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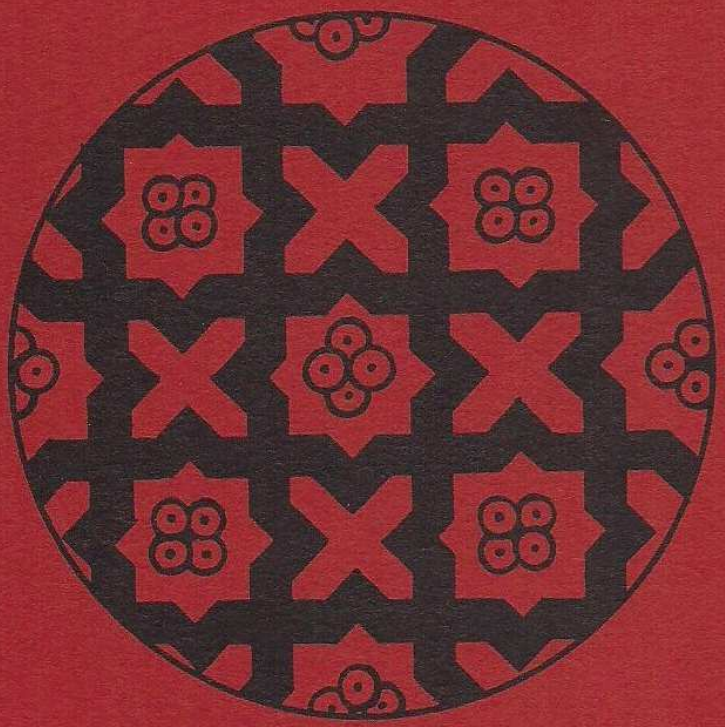

Edited by

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THE SOVIET IMPACT ON MODERN ARABIC LITERARY CRITICISM: HUSAYN MURUWWA'S CONCEPT OF THE "NEW REALISM"

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Two main factors have come to play a determining role in the mode of critical thinking that has dominated the modern Arabic literary scene. First, there has been the combined impact of political, social, cultural and literary changes of which modern Arabic literary criticism has been aware and to which it has responded by trying to develop gradually an approach both modern and Arab. Secondly, there has been the influence of foreign culture which works as a stimulant to the modern Arabic literary critic who strives -- with varying degrees of success -- to employ some of its notions and elements in his encounter with his own literature, which in turn has been exposed to the same influences. Thus modern Arabic critical discourse has been determined by a multitude of internal and external factors, each of which has exerted a measure of influence which varies according to the cultural formation of the critic, the type of literary discourse under consideration, and lastly the circumstances and conditions of the production of the critical text itself.[1]

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The critical output of Ḥusayn Muruwwa[2] is in no way an exception in this context, and his book *Qaḍāyā adabiyya* (Literary Questions) (Cairo, 1956) is a very interesting example of the way in which some Arab critics tried -- particularly during the 1950s -- to employ certain concepts related to socialist realism in their encounter with various aspects of modern or classical Arabic literature, or to adapt them to the needs of Arab society by elaborating an Arabic version under a variety of names.

Muruwwa's major contact with this source of influence came about when he attended the Second All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers (Moscow, 15-26 December 1954) on behalf of the Lebanese branch of the Arab Writers' Association.[3] On returning from Moscow he wrote an extended report on the proceedings -- parts of which appeared in *al-Ṭarīq* and *al-Thaqāfa al-Waṭaniyya*[4] -- which later formed the second half of his book *Qadāya adabiyya*.[5]

Although the Second Congress was not as important as the First and was therefore not a major turning-point in Soviet literary life, except perhaps in the sense of being symptomatic of the desire throughout the Soviet Union to resume many normal activities suspended during Stalin's heyday,[6] it nonetheless signalled the start of the process of reassessment of the Stalinist era by seeking more 'elbow room for the individuality of the artist and more scope for the human beings he was to depict. In this sense the congress was a move away from politics. Its basic trend was apolitical.'[7]

As far as the Arab Marxist writers were concerned, particularly those who had just formed the *Arab Writing Association,* it was an inspiring occasion, and having been attended by no less than three of them from Syria and Lebanon,[8] it was certainly a great boost both to the Association in particular and to the Arab leftist movement in general. As for Muruwwa, it gave him first-hand experience of the model which he was at the time propagating among Arab writers and which he continued to elaborate in the following decades. However, before we consider this model inspired by the Congress, it is worth noting the following:

1. Although Muruwwa's contact with this foreign influence was in a way a direct one, it is important to remember that he knew no Russian. He was accompanied by an official interpreter, and this would naturally have set certain limits to his range of contact. For, in a sense, Muruwwa was subjected to some measure of censorship by the Soviet authorities. Hence one should compare his account of the Congress with other accounts in order to counter the effect of such censorship. (In this connection it is perhaps worth noting that Muruwwa states that the Congress ended on the 25th of December[9] whereas in fact it continued for another day.) Be that as it may, what really matters is what he was given to understand and what he actually reported later in his account of the Congress as being important and relevant to the development of modern Arabic literature.

