early assimilation and interpretation of a Western critical education from which other poets were to benefit later on.

The influence of the English Romantic School on Shukri is apparent. Here is a new and idealized attitude towards poetry, similar to that of Gibran. The poet's place in life is described as lofty and distinct from that of the ordinary person. "The true poet sees that poetry is the most glorious thing he can do in life and (believes) that he was born for it and that it was not a complement to his life but it's very essence" Every poetic genius is worthy of being called a prophet of nature sent to this world to enhance men's souls and move their spirits, illumine and set them aflame. He is God's greatest creation and he penetrates deep into the soul and strips it of its secrets. However, there is little in Shukri's poetry to show that he was able to penetrate deep in to the

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realms of the soul and express its emotional and spiritual conflicts. Much of it remains on a rather superficial level, and although he did manage to express feelings and experiences of a subjective nature, and to establish some link with the human heart, he rarely went beyond this. The contrast in this respect between his poetry and his creative prose works, such as Al-Itiraf and Mudhakkarat Iblis, is significant. It was in prose that Shukri felt free to depict the explosive elements felt in society, bringing to the fore his dark impressions, hatred, revulsion, despair and final condemnation in a way he was never able to do in poetry. This is again a proof that the poetic tools were not sufficiently flexible in the hands of the poets of the time and could not be used to the best advantage. Although most of Shukri's poetry revolved around the love theme, nearly all of it followed the traditional pattern of love poetry in Arabic (the playful or plaintive tone, the play of words, the pseudo-fascination with "purity", the repetitive and limited experience); his power of introspection was limited and in his expression of personal experience, he was rarely able to achieve real emotional veracity.[168]

In fact Shukri's poetry has proved difficult to judge by the critics of the thirties and forties. Even Mandur seems uncertain when he tries to assess Shukri's verse, perhaps because some of it hesitates, so to speak, on the threshold of art. On the other hand, in much of it, traditional themes, banality, sentimentality, together with structural weakness, a prosaic style and an absurdity of diction prevail. The following two examples show plainly the weakness of his structure and his absurd use of words:

بائع باع رخيصا عمره　　بعلا لا ت المي و هو غبين

و قلاه لا قلئ مستضعف　　يبتغئ الا ما ل ا و حز الوتين

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A wrong-headed vendor who sold his life cheaply with wishful thinking. His loathing is not the loathing of a weak man, who wishes only to seek his desires or die (literally or the cutting of the corta) and - في اليش منظرا

يبعث البشر وللنفس بهجة واعتصا مساكنت

In life you were delightful to the eyes, a joy and a refuge for the soul

It is probably Shukri's poetry that is responsible for the use of words in a weak structural context by several poetic innovators in Egypt. He often has a strange, non-poetic diction and phraseology that can only be explained by the fact that he was trying hard but unsuccessfully to engineer a change in the traditional use of language. Although his use of language is sometimes correct from a lexicographer's point of view, the words seem out of place and precariously situated in the sentence. There is nothing here of Shawqi's glorious use of words nor of his powerful sentence formation. However, it is easy to understand Shukri's dilemma. His rebellion was directed particularly against Shawqi's methods of writing poetry, of which language was an especially important element. But only a poet of Shawqi's stature could have accomplished single-headed, revolution in the language of poetry so strongly established by Shawqi himself.

A staunch believer in innovation, Shukri made experiments with blank verse. The first poem in blank verse appeared in his first Diwan whilst in his second Diwan he included several poems in blank verse of varying length. In all these poems he retained the two-hemistich form, and introduced no methods to compensate for the loss of the habitual music at the end of the verse. However, he was not the first to attempt blank verse in Arabic. At least as early as 1869, Rizq Allah Hassun translated the "Book of Job" into blank verse, and in 1905 Al-Zahawi of Iraq also attempted a poem in this form. But all these and later experiments by poets such as Ahmad Zaki Abu Shadi and

Muhammad Farid Abu Hadid, using blank verse in the two-hemistich form, were complete failures. It was, it seems, too early for Arabic poetry to experiment with blank verse before it could affect a change in the basic two-hemistich form.

In his ideas on poetry, Shukri has an interesting discussion on the role of the simile and of the imagination in poetry. The whole conception of imagery was to undergo a vital change in modern Arabic poetry and it is interesting to the note the beginnings an important discussion which was to flourish in the fifties and sixties. Shukri insists that imagination is not limited to the invention of similes, but embodies other elements in the poem like theme, ideas and the general spirit of the poem. As for the simile, it is never to be sought for itself, because its value lies in its ability to arouse a memory, a hope, and an emotion or to reveal a truth. In elucidating these ideas, Shukri was ahead of his time. They were in fact, an attempt to put an end to the linguistic play of words of the past generation of poets, which, despite the efforts of the neo-classical school, still lingered on even in some of the best examples of their poetry.[169]

The impact of the Diwan movement, the idea of the universality of poetry was among the ideas discussed by Shukri. The poet "does not write for… one special people but for the human mind and soul everywhere. Moreover, he does not write only for the present day but for every day and never time". These ambitious ideas were also propagated by Nu'aima and Al-Aqqad. Despite their pretentiousness, they are a sign of the comparative intellectual freedom enjoyed by poets and writers at the beginning of the century. Later on poetry would be regarded by many writers to have a social function, and would be related to the poet's sense of patriotism.

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As for Shukri's direct influence on poets outside Egypt, he appears to have been little known in the rest of the Arab world. He published his Diwans mainly in the second decade, when Shawqi's fame had become established throughout the Arab world and was to reach colossal dimensions in the third and fourth decades, overshadowing any other poetry in Egypt of the kind Shukri was writing, with its concern with the self, with its quieter tones and above all its often weak phraseology. And yet, in Egypt itself, Shukri enjoyed a considerable reputation during the second and third decades. The powerful campaign launched by him and his friends in the Diwan group could not have failed to influence the younger generation of poets considerably. In conclusion one may say that although Mutran could be regarded as the first innovator in modern poetry, Shukri was the first real rebel in the Arab East. He tried, as no one before him, to open up a completely new path, and argued the importance of poetry and the need to modernize it with vigor, courage and insistence.

