

The Role of Arab Classical Drama in Spreading Moral and Patriotic Values Among the Public “The Death of Cleopatra” by Ahmed Shawky is an Example

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Abstract

Drama significantly influences public awareness, serving as a potent artistic medium with broad reach and impact, as well as an effective tool for conveying moral and patriotic messages. Drama functions as a potent medium for conveying patriotic and ethical messages. This research aims to examine the artistic and ethical elements inherent in the classical Arabic play "Death of Cleopatra," authored by Ahmed Shawqi, as a model for embodying national values and guiding communal behavior. This study examines the inherent ideals within the theatrical text and their impact on the audience's consciousness, identity, and behavior. The play presents a set of essential questions at its outset, including the following: In what manner does the play communicate its moral and national themes to the audience? What function does it serve in enhancing Arab audiences' sense of identity and national affiliation? In what manner does the audience's comprehension of history and their shared responsibilities evolve due to the ethical and national principles articulated in the book? To what degree does this play remain pertinent within contemporary Arab culture? This analysis deconstructs the symbols and concepts in Shawqi's text through various methodologies, including literary criticism, cultural studies, and ethical philosophy. The research findings indicate that ancient Arabic drama, as exemplified by Ahmed Shawqi's works, transcends mere representation of cultural and historical narratives. Rather, it plays a significant role in the audience's ethical education and the nation's advancement. Theater serves as a transformative medium that imparts values, enhances collective consciousness, and cultivates national identity, thereby exerting considerable influence on Arab culture, as evidenced by this study's findings.

Keywords; Ahmed Shawky; Arabic Drama; Ethical Values; National Identity; The Death of Cleopatra.

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Introduction

Drama holds a significant position in the lives of Arab nations as it serves as the direct and shortest path for communication with the public. It directs various cultural and educational messages in an easy and appealing manner, achieving its intended educational, moral, and even political objectives. It is one of the most important literary arts that elevates the recipient (the audience), constantly seeking to provide solutions to societal problems, particularly in guiding ethical values. It acts as a clear mirror reflecting the features of society, both its positive and negative aspects, and urges it towards change. Despite its relative novelty in Arabic literature, drama has managed to establish its legitimacy and present its visions under the umbrella of prevailing moral concepts within the public and their social reality. Ahmed Shawqi, the renowned writer, was known for his morally-driven plays during the Renaissance era. In 1929, he penned the historical play "The Death of Cleopatra" with the intention of contributing to the establishment of an Arabic poetic theater that stimulates national values among the masses and defends Cleopatra as a symbol of nationalism. Therefore, we can address some of the issues that served as the basis for the study in the play, namely: How does the dramatic text tackle the moral and national values in Cleopatra's demise? And what is its impact on the audience in instilling a sense of nationalism among them? To begin, we will shed light on the theoretical methodology regarding the relationship between the art of drama and ethics first, and then its connection to the audience.

The influential role of theater and drama in shaping public morality and nationalistic attitudes in the Arab world has been extensively analyzed by scholars. Critics like Samir Sarhan (2013) in his book *Poetry and Politics in the Modern Arab World* argue that late 19th and early 20th century playwrights were highly "devoted to imbuing their art with a moral purpose" and providing plays that were "ethically and patriotically instructive" (p. 79). Sarhan puts particular focus on Egyptian writer Ahmed Shawqi, describing him as an artistic pioneer who utilized theater specifically as a vehicle for transmitting ethical values and patriotic themes to the public. Other studies like Mahmoud's (2010) *Theater and Nationalism in Modern Egypt* provide deeper examination of how Shawqi's historical dramas, including iconic works like *The Death of Cleopatra*, projected heroic representations of ancient Egyptian figures in order to cultivate nationalistic pride and loyalty among audiences. Mahmoud argues that Shawqi's plays "helped dramatically transform Egyptian identity" by glorifying the nation's Pharaonic heritage (p. 56).

Building on Mahmoud's analysis, Tarek el-Ariss (2018) in his article "Staging Cleopatra in the Early Arab Renaissance" offers a more nuanced critique of Shawqi's portrayal of Cleopatra. El-Ariss argues that Shawqi's exaggerated depiction of Cleopatra's national loyalty and resistance ironically distanced some 20th century Arab audiences who viewed Cleopatra as a foreign queen, not a true Egyptian heroine. This critique provides an important counterpoint, showing how Shawqi's dramaturgical choices may have sometimes fallen short in resonating with all viewers. Overall though, scholarly consensus agrees that Shawqi's classical dramas were fundamental in disseminating moral virtues and patriotism widely among 20th century Arab theater-goers. By providing an ethical and aesthetic analysis of texts like *The Death of Cleopatra*, this paper will contribute to our understanding of how Shawqi embedded values in drama, further elucidating classical Arabic theater's influential nation-shaping powers.

This research delves into an analysis of how ethical and national values portrayed in Arab classical drama particularly in Ahmed Shawky's play "The Death of Cleopatra." This investigation is part of a conversation that has spanned, over a hundred years exploring the lasting impact of

Cleopatra. She is not viewed as a historical figure but also serves as a symbol in different cultural stories that continue to shape contemporary views, on ethics, nationalism and identity. In examining Ahmed Shawky's play "The Death of Cleopatra" in the context of drama and its depiction of moral and patriotic ideals this study positions itself within an academic conversation that explores how Cleopatra is portrayed. This discussion encompasses aspects of literature, theater and historical interpretation showcasing the impact of Cleopatra, as both a real historical figure and a symbolic representation, within cultural stories that still influence modern understandings of who we are our sense of belonging to a nation and what is considered right or wrong.

The exploration of Shawky's work is built upon the foundation laid by M.M. Badawi, whose significant contributions, to the study of drama provide historical and cultural context. Badawi's examination of drama in Egypt (1988), (Badawi, M.M, 1988) and his investigation into the early developments, in Arabic drama trace the evolution of Arabic literature and its thematic concerns (Badawi, M.M, No date) . This framework sets the stage for an analysis of "The Death of Cleopatra."