2. The context in which this contact with foreign influence took place is very important indeed, since the Soviet authorities must have been eager to impress the guests of the Congress and to convince them of the relevance and value of the Soviet literary experience to their national literature. And with all the hospitality and festivity which accompany such major events, one should expect the guests -- in their evaluation of the Congress -- to be influenced by extra-literary considerations.

3. Muruwwa, who is now a member of the Central Committee of the Lebanese Communist Party,[10] has been an active member ever since since he joined the party. As a writer, he was deeply involved in implementing the cultural programme of the party and its sponsored activities and thus instrumental in spreading Marxist ideology in the Arab East through his uninterrupted contribution to, and support of, the leftist Press, particularly *al-Ṭarīq* and *al-Thaqafa al-Waṭaniyya*. This shows that he was already prepared for Marxist influence since it fits the frame of reference in which he situates his critical experience.

4. As mentioned earlier, Muruwwa devoted nearly half of his book to the Congress. The other half was devoted to topics which were stimulated by certain cultural events in the Arab world or were merely responses to others. What is worth noting here is that most of them were published[11] -- and probably written -- after his visit to the Soviet Union. That he has

considered these issues with the Soviet model in mind, we can see quite clearly from certain allusions in his discussion, as well as from certain conclusions and views expressed throughout his discussions of certain contemporary issues in the Arab East, particularly in Lebanon.

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Since the model of the New Realism, which Muruwwa adopted from the Soviet version of Socialist Realism considered and discussed in the Second Soviet Writers' Congress, was a direct result of his attendance at this Congress, it is pertinent at this point to look into Muruwwa's report and see what issues he considered important and relevant to Arab literature at that time.

According to Muruwwa, the most important feature of the Soviet literary scene, as reflected in the proceedings of the Congress,was the strong and mutually rewarding relationship between literature and life. Writers are of the people.[12] Therefore the entire Soviet people saw the Congress as a great historical event: 'For literature there is closely linked to the life of the people. And people are in constant and uninterrupted contact with the life of literature, because there is between the life of the people and that of literature, a unique interaction unprecedented in the history of humanity.'[13]

As a result of this interest, the Congress received many letters of support and appreciation from readers all over the Soviet Union. The press too gave the proceedings extensive coverage. *Pravda*, the foremost political newspaper in the country, reprinted many of the reports and addresses delivered at the Congress because, as Muruwwa puts it, 'the question of literature there is closely connected with the most important questions of the country and the people'.

Quoting Konstantin Simonov, Muruwwa notes that because Soviet writers write for all the people, their essential style is that of realism.[14] Hence, he adds, Simonov's criticism of some historical novels for failing to choose the hero from among simple and ordinary people. Some of these novels depict an extraordinary hero whose life is unconnected with the people and whose relations with others are unfamiliar. Yet the true hero must be of the ordinary people, living their everyday lives.[15] However, although Soviet literature has not achieved its ideal aims, Muruwwa remarks, nonetheless, according to Fadeyev, it serves the causes of the people with sincerity and faithfulness, and reflects their preoccupation and worries because it is actually derived from their life.[16]

This close and vital link between literature and life in the Soviet Union is not only called for and approved of by writers and critics, but also by the people themselves. Thus children and soldiers, we are told, call upon writers to visit them in

order to forge a stronger link with life and to experience it at first hand before writing about it. For example, as one of the young delegates suggested, they should have accompanied the team that went to the North Pole: 'The writer has to put up with difficulty in order to write something great'.[17] That is to say, he must experience life intensely and directly and draw on his experience before he writes, particularly of the new life in the new areas which have undergone a considerable change under the Soviet system.[18] Soviet-Russian literature has become an inspiring model for other Soviet writers who write in other languages, and this was because of -- as the Azerbaijani writer Mahdī Ḥusayn puts it -- 'its democratic tendency and close link with life, and its profound and constant inclination to deal with the great question of people's lives'. In short, Soviet literature is intimately connected with the life of all Soviet nationalities, truly expressive of them, sincerely committed to their cause, and finally is bound up with their development, activity and ambitions.[19]

As A.H.Gomme rightly claims: 'In Russia the power of literature has always been taken very seriously, throughout her history, and especially in this century, the efforts of the State to prevent literature have been eloquent evidence of the fear of the novel and of its capacity, by celebrating individual experience, to undermine the complacencies of power'.[20] To employ literature in the process of radical change to which a system like the Soviet one aspires is all too natural, and this certainly would come to Ḥusayn Muruwwa's notice, particularly in the light of his own radical views regarding the established order in the Arab world.

