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1984

Egyptian Attitudes toward Warfare

in Recent Theatre and Dramatic Literature

by

William Allen Scott

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Abstract

EGYPTIAN ATTITUDES TOWARD WARFARE

IN RECENT THEATRE AND DRAMATIC LITERATURE

by William Allen Scott

Chairperson of the Supervisory Committee: Professor John R. Wolcott

School of Drama

Egypt is the center of theatre activity in the Arab world. During its brief but productive history, Egyptian theatre has frequently broached sensitive political topics.

Ali Salem's The Oedipus Comedy or You Who Killed the Beast deals with government accountability and public responsibility. In this version of the Oedipus story, a comedy set in ancient Egyptian Thebes, the sphynx keeps returning, despite Oedipus' answers. The Egyptians learn that confronting a threat to peace is the responsibility of all the people. The play appeared in the wake of the 1967 war with Israel, and despite the play's comic style, The Oedipus Comedy or You Who Killed the Beast is a serious examination of the factors which led to the Arab defeat.

Mahmoud Diab's Messenger from Tumayra Village is a tale of suffering behind the lines as family members contend for ownership of the land that feeds them. Set in a small Delta village during the 1973 war, the play deals directly with contemporary hostilities and their effects upon the peasant class. Not only does Messenger from Tumayra Village give a realistic, personalized representation of the problems which war with Israel has created, but it shows the pride with which the Egyptians viewed their performance in the 1973 war.

But the war with Israel is not the only political issue treated in these plays. They also deal with the dangers of repressive leadership, with censorship, propaganda, and bureaucratic incompetence, with

government accountability and public responsibility. Above all, the plays deal with the victims of all these problems -- the Egyptian people.

The purpose of this work is threefold: to bring to English-speaking audiences my translations of two stylistically diverse plays of artistic merit; to provide a framework for understanding modern Egyptian drama; and to focus attention on Egyptian perceptions of one of the most important dilemmas in the Middle East -- the problem of Palestine. My greatest hope is that theatre producers and directors may use my research to bring these plays to the stage or, at least, to give greater authenticity to productions of other plays which deal with Arabs or Egyptians.

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Preface

My first awareness of the Arab world developed during 1966 and 1967. I was a soldier, assigned to study Arabic at the Defence Language Institute in Monterey, California. I got into a little trouble for acting in local theatres without official permission, but I kept up with my studies, learned to read, write, and understand Arabic, and absorbed a great deal of information about Arab culture.

Two-thirds of the way through the year-long course, the six-day war erupted. I followed the events in fascination and amazement. At the time, for me, war was something that happened on maps, in books and newspapers, and on television screens. I observed and sometimes took part in heated debates about strategies and legalities, about who was right and who was wrong, who would win and who would lose.

The United States Army, in typical fashion, sent me to Massachusetts for cross-training as a communications intelligence analyst, and then packed me off to the Viet Nam War. Although I worked primarily indoors as an analyst and reporter, I had ample opportunity to witness the brutal reality that transcends maps and statistics. Finally, I learned to doubt the political rationalizations that attempt to justify the slaughter of human beings.

In 1970 I returned to civilian life and my career in theatre. As a part of my studies at Western Washington University I travelled with a theatre study program to London in 1972. From England I took a vacation and hitch-hiked to Morocco, guided, perhaps, by my still dormant interest in the Arab world. For several months I read books and practiced Arabic, and then I returned home to resume my work and study in theatre. But I had begun to formulate plans for combining my interests in theatre and foreign language.

Ten years after the Six Day War and graduation from the Defence Language Institute, I enrolled in a doctoral program at the University of Washington that led to my specialization in Egyptian theatre. My studies in the School of Drama greatly expanded my knowledge of

aesthetics, theatre history and dramatic criticism, while my work in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Literature increased my knowledge of Arabic language, literature, history, music, and theatre art; but it was not until the summer of 1980 as a Center for Arabic Studies Abroad fellow that I had the opportunity to visit Cairo and gain first-hand knowledge of Egyptian theatre. Several worthy plays were recommended to me by Egyptian theatre professionals. I returned to Seattle and spent two years translating the plays included in this anthology. Then I was faced with a choice: either remain in Seattle and complete the research necessary to write about the historical and political background of the plays or utilize the limited funding still available to me and return to Egypt. Rather than gamble on a future opportunity, I went back to Egypt in 1983 and gathered as much information as possible from government archives and theatre practitioners. If some questions remain unanswered, it is an indication, not only that such questions surfaced after my return to the United States, but also that much remains to be written about Egyptian theatre beyond the scope of this project. The following pages are the product of my research since 1977.

Language Notes

The Threat of Non Comprehension

The swarming crowds of Cairo can make Western visitors feel apprehensive. The less visitors understand of Arab language and culture, the more they will experience anxiety and fear. If these visitors have been indoctrinated by centuries of distorted information about 'The Orient', they may feel threatened by even the most mundane conversations overheard on the street. Imagine the following, ficticious conversation from the perspective of a nervous foreigner who sees only the excited gestures and hears without comprehending as two Egyptians shout to be heard over the din of the traffic.

"Look out for that car!"

"Never mind. Come on. Let's cross over there."

"Hey, look! A foreigner!"

"What strange clothes. By God, do you see his shoes?"

"I saw him before at the market. Oh, and I saw Abdel Hamid's boy, too. He said to give his greetings to your father."

"May God bless him. By the way, have you been to the government grocery yet? Rice is on sale."

Egyptians are usually as wrapped up in the pleasures and drudgeries of everyday living as are any people anywhere. What differs from place to place -- whether from district to district in Cairo, country to country in the Arab world, or from nation to nation in the world at large -- is the set of circumstances which determine the availability of daily bread, housing, clothing, work, transportation, and money.

Classical and Colloquial Arabic

Written and spoken Arabic can differ to such an extent that a scholar trained to read the language might fail to understand a simple conversation. There are, in fact, hundreds of spoken dialects in the Arab world and several versions of the Egyptian colloquial dialect known as al-'ammīya. Classical Arabic, al-fusha, is principally a written language, although as the official language of Arabs from Morocco to Iraq it is also the spoken language of Arab diplomacy. Al-fusha is also the language of the Koran, so it is widely understood in a religious context. In Egypt, however, where approximately seventy-five percent of the people are illiterate, al-'ammīya is the basis of communication.

Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) is the currently accepted form of al-fusha which is found in modern newspapers, but it is still only a slightly simplified version of the Arabic found in the Koran and in the volumes of classical literature which have amassed during fourteen centuries of Islamic civilisation. Modern Egyptians may with some difficulty understand al-fusha, but they speak to one another in al-'ammīya. Consequently, the use of al-'ammīya in drama has become increasingly widespread. Both of the plays translated for this anthology were written in versions of al-'ammīya.

Transliteration

The Arabic language can sometimes intimidate readers unfamiliar with the variety of ways in which Arabic vowels and consonants are transliterated into Roman letters. The problem is especially acute for actors, who need to vocalize the dialogue in plays. Table One and the glossary included in this section are designed to minimize this problem.

Arabic is a phonetic language, like Spanish or Italian, but some Arabic letters lack equivalents in European languages. Numerous systems have been devised to render Arabic into Roman characters, and so several

variations for a single letter may be found in common usage. Words in dialect and spellings of names reflect regional and personal choices which have become conventional, supplanting more precise but artificial versions. Such conventions have generally been followed in this work. For example, the playwrights' names are rendered according to common usage rather than strict phonetic transliteration: Ali Salem ('Alī Sālim) and Mahmoud Diab (Mahmūd Diyāb).

The primary transliteration system used in this text is the Library of Congress system of the United States. The letters 'b', 'f', 'k', 'l', 'm', and 'n' are pronounced as they would be in English. The letters 's', 'd', 't', and 'z' each have two forms, the common sounds associated in English with these letters and emphatic forms indicated as 'ṣ', 'ḍ', 'ṭ', and 'ẓ'. The difference between emphatic and non-emphatic letters is academic at best and confusing at worst for non-speakers of Arabic. Consequently, the dots below emphatics are omitted in the following pages (excluding references, quotations, Table One and the glossary). Scholars familiar with the language will be able to determine proper spellings with a little extra thought.

The hamza is simply a glottal stop, a momentary interruption of air and sound with the back of the throat. Although the English alphabet has no hamza, the English language does form the sound at the beginning of words which start with vowels. In Arabic, however, the sound may also occur in the middle or at the end of a word.

