Imbirāṭūrīyya fī al-Mazād

In this political satire Bā-Kathīr creates the atmosphere of the downfall of the British Empire. Despite some penetrating insights into the minds of those at the head of this Empire, the play suffers from faults which a little attention would have corrected. This is particularly so in the question of formal ways of address among the titled gentry of England. For instance, both Cohen and Lady Stately keep addressing Henry Toilman, son of Labour M.P. John Toilman, as Mr. Henry.[1] Also, Edward Stately, Conservative M.P. and holder of a knighthood, is addressed as Sir Stately instead of Sir Edward.[2] These details are irritating if not corrected in a production of this play.

In Act I Mr. and Mrs. Toilman are preparing to receive Sir Edward and Lady Stately for tea. Their son Henry Toilman is the fiancé of Caroline Stately at present attending a peace conference in Paris. Mr. Toilman is very tight-fisted. He buys clothes from second-hand dealers, demands that Sir Edward remain still while sitting on one of his chairs so that the chair does not suffer stress. John and Edward get into an argument as to the party responsible for the liquidation of the British Empire. Henry, who throughout the play is to be the voice of revolutionary youth, lays the blame as well as a curse on both parties. The argument shifts to the forthcoming elections and the party likely to win. The Conservative Party wins the election under the leadership of Sir Circle, a thin cover for Sir Winston Churchill. There is to be a celebration party.

In Act II, during the celebration party, the Prime Minister is informed of the danger posed by a resolution passed in the Conference of

---

1. Imbirāṭūrīyya fī al-Mazād, pp. 7, 27.
2. ibid., p. 30.

the Third World meeting in New Delhi. Sir Circle loses his temper, and orders the bombing of Egypt on the pretence that Israel cannot exist as long as Egypt exists. He falls down still shouting.

In Act III the young in France overthrow the government. The British Parliament is called for an emergency session but the revolution reaches Britain before the session begins. All members of the Cabinet as well as all Members of Parliament are arrested. Sir Circle, who has disguised himself as a fat old woman, is discovered in the attic of Sir Edward's country house. Mr. John Toilman had betrayed him to the young revolutionaries.

Act IV sees both Toilman and Stately, among others, in prison. They hear of the possible sale by auction of the British Empire, the confiscation of the property of the ruling classes and the sending of Sir Circle to Nuremberg to face charges as a war criminal. The Afro-Asiatic powers, aiming to avoid the sale by auction of the British Empire because they fight for the freedom of all peoples, foil the attempt of America and Russia to buy the Empire. The English are allowed to be free but are confined to the boundaries of their island. Sir Circle's freedom of activity is to be destroyed. Someone proposes that he be sold on the Stock Exchange as he has become an archaeological piece, but in the end everybody agrees to hand him over to the Nuremberg Court.

The confrontation between Henry and his father John Toilman in Act III is reminiscent of the same father-son antagonism in the novel Sīrat Shujā'. While the father is inspired solely by his personal interest, the son is inspired by the good of the state. The playwright leaves us in no doubt as to the person who is in the right.

The aim of the play is to ridicule those imperial powers-that-be in the third world. This is done successfully by degrading the English

politicians who appear in the play. What the play does not succeed in doing is to make the reader swallow the wish-fulfilment revolution at the end.

Mismār Juḥā

This is the most popular play written by Bā-Kathīr. It was played by al-Masraḥ al-Misrī al-Ḥadīth throughout the theatre season of 1951. Afterwards it was chosen to be filmed. The play is based on two ideas[1] - one is:

> '... the political aspect which shows in the struggle between Juḥā and the Resident Governor (representative of a foreign imperial power) of Iraq. This struggle leads to the revolt of the people against the Governor and the liberation of the country from his yoke. The second is the social aspect which is shown in the contrast between the exemplary (character) of Juḥā and the gross materialism of his wife Umm al-Ghuṣn. This contrast is centered specifically around the marriage of their daughter Maymūna. While Juḥā wishes her to marry his nephew Ḥammād the fallāḥ, Umm al-Ghuṣn wants her to marry a rich man.'

Invariably attention has been paid more to the political aspect of this play than to the social aspect.[2]

The play is in six scenes. In the first scene, Juḥā is dismissed from his post as Imam of one of the mosques of Kufa because of his criticism of the authorities. He escapes prison by pleading his preference for prison to the nagging of his wife. The Wālī considers him punished, then, by sending him to his wife.

---

1. FM p. 34.
2. Rizzitano, op. cit. p. 444.

In scene ii Juḥā returns home and his wife's tongue lashes out at him. By making Juḥā hesitate between staying out or going in, Bā-Kathīr heightens our expectation of the manifestation of the power of the wife over him. Umm al-Ghuṣn rebukes Juḥā for losing his job but he does not take her seriously. He starts to think of the possible profession he can take up. Ḥammād comes visiting, and advises his uncle to sell his rather large house and use the proceeds to buy land and become a farmer. Umm al-Ghuṣn does not agree with this idea, but her objection is swept aside. A revolt among the peasants brings Juḥā back to the position of Judge of Judges - the Chief Qadi - a position won by his outspokenness against the foreign power and to be used for the improvement of the lot of the people.

Scene iii sees Juḥā and his family in Baghdad. Juḥā makes a plan with Ḥammād. He cedes the ownership of the house to Ḥammād. Umm al-Ghuṣn becomes the respect-demanding wife of the Chief Qadi and she makes her two children remember to behave themselves as worthy of their exalted position in the society. She now objects, more than ever before, to her daughter marrying Ḥammād. She invites rich people to her mansion in the hope of finding a husband for her daughter. Ḥammād conspires with al-Ghuṣn to play the fool in front of these rich, snobbish guests. They are annoyed and walk out of the house.

A court scene follows where we learn that the house has been sold by Ḥammād to Ghānim on condition that Ḥammād is allowed to retain a nail in the house. Having put the nail there he comes and goes to and from the house, thus making a nuisance of himself to Ghānim. Ghānim takes Ḥammād to court where Juḥā sits in judgement.

While the case is being heard, Umm al-Ghuṣn comes to complain against her husband's cruelty to her and her children. The case of

Ghānim v. Ḥammād is suspended and both Juḥā and his wife make statements to the court. While this is going on the Resident Governor sends a whispered message to Ghānim. Umm al-Ghuṣn is asked to go home with the promise that officials will be sent to verify her statement. The main case is reopened. Ghānim declares that he is ready to forfeit his rights to the house so that Ḥammād can have it and be done with it. Juḥā is suspicious of this move, knowing that it must have been suggested to Ghānim by the Resident Governor. Juḥā then proceeds to cross-examine Ghānim with the aim of getting the truth out of him.

The court audience get impatient and start to shout that Ḥammād should take his nail from Ghānim's house. But Ḥammād, as prearranged with Juḥā, points out to them that there is a much more dangerous nail stuck into their land. They should demand that it be removed. The Resident Governor, sensing what Ḥammād is playing at, orders the arrest of both Ḥammād and Juḥā.

In scene v Juḥā is visited in prison by the Resident Governor with a paper for him to sign directing the people to stop what is now an open revolt against the authority of the Governor. Juḥā refuses to sign. Later the leaders of a revolution that has taken place visit Juḥā and offer him a ministerial appointment in their new government. The Governor returns to Juḥā to negotiate. Juḥā and the others imprisoned with him are released. The foreign occupation of Iraq ends. Ḥammād marries Maymūna and Umm al-Ghuṣn is reconciled to her husband.

C H A P T E R VIII

The Epic Drama of ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb

If God had wished that there should
have been another Prophet after me
ʿUmar would have been he.

- a ḥadīth of the Prophet.

VIII

Bā-Kathīr revealed, in a press interview, that the model for his epic on the life of the second Caliph 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb is Thomas Hardy's epic drama on the Napoleonic Wars, The Dynasts.[1] Behind The Dynasts as ancestors in the epic form are The Iliad of Homer, Sugund by Morris, Shakespeare's History plays, Sir Walter Scott's Waverley novels, Gibbon's Decline and Fall and Carlyle's French Revolution.[2] Like Hardy's epic drama, Bā-Kathīr's was to have been divided into three parts and nineteen acts. Hardy's epic drama covers ten years of the war with Napoleon just as Bā-Kathīr's covers the ten years of the caliphate of 'Umar (634 - 644 A.D.). The similarity between model and imitation hardly extends, however, beyond these structural aspects. Bā-Kathīr does not make use of such other techniques of Hardy's as long stage directions, dumb shows with extended passages of visual description, aspects which have led John Wain to describe The Dynasts as a 'shooting script'.[3] Nor does Bā-Kathīr use blank verse or any other verse form in his epic as Hardy does. The effect of all these differences is that Ba-Kathir's epic lacks the grandeur and awe present in The Dynasts. More important still, the Phantom Intelligences who play an important part in The Dynasts have no counterparts in 'Umar.[4] These Phantom Intelligences are the expression of the characteristic fatalism which accompanies most of Hardy's heroes.

---

1. al-Jīl, 16th April, 1962. The Dynasts, first published in three parts, 1904, 1906, 1908.
2. Thomas Hardy by Duffin, H.C., Manchester, 1916.
3. Introduction to Pocket Papermac Edition, 1965, p. x.
4. These Phantom Intelligences are: the Ancient Spirit of the Years, Chorus of the Years; the Spirit of the Pities, Chorus of the Pities; Spirits Sinister and Ironic, Choruses of Sinister and Ironic Spirits; the Spirit of Rumour, Chorus of Rumours; the Shade of the Earth; Spirit Messengers; and Recording Angels.

Characteristically, then, Bā-Kathīr has modelled his work structurally on a Western example. But the idea, the world-view expressed in the epic of 'Umar, is Islamic through the choice Bā-Kathīr makes of a period of pristine Islam and a personality who embodies all the Islamic virtues. Bā-Kathīr defines his aim in writing this epic as being to rebuild 'our contemporary life on the strong, perfect foundations'[1] laid down by the Prophet and his companions.

Orthodox Islam has built up the character of 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb as next only to the Prophet.[2] He is considered to be the founder of the Arab empire in as far as he not only ordered the military conquests but also established the administrative basis of the empire. His strongest characteristic was his energy of will. He began as a declared enemy of Islam and ended by supporting it with all his strength. It is no wonder, then, that he has been styled the 'St. Paul of Islam'. He was converted to Islam when he was twenty-six, four years before the Hijra. He was more of a councillor than a military man. All the same, he was autocratic in the sense that he took decisions and pursued their execution with such singleness of mind, such tenacity of purpose, such a conviction of his own rightness, that it was difficult for his advisers to question him. But with this he had a simple life style which must have impressed Bā-Kathīr at a time when he was getting disillusioned with the opulence of political leaders in Egypt. If one accepts that 'an epic is a work resting primarily on the activity of one or more central figures, men who change history or who through their 'chooseness' (sic) begin a new portion of history',[3] then 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb - 'one of the most typical modes of all virtues of Islam'[4] - is a fit subject for an epic.

---

1. al-Idhā'a, 23rd Jan. 1965.
2. Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam; 'Umar the Great (Lahore, 1939) 2 vols.
3. Irving, Howe, Thomas Hardy p. 155.
4. Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam, p. 601.

Bā-Kathīr was granted a state pension through the Ministry of Culture and National Guidance in 1962. This pension lasted two years while he worked on 'Umar. The epic as planned was to cover about one thousand pages and to boast one hundred lead characters. Like Hardy's The Dynasts it was to have nineteen acts. Of these nineteen acts only the first six had been published, each as a volume on its own, by the time Bā-Kathīr died in 1969.

'Alā Aswār Dimashq

This play is prefaced with an introduction in two scenes. This introduction - entitled, appropriately, al-Fātiḥa - deals with the death of Abū Bakr and the choosing of 'Umar as his successor. Scene i opens with Abū Bakr on his death-bed. He sends for 'Umar and asks his opinion of the two Muslim generals, Khālid b. al-Walīd and Abū 'Ubayda, as possible rulers of Islam. 'Umar cannot see either of these two being caliph. Abū Bakr makes 'Umar accept unwillingly that no other person could best head the young Muslim nation at that time except 'Umar himself. In scene ii Abū Bakr consults the most important leaders of the Muhājirūn and the Anṣār on his choice of 'Umar as his successor. Abū 'Ubayda and Sa'īd b. Zaid[1] are the main voices of dissent. While Abū Bakr accepts the fact that 'Umar could be ruthless, he points out that he would maintain order. While Abū Bakr again concedes 'Umar's late conversion to Islam, he convinces his listeners that 'Umar's enthusiasm would be of importance to the young religion. When they have all agreed to the choice, Abū Bakr summons 'Uthmān to write down his last statement. Abū Bakr faints at the dramatic point of mentioning the name of his successor. When he recovers he is informed that the statement is

1. It is difficult sometimes to identify characters since there is no list of dramatis personae in any of these six volumes.

complete as he would want it. Abū Bakr's family now gather round him. He asks to see his youngest son's spinning-top but he dies before it is brought. This shift from important state matters to such a simple family concern for his son's latest toy is an effective method of creating the atmosphere of the dual responsibility of the head of the Muslim state. Presently this contrasts with 'Umar's obsessive concern for order when he silences the family of Abū Bakr from crying over his dead body.

The public duties of Abū Bakr and his private life are well balanced. This equilibrium between public duties and family demands is an important theme in the whole epic.

Scene i of the play itself is a battlefield on the outskirts of Damascus. In a battle against Byzantine forces, Abān b. Sa'īd is mortally wounded. His wife swears to avenge his death, but Abān is happy because he is dying 'fī sabīl Allah' and he will be one of the giants of Judgement Day - one of those who gave their lives for Islam. His wife fails to catch up with and kill the warrior who wounded her husband. She returns to his side to watch him die. She vows to avenge the death no matter where she has to go to do it.

Scene ii shows the antipathy of 'Umar for Khālid b. al-Walīd and the existence of this same feeling on the side of Khālid too. Khālid even parodies 'Umar speaking of Khālid before Caliph Abū Bakr. A youth of about twenty years of age is brought to Khālid on suspicion of spying. The youth tells a different story. He is in love with the daughter of the killer of Abān b. Sa'īd whose name is Tūmās. This youth is escaping from Tūmās to run away and marry his sweetheart. When Khālid releases the boy, he refuses to go. He begs to be allowed to remain with the Muslim forces until they enter Damascus.

In scene iii there is a council of war. Yūnus, the youth referred to in scene ii, tells Khālid that the governor of Damascus would be celebrating, that night, the birth of his son. Khālid suggests to the leaders of his army that they storm the town while this celebration is going on. They all take an oath of secrecy at the end of the meeting.

When the Muslim army takes Damascus in scene iv, Khālid is for ruthless measures against the Byzantines. Abū 'Ubayda, on the other hand, counsels caution. His suggestion that the Byzantine authorities be allowed three days to leave the city is accepted by Khālid and the other leaders. But since the whole issue had occasioned argument among them, Khālid suggests (out of ignorance of the death of Abū Bakr) that they should write to the Caliph Abū Bakr asking his opinion on the issue. Tūmās comes to complain ~~against~~ of Yūnus who, he alleges, has taken away his daughter. Yūdūqiyā, the daughter, says that she has not been taken away by force but that she has followed Yūnus of her own volition. Tūmās argues with his daughter that her going away would sadden her mother. Moreover, she must know that Yūnus was a traitor to them since it was through his treachery that the Muslim army was able to enter the city. Yūdūqiyā recoils from Yūnus and rejoins her father.

In scene v, Yūnus wishes to follow the fleeing Byzantines to rescue Yūdūqiyā. Khālid desires to pursue them and ensure that they do not spring a surprise attack on the Muslims. Abū 'Ubayda once more opposes Khālid. He maintains that unless the Byzantines are first warned Khālid must not go into battle against them. Moreover, Abū 'Ubayda chides Khālid for not turning up for prayers. To which Khālid replies:

'I am your commander in battles and not in prayers.'[1]

1. 'Alā Aswār Dimashq, p. 82.

Scene vi shows Khālid in pursuit of the Byzantine soldiers. When he catches up with them he insists on their surrendering all their arms - an imposition at variance with the treaty concluded three days earlier. Yūdūqiyā, in an attempt to cross the lines and join Yūnus, is shot by her father. Khālid demands that he surrender himself.

In scene vii Yūdūqiyā is dying from her wounds. Umm Abān is allowed to shoot Tūmās but she weakens. Yūdūqiyā becomes a Muslim and dies.

Scene viii shows Abū 'Ubayda, who had known of the death of Abū Bakr all the time (on the day of the treaty with the Byzantine leadership, to be precise), informing Khālid of the changed situation back in Medina. Naturally Khālid is angry that he has been kept in the dark for so long. Khālid's main reason for opposing 'Umar is that for six years 'Umar was the scourge of the Muslims before his conversion. Abū 'Ubayda tries to assure Khālid that he (Khālid) would still remain the leader of the army, but Khālid is certain that 'Umar would not keep him much longer in the post.

In the rather brief scene after the above, Heraclius is convinced by his empress that they should move to Antioch after they had started to organise their defences around Homs.

In scene x we are back in Mecca where 'Umar is given the title of amīr al-mu'minīn. He refuses to take money from the state purse, but an arrangement is made for the upkeep of his family since he no longer has time to continue his commercial activities. News comes from Syria confirming its conquest by the Muslim army. Preparations are made for the conquest of Iraq.

Ma'rakat al-Jisr

Two battles take place on a bridge. The Muslims lose the first battle but win a decisive victory in the second.

In scene i al-Muthannā b. Hāritha and his wife Salmā discuss the recent appointment of Abū 'Ubayda as the commander of the Muslim forces. This appointment passes over al-Muthannā and displaces Khālid b. al-Walīd. Al-Muthannā is not bitter against the Caliph for this. All Muslims, al-Muthannā muses, are fighting 'fī sabīl Allah'. Questions of personal ambition should not be allowed to cloud this supreme objective. At a party given by al-Muthannā, Abū 'Ubayda relates to him 'Umar's injunction that the new commander must work hand-in-hand with al-Muthannā. Abū 'Ubayda must consult him on all issues before taking decisions. Rumours of the enemy's approach circulate at the party.

In the second scene, Abū 'Ubayda receives delegations and settles disputes. The Muslims are encamped on part of the Persian territory which they have conquered. The chieftains of this part of Persia bring gifts of choicest victuals to Abū 'Ubayda, but he refuses to accept them, insisting that he be given the same meals as his soldiers. The food brought by the grandees is given to some Persian peasants by Muslim soldiers. These peasants are flogged by their masters not only for eating the food in front of them but also for showing that they enjoyed eating it too. The peasants sing a protest song which further annoys the chieftains. The peasants report to Abū 'Ubayda that they were flogged. After listening to both sides, Abū 'Ubayda gives canes to the peasants with which to avenge themselves. The chieftains protest their preference for death rather than to be caned by their own peasants. Abū 'Ubayda ignores this and orders the peasants to go ahead. The

peasants refuse and Abū 'Ubayda orders them away from his presence. Jābān, an officer of the defeated Persian troops, who has been in hiding, is brought before Abū 'Ubayda. A Muslim civilian who did not know his identity had given him protection. When Jābān's real identity is disclosed by another Muslim, Jābān's protector is still ready to continue guaranteeing his safety since this was his promise to him from the beginning. Abū 'Ubayda upholds this decision although Jābān is unrepentant. He boasts of the day the Persian leader Rustam will drive the Muslims out of Persia.

