

## INTERTEXTUALITY- FOREIGN INFLUENCE ON THE ARABIC POETIC DRAMA

**Yaseen Kittani**

*Senior Lecturer (A), Dean of the faculty of Humanities, Al-Qasemi Academy,  
Baqa al-Gharbiyya 30100, P.O.B. 1771, Israel. Email: ysnk538@qsm.ac.il*

**Fayyad Haibi**

*(Ph.D) Lecturer in Modern Arabic Literature, Al-Qasemi Academy,  
Baqa al-Gharbiyya 30100, Israel.*

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**ABSTRACT:** *This study seeks to examine the relationship between Aḥmad Shawqī's *The Death of Cleopatra* (Shawqī 1929), one of the early Arabic poetic plays, and Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* (1607). The study provides a rationale as to the reasons behind assuming an existence of influences over Shawqī as he set out to write this play, proving all along Shawqī's incontrovertible prior knowledge of Shakespeare's Tragedies, particularly *Antony and Cleopatra*. The study ventures beyond the mere scrutiny of a literary work- together with the nonliterary details derived from history, for example- to an evaluation of Shawqī's adaptation of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*. The study reveals that Shawqī was unquestionably reproducing *Antony and Cleopatra* when he wrote his play. This reproduction figures in many forms: borrowing, paraphrasing, stilisierung simulation, etc. Apart from these strategies of imitation, the study, however, sheds light on the poetic elements where Shawqī showcases his originality as a playwright who reframes what he adapts from Shakespeare and Plutarch (See Plutarch 1950, pp. 441-488) to be in line with his own literary thought and ideological philosophies.*

**KEYWORDS:** Literary Influence, Intertextuality, Cleopatra, Shakespeare, Shawqī

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### INTRODUCTION

Literary influence has been exhaustively addressed by Western scholars and critics, who seem to have inconsistent views of the notion and how to approach it. While some argue that an appropriate approach should in the first place examine how a writer is influenced by another writer, other critics believe that the genuine influence only appears in the literary works themselves, thus steering the debate away from the assumption that a writer might be influenced by another earlier or contemporary figure.

The approach to literary influence primarily focuses on the influenced writer. Typically, a scholar would trace the sources of the discernible artistic creativity in the influenced writer– a task that basically hinges on aesthetic rather than quantitative standards that rely on collecting data, facts and evidence (Weisstein 1968, p. 36).

Shaw (Shaw 1961, p. 66) argues that for influence to be meaningful, it “must be manifested in an intrinsic form, upon or within the literary works themselves. It may be shown in style, images, characters, themes, mannerisms, and it may also be shown in content, thought, ideas, the general weltanschauung presented by particular works.”

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The assumptions that influence does exist presume a particular similarity between the two works in question. For example, when we assume that writer A has influenced writer B, then, after conducting an aesthetic critical analysis, we can safely conclude that there are several similarities between the works of writer A and writer B. This, however, is insufficient to identify the nature and degree of influence. Rather, we are merely enumerating how the two works have something(s) in common, for influence entails an authentic relationship between the two authors' works (Hassan 1955, vol. 14, p.66-68).

Spanish writer Claudio Guillén believes that the reference to the starting point, on the one hand, and to a certain result in another course, on the other hand, is not an indication of how to span the distance between these two points, and it does not explain the very nature of the process of creation. He, thus, renounces the idea of transmission, which states that influence involves a transfer of literary forms and contents from one work to another. One must not, as such, ignore the fine psychological secrets of artistic creativity (Guillén 1959, vol. 1, p. 175-192).

These assumptions would function as guidelines in the search for a particular influence— a process that should be embedded in the pursuit of the elements of reproduction in a literary work, with an eye on the elements reproduced in the new work (Beled 1981, vol. 2, p. 37).