The 'ayn uses the same vocal mechanism required to make a hamza, but instead of an interruption, the 'ayn generates a sort of creaking noise which may alter the sound of a neighboring vowel.

The precise sounds of hamza and 'ayn are perhaps less important to pronunciation than the functions they fulfill. Hamza aids in articulation, in the separation of syllables; 'ayn also adds emphasis, especially when joined to a long vowel or diphthong. Further explanation would require the presence of a native speaker. In general,

the two consonants are sufficiently similar to warrant using the same symbol, an apostrophe, to indicate either hamza or 'ayn.

A letter which may be particularly confusing is hā'. Not only does Arabic have two versions of the letter, one soft and unobtrusive (h), the other given slightly stronger aspiration (ḥ); but several other Arabic letters require a two-letter romanization which pairs 'h' with other consonants -- e.g., 'th', 'dh', 'kh', and 'gh'. These compounds are explained in Table One. The soft 'h' which indicates a feminine ending has generally been omitted (except when a word appears in a reference, quotation, or contextual passage). So 'h' at the end of a word generally implies the more emphatic, aspirated 'ḥ'. A word of caution: 'ḥ' is less emphatic than 'kh', which has a more gutteral quality. 'Kh' is like an aspirated rather than voiced 'gh', which sounds similar to the gutteral 'r' of French. The 'r' in Arabic is never pronounced in the American fashion. It is more of a trilled sound, such as occurs in Spanish or Italian.

Hamza, 'ayn, ghayn (gh), rā' (r), and letters which require an 'h' in transliteration are the most difficult Arabic consonants. The principal vowels are 'a', 'i', and 'u'. The addition of lines over vowels ('ā', 'ī', 'ū') provides a two-fold hint about pronunciation. First, a line indicates that the vowel is to be lengthened in duration and therefore stressed. Thus, the line over a vowel implies an accented syllable. If more than one vowel is lined in a single word, the Egyptian practice is generally to emphasize the penultimate syllable. The addition of a line over a vowel may also accentuate a diphthong if the vowel is followed by a second vowel or the letter 'y' or 'w'. In some transliteration systems 'o' and 'e' are utilized. These letters generally receive less emphasis than 'a'. Compounds, such as 'ai' and 'ou', represent transliteration variations of diphthongs. Consequently, these compounds receive greater emphasis.

Many Arabic words have only three basic consonants. Occasionally, one of the consonants is doubled -- even if the pair concludes a word.

In the middle of a word, doubled consonants mark the end of one syllable and the beginning of another. The word feddan, for instance, is pronounced 'fed-dan' rather than 'fe-ddan'. Arabic has no silent letters, so articulation is an important feature of an Arab accent. Also, each syllable must contain a vowel or diphthong.

The flow of Arabic is as important as articulation. The use of contractions in translated dialogue is intended to generate a sense of the flow of spoken language. Punctuation and phrasing are, whenever possible, reflections of the original speech patterns.

Thanks to the supervision of my translation efforts by Professors Nicholas Heer and Muhammad Siddiq of the University of Washington, the English versions of the two plays in this anthology have a strong literal foundation. However, the translations have been revised for style and speakability. Any resultant errors are my own responsibility.

Table One encapsulates basic rules of transliteration and pronunciation which pertain to typically difficult Arabic sounds. The Glossary defines the few Arabic words which are used in dialogue and explains the pronunciation of titles, names, and untranslated expressions. Capital letters indicate accented syllables.

One final subject which requires explanation at this point is the use of the letter 's' (in endnotes as well as within brackets in the translated texts). The Arabic word for page is safha; thus, 's' indicates page numbers in Arabic sources.

Table One -- Guide to
Arabic Transliteration and Pronunciation

Library of Congress Symbols	Name of letter(s) -- Description and/or Pronunciation Example(s)	Variations in Text
'	hamza -- glottal stop; as initial sound in 'apt', 'eat', 'in', 'urn', 'out'.	
'	'ayn -- voiced pharyngeal fricative; sort of creaking sound.	'
th	thā' -- Standard: aspirated 'th' as in 'thing' Egyptian: 's' or 't'	s/t
dh	dhāl -- Standard: voiced 'th' as in 'then' Egyptian: 'd' or 'z'	d/z
ḥ	ḥā' -- emphatic, aspirated 'h'	h
kh	khā' -- 'ch' as in German 'ich' or Scottish 'loch'	x
gh	ghayn -- pharyngeal sound similar to French gutteral 'r'	
j	jīm -- Standard: 'j' as in 'jump' Egyptian: 'g' as in 'go'	g
q	qāf -- Standard: hard 'k' sound Egyptian: glottal stop or 'g'	k
a	fatḥa short vowel; as in 'cat', 'bet'	e
u	ḍamma -- short vowel: as in 'put'	o
i	kasra -- short vowel: as in 'sit'	e
ā	alif -- long vowel: as in 'father'	a/aa
ū	wāw -- long vowel: as in 'lute'	u/ou
ī	yā' -- long vowel: as in 'feet'	ii/ee
aw	fatḥa-wāw -- diphthong: as in 'show' or 'loud'	au
ay	fatḥa-yā' -- diphthong: as in 'try' or 'tray'	ai

Glossary

Abū Sharaf -- Character name: A-bu SHA-raf. Abū means 'father'.

Abūl-Hūl -- (Abū al-Hūl) Character name modified to ease pronunciation: A-bul-HUL.

Ahlan wa sahlan -- 'Hello' or 'welcome'; a common greeting: AH-lan-wa-SAH-lan. The 'h' is soft, but apparent. Sometimes the greeting is shortened: Ahlan. Ahlan bīkī (BI-ki) means: 'Greetings to you'.

Aḥmad Abū 'Ārif -- Character name: AH-mad a-bu 'A-rif. Note the aspirated 'ḥ' in Aḥmad also occurs in Ḥāmid and Muḥammad.

Aḥmas -- Character name: AH-mas.

Anisa -- 'Miss'; a polite title for a young, unmarried woman: a-NI-sa.

'Atwa -- Character name: 'AT-wa.

Awālih -- Character name: a-WA-lih. The final 'h' is aspirated.

'Ayisha -- Character name: 'AY-yi-sha. Note doubling of 'y' in pronunciation.

Bāsha -- A title of respect left over from Ottoman times: BA-sha. Also: Pasha.

Bura'ī Abū Zaydān -- Character name: bu-ra-'I a-bu-zay-DAN

Dasūqī -- Character name: da-SU-'i. Note that the Egyptian 'q' is pronounced as a glottal stop.

Effendim -- A polite way of asking for clarification, i.e., 'pardon?' ef-FEN-dim?

'Ezzat -- Character name: 'EZ-zat.

Fedayeen -- The Palestinian underground resistance: fe-day-YEEN.

feddan -- A measure of land area; roughly an acre: fed-DAN.

fellah -- Farmer or rural peasant: fel-LAH. Note that 'h' is aspirated. Plurals: fellahs or fellahin (fel-la-HIN).

Fikrī Abū Ismā'Īl -- Character name: FIK-ri a-bu is-ma-'IL. Some characters substitute 'n' for 'l' in informal usage.

Gābir Abū Sa'Īd -- Character name: GA-bir a-bu sa'ID.

Haḍr -- A title of respect roughly equivalent to 'sir'. Used with pronoun endings: HA-dri-TAK -- 'your presence'.

Ḥājj -- An honorific used by Muslims who have made the pilgrimage to Mecca: HAJJ.

Ḥāmid -- Character name: HA-mid.

Hor Muḥeb -- Character name: HOR mu-HEB. Note that both 'ḥ's' are aspirated.

'irsh -- Name of a coin, roughly worth a penny: 'IRSH. Plural: 'i-RUSH.

Ismailia -- Name of a town on the Suez Canal. Spelled in text as pronounced by characters: Ismā'ilīya (is-ma-'i-LI-ya) or Ismā'nīya (is-ma'-NI-ya).

Kā'it -- Character name: KA-'it.

Kāmi -- Character name: KA-mi.

Khedive -- Title granted to Egyptian rulers in the 19th century by the Ottoman sultan.

Koran -- The word of God as revealed to Muhammad and recorded in writing: Qur-'AN.

Mā'a salāma -- Arabic expression meaning 'in peace', 'good-bye', or 'farewell': MA-'a sa-LA-ma.

al-Ma'āhida -- Place name in Egypt: al-ma-'A-hi-da.

Maḥrūs -- Character name: mah-RUS. Note aspirated 'ḥ'.

mastaba -- Stone bench: MAS-ta-ba.