In the realm of academia, R.D. Ceccatos (2006) (Ceccato, R.D, 2006) , examination of drama, during the classical era in "The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature" has greatly contributed to our understanding. Ceccatos research provides an overview of the landscape that encompasses Arab classical drama, including Shawky's interpretation of Cleopatra. This study emphasizes the depth and richness of classical Arabic literature in its ability to depict intricate moral and national narratives thus placing Shawky's "The Death of Cleopatra" within a tradition of literary works that explore the complex dynamics, between individual characters and broader societal themes.

This study aims to analyze "The Death of Cleopatra" by incorporating scholarly perspectives. It explores how Shawky's dramatization adds to the landscape of classical drama while delving into themes of national identity and ethical values. By examining Shawky's text this research emphasizes the lasting impact of drama, as a means of reflection and education enabling a comprehension of historical narratives and their significance in present day discussions, on ethics and nationalism

1. Drama and Art

Art and drama are deeply connected, as performances, on stage incorporate elements to convey emotions and meanings. Theatrical productions utilize components like set design, costumes, lighting and music to enhance the appeal of a play. The set design establishes the setting of the play through decisions involving colors, textures, shapes and spatial arrangements. Costumes are designed using fabrics, accessories and styles to showcase character traits and historical periods. Lighting effects create atmosphere indicate time settings and emphasize scenes through manipulation of light sources. Music and sound effects complement the narrative by intensifying moments. Additionally, actors' movements and expressions can be seen as art forms, in themselves. Drama offers an experience that engages senses. By combining performance arts with craftsmanship dramatic narratives come to life for audiences in a manner that evokes both intellectual stimulation and emotional resonance.

The relationship between ethics and art, particularly drama, is one of the fundamental issues addressed by criticism and philosophy alike. Prior to determining the relationship between them, it is necessary to define the following terms: art, drama, and ethics.

1.1. The concept of art

Defining the concept of art is consistently regarded as a challenging task by writers and critics. This is possibly due to the fact that we are faced with an aspect of human activity that does not adhere to absolute judgments nor is defined by them. Among the various human activities, none evolves as rapidly, moves as dynamically, and is further removed from stability and stagnation than artistic activity. The writer Ramadan Al-Sabbagh attempted to define the meaning of art in his book "Aesthetics of Art: The Ethical and Social Framework" by exploring its meaning through language. He states: "Perhaps this is one of the ways that enables us to comprehend the meanings adopted by art. In a general sense, art is a set of rules followed to achieve a specific goal, whether it is beauty, goodness, or utility. If the goal is to achieve beauty, it is called fine art. If the goal is to achieve goodness, it is called the art of ethics. And if the goal is to achieve utility, it is called the art of craftsmanship". (Art Blog, 2022)

1.2. The concept of drama

The word "drama" originates from the Greek word "dran," which literally means "to do" or "an action performed." The term then transitioned from Late Latin to most modern European languages. Since the word is commonly used in our theatrical context, it can be approached based on its Arabicization, where we say "amal" عمل "drama" (dramatic work) or "haraka" حركة "drama" (dramatic movement). It refers to the targeted text to be presented on stage, regardless of its genre, school, or linguistic nature. The roles of its characters are portrayed by actors who perform the actions and deliver the dialogue (Hamada, 1985, p. 113).

Drama has taken on various forms throughout different eras, in line with the natural evolution of society and the ideas and values resulting from these social movements. This is not surprising considering that the art of drama emerges from society and returns to it through its presentation to the audience. as a form of artistic expression, drama is inherently connected to human beings' ability to express themselves and convey the depths of their natural and social environment. This expression has always taken two forms: external expression and internal expression, which interact dialectically. The external expression is merely the performative manifestation of the internal expression. This expression activates a response in the recipient, following the scientific principle that states that every action elicits an equal and opposite reaction. Moreover, the matter goes beyond this boundary, as we observe that the reaction itself transforms back into action (Baddawi, 2000, p. 4).

1.3. The concept of ethics

Can be defined as "the science of behavior, with its subject matter being virtues and vices, their nature and manifestation, how to acquire them, their timing, and the establishment of rules based on this science. (Al-Hafny, 2000, p. 33) " In a concise philosophical dictionary, ethics is described as "a form of social consciousness and a social institution that regulates people's behavior in all areas of public life." Ethics has two aspects: ideological (ethical consciousness) and practical (ethical relationships) (Dictionary , 1976, p. 13).

Ahmed Badawi defines ethical values as "a set of values that drive the masses to defend the weak and punish the oppressor by referring to the standards of truth and justice. This judgment applies to various political, economic, and educational activities" (Baddawi, 2000, p. 31). In reality, the close relationship between art and ethics exists because fine arts purify our desires and refine our emotions. They achieve a kind of harmony between our feelings and thoughts, or between our desires and duties. We experience a profound sense of happiness when we witness something beautiful because we sense a remarkable harmony that removes any sense of conflict

or division within us. It's as if the perception of beauty is linked in our souls to an ethical sense, such as a feeling of peace, tranquility, or psychological harmony (Berkat, 2012, pp. 196-177).

The writer Ali Ahmed Bakatheer discusses the relationship between art and ethics, stating that many notable artistic works were created by their authors to convey a particular idea that captured their hearts and stirred their souls. They found solace in these excellent theatrical works. Bernard Shaw's plays, for example, mostly fall into this category. Shaw himself admitted on several occasions that he turned to the theater because he believed it was an effective tool and an excellent platform to express his opinions and advocate for them. Henrik Ibsen, John Galsworthy, Jean-Paul Sartre, and many others have also written successful plays that were inspired by their fervent passion for social and political reform, whether on a national or global scale. The fact that these plays were purposeful or carried a message did not diminish or detract from their value (Bakatheer, 2000, p. 36). According to Bakatheer, art should be infused with noble and lofty ideas and serve society and noble principles.

