*Erothanatos,* Vol. 2, Issue 3, July, 2018.
URL: https://www.erothanatos.com/vol2issue3
E-ISSN 2457-0265

# *Ibn Rumi in City Slums:* Celebration in Festive Theatre

Abdeladim Hinda

## Abstract

This article presents the analysis of *Ibn Rumi in City Slums* (1976), a play written by Abdelkrim Berchid, a Moroccan dramatist. In this sense, it seeks to unravel the play's festive lineaments in addition to its festive message. Through this article, the turn to Arab-Muslim narrative-performative stances which took places in the 1970s is highlighted. That is, the narrative-performative stance characteristic of festive theatre practice is examined in order to dwell on the aesthetic and epistemological orientations of Moroccan theatre in the 1970s. In a nutshell, the play is assessed on the basis of a historical and epistemological correlative.

**Keywords:** Festive Theatre, Tradition, Modernity, Celebration, Narration

Abdelkrim Berchid wrote *Ibn Rumi in City Slums* even before the publication of the First Manifesto of Festive Theatre in 1976,[1] and published it in 1978. He says:

> Any healthy understanding of any dramatic work cannot be achieved in the absence of its main sources and springs. The play *Ibn Rumi in City Slums* – which is a dramatic work reposed on a different philosophy as well as new techniques, and on defiant diligences in the field of drama structuring – cannot be interpreted unless one returns to festive thinking.[2]

He also says that the play is clearly an embodiment of the concepts of realistic festivity: the play delves into the depth of Arab mentality to show its theoretical foundations, be they hidden or manifest. It also delves into the consciousness and unconsciousness of the characters who manifest themselves in their dreams, mental conceptions as well as delusions. It delves into the

materialistic spirit of the Arab man reflected in his passion and love. It abbreviates all Arab times –the past, the present and the future – within a little temporal space.[3] This article is concerned with unraveling the festive lineaments in the play as well as its festive message.

Introducing Ibn Rumi to his spectators, Ibn Danyal says:

> Gentlemen! Lend me your eyes and your ears. I'm not a historian, nor am I a tutor of boys. Every analogy in history is but a mere agreement or coincidence. Ibn Rumi whom I have drawn and whom I'm going to relate about is not the poet you know, the poet who was born in Baghdad. The poet of tonight, my gentlemen, could be from Paris, Rome, or Casablanca; he could be Ali the son of Abbas or the poet Lorca. He could be al-Mejdoub or Bablo Niroda. He could be you, or you, or you. Who knows? He may be … or he may be…![4]

In Berchid's judgment, this introduction is very "crucial for the specification of the nature of the characters, events and attitudes pertaining to this dramatic work."[5] He adds that "Ibn Rumi is a character from history, but is also not from history."[6] Yet,

> The play's events are in the last analysis a chemical synthesis comprised of different and various elements. It is because of this that the element of history dissolves in reality, dream and phantasm to form a new reality, which is neither actual nor historical, but is rather a composite theatrical reality with its specific laws, dimensions and space. Inside this space the characters engage in dialogues and in struggles; and they are characters belonging in the first place to Man and his issues.[7]

Ibn Rumi is thus established as a universal citizen.

Ibn Rumi is a living being, who grows and develops. His state of affairs together with his attitudes change as a result of his interactive relationships with the outside world. The play does not start from a ready-made idea it aims to transmit to the recipient. In this sense, "a performance comes into being only during its course. It arises from the interaction of performers and spectators," [8] that is to say "due to the inherent in-betweenness of performance."[9]

The play is a grave trip in the fields of Arabic thinking and reality, which are synopsized in the play within a limited time. Time in the play has to do with all Arabic times and so does the place. Yet Berchid asserts that:

> I do not call for the employment and treatment of tradition because our tradition exists within our Selves. Tradition has nothing to do with 'the yellow books' as it relates to us. It relates to language, thinking, mentality, soul and history which has known continuity and has never been discontinuous. In this sense, the past has forevermore been present in 'the now' together with its human instances whose presence is marked by continuity, too.[10]

In this context, the odalisque Arib represents the entire history of the Arab woman. Though she changes time and place, she remains an odalisque:

> ***Arib***: I'm the odalisque Arib.
>
> They raised me in the field of whoredom.
>
> They taught me how to spawn pleasure and invent songs…
>
> I was a dancer in Baikal
>
> Denuding myself at nights
>
> The eye of men was stinging…whipping…burying me in its depth.