Mitwalli -- Character name: mit-WAL-li.

al-Murra -- Name of a bitter lake on the Suez Canal: al-MUR-ra.

Musaylihi -- Character name: mu-SAY-li-hi. Note aspirated 'ḥ'.

Nefer -- Character name: NE-fer.

Ragīya -- Character name: ra-GI-ya.

riyāl -- Name of a coin worth about a nickel -- ri-YAL.

al-Ṣādiq Abū 'Umar -- Character name: as-SA-diq a-bu- 'U-mar.

Ṣa'dīya -- Character name: sa'-DI-ya.

al-Sālihīya -- Place name in Egyptian Delta/Canal region: al-SA-li-HI-ya.

Sāmiya Shākir -- Character name: SA-mi-ya SHA-kir.

Sayid -- Title; roughly equivalent to 'mister': SAY-yid. Also appears in abbreviated forms: Sīdī (SI-di) and Sīy (SIY).

Senefru -- Character name: se-NE-fru.

Sitt -- Title; roughly, 'lady' or 'Mrs.': SITT.

Sutūḥī -- Character name: su-TU-hi. Note aspirated 'h'.

Tumayra -- Name of Diab's fictitious village: tu-MAY-ra.

Umm Fikrī -- Character name: UMM FIK-ri. Umm means 'mother'; Umm Fikrī means 'mother of Fikrī'.

Ustādh -- Respectful title used for educated people; roughly, 'professor': us-TADH. In conversation the 'dh' becomes 'z': Ustāz (us-TAZ).

Uwnaḥ -- Character name: UW-nah. Note aspirated 'ḥ'.

Yā salām! -- Expression of surprise, admiration, or dismay; roughly, oy vey!: YA sa-LAM!

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The author wishes to express sincere appreciation to Professors Heer and Siddiq for their guidance related to Arabic and Arab studies; to Professors Loper and Hostetler for their critical comments pertaining to theatre and drama; and particularly to Professor Wolcott for his patient and enthusiastic supervision of this project. In addition, special thanks to the following people in Egypt: Abbas El Tonsy for advising me to translate these plays; Ali Salem, Isma'īl Diab, Yūsuf Shawqī, 'Alī al-Ra'ī, Laila Abou-Saif, John Swanson, David Woodman, Samīr Awad of the theatre archives, and my friend Dwight Reynolds. Thanks also to Paige Gay of Word Wizards for her conscientious aid in preparing the manuscript. Finally, a special thanks to my wife, Victoria Artimovich, for providing inspiration, advice, and understanding during all stages of this project.

DEDICATION

To my parents

William and Edith

General Introduction

How are the problems confronting the Palestinians similar to those facing the Egyptian people? What progress was made by the Egyptian people during the Nasser and Sadat regimes toward solving these common problems? And how are answers to such controversial questions communicated within a society where political dissent is often suppressed?

Playwrights can sometimes avoid censorship by veiling their political messages in irony, allegory, or symbolism. Drama establishes a mythical language which can reaffirm, modify, or replace prevalent attitudes. Language, music, spectacle, plot, and character, can all reflect or reproduce the ideas of a dramatic work. Throughout its history theatre has provided a forum for political expression.

Egypt is the center of theatre activity in the Arab world. During its brief but productive history, Egyptian theatre has frequently broached sensitive political topics. Such is the case with the plays translated for this anthology.

The Plays and the Issues

Ali Salem's The Oedipus Comedy or You Who Killed the Beast deals with government accountability and public responsibility. In this version of the Oedipus story, a comedy set in ancient Egyptian Thebes, the sphynx keeps returning, despite Oedipus' answers. The Egyptians learn that confronting a threat to peace is the responsibility of all the people. The play appeared in the wake of the 1967 war with Israel, and despite the play's comic style, The Oedipus Comedy or You Who Killed the Beast is a serious examination of the factors which led to the Arab defeat. Oedipus, like Nasser, tries to bridge five thousand years of civilization in the face of external aggression and internal intrigue. Oedipus contends, not only with the Beast that threatens the city, but with traditional characters (such as Jokasta, Kreon, and

Tiresias) and with modern characters (including Awālih, the Chief of Police, and Hor Muheb, the Director of the University, and Uwnah, the Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce). The chorus consists of Theban citizens, a few of whom are treated individually, illustrating the plight of the common people caught up in the conflict. The juxtaposition of comic style and serious theme is paralleled by the use of traditional and modern characters, by a set design in Pharaonic style which includes radios, televisions and telephones, and by traditional theatrical techniques, such as shadow puppetry and storytelling, utilized in conjunction with modern techniques, such as fast-paced scenes punctuated by lighting changes. The play was produced in 1970 at Cairo's Muhammad Farīd Theatre by the al-Hakīm Theatre Company.

Mahmoud Diab's Messenger from Tumayra Village is a tale of suffering behind the lines as family members contend for ownership of the land that feeds them. Set in a small Delta village during the 1973 war, the play deals directly with contemporary hostilities and their effects upon the peasant class. The central character is Abū 'Ārif, known to his neighbors as 'Father Newspaper' because of his habitual, compulsive reading of the daily newspapers. When war breaks out, the villagers turn to him for news reports and analysis -- their only other source of information being a tempermental transistor radio. Other important characters include Fikrī Abū Ismā'īl, a soldier in the Egyptian army who is sent to fight in the war, leaving behind his sweetheart and his family. While he is away, his uncle steals prime farmland from Fikrī's mother, brother and sister. The situation parallels the plight of the Palestinian people whose land and property were confiscated by the Israelis during the panic and confusion of war. The play clearly reveals the Egyptian attitude toward Israel and what the Egyptians view as Israel's expansionistic policies. Not only does Messenger from Tumayra Village give a realistic, personalized representation of the problems which war with Israel has created, but it shows the pride with which the Egyptians viewed their performance in the 1973

war -- a war which President Sadat claimed brought about the return of manhood to the Arab people.

But the war with Israel is not the only political issue treated in these plays. They also deal with the dangers of repressive leadership, with censorship, propaganda, and bureaucratic incompetence, with government accountability and public responsibility. Above all, the plays deal with the victims of all these problems -- the Egyptian people.

Purpose

The purpose of this work is threefold: to bring to English-speaking audiences my translations of two stylistically diverse plays of artistic merit; to provide a framework for understanding modern Egyptian drama; and to focus attention on Egyptian perceptions of one of the most important dilemmas in the Middle East -- the problem of Palestine. My greatest hope is that theatre producers and directors, who might otherwise overlook the subtleties and depth of these scripts, may use my research to bring these plays to the stage or, at least, to give greater authenticity to productions of other plays which deal with Arabs or Egyptians.

The central purpose of this general introduction is to anticipate prejudices and misconceptions. Perhaps, at first, many of the comments contained in this section will seem unnecessary to some readers. I believe otherwise for several important reasons. First, some readers may be unaware that theatre activity exists in the Arab world or that Egyptian writers have contributed plays which stand comparison with those of Western playwrights. Second, the plays in this anthology deal with sensitive political and social issues. I have endeavored to clarify Egyptian atitudes toward these issues rather than debate the validity of Egyptian claims. Third, we in America hate to admit that censorship and propaganda can be found in our own society, but we are always willing to recognize it abroad. Perhaps these plays will show

that such dangers are more universal than we suspect. Finally, some may even doubt that drama can add anything significant or worthwhile to the comprehension of such real and vital problems as the war in the Middle East. I believe that the plays presented in this work will dispel such doubts.

Structure

The structure of this project is outlined in detail in the Table of Contents. The following generalizations may, however, help clarify the reasons for this structure.

The general introduction explains the scope and purpose of the work, and it also anticipates a variety of stereotypes, prejudices, and misconceptions. The body of the work is composed of translations, the commentaries which precede them, and the summary which follows them. Here I have concentrated on explaining the Egyptian points of view which the plays reveal.

Several appendices are included to provide a wider context for understanding the plays. Appendix A provides an overview of the Egyptian cultural heritage; Appendix B focuses on the proto-dramatic ceremonies of ancient Egypt; Appendix C investigates the medieval shadow puppet tradition; and Appendix D concentrates on the emergence of modern Egyptian theatre and drama.

Sources

I have employed a variety of sources in my research in order to comprehend and subsequently communicate the political aspects of the plays. These sources represent a wide range of perspectives. American, English, French and Israeli sources have been included, but whenever possible I have stressed the Egyptian point of view. After all, the plays express Egyptian understanding of the issues.