The arts, in their various forms, emerged, lived, and evolved theoretically and practically in a heated dialectical battle with ethics, attempting to establish the legitimacy of their existence and the necessity of their continuity. They sought to highlight their human and social significance, sometimes aligning with ethics and other times opposing them. Eventually, with the advancement of general human concepts and the social and cognitive progress resulting from this development, the arts came to be seen as an integral part of ethics itself. They became a major player in moral organization and behavioral guidance. As a result of this evolution, it is widely acknowledged that theater, in all its forms and variations, plays a crucial role in carrying, presenting, and disseminating positive ethical values, encapsulating them within beautiful literary and artistic frameworks inspired by reality, history, religion, mythology, and the artistic legacy of humanity as a whole (Theater and the Rule of Ethical Values, 2014). It is evident that drama, like other art forms, has a message, purpose, and ethical connection.

Specialists argue that the integration of the art of drama into social life, whether within a religious-social or socio-political framework, positions it within the conscious training of the individual by simulating their emotions. Theater mobilizes and directs emotions within both natural and social dimensions, making individuals aware of the love for public good and the aversion to public harm. Therefore, theater serves as a training ground for the human psyche, fostering a reevaluation of one's positions and promoting the reliance on reason and logic as the foundation for opinion and stance. It stimulates individuals to adopt the correct stance, providing them with the proper incentive to construct their positions (Abbas, 2022).

Drama serves to impart to young people various behavioral strategies and positive attitudes towards self, society, and the nation, in line with general cultural orientations. Through the careful selection of appropriate texts, this objective, along with other facets of social development, such as patriotism, positive role modeling, and self-confidence, can be achieved (Hussein, 2005, p. 23).

2. Drama and the Audience

The origin of the word "audience" comes from the Latin term "PUBLICUS," meaning a group of spectators and listeners in any artistic presentation, whether in dramatic, visual, or musical arts. The audience, regardless of its awareness or lack thereof, its level of education, or cultural background—whether enlightened or less so—is the true and effective judge of various artistic productions in any art form.

In modern theatrical presentations, actors may perform and practice their craft amidst the audience, reminiscent of certain ancient eras, such as the medieval drama of the market square. Alternatively, there may be a direct interaction between the actors and the observing masses, as seen in the comedic theatrical art of the Renaissance. However, today, the reverse can occur, meaning that the audience or some of its members may ascend to occupy their place as spectators on the stage. This naturally happens in plays and productions where the dramatic concept justifies such an artistic form in modern theatrical direction (Kamal Al-Din Eid, 1999).

To understand the role of the audience in revitalizing and developing drama and theatrical performances, it is essential for us to acquaint ourselves with the primary motivations that prompt individuals to regularly attend theatrical productions. These motivations vary from person to person based on their personal inclinations toward the theatrical presentation. As has been observed in the audience's expectations from a performance, there are key motivations, with the most significant being that artistic work, in general, always aims to generate aesthetic experiences for the audience (Zaki, 2000, p. 32).

There is a close connection between drama, especially theatrical performances, and the audience. There is no drama or theatrical presentation without an audience. The term "drama" implies the presence of recipients, and the term "performance" necessarily suggests the existence of an audience exposed to it. The audience serves as the true mirror reflecting the value of the theatrical work and the arts, in their various forms, emerged, lived, and evolved theoretically and practically in a heated dialectical battle with ethics, attempting to establish the legitimacy of their existence and the necessity of their continuity. They sought to highlight their human and social significance, sometimes aligning with ethics and other times opposing them. Eventually, with the advancement of general human concepts and the social and cognitive progress resulting from this development, the efforts and talents of the theater artists. The more people are inclined to attend a particular play, the more it contributes to the success of that play, witnessing an unprecedented level of popularity. It's crucial to note that, for some, one measure of the success of a theatrical work lies in the number of attendees for that performance (Naif, 2011, p. 19). the arts came to be seen as an integral part of ethics itself. They became a major player in moral organization and behavioral guidance. As a result of this evolution, it is widely acknowledged that theater, in all its forms and variations, plays a crucial role in carrying, presenting, and disseminating positive ethical values, encapsulating them within beautiful literary and artistic frameworks inspired by reality, history, religion, mythology, and the artistic legacy of humanity as a whole. It is evident that drama, like other art forms, has a message, purpose, and ethical connection.

3. Classical Drama in Arabic Literature and the Audience

Classical drama, originally a literary school that emerged in Europe in the fifteenth century, sought to revive the literary traditions common to the ancient Greek and Roman civilizations. Playwrights drew their principles from these traditions, subjecting the drama to those ancient artistic principles established by Aristotle, particularly the rules known as the three unities. They distanced drama from the authority of the church and shifted away from religious themes. Instead, they directed it towards a more humanistic and ethical orientation (Saber, 1889, p. 104).

In this period, the art of dialogue-based acting diverged from singing-based acting, giving rise to the genre of musical theater or opera. This form of dramatic poetry is designed for sung performance accompanied by instrumental music without interspersed spoken dialogue.

Essentially, it is a type of musical theater where acting, singing, and music blend together to captivate the audience.

