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### The 'Not-Said' Versus the 'Wish-Fulfilment': A Study of Mahmoud Diab's *Al-Halafit*

#### Abstract

The present paper represents a Marxist reading of Mahmoud Diab (1932-1983), a prominent Egyptian playwright and short-story writer. It attempts to examine Diab's *al-Halafit* (1970 [*The Downtrodden*]) in the light of Terry Eagleton's concepts of "the not-said" and Frederic Jameson "wish-fulfilment." While "the not-said" is the eloquent silence, the painful material which results mainly from the power struggle between the oppressors and oppressed, "wish-fulfilment" is but a psychogenic device in terms of which the exploited may express indirectly their ideology of desire for social justice. A close reading to *al-Halafit* drives one to make four points regarding the dramatic achievement of Diab. Firstly, although such two concepts were not in the mainstream of criticism during the time of Diab, he seems to be a professional therapist dramatist in a school established by Eagleton and Jameson. Secondly, he creates a dramatic vision via which he holds firmly his pen to draw a physic portrait of the not-said/wish-fulfilment in order to shed light on the social perplexities. Thirdly, to theatricalize the not-said/wish-fulfilment, Diab adopts *Masrah al-Samir* as a theatre technique. Finally, Diab represents the not-said/wish-fulfilment through an ideological clash between an elite group and subservient team. To motivate the latter speaks for the socio-psychic deviations that befall them, he produces a theatrical space resonant with commissive, imperative, assertive, and interrogative speech acts.

**Keywords:** Mahmoud Diab, Al-Halafit, Terry Eagleton, Frederic Jameson, Not-said, Wish-fulfilment.

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## الصراع بين المسكوت عنه والرغبة في تحقيق العدالة الاجتماعية: دراسة في مسرحية الهلافيت لمحمود دياب

### مستخلص الدراسة

تقدم الدراسة الحالية قراءة في اطار الفكر النقدي الماركسي لمسرحية الهلافيت (1970) للكاتب المسرحي المصري محمود دياب (1932-1983) في ضوء فكرة "المسكوت عنه" التي أرساها الناقد البريطاني تيري إيجلتون (1943) ونظرية "تحقيق الرغبة" للناقد الأمريكي فريدريك جيمسون (1934)، حيث أسهمت افكار هذين الناقدان في اثراء نظرية الادب بأليات وأدوات جمالية تهدف الي توضيح التوترات النفسية للصراع الطبقي علي الطبقات الكادحة، وما هذا الصراع الا انعكاس للممارسات الرأسمالية المستوحشة التي ادت ايدولوجياتها القمعية الي اصابة المهمشين بالصمت النفسي الناتج عن الظلم البين الذي ادي الي تسليح الطبقات المضطهدة بتقنية تحقيق الرغبة كألية ردع وفقا للرؤيا الفرويدية لتحقيق العدالة الاجتماعية، وتحليل مسرحية الهلافيت في ضوء المخرجات الجمالية لايجلتون وجيمسون يتوصل الدرس الي اربع نتائج مهمة. أولا، إن دياب لم يعلن تأثره بالإنتاج الفكري لايجلتون وجيمسون ومع ذلك مسرحه يؤكد انه كاتب مسرحي نفسي في مدرسة فنية دشنها ايجلتون وجيمسون؛ ثانيا، ان تبني دياب رؤية درامية مكننة ليس من مسرحة الصمت النفسي الذي اصاب الشخصيات الدرامية فحسب بل ايضا تجسيد الرغبة في تحقيق العدالة الناجزة؛ ثالثا، لمسرحة هذا الصراع اعتمد دياب علي مسرح السامر كتقنية مسرحية لمساعدة الشخصيات المستضعفة في التعبير عن مكونات الصمت النفسي واليات تحقيق العدالة الاجتماعية؛ واخيرا، لتدعيم موقف الطبقات الدنيا قدم دياب موتيفة الصمت والية البوح به من خلال التوظيف الجمالي لنظرية افعال الكلام الالزامية والامرية والتوكيدية والاستفهامية وذلك لخلق فضاء مسرحي يواجه فيه المظلوم ظالمه بكل ضرواة.

*الكلمات الرئيسية:* محمود دياب، الهلافيت، تيري إيجلتون، فريدريك جيمسون، المسكوت عنه، العدالة الاجتماعية.

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**The ‘Not-Said’ Versus the ‘Wish-Fulfilment’: A Study of Mahmoud Diab’s *Al-Halafit***

“Since Diab adores the land of Egypt, he yields a strong bitter criticism of its sociopolitical conditions, which certainly frustrate him, causing his fatal death” (Abd-al-Qader 1986, 10 [trans. mine])

**Introduction**

This paper offers a Marxist reading of Mahmoud Diab (1932-1983), a prominent Egyptian playwright and short-story writer. It attempts to examine Diab’s *al-Halafit* (1970 [*The Downtrodden*]), one of the major Egyptian plays of Diab in the light of Terry Eagleton’s concepts of “the not-said” and Frederic Jameson’s “wish-fulfilment.” Apparently these two critical concepts are the logical consequence of the repressive ideologies imposed by the capitalists/the minority in their efforts to subject the workers/majority to abject domination. To fully grasp the reasons behind this domination, Marxist criticism engenders a psychoanalyst approach that provides “an interpretive framework” (ix). It is an approach that seeks to show how capitalism causes “an ideological class struggle” (Balibar and Macherey 2014, 35) between what Nilsson calls “the few (capitalists)” and “the many (workers)” (2020, 2).

However, Marxist critics, generally, tend to attack psychoanalysis because it alienates people, according to them, from the social structures in which they exist. Noticeably, the intellectual efforts of Eagleton (1943), a prominent English critic and theorist, and Jameson (1934), a great American critic and Professor of comparative literature at Duke University, may culminate in bridging the gap between Marxist literary criticism and psychoanalysis. Both critics coin basic terms of psychoanalysis, e.g. “the not-said” and “wish-fulfillment” in relation to the socio-economic conditions that led to class struggle. By applying psychoanalytic terms to an ideological conflict, one may discover that any literary piece attempts to repress the ideology behind unjust social relationships. If one adopts Eagleton and Jameson’s criterion, one will find out that Diab aesthetically employs the thoughts of such two outstanding Marxist theorists with

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the purpose of revealing the underlying ideology that enlarges the gap between the hegemonic and nonhegemonic groups.