## RATIONAL

A researcher, venturing into literary influence, is typically driven by one of three forces: an author explicitly admitting his/her influence by a previous work; a critic bringing into focus a potential common feature between two literary works; or a similarity which is so obvious that it cannot go unnoticed. Now for the tragedy of Cleopatra, many critics saw an affinity between Shawqī's *The Death of Cleopatra* and Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*. Mandūr (Mandūr 1970, p.73-74) contends that Shawqī was inspired by three sources when he wrote this play: history; Shakespeare's *Antonym and Cleopatra* (supposedly introduced to Shawqī in French); and Shawqī's own feelings and purpose behind writing the play. In his reference to Shawqī's sources of inspiration, Hilāl (Hilāl 1965, 10-11) considers Shakespeare as the most influential figure.

## CHANNELS OF INFLUENCE

To answer the question of whether Shawqī was really influenced by Shakespeare, one needs to make sure that both external and internal elements are in evidence. The first external element is *temporality*. Shawqī's *The Death of Cleopatra* was written three centuries after Shakespeare had produced his play. Shawqī, Mandur emphasizes, read *Antony and Cleopatra* in French, as the complete works of Shakespeare had undoubtedly been translated into French long before Shawqī arrived in Paris (Hassān 1972, p. 231).

The second element is *spatiality*. Khidiwi Tawfeeq sent Shawqī in a scholarship to Paris, with an intention of enabling him to have a first-hand contact with the Western culture and literature, so that later he would be prepared to become the "Poet of the Palace." (Hassān 1972, p. 220) Different works by Shawqī provide stark evidence that he had indeed read Shakespeare's works, particularly plays. His acclaimed poem *In Memory of Shakespeare* unearths his awareness of the English renowned figure, while the lyrics Shawqī introduced into *Hamlet* (which would at that time be acted out on Cairo stages) are not but traces of how he had in-depth, thorough knowledge of *Hamlet's* characters and plot (Hassān 1972, p. 332).

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One can, thus, safely conclude that Shawqī was fully aware of Shakespeare's works. This conclusion would enlighten our discussion of the internal elements, i.e. those found in Shawqī's play *The Death of Cleopatra*.

### **What do the two plays have in common?**

Below, we identify the framework of similarities, how profound these similarities are, the nature of the envisioned relationship and the extent to which Shawqī was influenced by Shakespeare. A frequently recurring question that always walks into the scene when it comes to examining the notion of literary influence is: Does similarity between two literary works necessarily mean that the follower has been influenced by the predecessor?

A clear-cut, decisive answer to this question has never been there, as both works might have been inspired by the same source. It is, therefore, incumbent upon the author of this study to draw a scrutinizing comparison that might help in relating the similarity either to a shared source or to the assumption that the follower has adapted the antecedent's work. Bradley (1909) cites Coleridge saying that 'of all Shakespeare's historical plays, *Antony and Cleopatra* is by far the most wonderful. There is not one in which he has followed history so minutely.' (Bradley 1909, p. 279-308) Meanwhile, in his introduction to *Antony and Cleopatra*, Nathan Alterman claims that Shakespeare had drawn from Thomas North's translation of Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*. Shakespeare, Alterman continues to say, had taken entire texts from the English version, especially from the scene on Antony (Shakespeare 1963, p. 9).

Shawqī's acquaintance with Plutarch is also well attested. Although Mandour believes that Shawqī's source was Egyptologist Gaston Maspero, Shawqī explicitly refers to Plutarch in his analytical notes on *The Death of Cleopatra* (Shawqī 1929, p. 116). Does the two writers' prior knowledge of Plutarch suggest that the similarities in their works is an indication that both of them built on Plutarch? This is rather dubious as Shakespeare's position toward Plutarch is very much different from that of Shawqī. Plutarch's influence on Shakespeare goes beyond the mere historical events to the style, which emboldened Hassan (Hassān 1972, p. 268) to say that what Shakespeare did was nothing but simply rewriting the English translation of Plutarch. Shawqī, on the other hand, did indeed change many historical events and adopted a different style, suggesting that Plutarch had an inverse influence on Shawqī. One should, therefore, be cautious of slipping into false reasoning of the similarities between these two works.