In scene iii Rustam comes to see the widowed queen of Persia. They have been lovers before but they are deliberately trying to ignore this past. They have a son. Rustam proposes marriage so that the two of them can set up a new ruling house for Persia. Al-Fayrazān comes to report the general chaos of the Persian army crumbling before the Muslim forces. Al-Fayrazān suggests that the time is not right to change command when the queen proposes that Rustam lead the forces of Persia against the Muslims. Al-Fayrazān thinks that a change in the command might lead to a hurried change of tactics. The queen arbitrarily orders al-Fayrazān himself to take over the command of the army. When she asks Rustam for his view on her decision, Rustam suggests another Persian leader, Bāhāman, a Goliath of a man.[1]

In scene iv Ṣalīṭ, al-Muthannā and Bashīr are surprised at the change of behaviour they now see in Abū 'Ubayda. When he was made the

---

1. The stage direction describes him as follows:

رجل كبير ضخم الجثة ، طويل عريض ، أشمط الشعر

Ma'rakaṫ al-Jisr, p. 48.

commander of the Muslim forces, he was told to consult these men before important decisions were taken. Now he has made up his mind that their forces will cross a bridge to meet the Persian host. The three men think that this means certain death for the Muslim soldiers. Al-Muthannā is of the opinion that Abū 'Ubayda is being misdirected by his wife. She is the one who tells him that he has no opinion of his own if he keeps consulting the other army officers. When Abū 'Ubayda arrives, these men suggest that the Muslim forces hold their ground and wait for the Persians. Abū 'Ubayda accuses them of being cowards and insists they cross to meet the Persians.

By scene v, the first battle of the bridge has been fought and lost by the Muslims. Al-Muthannā saves a few soldiers by turning back and fleeing. The remaining soldiers are demoralised, but the encouragement of 'Umar through a letter and the news from Syria (where Khālid b. al-Walīd has been fighting) show the soldiers that Allah has been victorious and they are cheered.

In scene vi Shīrīn, a Muslim of Persian origin married to the brother of al-Muthannā named al-Mu'annā b. Ḥāritha, receives a messenger from the Persian queen as the two armies are once more poised for action. The message from the Persian queen is intended to enlist the help of Shīrīn against the Muslims. Shīrīn is to spy on her brother-in-law al-Muthannā and other Muslim leaders. Her immediate duty is to convince the Muslim commanders to cross over the bridge to the Persians, a move which led to their tragic defeat in the previous battle. Shīrīn takes the message, kills the messenger and pretends that she is much hurt by the presumption of the Persian queen to use her against the Muslims. Al-Muthannā consoles her and praises her for killing the spy whose master he will kill in due course.

In scene vii al-Muthannā prepares for the second battle of the bridge. The Muslims remain on their side of the bridge despite Shīrīn's urging against this stand. The Persians cross over to meet the Muslims. Shouting 'Allahu Akbar!', the Muslims rush into battle.

Scene viii is an attempt to represent the battle on stage. The Muslim Mas'ūd and Anas, a Christian of the tribe of Taghlīb, die in the battle. The inclusion of Anas, who is a Christian in the Muslim army, is interesting in that Bā-Kathīr projects here his mixture of Arab and Muslim being one and the same thing. In cases where racial distinction will not cover, religion will cover it. In this case, Anas does not fight as a Christian or as a Muslim, but as an Arab. That Arabs are fighting 'fī sabīl Allah', an Islamic concept, does not bother Anas, thanks to Bā-Kathīr, whom this does not bother either.

Kisrā wa Qayṣār

This is the shortest of the six published volumes of this epic. It deals with the preparation of the Muslims against the newly forged friendship between Persia and Byzantium.

In scene i the Persians attribute their defeat in the second battle of the bridge to the lack of unity among their leaders. This lack of unity becomes a threat to the existence of Persia with the Muslim armies at their doors. While discussions are going on as to what to do in this situation, messengers arrive from Byzantium bearing greetings from Qayṣār. They come with suggestions of co-operation with Persia against the Muslims. The Persian queen is the only one who is against an alliance with Persia's erstwhile rival and bitter enemy. Her objection is cast aside and Qayṣār's promise of co-operation is accepted.

In the second scene a Persian doctor[1] recommended by Shīrīn, and therefore accepted as trustworthy by the Muslims, comes to treat al-Muthannā for the wounds he sustained at the battle of the bridge. Shīrīn tells the doctor to treat her brother-in-law well and then she will poison him later. This is the most positive intimation one gets that Shīrīn could in fact be a danger to the Muslims, being an enemy within their own ranks. Twice al-Muthannā falls asleep after his treatment. When the doctor has gone, Salmā, al-Muthannā's wife, comes and complains of being kept unaware of her husband's condition. A messenger arrives from 'Umar.

Scene iii is a meeting of the companions with 'Umar to decide whether the Caliph, in the face of the threat posed by Persian-Byzantine co-operation, should lead the Muslim army himself. They decide that he should remain in Medina. Leaders are chosen and posted to the Syrian and Iraqi fronts. Rumour-mongering among the population of Medina is put down in a general prayer meeting addressed by 'Umar.

In scene iv the Caliph's messenger reaches Syria where Abū 'Ubayda and Khālid b. al-Walīd are in charge of the forces. He delivers the message that all the forces proceed immediately towards Byzantium. Khālid vetoes this order and tells the soldiers to stick to their original plan of withdrawing from the conquered lands back to Arabia. He accepts responsibility for his action.

---

1. His description is very contemporary. The stage direction says:

وهو يحمل فى يده صندوقا صغيرا من الجلد

Kisrā wa Qayṣār, p. 18.

Scene v shows the elders of Damascus pleading with Khālid not to withdraw the Muslim forces from Syria, since this would bring back to Syria the tyrannical domination of the Byzantine forces.

In scene vi al-Muthannā b. al-Ḥāritha dies; due, no doubt, to Shīrīn. A baby is born to one of the soldiers while al-Muthannā is dying. His last request is that the baby be named after him.

Abṭāl al-Yarmūk

This fourth volume of the series is important for what it says and shows of the humility and democratic attitudes of the leaders of the young Muslim state. It is also important in that Bā-Kathīr emphasises the readiness of the Muslims to die 'fī sabīl Allah'.

In scene i the Muslims under Khālid b. al-Walīd face the Byzantine forces across a valley. Khālid is of the opinion that, if theywish to win the day, they will have to produce some kind of stratagem. They must also be patient. But his plans are presented as suspect through the attitude of the other leaders to them. A messenger is sent to acquaint the Caliph with Khālid's plans. As usual, Khālid readily accepts responsibility for the consequences of his decisions and actions.

Scene ii shows the prominence of women in the general war effort. Romanus, who has become Muslim, does not feel that he has become completely committed to the Muslim cause unless he marries a Muslim woman. This obviously implies that he must marry an Arab girl since there are few converted Byzantines and Persians available.

In scene iii the simplicity of the life style of these early Muslims and their leaders is shown. At the beginning of the scene Khālid makes final arrangements for battle: Abū ʿUbayda is to be left to hold the

camp while Khālid leads the Muslims against the Byzantines. While he is still in his camp, sitting outside his tent, a messenger comes from the Byzantines. The messenger is surprised that the Muslim general to whom he is sent is the man seated casually in front of an ordinary tent. This messenger is so impressed that he immediately turns Muslim, and traitor to the Byzantines who sent him. He divulges the battle plan, entrusted to him, to Abū 'Ubayda. We are not told what the nature of his message to Khālid could be. The man, Jurja,[1] is sent back to his people to act as a spy for the Muslims. He would rather stay among the Muslims, but Abū 'Ubayda and Khālid convince him that he would be more useful for the Muslims if he went back.

Scene iv gives an opportunity to see how the opponents of the Muslims prepare for the forthcoming battle. Jurja behaves in so pro-Muslim a fashion that his leaders suspect him of harbouring treason against the Byzantine cause. Though the Muslims are known to have a smaller army, this is no guarantee of victory for the Byzantines. Within the Byzantine army there is dissension with Byzantines opposed to Armenians and Arabs. The solidarity of the Muslims is a complete contrast to the situation in the Byzantine army.

In scene v a message comes from Bāhān, the Byzantine leader, suggesting a truce whereby both armies would withdraw, the Byzantines to Antioch and Caesarea, the Muslims to Damascus and Homs. Khālid rejects this. He chooses wing and section leaders and confirms his plans for battle. Women too are deployed. After some fighting, Khālid holds a hurried consultation with his officers and they reorganise their forces in the light of field operations. The arrows of the

1. جرجة

Armenian archers cause havoc amidst the Muslims. To make matters worse, there is a sudden change in the weather. Darkness thickens. Winds howl. The situation is confused. All the same, it is to the Muslims that Allah grants victory.

Turāb mīn arḍ Fāris

The 'earth' referred to in this title is the one the Persian queen orders a slave to bring and which she gives to the leader of an Arab delegation. The delegation had come to present her country with the usual alternatives of either becoming Muslim and paying taxes or facing war with the Muslim armies. To her, this giving of earth to the delegation is a symbol of their humiliation, and her courtiers laugh with her when the Arab leader accepts the proffered earth from her. After the delegation has left, Rustam comes in and explains to the queen and the courtiers that the queen's gesture is a straightforward case of a symbolic handing-over of her country to the Arabs. Too late the queen sends soldiers to pursue the Arabs and recover Persia from their hands.

Scene i shows 'Umar worried at the possibility of bad news from the Syrian war front. He is short-tempered and unable to finish his morning prayers. He goes for a walk. While he is out, a messenger brings good news from Abū 'Ubayda.

Qayṣār and his wife Mārtīnā in scene ii summon the priest Athanasius to the palace to defend himself against two charges: the first is that he had preached to people that the defeat of the Byzantine army at Yarmūk was a sign of God's anger at Qayṣār for marrying Mārtīnā; the second is that he is preventing Qayṣār from going to Constantinople so that the son of Mārtīnā, Harman Haraclunas, might be done out of

what Mārtīnā considers his legitimate right to the throne. This the priest is alleged to be doing to promote his rival, Constantine, as the sole heir. The priest denies both charges. He agrees with Qayṣār that the true cross of Christ be carried from Jerusalem to Constantinople to prevent it falling into the hands of the Muslims.

In scene iii we are back in Medina where 'Amr intercedes for Ṭulayḥa who has killed two people. The Caliph guarantees safety for Ṭulayḥa before he knows what he has done. When he is informed of Ṭulayḥa's crime he does not go back on his word, although he makes it clear to the criminal that he does not like him. This type of action has occurred before. It is to give support to the idea that a Muslim must not go back on his word, whatever the situation may be. There is a dramatic story in which 'Umar sees a youth eating with his left hand. The Caliph sends messengers to tell the youth to eat with his right hand. But he does not. 'Umar concludes that the youth is possibly left-handed. He sends for him and questions him. The youth says that his right hand is busy. 'Umar demands to see it. The boy brings out the stump of the right hand. It had been severed at the last battle and the youth is, in fact, one of the heroes of Yarmūk. Once more one has to notice the readiness to suffer for Allah as shown in the behaviour of this youth.

In scene iv a marriage is being arranged between the widow of al-Muthannā, Salmā, and Sa'd,[1] one of the leaders of the army. Al-Mu'annā and his wife, for ulterior motives, wish to marry her off to a particular army officer. Salmā objects to this matchmaking, since she suspects that they are doing it as a means of establishing kinship with Sa'd and expecting to be rewarded by him. All the same, she agrees

1. This is Sa'd b. Abī Waqqāṣ.

to marry him, mainly because he says he wants to marry her as a mark of respect for the memory of her former husband. The simplicity of the life style of the authorities in Medina is the focal point of the next scene. Jabala b. al-Ayham, the king of Ghassan, who has turned Muslim, comes to 'Umar. He pointedly demands to know what advantages would accrue to him now that he has become a Muslim. He requests that he be made the ruler of the district between Basra and Damascus. 'Umar gives him examples of rulers who have become Muslims and how these have had to reject the grandeur of their former positions and fight for Islam like everyone else.

Scene vi takes place in the court of Hiraql. The true cross of Christ has arrived by sea. Sirjyūs, who has been sent for, arrives. Mārtīnā, still pushing the candidature of her son as heir to the throne, wants news from the capital, especially news concerning an army officer named Valentine. Mārtīnā wishes to know if he has been holding meetings with Constantine.

The action of scene vii has to do with the Persian earth episode described earlier on.

In scene viii the Persian earth arrives at 'Umar's house in Mecca. He is thankful to Allah. A man then enters, bleeding from the nose. He complains that he had been struck by Jabala because he stepped on his toes while they were going round the Ka'aba. The Caliph sends for Jabala, who confirms the man's story. When asked to apologise, Jabala does so under threat of imprisonment.

Rustam

This is the sixth volume of the epic. It deals with the leadership of the Persians under Rustam and his refusal to accept the Muslim offer of embracing Islam or paying taxes. This leads to war.

In scene i Rustam is angry with his men for allowing their encampment to be destroyed by Muslim forces without as much as a token resistance. The reason, he soon finds out, is that his men were away in neighbouring villages passing the night in drinking and in the company of women. Soon an old man enters to complain to Rustam of the menace of his soldiers to the villagers. They drank their wine without paying and they raped their wives and daughters. The old man points out that the Muslims do not treat people in such a brutal manner. Rustam threatens to punish all the soldiers involved, even if it is the whole army. One of his officers warns him of the consequences of such an action.

We learn in scene ii that Sa'd does not discuss military matters with his wife Salmā as her former husband used to do. When Salmā complains of this, he tells her that this has been the enemy's source of getting at the military information about Muslim armies. Salmā does not understand. Sa'd says that Shīrīn has been passing information to the Persians. It was for the purpose of safeguarding her source of information through the indiscretion of Salmā that Shīrīn was anxious to have her marry Sa'd. Salmā is warned to be on her guard. When some army officers come to see Sa'd, Salmā leaves them. The men prepare the tactics for the coming encounter with the Persians.

In scene iii Rustam and his aides are expecting Zuhra b. al-Ḥuwayya,[1] the messenger of the Caliph. He comes alone, and his discussion follows the usual pattern of alternatives. Rustam rejects becoming Muslim and paying taxes, and opts for war.

Scene iv shows Tulayha b. Khuwaylid al-Asadī,[2] one of the Muslim officers, facing two problems from his wife. She complains that her

---

1. عبود : نعم يا سيدى اسمه زهرة بن الحوية

2. طليحة بن خويلد

husband leaves her alone to spend his evenings with Sa'd. She is also bemoaning her inability to have a child. It is difficult to see what this scene contributes to the epic. It could be interpreted as showing the caution of the military officers against providing material for the indiscretion of their wives. Since they no longer hold their top-level meetings with their wives in attendance, there is less likelihood that these wives will talk about what they hear to other people who should not know.

In scene v, al-Mu'annā and his wife Shīrīn visit Sa'd and Salmā. Shīrīn warns Sa'd of a certain Persian-born Muslim whom she suspects of being a spy for the Persians. Sa'd, by way of answering her, wonders if the Muslim army is to be careful of relying too much on Persian-born Muslims. There follows an exchange of gifts. Sa'd gives the horse al-Shams, which used to belong to al-Muthannā, to al-Mu'annā. Shīrīn gives a necklace of pearls, sent to her by the Persian queen, to Salmā.

In scene vi Rustam is given the last chance of becoming a Muslim and paying taxes, or facing a war with the Muslim forces. Once more he is emphatic in his rejection of Islam and of letting his country become a dependency of the Arabs by paying taxes to Mecca. The Persians are ordered to march across the bridge which separates them from the Muslims, and to attack them.

The foregoing has been an attempt to summarise the first six acts of <u>'Umar</u>. As epic drama it is a hopeless failure. Nowhere else in the writings of Bā-Kathīr does subject-matter influence the form so disastrously. This failure would seem to prove that a literary form cannot be imposed upon indefinitely by the subject-matter. The epic,

originally restricted to 'narratives in verse of warlike adventures',[1] has been stretched by writers who have used the epic form for dramatic writing and for prose works.[2] A basic characteristic of all these is the dignity, the elaborateness, the heroic stature common both to subject-matter and to form. The subject-matter is vast and universal in dimension; the form is dignified and elaborate.

The life of the Caliph 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb definitely has heroic elements in it. In that, it satisfies the requirement of the subject-matter. The failure of the form is definitely that of Bā-Kathīr and his unwillingness to make concessions to the form. Unlike the example of The Dynasts which he had before him, Bā-Kathīr does not use poetry for his dialogues. Thus the plays lose the dignity and heroic dimensions of The Dynasts. As far as form is concerned, what Bā-Kathīr has written is not an epic. There is nothing to show that what is coming after these six volumes will be exciting, because the six volumes make no reasonable suggestion of things to come.

When it comes to the subject-matter, an interesting situation arises. As mentioned above, the life of the second Caliph of the Islamic state is part of Islamic legends. Not even the fact that 'Umar died at the hands of an assassin, a slave who had despaired of fair taxation and justice,[3] sobers the Muslim imagination when it applies itself to the subject of 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb. When Bā-Kathīr deals

---

1. Encyclopaedia Britannica, 11th Ed., vol. ix, p. 681. This is the definition of Voltaire and eighteenth-century critics.
2. Thomas Hardy, The Dynasts; Sir Walter Scott, the Waverley novels; Thomas Carlyle, The French Revolution.
3. Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam, p. 600.

with him in this epic, he does not show the imagination necessary to give the character the grandeur with which Islam has invested him. In two of the six volumes dealt with above, 'Umar does not feature; they are Abṭāl al-Yarmūk and Rustam. In the former we hear a lot about the humility of the early Muslim leaders. But we are not told that this is in fact due to the ascetic simplicity of 'Umar himself. As far as the reader knows, 'Umar is merely reflecting (and he is not alone in this) the general temperament of the times. One would expect the character of 'Umar to pervade these scenes of battles and camp fires. But this is not the case. One would expect 'Umar's world-view to be that of purpose which provides norms by which all the others measure their own conduct. Instead, all the Muslims are good, simple, straightforward soldiers. Their opponents, on the other hand, the Byzantines and the Persians, are haughty and arrogant, unjust and ungodly. Everybody behaves to type, including 'Umar himself. This is why these plays fail to form an epic as far as subject-matter is concerned. This is not the failure of the subject-matter itself but of the lack of imagination on the part of the playwright in the use to which he puts his subject-matter. Bā-Kathīr fails to reconcile a form whose characteristics are dignity, magnificence, even pomposity to some extent, to a subject-matter whose main theme is humility.

C H A P T E R IX

The Religious Plays

Evil should be recognised
Not for its own sake
But in order to avoid it.
For he who is ignorant of what evil is
Succumbs to it.

- Bā-Kathīr

IX

Tragedy may be justifiably taken as the cream of drama and also as the most elevated of dramatic works. Writers concerned with man's lot on earth have attempted to use this medium to express this concern, especially the problem of evil. Few have succeeded. Many have failed. Those who succeed do so for different reasons. They are gifted; they are painstaking. They also know and understand the medium in which they are working. Those who fail may have failed because they are not as gifted and also because they have little understanding of the medium they are using. 'Alī Aḥmad Bā-Kathīr must count among those who failed in their attempt to express the lot of man through the medium of tragic drama. It must be emphasised that Bā-Kathīr's failure in this case is not wholly due to his not being a gifted writer. His novels, poems and comedies show his talent as a writer of some imagination. His failure, like that of other contemporary Arab playwrights, is his limited understanding of the drama genre, a lack of comprehension of the meaning of tragedy and the inability to discern that drama as a literary form imposes limitations on what may serve as its subject-matter.