Generally speaking, Diab's dramatic art rotates around the clash between the two above-mentioned heterogeneous camps. Not only does such a *leitmotif* reflect the very fabric of Diab's theatre, but it also yields an objective theatrical space of the social contradictions that form the political unconscious of the dramatic personae. A close reading of his theatrical oeuvre, particularly *al-Halafit*, associates him with the great Italian playwright Luigi Pirandello (1867-1936) for two reasons: first, he tends to harp on the psychogenic trauma that dehumanizes the dramatic characters; second, he insists on urging the audience to act the role of the interpreter of the reasons behind such a trauma: "Impressed suitably with Pirandello's theatricality, I tried hard to search for an Egyptian theatrical form" (Diab 1969, 65 [trans. mine]). In his attempt to achieve such a form, he manages to produce a dramatic vision that consists of an aesthetic *mélange* of conscious and unconscious reasons behind the class struggle. He, thus, reflects a dogged determination to act the part of a social reformer, not to say "an intellectual surgeon" (Said 2020, [trans. mine]), who holds his scalpel/pen firmly to perform the task of a social critic. Besides revealing the unjust social ills, viz. abject poverty, exploitation and feudalism that befall the Egyptian downtrodden before the birth of the 1952 revolution, Diab tends to illuminate how the capitalist injustice gives rise to the appearance of the not-said, which in turn, maintains the characters' desire for social justice. Although Eagleton's and Jameson's thoughts were not in the mainstream criticism during the time of Diab, the study seeks to prove that *al-Halafit* novelizes the ideological conflict prevailed in Egypt in terms of unconscious impulses: the not-said and wish-fulfillment.

As this paper argues, the not-said refers to the imaginary situations, the repressed socio-political silence, which the characters attempt to voice in a disguised form. In voicing it, the literary text reveals an unconscious discourse that helps the critic to explore hidden agenda

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behind the ideological struggle. This effort contends that psychoanalysis and Marxist criticism offer “a critique of the critique of ideology” (Eagleton 2007, 72). Both disciplines probably display an aesthetic discourse where “meaning and force” (134) are connected. Although psychoanalysis and Marxist criticism stem mainly from different intellectual backgrounds, they provide the necessary critical tools via which Diab elucidates “the forces of the unconscious,” or rather the eloquent silence that brings on ideology struggle.

Eagleton’s concept of the not-said paved the way for Jameson to introduce a meta-critical theory of the interpretation of the political unconscious in which he attempts to compose a balance between the socio-economic realities and psychic “deviations” (Roberts 2000, 88), bringing into prominence the wish-fulfilment responsible for the birth of the political unconscious and ideological struggle. With this, Jameson contends that a literary piece should not be treated “as a statement about realities, but rather a structure of illusions” (2016, 355) that seek to innovate certain ideological effects. That is why Jameson’s critical achievement is expected to change the ethics of literary criticism as well as foster the critical tools necessary for any critic who aspire to act as if he/she were “a Freudian analyst” (Roberts 2000, 96). A psycho-analyst is meant to dig deep into the hidden layers of the text to untangle the power of the political unconscious—how ideology critique is represented in terms of disguised forces, let alone the not-said and wish-fulfillment concepts.

Even though Freudianism influences Jameson’s idea of the political unconscious, it does not reflect sexual experience. Rather, it offers a critique of class struggle in terms of “wish-fulfilment” (Jameson 2002, 50) and “desire” for social justice. Its very aim is to prove that the political unconscious of the downtrodden stems mainly from the conception of wish-fulfilment that pinpoints “the individual psycho biography” (50). In order to dig up the full significance of the political unconscious and the not-said in Diab’s theatre, one needs to delve deeply into the hidden layers of the text. This paves the way for critics to set up an aesthetic zone between

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the dramatic discourse and the socio-political conditions that led to its production. Both Psychoanalysis and Marxist criticism play a crucial role in exposing the “unconscious motivations” that may constitute the basics of Diab’s theatricality.

### **Rationale and Scope of the Study**

In an interview with Muhamad Barakat, Diab contends that “never do I put into my account any realistic theory. Rather, I demonstrate my best to address the sociopolitical dilemmas threatening my society” (1969, 66 [trans. mine]). Diab’s dramaturgic output motivates many critics to call him “a distinguished debatable artist” (Said 2020, [trans. mine]), mainly because most of his plays hinge greatly on “the open-ended technique” (Khulaf 2022, 144 [trans. mine]). It is a theatrical device via which Diab makes the spectators wonder about the end of the dramatic conflict as well as motivates them to become actively involved in deciding the end of the ideological struggle by having stimulated their critical thinking and involvement.

Diab, therefore, tends to pick up a dramatic vision that reflects the oppression and social injustices that befall the famished Egyptians. In the process, he endeavors to invent an original Egyptian theatrical form, *Masrah al-Samir* [theatre of folk entertainment]. This form enables him to practice the role of a Marxist thinker, not to say a therapist dramatist, who, to adopt Eagleton’s terms, contends that the theatre is but a “psychopathology of everyday life” (2007, 136). Although Diab never voiced the impact of Eagleton and Jameson on his theatrical output, a close reading of *al-Halafit* proves beyond the doubt that he manipulates the not-said and wish-fulfillment concepts, so as to stimulate the audience to resist the hegemony of their oppressors. This certainly is the essential schema of Diab’s dramaturgy, because of which the study addresses several questions: 1) What is Eagleton’s *not-said*? 2) What is Jameson’s wish-fulfillment? 3) What is Diab’s dramatic vision? 4) What is Diab’s conception of class struggle? 5) What is Diab’s theatrical form? 6) How are Eagleton’s *not-said* and Jameson’s wish-fulfillment presented in Diab’s *al-Halafit*?

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**Diab's *Al-Halafit***

Set on a threshing floor of a remote Egyptian village in Sharqia Governate, *Al-Halafit* is a three-act play. It opens with the people of the village waiting for the arrival of a rebec poet to celebrate a summer evening held by Mansour Abo-al-Saad, a malicious capitalist moneylender. When the poet does not attend, Mansour asks Shehata, a pivotal famished youth, to amuse the audience by acting the role of the mayor. However, the comic show is transformed into startling moments of revelation via which each one of the marginalized tells of the exploitation and marginalization that affect him/her. No sooner does the poet arrive on the scene than the underclass people prevent him from appearing on the stage, simply because they have painful material that needs to be narrated. Astonished by their revolutionary reaction, the powerful group betake themselves to Mansour's home to complete their carnival. This accidental action sustains the position of the downtrodden to the degree that the play ends with their planning to kill Mansour, simply because he is the root cause of their humiliation.

**Eagleton's *Not-said***

In order to understand how the mechanism of wish-fulfillment and the not-said is best reflected in *al-Halafit*, an overview of the aesthetics of Eagleton and Jameson is to be provided. Although Eagleton contends that the very objective of ideology critique is to reveal "the unconscious images" (2008, 149) responsible for class struggle, he argues that the Marxist critic is not "a therapist" (2006, 92). Rather, he/she is a social intellectual who should provide a psychiatric treatment of the socio-political dilemmas by disclosing the reasons behind class struggle. Both literary criticism and psychoanalysis produce "an inherently ambiguous discourse" characterized by "the displacement and elision of meaning" (92). The ambiguity of literary text yields a "typical concretion" for representing reality as it is, simply because the interpretation of the text as a flexible entity brings out "an overdetermined concentration of meanings." Eagleton's critical maneuver entices one to fully comprehend why the

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nonhegemonic group conceals the unspoken formations and then accidentally vent out such unvoiced painful experience. A simple analysis of such a material should indicate that the literary piece has no eccentric referent, because its interpretation is an open-ended process. This means that the critic is to closely follow the aesthetic traces of the “displacements and elisions of meaning,” as reflected from the beginning, within the ideological discourse of power struggle.