The influence of the classical school in modern Arabic literature is limited, primarily confined to poetic drama. This connection became evident when Arab playwrights engaged with French classical theater. Notable figures in this regard include the eminent poet Ahmed Shawqi from Egypt and the writer Maroun al-Naqqaash from Lebanon. Their engagement is reflected in the Arabic classical works through translations by Maroun al-Naqqaash, who translated plays by the French writer Molière, including "The Miser" and "The Noble Scoundrel." Additionally, Salim al-Naqqaash translated the play "Horace" by Corneille, written in 1640. This modest influence became apparent in the plays of Ahmed Shawqi, who had connections with French classical literature and delved into its theater during his studies in France (Mohsen, 1989, pp. 20-25). Drama is a cultural and educational art form that contributes to disseminating values and principles, as well as raising awareness among audiences of various demographics and age groups. Its significant role, in all its forms and variations, lies in carrying, presenting, and promoting positive ethical values. It encapsulates these values within a beautiful literary and artistic framework, drawing inspiration from reality, history, religion, mythology, and the artistic legacy of humanity as a whole.

Drama has historically served and continues to serve as a reflective mirror of society, with its ethical and moral dimension present in various forms, both directly and indirectly. In ancient Greek theater, for instance, the works of Menander (342-291 BCE) portrayed a reflection of morality on stage. The concept of "moral theater" flourished as an artistic form in the fifteenth century, where its themes revolved around the conflict between good and evil for the salvation of the human soul. Shakespearean drama, for example, prominently showcased images of ethics and values through its exploration of the dualities of "good and evil," presenting a timeless theatrical legacy. In Europe, around the mid-seventeenth century, the genre of ethical comedy emerged, as exemplified by Molière in works like "The School for Wives" in 1662 and "The Misanthrope" in 1666 (Osman, 2019).

On the Arab level, examining Ahmed Shawqi's play "Layla's Madman" reveals an ethical value in Layla's death. In this context, death is deemed more important than life and happiness within an existence devoid of ethics. Sacrificing love and life becomes necessary when it conflicts with customs and values. This is notably connected to Shawqi's influence from French classical theater during his studies in France, as noted by Dr. Hikmat Ahmed Sameer in his book "Contemporary Arab Theater" (Osman, 2019).

There are theatrical productions that have played on ethical and moral themes, transcending specific genres, whether they be social works or classical ones. Notable examples include works by Tawfiq al-Hakim, such as "Courage and Loyalty" and "Farah Anton" in the play "Salah al-Din in the Kingdom of Jerusalem." Prominent figures who supported ethical values in theater include Aziz Eid in tragedy, Naguib Al-Rihani in purposeful comedy, and Tawfiq al-Hakim in his early writings that sought to embody noble values in theater, contributing to the consolidation of national identity. Many of these works intersect with values and ethics in a sophisticated manner.

Studies even suggest that around 90 percent of Arabic and global theatrical forms, in their triumph for human dignity, align with a system of values and ethics that fulfills human conditions and dignity (Osman, 2019).

4. The Death of Cleopatra by Ahmed Shawqi and Its National and Ethical Values and Its Impact on the Audience:

4.1. Dramatic Analysis of The Death of Cleopatra

When Shawqi began writing for the theater, his influence was clearly rooted in classical drama. However, he did not delve into the study of various theatrical doctrines, and thus, he was unable to consciously choose a doctrine. Instead, his influence from classical drama came about spontaneously and non-methodically. Consequently, we don't see him strictly adhering to all classical principles in his theater. He rather followed his instincts (Mandour, 1992 , pp. 70-71).

Similarly, French playwrights of the classical era treated their historical themes from a human perspective, while Shawqi approached them from an ethical or national standpoint. In 'Cleopatra,' with her religious devotion moving between the Roman leaders, Shawqi portrayed her in a moral or national context. Shawqi did not attempt to present her desires and sensual inclinations as documented in history. Instead, he surrounded her with an aura of the Nile and dignity", (Bak, 2002, p. 150). Shawqi's inclination towards creating historical plays in almost all of his works is a reflection of the prevailing trend in theatrical composition in Egypt during that era. Historical events and folk tales were the predominant sources for Arab theatrical composition (Awad, 2015). His works were characterized by the transition of protagonists from history, noble language, reliance on poetic dialogue, and the exploration of conflicts between right and wrong. He also adhered to the three unities of place, time, and subject. Many of his plays were influenced by the works of Shakespeare (Mandour, Literature and Its Schools, , 1975, p. 210).

Shawqi wrote the dramatic text 'The Death of Cleopatra' in 1929, with the initiative to contribute to the establishment of Arabic poetic theater. In addition, he aimed to defend Cleopatra as a manifestation of nationalism, refuting the claims of his opponents who argued that he was indifferent to nationalism. Cleopatra, in his view, symbolized a national identity. This play was later produced in the 1960s by the Cultural Program radio station, directed by Hassani Al-Hadidi and starring Samiha Ayoub, Kamal Yassin, Salah Serhan, Lotfi Abdel Hamid, Abdullah Ghaith, Tawfiq Sadek, and Mohamed Reda (Bak, 2002, p. 150).

The play is considered one of the most beautiful works written by the Prince of Poets, Ahmed Shawqi. In it, he presents a unique perspective on the life of Cleopatra. The historical portrayal depicts her as an Egyptian queen who overcame the trials of fate, becoming a distracted queen, enamored and absorbed in love affairs, indifferent to her rule and her people. Shawqi aimed to depict her as a patriotic queen who cares for her people, works for the benefit of her country, and loves Egypt, countering the unfair characterization by Western historians who portrayed her as a frivolous figure unconcerned with the welfare of Egypt.

Cleopatra ruled Egypt alongside her younger brother after Julius Caesar helped her ascend to the throne. Following her brother's death, she visited Rome and was celebrated by Caesar. When Caesar was killed, the struggle for power in Rome erupted between Antony and Octavian. Cleopatra initially remained neutral. After Antony's victory and ascension to power, he invited Cleopatra to Rome. When he saw her, he fell in love, married her, and became preoccupied with her, neglecting his political and military standing. His political and military influence diminished, and he returned to Rome, marrying the sister of his rival Octavian. Antony, driven by nostalgia, returned to Cleopatra, provoking Octavian's anger. Octavian warned him of war, and in the ensuing conflict, Octavian emerged victorious. Fearing capture by Octavian, Cleopatra chose to

end her life, leaving behind two daughters from Antony and a son from Julius Caesar (Wahdan, 2019).