The greeting of the Central Committee of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union to the writers in their Congress was -- in Muruwwa's view -- splendid in its appreciation of literature with respect to its humanistic value and its great power in supporting the process of socialist change in the Soviet Union.[21] Quoting Stalin, Muruwwa notices that men of the pen are the makers of thought, the engineers of humanity, the creators of light and inspirers of goodness.[22] There are many writers who were awarded Stalin's Medal for having taken part in the war against the Nazis.[23] Furthermore, well over three hundred and seventy writers who had fought the Nazis and defended the country in time of war had also participated in the peaceful struggle to rebuild what the war had destroyed and to consolidate the foundations of socialism in industry, agriculture, organization and indoctrination. Thus the writers won the affection and love of the people.[24] Even the delegates from the armed forces acknowledged the role of the writer in the struggle for socialism and in consolidating the roots of communism. In his words: 'Soviet literature has always been the friend of forces fighting in defence of the country and has always directed them to be armed with moral power rather than military might. Soviet writers helped the Army during the war either by fighting or by enlightening the people about the

Fascist threat to the world in general and the Socialist one in particular. They taught us the meaning of nationalism and humanism, and their teachings helped us in our difficult struggle'.[25] There are much more effective weapons than conventional and nuclear arms, which are those of man. It is this power which the writers ought to take into account in whatever they write about the Army and the rest of the people.[26]

Soviet writers, Muruwwa remarks, take an active role in Soviet life because they are fully conscious of their great responsibilities towards their own people and towards human thought and literature in general. As the intellectual leaders of their people, they direct them in their progress towards civilization, and,as the avant-garde of progressive literature, they enrich human thought and literature with their experience of applying socialist realism in a socialist country.[27] It is this sense of responsibility, Muruwwa observes, that enables them to discuss the question of socialist and realist literature frankly and critically.[28] In fact, this phenomenon of criticism and self-criticism in the Congress was, in his view, an indication of a new policy followed by the Soviet leaders in the new era.[29]

It is important to point out here that the concept of socialist realism has undergone some modification. In the old statutes the passage dealing with socialist realism reads as follows: 'Socialist realism, the basic method of Soviet belles-lettres and literary criticism, demands of the artist truthful, historically concrete representation of reality in its revolutionary development.[30] At the same time, truthfulness and historical concreteness of artistic representation of reality must be combined with the task of ideologically remoulding and training the labouring people in the spirit of socialism'.[31] In the revised statutes the second clause was omitted; the reason, according to Simonov, was that some people found in it a justification for 'improving on reality', and certain other changes were made as well. Now, after a statement to the effect that Soviet writers are guided by the method of socialist realism, the passage reads simply: 'Socialist realism demands of the writer truthful representation of reality in its revolutionary development'.

To this was attached a clause which somewhat strengthened the assurance contained in the old statutes that "socialist realism affords exceptional opportunities for displaying variety and initiative in creative endeavour. The revision of the definition of socialist realism disclosed, perhaps better than anything else, both the mood of the Second Congress and the scope of official tolerance of change. The elimination of the second class cannot be considered a fundamental revision of doctrine, since it is a redundancy, a clarification of the meaning of the phrase 'representation of reality in its revolutionary development', and there was certainly no evidence that anyone at the Congress was prepared to relieve literature of its pedagogic tasks. But its elimination was a measure of the strong sentiment among writers at the Congress against the character of the literary output of the immediate post-war years and a sign of the trend towards a

less dogmatic application of the Zhdanovist doctrines".[32]

Muruwwa does not refer directly to this change, although his reports contain allusions to it, and he speaks repeatedly about the attempt of the Soviet writers to reveal their mistakes in applying the concept of socialist realism[33] during the twenty years that had elapsed since the First Congress in 1934. He refers to the criticism of Konstantin Fedin, Konstantin Simonov, Fadeyev, Ilya Ehrenburg and others.

To begin with, Konstantin Fedin, we are told, justifies the frankness of criticism directed against Soviet literature on the grounds that 'we criticize it in order to raise it to a higher standard'.[34] He calls for more attention to be paid to artistic form; for neglecting form is harmful to literature. However, this does not mean, in Fedin's view, a return to formalism. Such a reactionary theory is now discredited. Socialist realism is the alternative, but it does not mean that writers are characterized by one unified approach. On the contrary, writers can be as diverse as their styles and characters, and since the artist expresses himself in his own style as a person who has his own experience and who belongs to a certain nation, and since this varies from one artist to another, diversity and a variety of styles and characters are inevitable, and indeed the styles of socialist realism are extremely diverse.[35] Even some romantic works produced in the Soviet Union have not been criticized for falling outside the framework of socialist realism. What is important for Fedin is that the writer works hard at improving his talent, personal experience and knowledge of the laws of life in order to become an excellent writer. The manifestation of beauty and ideals varies from nation to nation and from one milieu to another. As for the application of socialist realism as a literary doctrine, it is related to the development of life. Nevertheless, Soviet writers cannot deepen their understanding of socialist realism, in Fedin's view, unless they go back to Gorky, who laid the foundation of socialist realism. Indeed, to go back to old texts or to the legacy of the past is important for every progressive writer. Fedin therefore calls upon them to study the classical heritage of all nations.[36]