Bā-Kathīr's understanding of drama, especially tragic drama, was at times deeper than that of other Arab playwrights of his generation. This understanding, limited though it was, led him to make statements very important for the history of drama in Arabic, which have, however, been ignored and overlooked. Bā-Kathīr writes that the roots of drama are to be found in pagan religious rituals. Drama, he continues, became an independent art form when there was a break with religious rituals.[1]

---

1. FM p. 25.

But Bā-Kathīr does not provide a proper answer to a question raised by this statement: at what point in the life of a community does this break, which leads drama to independence, take place? He implies that this is a natural process and each community is bound to end up breaking with its pagan ritual past. In fact this break can only take place as a result of intellectual development in the community.[1] It is when the community has developed enough intellectually to disbelieve the efficacy of its rituals that drama is set free as an independent art form. Without getting to this point, Bā-Kathīr moves on to his next point that, in some areas of the world, the death of paganism and therefore of pagan religious rituals eliminated the possibility of drama. Bā-Kathīr does not give any example of a place where such a thing has happened. He then goes on to deal with pre-Islamic Arabia, and says that Arab paganism was a paganism rooted in monotheism. Islam came to confirm and delimit this paganism. This paganism failed to produce drama because there was no system of elaboratereligious rituals accompanying it.

Once again, Bā-Kathīr hovers around the main issue but fails to make the necessary connection between a predominant belief in one God and the effects of this on tragic drama.

In dealing with the types of dramatic experience available in Classical Arabic Literature, he mentions shadow plays in passing. But he deals at greater length with the ta'ziya. Characteristically, Bā-Kathīr does not realise, as Beeston has pointed out, that: 'The Shi'a 'passion plays' are certainly of Iranian inspiration and perhaps ultimately stem from an Indian tradition'.[2]

---

1. Hunningher, op. cit. p. 43.
2. Footnote to article 'The Genesis of the Maqamat Genre', Journal of Arabic Literature, Vol. 2, 1971, p. 11.

Bā-Kathīr says that the reason the ta'ziya never developed into an independent art form is that contact was made with the West and knowledge was acquired of an advanced form of drama which truncated the further development of drama out of the ta'ziya. If this contact had not been made and the ta'ziya had gone on for some time more, say for another two hundred years, it would have emerged as an independent art form. Bā-Kathīr gives the analogy of European mechanical industries which have pre-empted the further development of Arab handicrafts. As mentioned above, Bā-Kathīr thinks in period time rather than the more relevant intellectual development time.

Bā-Kathīr mentions another experience of drama in Classical Arabic Literature in the activities of a certain Baghdadī sufi who used to go out of the city with a few boys, and these boys he would make stand in for each of the early caliphs of Islam while he passed judgement on them to the amusement of an audience standing around.[1] Bā-Kathīr concludes that any attempt to defend Classical Arabic Literature for not producing drama is futile. One must accept that drama is a borrowed form just as the novel ~~form~~ is. This acceptance is made with no feeling of inferiority. Rather it is with the knowledge that the signs of drama in Arabic experience would have developed to what drama is in the West. The contact with the West has made it possible to arrive at the same goal more quickly. This conclusion assumes that the goal of all human development is the same. It also ignores the influence of particular circumstances, environments and needs of different peoples on such developments and the whole relationship of these to their intellectual development.

---

1. There is an account of this in Ra'īf Khūrī's al-Ta'rīf fī al-Adab al-ʿArabī, vol. ii, pp. 186 - 188.

When it comes to the practice of play-writing, Bā-Kathīr wants to stand apart from and independent of his plays because, as far as he understands, this is a demand drama makes on its practitioners. He mentions that Wordsworth has commented somewhere[1] that while Shakespeare could express his personality in his poems, he could not do the same in his plays. It is not easy to define further this relationship which Bā-Kathīr talks about. Does it mean, for instance, that the playwright does not leave his mark on his plays? Or is it that the drama form does not permit such personalisation of the genre? It could not be that the playwright is unrelated to the fortunes of his plays once he has written them. It is therefore possible that Bā-Kathīr believes that, unlike the poem and the novel, the drama form does not permit self-revelation.

The only one of the classic unities of Aristotle which Bā-Kathīr accepts and makes use of in his plays is that of action. Others of time and of place he completely ignores, to the detriment of his plays. This leads to the lack of dramatic concentration to be found in some of them.

On the issues of comedy and tragedy, Bā-Kathīr is of the view that tragedy developed as an aspect of religious ritual while comedy emerges at the point the community loses faith in its religion.[2] Once more, Bā-Kathīr does not pursue the implications of this statement on dramatic writing under monotheistic theologically oriented belief systems.

Compared with the views of other Egyptian contemporary playwrights, Bā-Kathīr's[3] is far more informed and more searching in its attempt to grapple with the problems posed by an alien literary form. The statements he made on the issue have been ignored by Egyptian and Arab critics

---

1. It has not been possible to locate this comment in the works of William Wordsworth.
2. Cf. Hunningher, op. cit. p. 43.
3. See Part One, Drama in Classical Arabic Literature.

of dramatic writing.

Nevertheless, Bā-Kathīr's views reveal misunderstandings of the nature and function of drama that are reflected in his practice. This is understandable, since the drama form reveals ~~more glaringly~~ more glaringly problems of the conflict between form and content than any other literary form.

In her book The Frontiers of Drama,[1] Miss Ellis-Fermor has delimited the extent of the conflict between form and content in drama. These are mainly in three categories. The first of these is the practical impossibility of containing the epic subject within the bounds of a play without losing an essential element of drama - concentration.[2] The second is the difficulty of expressing the concept of anarchy or disorderliness in the dramatic form. The third frontier of drama is the impossibility of representing the mood of religious experience in a play. There is no need here to go into Ellis-Fermor's detailed analysis and examples of each of these frontiers of drama.[3] What is of immediate relevance here is the third on the list - drama and the expression of the mood of religion. Religious plays may conveniently be divided into three main groups. There are plays which make a religious experience the central theme. Good examples of this group are few outside Goethe's Faust and Milton's Samson Agonistes.[4] There is the second

1. First published in London in 1945.
2. Milton considered but abandoned drama for Paradise Lost.
3. For the epic Ellis-Fermor takes Shakespeare's history plays as successful while Hardy's The Dynasts fails. For the dramatic representation of anarchy she chooses Troilus and Cressida by Shakespeare. For the religious frontier successes she picks Shaw's St. Joan and Milton's Samson Agonistes.
4. Sewanee Review (xxxii, 1924), p. 351, calls Samson Agonistes a 'remarkable blend of Greek form with Christian content'.

group of religious plays which make religious experience the starting-point for the action of the play and then go on to its effects. Shaw's St. Joan is such a play. The third group of plays is deliberate propaganda for the dogmas and ethics of a particular religion. Plays of this type are the most numerous, and they are the least dramatic. The main reason for this is that:

> '.. there seems to be a deep antagonism between religious emotion and the needs of dramatic art. Nor is this conclusion altogether unexpected, for the essence of religious experience is that union . . . of man's spirit with a spiritual reality beyond yet akin to him. The mood, the condition of spirit, which is the climax of this experience is beatitude, a condition free of conflict within the mind and unconcerned by conflict without. There is thus an elimination of that very conflict upon whose tension and balance the significant form of drama depends. This material refuses to drama one of the fundamental conditions of its being and the dramatist who attempts it is likely to find himself crippled, not by the lack of passion in his subject, but, paradoxically, by its dominance.'[1]

If one considers the tragedies written by Bā-Kathīr against the above background, it is easy to conclude that they are mostly religious plays which attempt to propagate Islamic dogmas and ethics and thus they suffer as drama.

---

1. Ellis-Fermor, op. cit. p. 5.

For two main reasons, only four of Bā-Kathīr's tragedies are dealt with below. One is that 'quantity does not always equal quality'[1] in the mass of Bā-Kathīr's writing. It is therefore best to make selections representative of the best of his writing. The second reason is that some of those which one would like to look into in detail are out of print and unavailable. It would have been useful, for instance, to consider Faust al-Jadīd in this chapter if it had been available. The plays dealt with here are Sirr al-Ḥākim bi amrillah, Mā'sāt Ūdīb, Ilāh Isrā'īl and Hārūt wa Mārūt.

Sirr al-Ḥākim

This play is based on the life of al-Manṣūr Abū 'Alī al-Ḥākim bi amrillah (ruling by the command of God), the sixth of the Fāṭimid Caliphs who ruled in Egypt between 996 and 1021 A.D. Bā-Kathīr's aim in his two 'sirr' plays[2] is to attempt to offer more rational and psychological explanations for some of the puzzling characters in Arab history and mythology. The alternative title of this play is Lughz al-Tārīkh. In Sirr al-Ḥākim, as in another play, Mā'sāt Ūdīb, Bā-Kathīr's explanation is that of a long-laid conspiracy. The history books[3] present al-Ḥākim as a man of disordered intellect and his court as 'a lunatic asylum.[4] His harsh measures against Christians and Jews, as

1. Rizzitano, referring to the plays of Bā-Kathīr in Historians of the Middle East, p. 444.
2. The other one is Sirr Shahrazād. There are also what might be termed the 'jadīd' plays: Mā'sāt Ūdīb, which is subtitled 'Ard jadīd li-Tamthīliyyat Sūfūklīs al-Khālida; Shayluk al-Jadīd and Faust al-Jadīd. Here the aim of Bā-Kathīr is to offer alternative explanations to ideas from the West.
3. For example Hitti, History of the Arabs, p. 620; O'Leary, History of the Fatimid Khalifate, pp. 123 - 188.
4. O'Leary, ibid., p. 157.

well as his final declaration of himself as the emanation of the Godhead, are seen as the progress of a madman. Bā-Kathīr, on the other hand, presents a caliph who is momentarily misguided by one of his followers, the Persian Ḥamza. Ḥamza becomes in Sirr al-Ḥākim the instrument of all anti-Arabs as well as a protagonist in the ʿaṣabiyya contest between Arab Muslims and non-Arab Muslims. The changes which come over al-Ḥākim take dangerous turns when Ḥamza arrives at his court preaching an extreme form of the bāṭiniyya doctrine.

When al-Ḥākim recovers from this straying from 'the straight path' and repents (tāba) it is too late to save him from the consequences of his former acts of cruelty. He is not afraid of taking punishment. When his wife comes to tell him in scene vi that his life is in danger and he is not to attempt to go out that night so as to save his life, he shrugs off the warning. He refuses to stay in simply to escape being assassinated. By this time he has recovered from the temptation of Ḥamza, accepted Allah and His Prophet once more and is no longer in conflict with himself. This is the weakest point of the play and, by extension, of plays written to bear out the correctness of a particular religion.

The optimism of Sirr al-Ḥākim is shown by the use of some symbolic scene-setting and by the aptness in the names of some of the characters. At the beginning of the play, al-Ḥākim sits and reads in the dark, saying that he has become as accustomed to reading in darkness as to reading with light. All the same, the curtains are drawn to admit light on to the stage. At the end of the play, when al-Ḥākim is going out for what is to be his last night wandering, he calls his slave Nasīm. The name Nasīm suggests (by its association with calm and freshness) that al-Ḥākim has accepted the fact of what is to happen

to him and considers it to be good. One can pursue this further by saying that the penance which al-Ḥākim is going to suffer will be, in his own interpretation, comparable to a burnt offering, its freshness rising upwards to be accepted by God.

When the play is compared with Camus's play Caligula,[1] its weakness as a tragedy becomes apparent. Both Bā-Kathīr and Camus have created characters who are sensitive and who commit heinous crimes in the cause of truth and godliness. They (al-Ḥākim and Caligula) are caught in the inescapable unhappiness of such people and have the sympathy of only a few likeable characters in the plays to support them. But Caligula does not retrace his steps after declaring:

> 'And yet - what is a god that I should wish to be his equal? No, it's something higher, far above the gods, that I'm aiming at, longing for with all my heart and soul. I am taking over a kingdom where the impossible is king.'[2]

He does not retract. Al-Ḥākim, on the other hand, repents and walks composedly to his death.

Sirr al-Ḥākim is good in parts. The use of the off-stage area for the fight of the ten men at the end of scene ii while those looking on comment for the benefit of the audience, is effective. When the victor emerges to receive his prize, al-Ḥākim condemns him to be beheaded, to show his power of life and death over all men. This demonstration, coming at the moment of victory for the fighter, is effective.

---

1. It is difficult to avoid this if one is familiar with Caligula. More so when one knows that Bā-Kathīr's library contained a copy of the French edition of Caligula, though with uncut pages.
2. Albert Camus, Caligula, Cross Purpose (Penguin Plays) Caligula p. 42.

Most of Bā-Kathīr's plays present few problems to producers. But Sirr al-Ḥākim includes some pages of dialogue between al-Ḥākim and his conscience, named al-Shakhṣ.[1] When Faṭṭūh Nashāṭī produced the play for the second part of the 1971 theatre season at the National Theatre, he did away with al-Shakhṣ and substituted a soliloquy. This was less effective than the whole part-scene reads in the play. This is because al-Shakhṣ convinces al-Ḥākim that he is wrong in following the dictates of Ḥamza. The conflict of mind is strongest here.

One of the most dramatic points of action in this play is scene v where, at the behest of Ḥamza, al-Ḥākim takes a dagger he offers him. He approaches Ḥamza as if he is going to stab him. Slowly the audience sees the countenance of Ḥamza change as he dreads that al-Ḥākim might take him seriously and stab him to death. Slowly al-Ḥākim relents and throws away the dagger. Ḥamza's courage returns, but the audience now knows him for what Bā-Kathīr wants him to be known - a coward. It is in moments of action such as the two recounted above that Bā-Kathīr shows some liveliness in his serious plays, moments when he permits his characters to do something rather than repeat mechanically the long and tedious dialogues which he writes for them.

Generally speaking, Sirr al-Ḥākim has never caught on in Egypt. Records of performance show this. From 1952 to 1956 there were seven productions with an average of one hundred and seventy people in attendance.[2] This is the lowest among the few plays of Bā-Kathīr which were put on stage in his lifetime. By comparison, during the 1955/56 season, when Sirr al-Ḥākim had two performances with a total attendance of

1. Sirr al-Ḥākim, pp. 140 - 142.

2. al-Masraḥ, special no., July 1966, on Egyptian Theatre 1952 - 1966, which includes statistics for various items of play-production during this period.

one hundred and eighty-five, Mismār Juḥā, one of Bā-Kathīr's political satires, had one thousand, one hundred and twenty-five people at two performances. The producer of both plays was the same person - Zakī Ṭulaymāt.

Mā'sāt Ūdīb

The reason why the pattern of scene-to-scene summaries cannot be continued in this section is that so much of these tragedies depends on lengthy explanations of what happened before the time of the play. So much of Mā'sāt Ūdīb, for instance, goes to explain the ingenious plot and conspiracy of the High Priest Lucius against the ruling house of Thebes. More than the comedies, these tragedies are narratives with few dramatic actions. To do a scene-to-scene summary would not be as explanatory as to take the whole play and explain the basis of the story and then point out scenes which are of critical importance.

The influence of a religious ethic in the plays of Bā-Kathīr can hardly be better illustrated by any play other than Mā'sāt Ūdīb where Bā-Kathīr uses the age-long theme of Oedipus Rex of Sophocles. This theme is being used more and more by cultures which are not basically European.[1] In Modern Arabic Literature the story has deeply affected some writers.[2] Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm has also used this theme for a play.[3] In none of these adaptations mentioned does one find such an elaborate explanation for the tragedy of King Oedipus as that provided by Bā-Kathīr in Mā'sāt Ūdīb. The fact that, as usual, Bā-Kathīr does not ask questions but simply supplies answers, makes the play unsuccessful.

1. For instance a play The Gods Are Not To Blame by Ola Rotimi, a Nigerian playwright who writes both in English and Yoruba.
2. al-Ayyām, vol. i, p. 147.
3. al-Malik Ūdīb.

Bā-Kathīr's explanation of the life of Oedipus is as follows: The two city-states of Corinth and Thebes are rivals. When the king of Corinth is told that Jocasta, the wife of the king of Thebes, is expecting a child, he bribes the chief priest of Thebes to do all in his power to dispose of the child as soon as it is born. The high priest invents his elaborate plan. He tells the king of Thebes that should the child be allowed to survive he would kill the king and marry the queen, his mother. Because of his position as high priest, Lucius is believed. The child Oedipus is handed over to him so that he can kill him. Lucius, having succeeded in the first part of his plan, now starts to work to make possible the whole idea of having Oedipus kill his father and marry his mother. He keeps the child in the court of Corinth where the king and queen grow to love him as if he were their own child. When Oedipus is old enough Lucius makes one of his playmates taunt him about his parentage. Oedipus, who has grown up believing that the king and queen of Corinth are his parents, is unhappy when he learns that they are not. Lucius has him sent to Thebes where, he warns Oedipus, he might have to defend his life in the process of discovering his true parents. Meanwhile, the aging king of Thebes is told that he must go out and meet a threat to the city-state. When the two men meet, Oedipus kills his father. He then becomes the king of Thebes.

Meanwhile, the queen has refused to come out as a result of the death of the king. Lucius now sets to work on making Oedipus marry his mother. In fairness to the evil genius of Lucius, it has to be said that Oedipus has come across part of the story of his life and the prophecy of the high priest. But it is hidden from him that the king he has killed is his father. All the same, Oedipus doubts the reasonableness of marrying the queen. But when the two meet, they fall in love and

marry. For seventeen years they live happily together until the land is plunged into suffering. Lucius immediately points out that some crimes have been committed for which there must be penance before the land can prosper again. He reveals to the people that Oedipus is the sinner. Jocasta commits suicide, and Oedipus leaves his castle for the last time, singing:

Where are you Hurair of Corinth?
O companion of my youth where?
Together we used to walk the road!
Come now, let us together complete our evening stroll![1]

Bā-Kathīr's play commences in the seventeenth year of the reign of Oedipus. When one realises that most of the story took place long before this, one sees that the play is full of flash-back narratives. The condition created in this play is not that of a gradual movement towards self-knowledge as is the case with the Greek original. The mood at the end of the play is that of beatitude - 'a condition free of conflict within the mind and unconcerned by conflict without'.[2] Therefore it fails as drama. There is no record of the play ever having been produced.

---

1. Mā'sāt Ūdīb, p. 184.

أين أنت يا هرير كورنت ؟
يا رفيق الصبا أين أنت ؟
قد مشينا معـا في طريق !
فلنتم السرى يا رفيق !

2. Ellis-Fermor, op. cit. p. 5.

Ilāh Isrā'īl

Bā-Kathīr quotes a verse from the Qur'ān as preface to this play:

> 'For we have cast amongst them enmity and hatred till the resurrection day. Whenever they light a fire[1] for war God puts it out, they strive for corruption in the earth, but God loves not the corrupt.'[2]

The 'they' of this quotation is supposed to refer to the Jews. Where Bā-Kathīr's other political satires have been basically anti-Zionist, Ilāh Isrā'īl is anti-Semitic. It is a very illogical play, and in extremely bad taste.[3]

The play is divided into three one-act playlets. Since it has never been put on stage, it has not been particularly important to determine whether it is one play or three one-act plays.

Act One, subtitled Exodus, deals with the departure of the children of Israel from Egypt. Moses finds out that the Jews have stolen gold from their neighbours (gold which, one might say, was acquired through the labour of the Israelites). Moses orders the gold to be returned to the Egyptians. The Israelites, whose leaders have met Iblīs (the Devil) and pledged their devotion to him, disobey Moses. On instruction from Iblīs they take the gold from Hārūn and fashion a golden calf, which they worship. For this idolatry the children of

---

1. The ancient Arabs always lit a beacon fire as a proclamation of war, or a notice of the approach of an enemy.
2. Qur'ān 5:69.
3. See Dr. P.J.E. Cachia's article 'Themes related to Christianity and Judaism in Modern Egyptian Drama and Fiction', Journal of Arabic Literature, vol. ii, 1971, p. 189.