The critic should also thoroughly search for what the text refuses to voice. It is “the imaginary situations,” which the writer tries to represent in a hidden form. In illustrating these situations, the text reflects an ideological discourse, which springs mainly from the power conflict between the upper classes and the underclasses. In so doing, one can reveal the “absences” and negotiate the text in the hope of breaking the silences of the repressed ideology by dramatizing “the not-said.” Though ideology is depicted in terms of “eloquent silences” (90), the job of the critic is neither to complete the text, nor to highlight the undeclared material. Rather, the critic should look for the gaps of meaning, what the text avoids speaking about by exposing the ideological implications of the “not-saids.” The illustration of unspoken desires helps the critic to produce an aesthetic space that maintains the relationship between the text and socio-political factors which form the backbone of power struggle. This denotes that the writer’s pursuit of representing the socio-economic consequences of class struggle in a disguised form may be the main reason behind the birth of class struggle. That is to say, the very objective of Marxist criticism is to concentrate on the unconscious dimensions of the text to highlight the aesthetic value of the unstated predicaments:

In putting ideology to work, the text necessarily illuminates the absences, and begins to ‘make speak’ the silences, of that ideology. The literary text, far from constituting some unified plenitude of meaning, bears inscribed within it the marks of certain determinate absences which twist its various significations into

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conflict and contradiction. These absences - the '*not-said*' of the work - are precisely what bind it to its ideological problematic: ideology is present in the text in the form of its eloquent silences. (Eagleton 2006, 89)

### **Jameson's Political Unconscious**

If Eagleton reworks Freud's basic premises, Jameson seems to hinge greatly on Freud's psychoanalytic theory as "interpreted by Lacan" (Roberts 2000, 73). His manipulation of Lacan along with the insistence that the critics should treat literary pieces as though they were "psychiatric patients" (Roberts 2000, 76) indicate that "Marxism and Freudianism" offer a creative criterion. It is a critical maneuver that helps one conclude that the surface structure of a literary work hides the significance of the text, mainly because the authentic interpretation of any piece flows from "the underneath surface" (76). That form of reality is the logical consequence of the individual's "political unconscious" (2002, 4) that results mainly from the birth of his/her "wish-fulfilment" (4). To interpret the concept of wish-fulfilment as reflected in any text, it is necessary to pay a particular attention to the achievement of Freud and Lacan, simply because both psychoanalysts provide what Jameson christened "a symptomal analysis" (41) that examines the hidden anxieties inflaming ideological conflict.

In order to achieve Jameson's analysis, one should consider the resonates of the unconscious anxieties, which are but an echo of wish-fulfilment. It is the psycho mechanism which may reflect how the marginalized express skillfully their harsh realities, or rather "the irreducible wishes" (Jameson 2002, 51), resulting from their desire for an egalitarian society through "a powerful abstraction" (51). But wish-fulfilment seems to depend greatly on the "psychobiography" (51) of the individual subjects, whom the critics seek to depict the sociopolitical miserable realities besieging them. To accomplish such an aim, the critics need to resort to Lacan's rereading of Freud, mainly because Lacan's efforts bring into prominence the importance played by "psychic reality" in maintaining the existence of the "ideology of

desire.” It is but a set of ideas that tend to provide deeper insights into the “immortal struggle” (52) between “Eros”/the dominated and “Thanatos”/the dominator. Such is “a genuine metaphysic” via which the Marxist critic rewrites a metatext of the text under study as well as transforms each piece of narrative into a completely different thematic structure. This criterion illuminates how desire/wish-fulfilment may entice the lower classes to struggle fiercely against any “repressive reality” imposed by the capitalist project. That is to say, social injustice may spur on the dislocated people to choose between destroying the grids that make them inferior to their masters or existing in “a dreary wasteland of aphanasis.” Jameson puts this idea as follows:

But the ideology of desire in its most fully realized forms is . . . a genuine metaphysic, at its most resonant and... rich with death and the archaic, of Freud's own late metapsychology, with its vision of the immortal struggle between Eros and Thanatos. Such "theories" certainly rewrite the work; . . . the object of commentary is effectively transformed into an allegory whose master narrative is the story of desire itself, as it struggles against a repressive reality, convulsively breaking through the grids that were designed to hold it in place or, on the contrary, succumbing to repression and leaving the dreary wasteland of aphanasis behind it. (2002, 52)

Consequently, Eagleton’s not-said and Jameson’s ideology of desire bring out hermeneutics of Marxist criticism. It is an interpretative methodology to explore how the not-said and wish-fulfillment seem to be best translated in Diab’s *al-Halafit*. Diab tends to dramatize the aesthetic consequences of class struggle on the psychic reality of his *dramatis personae*. His effort insinuates one to hold that he is a leading promoter of Marxist criticism, particularly of the thoughts of Eagleton and Jameson. That is because he tends to innovate a vivid, dramatic vision that carries the concept of not-said and wish-fulfilment to a new aesthetic

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complexion. In it, he warns the audience against cloaking the unconscious socio-political factors that bring on the widening gap between the haves and have-nots, otherwise they will have no options but to dwell in the wasteland of unjust social relations.

### **Diab's Dramatic Vision**

Motivated by a strong desire to reflect upon the class struggle that inflicted the Egyptians before the birth of the 1952 revolution, Diab yields a theatrical discourse characterized with a skillful dramatic vision and structure. This indicates that he is an innovative experimental dramatist. His aesthetic experimentation flows mainly from "delving too deeply into the depths of the characters in order to not only highlight the hidden motives behind the birth of class struggle" (Auda 1993, 20 [trans. mine]). The elucidation of such psychic factors motivates one to infer that Diab's dramaturgic project speaks for the unsaid and the sociopolitical desires that inflict the audience in order to convince them to revolt against the makers of their oppression.

When asked about the conception of theatre, Diab contends that theatre is but an artistic medium. In it, the artist ought to depict truthfully an evolutionary portrait of his/her society. It is an intense poetic representation of the harsh realities of the clash between the famished workers and cannibal capitalists, an outcry that aims to attract the attention of the spectators to illuminate the painful material that hangs over them. If the theater does not reflect the dreary realities, nor raise questions regarding how to erase them, it does not deserve the merit of being an outstanding authentic art at all. The more the dramatist is keen on the challenges threatening the audience, the more his/her theater becomes active in forcing them face down the gloomy sociopolitical conditions that befall them. The very objective of theater seems to be inherent in convincing them that theatricality is a means of catharsis, a tool for releasing strong feelings of pity and fear over their society, not the fate of the heroes. That is why the dramatis personae should be haunted by a psychic shock. It is a psychological desire that not only reveal their hidden depths, but also motivates them to struggle for altering the unjust social conditions

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which authentically mirror those of the spectators:

Theater is but an artistic medium. In it, the playwright offers an independent effective perspective of his/her society in the hope of improving the spectators' self-consciousness about the how of changing their unjust socio-economic conditions from worst to better. Since theater is a vivid poetic representation of the harsh realities that befall the audience off stage, it ought to help them recognize themselves by experiencing their historical present as well as pondering over the future. (Diab 1969, 66 [trans. mine]).