Like Shukri, Al-Mazini, in his book Al-Shir, Ghayatuhu wa Wasaituh, also sang the praises of the poet, and like him his poetry lacks any indication that the poet is fulfilling the remarkable role assigned to him as the guide and interpreter of sacred inspiration and divine wisdom. Unlike Shukri, however, he believed in a special language for poetry, in which he was probably influenced by the ideas of Diya al- Din Ibn al-Athir. Thanks to his concern for the language of poetry, he was particularly critical of the decorative play of words prevalent in the poetry of former generations: words were never to be used for their own sake but were meant to draw an image or arouse an emotion. Poetry, he had said, remains the product of the emotions and feelings, and indeed, his own poetry did serve to forge a link with the human heart and express the emotions.

According to Al-Mazini, metre was also important. But linking emotion in poetry with metre he was perhaps the first Arab write to do:

Every emotion, when it takes hold of the spirit and flows evenly (as against chaotic, turbulent emotions which he regards as completely un poetic), constantly seeks a language that suits its flow… Deep, long-lasting emotions have always sought an outlet in material language, the deeper the feelings, more prominent the metrical constructions, and the more effective.[170]

Finally on prose poetry, which, since the publication in 1912 of Al-Raihaniyyat and in 1914 of Gibran's Dam'a wa Ibtisama, was seeking to established itself as a genre of modern Arabic literature, Al-Mazini had the following criticism:

This problem shows that a great ignorance has come over people… for you see that most people in this unfortunate country (insist) that metre is not necessary in poetry, and that there is some writing which is poetry but which does not employ metre. This ignorance and stupidity has driven some people to try this new kind of poetry, thinking that they have accomplished something good and have invented some new kind of art.

It is interesting to see how early the argument against prose poetry, which has continued even up to the present time, started in Egypt.

In another book, Shir Hafiz, Al-Mazini attracted the older poet in bitter and unrelenting terms which he later regretted. Yet this book, despite the apparent prejudice revealed in it, is of considerably value, for it is the first direct attack to be made on any of the neo-classical poets. Only an outpouring of vehement criticism coming from a so seemingly knowledgeable and confident critic as Al-Mazini, could shake to any degree the firm traditional conception that people had of poetry and its role. Oblique, hesitant attacks from less pretentious sources would have been of little effect. While Al-Mazini in his book, Al-Diwan, was to revoke some of the main ideas he had

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put forward in this book, including his great eulogy of Shukri's poetry which he described, in the first book, as synonymous with what modern poetry should be, his criticisms still stand.

Al-Mazini's attack on Shukri in Al-Diwan was both prejudiced and destructive. Its personal and bitter nature and the emotionalism of its tone was a bad setback for modern Arabic criticism, and it was completely contrary to the idea of objectivity in criticism to which Taha Hussain had been trying so hard to woo the critics in Egypt. His attack on al-Manfaluti, on the other hand, which shows al-Mazini's lack of understanding of the importance of that writer's achievement, is significant as being one of the earliest if not the earliest major attack on kind of decadence characteristic of early Arabic Romanticism, its sentimental style and melancholy. Al-Raihani later joined this attack, and by their separate efforts they may have been influential in checking some of the worst excesses of Arabic Romanticism which flourished at the end of the twenties and start of the thirties.[171]

In his poetry, Al-Mazini was the most apparently Romantic of the Diwan group. In its expression of Romantic pessimism and rebellious sentiment, this poetry of the self was in complete contrast with the objective poetry where the personality of the poet disappears behind the public façade. In all other features, however, Al-Mazini's poetry differed little from the traditional poetry. His diction, his phraseology, his general poetic structure, still had the strength and traditional resonance of the neo-classical poetry with none of Shukri's faltering phraseology and hesitant expression. There is no attempt to bring about a change in diction, and his language is based on a firm classical foundation, which not even his direct appreciation of certain English poems with their new themes, was to affect. His poetry, for all its Romantic

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features, failed to influence in any important way the Romantic trend in Arabic poetry.

The enthusiasm manifested in al-Mazini's early writing on poetry seems to have been inspired by outside factors rather than by a permanent derive. Criticism with al-Mazini was a passing attraction, the result of an impressionable mind fascinated with the world of ideas and theories, as he himself admitted. In fact his career, perhaps more than that of any other man of letters of his generation, is a proof of the influence of imported Western theories at that time on the young writer, and the need that was felt for a new kind of theory and for forging links with foreign and more progressive fields. As a result of his falling early under the influence of Shukri, who was predominantly a poet, al-Mazini took to poetry and poetic criticism, his true talent he became later the best humorous writer in modern Arabic literature remaining dormant until the mid-twenties. His final change of tone from the emotional and erratic to the sarcastic and humorous is a good example of literary talent finally emerging from the labyrinth of imported ideas and methods.[172]

Al-Aqqad's career as poet and a critic of poetry was the most constant of the three poets. Throughout his long and fruitful life, he remained loyal to his self-appointed role as guardian of the literary citadel. Like al-Mazini, he wrote both theoretical and applied criticism and was constant in his call for modernism, truth, greater depth and a portrayal of the poet's self. In his double concern to both bring about a revolution in the concept of poetry, and to establish himself as the leading poet in Egypt, he worked in three fields. The first, which was the most beneficial to poetry, was his writings on the poetic theory. The second was his applied criticism: violent, bitter and often indiscriminating, it had a twofold effect. On the one hand it helped to destroy

[172] Salma Khadra Yayyusi, Trends and Movements in Modern Arabic poetry, Volume-I P-163

the deeply entrenched neo-classical school and was one of the foundations on which later criticism against traditionalism based itself; while on the other, it retarded the development of objective, level headed criticism. The third was the examples he gave in his own poetry of the theories he advocated. This was disastrous. For his clear and modern theories, his consciousness of the role he wished to play and his insistence on his own value as a poet little availed a poetry that lacked the basic elements of art. Yet he was able to create in the minds of a generation thirsty for change and modernization but hazy in vision and perception, a mental impression of his importance as a poet. This may have been the result of the abundance of his poetic output on the one hand, and his well-informed and authoritarian critical writings on the other. Consequently, a good number of critics and writers on poetry in Egypt accepted his poetry (together with the poetry of Al-Mazini and Shukri) as an example of what modernized poetry should be in Arabic, with the inevitable lowering of the standards of aesthetic appreciation in Egypt.[173]