Throughout my work I have endeavored to identify my own opinions when they appear and to differentiate between my opinion or analysis and those of the source I have explored. For example, one of the books which provided background material on the Nasser era is Mahmoud Hussein's Class Conflict in Egypt: 1945-1970. According to the information printed on the book's cover, the Jerusalem Post recommended the book in the following words:

> Israel's politicians and strategists would do well to spend some of their precious spare time studying this book by an Egyptian communist and ardent nationalist. . . They might not only learn a lot about their Arab adversaries, but would also begin to understand why our propaganda has been so patently ineffective. . . An instinctive reaction of a Jewish reader in this country may be to dismiss it all as arrant nonsense; but this will not do. The picture painted by the author contains many points that are evidently true. Moreover, in many points his analysis is patently superior to that prevailing in Israeli quarters. [1]

Hussein's work is only one of many sources I have cited during discussion of my translations. Other, less radical, Egyptian sources include written accounts and personal interviews with government officials and theatre personnel. Often, instead of attempting to paraphrase a particular account, I have quoted it at length to retain the impact and authority of the originals.

Egyptian Theatre and Drama

Egyptian drama is a voice that is only beginning to be heard in the West. One of the listeners is Andrew Parkin of the University of British Columbia in Canada. In a preface to Mahmoud Manzalaoui's 1977 anthology of Arab plays, Parkin predicted that

the new wealth and power which vast oil reserves have brought to the OPEC nations may well mean that audiences for drama will take a much greater interest in these plays than might have been the case a few years ago, even though most of the plays come from Egypt, which is not a rich oil producer. [2]

Yet most Westerners remain ignorant of Egyptian theatrical activity. One reason is that translations and information about Egyptian theatre and drama have only recently, and quite gradually, become available in the West. Jacob Landau's Studies in the Arab Theater and Cinema, the first serious treatment in English of the Arab theatre movement, appeared in 1958. Since the publication of Landau's book, the growth of Egyptian theatre has accelerated, as Mahmoud Manzalaoui explains:

> From time to time, one genre or another emerges as the central one which men of letters use for self expression, and from which the public expects both the most vital assertion of its preoccupations and an imaginative pioneering and sensibility. If the short story fulfilled this role in the Arab world of the nineteen-fifties, there is no doubt that, in the sixties, at least as concerns Egypt, the drama was the dominant genre. [3]

The growth of political and economic problems since 1967 have slowed the progress of Egyptian theatre. Perhaps one means of injecting new life into the stagnating theatre of the 1980's is for Western producers and directors to give greater attention and encouragement to Arab playwrights. Unfortunately, the few Arab plays which have been translated into Western languages have been largely ignored by Western, and especially American, theatre groups. Frankly, some of these translations have been so literal that theatre artists, confronted by the artificial, stilted dialogue which results from a literary approach to drama, have thus far shied away from producing Arab plays. As critic

Walter J. Meserve of Indiana University observes in an article on Farouk Adbel Wahab's 1974 anthology, Modern Egyptian Drama:

> What has generally been missed by the Western critic or allowed to pass unrecognized for their full value, are the plays of a growing number of Third World dramatists which are equal to and, indeed, sometimes superior to contemporary plays created for the Western stage. In no country is this omission more obvious than modern Egypt. . . . [4]

Establishing an awareness in the West that worthwhile Arab theatre and drama exist is only one of the problems that must be overcome. Another serious problem is the attitude of Western observers and commentators. According to Walter Meserve, the problem centers on Western expectations of Eastern exoticism.

> Most professional and academic theatre people in America consider modern drama the province of the Western world of Europe, England and America. The Third World. . . interests them mainly for the elements of an exotic traditional theatre distinguished by dance, rhythmic music, pantomime rituals, masks and make-up. Their few experiences with the kind of Third World theatrical productions which the influence of Western culture made possible have not, evidently, either impressed them artistically or stimulated them to be more than vaguely curious. [5]

Meserve's comment is echoed by Andrew Parkin:

> In the English-speaking world, Arab dramatists not so long ago seemed, if they were known at all, to be reflecting an exotic society, troublesome at times, yet essentially provincial, and culturally passé; a little beside the point. [6]

Meserve examines the reasons for the Western attitude:

> The reasons behind this attitude which further separates

East and West are both simple and complex. They are simple because they can be bluntly stated in terms of ignorance and arrogance, mainly on the part of the Western observer. The complication becomes clear when the historian tries to explain why the attitude appeared in Western man's relations with the people of those areas now described as the Third World and why it persists. [7]

To be sure, the exotic ritual drama of the East has had a profound effect on the development of Western drama in the twentieth century. The works of Antonin Artaud, for instance, drew attention in the West to the ritual drama of Southeast Asia. Artaud's ideas have greatly influenced many twentieth century Western theorists of drama and theatre in their attempts to trim away the artificiality of tradition and to regain the spontaneity of ritual celebration. This search for exotic spontaneity is largely a product of Western romanticism. At the opposite extreme is the exotic formalism of the anti-romantics. Ezra Pound and Ernest Fenollosa, for example, brought to light the classical works of the Japanese Noh Theatre, works which exhibit an exotic purity and crystalization of form.

Modern Egyptian theatre and drama have developed as a direct result of contact with the West. Holding little in common with the exotic extremes of the Far East, Egyptian theatre and drama are clearly Western in form and typically Arab in content. Yet, while modern Egyptian playwrights have modelled their approach to theatre on nineteenth and twentieth century forms, they have also drawn from indigenous theatre traditions dating as far back as pharaonic times. Ancient Egyptians performed dramatizations of religious myths of creation, destruction, and resurrection, such as the story of Isis, Osiris, and Horus. During classical times, theatre activity continued, as ruins, excavated in 1961, of a Roman theatre in Alexandria would indicate. The Islamic era brought shadow puppetry to the Arab people, a form which continues today in many corners of what was once the Ottoman Empire. Western-style

theatre dates from the mid-nineteenth century, but popular troupes have probably entertained the Egyptian masses with improvisational comedy for centuries.

The modern era has witnessed the consolidation of these traditions within the formal context imported from Western civilization. Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century with adaptations of plays by Moliere and other famous French playwrights, Arab artists have incorporated into their repertoires skillful translations of Shakespeare, Ibsen, Chekov, Strindberg, Pirandello, Gorki, Brecht, and Miller. Meanwhile, Arab playwrights have contributed many original plays in absurdist, symbolist, and existentialist styles. In addition, they have experimented with naturalism and selective realism. Many popular comedies and melodramas have been written, and often these plays rely heavily on musical interludes or accompaniments. Many plays, however, whether serious or comic, realistic or experimental, are overtly political, challenging Egyptian audiences to face up to serious social problems.

Theatrical presentation of Arab and Western plays has developed largely along nineteenth and twentieth-century lines, although Egyptian artists are still experimenting with traditional, indigenous performance styles, such as the sāmir form, a centuries-old, theatre-in-the-round, which often involves improvisational variations and encourages audience participation. Nevertheless, most modern Egyptian drama is presented in theatres modelled after nineteenth-century, European, proscenium houses. Many of these theatres seat over a thousand people and have such poor acoustics that electronic amplification systems are necessary additions. Furthermore, the main theatre season in Cairo takes place in the winter when cold, damp evenings are commonplace, and most theatres lack heating systems. Also, except in a few of the most prestigious theatres, audiences unfamiliar with Western theatre ettiquette often smoke cigarettes and converse openly among themselves during a performance, and waiters roam the audience, hawking a wide variety of refreshments while the play is in progress.

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Many Egyptian theatre artists recognize these problems, and they are taking steps to recondition audience behavior. But they also recognize the need to encourage people to attend. Government subsidies have decreased since the Nasser era, and censorship has increased, so much of recent Egyptian theatre is geared toward entertaining unsophisticated popular tastes. Nevertheless, several contemporary theatres continue to do their best to stage thought-provoking material in original, innovative styles of presentation.

The writing and production of original Arab plays have fostered a sense of pride among the Egyptian people. In the words of H. E. Youssef el-Sebai, former Minister of Culture of the United Arab Republic of Egypt,

> we are proud of our own dramatists, the earliest pioneers, the established figures and the younger experimenters, writers who are not imitators, but creative artists in their own right, expressing moods and aspirations which are their own, and reflecting the dynamism of our modern Arab society. [8]

The history of theatre in Egypt, as well as general background about Egyptian culture, is treated in greater detail in appendices to this work. The bulk of the following material, however, is devoted to important recent plays which exemplify Egyptian attitudes toward war in the Middle East. But first, here are a few final notes to explain my approach to this material.