> I was an actress in Broadway,
>
> Each night dying once.
>
> My price? [*She sarcastically laughs*] Applause when I excel at death and whoredom.
>
> I die and the curtain falls.
>
> I was a fashion exhibitor in Paris.
>
> You see me in the markets barefooted and uncovered,
>
> And in posters and pictures.
>
> You see me like a peafowl swanking in colors, the shiny colors…
>
> I'm Arib the odalisque. I'm known to the slave traders of Baghdad and Cairo and …to the drunkard in Beirut…and to the middlemen too.[11]

The play in this sense does not summon up the past just to resurface again, but to interpret it rather. Nor does it regard it as an inert thing lacking both existence in and touch with the current moment. Quite the contrary, the past and the present form a unity in the play: Ibn Rumi along with his neighbors and friends –who belong to the past –reappear again in the present time. It follows that "the play in essence is a serious endeavor intended to quest for the real Arabic time, which can make two things attainable: *al-hadata* [modernity] and *al-mo'asara* [contemporariness]."[12] Berchid further argues that "since we carry the past within our Selves, we inevitably tend to experience self-destruction or internal destruction; and it is this very particular destruction that Ibn Rumi faces. He starts from inner combustion to come out of his ashes cleaner and purer, and freer and more active."[13]

Ibn Rumi is an exemplary instance of the festive man. He loves life in all its aspects, both corporeal and incorporeal. Since the love of things entails protecting and defending them, Ibn Rumi has thus become, by necessity, a struggler. At the beginning, he seems to be satisfied

with confronting the negative voices issuing from his mind, his unconscious, and his tired nervous system. These voices promote dread, anxiety, pessimism, seclusion, capitulation, suicide, etc. Berchid maintains here that "the modest triumph of Ibn Rumi at the end of the play could be interpreted as a major step to what lies ahead because –as he is now preparing to face the outside – he will be a united voice after he has been a plethora of clashing voices."[14]

Ibn Rumi is a compulsive fighter. Though he seems to be struggling against everything around him, he does not seem to be conscious of that struggle. More than that, we see him dying time and again as if to emphasize the festive concepts of struggle and death which by necessity generate "resurrection, renewal and continuity."[15] It is in light of this festive notion of death and struggle that the play comes to an end: Ibn Rumi is combusted completely to give room to another person to rise in his place, yet a person endowed with a new spirit and eyes. He says:

> Yes! It's the first time that I feel I'm alive, and I breathe, and I see. Get closer! Get closer, O you in whose looks I read what is in the heart. Your hearts are clean; I see them hanged on the washing line….[16]

It is in this spirit of renewal that he says to his neighbors: "[*To Arib*] I will go into the markets of Baghdad to bring you the anklet. [*To the others*] My brothers say farewell to me, or see me off for I may or may not return. Who knows?"[17] He goes into the market, which is a symbol that denotes human gatherings driven by exploitation, monopoly, injustice, inequity and every other relationship that stifles life and deforms the humanity of the human. Yet this will inevitably drive him to struggle against death for he highly values life. In other words, his act of going into the market is an act of rebirth.

Ibn Rumi is a man who interprets the world around him in view of the philosophy of the popular man. His understanding of concepts is colored by this philosophy. He relates

between a star in the sky and the lots of people in the Earth and between seeing a hunchbacked man and evil that might befall him:

> Did you read your luck today, sir? Of course, not. Otherwise, you wouldn't have said what you said…listen [*he reads*] you'll lose a beloved one due to a misfortune afflicting you because of a crookbacked man….you're the cause! I should have known this before….. O you Dabal, it is in your back that I see my ill-being and that of Baghdad… in your face I read the curse of the Heaven.[18]

He is the offspring of exploitation or the product of disorder of distribution, which is "a curse from Heaven. A curse special to me alone, and has nothing to do with you. Get away lest you be infected."[19] He does not ascribe things to their original causes, nor does he premise his inferences on reason. He seems to think and act according to what has already been entrenched in his head due to social acquisitions, including political institutions embodied by the servant Ya-Zaman:

> The City Council does not want much from you; just a few lines of poetry, lines describing the poor neighborhood together with its wretched inhabitants. You believe in misery. Don't you? You believe that your troubles come from these dirty cottages, from Da'bal, from Issa, from Achaab, and from all the paupers and the homeless. Ibn Rumi, this is your chance to say goodbye to misery for good.[20]

He is propelled by these socio-political institutions to spread mythical thinking in a bid to justify exploitation, impoverishment, ignorance and un-education. This production of docility is also very visible in Ibn Rumi's neighbors' trial of Da'bal:

> Issa: You who lack beauty sell it to people?
>
> Jahda: when did this monster appear?

> Issa: Didn't you know, the crookbacked Da'bal, that all of Ibn Rumi's trouble today have come from your swollen back?
>
> Jahda: and the poverty of Baghdad …and the years of dryness and locust…
>
> Issa: Everything from you has erupted…O you the evil portent of Baghad.[21]

Though being a victim, Da'bal becomes a culprit in the scales of mythical convention propagated by statecraft. Yet Da'bal is conscious of this. He says:

> Nay! O you the dwellers of this neighborhood, evil portent is but a mere talk, while misfortune is but a mere superstition. I am like yourselves, one of the paupers, a victim! How come therefore I become the executioner? How come? How come O you the angels of the Merciful that my hunch spawns the misfortune of Baghdad? How come, knowing that the crookbacked Da'bal has been formed in a meager womb? Always threatened by hunger, poverty and sickness? I inherited my hunch from Baghdad which distributed yet didn't do justice. …I'm not an evil portent to Baghdad, but Baghdad is an evil portent to me, and to the deformed, the blind, the paupers and the castrated![22]

Ibn Rumi is unable to act and move because he is a prisoner of his special view of the world around him. This view did not originate in his head due to a conscious free choice, but found a way into his head as it did into those of others thanks to the efforts of different official institutions. This view is very feudalist and determinist in nature as it promises the absurdity and insignificance of human action. Aristotle pointed out that the process of philosophizing always starts with 'surprise.' Ibn Rumi appears to the audience at the beginning of the play as a child who has just come into this world. Everything around him is surprising, frightful, wild, dirty, deformed and illogical. He reads a theatrical dialogue to the audience:

- O you who stand like wax idols, what're you doing?

- We stare at the sun…
- Now, tell me. Did the slates breathe in whispers? Did they appear and become visible after yesterday's abandonment? [*Silence. He changestone*] complete silence then black darkness followed with the curtain's fall…the play has ended [*he puts the book aside*]. Alif. Laam. Jeem. Yaa: letters? What do they conceal? Do I have to open the door, or not? Do I have to? I don't know.[23]

Ibn Rumi's thinking is suspended between affirmation and negation: "Do I have to open the door or not."[24] In his hesitation, he makes us feel as if he were both himself and the other. He prefers "going inside" instead of "going outside:" He "goes into" his Self in lieu of going out into Baghdad. Besides, instead of realizing things, he tends to make them: he is a poet endowed with a flair for imagination, which constitutes a source of his living yet also a source of his misery. He makes the impossible possible, the absent present, and the far near. He imagines things and becomes a prisoner of these imaginations. In a sense, he is a prisoner within himself and within his community. Berchid maintains that "Ibn Rumi's character cannot be specified in words for he in the main represents situations from existence which are in a constant flux….It is because of this that Ibn Rumi does nothing but contradicts himself throughout the play."[25] Issa observes this trait of character in Ibn Rumi: "believing you is not enough for your stance is the offspring of a situation, an ephemeral situation. All your stances are built by particular psychological situations to be destroyed by others."[26] Jahda adds, "He is like the sky that clouds over once," "and brightens another time," completes Da'bal. Ibn Rumi is a person who changes time and again, yet this change happens in relation to an immutable pivot: "I want to live. Don't I have the right to live like other people?"[27] He lives and lives in the midst of people: he pockets his money and goes to the brothel in quest of love, where he finds his beloved Arib. This shows that he lives with people, not at their expenses.