This point deserves discussion because this respect for the poetry of the Diwan group and for the poetry of al-Aqqad in particular marks a relapse in the development of poetry and aesthetic taste in Egypt. A strange confusion resulted in the field of applied criticism of modern Arabic poetry which has not yet been cleared, and it has affected many critics, including Taha Hussain. On the other hand, Marun Abbud the most original critic in Lebanon reacted to al-Aqqad's poetry with biting sarcasm. Taking several of al-Aqqad's Diwans Hadiyyat al-Karwan, Abir Sabil and Wahy al-Arbain, he picked out examples that could leave no doubt as to the inferiority of his poetry. "This poetry is as dry as wood" he exclaimed. It is hoarse and prosaic and lacks the moving power of poetry. He remarked on the curious discrepancy between al-Aqqad's theorizing on "true poetry" and the examples he created to demonstrate them. Al- Aqqad is like an eloquent priest who knows the Bible

[173] Salma Khadra Yayyusi, Trends and Movements in Modern Arabic poetry, Volume-I P-164

and all the Holy Books, and is perfect in the art of preaching but is hindered by his instincts from behaving according to what he teaches. There is no clemency from Abbud: I read the introductions to his Diwans and exclaim God Bless I must be confronting a poet who is unrivalled, but as soon as I cross the threshold, I find poor poetry and imagine myself reading the exercise books of practicing (students) in intermediate classes.

Nonetheless, al-Aqqad continued to find support over the years from Egyptian writers, even though his poetry never gained much following either in Egypt or elsewhere. He continued to write poetry, publishing ten Diwans in the course of the years, but his fame as a thinker and prose writer has superseded his reputation as a poet. in fact, al-Aqqad is hardly remembered as a poet in the last decades by most readers and students of poetry, but as the concern here is with his place as a poet and writer on poetry, his place as a man of letters, as the writer of the famous biographies, of the novel Sara, of the numerous articles on general culture, and his writings on philosophic themes, will have to be ignored. As we have seen, al-Aqqad as a poet did have some adverse critics, among them, not unexpectedly, Muhammad Mandur. In several places he referred to the dry, intellectual nature of al-Aqqad's poetry, its prosaic structure, and its didactic spirit, the tepidity of its emotions and the banality of its vision. Al-Aqqad's poetry was naïve and direct, and in his opinion, very different from the complex material of his intellectual writings.

Two Diwans of al-Aqqad's should be mentioned here as an example of the poetic experiments he made in the 1930's. These are Hadiyyat al-karawan (1933) and Abir Sabl (1937). The characteristic feature of the first Diwan is that it is devoted mainly to a single theme: the Karawan (curlew). In his introduction, al-Aqqad wonders at the fact that one does not find any mention of the curlew in the poetry of Egyptian poets, despite the fact that it is a common feature of the Egyptian countryside. All these poets ever mention is

the sparrow and similar birds although they are not heard nearly so often. However, the poetry in this Diwan, like the rest of al-Aqqad suffers from an excess of intellect and affectations; and in fact, it received one of the strongest bouts of ridicule from Abbud.[174]

In Abir Sabil (The Wayfarer) al-Aqqad attempts another theory. In its introduction al-Aqqad declares that:

All that we clothe we with our feelings and engulf in our imagination, and penetrate with our consciousness, and imbue with our worries, dreams and fears is poetry and a subject for poetry, because it is life and a subject for life the wayfarer therefore sees poetry, if he wishes, everywhere… he sees it the house he lives in, and in the street he walks in every day, in the shop windows, in the car.. Because all these are linked with daily life and everything which is linked with human life is entangled in our feelings and is therefore fit to be expressed in poetry.

This attempt to portray scenes and experiences from daily life was favorably received in Egypt. This shows, perhaps more than any other critical reaction, how aesthetic standards had already fallen among some well-known writers on poetry in Egypt. To give a single example, Shawqi Daif, in order to illustrate what he described to be al-Aqqad's "magnificent gift" of changing into poetry ordinary things and surrounding them with a halo of art and dreams, gives as an example his poem "The shop Goods on a Feast day سلع الد كا كين في يو م البطا لة in it al-Aqqad describes the sadness which the forsaken goods in a shop supposedly experience on a feast day. They yearn for freedom, they are frantic least they become worn out from stagnation, they cry for help. The banality, the ridiculously prosaic expressions, and the great absurdity of meaning never struck Daif as examples of extremely bad poetry. He does not seem aware that experience in poetry must spring from the human

[174] Salma Khadra Yayyusi, Trends and Movements in Modern Arabic poetry, Volume-I P-165

condition and not from an affected situation of inanimate objects. He accepts this poem even year after its publication, as a great and original experiment aimed at modernizing Arabic poetry, which is indeed a strange and unhappy situation. Years earlier, Marun Abbud had rejected al-Aqqad's experiment in no uncertain terms: Is there no sane man in Egypt to advise this man (al-Aqqad)? he burst out. Mandur was too express great concern over the possible influence on Arabic poetry of a work such as Abir Sabil. We fear that the example of Abir Sabil may draw Arabic poetry to the pit which it had reached before al-Barudi, when it was bent on dealing with petty subjects. However, his fears were completely without foundation, for he was writing in the fifties when Arabic poetry had successfully found the way to expressing the deeper and more vital issues of the human condition.

According to Mandur, al-Aqqad was imitating Ibn al-Rumi in his description of simple things from daily life, as Ibn al-Rumi was one of the favorite poets whom he studied and analyzed.

This extract from the poem is a typical example:

مقفرات مغاقات محكات كل ابواب الد كا كاين علي كل الجهات

تركوها اهملوها

يوم عيد عيدوه و مضوا في الخلوات

البدار ما لنا اليوم قرار

اي صوت ذاك يدعو الناس من خلف الجدار

ادركوها اطلقوها

ذاك صوت السلع الحبوس في الظامة ثار

Desolate closed right up, all the doors of the shops, on all sides. People have left them; have neglected them, on a feast day which they are

celebrating, going out into the open spaces. Quick, we have no peace today. What is that voice, calling to people from behind the walls, go to them, release them. That is the imprisoned voice of the goods, rebelling in the dark.

However, it is more likely that the ideas he expounds in the introduction to Abir Sabil were derived from those of Hazlitt, his favorite English critic, for their similarity is striking. Hazlitt says

There is no thought or feeling that can have entered into the mind of man, which he would be eager to communicate to others, or which they would listen to with delight, that is not fair subject of poetry. It is not branch of authorship it is the stuff of which our life is made.

