

The Mirage Epic: Sadalla Wannous's Allegory of Colonial Globalization

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Abstract

Sadallah Wannous (1941-1997), the leading Syrian dramatist, who spent most of his production years exhorting the masses to uphold the values of freedom and democracy, warns, in his late plays, of the perils of global capitalism. In his allegorical play, *The Mirage Epic* (1995), he comments on the modernization of Arabic societies through the interaction of a small village with a wave of economic investment. As Abboud Al-Ghawi, a Faustian figure, transforms the village into a huge tourist and commercial establishment, the village is swarmed with commodities, and people gradually become opportunistic. The play presents a panoply of characters symbolizing a mosaic of stereotypes in an unnamed Arabic society: the romantic poet, the compromising cleric, the unyielding idealist, the peasant who loses his land, and the women who are fascinated with the sparkle of possessions. The introduction of free market capitalism changes the indigenous culture. The depiction of people's humanity and capacity to love is mainly informed by pre-wealth and post-wealth conditions. As the agrarian system is uprooted and people are converted to a life of commercialism, they are irretrievably caught up in the vicious circle of financial need and moral depravity. The byproducts of modernity--materialism and consumerism--are presented as facets of globalization which, in turn, is dramatized as a new form of colonialism that deeply affects people and controls them.

Key words: globalism, modernity, postcolonial drama , Syrian drama, Wannous