Israel are to suffer wandering in the wilderness until the present generation dies out. Even when this happens, the Israelites are still devotees of the Devil. When they go into battle they kill women, children and defenceless old people in obedience to Iblīs. Moses curses them and goes away to die. He asks his nephew, the son of Hārūn, to bury him where the Israelites will never find his body to stand upon his grave.

Act Two is subtitled The Kingdom of Heaven and deals with the Jews in the time of Jesus Christ. When all the attempts of Iblīs to conquer Jesus fail, he leaves him to the Jews. Caiaphas and Hananaya decide to get at him through the help of Mary Magdalene. But Mary falls in love with Jesus and repents of her past life as a prostitute. When Judas Iscariot is crucified because he is believed to be Jesus, Mary, who is aware of the mistake, does not disclose her knowledge. This is to revenge herself on one of the enemies of Jesus.

Act Three is subtitled The Serpent. Here Iblīs and his infernal angels celebrate the coming creation of their kingdom on earth. The illogical part of this play is in scene ii of this act. Here Jewish leaders from all over the world discuss the creation of their state of Israel. The voice raised in opposition to the creation of Israel bases its argument on the claim that Jews already control the world through their love and acquisition of gold. What, then, do they want with a piece of land? The dissenting voice is shouted down, and war as a means of achieving their end is adopted by the Israelites. Bā-Kathīr takes for granted - without making a case for it - that the Jews were responsible for the two world wars and would be for a third if it was sparked off by the Middle East situation.

The most odious part of this play comes towards the end of this act where Iblīs instructs his devils to go into the loins and the wombs

of Jews so that they will breed a new race of devils to carry on the work of Iblīs on earth.

Once again another of Ba-Kathir's plays fails as drama. There is complete absence of dramatic concentration as a result of the distance in time and space between the three parts of the play.

The rôle of the propagandist is inescapable in the writing of comedies and satires. This is because there is an ideal against which the playwright sets the activities of his characters to see how far they measure up to them. These ideals may be based on the backgrounds of a particular race, creed or sex. But in the writing of tragedies, the sympathy of the playwright must be with humanity at large. There must be a sympathetic understanding of suffering humanity to give such a work wider dimensions than those of the playwright. It may be too much to say that Bā-Kathīr lacks such understanding. But he has allowed it to be completely clouded over by his religious and Arab nationalist priorities. This has contributed in no small measure to the failure of Ilāh Isrā'īl.

Hārūt wa Mārūt

It is in Hārūt wa Mārūt alone among the tragedies of Bā-Kathīr that there is the smallest trait of sympathy for the plight of humanity. Even this sympathy is not of his own creation. It is found in the myth on which this play is based.[1] In heaven some angels make derisive remarks on the inability of man to avoid committing sins. God is

1. See Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam, pp. 134 - 135; Encyclopaedia of Islam, vol. ii, pp. 272 - 273; Qur'ān 2:102.

angered by this attitude and asks them to select two of their number[1] to go and live on earth under the same conditions as those of man. Hārūt and Mārūt are chosen to go.[2]

Bā-Kathīr's play commences at the point where the city-state of Babel, rival to another city-state, that of (the Hyksos) al-Ru'āh, needs a new ruler and a new judge. The king has died and his two daughters, Al-lāt (the elder) and al-Uzzā, are rivals for the throne. The people of Babel worship physical beauty. The two sisters are to appear naked before the whole population, and the more beautiful is to be chosen as queen of Babel.

Ba'al, prince of al-Ru'āh, is the lover of Al-lāt, but his father will not consent to his marrying her.

The criterion for choosing a new judge is also the physical beauty of the person and not his legal qualifications. Hārūt and Mārūt are given this job as joint judges of Babel.

When Hārūt and Mārūt have been established for some time, they are resting in their house expecting a visit from Tāmārā. She and her husband have brought a case before the judges. Though Hārūt and Mārūt are conscious of Tāmārā's resemblance to Al-lāt, who has succeeded her father as ruler of Babel, they refuse to believe that she is Al-lāt. They use her beauty as the sole evidence of her rightness, and decide the case in her favour. They have already failed to resist the charms of so many other women. Both of them are anxious to chalk up another victory. At this point a little bit of comedy

---

1. Tha'ālabī gives three: ~~Azriyā'īl~~ ʿAzrāʾīl, Hārūt and Mārūt, in Qiṣāṣ al-Anbiyā'.

2. Bā-Kathīr gives three names, the third repenting of their statement at the beginning of their stay in Babel and returning to heaven.

intrudes to lighten up the atmosphere of flash-backs. Mārūt has been dreaming of Tāmārā when Hārūt wakes him up. While they wait for her they argue as to who should have her first. The following dialogue takes place:

Mārūt: Listen, Hārūt, we must not argue in front of her since that will ruin all our chances with her. So I'll be first.

Hārūt: And why should you be first?

Mārūt: Part of what you deprived me of in the dream.

Hārūt: Do you want to monopolise her in your dream as well as in reality? What selfishness!

Mārūt: No, in fact I didn't get anywhere in the dream and it is your fault![1]

---

1. Hārūt wa Mārūt, p. 49.

ماروت: اسمع يا هاروت • لا ينبغى أن نختلف
أمامها فيضيع منا كل شىء • أنـا الأول •

هاروت: ولم أنت الأول ؟

ماروت : جزاء ما حرمتـنـى في الحلم

هاروت : تريد أن تستـأثر بها في الحلم وفي
الحقيقة ؟ يا لك من أنـانى •

ماروت : كلا أنـا لم أنـل شيئا في الحلم ،
وأنت كنت السبب •

Whenever there is a knock on the door after some characters on the stage have been talking about another ~~character~~ in anticipation of ~~that character's~~ his entry, it is always that character who ~~is knocking~~ knocks and ~~who~~ comes in when the door is opened. But for the first time in any of the plays of Bā-Kathīr, the knock on the door does not belong to the expected Tāmārā. When Hārūt opens the door it turns out to be someone else. The person is Hermes the Wise, who used to be the unheeded adviser of the former ruler of Babel. The change of rulers has not changed Babel's attitude to him. There follows an interesting discussion on the future of man and the gradual realisation of his potentialities. This would seem to be a positive affirmation of Bā-Kathīr's faith in man and his eventual salvation through his trust in God.

When Tāmārā arrives Hārūt and Mārūt fall over themselves to make her welcome. They give her a copy of the judgement in her case with her husband. While Hārūt is away in the court-house bringing the document of the judgement, Mārūt gives Tāmārā some magical powers in return for the promise that she will allow him to kiss her. When he demands this payment, Tāmārā calls her husband Ba'al, who enters immediately. Mārūt is embarrassed and does not know what to say or do. To his relief and surprise, Tāmārā, now self-revealed as Al-lāt, upbraids Ba'al for spying on her and asks him to leave her presence.

Later, in the palace of Al-lāt, Ba'al attacks Hārūt and Mārūt with his sword, but this has no effect on the two angels. When Ba'al rushes at them, they kill him. Because of this, both of them lose their power of communicating between heaven and earth. Al-lāt puts them in prison.

Hārūt and Mārūt now regret their inconsiderate criticism of man, since they themselves have not been able to resist temptation despite their being angels. When Babel is threatened by the armies of the king of al-Ru'ah, Hārūt and Mārūt are taken away and given punishments which bring to mind that of Tantalus.

Nowhere, with the possible exception of Juḥā and Madam Gulfidān, does Bā-Kathīr create a memorable character in his plays. Even in the case of Juḥā, Bā-Kathīr uses him - a character already established in Egyptian folklore - as a nail on which to hang his exasperation against British imperialism in the Middle East. While this hangs well in a comedy such as Mismār Juḥā, it fails completely in his tragedies, which are merely religious plays of the poorest category.

PART THREE

THE MAIN IDEAS OF 'ALĪ AḤMAD BĀ-KATHĪR

AND THE RELATION OF THESE IDEAS TO LANGUAGE IN HIS WORKS

'The rôle of the writer is to be
so inspired as to divine dangers
which ordinary people cannot see'

Bā-Kathīr Interview - al-Jīl

CHAPTER X

X

'Alī Aḥmad Bā-Kathīr can be identified with the conservative aspect of the intellectual movement generally in the Arab world and specifically in Egypt. It is true that he was not born or brought up in Egypt;[1] in fact, he did not come to Egypt until his intellectual attitudes had been formed. All the same, both the literary and intellectual movements in Egypt made such deep impressions on him that when he decided to leave Hadramawt after the death of his first wife, Egypt was his objective. His case is not unlike that of the Syrian immigrants who came to Egypt during the latter half of the nineteenth century because it offered them a freer atmosphere for the expression of their intellectual bent. Bā-Kathīr found the atmosphere of Hadramawt at this time very restrictive. The authorities there did not admit of any criticism. Yet Bā-Kathīr had heard of the group of Muslim intellectuals who were followers of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1839 - 1897). It is therefore of some relevance here to give a short historical sketch of the trends in Egyptian intellectual ideas and social thought after 1905, the date of the death of Muḥammad 'Abduh.

Louis 'Awaḍ, in 'Cultural and Intellectual Developments since 1952', his contribution to Egypt Since the Revolution, says:

---

1. See Dr. P.J.E. Cachia's comment in 'Themes related to Christianity and Judaism in Modern Egyptian Drama and Fiction', Journal of Arabic Literature, vol. ii, 1971, p. 188.

> ' ... Egyptian cultural and intellectual movements, regardless of their shade, scope and guise, have always tended, at least since 1798, to follow two streams, one major, the secular, which is nationalistic and moderate both in its conservatism and its radicalism; the other minor, the theocratic, which is extremist and terrorist.'[1]

One or two observations have to be made on this statement. The first is that intellectualism as conceived in this statement, and as it took place in Egypt, was not a dry, philosophical, ivory-tower preoccupation of one individual or group of people with no relevance to the life of the society at large. Rather, it was an engagé approach to their way of life which was changing as a result of new forces, especially external ones. Instead of accepting the time-worn wisdom of the ages, a group of people, powerful although in the minority, set out to fashion anew the belief system that must govern the life of their society in the new situation. The second observation is that Louis 'Awad's distinction between the secular aspect and the theocratic aspect of the intellectual movement is valid with some reservations. His analysis of these movements displays the usual brashness of hindsight. It is impossible to talk of these two main streams of Egyptian intellectual ideas and social thought until after 'Abduh. This is because Muḥammad 'Abduh 'more than any other man gave Egyptian thought a centre of gravity'.[2] It was after him that these movements can be said to have split into two main streams.

---

1. Egypt Since the Revolution, p. 146.
2. Gibb: Modern Trends in Islam, p. 43.

The streams were not so distinct in the period before the arrival of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani in Egypt and the work of Muḥammad 'Abduh, his disciple.

This is not to say that there was no intellectual life before the arrival on the scene of these two people. But the rôle of the intellectuals of this period was different. It did not consist of the conflict of East and West, the virtual spring-board of these new intellectuals. The 'ulamā' (the intellectuals of this period) occupied official positions in the religious hierarchy, such as the Rector of al-Azhar, the muftis of the four madhhabs and the Marshal of the Notables, as well as the heads of the two Sufi orders.[1] These people were trusted by the common people, and many times during the nineteenth century they rose to eminence by using their positions to the advantage of the people against their oppressive foreign rulers. Napoleon gave them a place of importance in the government which he set up at the time of the French Expedition in 1798. The success of Muḥammad 'Alī against all other rivals owed much to the 'ulamā', especially 'Umar Makram.[2] For many reasons, this position of eminence was lost during the century.[3]

One of the most important policies of Muḥammad 'Alī as ruler of Egypt was the educational missions which were sent to European countries to learn various arts and sciences. Between 1813 and 1919 about 1,715 Egyptians are said to have been sent to Europe on educational missions.[4]

---

1. Safran, Political and Social Change in Egypt, p. 264.
2. ibid., p. 273 ff.
3. See Ibrahim, The Decline of the 'Ulamā' and the Rise of the Modern Intellectuals (unpublished Oxford thesis).
4. Makarius, La jeunesse intellectuelle d'Égypte au lendemain de la deuxième guerre mondiale, p. 82.

These people formed a new élite which became more and more important in the running of the state as well as the social set-up of Egypt. According to Vatikiotis, the concern of these intellectuals was the need to acquire European methods of education which were essential to the emergence of a modern state.[1] They did not concern themselves with the implementation of socio-political values which underlined European culture and society or political systems. Men such as Shaikh Rifā'a Rāfi' al-Ṭahṭāwī (1801 - 1871) and 'Alī Pasha Mubārak (1824 - 1893) worked within the Islamic ethos under the rule of foreigners who were, however, Islamised at a time when religious loyalties counted for a great deal. Thus they were not faced with a totally foreign occupation as later Egyptian intellectuals were. But this situation was not to continue for long. The Ottoman Empire was disintegrating, and many parts of it were falling into the hands of European powers. In Egypt the extravagance of Ismā'īl (Khedive, 1863 - 1879) led to the financial control of the country by France and Britain. The failure of the 'Urābī revolt of 1882 brought about the occupation of Egypt by Britain.

Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī was another in the line of activist Muslim intellectuals to call attention to the changes taking place in the lives of Muslims all over the world and the consequences of these changes on the religion of Islam and the way of life it had fostered. Others before him include Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb, the Grand Sanūsī, and to some extent 'Uthmān dan Fodio in Nigeria. Al-Afghānī was born

---

1. Vatikiotis, The Modern History of Egypt, p. 110.

and brought up in Iran and not in Afghanistan as it is commonly believed.[1] What is of immediate importance here is that Afghānī came to Egypt briefly for the first time in 1869. He came back again in 1871 and stayed on until he was compelled to leave because of his alleged incitement of the young against the government. He went to Paris where he started to publish al-'Urwa al-Wuthqā, العروة الوثقى a magazine that was to have widespread influence on the growing generation of Arabs. Bā-Kathīr came across copies of this magazine while he was still in Hadramawt. Afghānī spent the rest of his life in Constantinople. Wherever he went he left behind him a trail of political activities. It must be on this basis and the influence he had in the Arab world that his life must be judged, rather than whether or not he was a good or a bad Muslim as Keddie and Kedourie have been at great pains to decide. While their studies have thrown much more light on the life of Afghānī, they have not added much to the evaluation of this man's influence on the intellectual development in the Arab world.

In the face of European political and military success the Muslim world was forced to search itself and find reasons for its inability to withstand this assault. Schools set up on the Western

---

1. The early life of Afghani is shrouded in mystery, some of it just being cleared by the work of Nikki Keddie and Elie Kedourie. For more detailed material on al-Afghānī's life see Nikki Keddie - 'Sayyid Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī's First 27 Years - The Darkest Period', Middle East Journal (Autumn 1966) pp. 517 - 533; 'The Pan-Islamic Appeal: Afghānī and Abdulhamid II', Middle Eastern Studies III (1966) pp. 46 - 67; 'Afghānī in Afghanistan', M.E.S. I, 4 (July 1965), pp. 322 - 349; An Islamic Response to Imperialism.

   Elie Kedourie - 'Further Light on Afghānī', Middle Eastern Studies, Vol. I, No. 2, Jan. 1965, p. 187; Afghānī and 'Abduh.

models and overseas universities produced a group of educated Muslims who 'set a higher value on the new ideas than on the traditional ones'.[1] Al-Afghānī saw the danger to the belief system of Islam in this new class of Muslims. He took it upon himself to persuade Muslims 'to understand their religion aright and live in accordance with its teachings'.[2] Besides his Refutation of the Materialists, a reply to a lecture delivered by Renan on Islam and Science, al-Afghānī did not produce a set of ideas in book form. But he had around him many men on whose shoulders was to fall responsibility for their people. When al-Afghānī came back to Cairo in 1871 he took up residence at Khan al-Khalili near the Azhar. One of those who attended his lectures on theology, jurisprudence, mysticism and philosophy was Muḥammad 'Abduh. To these eager followers al-Afghānī also pointed out the danger of European intervention in the affairs of Muslim countries and the need for unity among Islamic peoples. He encouraged them to form and inform public opinion by writing and publishing newspapers.

The most important concept and perhaps the one that had a far-reaching effect on his followers, especially 'Abduh, was his concept of Islam first as a religion and then as a civilisation. This concept was to explain the backwardness which had overtaken the Islamic lands. He said that their stagnation was due to the fact that Muslim rulers had deserted the truth of Islam. There was no difference between this truth of Islam and the achievement of Science in the West. The essence of Islam and of modern rationalism was the same, and he went to great lengths to prove the validity of this statement. This he did by quoting

1. Gibb, Studies on the Civilization of Islam, p. 328.
2. Hourani, Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, p. 118.

and, where necessary, bending passages in the Qur'ān to make them concur with this rationalism. In as much as

> 'what the prophet received through inspiration was the same as what the philosopher could attain to by the use of reason'[1]

there was nothing wrong with the truth of Islam. It was still relevant to the new situation if only Muslims understood it aright.

Thus by the time al-Afghānī was expelled from Egypt in 1879, he had sown the seeds of the ideas which were to dominate the intellectual scene in Egypt during the following half century. These ideas were still to be worked out into a more consistent and intelligent philosophy of life by al-Afghānī's greatest disciple Muḥammad 'Abduh.

Muḥammad 'Abduh was born in 1849. He had his early education in the traditional Islamic kuttāb. He came to the famous University of al-Azhar in 1866. Three years later he met Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī who was on his first brief visit to Cairo. When al-Afghānī came back in 1871, this time to stay, 'Abduh was one of the students who attended his lectures both at the Azhar and at his place of residence. This contact brought 'Abduh face to face with Western scientific thought and technological achievement. Kedourie quotes Adīb Isḥāq (1856 - 1885) as saying that under the guidance of al-Afghānī 'Abduh 'delved deeply'[2] into the traditional sciences of Islam as well as the rational sciences of the West. He also began to deliberate on the state of Islamic countries. Al-Afghānī's ideas got 'Abduh involved in the 'Urābī movement. Al-Afghānī had formed a delegation to the French Commission in Cairo demanding the deposition of Khedive Ismā'īl and his replacement by Tewfiq, his son.

---

1. Hourani, ibid., p. 126.
2. Kedourie, Afghani and 'Abduh, p. 16.

Al-Afghānī was compelled to leave Egypt in 1879 and for a while 'Abduh was made to retire to his village. But the seed of ideas which al-Afghānī had sown bloomed into the unsuccessful 'Urābī revolt of 1882. 'Abduh, who had been recalled in 1881 to edit the government paper al-Waqā'i' al-Miṣriyya, was exiled for his implication in this revolt. He spent his exile in Paris helping al-Afghānī to publish the magazine al-'Urwa al-Wuthqā. Later he went to Beirut when the magazine was banned. In Beirut, 'Abduh started to teach. He was allowed to return to Egypt in 1888 and appointed a judge in the national courts and then counsellor in the Court of Appeal. In 1899 he was appointed the Grand Mufti of Egypt, a post he held until his death in 1905.