Such experiments in poetry earlier in his career show his great interest in theory and novelty. His poetry itself never gained a true audience, but it often received, and still does, a good amount of praise by Egyptian writers.[175]

It is as a critic of poetry that al-Aqqad was outstanding. His criticism, however, despite the fact that it achieved ultimate results, had several factors which hampered its immediate effectiveness. In the first place he was bitter and violent in his applied criticism to be immediately convincing. Thus he, like al-Mazini, was unable to provide a firm basis for objectivity in literary criticism. In the second place his choice of targets revealed a basic inability to recognize genius. For, as has been mentioned, it was mainly on Shawqi, then at the height of his poetic achievement, that he chose to direct his attack, stripping him of all merit. His argument against Shawqi's alleged weaknesses was often unconvincing and carried sometimes the marks of willful prejudice. He overlooked the particular circumstances of Shawqi's career and the role poetry had yet to play before it could safely undergo the changes he advocated. In his enthusiasm for the achievement of modernity in poetry he

[175] Salma Khadra Yayyusi, Trends and Movements in Modern Arabic poetry, Volume-I P-167

failed to recognize what was possible in that particular time and place. In the third place, even aside from his lack of sound judgment, his views were too radical for the majority of readers, particularly because there were still a large number of eminent poets who to a greater or lesser extent were writing within a classical framework.

Finally, in his criticism al-Aqqad often expressed contradictory views and showed a remarkable discrepancy between theory and practice. This is excusable, to certain extent, in the circumstances, for this is the period, when there existed a prevalence of poetic theory over genuine poetic practice, as well as of theorization over applied criticism. Most of the Egyptian critics of the second, third and even fourth decades were at their best when dealing with classical poets. When dealing with contemporaries they were often at a loss. Either through unmerited praise or violent ridicule, they introduced a standard of poetic evaluation rather lacking in aesthetic principles, and as overbearing as Taha Hussain's attitude towards some contemporary poets.

It is the important to see in al-Aqqad not only the pioneer in introducing a new and different conception of the art of poetry, but also the pioneer in trying to clear the way for these conceptions by destroying the classical stronghold. The conclusion would naturally be that since the power of neo-classicism manifested itself in Shawqi as the first and leading poet, then the attack it should be equal in strength to the poetry it set itself to defame.[176]

Al-Aqqad was aware of the violence of his attack on Shawqi. He and his colleagues, he explained, were destroying the overwhelming illusions and involved intrigues which existed in the literary world and they needed violence to prove their argument. His criticism of Shawqi is regarded as the greatest achievement of his career as a critic.

[176] Salma Khadra Yayyusi, Trends and Movements in Modern Arabic poetry, Volume-I P-168

Al-Aqqad summarized what he regarded as defects in Shawqi's poetry into four main points: imitation, absurdity, disunity of the poem and concern with the outer description of things rather than with their essence. According to him, Shawqi not only imitated the classical poets but also borrowed directly from them. He gave several examples of what he saw as plagiarism in Shawqi, naming such poets as al- Ma'arri, al-Mutanabbi, al-Sharif al-Radi, Muslim Ibn al-Walid and other who were targets for his free borrowings. With imitation comes artificiality. Poetry al-Aqqad insisted, should be the result of a natural and spontaneous talent. Otherwise, it was sheer artifice, and therefore not the outcome of an artistic talent but of intelligence. In his opinion, Shawqi's poetry abounded in artifice and did not express the poet's own experience, taste or true emotions.[177]

Contemporary opinion in the Arab world is often in agreement with al-Aqqad's views on Shawqi. But poets like Shawqi, although highly traditional are not really imitative, in the sense that they do not copy the classical poets to the loss of their own individuality and poetic personalities. Some of the classical attitudes which persisted in their poetry were not the result of direct and deliberate copying the work of intelligence and observation, as al-Aqqad would have us believe, but reflected the personalities and attitudes of the poets themselves. The classical poetry, moreover, was the only poetic tradition which they could follow. They derived their poetic strength from it, and this was, instinctively the only thing to do at the time. By turning his back on the classical tradition and by turning to the English poetry, Shukri failed drastically in his experimentation with the language of poetry and with blank verse. We shall see how Abu Shadi, a younger contemporary of Shukri, also fell under the same influence and experienced the same failure. The persistence of the traditional and emotional set-up in that period (i.e. in the last decades of the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth

[177] Salma Khadra Yayyusi, Trends and Movements in Modern Arabic poetry, Volume-I P-168

century) is important and must be emphasized if one is to understand the aesthetic development of modern Arabs. The inherited emotional pattern was accentuated, in no small degree, by the classical poetry itself which confirmed existing attitudes and emotional reactions and illustrated them with ready-made verses from eminent classical poets.[178]

But another point, purely artistic, deserves discussion here. Shawqi's genius, although it had to limit itself, by force of time and poetic circumstance, to a traditional framework, was nevertheless creative within that framework itself. Other highly endowed poets have also managed to be creative within the traditional setting, poets like Muhammad Mahdi al-Jawahiri, Badawi al-Jabal and others. Aside from a relative compatibility of attitudes between these poets and the classical emotional make-up, there is a sort of a spontaneously induced emotional state where the spirit of the classical poetry dominates the creative faculty. They do not copy it deliberately, as minor poets do. They are genuinely imbued with it. The reaction of the modern Arab reader of more traditional education to classical poetry confirms this idea. Very often he is a part of its emotional set-up, and his appreciation of it is more often the appreciation of the emotionally involved rather than of the aesthetically moved. Indeed, it must be recognized that the classical poetry is still a part of the living modern culture of a great number of Arabs. Without this recognition, the whole story of contemporary poetry in the Arab world, its struggle and development, cannot be made clear.

This does not mean that traditionalism in poetry, even at the hands of highly endowed poets, should not have been attacked and rejected. But al-Aqqad's mistake lies in his bad choice of examples from Shawqi's poetry to illustrate his views. Referring to the absurdity of meaning in Shawqi's poetry, he said that it is consisted of unlimited exaggerations, untruths, contradictions

[178] Salma Khadra Yayyusi, Trends and Movements in Modern Arabic poetry, Volume-I P-169

in meaning, a lack of logic and other defects. But he was really unable to prove the absurdity of many of the verses he gave as examples. As a single example of absurdity he gave this verses from Shawqi's elegy on Egypt's national leader, Mustafa Kamil (d.1908) : مصر الا سيفة ريفها وصعيد ها قبر أ بر علي عظا مك حا ني

Sad Egypt its villages and plains are a grave which holds your bones with love and tenderness.

This, he supposed was meant to be a wonderful example of wisdom, whereas it was mere artistry, for Shawqi made the whole of Egypt one big grave for the man who had brought about its progress.

