

MELIKA SLIHBEĞ BOSNAWI

S A R Â B - THE THEATRE OF SHADOWS

(fragments)*

Night. The year 1236. The city of Aleppo in Syria. Entire auditorium's space is covered by the video projected atrium of "Al-Firdaws Madrasa", of which is visible only its shadowy illusion, and wherein is dragged the audience. It will be separated from the stage (looking as if being placed in the bottom of the atrium) by a white curtain, behind which there will take place "the theatre of shadows". Stretched between puppets/actors and spectators, it will make a clear boundary in between physical, bodily world of the audience, and the world of imagination. A strong light, directed to it, will be reviving dolls/characters, and a playing metaphor for the dawning, that is a creative power of God.

On the edges of the auditorium's rows, under the video-projected pillars of Al-Firdaws Madrasa's atrium, here it is, moving at the dignified pace, a still gracious woman in her 50s, clothed in a royal, but still modest dress, which meets Islamic code of dressing. It is Dayfa Khâtûn, Mâlek Az-Zâher's widow, a current regent and constructor of the Madrasa, who, as approaching the stage with a white curtain, pronounces, in the role of a Muqaddam/Speaker, two prologues.

DAYFA HÂTÛN, Pro-logue 1:

Glory be God, Who is without shape or shadow,
and Who is The Creator instead of shapes and shadows!
Praised be The Author of The Book-Universe,
that combines all other Divine books!
Praised be The Sender of the Last Prophet,
and Last Messenger,
A Perfect man,
in who are united all previously sent,
may the blessing and peace be upon him,
and his immaculate offspring!

As taking in her hands a saz, and striking it, Dayfa clearly separates first from the second prologue:

DAYFA KHÂTÛN, Pro-logue 2:

Glory be to the Tailor of every image,
The One Who places a stick in our body,
by which are moved our limbs,
The Producer of every sound and music,
movement and dance,
The Author of all narratives,
and The Genuine Narrator!

And may He be thanked for the possibility
offered me by Him,
to fill this lonely night with a play,
that I named "Sarâb"
"The Mirage",
in Madrasatu`l-Firdaws,
"The Devine School"
which I gave to be built:

- In memory of our teacher and guide,
Shihâbu`d-Dîn Bin Yahyâ as-Suhrawardî,
a great theosopher and gnostic,
a victim of intrigues of those who are given
"hearts but they do not understand,
the eyes but they do not perceive,
the ears but they do not listen",
who were sent to The Book of Guidance,
but they "do not hold it except for the paper and script"
and hence are not but the mere paper wraiths,
Illusionary people in the theatre of illusions of letters,
by which they replace a real life
of the divine signs,
being both; signs and the signified
at the same time!

- In memory of the Master,
who taught and trained my husband,
Salahu`d-dîn's honest son,
Prince Mâlek Az-Zâher,
to be the inheritor of his
"Wisdom of Illumination",
a fair and generous ruler,
in a constant remembrance of God,
and resolute oblivion of his ego.

- But above all, I gave to be built this

Madrasatu'l-Firdaws,
in the name of, and to the eternal glory of The One
Who is All-Merciful,
including this poor Aleppo's quarter,
where He helped me establish,
all in one place:
a school - for studying true sciences,
a house of worshipping - not but the One,
a zâvia - for the Gnostics and Sûfis,
and a waqf - for the poor,
and of the benefit to all people of the world!

- And my thanks to all those,
who came to see this "Sarâb". . .
a prelude to the genuine drama about
a "Divine sage"
a "Crimson Intellect" of his time,
Abu'l-Futûh, from Suhraward,
as an imaginary introduction to a sad,
but a magnificent story about
how the Thought gets rid of the authorities' bridle,
and false realities,
in order to, as freed by its own sacrifice,
escapes into the Invisible, Ulterior,
Divine, Kingdom Of The Light of lights,
Nûru`l-Anwâr.

In which. . .

Hereupon Dayfa, as lightly striking the saz and stepping up in a half dancing
but still extremely dignified way, approaches a white screen, in front of which
she poses, she takes from a box her puppets, smarten them up, perch them
on a stick, and then returns them back to the box, while saying:

You haven't given, O God, at night, lonelier
human creature than a ruler.
The unjust escaping throughout night from his victims' shadows,
and the just one from the fear, and remorse, whether, and if so,
he sacrificed someone else at the altar of his own Self

Not greater mire than Ego,
nor a greater intrigue than foolishness,
nor worse government than selfishness,
nor more perilous thought than. . .

. . . But alas!
every genuine reasoning,
every purple intellect,
as guarding the border between
The Light of Cognition and the Dark of Ignorance,
becomes fatal to the thoughtless,
arrogant,
power.

In its deep shadow, producing it
while inserting itself where the Self of God
is the only real Axis of the World,
their fate of martyrs,
throughout history,
found so many great thinkers.

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(Now follow the dramatis personae/fates of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Hypatia
of Alexandria, Hallâj, Shihâbu`d-Dîn Yahyâ Suhrawardî. . .)

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And my thanks to all those,
who came to see this "Sarâb",
a thespian mirage of the characters
of chronicles and History,
as a prelude to a genuine drama about. . .

From this moment on, a crimson light is quite slowly enveloping the entire
area of the auditorium and stage, while Dayfa continues to pronounce the
end of the text as follows:

. . . a Divine sage from Suhraward,
Shihâbu`d-Dîn, "A Murdered Master"
A Crimson Intellect of his time,
A Shaikh of Illumination,
who, after centuries of oblivion,
revived the faith in the One,
and testing the Secret of Unity
of His Existence

Himself paying for that,

just like all those who were talked about
in our imaginations of shadows,
with his own sacrifice.

And dying with the name
of The Light of lights,
In Whose Transient Kingdom
he saw his death just like
a glittering cradle of life,
the cradle of his eternity,
the holiest of the holiest places. . .
So come again!

Her voice gradually softens and strengthens the sound of her musical
instrument, in whose crescendo she's ecstatically ending her call:

But may come only the one,
who really longs for knowledge,
a novice, who is ready to embark on a journey,
without any belongings,
a passionate one, willing to hear,
and answer to it,
The Divine call:

"Empty a house for Me,
I am with the broken hearted!"

With the spaceless, and with the timeless,
with those, whose hearts and minds are free
from every other self and will
- but God's.

With the passengers through the luminous spheres,
leading them to the Outside Kingdom
of The Light of lights.

With those for whom only the prudent know
that they are exactly those who are related to
the holy words from the Sermon on the Mount:

"Blessed are the poor in The Spirit,
for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."

Dayfa Khâtûn will then passionately perform samâ` while disappearing in the purple of the dawn. From the same scarlet lights will also go out the crowd, in order to rest between this one and the next act, as being accompanied by the sound of Dayfa's musical instrument, all until it completely dies down.

* A part of two acts drama CITADEL OF LIGHT, inspired by life & work & death of Shaikh al-‘Ishrâq / "The Master of Illumination", called Shaikh al-Maqtûl / "The Murdered Master".

1. SARÂB / MIRAGE
2. CRIMSON INTELLECT