Ibn Rumi's tragedy stems from his outlook on existence, which prompts his suffering, confusion and anxiety. As the play suggests, his salvation is impossible unless he changes this outlook. In other words, the play demonstrates that change should first start from within to bring about change in real life situations. Ibn Rumi's outlook has many weaknesses: 1) He has forgotten that he –as an individual self –cannot invest himself with importance unless he lives in the heart of the multitude as he is a part in/of a whole; 2) in his analysis of phenomena, he takes the results as premises, a thing that makes facts sound upside down to him, and this adds up largely to his confusion; 3) and though he is a victim in such a feudal-slave society, he consciously or unconsciously turns into an executioner himself: instead of condemning the regime, he wants to support it; though he is a living man, he reduces himself to a mere amount of words for display in the market, which robs him of his humanity and dignity –even the word, which is sacred, is turned into a mere commodity; he sells himself, and with the same price he wants to buy others (Arib). In this sense, the concept of exploitation in the play has nothing to do with the duality of classicism. In Berchid's play, exploitation takes a pyramidal form: the exploited (Ibn Rumi) exerts exploitation on the exploited (Arib). At the top of the pyramid we find Baghdad's Head of Commerce, while at the bottom we find the odalisque Arib together with those at the whorehouse. Yet Arib refuses to build a master-slave relationship with Ibn Rumi who instead of looking at her as a woman "excelling at recital, singing and poetry….and the art of passion,"[28] is now convinced that she is a human being who has exactly the same social status and conditions of existence; 4) his view of home is unhealthy, too: he has changed his home into a prison, a thing that adds up to the explanation of his upside-down concepts. Though he believes he is a life-loving person, he stifles life at home; and 5) that his conviction that the world outside his door's keyhole is deformed, cruel and horrible. Instead of making this insight an impetus for changing this world, he just tends to be internally satisfied with

rejecting it. Ibn Rumi's attitudes and outlook remain suspended between confusion and denial until Arib comes to his rescue.

He regards the tin town as a pandemic evil. In this, he is in agreement with his neighbors. Yet his approach to eradicating it differs from theirs: he aligns himself with Baghdad's Bourgeois political authority embodied in the City Alderman (head of commerce) who wants to destroy the neighborhood and build in its place beautiful and gigantic buildings and eventually 'mortgage' the country to international powers. This is in truth another form of slavery whereas an entire neighborhood throbbing with innocent lives is placed under the mercy of auctioning in exchange for dollars. This is an act of materializing human life expressed by the servant Ya-Zaman:

> The City Council has decided to demolish this neighborhood. Ibn Rumi, don't worry about your house. You'll have what is better. These wretched cottages will be changed into a gigantic building for sightseeing to which rich tourists will come from Nisabor, Jorson, Fes and Sikiliya. All types of currency will bombard it. Do you know that?[29]

Yet the poor dwellers of the slums look at their homes from completely human perspectives: they want to create a clean and decent neighborhood. When they express their strong clinging to this neighborhood, they do not mean that they like wretchedness and poverty. But, this act of clinging to dilapidated homes is an outcry against the bourgeois methods of human objectification. They say that they are not commodity for sale. Though Ibn Rumi is one of these disfranchised dwellers, he does not work for their advantage/welfare because those who are 'above,' knowing his insatiability, make use of him. They secretly offer him presents and gifts and commission him to portray the slums in the worst possible light in a bid to drive the dwellers out.

However, Ibn Rumi's conscience awakens at last and refuses to cave to this bourgeois demeaning act of objectification of human life. He therefore abandons his dreams, and changes his outlook. More than that, he decides to go outside instead of staying inside and committing class-struggle suicide, and clings to his neighbors and prevents them from leaving the neighborhood:

> Da'bal: I will leave as I promised you.
>
> Ibn Rumi: no, you'll stay. I fear for your safety from the outdoors. I'm scared of the hold of middlemen. You will stay! Everybody will stay, and let the servant Ya-Zaman go to Hell.[30]

The servant Ya-Zaman is but a go-between who conveys to him instructions from 'above.'