While under the direct influence of al-Afghānī, 'Abduh had been involved in revolutionary political ideas, but his attitude seemed to have changed after his exile. As Nadav Safran puts it:

> ' ... he became convinced of the futility of impulsive and violent methods and began to see the problems facing Egypt and the Muslim countries not so much in terms of a threat of the material power of the West as in terms of a challenge of the intellectual, social and ethical dynamism underlying that power to an Islamic superstructure no longer suitable to the present age.'[1]

It may also be that he was just being wary of personal involvement.[2] 'Abduh saw the existence of two ways of life within the Egyptian educational system: the traditional and the Western. How was the natural

---

1. Safran: ibid., p. 63.
2. See How We Defended Arābi and his Friends, by A.M. Broadley.

gulf between these two ways of life to be bridged? The first thing to do was to accept the changes which the Western way of life brought. Then these changes must be linked with the principles of Islam. His task was to restate what Islam really is and then show its implication for modern society.

For this task, he conceived religion as having two aspects: 'ibādāt, which had in it the eternal elements of the religion and thus was not subject to change; and mu'āmalāt, which contained general principles for human conduct. This second part of religion allows for change and in fact must be subjected to change if society is not to decay. He saw the most urgent work of the Muslim states as the creation of new ulama knowledgeable in both the Islamic sciences and the ideas coming from the West. The duty of this group of people would be to refashion the laws of Islam to conform with the modern way of life.

In the matter of law in society, 'Abduh advocated the use of talfīq which meant the employment of all the four schools of legal opinion in any particular case instead of restricting judges to any one of these. On education, he recommended the introduction into the Azhar of a new syllabus which would include some of the Western sciences. He also recommended for each social group an education that agreed with its rôle in the society.

The area where 'Abduh's ideas were to influence Egyptian society most was that which dealt with the relationship between Islam and the modern scientific age. His idea was that true civilisatin was in conformity with Islam. Since Western civilisation was a product of reason, it followed that Islam was not against reason being used in the search for knowledge. Islam is a rational religion. 'Abduh thus

endorsed the acceptability of reason in Islam. But it must be realised that this endorsement only applied to the second aspect of Islam - mu'āmalāt - which contained the general principles for human conduct.

To show that reason had always been given a rôle in this aspect of Islam, 'Abduh went on to identify certain traditional concepts of Islamic thought with ideas of modern Europe. Examples of these are his equating shūrā with parliamentary democracy and ijmā' with public opinion. He threw open the gates of ijtihād and extended the sources of Muslim law not only to the generation of people who knew the Prophet but also to all those who had at one time or another during the history of Islam contributed to its development.

From these ideas of Muḥammad 'Abduh flowed the two streams of Egyptian thought. The first stream was of those who held to his idea of the unchanging nature of Islam, and this can be called the theocratic trend. The second is of those who stressed the legitimacy of social change as a de facto division between religion and society. This may be called the secular trend.

Before following the development of these two trends, it is relevant to mention that 'Abduh advocated the restoration of the Caliphate to one Arab country while the other Muslim areas under European influence became national states under it.

Rashīd Riḍā became the advocate for the spread of the ideas of Muḥammad 'Abduh after the latter's death. But he was to modify these ideas to such an extent as to be wholly conservative. Rashīd Riḍā was born in Tripoli (of Syria) and had his early education within the Islamic tradition, obtaining his diploma of 'ālim in 1897. He had come across copies of al-'Urwa al-Wuthqā, and he devoured them. He sought out all available back copies and read them. This contact made him wish to meet

al-Afghani, but this was impossible. He came to Egypt in 1897 and immediately attached himself to Muḥammad ʿAbduh. He started to publish a weekly, al-Manār, in 1898 on the same principles as al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqā. It was in this paper, which later became a monthly, that Rashīd Riḍā expanded his ideas and those of ʿAbduh.

One basic difference between the times of ʿAbduh and those of Riḍā was that while ʿAbduh had been mainly faced with what he considered the antagonism of the Christian outside thinkers, Rashīd Riḍā had to contend with Egyptians who had imbibed the ideas of the outsiders and now demanded the adoption of these ideas within Egypt. This change explains why ʿAlī Aḥmad Bā-Kathīr, who could not stay on in the restrictive conservatism of Hadramawt because he was radical within that society, finds himself labelled as conservative in Egypt. His ideas were those of a generation which was already on the decline by the time he arrived in Egypt in 1934. In this connection one must remember that Rashīd Riḍā died in 1935 almost in obscurity. The nearest group of people to think the same way as Rashīd Riḍā did, and with whom Bā-Kathīr could identify, were the Muslim Brotherhood.

As far as religion was concerned, Rashīd Riḍā believed that pristine Islam contained both general principles governing civil relationships and moral principles underlying all legal and government regulations. Thus Muslims only had to go to their religion and refer to the salaf for all the ideas they would need for this modern age. The salaf meant to ʿAbduh the creators of the central traditions of Muslim thought from the Prophet to al-Ghazālī; to Rashīd Riḍā it meant only the first generation of companions who knew the Prophet. Rashīd Riḍā and the Manarists agreed with ʿAbduh on the question of the relationship between Islam and modern technology. This was to show in the contribution of Riḍā to the al-Manār

commentary on the Qur'ān. In politics Rashīd Riḍā was violently opposed to the Egyptian Nationalists. He advocated the restoration of the Caliphate where each Muslim state would occupy relations to the central government akin to the position of the states in the United States of America. For him the bonds of religion were stronger than those of race, and it was on this basis that he advocated Pan-Islamism. As will be shown below, the whole of Bā-Kathīr's creative capability was devoted to proving the possibility of such political arrangements. As with Riḍā, so with Bā-Kathīr. The growth of Nationalism in Egypt and Turkey made both of them turn into uncompromising conservatives. Under the Muslim Brotherhood this conservative trend employed violent means to gain their political ideal of a Pan-Islamic state.

Nationalism was the medium through which the secular trend of 'Abduh's thoughts was expressed. In an unpublished article entitled 'The Assumptions and Aspirations of Egyptian Modernists', Dr. P.J.E. Cachia has expressed the problem these intellectuals faced thus:

> 'It was obvious against whom zeal was to be roused; but the occupiers were British, were Europeans, were Westerners, were Christians. Was it round an Egyptian, an Arab, an Oriental, a Muslim core of consciousness that the opposition was to take shape?'

The British occupation which followed the 'Urābī revolt and the amelioration of the financial condition of the state staved off nationalist political agitation for some time. But a 'ferment of political ideas' was created as a result of five main factors, according to J.M. Ahmed.[1] These factors are the growth of Pan-Islamic feeling, the Dinshawai incident of 1906, the economic and security crises, the

---

1. Ahmed: The Intellectual Origins of Egyptian Nationalism, pp. 58 - 59.

Russo-Japanese war which showed the potential latent possibilities of a so-called relatively weak nation; and, maybe most important of all, the growing opposition to foreigners. These factors gave rise to a spate of nationalism which found expression in newspapers and on rostrums. It is convenient to see the whole of the Nationalist Movement in three stages. The first may be called the journalistic stage from the formation of political parties in 1907 to the beginning of the First World War. It must be pointed out, though, that the political parties grew around particular newspapers. The second stage is the period when Nationalism was under the leadership of ~~Saad~~ Sa'd Zaghlūl and the Wafd. The last stage can be called the search for the idea of the Egyptian nation. Obviously the third stage of this nationalism is opposed to the ideas expanded by Rashīd Riḍā and the Manarists and supported by 'Alī Aḥmad Bā-Kathīr. More important still for his literary career, this last stage of Egyptian nationalism was predominant in the years following Bā-Kathīr's arrival in Egypt.

By 1909 there were 84 daily newspapers in Egypt, 39 of them in Arabic.[1] It was around these newspapers that the political parties grew. Three political parties were formed in 1907. These were the Umma Party which grew around the newspaper al-Jarīdah, the Nationalist Party which grew around the charismatic personality of ~~Mustapha~~ Muṣṭafā Kāmil (1874 - 1908) and the newspaper al-Liwā', and the Constitutional Party which grew around the newspaper al-Mu'ayyad. All these parties disappeared with the declaration of the British protectorate over Egypt in 1914.

When the war ended, ~~Saad~~ Sa'd Zaghlūl became the focus of Nationalist yearnings. He was born in 1857, and had his education first in the kuttāb and then at al-Azhar. He then went to the Law School. He met al-Afghani and worked with Muḥammad 'Abduh. He formed a delegation in 1918 to demand

1. Ahmed, op. cit. p. 66.

the independence of Egypt at the peace conference in Paris. This delegation became the nucleus of his party, the Wafd. The incidents around the 1919 revolution are well-known and need not be recounted here. In 1922 the protectorate over Egypt was ended, and in 1923 Egypt became an independent monarchy. The constitution reserved questions of foreign affairs and the Sudan for the office of the British representative in Egypt. From the time of this constitution, the three-cornered pattern of political struggle among the British, the Crown and the political parties, which before had been concealed, became apparent. Of these parties the main one, apart from the Wafd, was the Liberal Constitutional Party, formed in 1922. ~~Sa'd~~ Sa'd Zaghlūl and the Wafd led the country until Zaghlūl died in 1927.

What were the ideas, and who were those who formulated these ideas, which were behind the Nationalist Movement? One of them, Aḥmad Lutfī al-Sayyid, was connected with the politics of al-Jarīdah and the Umma Party. He was born in Lower Egypt in 1872, the son of a Pasha. He had his early education in a Qur'ānic school, but at the age of thirteen he was sent to Cairo to a modern secondary school. From there he went to the Law School. He edited al-Jarīdah until 1914, after which date he devoted the rest of his life to scholarship as Rector of the University of Cairo, lecturing in Philosophy. He was a member of the Wafd of ~~Sa'd~~ Sa'd Zaghlūl of 1918, but little by little he withdrew completely into academic life. He was one of the few who formulated any clear ideas about Nationalism in Egypt. He was well-read in European liberal thought of the nineteenth century, and the influences of these writers show in his work. His starting-point on the question of Nationalism is that there is a separate Egyptian nation. For him the flourishing and decaying of society have not much to do with religion. Islam is equated with any other religion and he concludes that it could not be suitable as

a basis for political action in the twentieth century.

'Our Nationalism must rest on our interests and not on our beliefs.'[1] Lutfi as-Sayyid did not subscribe to Pan-Islamism as a political force because he saw it as an imperialist principle to counter Egyptian Nationalism. He also saw the importance of assimilating the philosophical ideas which underlay modern progress. In speaking of modernisation, Gibb says:

> 'It was not the technological revolution in itself which determined the way in which the Western societies evolved, but the philosophy, the rationale of the West which gave direction to the manner in which the new discoveries and new techniques were exploited.'[2]

It seems to have eluded former Nationalists that it was necessary to accept the basic philosophic ideas of the West in order to be able to make use of its technology. 'Without this, it would be impossible to assimilate European technology.'[3] Ṭāhā Ḥusayn was to emphasise this same point years later in his Future of Culture in Egypt. Lutfī al-Sayyid dealt with other problems in Egypt such as the family and the problem of marriage, and the problem of the Arabic language. He saw the solution to these problems in the light of national independence which would generate the virtues of freedom and representative government.

Raoul Makarius has put forward the theory of the three stages of the evolution of Egyptian ideas, an evolution seen in the context of

---

1. Ahmed, op. cit. p. 106.
2. Gibb, Studies on the Civilization of Islam, p. 323.
3. Ahmed, op. cit. p. 97.

economic development in Egypt.[1] The first stage is the period of newly introduced capitalism ending with the declaration of the protectorate in 1914. This period he sees as dominated by the ideas of Muḥammad 'Abduh. The second is the period between the wars - a period dominated by the ideas of such writers as Ṭāhā Ḥusayn (1889-), al-Māzni, Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal (1888-1956), and others. Haykal and his associates in the Liberal Constitutional Party formed as an opposition to the Wafd in 1922, supported neither the return to the past of the conservatives nor the complete cutting adrift from the past advocated by the secularists. Rather they were in support of a policy of a slow process of education and reform. Theirs was to be a cautious adaptation of European methods to the existing level of general education in Egypt. Through their newspaper al-Siyāsa, edited by Haykal, they began to promote this slow revolution. Their greatest success must be their organisation of the Egyptian University. On the negative side, their attitude provoked first the establishment of the newspaper al-Fatḥ, which attacked them as a group which saw all Egyptian questions in terms of European ideas. Later still, this opposition led to the formation of the Muslim Brotherhood in 1927. The third stage of this evolution is given by Makarius as beginning towards the end of the Second World War when capitalism was in full force with all its attendant problems. This period was dominated by the adherents of Socialism and Marxism.

The rise of the Muslim Brotherhood challenged the fundamental assumption of the historical development of modern Egypt: the assumption that there is a unified modern civilisation called into existence by Western Europe and that Egypt must form part of this modern civilisation.

---

1. Makarius, op. cit. p. 21.

The Muslim Brotherhood claimed the right to speak for the people and demanded the establishment in Egypt of an Islamic state. Ḥasan al-Bannā, who founded the Muslim Brotherhood, had been educated in the Azhar and was influenced greatly by the Manarists. The Brotherhood was well-organised, and its influence was soon evident in every facet of Egyptian life. It was characterised by an intense faith in Islam and a readiness to support this faith with violence. It had a lot of investments, and it established schools and mosques not only in Egypt but also in other Arab countries such as Syria. Ḥasan al-Bannā was assassinated in 1949, and Huḍaibī became the leader of the Brotherhood. Because of its violence and involvement in politics, it was suppressed after the Revolution of 1952.

Writing in What Is Our Message?, Ḥasan al-Bannā says:

> 'It is the culture and civilisation of Islam which deserve to be adopted (in solving Egyptian social problems) and not the materialistic philosophy of Europe.'[1]

But the man who set down the ideas of the Muslim Brotherhood was Muḥammad Ghazzālī. He wrote many books such as Islam and Economic Conditions, Islam and Political Despotism. In 1950 his book Min Hunā Na'lam was published to refute the ideas put forward in a book by Khālid Muḥammad Khālid(1920-), Min Hunā Nabda'. Khālid had restated the thesis of 'Alī 'Abd al-Rāziq about Islam having nothing to do with politics and the general ordering of society. In Min Hunā Na'lam, Ghazzālī preached a return to the Qur'ān and the traditions of the Prophet. He asserted that it was necessary to have an Islamic state which would defend Islam, command what is good and prohibit what is evil. He emphasised the importance of jihād. The problems of the country could be solved through

1. Ḥasan al-Bannā, What Is Our Message?, p. 3.

Islamic socialism which would be based on monotheism and the brotherhood of men. Besides these assertions and pious declarations, the ideas of the Muslim Brotherhood were vague and completely out of touch with the realities of the historical development of Egypt.

By the time 'Alī Aḥmad Bā-Kathīr arrived in Egypt in 1934, the ideas of the Muslim Brotherhood had been silenced (but not completely destroyed, since it was the inevitable movement of historical development), stemming from the ideas and attitudes which underlay the publications of 'Alī 'Abd al-Rāziq (Islam and the Basis of Political Authority) and Ṭāhā Ḥusayn (On Pre-Islamic Poetry). 'Abd al-Rāziq had been educated in al-Azhar and Oxford. He maintained in his book that the mission of Muḥammad was purely spiritual and not political. Abū Bakr created the Islamic state and tainted it with religious undertones. This interpretation of Islamic history led him to answer in the negative his major question 'Is the Caliphate necessary?' and, growing out of this question, another one 'Is there an Islamic system of government?'. As would be expected, he was condemned by the paper al-Fatḥ just as Ṭāhā Ḥusayn was because of his book On Pre-Islamic Poetry. The uproar which arose around these two books 'was a turning-point in Egyptian thought'.[1]

The violent reaction to his book made Ṭāhā Ḥusayn proclaim his philosophy of the dual nature of man - as a rational philosopher and a sentient believer in Islam. But in another book published in 1938 Ṭāhā Ḥusayn seems to have returned to his original revolutionary self. The publication of this book, Safran says,

> 'was intended to stop what he (Ṭāhā Ḥusayn) considered to be a drift into intellectual chaos and in which he pleaded once again the case for an unequivocal Western orientation.'[2]

---

1. Ahmed, op. cit. p. 119.
2. Safran, op. cit. p. 175.

In the book entitled The Future of Culture in Egypt, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn propounded his theory of the Mediterranean mind of Egypt. Egypt's rightful place was with Europe. Thus, in accepting Westernisation, there could be no discrimination. Egypt must take both the good and the bad. As for those who talked of the spirituality of the East and the materialism of the West, it was either that they did not understand the West or else they overestimated the East.

The social situation referred to above in connection with the theory of Makarius was soon to alter the intellectual demands of the society. The death of ~~Saad~~ Sa'd Zaghlūl in 1927, the repeal of the 1923 Constitution, the failure of the Wafd in the 1936 Treaty, the humiliation attendant on the British imposition of an unpopular government in 1942 and the problems of capitalist industrial expansion after the Second World War - all these now demanded national liberation and social justice.

Before continuing the discussion of the solutions offered on both sides of the intellectual movement to the problems of liberation and social justice, it is necessary to pause briefly to consider the problem of women in the new Egypt. This is because it touched both the radicals and the conservatives, since they had wives and daughters. Whereas their pronouncements on politics and social justice might be accepted as possibilities with little scope for immediate implementation, any pronouncements they made on the subject of the liberation of women from ancient Muslim customs such as the veil might be tested against their own family and relations. One may note that the process of secularisation continued despite the opposition of conservatives while the position of women remained, with few exceptions, as it had been long before the contact with the West in spite of the wishes of the radicals. The problem of the liberation of women in Egypt was a pointer

to what was wished as against what really was allowed to be.

Neither nor always too often
~~Both~~ the secular ~~and~~ the theocratic trend in the Egyptian intellectual movement ~~did not often take~~ sides strictly according to their public postures on other issues.[1] Centuries of Islam had locked up woman and restricted her to the kitchen or the harem. Qāsim Amīn wrote a book in 1899 entitled Taḥrīr al-Mar'aẗ. He was born in 1865, of Kurdish stock. He had a French education, and was much influenced by French writers. In this book Qāsim Amīn attributed the cause of decay in Islam to the disappearance of social virtues. This disappearance of social virtues stemmed from ignorance which began in the family. The rôle of woman was to form the morals of the society, but she was not free. To restore social virtues and revive Islam, woman must be set free. This was to be done through her education. If she was educated she could be economically free and able to earn her keep. Bā-Kathīr deals in his play Cats and Mice with the implications and complications that could result from having an economically independent woman for a wife. The second suggestion which Qāsim Amīn made was that polygamy must be abolished and the political rights of women asserted. In a second book, al-Mar'aẗ al-Jadīdaẗ, published in 1900, Qāsim Amīn strengthened his arguments by incorporating Western social thought, especially the writings of Herbert Spencer. As would be expected, these books were roundly condemned by Rashīd Riḍā and his Manarists.

By the end of the Second World War this issue of the position of women in the Egyptian society, as well as many other issues on which the secularists and the conservatives were in disagreement, had been overtaken

---

1. Dr. P.J.E. Cachia has given the example of 'a leading modernist like al-'Aqqad' and his attitude to the problem of women in Egypt. 'Assumptions and Aspirations of Egyptian Modernists', p. 24.

by social change. Industrially, Egypt had taken over as much of Western technological advances as possible. The Sharī'a had long before been sidetracked in favour of Western legal systems. Moreover, the social problems attendant on an industrial state called for social justice. Egypt's problems after the war were twofold: the achievement of social justice, and the achievement of complete independence. As stated above, the solutions which the Muslim Brothers offered, and which they backed with violence, were out of touch with the realities of the extent of secularisation in the Egyptian society.