In defending Cleopatra, Shoukry aimed to prove that she was an Egyptian woman primarily devoted to serving her country through the dangerous game of politics. When she intertwined her politics with love, it wasn't to showcase weakness or vulnerability, but rather to use her intelligence to achieve her noble ethical goal of preserving Egypt's interests and maintaining its sovereignty. The text hints at the conflict between love and duty, making her jealous for her homeland. It doesn't matter if the Romans isolate her and if she sacrifices herself for her kingdom. She opts for suicide without a single hair on her head quivering, holding on to her relationship with Antony, the Roman commander who defied his people and died for her. Thus, the values of loyalty, devotion to the homeland, sacrifice, and the value of love for Antony are manifested, making everything insignificant in the face of her dedication to her country, even her own life:

Table 1: Cleopatra's speech

Line from the Play	Speaker	Context or meaning	Implications for Character or Theme
I die as I have lived, for Egypt's throne,	Cleopatra	Cleopatra declares her consistent dedication to Egypt's throne.	Demonstrates loyalty and sacrifice for national pride.
I sacrifice for the throne of beauty.	Cleopatra	Cleopatra suggests her life was a sacrifice for her ideals.	Shows her commitment to ideals of beauty and power, possibly hinting at the intertwining of personal and national identity.
A life of humiliation leads to death,	Cleopatra	Reflects on her perceived indignities and their consequences.	Highlights the theme of dignity in life and death, suggesting a noble end is preferable to a life of disgrace.
Rise, O serpent of the valley, rise!" (Shawqi, 1946, p. 102)	Cleopatra	Invoking the symbolic serpent, possibly as a call to action or fate.	May symbolize Cleopatra's acceptance of her fate or a final assertion of power and connection to Egyptian symbolism.

Source: (Shawqi, 1946, p. 102)

Cleopatra's loyalty is strong, both to Egypt and to Antony. Even in this fatal moment, she doesn't forget Cleopatra, presenting herself as a beautiful woman facing death with dignity. Here is a translation of the lines:

Table 2: Cleopatra's speech

Line from the Play	Speaker	Context or Meaning	Implications for Character or Theme
Oh death, gently take my soul	Cleopatra	Cleopatra is addressing death with calm acceptance, requesting a peaceful end.	Illustrates her acceptance of fate and desire for a dignified end.
And steal it, as the thief steals the tear from the weeping eye	Cleopatra	Comparing death to a thief, suggests an end both subtle and inevitable.	Conveys the inevitability of death with a sense of resignation and peace.

So I die as I have lived, as if	Cleopatra	Implies she has lived a life of appearances, perhaps disconnected from reality.	Reflects on the duality of her existence, caught between reality and illusion.
I am a house of imagination and a doll of the ideal	Cleopatra	Describes herself as a construct of dreams and ideals rather than tangible reality.	Highlights the conflict between her idealized self and her actual circumstances.
As if closing my eyelids is a nap	Cleopatra	Minimizes the finality of death, likening it to a temporary rest.	Suggests a continuation beyond death, diminishing its finality and fear.
As if my slumber is a graceful recline	Cleopatra	Further diminishes the severity of death, likening it to a restful, elegant pose.	Portrays death as a natural, even graceful part of life, reflecting her royal demeanor.
In secret, it leads me to Antony in my gaze	Cleopatra	Implies that in death, she will reunite with her lost love, Antony.	Embodies the romantic notion of love transcending the physical world, reinforcing her enduring love.
And the beauty of my attire and adornment" (Shawqi, 1946, p. 101)	Cleopatra	Suggests she is preparing for death as one might for a grand event.	Indicates her approach to death as a final, dignified act, maintaining her royal stature and aesthetic.

Source: (Shawqi, 1946, p. 101)

Shawqi succeeded in depicting the tragic panorama of the fateful end of that dynamic woman in the historical period of 69-30 BCE. He achieved this by choosing the most gruesome way of death, describing it as a joyful and happy death. Through panoramic and captivating poetic imagery, he portrayed the psychological aspects of love and the romanticism of rapidly unfolding events, turning the tragedy into a dramatic focal point. The play elicited applause from the audience, impressed by tears of joy mixed with sighs of pain. Shawqi's choice for Cleopatra's beautiful character to meet the worst death showcased his focus on the cultural persona and national seriousness of Cleopatra, redirecting her love towards another path – the love for the homeland (Nouri, 2016).

In the remaining scenes of the dramatic text, Shawqi presents the proclamation of "Caesarion" as the legitimate heir of the deceased Caesar, the ruler of the country. This prompts Octavius to declare war against Egypt. Antony receives this with disdain, considering himself the prince of battles, with the entire world as a witness. The battle begins, centered around the Actium naval battle. Cleopatra withdraws from the fight, justifying it by describing the intense and harsh nature of the battle. She pulls back her ship, and the rest of the warships follow suit. In doing so, she and her army escape, preserving the ships from destruction or capture, symbolizing noble national values. Cleopatra's actions are driven by her intense love and loyalty, expressing pride in herself. She earns appreciation, proving herself a daughter of Egypt and its great queen, stating:

Table 3: Narrator's speech

Line from the Play	Speaker	Context or Meaning	Implications for Character or Theme
I was in a storm, I roamed my street	Narrator	Experiencing chaos and uncertainty	Search for identity and direction amidst turmoil.
From it, the towers emerged, marking my path	Narrator	Finding guidance and direction	Emergence of clarity and purpose from chaos.
They have escaped the turbulence of battle	Narrator	Resilience and survival	Endurance and strength through challenges.
And the ships still bear witness to destruction and capture	Narrator	History's scars and lessons	The lasting impact of conflict on personal and collective memory.
A stance that amazes the sublime, I was in it	Narrator	Pride and astonishment at one's own resilience	Recognition of personal strength and unique destiny.
The daughter of Egypt, and I was the queen of Egypt (Shawqi, 1946, p. 52)	Narrator	Connection to heritage and leadership	Self-realization and empowerment rooted in cultural identity.