Following Fedin's example, Simonov points out that Soviet writers are mistaken in applying socialist realism in their literary work, and here he singles out Kazakevich, whose hero fears death merely because it is inevitable, while some other excellent writers depict heroes free of any fear in confronting death. For such a heroic death inspires in the readers the love of life, in view of the fact that the hero had met death, proud of his support of the cause he died for.[36] However, this does not mean that socialist realism requires heroes to be depicted as excellent and perfect in every respect without contradiction or conflict with other heroes. Those writers who thought so and subsequently rejected socialist realism on these grounds are just as mistaken as those who think that socialist realism means the repetition of certain words, expressions and clichés. For

every writer has his own style, language and characteristics irrespective of the influence of other writers. We know that some writers develop, and subsequently their style and character change under the influence of personal and external factors.[37] Thus Simonov as well as Surkov made concessions to the demand for greater recognition of individuality of styles and talents.[38] Furthermore, truthfulness in representing reality now requires, according to Simonov, the depiction of perfect heroes without defects or conflict in their life to be abandoned, for it is harmful to both literature and life. The duty of literature requires it to fight corruption in society. Therefore, if the writer represents a society without corruption, he misleads and deceives his people as to their true condition. Whatever success the Soviet people have so far achieved in building socialism, it has not been accomplished without conflict, and corrupt and saboteur elements still exist and should not be ignored by literature in the struggle to rid society of them.[39] It is on this basis that Simonov rejects Rasul Hamzatov's call to make Soviet literature a literature of happiness, since this would be a deception of the people, and he also criticizes the absence of conflict in literature and the attempt to improve on reality by depicting extraordinary heroes who are transformed suddenly and quickly.[40]

While Fedin chooses to stress the importance of form, and Simonov chooses to give greater recognition to the individuality of style, Fadeyev stresses the importance of sincerity in literature. According to him, literature cannot be wholly realistic unless it is sincere and truthful. The duty of realist literature at this stage is to fight the capitalist ideology. Although Soviet literature has not yet reached the ideal standard, it is still possible to say that it serves the causes of the people sincerely and reflects their concerns, as it is indeed derived from them.[41] However, Ilya Ehrenburg, so Muruwwa tells us, does not seem to share Fadeyev's views on the sincerity of Soviet writers, or at least some of them. By way of criticizing socialist realism in some writers, Ehrenburg refers to the allegation that some writers do not write with deep sincerity and depict their society in a too favourable light -- in other words, they improve on reality. 'Soviet readers', Ehrenburg adds,'are tired of scores of Soviet books depicting perfect heroes, while in Soviet society there are many people with defects who seldom see themselves in our books. We -- the Soviet writers -- have no McCarthy to prevent us from speaking freely. Why, then, should we not write freely and depict our society as it is? Nothing prevents us from so doing except mistaking the application of socialist realism or narrowing it stiflingly for ourselves'.[42]

Having reported at length these discussions of socialist realism, which were governed by the spirit of criticism and self-criticism, and, having hinted several times earlier at the importance of the Soviet literary experience in applying socialist realism to Arabic literature, Muruwwa sums up those aspects of

'socialist realism' which could be derived from the twenty years of Soviet experience in applying this method.

According to him, the experience of Soviet writers between 1934 and 1954 was rich because it had been co-extensive with a fertile era in the life of the Soviet people. Hence the necessity for Arab realist writers to study what the Soviet writers had to say about realism in their Congress. This does not mean,however, that we -- meaning the Arabs -- ought to 'import' the concepts of socialist realism as such to our Arabic literature, for we are still still several stages behind such realism. In addition, we have a heritage of literature with merits and characteristics that might help us to deduce an aspect of this kind of realism suited to our special circumstances and national character. (It is indeed of the essence of its truth, however various its forms may be as a result of the varied milieu'.[43] The point -- in Muruwwa's view -- is that we ought to seek guidance from the Soviet experience and see, in particular, how they put socialist realism into practice in all forms and kinds of literature, and how they shifted their literature from the realms of purely personal feeling and abstract imagination and speculation to those fields of human activity in which simple people live, work, produce and develop. Also, we need to appreciate how their realism manages to absorb the life of their people in all their activities, be they practical or creative, and how they want it to expand even further, gradually to engulf the people's various activities, their facets of life, and human existence. Summing up the aspects of socialist realism, Muruwwa makes the following points:

1. Literary Realism, which they [in the Soviet Union] now term 'Socialist Realism' does not require uniformity among writers, either in form or in content. On the contrary, it requires a diversity resulting from the differences in personality of writers, in the national character derived from the circumstances of the milieu, the national tradition of the people, their linguistic and emotional heritage, and their development styles.[44]

2. Realism, as such, contradicts naturalism, which makes the writer merely a 'copier' (*musajjil*) of the images of reality, without being concerned with choosing the aspect which he is facing, or understanding the impact of the image of reality on the life of people, or on directing their minds, behaviour and feelings. Realism differs from naturalism because:

   a. It depicts reality in a new framework, which is that of art, and subsequently the features of reality change and acquire a new ability to influence the original reality, interact with it and realize its potentials.

   b. It is more selective in its depiction of reality, choosing the events and scenes which are more important in directing, influencing, and interacting with reality and in stimulating the aesthetic senses in human beings, developing them and elevating their standards.

c. It always tries to discover whatever is inherent in the reality of the urges to continue birth, renewal and development.