As for the Leftists, they were an amalgam of genuine Marxists, half-baked socialists and unemployed anarchists. They felt strongly both the urgency of doing away with the British presence and bringing about social justice in Egypt. Like most intellectuals from the Afro-Asian states, these people were attracted by Marxism and saw the salvation of their country in terms of a socialist revolution. But they were not united in one single body. Instead, they clustered around a number of ephemeral newspapers, disbanding whenever the authorities struck and re-clustering when the authorities relaxed. It is therefore difficult to enumerate what the ideas of these intellectuals were except that, like the theocratic Muslim Brothers, they too were opposed to the British presence and appalled by the gap between the rich and the poor. It is possible to say that the ideas of these Marxists might have crystallised into parties and groups but for the Revolution of 1952.

The Free Officers, under the leadership of 'Abd an-Nāṣir, staged a successful coup d'état in 1952. In his Philosophy of the Revolution, 'Abd an-Nāṣir gives a picture of the confused state of ideas in Egypt at the time of the coup:

'Every idea we listened to was nothing but an attack on some other idea.'[1]

The leaders of the Revolution refused to come into the arms of either the Muslim Brotherhood or the Marxists. The Muslim Brotherhood was later banned and the leaders gaoled or hanged. The Marxists were suppressed at the very time 'Abd an-Nāṣir was being welcomed in Communist countries. Political and intellectual freedom was suppressed during the period of 'Abd an-Nāṣir's leadership. He satisfied neither the Marxists nor the conservatives. While his banning of the Muslim Brothers might have pleased the Marxists, his involvement in the Arab-Israeli conflict had the complete support of only the conservatives. For everybody his image of dynamism in the face of European powers, especially Britain, was a welcome substitute to much-needed social reforms at home.

This, then, was the intellectual background against which 'Alī Aḥmad Bā-Kathīr lived and worked for thirty-five years before he died in 1969. The following exposition of his main ideas will show that he was always on the side of the conservatives. Moreover, and with all the awareness of his family's denial of his ever being a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, his work can be read as a literary apologia for the ideals of that Brotherhood. What is more, Bā-Kathīr is the only writer of note who consistently dealt with themes which can be associated with the ideas of the theocratic trend of the Egyptian intellectual movement.

It will not be too much to say that Bā-Kathīr's exasperation at Western imperialism in the Middle East fed his creative powers all his life. His continuous attacks on these Western powers in his plays form the bulk of his writing. Naturally he saw beyond the exit of Western powers from the Middle East. This led him to the more difficult problem

---

1. 'Abd an-Nāṣir, Egypt's Liberation (translation of Falsafat al-Thawrah), p. 34.

of criticising Arab governments who might not feel too well-disposed to tolerate him. In later years he had to resort to themes from mythology and history to conceal his criticism of these countries. But on both the problem of Western powers in the Middle East and the state of weakness of the Arab countries, his call was to everybody to rally round an Arab-Islamic flag. While it is easy to say that anyone who professes Islam as his religion might be invited to join, how does one define an Arab? As far as Bā-Kathīr is concerned, he does not seem to have had much trouble in doing this. One of his characters declares indignantly to another one:

> 'You ignorant thing . . . Arab nationalism is not based on races, and anyone living in the land of the Arabs is an Arab although he might by race be a Chinese. Take Salah al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī, who was of Kurdish origin. Was he not one of the heroes of the Arabs and of Islam? And Nūrī al-Sa'īd, said to be of Kurdish origin too, is he more than a traitor among traitors to the Arab cause?'[1]

The reference to Kurds in this speech is explained when one knows that this particular play, The Unique Leader, deals with Iraq under Qāsim.

In the two novels Wā Islāmāh and Sīrat Shujā' one finds statements to the effect that someone has betrayed the country and Islam. Bā-Kathīr

---

1. The Unique Leader, Act I, p. 10.
يا جاهل .. ان القومية العربية ليست عنصرية ، فكل من يقيم فى الوطن العربى فهو عربى ولو كان أصله من الصين. هذا صلاح الدين الأيوبى من أصل كردى فهل كان الا بطلا من أبطال العروبة والاسلام؟ وهذا نورى السعيد يقال انه من أصل كردى فهل كان الا خائنا من خونة العرب؟

uses bilād for country in this context, and this is supposed to cover all the Arab lands.[1] Other terms used to designate the same idea besides bilād al-Islām are dīn wa waṭan,[2] Ummah wa dīn,[3] bilād al-'Arab wa al-Islām,[4] bilād al-'Arab wa al-Muslimīn,[5] al-Dawla wa al-Waṭan wa al-'Arab wa al-Islām.[6] These terms occur so profusely that it is not possible to list all of them. What is of major interest here is that words denoting territorial limits go hand-in-hand with religion.[7]

There is nothing particularly original in this idea of Bā-Kathīr. The concept of religion being the boundary to be recognised rather than national boundaries is a centre-piece in the ideas of the Muslim Brothers. His addition, that the whole history of all the countries in the Middle East, pre-Islamic as well as post-Islamic, is the heritage of all Arabs and Muslims, is not original either. In the furtherance of this idea he chose themes from the history and mythology of different Arab countries.

---

1. Wā Islāmāh, p. 142.
2. ibid., p. 192.
3. ibid., p. 260.
4. Sīrat Shujā', p. 27.
5. ibid., p. 237.
6. ibid., p. 293.
7. ibid., p. 265.

Bā-Kathīr quotes two lines from al-Mutannabī at the beginning of his historical play Akhnātūn wa Nifirtītī to support his concept of the unity of all the aspects of the history of Arab countries:

أبوكم أبى يوم التفاخر يعرب

1 وجدكمو فرعون أضحى بكم جدى

Writing much later in Fann al-Masraḥiyya, he asks:

> 'Is Egypt not an Arab country in the first rank of Arab countries? Is its ancient history not part of its whole history and so has to be part of the history of Arabs whose heritage ought to be dear to everyone: the Pharaonic civilization in Egypt, the Babylonian civilization in Iraq and the Phoenician civilization in Syria? What is the difference between these civilizations and the Sabaean civilization in Yemen? Are all these not connected with the inhabitants of these ancient regions who are the ancestors of the Arabs of to-day in these parts?'[2]

This concept is not completely unlike al-'Aqqād's concept of equating Arab with Semite.[3]

Like his idea that opposition to Western imperialism and internal reform must be organised around a 'Muslim core of consciousness',[4] Bā-Kathīr's concept of Arab history was not particularly original. The interesting thing is that it ties up with that of the Muslim Brothers.

---

1. Akhnātūn wa Nifirtītī, p. 11.
2. Bā-Kathīr, Fann al-Masraḥiyya, p. 38.
3. Athar al-'Arab fī al-ḥaḍāra al-'Urubiyya. See also article 'The Use of History by Modern Arab Writers', by Anwar G. Chejne, M.E.J. No. 14, 1960.
4. Cachia, 'Assumptions and Aspirations of Egyptian Modernists', p. 18.

Another point of agreement between Bā-Kathīr and the Muslim Brotherhood is the readiness to use violence to achieve their political aims. While the Brotherhood used violence in reality, Bā-Kathīr employs it in the only area he controlled, his writing. A revolution ends the following plays: An Empire for Sale, God's Chosen People, The Unique Leader, The Simple Fellah and Juḥā's Nail. It would seem as if Bā-Kathīr believed during the period he wrote the comedies that a few coups d'état and a few executions would solve the problem of the Arabs. In none of the five plays listed above are we told of what follows the coups d'état. What we get is a euphoric feeling that, since some people have been shot dead, there will be peace.

Much later, Bā-Kathīr seemed to have changed his opinion from this simplistic attitude to a more realistic attempt to imagine what best to do. In The Red Revolutionary he seems to come to the conclusion that, even when violence is on the side of justice and fair-dealing, it is still necessary to concede to the authorities the chance of putting things right. It may also be said that, by the time Bā-Kathīr wrote this novel, he had lost his feeling that he had all the answers to all the problems which plagued the Arab countries, especially since the imperialists, who had been the ready whip-dogs, were now no more.

Bā-Kathīr's Arab-Islamic unity was propped up by his reading of the history of those countries of the Middle East which are Arab, and was to be secured through the violent overthrow of governments. How did his use of language further his literary as well as his political aims? It would seem unusual that political aims are to be discerned in the language of literature. Generally, it is unusual, but Bā-Kathīr considers the political implications of his language as well as the literary.

Language has always been a major problem for the Arab writer. One of the reasons for this situation is the dual nature of language in the Arab world where people have an ancient allegiance to the classical language while, at the same time, they express their day-to-day wishes, aspirations and ambitions in the colloquial language of their region. Each writer has had to make his own decisions as to which of these two he would use for his literary works. One writer has even used both in the same work![1] In discussing the problem of language, Bā-Kathīr asks two questions: What type of reality is language supposed to serve - artistic reality or social reality? Must each region of the Arab world use its own colloquial language in drama? To begin with the problem of reality, a fellah is not supposed to speak like a professor of Arabic. But Bā-Kathīr calls this a superficial, simplistic approach. Art, he says, is not a photographic recording of life. Art is an attempt at reproducing and expressing a critique of life. Othello speaks of Italy in Elizabethan English. Why is this accepted or acceptable? Bā-Kathīr thinks that the Egyptian stage had been pampered into accepting colloquial language and the audience would not make the effort to follow a play in classical Arabic. Bā-Kathīr goes on to say that no writer has ever recorded the speech of everyday life. It would bore his audience and his readers. The artist has had to embellish language to make it appeal to his audience. It is Bā-Kathīr's belief that it is not possible to embellish colloquial language. The writer can only quote it. He therefore concludes that there is no artistic room for the writer to manoeuvre.

---

1. Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm in his play al-Safqa.

Another consideration of Bā-Kathīr's against use of the colloquial is that there is no generally accepted or acceptable colloquial for any particular region. Cairene colloquial is different from the colloquial used in Upper Egypt. Bā-Kathīr again concludes that since language is living and since, according to him, no writer can make the colloquial language grow, the classical language which he thinks is more responsive to individual writers is the language to use.

Besides all these literary reasons, Bā-Kathīr gives another reason, which is political. He believes that for the good of Arab-Islamic unity, writers must use the classical language of the Qur'ān so that they can address an audience larger than they would normally address using the colloquial of their regions.

It would be difficult to say categorically which of these two main reasons is more important in his decision to use the classical language in his works. In the section on Language in Fann al-Masraḥiyya Bā-Kathīr seems to give the impression that both literary and nationalistic considerations are important in making his choice.[1]

Bā-Kathīr does not use a particularly striking style. One could read a page or two and recognise the style of Ṭāhā Ḥusayn or Najīb Maḥfūẓ. But there is nothing striking in the style of Bā-Kathīr except for the intrusion sometimes of phrases that could be of English origin. It could be said that he writes Arabic with 'unrelieved good sense'. Sometimes this style is plain, clear, repetitive, for example:

---

1. op. cit. FM, pp. 76 - 82.

وكيف تسرى عنهما ، ولكنها لم تعجب [illegible] لما
حدث ، فهى تعرف السبب الذى بكتا ذلك
البكاء من أجله ، بل تعرف أيضا أنه مصدر هذه
العلة التى أصابت سمية فألزمتها الفراش .
1

At other times, his sentences are long-winded, as in the following sentence:

ونظر الى الجالسة أمامه فلم ير جلنار
الصغيرة ابنة خاله جلال الدين التى
نشأ واياها طفلين يلعبان فى ربوع
لاهور ، وينتقلان فى مختلف الممالك راكبين
على جواديهما الصغيرين حتى اختطفهما
اللصوص وكان من أمرهما ما كان ، بل رأى
مكانها امرأة تامة التكوين ، ناضجة الأنوثة ، لا
صلة بينه وبينها من قرابة أو عشرة ، وتنقل
طرفه من جيدها الطويل كأنه ابريق من
الفضة الى كتفيها المدمجتين وظهرها الرخص
المسحوب من جوانبه كلما نزل ، حتى ينتهى
الى خصرها [illegible] الضامر ، ولمح بياض ساقيها ولطف
2 قدميها ، فامتلأ قلبه رهبة لم يطق معها الوقوف

1. Sīrat Shujā', p. 16.
2. Wā Islāmāh, p.121.

Even when Bā-Kathīr uses short sentences, they are often cliché-ridden.

اطمأن بالصبيين المقام بدمشق عند سيدهما
الجديد الشيخ غانم المقدسى ، ونزلا فى قصره
الكبير بدرب القصاعين، تحيط به حديقة غناء
حافلة بالكروم وأشجار التين والتفاح والزيتون [1]

In those plays which are not poetic drama, the plainness of the style of the novels can be seen. The characters seem to speak as if they were all one and the same person. The only time Bā-Kathīr makes any attempt to differentiate his characters is when he is consciously portraying social stratification.[2]

1. Wā Islāmāh, p. 103.
2. al-Dunyā Fawdā, p. 12.

سونيا : انتظر يا بيومى . ماذا تشربين يا نكتورة ؟
غندورة : شكرا .. لا شىء .
سونيا : قهوة ؟ شاى ؟
غندورة : لا . لا أشرب القهوة أو الشاى بعد العصر .
سونيا : غازوزة ؟
غندورة : (فى اهتمام خاص) غازوزة !
سونيا : مثلجة ؟
غندورة : لا مانع .
سونيا : واعمل لى أنا قهوة يا بيومى .
بيومى : سكر ؟
سونيا : ع الريحة .
بيومى : لماذا يا ستى ؟ كفى الله الشر ! السكر موجود ولله الحمد ... سأعملها لك بسكر مضبوط كالعادة .

سونيـا : قلت لك ع الريحة • من اليوم فصاعدا
قهوتى ع الريحة • أفهمت ؟

بيومى : (يلحظ بيومى اهتزاز الستارة ويلمح وجه
أحمد فيتنحنح ويرتبك)

سونيـا : ماذا بك ؟ ماذا تنظر خلفـى ؟ (تنظر
خلفها نحو الستـارة)

بيومى : لا شىء يا ستى •

سونيـا : لست على بعـضك ••• كـنت تتطلع
خلفـى وتتنحنح !

In the above dialogue, Bā-Kathīr resorts to Cairene colloquial Arabic to show the social positions of ~~Bayūmī~~ Bayyūmī and Sonia, his doctor employer. Bā-Kathīr also differentiates the two characters in a second manner. He does this by making ~~Bayūmī~~ Bayyūmī, a simple peasant of Upper Egypt extraction, wonder in astonishment at his mistress' refusal to use sugar in her coffee despite the fact that, thanks to Allah, they have sugar in abundance in the house. This second manner of characterisation is Bā-Kathīr's answer to those who insist that a playwright must use the colloquial on the stage in order to effect social stratification. One must notice, all the same, that this is a manner of character representation better suited to novel-writing than to writing for the stage.

The other feature of Bā-Kathīr's style which brings in some variation is the phrases which could be of English origin. There are a few examples of these in the novels, such as:

1 وأنه فوق ذلك والد سمية

(and above that, he is the father of Samiyya)

2 ويقف على قدميه

(and he stood on his two feet).

But it is in the plays that these examples are multiplied. This is especially so in the collection of plays Masraḥ as-Siyāsah, where the presence of English characters makes this a convenient character-identity. A few of the examples which can be found in the plays are:

3 هب ان الفرنج قد عدلوا

(Given that the Europeans have been fair . . .)

and

4 ابن آدم يموت وعمله يبقى بعده

(Man dies but his work remains behind him).

While the first example is not uncommon in Arabic, the second echoes the Shakespearean lines from Julius Caesar:

'The evil that men do lives after them;
The good is oft interred with their bones;'.[5]

---

1. Sīrat Shujā', p. 146.
2. al-Thā'ir al-Aḥmar, p. 14.
3. Dār ibn Luqmān, p. 108.
4. ibid., p. 187.
5. Act 3, Scene 2.

Sometimes Bā-Kathīr makes use of more than just the phrase which might recall an English equivalent. He uses an idea which might not necessarily have an Arabic equivalent. For instance, some men are labelled in Sha'b Allāh al-Mukhtār as:

1 انهم جميعا طابور خامس

(They are all fifth columnists).

The conclusion one can reach from all this is that, when writing prose passages, Bā-Kathīr took hardly any pains with his style. He was more concerned with communicating his ideas than with making an attempt at elegance. But in his poetry, especially as shown in the poetic dramas, he was more careful, and this is why these plays read better and are more interesting stylistically than the other plays.

1. Sha'b Allāh al-Mukhtār, p. 34.

C O N C L U S I O N

"It is a pity that one cannot see the learned entrails of authors so as to discover what they have eaten."

- Freud

The foregoing, then, has been an attempt to see how Bā-Kathīr solves the problem of the conflict implicit in drama between an alien literary form and the Islamic content of his plays. It must be obvious by now that Bā-Kathīr was not conscious of this conflict between form and content in drama. Because Ba-Kathir was not conscious of this conflict, he did not work towards resolving it. One may temper censure of a playwright or a novelist for being ignorant of the basic features of the form in which he is working, especially if such a form has evolved from a literary and cultural experience different from his own as is the case of drama in Arabic Literature. But the critic must carry full blame for such ignorance. The rôle of the critic is not only that of helping the public to a better appreciation of an artist but also aiding the artist to a greater realisation of his potentialities by way of giving him a deeper comprehension of his work. The Arabic critic of drama has not shown any deep comprehension of the drama form and he has therefore not been of much help to the Arab playwright.

In the particular case of Bā-Kathīr, who was aware of some of the historical development of drama in the West, his lead was not pursued because of two main reasons. The first is that his politics alienated those who could have benefited both themselves and Bā-Kathīr from such a follow-up. Time and the changes it brings to political questions will erase this basic antagonism. More and more, literary questions are likely to transcend political bickerings in the consideration of the careers of literary men. It means, then, that Egyptian critics will redeem the name of Bā-Kathīr and give him his proper place among contemporary writers. Should they fail to do this, it would seem that non-Egyptian critics interested in Arabic Literature of the modern period will have to continue to call the attention of Egyptians to him.

This is already happening, especially with more work being done on Bā-Kathīr's contribution to the blank verse and free verse movements in Modern Arabic Literature. Perhaps this is good in that a much-needed historically critical perspective not easily achieved from within may be applied to Arabic Literature in Egypt.

The second reason for the neglect of the work of Bā-Kathīr is the feeling that he is a bad writer anyway. Nobody until now has attempted to justify or refute this statement. Taking into consideration the amount Bā-Kathīr published - about seventy plays, five novels and contributions of poetry to magazines and anthologies (although quantity does not guarantee quality) - this feeling may not be altogether true. Others with a similar record have found for themselves places in the history of contemporary Arabic Literature.

Bā-Kathīr's historical novels are still read and reprinted. For a writer given to discursive and long-winded reportage, Bā-Kathīr might have been better advised to stick to prose narrative. He is almost incapable of making anything happen on the stage. His dramatic points are made in dialogue, rather than in action. Moreover, he either lacked the artistic courage to explore the possibilities of language, or else he had no patience for it.

As for his poetry, the situation is a little different. Those poems written in the tradition of classical Arabic poetry arouse hardly any interest in critics of modern Arabic poetry. On the other hand, his experiments in blank and free verse (Bā-Kathīr does not distinguish between these two) are of importance to those movements in Modern Arabic Literature.

More than any other contemporary playwright, Bā-Kathīr worked towards reversing the history of the theatre in Egypt. He had before

him an audience which had been pampered with buffoonery and raised on local jokes. He decided to lift it to the level of sophistication nearing what would be expected in a modern society. More drastic still for the history of the theatre in Egypt and for his literary career was Bā-Kathīr's decision to use classical Arabic for his comedies. But in both endeavours he failed.