Source: (Shawqi, 1946, p. 52)

The decisive battle unfolds, leading to Antony's defeat and his escape into the desert with his follower Orus. In this scene, the writer portrays positive ethical values exemplified by the servant Orus, highlighting loyalty and sacrifice. Orus, expressing his commitment and devotion to his master Antony, takes his own life to please him.

Table 4: Anthony and Orus' dialogue

Line from the Play	Speaker	Context or Meaning	Implications for Character or Theme
Orus, I have struggled, weary from hardship and distress. Rest for a while, my companion, before men seize us.	Antony	Expressing exhaustion and impending capture	Human vulnerability and fleeting power.
Antony sits exhausted, and memories overwhelm him.	Stage Direction	Physical and emotional fatigue	The weight of past actions and their consequences.
Orus, what has befallen me that you forgot my place? I came tired, bearing my shame and lowering my high status. I have diminished my soul with disgrace that will endure over time (Shawqi, 1946, p. 23).	Antony	Questioning loyalty, acknowledging his downfall	Self-realization of failure and loss of honor.
Maintain your dignity, Caesar, do not be dismayed, And let fate unfold as it will, drawing the course. Embrace defeat, stand tall in paradise, as you used to receive triumphant victories. For you are not the first star to shine, Nor are you the last star to disappear. Just as the sun descends after its ascent, And sickness follows the morning's brightness" (Shawqi, 1946, p. 24).	Orus	Urging Antony to accept his fate and maintain his dignity	Acceptance of life's cycles, resilience in the face of defeat.

Source: (Shawqi, 1946, p. 24)

Then Antony asks Orus, who had previously sworn not to disobey his master until the end of his life, to kill him. Orus, cunningly so as not to disobey his master, takes his own life. Antony comments on this, saying:

"I have seen how Caesar should die,
And I have seen from you, the servant, how one should die."

The writer managed to allude to the noble ethics embodied in the character of Antony, making him a historical mirror reflecting the reality of his time and the reality of the Roman leader. Antony was characterized by qualities such as tolerance, sacrifice, courage, love, and loyalty. He sought to please Cleopatra and stand by her side and the side of her kingdom against external threats. He sacrificed himself in the Battle of Actium near Alexandria when Cleopatra withdrew during the fight, weakening his position. Octavian emerged victorious, and when Cleopatra sent word to Antony falsely informing him of her death, he plunged his sword into his heart. Upon learning the truth, he forgave her and ordered to be carried to her to die in her presence.

In the third act, there is a dialogue between Antony and the physician Olympus before his suicide. Antony talks about his bravery in wars and how it led him to escape from his war with Octavian due to the weakness of his hand when Cleopatra fled with her army and abandoned him:

"But wretched is the war, and rendered vile
When it takes flight and leaves the warring camp.
And were it not for war's uncertainty,
A common soldier might have been a lord."

In this dialogue between Antony (أنطونيوس) and his loyal servant, Orus (أوروس), Orus reassures Antony, urging him not to be dismayed by his defeat and encouraging him to face adversity with dignity. Orus expresses admiration for Antony's past victories, comparing him to a shining star that has experienced both triumphs and setbacks.

Table 5: Anthony and Orus' dialogue

Line from the Play	Speaker	Context or Meaning	Implications for Character or Theme
Be steadfast, Caesar, do not be dismayed, and let fate unfold as it may. Embrace defeat with the grace of a hero, As you did with the conquests of old. For you are neither the first star to shine, Nor the last to fade away.	Orus	Urging acceptance of fate with dignity and courage, reminiscent of past victories.	Resilience and historical perspective on legacy; cyclical nature of success and failure.
Then was I a coward in the war, or did I betray Orus in matters of love? Witness that I am Antony, The son of Rome, and the gallant one. If I live, I live with an unblemished brow, And if I die, I die with an honorable reputation (Shawqi, 1946, p. 24).	Antony	Reflecting on past actions and asserting his identity and honor.	Concern for legacy and honor; internal conflict and affirmation of personal values.

Source: (Shawqi, 1946, p. 24).

In this dialogue between Antony (أنطونيوس) and the physician Olympius (أولمبوس), Olympius reveals the tragic news of Cleopatra's suicide. Antony reacts with shock and grief, asking for details about the circumstances of her death.

Table 6: Antony and Olympius' dialogue

Line from the Play	Speaker	Context or Meaning	Implications for Character or Theme
Cleopatra took her own life, with a dagger's thrust to her chest at the break of dawn.	Olympius	Announcing Cleopatra's suicide to Antony.	Despair and the tragic end of a queen; emphasizes the theme of tragic destiny.
Oh, Heavens! She took her own life! Where? Why? How did it happen? And when?	Antony	Antony's shock and disbelief at the news of Cleopatra's death.	Personal loss and bewilderment; questioning the reality of fate and personal decisions.
I passed by the palace at dawn today, but found no order or beauty in sight. Instead, a desolate emptiness echoed with wailing. It became apparent to my eyes – a forsaken place, a mournful scene.	Olympius	Describing the chaotic and sorrowful scene at the palace.	The fallout of tragedy on a grand scale; the end of an era and the emptiness that follows.
She took her own life! What a piece of news! Oh, the cruelty of fate!" (Shawqi, 1946, p. 24)	Antony	Antony's lament on hearing of Cleopatra's death.	The harshness of destiny and the impact of Cleopatra's decision on Antony.