3. Realism rejects formalism that concerns itself with form only without due regard to content and thus denies literature any social message except the 'beauty of art'.[45]

4. The rejection of 'formalism' in literature does not imply that realism does not concern itself with artistic form. On the contrary, it pays as much attention to form as it does to content; for it believes that form and content are indivisible They influence and interact with each other. The success of any literary work in realism is dependent not only on the importance of the subject, but also on the complete unity between form and content. Romanticism and realism may be combined provided the former is not excessive and does not divert the path of the work from the direction of its social message.[46]

5. Since realism sees literature as an art with a social function, it considers it has a crucial role in organizing society, a role which influences its human development. This means that writers have social, national and human responsibilities requiring fidelity and sincerity in literary work.

6. When realism stipulates that literature is responsible because it has a social, national and human message, it also assumes that it must have a positive and constructive stand toward social, national and human questions as a whole.[47]

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With a detailed account behind us of Muruwwa's encounter with the literary phenomenon of Soviet socialist realism, we can now turn to consider his criticism and see how this external influence has inspired, stimulated and considerably informed the frame of reference within which he has situated his critical activities, namely the concept of 'new realism'.

As a radical intellectual, Muruwwa views literature as an integral part of the forces of change in society. It is part of the superstructure which, although determined in the final analysis by the infrastructure, has an important role to play in stimulating and accelerating the process of change in society. As Engels puts it:

> Political, juridical, philosophical, religious, literary, artistic, etc., development is based on economic development. But all these react upon one another and also upon the economic basis. It is not that the economic situation is cause, *solely active*, while everything else is only passive effect. There is, rather, interaction on the basis of economic necessity, which ultimately asserts itself ... so it is not,

> as people try here and there conveniently to imagine, that the economic situation produced an automatic effect. No. Men make their history themselves, only they do so in a given environment, which conditions it, and on the basis of actual relations, already existing, among which the economic relations, however much they may be influenced by the other -- the political and ideological-- relations, are still ultimately the decisive ones, forming the keynote which runs through them and alone leads to understanding.[48]

Thus when Arab reactionaries -- as Muruwwa calls them -- attack progressive literature on various grounds, they do so because they want to eliminate both literature and writers from the conflict over the process of change in Arab society, or at least to contain and diminish their role. To isolate art, particularly literature, from the questions of life in general and national issues in particular, means the loss of a great influencing force on the masses for the national liberation movement in Arab countries.[49] Literature is part of the theory or ideology, which is a very important weapon in overthrowing the established order and replacing it with better. Thus, once the forces of literature enter into the national struggle of the masses, they can, first, reflect the movement of this struggle in its truth and in its realistic and developmental motives, and, secondly, strengthen the resolve of the fighers, illuminate their way and support their belief in the rightness of their cause.[50] For, as Marx puts it, 'material force must be overthrown by material force; but theory also becomes a material force as soon as it has gripped the masses. Theory is capable of gripping the masses as soon as it demonstrates *ad hominem*, and it demonstrates *ad hominem* as soon as it becomes radical'.[51] In short, to neutralize literature in the conflict between the progressive and reactionary forces of society is to lose this 'dynamic' force which can enhance the movement of the fighting masses for realizing peace, national independence and the happiness of the people.[52]

Thus, Muruwwa wants literature to be geared to serving the process of change, closely relating it to the overall historical development in society. This, however, is not a sufficient qualification for literature to be called 'progressive'; for literature could be either in the camp of progressive social development or in that of resistance to this movement, namely the camp of reactionaries. 'Literary work,' he writes,'becomes progressive inasmuch as it depicts closely and truthfully the historical movement which brings forward new forces and reveals the continuing conflict between these forces and the old and decaying ones which the process of social development wants to uproot from society after they have accomplished their historical tasks'.[53] The scientific outlook views literature in all its forms as an expression of actual life, of the circumstances, conditions and systems of society in the particular era in which the writer lives.[54] The theoretical foundation of

realistic doctrine in literature is a scientific one and is closely related to the objective laws of development in human society. Literature, he stresses, is a social, not a purely individual, function. It is influenced by the integrative, developing and living movement of society and is indeed a high form of social awareness in which the writer is seen as the product of his milieu which deposits, in his consciousness, emotions and intellect, traces of his consciousness, emotions and dominant ideas. All these traces are then fused together by his artistic talent and personal temperament and recreated in his literary works which in turn influence the milieu. This influence varies according to the writer's interaction with the milieu and according to his outlook on the external world, nature, life and society.[55] That is to say, 'the relationship between art and reality is twofold: reality is reflected in art, but art also exerts an active effect upon reality'. For socialist realism, the model Muruwwa has in mind when he talks about progressive realistic literature, 'demands a profound and true perception of reality and reflection of its main and most progressive tendencies: but it is itself a weapon for reality'.[56]