### **SIMILARITY IN CONTENT**

Perhaps the content of Shawqī's work, which is overstuffed with similarities to that of Shakespeare', is but an indication that the former has indeed taken from the latter, as shown below:

1. In *The Death of Cleopatra*, Shawqī says in the words of Cleopatra:

*[Urus, your art is warfare  
Mine is politics  
If Mark is a god  
Then you are a goblin]* (p. 28)

In another scene, Urus addresses Antony saying:

*[I saw you as the war tried the valorous  
I bear witness you were a god in the battlefield  
Your sword was the most vehement  
And your spear was the most lethal]* (p. 53)

Shawqī's reference to Antony as a god is quite symmetrical to Shakespeare in more than one place in *Antony and Cleopatra*. When Philo steps into the stage, he starts with these verses:

*Those his goodly eyes,  
That o'er the files and musters of the war  
Have glowed like plated Mars* (Shakespeare 1966, vol. XII Act I. Sc. I, p. 165)

By the same token, Agrippa refers to Antony, saying:  
*What's Antony? The god of Jupiter.* (Act III. Sc. II, p. 275)

Obviously, Shawqī reference to 'god of the battlefield' corresponds to Shakespeare's 'Mars', while the former's reference to god corresponds to the latter's reference to Jupiter.

2. In Shakespeare's, the soothsayer (asked by Antony "Whose fortunes shall rise higher, Caesar's or mine?)" says:

*Caesar's.  
Therefore, O Antony, stay not by his side:  
Thy demon, that's thy spirit which keeps thee, is  
Noble, courageous high, unmatchable,  
Where Caesar's is not; but, near him, thy angel  
Becomes a fear, as being o'erpower'd: therefore  
Make space enough between you.* (Act II. Sc.III, p. 240/41)

In Shawqī, in a slightly different scene, Cleopatra asks Habra to read Antony's palm. Habra responds:

*[My lord, how mystifying your omen is  
Able to control your own destiny  
While people forcibly live  
If you will, you die soon  
Or live for long]* (Act II, p. 36)

It is here where Shawqī freely paraphrases Shakespeare's message, yet, at the same time, turns Shakespeare's serious situation and style into a comic one, i.e. burlesque. When Antony asked the soothsayer to tell him his future, the soothsayer would truly believe in what he said, and he took action accordingly, thus walking away from Caesar and leaving Athens to settle in Alexandria.

Shawqī, on the other hand, introduced the scene in a frolicsome manner, where Habra flirts with Cleopatra's beautiful hands, which makes Antony say, with a laughter:  
*(He was asked to read the palm, but he turned to versify)* (*The Death of Cleopatra*, p. 39).

3) Moḥammad Mandūr (Mandūr 1970, p. 74) cites another convergent setting. When Octavia enters the palace and finds Cleopatra and her maids all dead, Caesar says:

*The manner of their deaths?!*

*I do not see them bleed.* (Act V. Sc. II, p. 425)

Shawqi only paraphrases Shakespeare's words:

*[It is strange, doctor?!*

*I see a corpse, and still*

*I do not see a trace of a wound]* (*The Death of Cleopatra*, p. 109).

According to Mandūr, this translation of Shakespeare's verses reveals how versatile Shawqī was. He was able to render the verses in a way that retained the English version's both senses of interrogation and exclamation.

In Shawqi, Caesar continues to say:

*[Isn't she more glaring and affectionate*

*Than the basilisks in the morning! ]* (*The Death of Cleopatra*, p. 109).