Anticipatory Anti-Quibbulations

Before turning to discussions of The Oedipus Comedy and Messenger from Tumayra Village, I wish to anticipate prejudices and misconceptions concerning the terms 'Orientalism,' 'Zionism' and 'Palestinian' which readers may bring -- however unwittingly -- to the plays and to the comments I make about the plays. First, what is the nature of 'Orientalism' and how does this concept result in distorted notions

about the people of the Arab world? Second, what is 'Zionism' and how do Arabs see it as a political rather than religious movement? Why do Arabs see Zionism as a rationalization of foreign colonization and exploitation of Arab lands? Third, who are the 'Palestinians' and how has the conflict over Palestine polarized Jews and Muslims, Arabs and Israelis, to such an extent that their common heritage is often forgotten or even intentionally concealed? Finally, how can theatre perpetuate prejudices and misconceptions, and how can it change such notions?

Orientalism

Ignorance of Islam -- and of the social conventions which have developed during 1400 years of Islamic civilization -- is understandable for most Westerners. Most of us have had little, if any, contact with the world of Islam. For most of us the Middle East is a land of intrigue and seemingly perpetual conflict and strife, the land of the medieval Christian and modern Zionist crusades. The Arab world means commandos, camels, deserts and oil fields, filthy-rich oil barons, veiled women, and docilely toiling peasants. Egypt is the land of ancient mysteries, mummies, pyramids and pharaohs.

Edward W. Said, a Palestinian Arab and Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University, published Orientalism in 1978, unleashing a controversy among specialists on the Middle East. Said accuses scholars, politicians, journalists and artists of perpetuating the notion that the Middle East is merely an object of Western interests. The following is Said's definition of Orientalism.

> . . . Orientalism is not a mere political subject matter or field that is reflected passively by culture, scholarship, or institutions; nor is it a large and diffuse collection of texts about the Orient; nor is it representative and expressive of some nefarious "Western" imperialist plot to hold down the "Oriental" world. It

> is rather a distribution [sic] of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, and philological texts; it is an elaboration [sic] not only of a basic geographical distinction (the world is made up of two unequal halves, Orient and Occident) but also a whole series of "interests" which, by such means as scholarly discovery, philological reconstruction, psychological analysis, landscape and sociological description, it not only creates but also maintains; it is [sic], rather than expresses, a certain will [sic] or intention [sic] to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even to incorporate, what is a manifestly different (or alternative and novel) world; it is, above all, a discourse that is by no means in direct, corresponding relationship with political power in the raw, but rather is produced and exists in an uneven exchange with various kinds of power, shaped to a degree by the exchange with power political (as with a colonial or imperial establishment), power intellectual (as with reigning sciences like comparative linguistics or anatomy, or any of the modern policy sciences), power cultural (as with orthodoxies and canons of taste, texts, values), power moral (as with ideas about what "we" do and what "they" cannot do or understand as "we" do). Indeed, my real argument is that Orientalism is -- and does not simply represent -- a considerable dimension of modern political-intellectual culture, and as such has less to do with the Orient than it does with "our" world. 9

The distorted Western perspective which Said identifies surely does exist and often appears in art, literature, political commentaries, and even academic scholarship. Unfortunately, Said's case loses some of its power because he is often guilty of making similar distortions. While

he draws attention to tendencies among Orientalists to rely too heavily on out-of-date material, he himself tends to view generations of scholarship from a purely twentieth-century perspective, ignoring both the contemporary validity of suoh work and its value as a stepping stone to subsequent research. Furthermore, Said's argument is sometimes clouded by his erudite style of writing as well as by his personal sensitivity to his subject matter. Nevertheless, his argument is weighted by a wealth of examples which reveal Western prejudices and misconceptions about the Middle East.

Zionism

A group of Quakers appointed by the American Friends Service Committee to study the Arab-Israeli conflict describe the irony of inter-Semitic strife.

> It is one of the great ironies of history that the roots of the present Arab-Jewish struggle should have grown, not in the poisoned soil of ancient mutual animosities, but in the mistreatment each has received at the hands of others. The Jews and Arabs are Semitic cousins, share cultural traits and traditions, and through long centuries lived in relative peace with one another even during periods when Jews were subject to sustained persecution by the Christian West. [10]

The real cause of the Arab-Israeli conflict is not anti-Semitism. At the heart of the conflict is a movement called Zionism.

Zion, according to Webster's dictionary, was originally a Canaanite fortress in Jerusalem which was captured by David and called in the Bible the 'City of David'. Later, the word came to mean the hill in Jerusalem on which the Temple was built. "Zion has historically been regarded by the Jews as a symbol of the center of Jewish national life." [11] The word also signifies Jerusalem or the land of Israel, the Jewish people, heaven or the heavenly city, and the theocracy of God. [12]

Zionism is a modern political movement, "a movement formerly for reestablishing, now for supporting, the Jewish national state of Israel." [13] Centuries of discrimination against Jews in Christian and Muslim countries created the fundamental motivation for Zionism. The atrocities of Nazi concentration camps, now known collectively as the Holocaust, were only the most recent and most blatant of violent acts perpetrated against Jewish minorities in the West. But the Zionist movement to oolonize Palestine had already begun decades before Hitler came to power. The desire for religious freedom and self-rule led many nineteenth century Jewish intellectuals to seek a homeland of their own. Foremost among these individuals was an Austrian named Theodore Herzl (1860-1904), the founder of Zionism.

The early Zionists briefly considered establishing a homeland in Uganda or Argentina, but they soon abandoned these sites in favor of a return to 'the Holy Land' of Palestine. The fact that there were already people living in Palestine made no difference to the Zionists. They began to negotiate with the Ottoman Empire, but these negotiations were interrupted by World War I. After the war two documents changed the situation entirely and led to the eventual creation of Israel.

The 1916 Sykes-Picot agreement between the British and the French was kept secret during the war. While Lawrence of Arabia and others were promising independence to Arab nationalists who took up arms against the Ottoman Turks, the Sykes-Picot agreement had already insured that Britain would receive control of Palestine, Trans-Jordan, and Iraq, and the French would gain power over Lebanon and Syria.

The second document was the 1917 Balfour Declaration, a letter from British government spokesperson Lord Balfour to Zionist leader Lord Rothschild. The document stated that "His Majesty's Government view with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people." [14] Thus, the British betrayed their commitments to Arab allies in favor of their own colonialist interests, and at the same time endeavored to foist upon the Palestinians the pesky minority of British Jews.

Between the World Wars conflict increased between the Zionist settlers and the indigenous Palestinians. Hitler's rise to power in the 1930's accelerated the wave of immigration as European Jews fled the Nazi atrocities.

> Here again, before and after World War II, the Christian West was weighed and found wanting. Instead of opening wide their gates to refugees from Nazi persecution -- and perhaps saving millions of lives -- the free nations vacillated, took half measures, and waited. 15

Meanwhile, an estimated six million Jews were murdered. After World War II, rather than absorb the survivors of the Holocaust, the Western powers approved by a two-thirds majority in the United Nations the establishment of Israel. Thus, the Palestinians were to pay for Western guilt and shame.

Civil war was already underway when the May 14, 1948 partition took effect.

> Within hours after Israeli leaders proudly raised the Star of David flag and launched the Jewish state, military units from Jordan, Syria, Egypt, Lebanon and Iraq began an open assault upon Israel. [16]

The Arab nations lost the 1948-49 war, but they refused to recognize the Zionist state of Israel as the legitimate government of Palestine. In 1956 the Israelis colluded with the British and French and waged war across the Suez Canal. In 1967 Israel struck first to avoid attack by their still hostile Arab neighbors, and in 1973 the Egyptians and Syrians forced the Israelis to realize that Arab soldiers could and would continue to fight. In 1982 Israel launched an invasion of Lebanon in an attempt to exterminate the Palestinian refugees whose presence had been forced upon the Lebanese people.

Meanwhile, Western Jews who opposed Zionist policies found themselves to be no match for worldwide Zionism. Rabbi Elmer Berger of the American Council for Judaism explains the situation in the Council's 1957 publication, <u>Judaism or Jewish Nationalism</u>.

