Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad as an Innovative Critic in Arabic Literature

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Abstract
This paper contains the Egyptian innovative critic Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad who came to prominence in the first half of the twentieth century. Through the influence of al-Aqqad's criticism of the generation that later were led to venture into Arabic literary criticism. Al-Aqqad for the first half of the 20th century is one of the chiefs of the greater clans of criticism. He achieved his greatest fame as a critic, even though some contemporary critics called him also a great, and even a naturally gifted critic. His significance for modern Egyptian literary criticism lies in the fact that he restored to literary criticism the prestige it had lacked for centuries. With Al-Aqqad’s contributions to new criticism in the sense of innovation, he expanded the views that the poem is a legitimate objective of study in itself, a monumental thing in itself and a unique but highly-ordered organism. Description for its own sake was not practised by the new critics except al-Aqqad in Arabic literary criticism.

Introduction
Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad was a famous poet, translator, historian, journalist, philosopher and an innovative critic of the twentieth century in Arabic literature. As an Egyptian critic, he was known for his patriotism toward the country of his birth. He used his writing to spread his pro-democratic beliefs and was known as a leading innovator poet and Arabic literary critic of 20th century. His career is the most emblematic of the role that the truly gifted poet rather critic came to play within the fabric of Islam, especially following the breakup of central authority that we can observe with the establishment of Arabic literary criticism in the first half of the twentieth century. He was influenced by the western thoughts, ideological and social theories like materialistic Marxism: His ideas were borrowed from the English critic Hazlitt and French writer Gustave Le Bon.

Al-Aqqad came to the scenario of modern Arabic literary criticism with new thoughts, trends and philosophies and by these thoughts he judged the critics and poets. He illustrated his new thoughts and philosophies in various books of criticism. He applied his new trends and thoughts and techniques in his book “Khulasat al-Yawmiyyat” which was published in 1922. He was the first critic who made the Arabic literary criticism valuable and he changed the meaning of poetry and literature and he explained in the principles of literary criticism various tools, which did not exist before him.
Thus, this Egyptian critic has immensely contributed to the Arabic literature both thematically and artistically. He is very rich, impressive, attractive and of very high standard. His vast contribution to the Arabic literary criticism has been the thrust of this paper.

Data and Methodology
Data for the present study are based on the qualitative research conducted using content analysis approach. For the purpose of the study both the primary and secondary data materials such, books, and the like are used in gathering required information. All the data are gathered from extensive reading on al Aqqad’s works, involvement in criticism as well as his writings.

Objectives of the Study
The main objectives of this article are
i. To show the attitudes of Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad as an innovative critic.
ii. To trace the development strategy in Arabic literary criticism by Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad.
iii. To discuss the involvement of al-Aqqad’s new trends as well as his writings in Arabic literature.

Hypothesis
Mainly, the study attempts to show how such new trends and movements derived from al-Aqqad had influenced his disciple in Arabic literary criticism in the last century which exposed him to literature and views which were paramount in Arabic literature and to show how al-Aqqad’s innovative attitude has its impact on neo-classical poets of Egypt and later brings the literature towards material and intellectual development.

Result and Discussion
Al-Aqqad as an Innovative Critic
Al-Aqqad as a critic was popular for his unique opinion that is different from others in criticism and poetry. He brought his various aspects of criticism and its explanation was found in the journal in al-Azhar. Arabic literary criticism originated by al-Aqqad in the first half of the twentieth century was a new step that gave a new insight to the growth of stylistics. In his literary criticism, al-Aqqad reinforced the close reading of the texts and he paid attention to the philosophical and scientific details of the text. The very function of poetry, he suggests, is to use language in innovative ways. If the transformation of meaning leads to difficulty and indeed obscurity that should not inhibit the enjoyment of the poem’s reception, Al-Aqqad is in many ways one of the symbols of the profound changes that were to have major impact on the direction and nature of Arabic literary criticism.

Al-Aqqad as a critic on modern Arabic poetry was the most unchangeable of the Diwan group. In his criticism he used both the theoretical and applied criticism and was firm
in his call for modernism. Among the Al-Diwan School, Shukri composed marshal poetry and extensively used this types of rhymes and innovated in the metres of poetry. Thus, he wrote compassionate, social and historical stories. Shukri as a critic even seems to believe that it was the controversy over the appreciation of neo-classical poets. His modernist and philosophical outlook had offered perhaps the first theoretical view of modernity not simply as situated on a time scale but as a process of change. Al-Aqqad reacted against the neo-classical poets, al-Barudi, Shawqi and Hafiz. He attacked Shawqi as early as 1911 in his book “Khulasat al-Yawmiyyat” and again in 1921 in his contribution to the famous pamphlet al-Diwan. Al-Aqqad in that place criticized the language and the poetic form of the neo-classical poets. He criticized the neo-classical poets, because of this violent use of figures of speech like the Tawirah, the Kinayah and the Ginas which were written in his collection of essays “al-Fusul” (1922.) He totally opposed the neo-classical poets for their unattainable use of words. According to al-Aqqad the language of poetry is the language of aesthetics and the language of poetry is the language of the intellect. Among the Diwan group, al-Aqqad criticized neo-classical poets as Shawqi, Hafiz Ibrahim, al-Barudi, Hanfi Nasib, Ismail Sabri, Tawfiq al-Bakri, Abdullah Nadim and the others because he was inclined towards innovating unknown patterns yet he did not depart in any of them from the rules of poetry and language. Al-Aqqad attacked traditional poets. According to his views, some of the requisites of a good poem are organic unity, sincerity, the avoidance of exaggeration, artificiality and inflated language.