This is undoubtedly an indication that Shawqī was conjuring up Shakespeare when he was writing his play, for in Shakespeare's play Caesar says:

*But she looks like sleep,*

*As she would catch another Antony*

*In her strong toil of grace.* (Act V. Sc. II, p. 425)

The two works are very much comparable in this scene, as if Shawqī was merely reproducing the words of Shakespeare. In Plutarch, Cleopatra's face was swollen and her skin was ulcerated because of hurting herself for grief over Antony. (Plutarch 1950, p. 481/482) Shawqi followed in Shakespeare's steps and adopted his narrative (not that of Plutarch); thus leaving no room for speculation on whether Shawqī was influenced by Shakespeare or not.

4. Hilāl (Hilāl 1965, p. 18) cites another comparable part of a scene, namely that when Dercetas informs Caesar of Antony's death. Caesar laments Antony's death saying:

*But yet let me lament*

*With tears as sovereign as the blood of hearts*

*That thou, my brother, my competitor*

*In top of all design, my mate in empire,*

*Friend and companion in the front of war,*

*The arm of mine own body, and the heart*

*Where mine his thoughts did kindle-that our stars,*

*Unreconcilable, should divide*

*Our equalness to this* (Act V. Sc. I p. 394)

In Shawqi, Caesar asks Cleopatra to allow him see Antony:

*[Oh, Ma'am, would you allow me*

*To see my warfare companion*

*The one I was always his ally in the battlefield*

*And who was always my champion in naval combats*

*We would together institute pride for Rome  
And plant her laurel in every land]* (*The Death of Cleopatra*, p. 81).

And later:  
*[Death has settled it down  
Silenced the shambles  
And ceased the waging war]* (*The Death of Cleopatra*, p. 82).

It seems that Shawqi's simulation here was independent of the content of Shakespeare's play.

5. In *Antony and Cleopatra*, Philo tells Demetrius about Antony:

*Take but good note, and you shall see in him  
The triple pillar of the world transform'd  
Into a strumpet's fool: behold and see.* (Act I. Sc. I, p. 166/67)

There is a quite comparable scene in *The Death of Cleopatra*. When Roman leaders see Antony steeped in his pleasures with Cleopatra, one of them says:

*[Let go of Antony  
As I see inebriation ruined him  
He was a discerning young man  
But now he's become a naïve lad]* (*The Death of Cleopatra*, Act II, p.35).

All these comparable scenes are not simply parallels that exist only when there is no causal relationship. Causality, as we have demonstrated, does exist. Still, some might argue that these points of convergence are mere allusions. An allusion requires deliberateness, which is not the case, either. Paraphrasing, then, is perhaps the only characterization that might hold true.

6. When Antony dies, Shakespeare depicts Cleopatra mourning:  
*The crown o' the earth doth melt. My lord!* (Act IV. Sc. XIII, p. 385)

This is the same idea featured in Shawqī:

*[The Earth's axis has faltered  
And the equilibrium of nations, as well]* (*The Death of Cleopatra*, Act III, p.77).

7. In Shakespeare's play, the echo of Antony's words to Cleopatra (that she will be shown in Rome in front of the audience and ruptured by Octavia's nails) severely impacted Cleopatra that she started to shiver. She bewails to her maid Iras:

*Iras, what think s't thou?  
Thou, an Egyptian puppet, shalt be shown  
In Rome, as well as I, mechanic slaves  
With greasy aprons, rules, and hammers, shall  
Uplift us to the view. In their thick breathes,  
Rank of gross diet, shall we be enclouded,  
And forc'd to drink their vapour* (Act V. Sc. II, p. 415).

Similarly, when she commits suicide, she talks to the snake:

*Come, thou mortal wretch  
With thy sharp teeth this knot inttinsicate  
Of life at once untie: poor venomous fool,  
Be angry, and despatch. O, could'st thou speak!  
That I might hear thee call great Caesar, ass  
Unpoliced!* (Act V. Sc. II, p. 422)

In Shawqī's play, however, Cleopatra was very much careworn, though Shawqī relates her concern not to her dignity as a human being, but to her glory as Queen of Egypt. In Shawqī's play, Cleopatra says:

*[Shall we allow the horses' hooves to tread on Egypt's crown]* (*The Death of Cleopatra*, Act III, p.67).