With this process of interaction between literature and reality taken for granted, every literature, according to Muruwwa, has a share of realism, and every writer is a realist, in one respect or another. By the same token, literature is also bound to have a particular outlook on the questions of external reality, nature, life and society, and every writer is bound to have a particular attitude towards the views, doctrines, ideas, systems and conventions prevailing in his milieu and age. Thus, when considering the issue of orientation in literature, Muruwwa states very clearly that every writer has specific orientation. The fact that he is the product of his milieu and society necessarily means that he is always influenced by the political, social and economic doctrines prevailing in his society, milieu and age, and his output expresses the values, ideas, ambitions and feelings of a particular group as well as some aspects of its conflict with other groups. Viewed from this perspective, writers throughout history have been either a group depicting the birth of the new in society as well as the disintegration of the old, or, in other words, expressing or articulating the historical movement, or a group ignoring this movement by ingoring the new forces and supporting the old, which obstruct the birth of the former.[57] According to Muruwwa, the first group represents progressive realistic literature that has an essentially revolutionary message when it depicts the conflict between the two forces, while the second represents backward and reactionary literature, since it becomes a weapon in the hands of the established order.[58]

However, the content is not, in Muruwwa's view, the only characteristic to distinguish progressive literature from the reactionary. For literature sometimes draws on reactionary

groups for material and yet remain progressive. The role of style and form or the question of how the writer writes comes here into play. Literature may deal with the reactionary classes anticipating their disintegration or decline, or mocking and defaming them, and thus it becomes progressive. Here Muruwwa cites as examples Bashshār, al-Jāḥiẓ, Abū Nuwās, Ibn al-Rūmī , Abū al-ʿAlāʾ al-Maʿarrī, al-Mutanabbī -- in some of his poetry -- Dante and Balzac. But Muruwwa seems to have to bend some of the criteria for progressive literature in order to accommodate these writers within his category. In fact, by doing so he does not only carry out what was termed in the Soviet Union during the thirties, 'the appropriation of classical heritage',[59] he also establishes a measure of continuity in the history of progressive literature. Furthermore, it has long been established among Marxist critics that 'socialist realism' or the 'new realism' is merely a higher stage of the critical realism of the past.[60] Thus Louis Aragon reminds the First Congress of the Soviet Writers, which adopted socialist realism as the official watchword of Soviet literature,[61] that:

> Socialist Realism is the culmination of literary effort pursued in French literature by Balzac, Zola, Pottier, Valles, Stendhal, Barbusse, Rimbaud, and Peguy. Johannes R.Becher, who had been an Expressionist poet before becoming a convert to the Marxist aesthetic and reverting to a popular lyricism, traces a continuous line of development in German literature from Goethe and Schiller through Weerth, the plebeian and popular nature of whose writings Marx and Engels had praised, and the political poetry of Freiligrath, to Socialist Realism.[62]

In fact, as Arvon puts it:

> In order to bridge the gap between the past and the present, all that is required is to apply the term 'critical realism' which had long been common in Russian literary criticism, to all bourgeois writers whose works seem at all compatible with a Socialist point of view. Thus Socialist Realism can be regarded as merely a higher stage of critical realism; looked at from this point of view, it becomes a permanent principle of aesthetics accompanying and illustrating the class struggle throughout human history'.[63]

Muruwwa accepts neither of these terms and by way of adapting the Soviet model to suit the Arabic literary reality, he introduces the terms 'new realism' *al-wāqiʿiyya al-jadīda* and 'old realism' (*al-wāqiʿiyya al-qadīma*). As he explains elsewhere, the school of 'socialist realism' can be applied only to the literature of socialist countries. As for the realism which is based on historical and dialectical materialism, it should be called 'the new realism'. For the term 'socialist', which is an inherent constituent of the literary content, is an emotional reflection of the socialist life of the people in the socialist countries. In fact, except for the name, the term

'new realism' is -- according to Muruwwa -- identical with socialist realism.[64] When he talks about progressive realist literature, he means that which represents truthfully the conflict of the contradictory forces within society and by so doing represents life itself in its development movement.[65]

However, Muruwwa distinguishes between two types of this representation: depicting and reflecting the social and historical movement of reality in a spontaneous and instinctive way, and depicting reality consciously and deliberately from a scientific and objective basis. Here he writes that there is a difference which must be noticed between (a) a realistic literature orientated spontaneously and without any clear intention truthfully to depict real life and to highlight the revolutionary nature of reality, and (b) a realistic literature orientated with an intention and consciousness deriving from comprehending objective reality and from a scientific outlook on the world in which the writer lives -- an outlook which comprehends the objective law of development of this world and which, far from being partial or fixed, penetrates into all its complementary aspects.[66] In other words,

> The difference between these two kinds of orientated literature is the difference between the literature of the old realists in whose writing illusions and dominant ideas of their age overlap with the progressive ones, and the literature of the new realists who are able to arm themselves with modern scientific philosophy and can penetrate into the truth of the laws of social development which are moving objectively.[67]

It is according to this model of 'new realism', mainly inspired by the Soviet socialist realism, that Muruwwa deals with Arabic literary productions both of the past and of the present as well as with other related issues.