Al-Aqqad often insisted on the unity of the poem, which he found lacking in Shawqi's poetry. When he spoke of unity, he usually meant organic unity and he was probably the first writer who wrote on this subject in modern Arabic with such clarity and insistence. Mandur, however, tries to disprove the importance of an organic unity in lyrical poetry. It is wrong to ask the poet for such a kind of unity, he says, "The lyrical poem is built on a stream of feelings and thoughts which can be arranged in many different ways". He went on after that to show the lack of such unity in al-Aqqad's poetry himself. Al-Aqqad's discussion of this topic was, however, to bear fruit in later decades and contemporary poets of the fifties regarded the organic unity of the poem a most important element in poetry. Mandur, however, was the first to argue the matter and reject the blind acceptance of the organic unity of a poem as a prerequisite of good poetry.[179]

Al-Aqqad urged poets to go deeply into the essence of things and to reflect in poetry the vastness of the universe and the profundity of life. Poetry, moreover, must be authentic and reflect a poet's spontaneous reaction to

[179] Salma Khadra Yayyusi, Trends and Movements in Modern Arabic poetry, Volume-I P-170

things. To him, Shawqi was a master crafts man with no spontaneity or authenticity, but al-Aqqad was unable to prove his superficiality. He also overlooked the fact that Shawqi expressed himself in accordance with the outlook and mode of his own generation. It is true that the poet often proceeds his age and that he can write poetry so advanced that it is understood only by a few individuals. But this was not the revivalist role Shawqi's genius was destined to play in modern poetry. On the other hand, al-Aqqad's insistence that the poet look within himself and there seek his inspiration, was not a broad call for Romanticism but a continuation of his unrelenting attack on the neo-classical poetry with its apparent neglect to portray the poet's own experience. His main objective was that the poet should portray his true attitude towards life and things and should produce a personal philosophy of life, not a traditional stereo-typed attitude.

However, Al-Aqqad's open invitation to go back to the self, he overlooked a most important point. It was the difficulty, the extreme difficulty for the poet of the time to arrive at real self-known, and to abandon the public front which poetry had known over many centuries. Even away from poetry, it was difficult for the individual in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century's to shake free from his own inner taboos and the imbued attitudes that spontaneously expressed themselves in reactions to personal and social relations. One of the main problems of modern Arabic poetry during the first half of the twentieth century was its struggle, conscious and unconscious, towards emotional and spiritual veracity. If we go back to the nineteenth century we find that the issues aroused by al-Shidyaq's original and courage efforts were neither of a spiritual nor of a particularly emotional nature, but were mainly intellectual. But such attributes of courage and individuality are useless to poetry which is mainly the expression of emotions and attitudes, and banality is the result al-Shidyaq stumbles and falls, writing in the stereo-typed traditional fashion where stock emotions are evoked and portrayed in

the poem. The same traditional way of feeling and emotional reaction is very clearly seen in the poetry of in Rizq Allah Hussain. This poet, who in one anthology put into verse a number of Biblical stories, and in another translated allegorical tales from Russian poetry, when it came to expressing personal matters, fell back into traditional ways of thinking and feeling. In his traditional eulogies and satires, and in his poems of longing and lamentations, he remained over loyal to the poetic tradition.[180]

The difficulties of undergoing emotional and spiritual experiences of a personal nature and portraying them in poetry were repeatedly felt by many an Arab poet. Aisha al-Taimuriyya (d.1902) could only express the emotions and moods of the poetic tradition, rather than of her experiences, for there is nothing in her up-bringing, her education or her life that suggest a deep introspection or an outgoing of the self towards new areas of experience unknown in those times.

From going over the development of poetry in the nineteenth century of these was their belief that modernity consisted in the description of modern inventions like steam, electricity, aero planes and other machines, which was ridiculous change in subject matter alone was no sign of modernity but rather the inner attitude of the poet and the way he described things. This is one of al-Aqqad's best arguments, because it differentiated between subject matter and content in poetry. Thus poet like Hafiz and Ali al-Jarim were not modern when they set out to describe the aero plane and the train. This, he said, was merely a continuation of the old poetic tradition of describing the horse and the camel.[181]

Another false conception, he said, was the belief that the avoidance of exaggeration a point upon which al-Aqqad had insisted in his criticism of

[180] Salma Khadra Yayyusi, Trends and Movements in Modern Arabic poetry, Volume-I P-171
[181] Salma Khadra Yayyusi, Trends and Movements in Modern Arabic poetry, Volume-I P-173

Shawqi) consisted in following with accurate precision the objective and the scientific truth. This, he rightly insisted was ridiculous for it made of Ibn Malik's Alfiyya the best of all poetry, classical and modern. He allowed the poets to exaggerate, but at the same time they were to follow the artistic truth.

In his sixth article he goes on to correct other misconceptions of the poetic art as understood by his contemporaries. Imagination in poetry, he maintained was not a license to untruths or to illogical conceptions. The expression of emotion is not achieved by the portrayal of extreme tenderness and effeminate feelings, of tears, sighs, sorrows, lamentations and misery. The language of poetry was not to be limited to certain words of "poetic value" which were to be repeated by all poets. Nor should ideas in poetry be expressed in round about ways which make their understanding extremely difficult, neither were they to be expressed by means of affected similes and forcibly invented images.[182]

Another prevailing misconception he criticized was the idea that the poet had to be a moralist and to try to participate directly through his poetry in his people's progress. In the twentieth century this conception of the role of poetry, which later developed into greater sophistication and importance around the mid-century was still naïve, and was mixed with the idea of poetry as a record and comment on public events, vigilantly participating in them through celebration or satire. Al-Aqqad criticized the concept that the poet could not excel unless he commemorated in his poetry every political and social event of his days. Warning against seeking immediate benefit from art, he maintained that the role of poetry in arousing people's consciousness was different to that of the politicians and social workers, for poetry could teach people a love of beauty, and this in turn would teach them to rebel against

[182] Salma Khadra Yayyusi, Trends and Movements in Modern Arabic poetry, Volume-I P-173

oppression and tyranny, because the soul that understands beauty rejects humiliation and tyranny.

Al-Aqqad's conception of innovation in poetry was summed up in the last article. Innovation, he insisted did not lie in rejecting what was good in classical Arabic poetry but in writing what the poet really felt in his heart. The poet must echo his own age and not follow in the footsteps of the classicists, seeing the world with their eyes.