One reason is that he was not a cynic by nature, nor was he cut out by upbringing to amuse others. For one who wished to write comedy, he took himself far too seriously and too earnestly. That some of his comedies succeeded was in spite and not because of himself. One can almost picture Bā-Kathīr waiting impatiently for the audience to stop clapping for Juḥā and listen to his political hand-out.

A second reason for Bā-Kathīr's failure is that he dealt with social and political realities in his comedies. He should either have dealt with both problem and solution realistically or else he should simply have satirised both social and political situations without over-burdening his material with once-and-for-all-time solutions. But Bā-Kathīr was too committed a writer to avoid providing answers, answers which were unrealistic, and he had nothing of the cynic to take joy in simply making fun of others. By mixing realistic problems with unrealistic solutions, prescribing answers rather than provoking questions, Bā-Kathīr contributed in no small measure to the failure of the bulk of his comedies.

If

> 'in comedy we see the petty vices laid bare and in tragedy (we see) the royal evils which 'teacheth the uncertainty of this world, and upon how weake foundations guilden roofes are builded'',[1]

1. Sir Philip Sidney, An Apologie for Poetrie, p. 45.

then orthodox Muslim society cannot nurture tragedy any more than another monotheistic society can. Bā-Kathīr would have had to go outside himself and outside his own society in order to produce a tragedy worthy of that name. Here too, as in the comedies, both Bā-Kathīr and Muslim society must share the responsibility for the inability to nurture tragedy in Modern Arabic Literature. It is not as if any other Arab playwright operating within the same conditions as Bā-Kathīr has been able to produce a worthwhile tragic play.

While some of Bā-Kathīr's comments on drama in Arabic Literature are sometimes deeply discerning, such as the relationship between ritual dance drama and the ultimate development of drama as an independent art form, others are superficial and not fully explored. The reference here is particularly to Bā-Kathīr's suggestion of the monotheistic nature of pre-Islamic paganism. Pre-Islamic paganism had a religion 'qa'im 'alā al-Tawḥīd'.[1] This was the religion of Ibrāhīm and Ismā'īl. Because the religion was monotheistic, says Bā-Kathīr, no deep ritualistic system evolved comparable to that which produced Greek religious drama. By refusing to pursue the logic implicit in his statements, by stopping halfway to make convenient conclusions, Bā-Kathīr makes it impossible for himself to understand the drama form he is using. Always, he seems impatient to get on to his political and social message.

As has been noted in this thesis, many of Bā-Kathīr's comedies end in revolutions overthrowing the regime which is not friendly to his political ideas. This has led to facile articles in the Arabic press about the works of Bā-Kathīr and the place of revolution in them.[2] As far as one can make out, Bā-Kathīr's revolutionary solution is nothing

1. FM p. 31.
2. See al-Masraḥ, special no. on Egyptian drama, July 1965, pp. 42 - 46.

more than a military take-over of power and an immediate handing-over of such power to a group dedicated to a return to pristine Islam.

Bā-Kathīr was too keen a propagandist to allow his artistic talent to take its natural course. He was too conservative an artist to venture beyond the confines of the form. He was too much of a Muslim to subject his material to the directives of his borrowed form. He was too set in his ways to sympathise with the march of events, especially the process of secularism in Egypt. He was too egocentric to change his opinions. No wonder, then, that he was out of step with most of his contemporaries, since:

> 'We hate poetry that has a palpable design upon us - and if we do not agree, seems to put its hand in its breeches pocket'.[1]

While the present generation might object to Bā-Kathīr, future generations are likely to turn to his work to see how a Muslim of conservative disposition treated imaginatively the social and political conflicts of his age. His solutions are not likely to be of interest to them, but his approach, his experiments and even his failures will have something to say to them.

---

1. John Keats, Letters.

A P P E N D I X

Critical Summaries of Some Other Plays of Bā-Kathīr Mentioned but not Dealt with in Detail in the Body of the Thesis

Dār Ibn Luqmān

This is one of the few plays of Bā-Kathīr which have lists of dramatis personae. However, as if to offset this advantage, the acts are conventionally numbered but the scenes are numbered independently of the numbering of the acts.

The Sultan is ill and on the verge of death. The French Crusaders are at the doors of the Islamic Empire. The Mamluks, who form the bulk of the Egyptian army, refuse to obey their commander Fakhr al-Dīn when he orders them to face the enemies of Islam. When Fakhr al-Dīn complains to the ailing Sultan, he is angry with them and orders some of them to be executed. But these are later pardoned. The Sultan refuses the request of the soldiers that Fakhr al-Dīn be relieved of his post as commander of the army. This refusal angers the Mamluks. But Fakhr al-Dīn tells them of his plan to depose the Sultan and take his place in spite of his oath of allegiance to the Sultan.

The Sultan's wife, Shajarat al-Durr, is in sympathy with the Mamluks. Her own son had died, and another son of the Sultan, Tūrān Shāh, left the palace long ago when he was young. Shajarat al-Durr plans that, when the Sultan dies, the news shall be kept secret so that the French will not exploit the disorder that may follow uncertain succession. It becomes more difficult to place Shajarat al-Durr's sympathy when she sends Aḥmad to tell Fakhr al-Dīn to beware of the Mamluks.

At the court of Louis IX of France, the women exchange gossip. But they are of little importance to the action of the play generally and to this scene in particular. Bā-Kathīr's use of the wife of Louis IX as the defender of Islam and all things Islamic is unsatisfactory and savours of the apologetic literature of many Muslim writers at the

beginning of this century. There is the special example of al-'Aqqād, who quotes the opinion of European Orientalists extensively in support of Islam on the grounds that the praise of an enemy is worthy of the notice of Europeans. Aḥmad, who is a honey-maker, escapes and flees the Sultan's palace because he is not allowed to marry his cousin Na'īsa. The Sultan dies; and, while Egypt awaits the return of Tūrān Shāh, Fakhr al-Dīn deputises for him. He sends messengers to the French King offering him Jerusalem, Ascalon and Tiberias if he refrains from attacking Egypt. Some of the courtiers of the King advise acceptance, while others counsel rejection. Aḥmad, who is now at the court of the King, is called to give his view, partly to test his sincerity to the French. He advises the French to reject the offer on the grounds that Fakhr al-Dīn is in no position to defend himself against the French. The King takes this view, and prepares for war with Egypt. Aḥmad goes away to a lonely spot to cry for betraying Islam on account of a peasant girl.

But we are also told that Aḥmad's rôle is that of an <u>agent provocateur</u> in the French court. When the French attack Egypt they are defeated. Fakhr al-Dīn dies in the first battle when the Mamluks abandon him. Aḥmad comes under suspicion of being a Muslim spy against the French and is put in prison. Two reasons lead to his final release and acquittal. One is that, while the battle was going on, he saved the life of a French officer. He has him put in a safe place in the palace of the Sultan. When the fighting is over they go together back to the French, and the officer testifies to Aḥmad's sincerity. The second reason is that Margaret, the French Queen, supports Aḥmad and, no matter what he is accused of, she defends him. Fortunately for Aḥmad, the King accepts her views. Aḥmad is interrogated about his activities on the day of the battle.

The ease with which Aḥmad deceives the French is unacceptable. They have to be morons to accept such excuses as he gives for his actions. He is not particularly intelligent, either. One wonders how he is able to sway monarchs and experienced courtiers. Bā-Kathīr loses the concentration of the play by going into the problems of Louis IX and his wife.

When the French are defeated the King is captured with most of his court. This is made possible by the work of Aḥmad. To the annoyance of intelligent readers, the Queen continues to defend not only Aḥmad but Muslims in general.

Conveniently, Aḥmad is made (by the playwright) to avoid encountering his erstwhile friends whom he has betrayed, and nobody raises the question with the Queen who, we are suddenly told, is nine months pregnant. Tūrān Shāh becomes the Sultan of Egypt, but he is very rapacious and so alienates Shajarat al-Durr and Aḥmad, the latter because of his interest in Na'īsa.

The agreement between the French and the Muslims is that the French should ransom their King and his family. But the French delay in paying the ransom. Meanwhile, Tūrān Shāh has been killed, and Shajarat al-Durr becomes the Sultāna. Through her kindness, the prisoners are treated well. Margaret goes away to raise the ransom. While she is away, the Muslims attack the town of ~~Damiīta~~ Damietta where the French King has his army. Margaret pays part of the money, and the King and his court are set free. Aḥmad is able to marry Na'īsa at last.

al-Dūdāt wa al-Thu'bān

This is the first of a trilogy dealing with the French invasion of Egypt in 1798. The other two plays were never published, if ever they were written. There are too many characters, possibly as a result of the intended length.

Nothing happens in the first act; it merely describes the situation of Egypt at the time. The focus of attention is a group of blind beggars who are apparently very rich and who are trusted by leading citizens of Cairo. The head of this group is Shaykh Sulaymān. Sulaymān nourishes a private ambition, known to his followers, of ruling Egypt since he is an Egyptian in flesh and blood. He does not believe - and in this he seems to represent the view of the playwright - that the Mamluks will defend Egypt against the French, because they do not belong to the country. They are not dependable in the fight for Allah. The best course of action at this point is to organise a people's army. 'Umar Makram does not agree with Shaykh Sulaymān's solution. He incites the people to riot and to disobey the French. Many rich people, in the face of the French victory, come to deposit their wealth, mostly jewellery, with Shaykh Sulaymān.

Napoleon is now settled in Egypt. There still exist some pockets of resistance to his rule, but he fears the English and the Turks rather than the Egyptians. He is highly-strung, unhappy and restless. He writes a letter and then tears it up. In a discussion with one of his aides, he reveals his aim of coming to Egypt as the liberator of Egyptians from the Mamluks and the Turks. When Shaykh Sulaymān comes to see him, they discuss the possibility of creating companies of soldiers made up of fellahs and other Egyptians. Napoleon is intelligent

enough to see through this, especially the possibility of such a force being deployed against him. After Sulaymān leaves with nothing positive from Napoleon, the wife of Murād Bey, a prisoner of Napoleon, comes to see the Emperor. When Napoleon makes passes at her, she walks out. Napoleon moans that, despite his being conqueror of Italy and victor over the Mamluks, the traitor Murād Bey is happier than he is in that he has a faithful wife. We learn from his soliloquy that he has received a letter that day informing him of the unfaithfulness of Josephine in Paris.

Back in the house of Shaykh Sulaymān, there is a meeting of leaders from the whole of Egypt. The revolution against Napoleon is planned, and an opportunity is awaited to spring a surprise on the complacent French and the Mamluks.

Napoleon visits Shaykh Sulaymān, and offers him the Sultanate of Egypt. Shaykh Sulaymān refuses, and this refusal angers Napoleon. Shaykh Sulaymān suspects that Napoleon is only interested in using him. We learn that ~~Dāūd~~ Dāʾūd, Sulaymān's half-wit of a son, has his wife in the fifth month of pregnancy. We have been told in Act I that she is pregnant. Thus, all the incidents recorded in Acts II and III have taken place within the last five months.

The revolution fails. After seven hundred and twenty-nine people have been interrogated and executed, the French still cannot find the leader of the revolution. One would have expected Napoleon to know or suspect that it is Shaykh Sulaymān. Bā-Kathīr's aim seems to be to make the point that none of the people interrogated feared to die 'fī sabīl Allah'. Napoleon has both Shaykh Sulaymān and his associate, Shaykh al-Sādāt, arrested. They are interrogated and both refuse to admit responsibility for the leadership of the revolt. Napoleon promises Shaykh Sulaymān his safety on condition that he co-operates with him.

'After you have killed my wife, Umm ~~Daūd~~ Dāʾūd?' asks Sulaymān. Napoleon replies that she is alive. She comes out and Shaykh Sulaymān is happy. When Napoleon stretches out his hand to seal their newly made understanding, Shaykh Sulaymān spits on him. Napoleon orders his immediate execution along with Shaykh al-Sādāt. Both of them go to their deaths heroically defiant of the French.

Qiṭaṭ wa Fīrān

There are only five characters in this play - ʿĀdil, the well-read son of Dr. Rāḍī, a gynaecologist; Ramzī, the friend of ʿĀdil; Nafīsa Hānem, mother of Sāmiya and a widow who later marries Dr. Rāḍī, himself a widower, ʿĀdil's mother having died some time earlier. The continuous working hours of Sāmiya threaten to break her marriage. Sāmiya saves all her money. ʿĀdil is dissatisfied as a result of his wife's neglect of him. He talks of murdering her. Nafīsa Hānem supports her daughter, and even advises her to move out of her husband's house and live with her since her life is in danger. Dr. Rāḍī tries to reconcile the young couple, and takes their children to live with him so that they will not witness the tension in their parents' home. Also, Dr. Rāḍī gives money to the couple to ease the financial strain on ʿĀdil's twenty-five pound salary. Sāmiya does not contribute to the housekeeping.

Dr. Rāḍī is alarmed when his son kills a cockerel in order to get practice in taking lives. He takes ʿĀdil to his house to look after him. Both Nafīsa Hānem and Sāmiya also come to stay in Dr. Rāḍī's house. Together the two parents work to reconcile their children. Later ʿĀdil and Sāmiya are reconciled, Sāmiya giving up her work. Both ʿĀdil and Sāmiya find themselves opposed to the proposed marriage between Dr. Rāḍī and Nafīsa Hānem. Later they accept it. With Ramzī,

'Ādil's friend, winning the hand of Qamar, a girl we know nothing about save the name, the number of happy couples rises to three. The only dark shadow is the news that Ramzī's former wife and her new husband have died on their honeymoon in an accident in the Lebanese mountains.

al-Dunyā Fawḍā

La Femme Moderne is a club run by the emancipated women of Egypt headed by the masculine woman president, Sonia. Dr. Ghandūra, another emancipated woman, is a biologist who has been carrying out sex change experiments on guinea-pigs. She now approaches an important stage in her experiments where she needs more money to carry on the work. What is even more important, she needs willing people for this stage of the experiment. Sonia promises to present her request to the executive committee of the club. The club's ideal is the complete liberation of women from the bondage of men. But they spend most of their time in the club discussing clothes. Aḥmad, cousin to Sonia and formally her future husband, calls at the club to see her. From this time to the end of the play, Aḥmad ironically becomes the centre of the action of the play instead of the women. Sūsū, an effeminate man, takes to Aḥmad. Later he drinks some of Dr. Ghandūra's potion and becomes a woman with the name of Susan. Susan now pursues 'her' desire and declares 'her' love for Aḥmad. Sonia, too, takes the potion and becomes a man with the name of Hasanī. 'He' declares 'his' love for Muhja, a beautiful young member of the club. Meanwhile, there is an understanding between Dr. Ghandūra and Aḥmad that she would change everybody in the world to the opposite sex and only the two of them would be left in their natural state. Far-fetched as this dream may seem, Dr. Ghandūra clings to it tenaciously.

The climax of the play comes when we discover that Aḥmad and Muhja are very much in love with one another. Susan is disappointed. Hasanī is angry with Aḥmad for taking his girl-friend. Dr. Ghandūra storms off the stage (or page) calling curses on Aḥmad for betraying her. Hasanī and Susan console one another by deciding to get married. The play ends with Hasanī and Aḥmad discussing the possibility of forming a society for the protection of the rights of men.

Sirr Shahrazād

Shahrayār is in his Queen's bedroom. As usual in the beginning of many of Bā-Kathīr's plays, there is no action. We learn that Shahrayār has sacked his wazir Nūr al-Dīn and replaced him with Rukn al-Dīn who seems to be making a royal mess of everything. The people of the country are discontented. When his Queen is disappointed that Shahrayār is unwilling or unable to go to bed with her, she decides to hurt him. She brings a negro slave into her bed and then encourages one of her servants to tell on her. Shahrayār is enraged and he kills the slave. In further discussions between Budūr, the Queen, and Shahrayār, she calls him a eunuch. So he kills her. In the National Theatre production of this play, Bā-Kathīr writes in Fann al-Masraḥiyya, the play starts from Act II 'so as to avoid any feeling of racial prejudice innocently apparent in Act I'. It would seem more reasonable to say that Act I can be ignored without doing any visible damage to the play. Act II begins three months after Act I. Shahrayār has been taking maidens one for each night and killing them the following morning. Now it is the turn of Nūr al-Dīn's daughter Shahrazād. A friend intervenes, and Shahrayār puts Shahrazād off for seven days and orders the daughter of their neighbour, an old widow, to be taken to his palace. Meanwhile

two men, leaders of commerce, come to Nūr al-Dīn disguised. In a scene reminiscent of Macduff's visit to Malcolm in Macbeth and Cassius' to Brutus in Julius Caesar, these two men urge Nūr al-Dīn to save the country from the ravages of the King. Luckily for him, he is not as enthusiastic in his response as they are in their incitement, because they are in fact agents provocateurs from the King. When the old widow comes crying to Nūr al-Dīn for help, the King enters with armed guards. He 'plays back' (from the verbatim report he has been given) the words of Nūr al-Dīn, and orders his execution. He rescinds his seven-day grace for Shahrazād and orders her to be taken to his palace.

Riḍwān, the wise tutor of Shahrazād, has taught his pupil something which might be useful for her. She is confident that everything will end well. Everybody believes, and the King encourages them to do so, that his action of taking one woman for one night only and killing her in the morning is the result of his disappointment when his wife betrayed his bed with a negro slave.

Shahrazād's secret is that she gives the King the impression that she is fearful of his ardour and finds it difficult to yield to him especially since his fame as a lady-killer frightens her. She also uses her talent for story-telling to her own advantage. She brings her sister with her, and both of them dance for the entertainment of the King. Soon Shahrazād cures Shahrayār of his impotence. But his mind is sick, and he sleep-walks, remembering his crimes, like Lady Macbeth. To cure this malady Shahrazād prepares a re-enactment of the circumstances of Budūr's death. She puts a negro woman in her bed instead of a male. When Shahrayār sees what he thinks to be a man, he is furious, and gets his sword to kill again. Just in time it is revealed to him that he is wrong. He repents, and pays compensation to all who had lost their

daughters during the period of his madness. Furthermore, he endows all young girls getting married that year. With this, everything ends happily.

Sha'b Allāh al-Mukhtār

This play, written to prove that the Arabs, and not the Jews, are God's chosen people, is in the tradition of some of the other plays of Bā-Kathīr: the young are not in agreement with the policies of their elders. They therefore organise a revolutionary take-over of government and we are left with the feeling that everything from then on will be all right. In the particular case of this play, Simon and his uncle, Haym, are opposed to Israel although they are Jews. Simon grew up in Egypt, and we soon learn that he is involved with an underground movement aimed at toppling the Israeli government with the financial and moral support of two American businessmen.

Haym and his wife, Sarah, have an hotel in Tel-Aviv, and all the action of the play takes place here. Haym secretly shares the revolutionary zeal of his nephew, but he cannot support him out of their earnings because of the fear of his wife who does not share this feeling. Rachel, Haym's daughter, is betrothed to Simon. But this does not prevent her, and even her mother Sarah, from prostituting themselves to some of their guests with the knowledge of both Haym and Simon.