NOTES

1. See ʿAbd al-Nabī Ṣṭayf (Staif), *'Nazra fī qadiyyat al-mu'aththirat al-ajnabiyya fī al-naqd al-ʿArabī al-ḥadīth'*, in *al-Mawqif al-Adabi* (Damascus), Nos. 140-42 (Jan.-March, 1983), pp.112f.
2. Born in 1909 in Ḥadatha -- a small village in the south of Lebanon -- Ḥusayn Muruwwa received his primary and intermediate education in Bint Jubayl and al-Nabaṭiyya, respectively. In 1924 he went to Iran to study Islamic law, and Arabic language and literature at the Religious University of al-Najaf, where he stayed until 1932, returning to work in journalism in Damascus and Beirut. In 1935 he went back to al-Najaf for four years to study Islamic theology and then worked as a teacher of Arabic in Iraq for ten years, while also writing for the political and literary press in Syria, Lebanon and Egypt. Having taken part in the popular uprising in Iraq against the 1948 Portsmouth Agreement with

Britain -- an uprising spearheaded by the communist-led 'Student Co-operation Committee -- he was deported in 1949 by Nūrī al-Sa īd's government and has since lived in Lebanon.

Muruwwa has always had close contacts with the leftist press in the Arab East, particularly with *al-Ṭarīq* and *al-Thaqāfa al-Wataniyya*. His long-standing commitment to the former earned him the editorship of the review, and he recently became its managing editor. After almost ten years of research Muruwwa was awarded a doctorate from the University of Moscow for his impressive work on *The Materialistic Tendencies in Islamic-Arab Philosophy*, which came out in two massive volumes in 1978 and 1979 respectively. Muruwwa is now a member of the Central Committee of the Lebanese Communist Party which he most probably joined in the 1940s. A founding member of the Arab Writers Association (Damascus, September 1954), he continued to be its most active, articulate and influential member in Lebanon until it was closed by the late President Nāṣir immediately after the 1958 Union between Syria and Egypt. In 1980 he was awarded the Lotus Prize by the Organization of Afro-Asian Writers and the *al-Ādāb wa-Funūn* Order from the Democratic Republic of South Yemen.

3. Ḥusayn Muruwwa, *Qaḍāyā Adabiyya* (hereafter *QA*), p.66.
4. Cf. Ḥusayn Muruwwa, "Bayn al-Kirimlin wa-Qa'at al-A'mida fī Muskū", *al-Thaqāfa al-Waṭaniyya* (15 February 1955); "Min wujūh al-waqi'iyya al-adabiyya fi Mu'tamar al-Kuttāb al-Sufyatiyyin al-Thanī "; ibid. (15 March 1955); "Adab al-silm min khilāl Mu'tamar al-Kuttāb al-Sufyatiyyin al-Thānī", *al-Tariq*, 14, No.3 (March, 1955), pp.17-22.
5. *QA*,pp.66-122.
6. Walter N.Vickery, *The Cult of Optimism: Political and Ideological Problems of Recent Soviet Literature*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1963, p.53.
7. Ibid., p.73.
8. In addition to Muruwwa, the Congress was attended by Jūrj Hannā from Lebanon and Mawāhin 'Alī Kayyalī from Syria. Both Muruwwa and Kayyālī addressed the Congress. For their speeches see *Vtoroy syezd sovetskikh pisatelei: stenograficheskiy otchyot, (The Second All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers: Stenographic Report)*, Moscow, 1956, pp.525-6 and 561-2. (I gratefully acknowledge my debt to Miss Pam Godfrey of Oxford University Press and Oxford College of Further Education, without whose help the consultation of this report would have been impossible. It is also worth pointing out that, in its report on the cultural life in Syria in March 1955, *al-Thaqafa al-Waṭaniyya* refers to a forthcoming talk on the Congress to be given by Kayyālī at the request of *al-Jam'iyya al-Sūriyya li-l-Funun*. Cf. *al-Thaqafa al-Wataniyya*, 4, No.3 (15 March 1955), p.56 and Shawqī Baghdādī, "Lam takun sinīn jadbā': Ḥawl al-ḥamla al-muwajjaha ḍidd al-adab al-Sufyatī bi-munasabat in'iqād al-Mu'tamar al-Thānī li-Ittihād al-Kuttāb

al-Sufyatiyyin", ibid., 4, No.5 (15 May 1955), pp.25-33.