This concern appears in different talks:

*[Father, I fear neither ouster nor death  
All what I fear is to be taken as a captive]* (p. 67)

And elsewhere, she says:

*[Caesar is trying hard to present me tomorrow  
Like a captive before the people of Rome]* (p. 85)

8. Shawqī forges a long dialogue between Anubis and Cleopatra about the snake. She asks and he answers: Will my beauty remain intact? Will I turn pale? What about my lips? How does a canine bite look like?

In his answers, Anubis encourages her by telling her that the victim does not feel the pain; the poison does not wrench beauty; the color of the skin becomes brighter; the eyelids will look like those of a sleeping woman; and the canine's bite is milder than a needle prick. Therefore, Cleopatra plugs her courage and continues her dialogue:

*[You should bring me the snake  
No matter the spears and swords]* (Act III, pp 68-71).

In his play, Shakespeare incorporates a similar dialogue between Cleopatra and the farmer. She asks him about Serpent of the Nile which kills but never hurts. He tells her about the noble woman who has recently died from its bite, but felt no pain (Act V, Scene II, pp 418-419). Besides, in her conversation with Iras, who died quietly in her arms, Cleopatra considers her stroke of death as a lover's pinch which hurts but is still desired:

*If thou and nature can so gently part,  
The stroke of death is as lover's pinch  
Which hurts, and is desire'd* (Act V. Sc. II, p. 415).

9. In Shakespeare, Cleopatra asks Iras to give her some clothes and put the crown on her head– in her fancy imagining that Antony is calling her name:

*Give me my robe, put on my crown; I have*

*Immortal longings in me: Now no more  
The juice of Egypt's grape shall moist this lip:  
Yare, yare, good Iras; quick. Methinks I hear  
Antony call; I see him rouse himself  
To praise my noble act. (Act V. Sc. II, p. 421)*

In Shawqi, Cleopatra makes the same demand from her maid:

*[Oh, my daughter  
Come, bedeck me for my death  
Clad me with a gown  
That Antony would love to set eyes on  
A gown that I used to dress  
When I would meet him young  
And forget not to  
Provide me with the crown] (The Death of Cleopatra, p.107).*

These are the same demands in Shakespeare's play: the gown, the crown and awaiting Antony. These are but examples on Shakespeare's traces in Shawqi's play. However, in terms of the author's purpose, the characters and the build-up of the play, the two plays are distinct. Below, we identify the points of divergence in the two works.

## **DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO PLAYS**

In his analytical notes, Shawqi raises a question: Shouldn't Egyptian authors do justice to this oppressed woman- at least chronicling that abstract history as it was- ascribing to her nobility and goodwill? In *The Death of Cleopatra*, the answer is manifested in two new conceptions: the history of Cleopatra as conceived by Shawqi himself; and Cleopatra's personal life as depicted in Western chronicles. However, even when considering the alleged scandalous life she lived, Shawqi gives her the right to defend herself, her policy and her passion (Shawqi 1929, p. 117-118).

Shawqi's distortion of history and the idealism he bestowed on Cleopatra raise two important questions: To what extent does an author have the right to change historical facts? Why do authors tend to write about historical events?

Aristotle (Aristotle 1961) expounded this idea in details:

It is, moreover, evident from what has been said, that it is not the function of the poet to relate what has happened, but what may happen- what is possible according to the law of probability or necessity. The poet and the historian differ not by writing in verse or in prose. The work of Herodotus might be put into verse, and it would still be a species of history, with meter no less than without it. The true difference is that one relates what has happened, the other what may happen. Poetry, therefore, is a more philosophical and a higher thing than history: for poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular.

In other words, historians do not say what they imagine, nor do they add to the events from their own. Their originality might only figure in directing events and arranging them in such a way that uncovers human aspects. Writers and poets, on the other hand, have free hand in

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saying what they imagine, and in doing so, they fill the gaps in history and interpret it to create human models.