### **Diab's Conception of Class Struggle**

Although Eagleton's unsaid and Jameson's wish-fulfilment were not in the mainstream criticism during the time of Diab, Diab's concentration on the consequences of the psychic shock was but an echo to the aesthetics of Eagleton and Jameson. That is why Diab's dramaturgy may, as Salah al-Sirwi (1995) observes, focus on showing how such the ideological struggle drives the famished poor to a sense of total alienation, mainly because they face unjust hegemonic group. That has a grim determination to remove the social identity of the dominated in order to receive their humiliation with open arms. Since the poor have a political agenda of social justice that flows essentially from voicing the not-said material whatever the consequences, they refuse the hot pursuits of the capitalists to beat them into total submission. The more they try their hardest to break the silence imposed on them, the more they are defeated by the hegemonic team, simply because "such a team is motivated by innate intense hatred and violence against the downtrodden" (37 [trans. mine]).

In order to attract the attention of the audience to the necessity of illustrating the not-said and wish-fulfilment, Diab's dramaturgy always ends up with the sweeping victory of the dominators over the dominated. His catastrophic technique of ending the class struggle can be related back to two reasons: He may seek to caution the Egyptians against concealing the not-

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said and remind them that the individual hero will never be able to annihilate the oppression of the capitalist mentality. That is why he, as Said contends, pays particular attention to the whole group of downtrodden, not a specific hero. He envisions that an egalitarian society can be achieved on condition that the downtrodden cooperate strongly with each other so that they may resist the unjust sociopolitical power mistreating them. His main aim is to address the consciousness of the audience to stick closely to collective action, simply because social justice needs cooperative, not individual efforts: “Hardly ever will you win all alone: Victory springs mainly from collective labour” (2020, [trans. mine]).

### **Diab’s Theatrical Form**

Diab’s theater may rotate around the consequences of oppression on the downtrodden, particularly the Egyptian peasants. His concentration on the rural people can be traced back to the belief that the class struggle between the capitalists and proletariat can be best represented through the suffering classes of farmers: “they reflect an authentic portrait of unjust socioeconomic condition of all the Egyptians without any falsification” (Diab 1969, 67 [trans. mine]). This assessment denotes that he may be recognized as the forerunner of dramatizing the schema of oppression in Arab theater. His schema tends to highlight the role played by the aesthetics of dramaturgy in “revealing the unjust social realities in terms of the school of social realism” (Khulaf 2022, 11 [trans. mine]).

To theatricalize the conflict between the haves and have-nots, Diab adopts *Masrah al-Samir* [theater of folk entertainment] as a theatre technique. His very objective is to produce a critique of ideology by depicting the exploitation of the rural people in terms of the folkloric technique, *al-Samir*. Held by the farmers in the countryside, the *Samir* is a theatrical carnival, or rather “a narrating drama” (Yehia 2018, 179) in which the people celebrate the harvest season by depending on “the rebecc poet and folk biographies” (179). In his article, “Towards an Egyptian Theater” (1964), the prominent Egyptian dramatist and novelist Youssef Idris

(1927-1991) calls upon dramatists to return to Egypt's popular tradition in the hope of originating an Egyptian theatrical form. No sooner does he dig deep into such tradition than he discovers that the *Samir* is the most common dramatic structure adopted by the majority of the Egyptians. The dramatic narrative of *al-Samir* is composed of several acts known as *fasls*, each of which unclouds "wisdom or spiritual exhortation" (Idris in Sibley 2019, 48). The hero of the *Samir* is the "*farfur/zarzur*," not to say *Halfut*, a comic witty folk character. His/her satirical projections onto the unjust hegemonic groups may prove that despite the *Samir* raises many moral and political lessons that are "amusing, there are many things that bring one to tears" (50).

Being aware of the aesthetic value of *al-Samir*, Diab voices that Idris's call much influences him. However, he confirms that he does not imitate Idris's model of the *Samir* very accurately. Rather, he uses it as a useful starting point for setting up a new dramatic structure. It is a complex theatre form that provides the *dramatis personae* with an ecstasy "to delve deeply into their innermost feelings to reveal the trauma that inflicts them" (Diab 1969, 69 [trans. mine]), not to say the unsaid and wish-fulfilment. This achievement denotes that Diab may carry the idea of *al-Samir* to new horizons where the traditions of such a concept are transformed into an innovative "contemporary living theatre" (Yehia 2018, 179). In it, he tends to create an aesthetic collection of "entertainment, narration and epic drama" (179) with a view to drawing a portrait of the ideological realities attacking the audience of his theatre. The significance of such a portrait stems mainly from the narration of a group of characters, not a single narrator, whose performance on the stage reminds one of Bertolt Brecht's technique of "breaking the delusion" (179). It is a theatrical device, in terms of which the heroes are engaged in direct dialogue with the spectators who play "the chorus role" (179). In this respect, the actors can harp on the alienation and injustice attacking the underclass people. Diab's dramaturgy seems to belong to the sociopolitical theatre since it yields theatrical portrayals that

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rework Idris's conception of *al-Samir*. Diab's very objective is to stimulate the downtrodden to participate effectively with the actors in creating a critique of the capitalist ideology responsible for the birth of the not-said and wish-fulfilment.

## Discussion

### The Not-Said and Wish-fulfillment in *al-Halafit*

In order to examine the unsaid and wish-fulfilment in *Al-Halafit*, one should hold that "the institutions of hegemony" (Eagleton 2007, 179) are responsible for the birth of such neurotic material. These institutions also maintain "the oppressive conditions" (180) which leave the downtrodden no options but to exist in a "self-defeating" (180) manner. To dramatize such a manner, Diab sets *Al-Halafit* in a threshing floor of a remote Egyptian village. The play addresses the ideological clash between an elite group and a subservient team. While the former is represented by Mansour Abo-al-Saad, a malicious capitalist moneylender, Mubarak, a livestock dealer, Mahmoud Abo-Amer, a legal custody, and the inspector of the village, the latter is exemplified by Shehata, a pivotal famished youth, Hilal, a fifty-years poor farmer, Zainab, Shehata's sister, and al-Jahesh [the young donkey], a nameless wretched person. Diab opens the play with gloomy stage directions to show how the marginalized group is weighed down with a burning desire to speak for their not-said and wish-fulfilment. In it, he defines *al-Halafit* as underdog people who are forced to work for the benefit of the hegemonic group. They possess nothing even themselves: only when they are alone can they feel their identity as humans. No sooner do they interact with the upper-class than they become mere chattels who work hard at farming and as servants to their masters. During their leisure time, "they act as a laughing stock, or rather unpaid clowns whose job is to amuse their exploiters. (Diab 1986, 14 [trans. mine.]