Since, by its very nature Zionism seeks to involve all [sic] Jews in its process of "Jewish" nationalism, Zionism cannot be expected to point out the fact it represents only a limited number of Jews. Such Zionist campaigns, therefore, reported in the general press of the United States and in what is called the "Jewish press," convey the impression that all [sic] Jews support these "Jewish" nationalist activities. The absence of public protest and repudiation by the silent "non-Zionists" among Jews [sic] can only support this impression. For during the past decade or more of blatant Zionist propaganda in every [sic] communication medium of America, non-Zionist silence is regarded by the American people as assent where there is, as a matter principle, a public duty to censure such patent distortion of American Jews at the hands of Jews themselves. [17]

Two major issues surface in Berger's comments. First, not all Jews advocate Zionism. Nor have they done so unanimously from outset. Herzl's 1897 pamphlet, The Jewish State, had led to widespread debate among world Jewry.

> Some Jewish philanthropists gave it limited support, some intellectual and religious leaders attacked it as both impractical and contrary to the interests of Jewish communities already established in Western countries. The strongest support came from the Jewish masses seeking to flee from Eastern Europe, even though most of them chose, as the opportunity became available, to migrate to the United States. [18]

Opposition to Zionism has continued since the creation of Israel; individual Jews, and groups such as the American Council for Judaism, have actively resisted, but many Jews have reacted passively. These are

the non-Zionists Berger identifies. As Berger points out, their lack of opposition has been taken to mean approval.

The second issue raised by Berger is the power of Zionist propaganda. Books, plays, movies, television, and newspapers have blanketed the American public with Zionist perspectives and interpretations.

The Arabs recognize the power of the Zionist lobby in America. Egyptian newspaper critic Kamāl al-Nagmi, for instance, devotes half of his March 24, 1970, article in al-Kawākib (The Stars) to this subject. He begins with a review of Ali Salem's You Who Killed the Beast, but he devotes the second half of his article to Fathi al-Abyāri's new book, al-rā'y al-'amm wa-al-mukhattat al-sāhyūnīyah (Public Opinion and the Zionist Plan). The book focuses on the impact of Israeli and Zionist propaganda on theatre, cinema, and television audiences.

Western media continually cater to the Zionist cause by constantly reinforcing Jewish fears of racism and by consistently portraying Palestinians as insane terrorists. Racism is a problem which all people, not just Jews, must overcome. Palestinian fanatics obviously exist, but they are the only image of the Palestinians which reaches the Western public. The fact that educated, responsible Palestinians are dispersed throughout the Arab and Western worlds is generally hidden.

A recent example of an Arab attempt to curtail the power of Zionism in America is an October 1983 lawsuit directed against the United Jewish Appeal, the World Zionist Organization American Section, the Jewish Agency American Section, the Jewish National Fund, and Americans for a Safe Israel. The lawsuit, filed in federal court by a group which includes the mayors of four West Bank towns, asked that the tax exemptions of these organizations be revoked "on the ground they were channeling contributions to Israeli organizations to confiscate land from Palestinians." [19] Whether or not this particular claim is proven in court, the fact remains that Zionist lobbies and institutions wield a tremendous amount of financial and political power, including the capabilities of propagandizing their own cause while censoring

opposition. An example of an attempt at censorship which backfired occurred in 1980. Playing for Time, Vanessa Redgrave's performance as a Jewish inmate in a Nazi concentration camp, was shunned by pro-Zionist advertisers -- not for its content -- but because Redgrave had taken part in a documentary film about the Palestinians. Lack of sponsorship, however, did not stop CBS from airing the program, and according to Seattle Times television columnist John Voorhees, the program drew a larger than normal audience precisely because of the controversy and the lack of commercial interruptions. [20] Playing for Time won the 1980-81 Emmy awards for outstanding drama special as well as for Arthur Miller's teleplay. Incidently, CBS has not shown The Palestinian, the 1977 Royal Battersby production which caused the controversy.

Palestinians

Even the term 'Palestinian' is an object of debate. The Arabic word for Palestine, Filāstīn, can be traced to origins in Biblical times.

> Palestine, it has been said, has been more of a geographical expression than a political entity. Lying between the Mediterranean and the Jordan valley, south of the Lebanon Mountains as far but not always including the Negev Desert, today it is divided between Israel and Jordan. The Canaanites and Phoenecians, who were Semitic, settled along its coasts, and were then invaded by the Indo-European Philistines ('Sea People'), who gave it the name by which it is known in Arabic, a version of which is our own. Later, the Jews came from the south, after much nomadic wandering: a federation of Semitic tribes, in fact, some of them descendants of the followers of Abraham from Ur in Mesopotamia who had settled in the Hebron district, others coming later out of domination in Egypt with Moses and the Israelites. [21]

Golda Meir denied that 'Palestinians' exist, quibbling that no people could be named for a nation whioh has never been formally recognized. Anwar el-Sadat and Menachim Begin, according to Jimmy Carter, agreed that Palestinians exist, but they differed as to which people could be included under that designation.

> Sadat used "Palestinian" to mean the Arab dwellers throughout what had been Palestine under the British Mandate, many of whom were not refugees or living under Israeli occupation. Begin exclaimed, "Palestinians! This is an unacceptable reference. Jews are also Palestinians. He must mean 'Palestinian Arabs'." 22

The purpose of this work is to clarify the Egyptian point of view. Therefore, and for the sake of consistency, Sadat's definition is used in this work. Exceptions will be made clear by context or by qualifying statements.

Theatre

Does theatre convey the truth? According to Pablo Picasso, "art is a lie that makes us realize the truth." 23 Charleton Heston reportedly maintains that "American movies have done much more than diplomats to introduce the American people to the world." 24 If, however, the Egyptian people judge Americans by televised episodes of The Love Boat (one of many programs imported by Egypt), then they obviously gain a distorted image of us. Yet Americans readily accept similar superficial treatments of foreigners. But what do Americans really know of the Egyptian people? In the words of Inspector Mulrooney in the popular 1959 movie, The Mummy, "they wouldn't know an Egyptian from a Chinese acrobat." 25

Drama -- whether presented on film, video-taped for television, or performed live in a theatre -- has the potential to reaffirm, modify, or replace prevalent attitudes. Thus drama can perpetuate false notions about the Middle East or challenge us to reexamine our misconceptions.

The plays in this anthology represent Egyptian attitudes toward the problems of war and peace, censorship and propaganda, distribution of wealth and power. These attitudes may be invalid in some respeots, but they are truly Egyptian attitudes. At the very least these plays offer Western readers (or, one hopes, spectators) the chanoe to see Egyptian issues through Egyptian eyes. Above all, the plays are political messages, and the theatre from which they come is a highly political environment. For scholars who treat drama as a minor branch of literary activity, Hamlet's admonition to Polonius is an appropriate reminder of the impact which theatrical production can wield.

> Good my lord, will you see the players well bestowed? Do you hear, let them be well used, for they are the abstract and brief chronicles of the time: after your death you were better have a bad epitaph than their ill report while you live. [26]

Notes to General Introduction

[1] Mahmoud Hussein, Class Conflict in Egypt 1945-1970 (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1977), back cover notes.

[2] Mahmoud Manzalaoui, ed., Arabic Writing Today 2 The Drama (Cairo: American Research Center in Egypt, 1977), p. 47.

[3] Ibid, p. 15.

[4] Walter J. Meserve, "Some Observations on Modern Egyptian Drama," Al-'Arabīya: Journal of The American Association of Teachers of Arabic, vol. 9, (1 & 2), p. 46.

[5] Ibid, p. 45.

[6] Manzalaoui, p. 47.

[7] Meserve, p. 45.

[8] Manzalaoui, p. 9.

[9] Edward W. Said, Orientalism (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), p. 12.

[10] Search for Peace in the Middle East (New York: The American Friends Service Committee, 1970), p. 13.

[11] Webster's New World Dictionary (U.S.A.: William Collins + World Publishing Co., Inc., 1972), p. 1654.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Search for Peace in the Middle East, pp. 16-17.

[15] Ibid, p. 23.

[16] Ibid, p. 25.

[17] Elmer Berger, Judaism or Jewish Nationalism: The Alternative to Zionism (New York: Bookman Associates, 1957), p. 65.

[18] Search for Peace in the Middle East, p. 15.

[19] Seattle Times, 7 October 1983.

[20] Telephone interview with John Voorhees of the Seattle Times, May 1, 1984.

[21] Roloff Beny and Anthony Thwaite, Odyssey: Mirror of the Mediterranean (New York: Harper & Row, 1981), p. 319.

[22] Jimmy Carter, Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President (New York: Bantam, 1982), p. 347.

[23] Herschel B. Chipp, Theories of Modern Art (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), p. 264.