Berchid's play depends upon "a composite structure: a structure manifested in several contradictious levels: reality, the shade of the shadow, truth, dream, conscience, unconscious, the present, the past, the here, the there."[31] He reduces these to two main levels: reality and the box of the shadow maker.[32] At the level of reality, the events take place in a shanty town, while at the level of the magic box of the shadow puppeteer, the events take place within the box of Ibn Danyal and Danyazard. In this sense, the events and relationships cannot be interpreted from one single vantage. For example, the narrator changes and so do the characters' stances: Ibn Danyal presents Arib as a woman worried about her reflection of physical beauty in the eyes of men, yet Danyazard rejects this image of Arib and propounds a new image: "Father, let me show you the new Arib; you'll see her as if you've never seen her before!"[33] Ibn Rumi's image also changes in this regard: Hamdan protests against Ibn Danyal's image of Ibn Rumi: "The Ibn Rumi you have presented does not resemble me, sir!"[34] Saadan adds, "It is for this reason that we object to your art."[35] Danyazard, too, says that "I object to your art, too, Father."[36]

In Berchid's Festive Theatre, creativity originates from the womb of the current instant. It is this artistic characheristic that we observe in *Ibn Rumi in City Slums*: everything is formed before and with the help of the audience. Here, Fischer-Lichte correctly observes that a performance "course cannot be entirely planned or predicted" due to its "inherent in-betweenness." [37] She adds that "performances rely on autopoietic processes involving participants, performers, and spectators alike and are characterized by a high degree of contingency."[38] She further adds that:

> The exact course of a performance cannot be foreseen at its beginning. Even if performers set the decisive preconditions for the progression of a performance – preconditions that are determined by a set of rules or the process of the *mise en scène*, they are not in a position to fully control the course of the performance. Many elements emerge during a performance as a consequence of certain interactions. In other words, over its course a performance creates the possibility for all the participants to experience themselves as a subject that can co-determine the actions and behavior of others and whose own actions and behavior are similarly determined by others. The individual participants – be they performers or spectators – experience themselves as subjects that are neither fully autonomous nor fully determined by others; subjects that accept responsibility for a situation which they have not created but which they participate in.[39]

In this sense, nothing in the play is 'fixed' or 'final.' Rather, everything in the play is subject to change. This is so because the element of surprise plays a fundamental role in festivity, and more than that plays an instigative role: when Ibn Danyal finishes his task of provoking the audience to challenge the official act of destroying the neighborhood, and starts to push his carriage back, his daughter stops him:

> Ibn Danyal: Danyazard! Where're you going, my daughter?
>
> Danyazard: where am I going? Going where these people are going!
>
> Ibn Danyal: Yet we don't belong to them. We're from another world.
>
> Danyazard: Father, you're mistaken! There's but one world and one city…the word that lacks movement is completely fake, exactly like a dime without value. Our existence in this city and our suffering are things we cannot jump over. Come, Father….the suffering of the poor has never been an entertaining spectacle…and will never be….come.[40]

If it is Ibn Danyal who has controlled the shaping of Ibn Rumi's relationship with his neighbors at the beginning of narration, it is now Danyazard who has interfered to reshape this relationship as she has discovered that her father's narratives do not respond to the audience's preoccupations. He admits, "I don't know the language of this generation…..it's for this reason that I leave narration to my daughter….my daughter, narrate to them."[41] Though Ibn Danyal is presented in the play as "the sheikh of the shadow puppeteers,"[42] he seems unable to dispose of illusion and move into reality. He is therefore the first representation of illusion-reality duality of festivity, while Danyazard manifests the second representation of this duality. Ibn Danyal fails to mobilize the audience against the demolition act, while Danyazard partakes in the demonstration against this act. This very act of taking part is to be regarded as a festive counter-act for resisting forms of injustice and oppression. I observe that Danyazard's act is very similar to Chahrazad's in *One Thousand and One Nights* in which Chahrazad puts her life at stake by distracting her father in a bid to save girls like herself. In the play, Danyazard too puts her life in danger by stepping out of the world of her father whom Saadan and Redwan accuse saying: "you have been etherizing us with songs and narratives like children;" "let's turn a blind eye on …and our life remains as it is ..."[43]