Diab's description of the depressing state of the downtrodden explains the ulterior reasons behind the birth of what Jameson calls "a wish-fulfillment" (2002, 161). It also proves

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that *al-Halafit*, to quote Jameson, is but “a daydream,” or rather “a daytime fantasy” (161). In it, Diab highlights how far the capitalists of the village disdain the workers to such a degree that the former treats the latter as if they were invaluable disempowered hoboes. The gloomier the atmosphere in which the wretched peasants exist, the more difficult it becomes for them to face an uphill battle for spelling out the not-said and wish-fulfilment, thereby achieving a sense of social justice and equality. Since the downtrodden refuse to stand against the miscarriage of justice perpetuated by the hegemonic group, they allow the capitalists to repress the not-said/wish-fulfilment. Such repression is best illustrated through three dramatic schemas, which may illustrate that the social injustice is the key reason behind the return of the unsaid and wish-fulfilment in an overt form.

The first theatrical schema is initiated with the beginning of the play when Diab introduces two unnamed characters: A and B who are about to join the celebration. A complains that he invests his life savings to share equally Mansour in breeding a cow. However, he accidentally discovers that the latter sells the cow at two different prices. While Mansour receives thirty-five pounds in return for his share, A gets only twenty-five pounds. This unjust deal forces him to wonder sadly in a silent manner how can this be done even though the sold thing and the purchaser are the same. Instead of encouraging him to speak the truth, B advises A not to talk so audibly, simply because other people may keep their eye open to their speech, thereby informing Mansour of such a complaint. Still, A does not give an ear to B’s warning since he has a strong desire to attack the upper-class people for exploiting the helpless of the village. Since Mansour is a very power broker, B advises A to imagine that the cow is sold with due price in order to be able to live in peace:

A: (*Whisperingly*) I only wonder how the same cow is sold with two different prices! In spite of going halves on breeding the cow with Mansour, I get twenty-five pounds for my share and he earns about thirty-five pounds for his. (*Raising*

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*his voice*) How come! It is the same cow and the very same purchaser!

B: Keep your voice down, otherwise Mansour will get wind of your complaint: walls have ears. . . . Imagine that your amount of money is as the same as that of Mansour in order that you may enjoys peace and relief. (Diab 1986, 14 [trans. mine.])

Since one “cannot talk about wish-fulfillment” (Jameson 2002, 51) except in terms of “a powerful abstraction” (51) of concrete wishes, Diab introduces the cow as a conceptual abstraction of the class struggle. His manipulation brings one closer to “the individual psychobiography” (51) of A and B. While the former shows an elementary dogged determination to speak for the not-said/unfair price of the cow, the latter reminds him of the negative consequences of such an attempt. B, thus, depends greatly on what Emily Benveniste called “imperative statements” (1971, p. 110): “Keep your voice down,” and “Imagine that your amount of money is as the same as that of Mansour.” His locutions denote that capitalism implants within the subjugated the seeds of fearing of challenging the cruel aspects of injustice. Although they discover the dirty plot hatched by Mansour and Mubarak, they are “unable to face the violent plotter nor even complain about the injustice that befalls them” (Khulaf 2022, 137 [trans. mine.]). To quote Jameson, this assessment indicates that the history of the Egyptian society is the “history of class struggles” (2002, 4) between oppressor and oppressed, not to say Diab’s A and B from one side and Mansour’s team on the other. It is a hidden open fight that carries to the surface “the repressed and buried reality” (4) responsible for bringing on the ideological conflict.

The second important *leitmotif* that reflects the cruel injustice of the hegemonic group seems to be best illustrated through the tragedy that befalls Hilal. He is forced to choose between two painful options: first, he ought to be jailed for signing a trust receipt of ten pounds that he borrowed from Mansour; second, to avoid such a fate, he should pimp his only daughter,

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Aisha, to Mansour. However, he opts for negotiating with Mansour indirectly through Mahmoud. Scarcely does he ask Mahmoud whether the latter submits the receipt to the public prosecutor or not when Mahmoud rebukes him, stating that he does not deliver it up till now because the public prosecutor leaves the office early. Hilal pleads submissively to Mahmoud not to give the receipt in. Not only does such an attempt irritate the latter, but it also leads him to accuse the former of trying to bribe him into betraying the ethics of his job as a legal attorney whom Mansour has a strong confidence in. Instead, he suggests that it is rather better for the former to attempt to settle down the matter with Mansour. Since Hilal is a penniless farmer who spent his nest egg on breeding a cow that dies suddenly during labour, he will never be able to pay off the loan. He, thus, entreats Mahmoud to wait for two months at least until the cotton is picked. Mahmoud recommends that the borrower should allow Aisha to work as a maid at Mansour's house for two months in return for the mortgage. Although Hilal suffers from a sharp financial crisis that may bring him to court, he absolutely refuses such an idea, mainly because Mansour has a bad reputation of being a very womanizer:

Mahmoud: Penniless as you are, Mansour is ready to forget the trust receipt! What else do you covet? . . . What does he want from a wretched person like you? He needs your daughter to serve as a housekeeper to help you. (*Looking at Aisha*) What an insane person you are! Your daughter will work as a maid for two months in return for the money you borrowed. . . .

Hilal: (*Screaming out*) That is a great calamity.

Mahmoud: Lower your voice. (Diab 1986, 26f [trans. mine.])

The interaction between Hilal and Mahmoud shows how the capitalists employ their authority to deepen the political unconscious of the underclass people. It also implicates that Mahmoud systematically abuses his job as a legal attorney in order to gain a superior linguistic position via which he relentlessly tries to direct the fates of the downtrodden. Mahmoud's

context-of-utterance is but a linguistic *mélange* of interrogative and imperative speech acts: “What else do you covet?” “What does he want from a wretched person like you?” and “Lower your voice.” Such statements, to cite Benveniste, enable him to gain a “very specific linguistic position” (61) via which Diab tends to elucidate how Mansour “eggs on the marginalized peasants to receive their ruthless exploitation with open arms” (Al-Farjani 2019, 1836 [trans. mine.]) by lending them money in return for a trust receipt. If they fail to pay back the loan, they should be jailed, or rather pimp their daughters to Mansour. Such a moral corruption, to quote Jameson, reflects the “antagonistic dialogue of class voices” (2002, 70), an imbalance in power. It is unjust social relationship which asserts that Mahmoud’s locutions are but “a symbolic move” (2002, 71) of the bloody confrontation between Mansour’s team and the marginalized camp. Besides, Mahmoud’s tactics stands for the “voice of the hegemonic class” (2002, 71) which prevents the downtrodden from achieving a “relational place” (2002, 71) in the ideological struggle. This oppressive endeavor beats the underclass people into a total silence that sharpens the unsaid and wish-fulfilment material that will be erupted accidentally.

The third motif articulates the unjustified prejudice of the upper-class against the dominated. That takes place when Mansour rebukes Shehata for sitting proudly by the masters’ bench. While fixing up the stage for the night feast, two youths blame Shehata for sitting comfortably on the bench prepared for Mansour’s company, swearing that Mansour will punish him severely for such an act. Motivated by such a warning, Shehata modifies his position by squatting down behind the bench in a very relaxed manner. No sooner does the hegemonic group led by Mansour gets into the threshing floor than the audience stands up respectfully, except Shehata who shows no reaction as if they were ghosts. His reaction drives Mansour to look him up and down and give him a box on the ears, exclaiming angrily why he sits in such a dreadful way. This tragicomic scene leads the audience to burst into hysterical laughter that makes Shehata boil with rage, pleading to Mansour to stop such silly fun-making.