[24] KZAM FM Radio, Bellevue, Washington, June 24, 1982.

[25] KSTW TV Tacoma-Seattle, October 12, 1982.

[26] William Shakespeare, Hamlet, II, ii.

Introduction to Ali Salem's
The Oedipus Comedy or You who Killed the Beast

ANOTHER OEDIPUS STORY? WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

Ali Salem's version of the Oedipus story is a conglomerate of oppositions, a juxtaposition of ancient myth and modern politics. The Oedipus Comedy or You Who Killed the Beast is both intensely instructive and refreshingly entertaining, and as the title suggests, it is both serious and comic. Modern Egypt is a land of contradictions. Almost any travel brochure soon points out the sharp contrasts of rich and poor, ancient and modern, desert and garden. Ali Salem's play not only reflects this dual nature, it identifies the duality as a central problem faced by Egyptian society.

You Who Killed the Beast is primarily a political play -- not just in the sense that all plays are political because they can be interpreted politically, but directly so in that it identifies specific political problems of the Nasser era and challenges the Egyptian people to confront these issues. Salem imaginatively uses the Oedipus myth to illustrate both the universal problems faced by a ruler in a corrupt society and the specific difficulties faced by Nasser in the aftermath of the 1967 war with Israel. In fact, Salem chooses allegory as a means of sidestepping the censor and confronting the trauma of the 1967 defeat. Thousands of people saw the play performed, in spite of efforts by government officials to close the show, and many more, unable to attend, filled the streets, singing and chanting the musical theme: You who killed the Beast. Yet what the public apparently saw in Salem's allegory was not openly discussed in the popular, contemporary press. Most reviewers limited their comments to outlines of the plot, explanations of the Oedipus myth, and identification of the artists who designed and directed the original production and who performed the characters in the play.

Arab and Western critics who have examined the play in greater depth stress dissimilarities between The Oedipus Comedy and traditional accounts of the Oedipus story. Some equate Oedipus with the controversial pharaoh Akhnaton; some equate Salem's title character with President Gamal Abdel Nasser; others seek and find universal levels of interpretation.

The first part of this introduction to Ali Salem's play provides background information for each level of allegorical interpretation: first is a general review of the traditional Oedipus legend as it is treated by the Greek playwrights; next comes the story of Akhnaton, 'the criminal of Akhetaton'; then follows a summary of the political events of the Nasser era; finally Ali Salem's play is discussed in terms of plot and genre.

The second part of the introduction incorporates the background information into discussions of certain thematic considerations: the first section centers on the question of Oedipus' manipulation by the Theban City Council; the second deals with the problem of the Beast; section three focuses on the alibi which Oedipus produces to explain his failures; the fourth section looks beyond the allegorical levels of the characters to discover behavior patterns dictated by nationality and sexuality.

Part three investigates the transition from script to performance in terms of music, spectacle, budget, and critical responses to the play. Part four presents biographical and bibliographical information about Ali Salem, one of Egypt's best-known, modern playwrights.

PART ONE: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

I. Traditional Dramatic Literature: The Greek Oedipus

The Theban chronicle spans three generations. King Laius, warned by the Delphic Oracle that he would be murdered by his offspring, pierced the feet of his only child by Queen Jocasta, and left the boy to

die on the slopes of Mount Cithaeron. A Corinthian shepherd discovered the boy there, named him Oedipus because of his swollen feet, and brought him to the childless rulers of Corinth, King Polybus and Queen Merope, who raised Oedipus as their own son.

> One day, taunted by a Corinthian youth with not in the least resembling his supposed parents, Oedipus went to ask the Delphic Oracle what future lay in store for him. 'Away from the shrine, wretch!" the Pythoness cried in disgust. 'You will kill your father and marry your mother!' [1]

Not wishing to bring hurt or shame to Polybus or Merope, Oedipus decided not to return to Corinth, but at a orossroads between Delphi and Daulis he was rudely ordered off the road by the occupants of a chariot. A struggle ensued and Oedipus killed four of the five passengers.

Thus Oedipus unknowingly fulfilled the first part of the Oracle's prediction, for one of the chariot's passengers was King Laius of Thebes. Laius had been on his way to Delphi to ask the Oracle how to get rid of a monster called the Sphynx which Hera had sent as punishment for Laius' abduction of young Chrysippus of Pisa. The Sphynx, a huge beast with the head of a woman, the body of a lion, the tail of a serpent, and the wings of an eagle, had perched on Mount Phicium near the city, and she now confronted all who approached Thebes with a riddle: "What being, with only one voice, has sometimes two feet, sometimes three, sometimes four, and is weakest when it has the most?"[2]

After his fatal encounter with Laius, Oedipus resumed his journey and soon arrived in Thebes where he correctly guessed the answer to the Sphynx' riddle. "'Man', he replied, 'because he crawls on all fours as an infant, stands firmly on his two feet in his youth, and leans upon a staff in his old age'." [3] The Sphynx leaped from the mountain and dashed herself to pieces on the rocks below. The Theban citizens proclaimed Oedipus king, and he married Jocasta, unaware that their union completed the prophecy of the Oracle.

Four children were born from this union: two daughters, Antigone and Ismene, and two sons, Polynices and Eteocles. All four were still young, however, when trouble came again to Thebes in the form of plague. The Delphic Oracle lay the blame on the unsolved murder of Laius, and Oedipus, not realizing his own guilt in the matter, commanded that the murderer be sought out and banished from Thebes.

Blind Tiresias, the renowned seer, then appeared at Oedipus' court and revealed what none, at first, would believe: that Oedipus killed his father and married his mother. A messenger from Corinth soon arrived with news that King Polybus had died, but Oedipus' bitter joy at what seemed to contradict Tiresias' accusation was short-lived for the messenger also related that Oedipus was merely an adopted son. Quickly, the servant who had been charged with disposing of the infant-Oedipus was summoned. He admitted to having given the child to a Corinthian shepherd. Jocasta, convinced of the shameful truth, proceeded to hang herself; Oedipus blinded himself with her broach and went into exile, led by his faithful daughter Antigone.

For many years Oedipus and Antigone wandered as outcasts in the land until at last they came to Colonus of Attica. There Oedipus disappeared magically in a grove sacred to the Eumenides.

By this time, however, Polynices and Eteocles had grown to manhood. At first the two had agreed to reign for alternate years, but when Eteocles refused to relinquish the throne, civil war ensued. Polynices and Eteocles killed each other in battle, and Creon, Jocasta's brother, took command and ordered that Polynices' corpse be left unburied. Antigone defied her uncle's orders and secretly attended to her brother's funeral, but Creon discovered her transgression and condemned her to be buried alive.

These are the basic lines of the Oedipus story as recounted by Sophocles in <u>Oedipus the King,</u> <u>Oedipus at Colonus</u>, and <u>Antigone</u>. The story of Polynices and Eteocles appears in Aeschylus' <u>Seven Against Thebes</u> and in Euripides slightly different version, <u>The Phoenician Women</u>, in which Oedipus and Jocasta are still alive and

dwelling in Thebes when the confrontation between their sons occurs. Aeschylus and Euripides also wrote versions of Oedipus which are not extant. In the earliest known reference to the Oedipus legend, Jocasta appears as a character in Homer's Odyssey. [4]

II. Possible Roots in Ancient Egyptian History: The 'Criminal of Akhetaton'

The XVIIIth Pharaonic Dynasty marked the beginning of a new era in ancient Egyptian history. The New Kingdom, as the era is called, lasted from c. 1559 to 1085 B.C., and witnessed the height of the Empire's glory. During most of this period the Empire was ruled from Thebes in Upper Egypt, but for about a dozen years the capitol was moved to a site midway between Thebes and Memphis. The new location, now called Amarna, was originally named Akhetaton, and Akhnaton, the pharaoh who initiated the move, was and still is one of the most controversial figures of Egyptian history. By the end of his reign (c. 1378-1362 B.C.) his contemporaries had branded him a criminal and a heretic; his city was abandoned, the stonework dismantled and carted away, his monuments defaced. Little evidence remains from which to evaluate Akhnaton, and much of what has been unearthed is still disputed by scholarly authorities. According to Cyril Aldred, interpretations range from 'free-thinker' to 'pacifist' to 'Marxist', and Akhnaton has been dubbed 'the first individual in history', 'the first monotheist', and 'an innovator in the field of art'.