9. *QA*, p.66.
10. Cf. Husayn Muruwwa, "Al-mawfiq al-naẓarī min al-thaqāfa wa-l-muthaqqafīn fī ḍaw' naẓariyyatina al-thawriyya wa-sulukina al-ʿamalī", *al-Ṭariq*, 33, Nos.10-11 (October-November 1974), pp.15 -22.
11. Cf. Ḥusayn Muruwwa, "Adabunā al-taqaddumī fī maʿraḍ al-arajīf", *al-Ṭariq*, 14, No.7 (July, 1955), pp.15-22; "Lughat al-ḥiwār al-qiṣaṣī fī adabina", ibid., 14, Nos.8-9 (August-September, 1955), pp.25-35; "Qadiyyat al-adab al-muwajjah fī ḥaqiqatiha al-ʿilmiyya", *al-Thaqafa al-Waṭaniyya*, 4, No.5 (15 May, 1955), pp.19-24; *QA*, pp.5-14, 25 -35, 15-28.
12. *QA*, p.70.
13. Ibid., pp.73-4.
14. Ibid., p.82.
15. Ibid., p.84.
16. Ibid., p.85.
17. Ibid., p.76.
18. Ibid., p.104.
19. Ibid., p.117.
20. A.H.Gomme (ed.), *D.H.Lawrence: A Critical Study of the Major Novels and Other Writings*, The Harvester Press, Sussex, 2nd impression, 1979, p.5.
21. *QA*, p.68.
22. Ibid., p.72.
23. Ibid., p.70.
24. Ibid., p.71.
25. Ibid., p.73.
26. Ibid., p.77.
27. Ibid., p.79.
28. Ibid., p.79 and Walter N.Vickery, ibid., p.65.
29. *QA*, p.79.
30. Cf. Ronald Hingley, *Russian Writers and Soviet Union Society: 1917-1978*, Methuen, London, 1979, p.198 and C.Vaughan James, *Soviet Socialist Realism: Origins and Theory*, Macmillan, London, 1973, p.88.
31. *Pervy vsesoyuzny syezd sovetskikh pisatelei: Stenograficheskiy otchyot*, Moscow, 1934, p.716, cited by Harold Swayze in his *Political Control of Literature in the USSR, 1946-1959*, Harvard University Press, 1962, p.113.
32. Ibid., pp.113-4.
33. *QA*, pp.79f.
34. Ibid., p.80.
35. Ibid., p.81.
36. Ibid., p.82.
37. Ibid., p.83.
38. Walter N.Vickery, ibid., p.57.
39. *QA*,p.84.
40. Ibid., pp.84-5.
41. Ibid., p.85.
42. Ibid., p.86.
43. Ibid., p.87.

44. Ibid., p.88.
45. Ibid., pp.88-89 and C.Vaughan James, ibid., p.90.
46. *QA*, p.89. See also Gleb Struve, *Russian Literature under Lenin and Stalin: 1917-1953*, London, 1972, p.258. Struve writes:

> An attempt was also made to oppose Socialist Realism to revolutionary romanticism which characterized the work of many Soviet writers in the early period and to which some of them still clung. There was a long and heated discussion on the relation between Socialist Realism and revolutionary romanticism, the outcome of which was that the latter was recognized as an essential ingredient of Socialist Realism. This view was advocated by Gorky, in whose own work elements of revolutionary romanticism had always been prominent, and he was supported by such romantically inclined Soviet writers as Lavrenyov. Gorky himself went even further when, in one of his articles published in 1934, he proclaimed that revolutionary romanticism was merely 'a pseudonym of Socialist Realism'.

47. *QA*, p.90.
48. Fredric Engels, from a letter to W.Borgius in his *Selected Works*, Vol.III, pp.502-3, cited in *Marxism and Art: Essays Classic and Contemporary*, ed. with historical and critical commentary by Maynard Solomon, Sussex, 1979, p.33.
49. *QA*, p.7.
50. Ibid., pp.7-8.
51. Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Right*, in *On Religion*, p.50, cited in *Marxism and Art*, ibid., p.53.
52. *QA*, p.8.
53. Ibid., p.12.
54. Ibid., p.19.
55. Ibid., pp.19-20.
56. C.Vaughan James, *Soviet Socialist Realism: Origins and Theory*, London, 1973, p.89.
57. *QA*, pp.20f.
58. Ibid., p.21.
59. Cf. Peter Brang, 'Sociological Method in Twentieth-Century Russian Criticism', *Literary Criticism and Sociology: A Yearbook of Comparative Criticism*, Vol.V, ed. Joseph P. Strelka, The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1973. pp.228f.
60. Henri Arvon, *Marxist Esthetics*, translated from the French by Helen R.Lane, with an introduction by Fredric Jameson, Cornell University Press, 1973, p.87.
61. Ibid., p.83.
62. Ibid., p.86.
63. Ibid., p.87.
64. Ḥusayn Muruwwa, *Dirāsāt naqdiyya fī ḍaw' al-minhāj al-waqi'ī*, Beirut, 1972, p.72.
65. *QA*, p.23.
66. Ibid., pp.25 f.
67. Ibid., p.26.