Berchid's play sheds light on a number of issues: 1) the suffering of slum dwellers together with the concomitant social and economic injustice having to do with destroying their houses; and 2) the relationship between intellectuals (the poet) and authority (the city council), which is characterized by subjugation and dominance. Berchid has successfully discussed these issues using the festive aesthetic framework, which comprises two styles here: narration and struggle of characters. Narration is embodied by Ibn Danyal and Danyazard. The dramatist returns to the 'yellow books' to revive or retrieve the wonderful style of Ibn Danyal (storytelling) which gives us "light"[44] /knowledge. Yet Danyazard opts for modern narration. It is for this reason that she rejects her father's method of narration. She refuses to comply with the methods of storytelling of the classics because she belongs to the modern age. As to the struggle of characters, it is governed according to the dialectic of reality and acting: Ibn Danyal's struggle with the stage hand; Mkadem and his acolytes' struggle with the neighborhood dwellers; Ibn Rumi's struggle with his neighbors; and Rabab's struggle with her odalisques.

To delineate these types of struggle, the dramatist has had recourse to a number of contradictions with which reality is replete and which can be reduced to the contradiction between poverty and wealth. It is in this particular framework where reality together with its mode of social, political and emotional relationships are treated. Here, the element of acting plays a fundamental role in exposing these contradictions along with their psychological reflections: (Arib and Ibn Rumi's master-odalisque relationship). Yet criticism is the tool fashioned by the dramatist to expound and examine these issues of reality: 1) Da'bal, Issa and Jahda's critique of Ibn Rumi; 2) Arib's critique of Ibn Rumi; 3) the neighborhood elites' critique of authority; and 4) Danyazard's critique of the neighborhood elites. The festive view of criticism here has to do with exposing anti-change attitudes, which are manifested clearly in critiquing Ibn Rumi who has praised the president of the city council and got a package of gold

as a reward for his support of the demolition act. Berchid here touches upon thinker-authority relationship by means of his deployment of face-mask (or truth-fakeness) duality. Before his transformation, Ibn Rumi seems to represent the intellectual who fakes the actual reality of his neighbors in a bid to curry favor with the city council. The mask game is played by Ibn Danyal, Ibn Rumi, Da'bal, Issa, and Jahda, who represent, in Danyazard's eyes, the symbolic equivalent of real characters: Ridwan, Saadan and Hamdan. She says:

> Gentlemen! The Baghdad in the narrative is not the Baghdad you know…and Da'bal, Jahda, Issa, Ibn Rumi and Arib….all these names are but masks behind which human exemplary instances from this neighborhood, from this city, hide.[45]

In brief, Berchid's message is that Baghdad's old situation is today's situation of contemporary cities.

Time in the play oscillates between the past and the present. The past is embodied in Ibn Danyal and Danyazard, while the present in the other characters. Time is not an absolute concept in the play. Nor is it abstract. It is marked with values that are theatrically capable of treatment in the present. The play juxtaposes these values to show that these values (whoredom for example) continue to exist in our present life. Yet the place has to do with the performance space. Danyazard says, "Gentlemen, the Baghdad in the narrative is not the Baghdad you know…;"[46] Ibn Danyal adds, "yes, it is this neighborhood, another version of your city [*He mentions the city in which the play is being performed*]."[47] I think that the end behind using Baghdad as a place in which the play's events take place is to create the festive harmony between tradition and modernity and between reality and acting. This shows Berchid's compliance with festivity's theatrical and dramatic principles: here he chooses the square of Baghdad as an open space of performance and places al-hakawati (Ibn Danyal) in its middle to narrate past stories to his spectators. This technique has afforded the dramatist a chance to

completely dispose of dramatic classical rules, which treat the place as a fixed framework in which the movement of characters and events is frozen. In other words, Berchid here transcends the classical view of the dramatic place (the theatrical building) to endorse *assaha* (the square) as an aesthetic place of performance denoting productive difference. Indeed, the play finds in *assaha* the alternative open space serving festivity's demands and responding to Berchid's obsession regarding 'authenticating' Arabic theatre. In festivity, the Arabic square constitutes the basis of aesthetics of a theatre aspiring for innovation and difference. Therefore, moving from the building into the square is a way of returning to tradition, to the open space of performance.