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When Mubarak asks Mansour to participate with him in humiliating Shehata, Mansour adopts such an attitude, simply because Mubarak is a livestock trader who can understand animals' aggressive behavior. That is why Mansour promises that he will release Shehata on condition that the latter should declare before the people that he is not a man. The more Mansour stresses on Shehata's ears, the more the latter refuses such an offer, declaring that he is a male person, not a woman. However, frightened by Mansour's authority, Shehata publicly announces that he is not a male person in the hope of getting rid of Mansour's degrading humiliation:

Mansour: If you want me to set you free, you should openly spell out that you are not a male person.

Shehata: Never ever do I dare to repeat such a stigma. Please, do me a favor and leave out my ears.

Mansour: I will never release you until fathoming out that you are not a man.

Shehata: I am a male person to the nth degree, sir Mansour.

Mansour: If so, I will never manumit you.

Shehata: Would you allow me to speak up? . . . I am no longer a male person; so, please, set me free. (*The hegemonic and nonhegemonic group laugh hysterically*). (Diab 1986, 37f [trans. mine.])

By sitting in a haughty manner, Shehata reflects a deep wish-fulfilment for having a just place within the social system. To use Jameson, it is "a symbolic act" (2002, 27) that brings into prominence the burning desire of the downtrodden for enjoying an egalitarian society. However, the dominant group led by Mansour is bent on suppressing such a wish. That is why Mansour yields what John Searle christened "directive" (1999, 17) speech acts, illocutionary conditional statements via which he seeks to get his hearer/Shehata to give up squatting and swear that he is not a male person. No sooner does Mansour observe Shehata sitting as if he were a master than he brings out three conditional locutions: "If you want me to set you free,

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you should openly spell out that you are not a male person,” “I will never release you until fathoming out that you are not a man,” and “If so, I will never manumit you.” Such directive points leave Shehata no options but to depend on what Searle called “indirect directive” (1999, viii) utterance via which he confirms publicly that he is no longer a male person: “Would you allow me to speak up? . . . I am no longer a male person.” Not only does such an utterance is an overt declaration of the victory of oppression over the underclass people’s desire for equality, but it also lends Diab a hand to contend that Shehata’s squatting by the bench of the hegemonic group, to borrow Jameson, is but a revolutionary “ideological act” (2002, 64) in the class struggle for justice. It may also pave the way for the downtrodden to vent out the unsaid material and try to find “imaginary or formal solutions” (64) in which they can remove the social barriers between classes.

In order to propose possible solutions to the social contradiction, Diab provides the *dramatis personae* with an aesthetic chance to set forth the trauma that befalls them. This is best demonstrated when Hassan, the rebec poet, was absent from performing some lyric poems to the audience of a summer celebration held by Mansour. To avoid cancelling such a celebration, Mansour thinks of making Shehata replace the poet so that he may entertain the spectators. In his attempt to urge Shehata to accept such idea, Mansour decides to establish a peaceful sense of intimacy with Shehata, simply because the former gives him a box on the ears before the audience. To remove such a stigma, Mansour not only apologizes profusely to him for any insult, but also declares publicly that Shehata from now onwards will be the mayor of the village until the arrival of Hassan:

Mansour: (*To Shehata*) From this moment onwards, you will be the mayor of the village until the arrival of the poet Hassan. . . . You should tell us what we ought to do. All the audience (*Pointing to the people on the stage*) are at your command. You can walk around, recite a fairy story, or a lyrical ballad. Act

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freely without no fears! Do whatever you dream of. (*The hegemonic camp laughed, cheered and clapped*). (Diab 1986, 45f [trans. mine.]

Although Shehata cannot believe his own eyes, he accepts Mansour's offer on condition that Ismael, chief of the village, will guarantee him not to be punished. His acceptance signals that Diab adopts the theatre technique of "a play-within-a play" (Abd-al-Qader 1986, 9 [trans. mine.]). While the first play is composed by Diab, the second is invented by Mansour in order to amuse the audience. This dramatic structure paves the way for Diab to endow the marginalized with a Marxist theatrical space. In it, the downtrodden unleash the not-said and wish-fulfillment against the hegemonic group which downgraded them from the very beginning of the play.

Having thus approved of Mansour's scheme for being the mayor until the arrival of Hassan, Shehata appoints al-Jahesh to be the chief of the village. To make Shehata feel power and a sense of relief, Mansour endows him with his expensive woolen wrap and Mubarak's slippers. When asked about his sociopolitical agenda, Shehata spells out that he adopts a reform policy that can be summarized in six actions, not to say dreams. First, he looks forward to disdaining and punishing the wretched boy Mansour by making Zinab, Shehata's sister, slap him hard on the face. Second, he dreams of marrying Aisha and buying her new shoes, clothes and five palm trees. Third, as for the suffering classes, he will not only shred any trust receipt, but also prevent the downtrodden from participating their livestock with Mansour and legalize that no cows be purchased by Mubarak. Fourth, the whole threshing floor will be transformed into the mayor's farm building where he will sit on an outdoor stone bench to serve food for the displaced peasants. Fifth, the role of Mahmoud as a legal attorney will be cancelled forever, simply because the village is devoid of any judicial disputes. Lastly, when Mansour attempts to visit Shehata, he will kick him out of his office:

Shehata: (*Pondering on the audience for a while*) I will rip up the trust receipts

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that handcuff my native villagers. As far as I can judge that nobody can participate with Mansour in breeding cows nor hold any bargain with Mubarak. (*He moves around concentrating on the threshing floor*) That large piece of land will be my farm building where I lean back in my chair and sit comfortably on an outdoor stone bench; the floor will be crowded with turntables [low round tables] that serve food for the downtrodden who will no longer hate each other, mainly because the village will be devoid of unjust court cases launched by evil persons like Mahmoud Abo-Amer. . . . Moreover, when Mansour Abo-al-Saad just thinks of meeting me, I will certainly kick him out. (Diab 1986, 69f [trans. mine.])