This work does not aim at a detailed account of al-Aqqad's critical theory of poetry but rather at summing up its achievement and influence. Many of his writings seem, even now fresh and original. The fact that he admitted, as early as 1913, the strong links he and his two friends had established with Western writings on poetry did not diminish but rather enhanced his prestige. He wrote in a poem correct and powerful style, and knowledgeable in Arabic literature and in Islamic studies. He spoke in strong terms of Egypt's future of progress and nationalism and despite his great dependence on Western thought; this does not detract from his merit. The fact that a great number of his contemporaries did not react favorably to him cannot alter the fact that a great many did. Al-Aqqad's service to Arabic poetic criticism and culture in general cannot be overestimated. In the course of several decades of this century he continued to bring into sight and into focus, for Arab readers, all that he had read, studied and assimilated of Western culture, applying modern Western methods to criticism of some of the classical poets as well as to his biographical works. He succeeded to a great extent in linking Arab with Western culture. He tried to rid poetry of imitation and artificiality. One has to admit that his criticism, despite the bitterness of its tone, was highly effective at the time, because it shook the deep-rooted conceptions of poetry. Mutran's influence before him had been limited to some poets and critics, while the bulk of the audience of poetry had

remained completely devoted to purely classical values and concepts. Al-Aqqad, with his insistent carping brought in clearer air. He related the art of criticism to living impressions, to the movement of life around him, to the essence of life itself. He tried to emancipate Arabic poetry from its bondage to sentimentality and ignorance, and helped a great deal to break up the critical tameness and rigidity of his time. In accomplishing this he followed the only method that could be effective at the time, direct unrelenting ridicule and attack on undesirable elements in poetry, carried on with point and vigor, but also with a strong background of knowledge and modern culture.[183]

However, al-Aqqad never accepted modern poetry in the fifties, and his continuous rejection and ridicule of the new movement in poetry and especially of modern free verse brought him into disfavor with the young generation of experimentalists. Most of these poets probably did not know that it was al-Aqqad who had said in the second decade, our metres and rhymes are not sufficient for the poet whose horizon has widened and who has read Western poetry and seen how their (the western poets) metres can easily accommodate long narratives and diverse purposes, and how the poetic structure yields to them so that they can use it for purposes for which no Arab poet can use anything but prose. But this is a far cry from al-Aqqad in the fifties, who in his capacity as chairman for the poetry committee at the Higher Council for arts, literature and social sciences in Cairo, enraged a whole generation of poets when he referred the Diwan of Muhammad Fauzi al-Antil to the committee for prose because it contained some examples of free verse. These are the impact of Diwan movement in modern Arabic literature.

2.2. **Sources and originality of Diwan literature**

The sources and originality of Diwan literature of Diwan groups, the poets Shukri, Mazini and al-Aqqad both they expressed their poetry in Arabic

[183] Salma Khadra Yayyusi, Trends and Movements in Modern Arabic poetry, Volume-I P-174-175

language and literature with the English lyrical poets. In spite of this discouraging condemnation from the author himself, al-Mazini's verses is of certain historical interest in that it is demonstrates clearly the twin sources of originality for the Diwan group: the English lyrical poetry and certain poets from the Abbasid period. One of the sources and inspiration of the books with which both al-Mazini and Shukri had became familiar at college in Cairo was the Golden Treasury the anthology of English lyrical poetry selected and arranged by Francis Palgrave and first published in 1861, covering the period from Shakespeare to the mid nineteenth century. No one was more enthusiastic than al-Mazini for the melancholic musings of Edmund Waller or Robert Burns on the transient nature of life.[184] It is noticeable that he chose to explain the more obscure or archaic item of vocabulary in his poetry by references to Abbasid poets, with the Ibn-al-Rumi being a particular favorite. In the final analysis one has to agree that al-Mazini's poetry does not rise to great heights, yet there are occasions when the strength of his feelings overrides the obvious derivations of theme and style, and when his direct UN complicated language is charged with powerful emotion to impressive effect.

The originality of Diwan movement, although al-Aqqad, was much more prolific then al-Mazini, once again it is not primarily because of his verses that he is remembered. After his audacious attack on the literary establishment in al-Diwan, he remained a controversial figure for most of his life, but he is a figure of great historical values because his writing gives clear indications of the ideas and literary trends fashionable in Egypt in the early decades of the twentieth century. He called constantly for poetry of the individual and emotions which would be a more authentic literary experience than the verses of the neo-classicists. Al-Aqqad proclaimed Hazlitt the champion of the imagination and the passions as the imam of the new school literature, and quotes the names of Words Worth, Byron and Shelley as great

[184] Badawi M.M, Modern Arabic literature. P-90-91

influences on his generation. He produced no fewer than eight volumes of poetry, of which the first collection published in 1928 in the most significant: it is in four sections and covers the period from 1916. In the Diwan literature, one of the sources and inspiration of the prefaces written by al-Aqaad himself, he calls for a literature of nature as opposed to the literature of the intellect and reason, very much after the manner of Words worth and Hazlitt. But the contents of his Diwan suggest that al-Aqqad was more consistent in the theory than in the practice of poetry, he is certainly capable of producing highly competent verses of lyrical subjectivity in line with the principles that he advocates, but he is equally prone to producing work that is both prosaic and uninspired. The impact of the English romantics is clearly detectable in poems such as 'Autumn' (al-kharif), 'Reflections on sunset' (Sawanib al-Ghurab) and 'Onset of Winter' (Gudam al-Shita) and it is worth adding that the language of these poems is of a simplicity and a lack of pretension of which Words Worth himself would have approved, far removed from the tradition laden rhetoric of neo-classical poetry. One of the best examples of this new language of poetry in action is elegy on a little girl (Ritha tiflab) in which the beauty and innocence of the child accentuate the tragedy of her untimely death.

The poet is able to recapture her happy image only in dreams which are dispelled by the light of the morning:

Make merry in our hearts and laugh in our souls,

But when the morning shines, go back, hurry on before it.