The concept of tradition in the play does not contradict the ideas of modernity for the play returns to 'the yellow books' (the past) to read them from the modernity vantage of ephemerality. That is, the play interweaves tradition and modernity and subjects them both to the force of constant change in a bid to create something new. The play is a product of interweaving. It has both theoretical and denotative dimensions and represents the festive tendency par excellence. Its language is variant, comprehensive and profound: poetry, narratives, singing, music, gestures, movements, lighting, darkness, etc. This linguistic variation explicates the nature of the festive theatrical action, which is very pluralistic and collective: Ibn Rumi's neighbors incorporate Ibn Rumi and his poetry into their cause, while Danyazard instigates her father to join in the demonstration. The play also revives Arabic popular performing spectacles such as al-halqa in which al-hakawati and his acolyte (Ibn Danyal and Danyazard) tell narratives, myths and fictions to their spectators with resort to the direct method of dialogue, characterization and gesture; it revives the Arabic heritage and modernizes it (Danyazard's rejection of her father's manner of narration); it makes use of mockery and irony to observe and examine social, political and cultural phenomena; it also reflects the Arabic obsession for 'authenticating' Arabic theatre by situating it in a productive

liminal interweaving state. The play in this regard is a product of interweaving the East and the West and the past and the present. These entities are without certitudes and are always in flux.

Regarding the play's aesthetic frameworks, it has invented the concepts of lawha [tableau] and nafas [breath]; the dramatic script has adopted 1) the concept of festive movement; 2) the technique of assembling festive tableaux in complete harmony; 3) classical structures yet also modernizing them (arawi; khayal azil, al-hakawati); 4) and has also depended upon the miserable reality technique: the poor, the slums, the oppressed (man and woman), etc. Aesthetically, the play represents innovation and 'productive difference.'

## Notes and References

[1] See Abdelkrim Berchid*, hodod al-kain wa lmomkin fi al-masrah al-ihtifali* [The Limits of the Actual and the Possible in Festive Theatre] (dar attaqafa: Casablanca, 1985), p. 184.
[2] Ibid. p. 174.
[3] Ibid. p. 180.
[4] See Abdelkrim Berchid*, Ibn Rumi in City Slums: A Theatrical Celebration in Seventeen Tableaux* (Edisoft Edition, Casablanca, 2010), pp. 22-23.
[5] See*, hodod al-kain wa lmomkin fi al-masrah al-ihtifali*, p. 181
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.
[8] See Fischer-Lichte, Erika. 'Interweaving Cultures in Performance: Different States of Being In-Between.' *Textures* (online), August 11, 2010. Web.
[9] Ibid.
[10] See *hodod al-kain wa lmomkin fi al-masrah al-ihtifali*, p. 182.
[11] See the play. Ibid. pp. 31-32.
[12] See *hodod al-kain wa lmomkin fi al-masrah al-ihtifali*, p. 184.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid. p. 93.
[15] Ibid. p. 194.
[16] Ibid. p. 89.
[17] Ibid. p. 91.
[18] Ibid. pp. 81-82.
[19] Ibid. p. 86.
[20] Ibid. pp. 56-57.
[21] Ibid. pp. 50-51.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid. p. 24.
[24] Ibid. pp. 24-25.
[25] Ibid., p. 201.
[26] The play. Ibid. p. 90.
[27] Ibid. p. 82.
[28] Ibid. p. 35.
[29] Ibid. p. 56.
[30] Ibid. p. 90.
[31] See *hodod al-kain wa lmomkin fi al-masrah al-ihtifali*, p. 213.
[32] Ibid. pp. 213-214.

[33] Ibid. p. 70.
[34] Ibid. p. 69.
[35] Ibid. p. 70.
[36] Ibid.
[37] See "Interweaving Cultures in Performance: Different States of Being In-Between."
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.
[40] The play. Ibid. p. 95.
[41] Ibid. 92.
[42] Ibid. p. 8.
[43] Ibid. 92.
[44] Ibid. p. 11.
[45] Ibid. pp. 92-93.
[46] Ibid. p. 92.
[47] Ibid.

## About the Author

Abdeladim Hinda (Ph.D) is author of *Theatre Tradition on Trial: Redefining Arab-Muslim Theatre*. He is a teacher of English whose fields of interests include translation, history, literature, performance arts, cultural studies, etc. He may be contacted at abdeladimhinda@gmail.com.