There are two viewpoints on how literary men see history. Some critics deny writers the right to change historical facts, particularly major ones. If they change these facts, then what they are producing is fake. Writers can choose to write about whatever events they see of significance; however, they are not allowed to change these events. Still, they can interpret history as they understand it, and to the point that helps them build creative, sensible works (Mandūr 1963, p. 77).

The second standpoint gives the literary man the right to modify historical events, whatever he wants, and perhaps the celebrated French author Alexander Dumas was able to expressly articulate this notion when he said that ‘What is History? A nail on which I hang my novels’. By this statement, he meant to first question the credibility of historical events that we take for granted, and second to allow the writer to transpose and modify historical events to fit with the requirements of the literary work or even to the intentions the writer has in mind. (Mandūr, *ibid*, p. 77)

### **Why do writers choose to write about the past?**

There are three motives behind writing historical drama:

1. The desire to give history an in-depth understanding that a historian usually fails to notice: Typically, this is achieved through referring to the contemporary acceptable behavior and the system of values governing that behavior, thus incorporating such manifestations in the portrayal of historical figures.
2. Using history as a model to elicit lessons and shed light on the present life: Hilāl (Hilāl 1965, p. 90) argues that the past helps us illuminate our present; hence evoking issues that were probable only in the past, but still have some echoes when it comes to understanding human values or the call for change.
3. The tendency to carry the reader out of the life concerns to a beautiful virtual world: By doing so, the playwright sneaks away in search of the outmoded romanticism that can only be found in history. This escape, according to Hilāl, drifts us away from- or even denies- our reality, carrying us to an imaginative, ideal world where justice has the final say (Hilāl 1965, p. 89).

Turning back to *The Death of Cleopatra*, what was the force that drove Shawqī to write about a historic figure? Arguably, Shawqī's motive was none of the above. Unlike Shakespeare and other writers (who portrayed Cleopatra as a wanton), Shawqī pictures her as a national leader who loved her homeland and defended its national dignity- one who, finding herself unable to take Rome by force and valor, strives to take it through guile and deceit. (Dayf 1960, p. 184) In doing so, Shawqī rewrites events so that they would achieve his goals of characterizing Cleopatra as an Egyptian politician, of Greek descent, who allowed only a little room for love- a leader who was keen to keep Egypt a sovereign nation in the face of the powerful Rome. (‘Abd al-ṣabūr 1982, p. 43)

Western writers, including Shakespeare, portrayed the relationship between Antony with Cleopatra as a devastating love- picturing the struggle between lovers as a conflict between the East and the West. They portrayed Cleopatra as a cunning woman with bestial desires- a model for Eastern mentality (Hilāl 1965, p. 11). The same conclusion was deduced by

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Hassān (Hassān 1972, p. 299), who says that Shakespeare presented that conflict as one between two forces that are very different in nature. Rome, with its power and ambition, is represented by Octavia, while Egypt, with its wealth and lavish life, is represented by Cleopatra. Antony, on the other hand, was torn apart, with a heart swaying between Egypt and Rome. Since Shakespeare looked at that conflict as a struggle between two different civilizations (i.e. the East vs. the West), the combat was inevitable.

Shawqī, as a response, stands to defend Cleopatra against this 'blatant encroachment', as he says in his notes on the play. He depicts Cleopatra as one with homage, solemnity and wisdom; one who is always driven by national interests. He, thus, defended her as a representative of the Egyptians. In the Battle of Actium, Shawqī imagines Cleopatra justifying to her retinue why she let Antony down:

*[Gentlemen, hearken the news of the war  
The death in the battlefield  
I was in my boat amongst my soldiers  
Pondering the war and other things  
I said Rome cracked  
And now you see the folk  
Split into two fighting halves  
I reasoned if Rome falls  
Then I am the only one to prevail  
In the middle of the storm  
I spread the sail and the battleships  
Followed my steps  
In my preoccupation  
I forgot about my passion  
And sold out Antony  
It was such a majestic episode  
In which I was  
A daughter and queen of Egypt]* (*The Death of Cleopatra*, Act 1, p. 16).