How harsh for little ones is the prison of the tomb.[185]

In the common sources and originality of Diwan literature and inspiration with al-Mazini and al-Aqqad reveals that Abbasid poets such as

[185] Badawi M.M, Modern Arabic literature. P-90-91

Ibn al-Rumi, Ibn al-Farid and Abu ala al-Ma'arri were important models for him, forming and intriguing combination of inspirational sources with the English lyrical poets. The another sources and originality of the Diwan, the subsequent volumes of verses that appeared after 1928 and little to the story of al-Aqqad as a poet, although some of the prefaces are of interest for the light they shed on literary debates and the general development of literary thought in this period. In his introduction to 'The wayfarer' (Abir sabil), 1937 he calls for a greatly increased variety in poetic subject in tastes and imaginations. He makes a plea for the inclusion of simple everyday subjects in the register of poetry, rather after the manner of Words Worth in preface to the lyrical ballad, and he claims to treat such subjects in this his latest collection. While this ideas may sound superfluous and irrelevant to the modern era, in the 1930s such a message was worth proclaiming: in the recent past Arabic poetry had certainly suffered from a surfeit of linguistic ornament and artificial styles, while much of the new romantic poetry had a tendency to concentrate on the more ethereal realms of the romantic imaginations to the theory and criticism of the new poetry, and it is for this that he will be remembered rather than for his own verses.

The originality of Diwan movement both al-Aqqad and al-Mazini owe their reputations to activities strictly outside the realm of poetry, although their onslaught in al Diwan did much to shake the foundations of the imposing neo-classical edifice. In the case of al-Mazini, he has just one short Diwan in two volumes published in Cairo in 1913 and 1917, but thereafter he turned away from poetry, and apart from his career in politics and journalism. He became one of the most important pioneers in the development of the modern Egyptian novel. When he wrote the preface to al-Aqqad four volumes of Diwan in 1928, al-Mazini makes the following highly unfavorable comparison between his own verses and that of his colleague: he applied this standard to myself and concluded that there is no merit in the poetry which he composed,

the English literature is not enhanced by it, and that the loss of it would not be detrimental, so he ceased versifying and stayed his hand from composing poetry.[186]

The sources and originality of the Diwan literature, of the fact that Shukri maintained a much lower profile than either al-Aqqad or al-Mazini was responsible for the poetical neglect of his true significance, for the sources and inspiration of the three members of the Diwan groups, Shukri is by far the most gifted and innovative poet. After the bitter personal attack against him which al-Mazini had published in the 1921 al-Diwan? Shukri faded quietly from the scene, apart from occasional poems and articles published in newspapers and periodicals later in the 1930s al-Mazini admitted how wrong he had been to attack Shukri; he acknowledge the debt he owed to him as one who had opened his eyes to European literature, and to English literature in particular. Al-Mazini confessed that during the early formative period of his life Shukri was something of a master to him in these important new fields. Shukri was at the height of his creative powers between the years 1909 to 1919, his first volumes of verse appeared in 1909 just before his departure for England and the second section appeared in 1913 after his return.

In the prefaces to this section that Shukri reveals the depth of his knowledge of poetry and criticism in eighteenth and nineteenth century England, and the extent to which he felt able to adapt many of these ideas to literature in Egypt. He complains strongly of the lifeless artificial nature of contemporary Arabic poetry, and scorns the age-old imagery current in amatory verse which still centered round the moon, the branch of the willow, the hill in the desert, the pearl, the grape and the eyes of the wild cow. His complaints are in the language and terms of Hazlitt, Keats, Coleridge or Words Worth throughout the preface to the third and fourth volumes Shukri

[186] Badawi M.M, Modern Arabic literature. P-92

insists on the vital role of the imagination and the passion and he extends the meaning of Atifa to include emotional polarities such as love-hate, hope-despair, jealousy-remorse, and bravery-cowardice. In what seems to be a direct inspiration and paraphrase from Hazlitt's lectures on the English poets, he speaks of poetry as the language of passions, the imagination and good taste, and at one point he repeats the coleridgean distinction between the superior faculty of the imagination and the not so elevated faculty of fancy of poetry. Other familiar sources and originality of ideas from the romantic tradition include the poet as a person of special vision capable of glimpsing immortality the need for simple everyday language in poetry, and the insistence on the primacy of beauty in all things.[187]

The sources and originality of the Diwan Literature, there is a general lack of variety in all his doleful introspection which reminds one of the consistent gloom and endurance of Abbasid poets such as Abbas b. al-Ahnaf or Aabul atahiya. Yet Shukri was one of the outmost importance for the introduction of ideas from English literature into the development of modern Arabic poetry, and his vital contribution to the lyrical poetry of personal meditation in Arabic, with his hopes and aspirations, and his ultimate despair, he represents the voice and experience of his generation, which so many frustrations in social and political spheres. Unlike both of his former colleagues, al-Aqqad, al-Mazini and Shukri remained a prisoner of his own particular psychological crisis, and did not overcome it as they did by a sense of humour or ridicule, or by the immersing himself sources, inspiration and originality of Diwan literature in the social and political issues of the time. These are the main sources and originality of Diwan literature to modern Arabic language and literature.

[187] Badawi M.M, Modern Arabic literature. P-93-94

2.3. Inspiration of the Non-Arabs to Diwan groups

The inspiration of the non-Arabs to Diwan groups, like Shukri, Al-Mazini and al-Aqqad they expressed their poetry a valuable attitude to existence or a philosophical of life. In the preface of Shukri's fifth collection (1916) he advocated reading foreign literature: if the Arabic poets read the literature of other nation, they will profit by novelty of their themes and the gates of creativity will be open to them; and it is justifying this plea, it is true, by reminding his readers of the fact that the classical poets like, Al-Mutannabi, Al-Radi and Al-Mu'arri had also been influenced by the non-Arabs learning of their day. It is obvious that the innovators were greatly stimulated in their efforts by European, chiefly English poetry, curiously enough; however, the young Egyptian literary revolutionaries of around 1910 derived their main inspiration of the non-Arabs not so much from contemporary English and European literature as from the literature of a hundred or more years earlier. Apart from their belief in the organic unity of the poems, these three poets Al-Mazini, Shukri and al-Aqqad had much in common although by the time the Diwan was published they had ceased to form a group.[188] All three poets had a serious and lofty conception of poetry and literature in general. The inspiration of the non-Arabs like-Words Worth, Keats and Shelley the later perhaps taking pride of place, and among the critic Hazlitt were a revelation to the young Egyptian romanticists. Their admiration for these English writers lead to translation and emulation, the latter often boarding on imitation and plagiarism. The influence of the English literature in general, not only of the 'lake poets' is obvious from the large number of translations and imitations of English poetry included on volumes published by the poets of the Diwan school. Shukri usually omitted to mention the