Shehata's words, here, seem to be a set of political expectations. To fully comprehend their significance, one, to use Eagleton's terms, should act the role of an "analyst of dreams" (2006, 90) so as to explore the not-said that tortures Diab's characters. Such not-said results mainly from the suppression practiced by Mansour's camp against Shehata's team, a racial discrimination reflecting the aggressive capitalist ideology and confirming that "there are certain things which must not be spoken of" (90). To dramatize such things, Shehata innovates six political wishes replete with what Searle named "commissive" (1999, 1) speech acts via which he commits himself to set up social justice. No sooner does he put on the woolen wrap and slipper than he yields six illocutionary performative points: "I will rip up the trust receipts," "I can judge that nobody can participate with Mansour in breeding cows nor hold any bargain with Mubarak," "That large piece of land will be my farm building," "the floor will be crowded with turntables that serve food for the downtrodden," "the village will be devoid of unjust court cases launched by evil persons like Mahmoud Abo-Amer," and "when Mansour Abo-al-Saad just thinks of meeting me, I will certainly kick him out." Not only may such statements highlight the not-said and wish-fulfilment that the dominated attempts to cloak, but they may

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also prove that Shehata is the spokesperson for the marginalized. By expressing the unspoken material, he seems to be an “omniscient narrator” (al-Ferjani, 2109, 1830 [trans. mine.]), or rather a political leader who provides fascinating deep insights about the how of removing the psychogenic trauma the befalls the Egyptian society.

Shehata’s revolutionary agenda helps Diab provide the marginalized of the village with genuine moments of revelation. In it, they try to tell of their complaints, the not-said/wish-fulfilment which they struggle to conceal from the very beginning of the play through three dramatic situations. The first is best demonstrated when Shehata orders Naseh, one of the famished farmers whom Shehata assigns the task of being the chief guard, to bring Hilal to the threshing floor to speak up for the trust receipt that inflicts him. Motivated by Shehata’s advice to reveal what tortured him publicly before the audience, Hilal opts for speaking mildly to Mansour, simply because he fears the oppression of the upper class. As soon as Hilal tries desperately to excuse Mansour for not repaying the ten-pound loan, the latter steadfastly refuses such an attempt, stating that he lends Hilal money on condition that the former’s possession of the cow is held in trust for the lender. Since the cow died during labour and Hilal has no money to pay back the loan, he ought to be imprisoned, or rather pimp his daughter to Mansour. On seeing such a horrible scene, Shehata asks Mansour to tear the trust receipt apart. Not only does such an order enrage Mansour, but it also drives him to insist that Shehata ought to end the game and leave out immediately. Besides protesting out against Mansour’s order, Shehata assembles the underclass people in a systematized cooperation with a view to reminding the hegemonic group of their previous promise that Shehata should be the mayor whose orders ought to be executed whatever they are. His revolutionary movement forces Mansour’s team to think of ending the matter at once and going home in peace. However, Shehata is bent on enforcing law by acting as if he were a natural-born mayor, thereby asking Naseh to arrest Mansour. The more Naseh progresses slowly towards Mansour, the more he is

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trembled with fear. His hesitation in arresting Mansour motivates him to cooperate with the downtrodden to achieve Shehata's command. That is why Mansour calls upon Ismail, the real chief of guards, to quell the protest of the dominated:

Shehata: Pay close attention, the chief of the village.

Al-Jahesh: Yes, sir mayor.

Shehata: Collect your soldiers and do bring me Mansour at once. (*All the audience laughs out loudly.*)

Mansour: (*While attempting to attack Shehata, Mubarak stifles him.*) What a hardened criminal you are! . . .

Shehata: Do carry out the orders, chief of the guard. Do not be so late, Naseh.

Naseh: Of course, sir mayor. (Diab 1986, 123f [trans. mine.])

Shehata seems to wield a linguistic tactic of power. His dialogue with Naseh may belong to what Eagleton calls "ideological utterance" (9, 2007) that enables Diab's characters articulate "the unspoken implication" (8). In highlighting such an implication, Diab's play, according to Eagleton, illustrates the "determinate absences" which Shehata's team tries to conceal from the opening of the play, simply because they sharpen their political unconscious. To express most fully the not-said/wish-fulfilment, Shehata, to cite Searle, produces a multiplicity of "directive" (1999, 27) speech acts via which he tries to egg on his addressee/Naseh to obey him by capturing Mansour. This explains why Shehata's dialogue with Naseh is replete with imperative forces which are repeated five times: "Pay close attention," "Collect your soldiers," "do bring me Mansour at once," "Do carry out the orders," and "Do not be so late." This denotes that the class struggle, in line with Eagleton, takes place among "a-b-c" (2006, 87), a complex network where b/Shehata may intervene to mutate a/Mansour into being c/the displaced. By wielding a language of power, Shehata seems to be an autocratic ruler whose speech acts ought to be blindly obeyed. It is a dramatic shift via which

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Diab successfully turns joking into a serious master scene. In it, Shehata makes the dominated unite behind him in opposition to the hegemonic group in order to remove all aspects of injustice, viz. trust receipt. His brave reaction unmutes the silences and the not-said experienced by the third-class people. It also implants the seeds of revolution into the downtrodden. In this regard, they attempt to seize hold of Mansour, the symbol of oppression, with a view to tearing apart Hilal's trust receipt.

Shehata's brave order of arresting Mansour brings out the second theatrical incident. As well as giving rise to the emergence of the unsaid/wish-fulfilment, such a schema provides character A to move quickly towards Shehata's team. There, he cries out that he has a hidden pain that needs to be erupted, otherwise he will die of frustration. He spells out that although he shares the property of a cow with Mansour equally, the latter forces him to sell it to Mubarak in order to repay his debts. However, the same cow is sold at two completely different prices: while Mansour receives thirty-five pounds for his share, A gains twenty-five for his, simply because Mubarak insists that the cow is priced at fifty pounds, not sixty. In addition to accusing Mansour and Mubarak of being big liars and cheaters, A invites the audience to solve such a dark riddle. This led Mansour to boil with rage, accusing A of being an ungrateful crook. A's avowal about Mansour's greedy for exploiting the have-nots refers the downtrodden to conclude that they are all but naïve victims whom the hegemonic group is used on sucking their blood mercilessly. In publicly declaring his complaint to the audience, A feels a great sense of relief; he no longer needs money. Instead, he waits to receive the emotional compensation from the fellow marginalized who looked at Mansour as if he were Pandora's box:

*(Different voices arise from the audience)*

- It is unbelievable!
- They conspire together against him!
- They scheme together to thieve people!

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- They cooperate to trick us!
- Now, I got it: they deceived me when I sold them my two cows!
- What an ass am I!
- What dangerous fraudsters they are! (Diab 1986, 125f [trans. mine.])

By disclosing the devil aspect of Mansour and Mubarak's characters, A articulates loudly the unvoiced experience that tortures him. His articulation paved the way for other displaced individuals to compose a critique of capitalist ideology. To achieve such an objective, Diab tends to dramatize the reaction of the dominated farmers to A's dilemma: Mubarak's attempts to beguile them into selling their properties/cows with unfair price. That is why they produce locutions that belong to what Searle calls "assertive" (1999, 12) speech acts: "It is unbelievable!" "They conspire together against him!" "They scheme together to thieve people!" "They cooperate to trick us!" "What dangerous fraudsters they are." These acts are but linguistic tactics invented by the marginalized audience to harp on their undeclared oppression, and reveal that Mansour is a vivid symbol of "feudalism" that sucks the people's blood through receiving "the lions rate in selling their properties" (Khulaf 2022, 144 [trans. mine]). In order to assert the impact of the upper class's aggressive domination on the unspoken trauma of the exploited, Diab makes the latter's assertive forces replete with what Searle named "performative verbs": "conspire," "scheme," "thieve," "cooperate," and "trick." Not only do these verbs clarify the unsaid/wish-fulfilment, but they also enable Diab to innovate a creative Marxist theatrical discourse. In it, he, to use Eagleton, supplies the dislocated with a chance to break the "necessary silences" (2007, 46) that mute them for decades by not only highlighting the "hidden limits" (46) of the capitalist ideology.