Shawqī goes further to exalt Cleopatra as a woman and queen with attributes of beauty, power, eloquence, ability to versify, penchant for reading, motherhood, faithfulness to her love, strong personality, pride, reform, compassion to followers, forgiveness, stamina, candor, etc. According to Hassān, (Hassān 1972, p. 291) this exaggeration from Shawqī makes us wonder if a person with such merits has ever existed.

Obviously then, what Shakespeare had on Shawqī was a counter-influence. This does not, however, negate the fact that Shawqī had indeed taken Shakespeare as a model in crafting his characterization. Yet, as Shawqī adapted that characterization into his own style, he came up with a product which is unquestionably genuine— crossing all borderlines to his national intentions (Hilāl 1965, p. 13).

A pastiche which is based on a counter-influence usually occurs when a writer feels a need to reproduce an artistic work- an endeavor which yields another work. However, this counter-influence is not necessarily excessive, i.e. one of the take-all-or-leave-all type, as a writer might choose to produce values that are completely contradictory to those in the influential work, but at the same time might produce some values that s/he finds worthwhile. Shawqī took from Shakespeare though he (Shawqī) was at odds with the spirit of Shakespeare's play.

## CHARACTERS

The plot in *The Death of Cleopatra* was somehow convergent to that in Antony and Cleopatra; yet, because the writers sought two different purposes, Shawqī showed stark contradiction to Shakespeare in the portrayal of characters, especially Cleopatra. Whereas Shakespeare was driven by the desire to give history an in-depth understanding that a historian usually fails to notice, the force that drove Shawqī was equivocal. Alternatively, he was presumably motivated by the three forces mentioned earlier (namely, the desire to give history an in-depth understanding; using history as a model to elicit lessons; and the tendency to carry the reader out of the life concerns to a beautiful virtual world). Shawqī tried hard to polish Cleopatra's character at the expense of Antony's. Cleopatra's character in Shawqī is always present, whether in the dialogues between other characters or the monologues she had with herself. Antony's character, on the other hand, is of secondary importance- despite the fact that Shawqī did not contradict Shakespeare, and history, regarding the centrality of this character as a historical figure.

Shakespeare, by contract, overlooks Antony's dark sides (depicted earlier by Plutarch) in order to elicit sympathy from the readers. He digs deep into Antony's innermost personality, making him die tragically with love purging all his sins. Perhaps Shakespeare's intention was twofold: identifying Antony's internal conflict of whether to choose Rome or Cleopatra; and picturing him experiencing episodes of this conflict and ultimately choosing Cleopatra. When Antony hears about Cleopatra's suicide, he decides to kill himself, and when he knows she did not commit suicide, he does not reproach her, as all he wants is to give her a send-off before he passes away. Despite his flaws, Shakespeare's Antony gained unparalleled sympathy from readers (Nevo 1972, p. 307).

In Scene XIV, Act IV, Antony is desperate, talking about glamorous Cleopatra whose heart, he thinks, is now his own. He regrets how he lost her and how she is plotting with Caesar against him. He asks Iras not to cry as they still have the power to kill themselves. This tear-jerking scene in Shakespeare is inconsiderable in Shawqī:

*[She committed suicide!  
How awful is the destiny  
Things developed dramatically  
She did not betray me  
I am the one who did  
It is ignominy to say she died  
And he did not dare to]* (*The Death of Cleopatra*, Act III, p. 56).

But soon, he continues with a moving poem on Rome:

*[Rome, forgive your son  
Woe is me  
You are very cruel  
Salute from a homeless fellow  
Who has destined to ruin his life]* (*The Death of Cleopatra*, Act III, p. 56).