[188] Brugman J, An introduction to the History of modern Arabic literature in Egypt P-96

sources of the poems he imitated but at later admitted that for example, 'al-shair wasural al kamal' in his second collection (1913) had been inspired by Shelley and 'al-Zawgah al-Ghadirah' inspired by Byron. Al-Aqqad first collection (1916) contained translation of fragments from Shakespeare, for example, the last part of 'Venus and Adonis' of a poem Robert Burns and of one by William Cowper.[189] As al-Mazini constantly maintained sincerity of prime importance in literature. This is come out clearly also in al-Aqqad's attempt, which is not always successful to write about ordinary scenes from everyday life in Egypt no less than in his well-known remarks in the preface to his volumes of poems on the curlew, which are obviously inspired by the various English romantic poems written on or addressed to a number of birds in Golden Treasury. Al-Mazini did not always answer Shukris description of him as an obvious plagiarist; in his second collection (1917) he did mention the American J.R.Lowel, the Jacobean Edmund Waller and Shelley as sources of inspiration. The innovative little of the poems of the Diwan poets especially their early work clearly show the dominating impacted of Western and in particular English poetry. These poems all breathe a truly romantic atmosphere and outlook on life. Al-Mazini was later accused by his former friend Shukri of plagiarizing the work of English poets like Shelley and Hood, an accusation against which he put up only a weak defense. Shukri's poem 'To the wind' (al-Ii'trih) in his fifth collection (1916) a subject un heard on in the classical tradition is rightly considered a direct imitation of Shelley's 'Ode to the West Wind' and al-Aqqad 'al-karwan', dedicated to the karwan bird, strongly reminds one of the Shelley's 'Ode to skylark'. The three Egyptian poets of Diwan groups cited as a sources of inspiration to Egyptian writers, which includes the names of Words Worth, Shelley, Byron, Carlyle, Browning, Tennyson and Hardy. And the other American writers inspired of the poems, they are Emerson, Longfellow, Poe and Whiteman. Of course, this

[189] Brugman J, An introduction to the History of modern Arabic literature in Egypt P-97

partisan account of the whole movement given by Al-Aqqad, who is one of its staunch protagonists, is in many respects highly exaggerated. These are the inspiration of the non-Arabs by Diwan groups.

2.4. Revival of Modern Arabic literature by Diwan group

The revival of modern Arabic literature by Diwan groups, the Egyptian poets Shukri, al-Mazini and Al-Aqqad, they expressed in which the great influence of English on the Egyptian literary revival was probably largely due to the fact that the English was used at the Teacher's College 'Madrasat al-Muallimin', a school established in 1928, where some of the writers of the new movement were trained. The revival of Diwan groups, like Shukri, al-Mazini and al-Aqqad, the three poets expressed the English poetry of his verses and translation of English poetry in modern Arabic literature. This was, as far as we can see now, one of the best schools in Egypt, offering a widely varied programmed. It was one of the few schools of higher education in Egypt and of greater importance than one would expect a Teacher's Training College to be. The teaching of the English was probably of a high standard and the students were introduced of English literature, most probably with a strong emphasis on the romanticist. Shukri himself has described how impressed he was one of the Teachers at this school, who kindled his enthusiasm for English literature.[190]

The literary revival of modern Arabic literature in Egypt in the early years of the twentieth century should not over look the literature of the Mahjar, the Arab emigration of America, especially since this literature come to bloom just before Diwan poets started their publications. The revival of three Egyptian poets like Shukri, Al-Mazini and al-Aqqad, they revive the Arabic literary criticism of modern Arabic poetry and English lyrical poetry.

[190] Badawi M.M, A critical introduction to Modern Arabic poetry. P-88

In common with al-Mazini, al-Aqqad reveals that Abbasid poets such as Ibn al-Rumi, Ibn al-Farid and Abu ala'al-Maa'ri.

The famous Diwan poet of modern Arabic literature al-Aqqad's account does reveal one or two significant point about his groups, their extreme reaction against Shawqi and their direct indebtedness to Western literature and particular English literature. The two points, in fact are not completely unrelated. Al-Aqqad's groups rejected Shawqi, because they came to know specimens of English poetry which seem to involve totally different principles. Their whole position is crystallized in their attitude to the question of the unity of a poem. The great majority of al-Aqqad, Al-Mazini and Shukri's contemporaries, however, were content to give emotion free rein. One of the distinctive features of Diwan groups was that their foreign culture was English, where as even in the Arab countries controlled by Britain it was the French who were more active in educational field and made the deeper mark on literature. Some of the critics therefore perceived the different between the revival nations in terms of their provenance and were impatient with what seemed to be UN necessary complications.

The revival of modern Arabic literature by Diwan groups, the strictest understanding of romanticism came through the Diwan School, two of whose members, al-Mazini and Shukri attended the Teacher's Training College in Cairo where they were exposed to revive English literature. Al-Aqqad although his only formal schooling was the primary level, proved the most constant and energetic and perhaps also the most scholarly. The influenced by the critic Hazlitt, Coleridge and other leading English critics of the preceding century, the perceived that the mark of the true poet is not merely to give vent to his emotions, but to capture a vision of reality, and the fit his creative activity to it. To this key poets of Diwan groups, understanding the attached a number of related concepts, such as the organic unity of the poem and the

distinction between wit and imagination, which have earned a permanent place in the vocabulary of Arab Critics the members of Diwan groups, for example, were undoubtedly more revive the influential as critics than a poets. It has become common to speak of various literary schools' functioning then, such as the Diwan School named after a single book that two of three temporarily allied poet-critics produced together. The derogation could even acquired a racialist tone, as al-Mazini after again asserting that all Arab poets were confined to one path by dint of imitation, added that of all the poets.[191]

The revival of modern Arabic literature, the Diwan groups writing in Arabic, the writers and the great man, the ones most deserving of being designated as geniuses were of non Arab extraction of modern Arabic literature.[192] In virtually all the varsities of criticism practiced then, from the academic to the impressionists, one finds of a marked concentration on the emotional power of the individual poet or writer. And Abdur rahman Shukri was giving the voice to a wide spread assumption, close to that of the late Victorians.[193] The three Diwan poets revive of modern Arabic literature to write essays and poetry in literary criticism, the magnitude of his critical oeuvre and his incessant efforts in the field of literary criticism did make him the most important critic of the Diwan School. These are the revival of literary criticism of Diwan groups of modern Arabic literature.

[191] Badawi M.M, Modern Arabic literature. P-434
[192] Badawi M.M, Modern Arabic literature. P-427
[193] Brugman J, An introduction to the History of modern Arabic literature in Egypt P-98