Source: (Shawqi, 1946, p. 24)

The writer chose to let the events unfold without intervening or providing a dramatic justification. The influence of Shakespeare's play "Antony and Cleopatra" is evident, especially in the focus on Cleopatra's death and the derived national and moral values (Kheila, 2008). The writer acknowledges the impact of Shakespeare's work but notes a lack of deep exploration of the conflict between human emotions and social ethics in their own plays. "While he did not delve into the intense struggle between human emotions and social ethics, a truly fierce conflict is not found in his plays. Instead, there are easy and smooth victories for the principles of those ethics over human emotions. It is noticed that the majesty and grandeur of that easy ethical victory are sometimes weakened. Although he did not give them importance in the context of the tragedy, he did portray the characters comprehensively, or in endorsing the impact of his play" (Mandour, 1992, p. 34).

The play evolves, portraying Cleopatra as the truthful queen towards her people. She denies any victory claims, refutes malicious and false rumors, and accuses her male adversaries of spreading this false news to incite the people against her with the alleged triumph. She declares that she doesn't deserve the praise and thanks because she hasn't achieved victory, despite her longing for it and her constant efforts against the enemy for the sake of the homeland and the happiness of her people. A dialogue unfolds between the queen and her attendant.

Table 7: The Queen and Charmion' dialogue

Line from the Play	Speaker	Context or Meaning	Implications for Character or Theme
The crowds, O Queen, by the shore, Surge with enthusiasm and good news. Their joy is fueled by what they witnessed in Actium, A display of triumph over the enemy that resounds.	Charmion	Reporting to the Queen the people's reaction to a presumed victory at Actium.	Public perception versus actual events; the power of rumor and public sentiment.
They speak and echo throughout the city, News spreading like wildfire.	Charmion	Emphasizing the rapid spread of news among the populace.	The impact of rumors and news on public morale and perception.
O men of falsehood, what lies have you spread? Untruths they tell, a fabrication by my life!	The Queen	Questioning the authenticity of the reported victory.	Discrepancy between public perception and personal truth; the isolation of leadership.
What victory have I achieved that they extol With tongues praising and thanking me? A sweet taste of triumph lingers in wishful thinking, Would that we gain the sweetness of victory's claw.	The Queen	Expressing skepticism about the supposed victory.	The elusive nature of victory and truth; the queen's detachment from the supposed triumph.
Tomorrow, the truth will be known to the people, nothing remains hidden from the gaze of nations. (Shawqi, 1946, p. 107)	The Queen	Foreseeing the revelation of the actual events.	Inevitability of truth and the public's eventual realization of reality.

Source: (Shawqi, 1946, p. 107)

The Queen's anger at the spread of the false victory news indicates Shawqi's patriotism and his belief in the awareness of the people. The Queen declares, "Nothing remains hidden from the gaze of nations," revealing Shawqi's closeness to the pulse of the people and their concerns. This response also refutes the notion that his connection to the palace implied detachment from the hopes and pains of the Egyptian people. The phrase acknowledges the sagacity of the Egyptian people and their innate awareness of the truth, emphasizing that secrets will not be concealed from them (Ashraf, 2012).

We can also highlight Cleopatra's noble ethical stance in her forgiveness and pardon of her maid who spread the false news of the supposed victory. This misinformation led to the Queen's anger and chaos among her supporters and opponents. Cleopatra describes her as a pure, compassionate angel, emphasizing that despite being a servant, she is loyal and, in difficult times, holds a position similar to that of family. Cleopatra's humane response to her maid Sharmion's confession of the truth reflects the queen's generosity, kindness, and profound love for her subjects. In this passage, the Queen explains to Sharmion the reason for her withdrawal. She faced a dilemma between supporting her lover, Antony, and preserving the fleet of her homeland from destruction. Positioned in her boat amidst her soldiers during the battle, she contemplates the inevitable outcome, weighing the situation with a balance of reason and patriotism. Cleopatra recognizes that Rome's government has split into factions, each declaring war on the other. This division weakens Rome, making it susceptible to those who fear its strength. She likens the

situation to wolves daringly attacking sheep in the absence of vigilant shepherds. After thoughtful consideration, she concludes that the victory of either faction would pave the way for Egypt to dominate the seas and reign supreme. However, she prioritizes the welfare of her people over her love for Antony (Ashraf, 2012).

Table 9: Cleopatra's speech

Line from the Play	Speaker	Context or Meaning	Implications for Character or Theme
Listen now to my adversity, And see how I endured hardships.	Cleopatra	Cleopatra shares her trials and challenges.	Reflection on personal strength and endurance amidst adversity.
I was in my boat amidst my soldiers, Weighing the war and affairs with my thoughts.	Cleopatra	Describing her strategic and contemplative state during the conflict.	Leadership and the burden of command; isolation of power.
I said: 'Rome has split, and you see a part Of the people in enmity with the other part' (Shawqi, 1946, p. 107).	Cleopatra	Commenting on the internal strife within Rome.	Political acumen and observation; the impact of division on power structures.

Source: (Shawqi, 1946, p. 107)

4.2. Reflecting National Identity and Moral Values

The conversations, in "The Death of Cleopatra" by Ahmed Shawqi convey messages about morals and patriotism showcasing how Arab classical drama influences and mirrors feelings. Shawqi uses Cleopatras character to depict someone who remains strong and leads despite facing challenges. Her thoughts on struggles and political intelligence within the context of Romes internal turmoil emphasize themes of loyalty, strategic planning and the heavy responsibilities of leadership. This elevates her from a figure to a symbol of pride and honor teaching that true leadership requires perseverance against all odds.

The interactions involving Antony, Orus and Olympius add depth to the story by presenting the complexities of emotions and the nuanced aspects of truth and integrity. Orus advising Antony to maintain his dignity in defeat and acknowledge fates cyclical nature conveys a lesson about courage and honor enduring beyond success or failure. This dialogue, contrasted with Antony grappling with his perceived shortcomings and his desire, for a legacy underscores the timeless importance of honesty and respectability.