The third dramatic perspective describes how Shehata's feeling of power reaches the fore when he rejects leaving the stage after the arrival of Hassan. His rejection may entice the downtrodden into refusing profusely to end the game and stifling the poet from narrating the

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“Hilali epic,” a cycle of folk tales describing the life of the hero Abo-Zaid al-Hilali, more than once. This anarchic state is interrupted by Shehata’s calling upon Zainab to set forth the terrible predicament that transposes her existence into a horrible nightmare. When she refuses to speak, Shehata entreats her to be valiant enough to save the village girls from Mansour’s sexual whims. Although she whispers to Shehata about Mansour’s continuous immoral act to seduce her while serving at the latter’s house, Shehata asks her to raise her voice as he could not understand her murmuring. Shehata’s request spurs Zainab into declaring openly that Mansour is used to luring the girls of the displaced classes into sexual relationships. Her catastrophic confession induces the female audience including Aisha to scream out from their depths for the crying shame that hangs over them. Armed with Zainab’s fatal statement about Mansour’s sexual scandals, Shehata launches a heavy criticism against Mansour. In it, he condemns the hypocrisy of Mansour by contending that there are two Mansours. Whereas the first pretends to be a noble man who supports poetry, folk tales and night entertainments, the second is but an evil womanizer who exploits the financial needs of the downtrodden to force them to pimp their daughters to him. Not only does such an attack irritate Mansour, but it also drives him to shoot at Shehata, but the chief guard prevents him from harming Shehata:

Shehata: Do you listen carefully to Zainab, people? Do you really listen? That is the harsh reality of Sir Mansour who falsely pretends to be the noble man of poetry, night entertainments, the story of Abo-Zaid al-Hilali, and Antar ibn Shaddad. The gloomy story that you have just heard does not belong to my sister alone; rather, it is the common fate of each female belonging to our exploited class whether they worked at Mansour’s house or still on the waiting list. It is the dreadful destiny awaiting all the female downtrodden. (*The nonhegemonic group drops silent in a submissive manner*). (Diab 1986, 139f [trans. mine.]

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The analysis of Shehata's dialogue with the hegemonic and nonhegemonic team seems to belong to what Catherine Belsey calls "interrogative text" (2002, 75). This assessment can be related back to the notion that Shehata's context of utterance rotates around two central interrogative forces: "Do you listen carefully to Zainab, people?" "Do you really listen?" Although Zainab whispers in Shehata's ear an avowal of Mansur's hot pursuit to seduce her, Shehata innovates such two repetitive questions in the hope of spurring on the audience to give an answer about the topic of discourse: Mansour's dogged insistence on forcing the poor girls into sexual relationships in return for forgetting the trust receipts signed by their families. No sooner do they fail to give an adequate answer than Shehata wields a new linguistic tactic so that he persuades them that expressing the not-said/wish-fulfilment is a must. That is why he relies greatly on creating what Searle christened speech acts of "declarations" (1999, viii) via which he seeks to make great changes in the miserable realities surrounding the under-class people. He spells out three main declarative points: "That is the harsh reality of Sir Mansour who falsely pretends to be the noble man of poetry," "the gloomy story that you have just heard . . . is the common fate of each female belonging to our exploited class," and "it is the dreadful destiny awaiting all the female downtrodden."

The aforementioned declarations depend greatly on Shehata's successful performance as a political leader. His illocutions possibly aim to bring about a close correspondence between Mansour's vicious whims/the discourse's propositional content and the dirty sociopolitical realities threatening the existence of the Egyptian displaced. Such a correspondence paves the way for Diab to end the play with a master scene. In it, Abo-Ratiba, a heavyset downtrodden whom the villagers fear of his great power, searches for Mansour to kill him: "Where is Mansour Abo-al-Sad, my dear brethren. How can I get such a hardened career criminal" (Diab 1982, 145 [trans. mine.]?) His unexpected violent reaction motivates one to infer that if the subalterns find "a spiritual leader who can carefully direct them to gain their due rights, they

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will certainly revolt against the makers of their oppression” (al-Rai 2001, 260 [trans. mine.]). In transforming the wretched Shehata into a prominent political figure, Diab really fulfils a two-fold objective. First, Shehata becomes the spokesperson for the working classes all over the world. Second, Diab aesthetically employs the character of Shehata not only to harp on the not-said/wish-fulfilment, but also, to quote Eagleton, to provide the marginalized with a theatrical discourse that “*speaks* its contradictions, rather than speaks of them” (2006, 140).

### Conclusion

Having analyzed Diab’s play, *al-Halafit* in the light of Marxist criticism—Eagleton and Jameson’s thoughts, I would like to conclude that Diab is a professional dramatist in a school established by such two aestheticians. If some critics described him as the Pirandello of Egypt, I would like to call him the Eagleton and the Jameson of Egypt. This epithet can be traced back to the fact that Diab represents the not-said/wish-fulfilment in *al-Halafit* through an ideological clash between oppressive hegemonic group and subservient nonhegemonic team. The oppression of the elite camp transforms the existence of the farmers into a horrible daydream of exploitation where the villagers are treated as if they were invaluable chattels, not to say unpaid clowns. To highlight how capitalist repression gives rise to the not-said, Diab introduces three dramatic *leitmotifs*: a. Mansour sells a cow which he shares equally with one of the farmers with two different prices; b. Mansour threatens Hilal with a trust receipt; c. Mansour scolds Shehata because he sits as if he were an overdog.

For all such horrible social injustice, Diab is bent on providing his subalterns with a defense mechanism via which they can voice the not-said/wish-fulfilment. That is why he adopts the technique of a play-within-a play. This structure may enable him to engineer four genuine dramatic moments of revelation via which the not-said/wish-fulfilment of the marginalized returns to disturb the power of the ruling classes: 1) Shehata’s six political wishes; 2) Shehata’s attempt to force Mansour into shredding the trust receipt signed by Hilal; 3) The

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heavy criticism launched by the oppressed when commenting on A's painful material; 4) Zainab's tragic avowal about Mansour attempts to force the girls of the downtrodden into sexual intercourse. By voicing the not-said/wish-fulfilment in terms of commissive, imperative, assertive, and interrogative speech acts, Diab asserts that when the oppressed classes find a revolutionary leader like Shehata, they will not only speak for their repressed ideology, but also plan for setting up an egalitarian society devoid of Mansour, Mubarak and Mahmoud. In a word, Diab's skillful dramatization of the psychic deviations of class struggle indicates that scholars of theatre studies should thoroughly investigate his dramatic achievement, mainly because he may deserve to be one of the makers of world drama.

### Endnote

Translations from Arabic are all mine.

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