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It appears that when Shawqī focused on such national feelings, he meant to give the impression that Antony did not commit suicide for Cleopatra, but rather for Rome or because he was so desperate.

On the other hand, Shawqī's portrayal of flat characters<sup>1</sup> (e.g. Octavia) is very much comparable to that of Shakespeare- which is not the case when it comes to round characters.<sup>2</sup> It might be the case that the more important the character is, the bigger the divergence (between Shakespeare and Shawqī) is; hence the salient variation in depicting Cleopatra. Indeed, Shawqī did not pay much attention to Antony or any other character because he, Shawqī, had an intention which is only realized through the character of Cleopatra, who dies majestically in Shawqī's play.

### DRAMATIC STRUCTURE

The dramatic structure is another point of divergence. Two elements are of relevance: 1. In Shakespeare's play, each round character has one or more narratives, which all are woven together within the main plot (Hassān 1972, p. 178). By contrast, Shawqī- though committed to the unity of place (all events take place in Cleopatra's palace and the nearby battlefield) – does not have one theme, adding to the main plot some secondary sub-plots. For example, in addition to focusing on the love affair between Antony and Cleopatra (which is the main theme), he engages the reader in another secondary story, i.e. the love affair between Helena (Cleopatra's maid) and her Egyptian servant Habi. Obviously, there is no connection, of whatsoever, between the main theme and this secondary story, and, unlike Shakespeare, Shawqī failed to make these sub-plots serve the main events of the story. Such techniques by Shawqī rendered some of the events incoherent, as they only served to distract the reader's heed.

It appears that Shawqī uses sub-plots as entertaining interludes. Unlike Shakespeare, who would recourse to this tradition only right before the climax, Shawqī would frequently intersperse that technique into the plot and probably without preplanning, thus falling short of accounting for what exactly interests readers in a dramatic work.

2. In Shawqī's play, lyrical poems are very long, and they sometimes distort the play's events (Hamada 1982, Volume III, Issue 1, p. 172). Shawqī would thrust these lyrics in the dialogues at the expense of the storyline. Arguably, taking away these lyrics from the play would not do any harm to the scenario. In Shakespeare, on the other hand, everything counts and nothing is dispensable: the events, the characters and poems, all work to further the purpose of the plot.

### CONCLUSION

The ongoing discussion suggests that in his *The Death of Cleopatra*, Shawqī was indisputably influenced by Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*. This does not, however, neutralize the originality and genuineness of Shawqī's work, nor does it indicate that Shawqī was only aping the tactics of Shakespeare. The resemblance between the two works should not conceal the remarkable differences.

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<sup>1</sup> Flat characters are those who are uncomplicated and their roles do not change throughout the course of a play.

<sup>2</sup> Round characters are those whose roles are complex and may undergo development that can surprise the audience.

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The two authors had the same source (i.e. Plutarch's *Twelve Lives*), but they emulated that source differently. Shakespeare took too much, and was loyal to Plutarch, that many critics would argue that Shakespeare did not do more than rewriting the English translation of *Twelve Lives*. On the contrary, what Shakespeare and Plutarch had on Shawqī was a form of counter-influence. This is particularly evident when we consider how he manipulated history in a way that serves his purposes. It appears that Shawqī was very huffy about Shakespeare, Plutarch and historians who portrayed Cleopatra as one who is lax in morals, a dissolute woman who has no qualms about compromising her country for her passions.

In some sense, Shawqī pays homage to Shakespeare. However, Shakespeare's work had a very marginal positive influence on Shawqī's play. Generally speaking, Shawqī committed himself to the main plot in Shakespeare's play. Though the points of convergence are not many, they are enough to safely conclude that Shawqī's work was only a pastiche of Shakespeare's play. That is why *The Death of Cleopatra* abounds with the paraphrasing techniques. All in all, imitation is not always bad. Taken together, influence and originality can construct creativity. What Shawqī produced was a creative work- a combination of the spirit of an influential writer, Shakespeare, and originality.

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