Al-Aqqad’s criticism is very healthy artistic activity on neo-classical poets, which partakes of the intellectual, emotional and aesthetic achievement of a poet, a poet who creates, particularly the literature of power as emphasized by him. Al-Aqqad attacked Shawqi for using in a speech by one character different metres and rhymes, but he did not take into consideration that the role, its tone and the changed manner of the peculiar nature might prove this or even furnish the role more essential and expressive. He viewed sudden change from one metre and rhyme to another, especially in one and the same speech. The neo-classical poets who made unceasing efforts to find a new medium which would give them more freedom than the rigid, stiff, and over dignified form of the Qasida, or the complicated form of strophic verse, allowed and would save them from sinking to the level of prose towards which both Shi’r Marshal and Shi’r Manthur tends.

His criticism on neo-classical Arabic poets like al-Mutanabbi (1923-24) and Bashshar b. Burd (1925) attacked them violently in their personality and their works. Apart from Mutanabbi and Bashshar b. Burd had ideas about Ibn Rumi. Ibn Rumi made his debut as a poet and the recognition he received resulted in his appointment as court poet. He was a literary critic, but his practical literary criticism was in a small way. He wrote about the classical Arabic poets Mutanabbi, Bashshar b. Burd, Ibn al-Rumi, Gamil and Abu Nuwas which were published theory in the newspaper al-Duster. In his work “Shu’ara Misr fi bi’atihim fi’l-gil al-Madi (1937)”, he wrote about the Egyptian past and classical poets and
poetry but did not deal with his contemporary poets. In practical literary criticism, al-Aqqad carries further fields in his thoughts on badness, in poetry.

However, al-Aqqad was the first person who spoke of this because he was influenced by western literary critics, particularly by Hazlitt. So the unit of objectivity is that the objective of ode must be one and it is not possible for anyone to mix these objectives with another objective in a single ode. Moreover, the objectivity must be single in the entire ode. The movement of innovation is influenced and contributed by romance and it terminology was the organic unity, thus the critics colour after the famous critic al-Aqqad and al-Mazini. So the organic unity, according to critics, scholars and the literary personalities like Ibn Khaldun was of the opinion of the earlier critics as he went in favour of verse unit and he intended the same meaning and prospect on different topics.

Al-Aqqad’s Development Strategy in Arabic Literary Criticism

Al-Aqqad was the first among three Diwan poets to write essays in Arabic literary criticism. His continual exertion of strength in the field of Arabic literary criticism did make him the significant critic of Diwan School. He believes that criticism should be a systematic and organized study. In his easy in literary criticism, which were published in 1911 under the title “Khulasat al-Yawmiyyat”, he claims that much supposed criticism is that contributes to a systematic structure of knowledge. He observed that the poet is able to express his imagination and thoughts, through deft and skilful use of word which are expressed in his book “Khulasat al-Yawmiyyat.”

Al-Aqqad was the strongest and most unsteady personality in the development of Arabic literary criticism. He had begun to write on poetic unity as early as 1908. In 1912 he wrote down the book “Khulasat al-Yawmiyyat” in which he wrote article on literature and life. In 1913 he wrote the introduction of Diwan Shukri and first Diwan of al-Mazini. Shukri’s Diwan was “al-Shi’r wa Mazayah” and al-Mazini’s Diwan was “Khawatir ann al-Tab wa’l-Taqlid.” Moreover, he wrote articles about the new poetic theories. His most important books regarding criticism are “al-Fusul” (1922), “Mutalaat fi’l Kutub wa’l Hayat” (1924), “Muraja’at fi’l Adab wa’l-Funun” (1925), “Sa’at bain al-Kutub” (1927), and his most important book on the history of modern Arabic poetry in Egypt, is “Shu’ara Misr wa Bi’atuhum fi’l Jil al-Madi” (1937). His two books of articles on poetry and literature are-“Ashtat Mujtami’at fi’l- Lughya wa’l Adab” (1955), and in 1960 he published “al-Lughya al Sha’ira” respectively. He wrote on classical poets like Ibn Rumi in 1931, on Umar Ibn Abi Rabi’a in 1943 and on Jamil Bathaina in 1944. Al-Aqqad examined their poetic form and structure and the texture closely to see whether it actually belongs to the genre or the subgenre in which it is placed. He followed the poetic image in their poetry drawn from the poet’s actual life.
Conclusion

Al-Aqqad was an outstanding critic, his criticism achieved good results and his objectivity in literary criticism rightly deplores that the theory of badness in poetry has never received the study which it deserves, partly on account of its difficulty. These early critical articles were little known which were included in the volume of essays “al-Fusul” (1922). He was valued as a critic of the generation, but his ornate style was too much for even those of his contemporaries who themselves strove to revive the new Arabic literary criticism. Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad tried to win the co-operation of all Egyptian poets and to start a movement of objective criticism based upon western methods, especially on English criteria of literary criticism. However in his criticism he declared himself to be the founder of a new poetic school.

References

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