

Arabic Fables in Contemporary Garbs: Ahmed Shawqī's Reconstruction of Fables in the Modern Era

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Abstract : The fable has lent itself to memorable imitations and reinventions. The writing of fables, in prose and verse, was widely cultivated not only in pre-Islamic Arabia but also in the middle ages, reaching its culmination with the Egyptian poet and man of letters Ahmad Shawqī (1899-1932), who revived the ancient tradition, a relatively minor and unexploited genre in the modern era, and re-wrote rimed fables with an Arab Islamic flavor, articulating a set of modern ethico-political concepts and sensibilities such as a belief in good judgment in governance, individual liberty, democracy, a sense of the brotherhood of man and justice. This essay aims to restore the 20th Century poet to his rightful place in the international pantheon of literary achievement, and offers an examination of the Arabian fabulist tradition as it appears in Arabic literature, and a treatment of this genre re-visiting a few representative samples of Ahmad Shawqī collection of fables and their implications for contemporary politics in the Middle East.

Keywords : fable, politics, governance, democracy, ethics of care

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