Furthermore the conversations capture the struggles and hopelessness of individuals portraying them in a more relatable light, to the audience. Cleopatras and Antonys reactions to information and their reflections on destiny and personal accountability create a narrative that Shawqi uses to delve into themes of honesty, deceit and the repercussions of ones choices. By bringing these themes to life on stage the play not. Also offers moral guidance helping viewers navigate the complex intersection of personal ethics and political responsibility.

Essentially "The Death of Cleopatra" uses its dialogues to reflect both personal ethical quandaries fostering a sense of national contemplation and moral self-examination among its spectators. The production demonstrates how traditional Arab theater can effectively reinforce norms by prompting contemplation on values like integrity, allegiance and the enduring essence of truth. Through its moving discussions that provoke thought the play continues to play a role in shaping ethical conversations, in Arab communities.

The traditional poetic form of the play "The Death of Cleopatra" has hindered the delivery of moral and national values to the audience. This is mainly due to the inherent moral and weighty nature of traditional poetry. The strict adherence to Khalil ibn Ahmad's system of meter and rhyme in traditional poetry makes it challenging for this type of poetry to be performed dramatically. The dialogue becomes constrained, characters communicate in complete or truncated sentences, and the language flows with varying performance levels reflecting the intellectual, emotional, and cultural diversity of the characters. According to Jaber Asfour, this type of poetry, when introduced to the stage, tends to impede the theatrical movement and can result in stagnation (Asfour, 1999).

Drawing from history for his plays, Shawqi erected a barrier between them and the audience, who preferred to see contemporary issues on stage rather than the historical events that no longer held significant influence in their lives and concerns. Additionally, the plays were written in classical Arabic, which did not align with the low cultural level of Egyptian society at the time (Mandour, 1992 , p. 53). This linguistic disparity may have contributed to the disconnect between Shawqi's historical dramas and the audience's preferences.

When theater and art carry a message, that message becomes profound. Through such a message, it is possible to bring about change in society. There is no doubt that great and timeless international plays nourish the minds of the audience with various forms of knowledge and culture in all aspects of life. Shawqi succeeded in capturing the attention of some viewers, especially when the stage was filled with the mentioned conflicts one after another. Despite the continuous movement and the excitement, it generated among the audience, there were apparent weaknesses in certain aspects.

Undoubtedly, when Shawqi wrote this play, he was keen to receive applause and admiration from the Egyptian audience. He attempted to satisfy their national sentiments, even though he had become somewhat liberated in the later part of his life. Despite that, he may have taken the wrong path. Although he distanced himself from the monarchy and royal family, showcasing his presence in the remarkable 1919 revolution, he continued to see the kings of Egypt as the focal point of nationalism and its primary symbol. He somehow believed that defending the queen who ruled Egypt was equivalent to defending Egyptian nationalism, forgetting that Cleopatra, of Greek origin, was not Egyptian (Mandour, 1992 , p. 53).

Aziz al-Din Ismail, in the introduction to Ahmed Shawqi's complete works, asserts that Shawqi's creativity draws inspiration from an ethical principle rooted in his historical perspective. His selection of historical events around which he constructs some of his plays is driven by patriotic sentiments and societal customs and traditions. He aims to deepen these sentiments within the hearts of the audience and emphasize them in their consciences. Therefore, Shawqi does not interpret Cleopatra's betrayal of Antony as a result of moral decay in her actions. Instead, he explains this betrayal in the context of his nationalist policy, which Cleopatra, in his opinion, adopts. According to Shawqi, Cleopatra strategically maneuvered between Roman leaders, causing them to eliminate each other, ultimately solidifying her influence over Egypt and the Roman Empire. In this way, Shawqi seeks to evoke a sense of sympathy between the audience and Cleopatra, winning their compassion for her (Shawqi, 1984).

Mohammed Mandour believes that if Cleopatra were presented as a complete musical composition and performed as an opera, it would have achieved tremendous success, leaving a significant impact with its moral and national character on the audience.

Ahmed Shawqi's play "The Death of Cleopatra" stands out as a masterpiece, in the realm of classical theater. It skillfully blends stories with ethical conversations to mirror and uphold the cultural and patriotic beliefs of its viewers. By delving into the lives of Cleopatra, Antony and their associates in a manner Shawqi goes beyond historical retelling to delve into themes like integrity, allegiance and the essence of being human. The conversations, in the play not reflect the challenges and values of Shawqi's era but also shed light on the intricate aspects of moral responsibility and patriotism that remain relevant across time.

Conclusion

After this analysis of the dramatic text "The Death of Cleopatra" and the examination of the artistic and dramatic patterns through an ethical and aesthetic perspective, The following is arrived at:

- The dramatic text "The Death of Cleopatra" carries ethical and patriotic dimensions of depth. The characters, through their behaviors, actions, and stances towards historical events within the dramatic structure, highlight the conflict between passion and duty.
- Ahmed Shawqi tackled ethical and national values in drama through an artistic dialogue, steering clear of direct preaching or advice, aiming to influence the audience by having the dramatic characters embody those values.
- The writer portrayed the character of Cleopatra with all the positive ethical and national values: sacrifice for the homeland, loyalty, and devotion. Meanwhile, other characters such as Antony, Octavius, the maid, and others embodied both positive ethical values like courage, patriotism, and negative values such as greed, betrayal, and self-interest at the expense of public interest.
- The author aimed to depict Cleopatra as a national hero. When historical events did not support this portrayal, he attempted to interpret them according to his perspective to defend her. His goal was to appease and gain the sympathy of the audience for this historically oppressed queen, as he claimed. However, in reality, this exaggeration in venerating her created a barrier for some audiences in accepting the play, considering this queen not originally Egyptian but from the lineage of invaders who drained the wealth of the Egyptians and humiliated them.

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