When the revolution comes at last, Ben Gurion and those in his government are arrested along with all Members of Parliament. The problem of running the state is temporarily given to an American businessman until everything can be handed over to 'Abd an-Nāṣir. A resolution in the United Nations Organisation says that all Jews in former Israel must go back to their countries of origin.

al-Fallāḥ al-Faṣīḥ

This is not only a simple play, it is sometimes very simplistic. It exemplifies Bā-Kathīr's unrealistic political wishful thinking. A peasant in ancient Egypt, on his way to the market with his harvest, is robbed of both the harvest and the donkey carrying it. He complains to the minister of the king, but the minister takes no action. Khanūm, the peasant, goes to the king. The king does nothing. Khanūm is in fact flogged and imprisoned for his impertinence in lodging complaints against the minister of the king. But he later becomes a member of the king's court when he is released from detention. This gives him the opportunity to discover that the king is just and good but is powerless in the clutches of his unjust and bad minister. Khanūm further discovers that the minister has his eyes on the throne and is deliberately pushing the king to adopt unpopular policies so that there may be a revolution against the king and, in the confusion following it, the minister will take complete control of the country. The king becomes the only power standing between this tyranny and the people.

Khanūm organises the revolution. The people besiege the palace. The minister, his wife, and the man who had robbed Khanūm on his way to the market are all arrested. Khanūm makes a speech to the people to spare the lives of the king and his queen. This is done, and the revolution succeeds.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

BOOKS: ENGLISH AND FRENCH

Adams, C.C. — Islam and Modernism in Egypt, London, 1933.

Ahmad, J.M. — The Intellectual Origins of Egyptian Nationalism, London, 1960.

Antonius, G. — The Arab Awakening, London, 1938.

al-Banna, H. — What is our Message? (reprint, 1968) (No name of translator).

Bentley, E. — The Playwright as Thinker, New York, 1946 (1967 edition).

Bentley, E. (Ed.) — The Theory of the Modern Stage, London, 1968.

Bieber, M. — The History of the Greek and Roman Theatre, Princeton, 1939.

Butcher, S.H. — Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art, London, 1895.

Butler, A.J. — The Arab Conquest of Egypt and the Last Thirty Years of the Roman Dominion, London, 1902.

Brunetière, — The Law of the Drama, New York, 1914.

Cachia, P. — Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, London, 1956.

Cargill, O. — Drama and Liturgy, New York, 1930.

Cohen, G. — Le Théâtre en France au Moyen Âge, Paris, 1928.

Cragg, K. — Counsels in Contemporary Islam, Edinburgh, 1965.

De Guerville, A.B. — New Egypt, London, 1905.

Drioton, E. — Le théâtre égyptien, Cairo, 1942.

Du Meril, E. — Origines Latines du théâtre moderne, Paris, 1839.

Ellis-Fermor, U. — The Frontiers of Drama, London, 1964 (first published 1945).

Erman, A. — The Literature of the Ancient Egyptians, London, 1927.

Freedley and Reeves — A History of the Theatre, New York, 1941.

Freud, S. — Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious (translator, James Strachey), London, 1960.

Gabrieli, F. — The Arab Revival, London, 1961.

Gautier, Leon — Les Tropes, Paris, 1886.

Gibb, H.A.R. — Studies in the Civilizations of Islam, London, 1962.

Harris, C.P. — Nationalism and Revolution in Egypt, London, 1964.

Harrison, J.E. — Ancient Art and Ritual, New York and London, 1913.

Heyworth-Dunne, J. — Religious and Political Trends in Modern Islam, Washington, 1950.

Hitti, P. — History of the Arabs, London, 1946 (3rd Ed.).

Holt, P.M. (Ed.) — Political and Social Change in Modern Egypt, London, 1968.

Hourani, A. — Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, London, 1962.

Hunningher, B. — The Origin of the Theatre, Amsterdam, 1955.

Ismail, Abd El-Monem — Drama and Society in Contemporary Egypt, Cairo, 1967.

Issawi, C. — Egypt in Revolution, London, 1963.

Young, Karl — The Drama of the Mediaeval Church, 2 vols., Oxford, 1933.

Keddie, N.R. — An Islamic Response to Imperialism, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1968.

Kedourie, Elie — Afghani and 'Abduh, London, 1970.

Khouri, Mounah A. — Poetry and the Making of Modern Egypt, 1882 - 1922, vol. i, Leiden, 1971.

Knight, Everett W. — Literature Considered as Philosophy, The French Example, New York, 1962.

Landau, J.M. — Studies in the Arab Theater and Cinema, Philadelphia, 1958.

Lichterstalter, I. — Islam and the Modern Age, New York, 1958.

Linnley, F. — Trends in Twentieth Century Drama, London, 1961.

Lukács, Georg — The Historical Novel, London, 1962 (translators, Hannah and Stanley Mitchell).

Magnin, C. — Origines du théâtre moderne, Paris, 1849.

Makarius, R. — La jeunesse intellectuelle d'Égypte au lendemain de la deuxième guerre mondiale, Paris, 1960.

Mansfield, P. — Nasser's Egypt, London, 1965 (revised ed. 1969).

Meisel, M. — Shaw and the Nineteenth Century Theatre, London, 1963.

Nasser, A. — Egypt's Liberation: The Philosophy of the Revolution, Washington, 1955.

Nicoll, A. — The Theory of Drama, London, 1931.

Pritchard-Cambridge, A.W. — Dithyramb Tragedy and Comedy, Oxford, 1927.

Ribner, I. — The English History Play in the Age of Shakespeare, New Jersey, 1957.

Safran, N. — Egypt in Search of Political Community, Massachusetts, 1961.

Sepet, M. — Origines Catholiques du théâtre moderne, Paris, 1901.

Sakkūt, H. — The Egyptian Novel and its Main Trends, 1913 to 1952, Cairo, 1971.

Smith, W.C. — Islam in Modern History, New York, 1957.

Vatikiotis, P.J. — The Egyptian Army in Politics, Indiana, 1961.

Vatikiotis, P.J. — The Modern History of Egypt, London, 1969.

Vatikiotis, P.J. (Ed.) — Egypt since the Revolution, London, 1968.

Styan, J.L. — The Dark Comedy, Cambridge, 1962.

Traore, B. — Le théâtre Négro-Africain et ses fonctions sociales, Paris, 1958.

ARTICLES: ENGLISH AND FRENCH

Adedeji, J.A. — 'The Place of Drama in Yoruba Religion', ODU - University of Ife Journal of African Studies, vol. iii, no. 1, July 1966.

Atlantic Monthly — 'The Shadow Play' (illustrated) 198, Oct. 1956.

Badawi, M.M. — 'Islam in Modern Egyptian Literature', Journal of Arabic Literature, vol. ii, 1972.

Badawi, M.M. — 'Shakespeare and the Arabs', Cairo Studies, 1964/65.

Barbour, N. — 'The Arabic Theatre in Egypt', Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies, vol. 8, 1935 - 37.

Bushrui, S.B. 'Shakespeare and Arabic Drama and Poetry', IBADAN no. 20, Oct. 1964.

Cachia, P. 'The use of the colloquial in Modern Arabic Literature', Journal of the American Oriental Society, vol. 87, no. 1 (Jan.-March 1967).

Cachia, P. 'The Assumptions and Aspirations of Egyptian Modernists' (unpublished).

Cachia, P. 'Themes related to Christianity and Judaism in Modern Egyptian Drama and Fiction', Journal of Arabic Literature, vol. ii, 1971.

Cachia, P. 'The dramatic monologues of al-Ma'arri', Journal of Arabic Literature, vol. i, 1970.

Cohen, Gustave 'Were there theatres in the 12th and the 13th centuries?', Speculum, vol. xx, no. 1, 1945.

Chejne, Anwar G. 'The Use of History by Modern Arab Writers', Middle East Journal, 14 (1960).

Drewes, G.W.J. 'Indonesia: Mysticism and Activism', Unity and Diversity in Muslim Civilization, 1955.

Dubech, Lucien 'Histoire générale illustrée du Théâtre', Journal of English and Germanic Philology, 30, 1931.

Fausset, H. 'Influence of Walt Whitman on the origin of the Vers Libre', Modern Language Review, April, 1916.

Gad, Laila F. 'The Puppet Theatre in Cairo', World Theatre, Sept. - Oct. 1915.

Hussein, Aziza — 'The Role of Women in Social Reform in Egypt', Middle East Journal, vol. III, 1953.

Hussein, Taha — 'Tendances Religieuses de la littérature égyptienne d'aujourd'hui', L'Islam et L'Occident, 1947.

Johns, A.H. — 'The role of Sufism in the spread of Islam to Malaya and Indonesia', Journal of Pakistani Historical Society, 9 (1961).

Johns, A.H. — 'Sufism as a category in Indonesian literature and history', Journal of South-East Asian History, 2 (1961).

Kaplinsky, Z. — 'Muslim Brotherhood', Middle Eastern Affairs, vol. v, no. 12, 1954; vol. v, no. 3, 1954.

Keddie, N.R. — 'The Pan-Islamic Appeal: Afghānī and Abdulhamid II', Middle Eastern Studies, III, 1 (1966).

Keddie, N.R. — 'Sayyid Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī's First 27 Years: The Darkest Period', Middle East Journal, xx, 4 (1966).

Keddie, N.R. — 'Afghānī in Afghanistan', Middle East Studies, I, 4 (1965).

Kedourie, Elie — 'Further light on Afghani', Middle Eastern Studies, Jan. 1965.

Khouri, Mounah A. — 'L. Awad: a Pioneer of the Free Verse Movement', Journal of Arabic Literature, vol. 1, 1970.

Laflin, Louise E. Jnr. — 'Egyptian Pyramid Drama of Resurrection', Theatre Arts Monthly, May 1941.

Laoust, Henri — 'Le réformisme musulman dans la littérature Arabe contemporaine', Orient, 10 (1959).

Leiden, C. 'Egypt: Drift to the Left', Middle Eastern Affairs, vol. xiii, Dec. 1962, vol. xiv, no. 1, Jan. 1963.

Milson, M. 'The Elusive Jamal al-Din al-Afghani', Muslim World, vol. lviii, 1968.

Moreh, S. 'Blank verse (al-shi'r al-mursal) in Modern Arabic Literature', Bulletin of ~~the~~ School of Oriental and African Studies, vol. 29, 1966.

Moreh, S. 'Free verse (al-shi'r al-ḥurr) in Modern Arabic Literature: Abu Shadi and his school, 1926 - 1946', Bulletin of ~~the~~ School of Oriental and African Studies, vol. 31, 1968.

Morrisseau-Leroy, Felix 'Theatre in the African Revolution', Présence Africaine, no. 52, 1964.

Ogunba, Oyin 'Theatre in Nigeria', Présence Africaine, 1966.

Prufer, C. 'Drama - Arabic', Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, vol. 4, 1912 edition.

Rizzitano, Umberto 'Reactions to Western political influences in 'Ali Ahmad Ba-Kathir's Drama', Historians of the Middle East, Oxford, 1962.

Shafik, Doria 'Egyptian Feminism', Middle Eastern Affairs, vol. III, no. 8 - 9.

Tibbetts, G.R. 'Pre-Islamic Arabia and South-East Asia', Journal of the Madras Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, 56 (1956).

Van der Kroef, J.M. 'The Indonesian Arabs', Civilizations, 5 (1955).

Von der Mehden, F.R. 'Marxism and Early Indonesian Islamic Nationalism', Political Science Quarterly, 73 (1958).

Vredenbregt, J. 'The Haddj: some of its features and functions in Indonesia', Bijdragen tot de taal - land - en Volkenkunde, 118 (1962).

World Theatre 'Glance at the origin of the Arab Theatre', xiv, Nov. 1965.

World Theatre 'The precursors of the Arab Theatre', xvi, ii (1967).

BOOKS: ARABIC

Abyaḍ, Su'ād Jurj Abyaḍ: al-Masraḥ al-Miṣrī fī mi'at 'ām, Cairo, 1965.

Amīn, Aḥmad Ḥayātī, Cairo, 1961.

'Awaḍ, Louis Maqālāt fī al-Naqd al-Adabī, Cairo, 1964.

'Awaḍ, Louis al-Adab wa al-Thawra, Cairo, 1967.

Badr, Ṭāhā Taṭawwur al-Riwāyya al-'Arabiyya al-Ḥadītha fī Miṣr: 1870 - 1938, Cairo, 1968.

Ḍayf, Shawqī Dirāsāt fī al-shi'r al-'Arabī al-mu'āṣir, Cairo, 19

Dawwarah, Fu'ād 'Asharāt Udaba' yataḥaddathūn, Cairo, 1965.

Fahmī, M.H. Taṭawwur al-shi'r al-'Arabī al-Hadīth fī Miṣr 1900 - 1950, Cairo, 1958.

Ḥamrūsh, Aḥmad al-Masraḥ ... mīn al-Kawālīs, Cairo, 1966.

'Id, al-Sayyid Ḥassān — Taṭawwur al-Naqd al-Masraḥī fī Miṣr, Cairo, 1962.

al-Maghribī, 'Abd al-Qādir — Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī, Iqra' series no. 68, Cairo, n.d.

Mandūr, Muḥammad — al-Masraḥ al-Nathrī, Cairo, n.d.

Mandūr, Muḥammad — al-Adab wa Funūnuhu, Cairo, 1963.

Mandūr, Muḥammad — Muḥāḍarāt 'an Masraḥiyyāt Shawqī, Cairo, 1955.

Muḥāsib, Ḥasan — Qaḍiyyat al-Fallāḥ fī al-Qiṣṣa al-Miṣriyya, Cairo, 1971.

Najm, M. Yūsuf — al-Masraḥiyya fī al-Adab al-'Arabī al-Ḥadīth, Beirut, 1956.

al-Naqqāsh, Rajā' — Ūdabā' Mu'āṣirūn, Cairo, 1971.

al-Rā'i, 'Alī — Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm, Cairo, 1969.

al-Rā'i, 'Alī — al-Kumidiyā al-Murtajala fī al-Masraḥ al-Miṣrī, Cairo, 1968.

al-Rā'i, 'Alī — Dirāsāt fī al-Riwāyya al-Miṣriyya, Cairo, 1964.

Rashīd, Fu'ād — Tārīkh al-Masraḥ al-'Arabī, Cairo, 1960.

Ṣurūr, Najīb — Ḥiwār fī al-Masraḥ, Cairo, 1969.

Sharaf al-Dīn, Aḥmad — al-Khalīfa al-'Ādil 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, Cairo, n.d. 2 vols.

Shukrī, Ghālī — Thawrat al-Mu'tazil: dirāsāt fī Adab Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm, Cairo, 1966.

Taymūr, Maḥmūd — Ṭulū' al-Masraḥ al-'Arabī, Cairo, 1963.

Taymūr, Maḥmūd — al-Shakhṣiyāt al-'Ishrūn, Cairo, 1969.

'Ukāsha, Tharwat (translator) — al-Masraḥ al-Miṣrī al-Qadīm, Cairo, 1966.

ARTICLES: ARABIC

ʻAzīza, Muḥammad	'al-Islām wa al-Masraḥ', al-Hilāl, Jan. 1971.
Idrīs, Yūsuf	'Naḥw Masraḥ Miṣrī', al-Kātib, Jan., Feb., March 1964.
Al-Sharūnī, Yūsuf	'Lughat al-Ḥiwār bayn al-ʻāmmiyya wa al-fuṣḥā', al-Adab, Jan. 1963.
Farīḥ, al-Farīd	'al-Masraḥ al-Miṣrī: ʻarabiyyatūhu wa ʻālamiyyatūhu', al-Adab, May 1971.
Yūnūs, ʻAbd al-Ḥamīd	'Masraḥ al-Fūlklūr', al-Masraḥ, Oct. 1969.
Yūnūs, ʻAbd al-Ḥamīd	'al-Dirāmā al-Shaʻbiyya', al-Masraḥ, Jan. 1970.
Yūnūs, ʻAbd al-Ḥamīd	'al-Fūlklūr ... mā huwa?', al-Adab, Nov. 1965.
Ismāʻīl, ʻIzz al-Dīn	'Masraḥ Bā-Kathīr al-Shiʻrī', al-Masraḥ, Feb., April 1970 (in two parts).
al-Quṭṭ, ʻAbd al-Qādir	'al-Buṭūla fī al-Adab al-Masraḥī', al-Adab, Jan. 1959.
Ṣāliḥ, Aḥmad ʻAbbās	'Masraḥ Nuʻmān ʻĀshūr', al-Masraḥ, July/Aug. 1970.

INTRODUCTIONS: ARABIC

al-Ḥakīm, Tawfīq	Introduction to al-Malik Ūdīb (a play), Cairo, 1949.
Taymūr, Maḥmūd	Introduction to Shelter No. 13 (a play), Cairo, 1949.

SPECIAL NUMBERS OF ARABIC MAGAZINES DEVOTED TO ARABIC DRAMA:

al-Majalla	vol. 10, no. 111, March 1966.
al-Adab	Jan. 1959, 'The Hero in Arabic Drama'.
al-Adab	Jan. 1957.

BROADCAST: ARABIC

Radio Cairo — Mā' al-Udabā' - Interview with Bā-Kathīr (a recording preserved by Bā-Kathīr's widow) some time in 1968.

NEWSPAPERS: ARABIC

al-Ahrām

al-Akhbār

al-Jumhūriyya

al-Jīl

al-Kawākib

al-Masā'

al-Muḥarrar

Waṭanī

UNPUBLISHED THESES CONSULTED:

'Abdalhamid, Muḥammad 'Affat — Dirāsa wa Muqārana li-fann al-Usṭūra fī Masraḥ Bā-Kathīr, College of Theatre Arts, M.A. Cairo, 1960.

Adelugba, Dapo — Nationalism and the Awakening National Theatre of Nigeria, University of California, M.A. Los Angeles, 1964.

Abou Saif, Laila Nessim — The Theatre of Naguib al-Rihani: The Development of Comedy in Modern Egypt, University of Illinois, Ph.D. Illinois, 1969.

El-Nazmi — The Modern Arabic Historical Novel, London University, Ph.D. London, 1966.

El-Tayib, Ahmad — The Drama in Arabic 1848 - 1950, University of London, Ph.D. London, 1954.

Farag, Nadia — Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm and his search for a national culture, American University in Cairo, M.A. Cairo, 1965.

Haggag, Nadia — Changes in Egyptian family life from Muḥammad 'Alī till the present, American University in Cairo, M.A. Cairo, 1958.

Ibrahim — The Decline of the 'Ulamā' and the Rise of the Modern Intellectuals, Oxford University, D.Phil. Oxford, 1970.

Kettle, Arnold — The relation of political and social ideas to the novel of the English romantic revival, Cambridge University, Ph.D. Cambridge, 1941.

Semah, D. — Four Modern Egyptian Critics, Oxford University, D.Phil. Oxford, 1969.

Somekh, Sassoon — The Novels of Najīb Maḥfūẓ: an Appraisal, Oxford University, D.Phil. Oxford, 1968.

THE MAIN WORKS OF BĀ-KATHĪR:

Plays

Akhnātūn wa Nifirtītī

Rūmīyū wa Jūlyīt (translated from Shakespeare)

Humām

Sirr al-Ḥākim bi-amrillah

al-Duktūr Ḥāzim

Mismār Juḥā

Ma'sāt Ūdīb

Imbirāṭūrīyya fī al-Mazād

Ilāh Isrā'īl

Hārūt wa Mārūt

al-Za'īm al-Awḥad

Gulfidān Hānem

Epic Drama

'Alā Aswār Dimashq

Ma'rakat al-Jisr

Kisrā wa Qayṣār

Abṭāl al-Yarmūk

Turāb min Arḍ Fāris

Rustam

Novels

Salāma al-Qass

Wā Islāmāh

Sīrat Shujā'

al-Thā'ir al-Aḥmar

Criticism

Fann al-Masraḥiyya min khilāl tajāribī al-shakhṣiyya