Cyril Aldred, who favors the 'monotheist' theory, dismisses most other interpretations as the product of the interpreters' biases. He emphasizes that

> the ideas that Akhenaton [sic] disseminated so far from being in advance of their time had a strong antiquarian flavour, and attempted to restore the supremacy of the Pharaoh to what it had been in the early Old Kingdom. [5]

Aldred summarizes his position as follows:

> In our study, we have found nothing of the revolutionary in the political and social character of his reign. In the artistic field his innovations were of a strictly limited type and their initial mannerism had changed to something more traditional by the latter part of his reign. In the sphere of religion, while he accepted much that was orthodox. . . there was one aspect in which he was wholly original, and that was his insistence upon a true monotheism, the worship of one god only, whose incarnation he was, to the exclusion of all else. [6]

Akhnaton saw himself as an incarnation of the sun-god Aton, and the pharaoh's political and artistic activities were direct manifestations of his vision. As Aldred comments, "an egocentric megalomania could only see Divinity as the giant shadow cast by a Pharaoh." [7]

The worship of Pharaoh as a god was not new; the practice continued throughout the Empire. What made Akhnaton a special case was partly due to his severe deformities -- huge, swollen legs and a grotesquely elongated skull. His new style of art glorified these attributes, naturalized them in the name of truthful artistic representation. This

> [r]eturn to Nature. . . manifested itself in religion by the fatherly care of the god Aten [sic] for all his creatures without distinction, and in his prophet Akhenaten's [sic] desire for 'Truth'. . . . [8]

Still, the catalyst for his notion of a supreme deity may have been an idea imported from the neighboring kingdom of Mitanni.

Mitannians were an Indo-European people who migrated into western Asia during the third millenium. They settled mainly in Upper Mesopotamia, but they also installed military chiefs over the native population in Upper Syria. In Akhnaton's time the Mitanni Kings were subjects of the Egyptian Empire.

A primitive form of monotheism may have been a characteristic of Mitanni Society. Another characteristic, according to Immanuel Velikovsky, may have been the wide-spread practice of incest which the Mitannians allegedly encouraged. [9] Such relations were supposedly common in Egyptian royal households -- between brother and sister, but not mother and son. According to Immanuel Velikovsky, Akhnaton violated this taboo.

Velikovsky takes the characters and events of the Oedipus legend and compares them with the fragments of evidence from the late XVIIIth dynasty of Pharaonic history. From this comparison Velikovsky envisions a scenario in which Oedipus is Akhnaton, Queen Tiy is Jocasta, and Creon is Tiy's brother, Ay. Smenkhkare and Tutankhamun are the historical counterparts of Polynices and Eteocles; Amenhotep III, Akhnaton's father, corresponds with Laius. Antigone is represented by two historical figures: Meritaton, Akhnaton's daughter by his official wife, Nefertiti, is the Antigone condemned for burying Polynices; Beketaton is allegedly Akhnaton's daughter by his mother, Queen Tiy.

Much of Velikovsky's evidence is circumstantial; some of his conclusions, as he himself admits, are pure speculation. Nevertheless, Velikovsky's comparison reveals too many parallels for his work to be dismissed outright. Yet Oedipus and Akhnaton has been greeted largely by silence from such orthodox authorities as Aldred and Bille-De Mott. Philippe Aziz briefly reports Velikovsky's thesis in a few paragraphs of Mŏise et Akhenaton, but he avoids mentioning Velikovsky by name.

Arab historian Fu'ād Muhammad Shibl also ignores Velikovsky's interpretation, choosing instead to emphasize the cultural revolution which supposedly resulted from Akhnaton's monotheism. In his Akhnātūn rā'id al-thawrah al-thaqāfīyah (1974), Shibl presents Akhnaton as a precursor of Islam, a martyr to the doctrine of the unity of God.

Prior to the release of Velikovsky's study, several plays were written about the controversial pharaoh. English mystery writer Agatha Christie wrote Akhnaton, probably in 1937, after travelling to Luxor where she became friends with Howard Carter, the discoverer of

Tutankhamun's tomb. Christie's play, unpublished until 1973, glorifies Akhnaton as a mystic visionary and stresses the loyal but practical nature of Horemheb, the general who eventually reestablished order after the fall of Akhnaton. Several Egyptian playwrights also wrote about the Amarna Period: Ahmad Zāki Abū Shādī composed, probably in 1931, Akhnātūn Fir'aūn Misr, a three-act historical opera; Ahmad Sabrī, probably in 1938, wrote Kāhin Amūn masrahīyah Fir'aūnīyah, a four-act historical tragedy in literary Arabic prose which "traces the intrigues of a war-like priest in ancient Egypt against his peace-loving king, the husband of beautiful Nafartītī"; and 'Alī Ahmad Bākthīr, who in 1949 wrote a play about Oedipus, contributed a four-act love story in literary Arabic free verse, probably in 1940, entitled Akhnātūn wa Nafartītī. 10

In 1981, twenty-one years after Velikovsky's Oedipus and Akhnaton was published, Egyptian playwright Ahmad Suwaylam wrote Akhnātūn masrahīyah shi'rīyah, a play in literary Arabic verse which persists in characterizing the pharaoh as a saint and martyr, a victim of the machinations of the priesthood of Amun. Yet Velikovsky's thesis had been known in the Arab world for at least a decade at the time of Suwaylam's orthodox treatment of the story. Among the Arab literary critics who have referred to Velikovsky's Oedipus and Akhnaton are Mahmūd Amīn al-'Ālim in al-Wajh wa-al-Qinā' fi Masrahina al-'Arabi al-Mu'āsir (1973), Ahmad Shams al-Dīn al-Hijājī in al-Ustūrah fi al-Masrah al-Misri al-Mu'āsir (1982), Sa'd Abū al-Ridā in al-Ta'bīr al-Drāmī (1983), and an unidentified columnist in the April 20, 1970, issue of al-Musawwar. All of these references to Velikovsky were made in relation to Ali Salem's Oedipus Comedy or You Who Killed the Beast. Nevertheless, in 1983 when the playwright was questioned about the al-Musawwar article (which included the comment that Velikovsky's book was one of the playwright's most important sources and that Salem's Oedipus was in fact none other than Akhnaton, Pharaoh of Egypt), Ali Salem replied cautiously, saying: "You know, critics can't always say exactly what they mean, either." 11

III. A Modern Political Allegory: The Nasser era

The Nasser era began with the July 1952 overthrow of King Farouk by a military group called the Free Officers. But the revolution signified more than just the end of the monarchy. "In 1952 the prime target of the revolt was foreign oppression. . . ." [12]

> For the first time in centuries, perhaps twenty centuries, Egypt was ruled by the Egyptians: Hellenistic sovereigns and Yemeni conquerors, Circassian Mamlukes and Turkish colonizers, French invaders, Albanian pashas, cosmopolite dynasts, English occupiers -- the alienators were at last replaced. . . ." [13]

The Free Officers were not the only group vying for an end to the British-controlled monarchy, nor was their coup the first attempt at revolution. A movement for nationalism had been growing since the nineteenth century; in 1882 and 1919 the movement had staged revolts which had been violently crushed, but by 1923 the nationalists had obtained a constitution and a parliament to influence if not control the king and by 1936 a treaty which granted at least nominal independence from Britain.

World War II brought the British back in force, and some of the most decisive battles of the North African campaign were fought on the barren coastal plain near Alemain. After the Europeans had finished fighting on Egyptian soil, war broke out in Palestine in 1948 over the creation of Israel by the United Nations. Meanwhile, King Farouk continued to live in luxury while his people struggled to survive poverty.

By 1952 four nationalistic factions had developed: the Wafd was the political party which mainly represented the small but wealthy bourgeouisie; the Free Officers were a clandestine group of junior-grade military leaders; the Muslim Brotherhood was a religious society which promoted a radical return to Koranic fundamentals as well as political and cultural isolation from the West; the fourth faction was the

communist movement which, "dominated by petty-bourgeouis intellectuals. . . remained largely isolated from the broad masses." 14 These four factions sometimes overlapped, as the following comparison of the Free Officers and the Muslim Brotherhood indicates.

> Both organizations were, each in its own way, plotting to seize power, and each tried to infiltrate the other. The Free Officers had the advantage of occupying positions within the established state apparatus; this enabled them to influence those members of the propertied classes who were frightened by the possibility of a profound political upheaval generated from outside the establishment. The Muslim Brotherhood, on the other hand, enjoyed mass support extending to the remotest regions of the countryside; the Free Officers lacked such support. 15

Nasser was "the heart and brain of the Maglis el Thawra (Council of the Revolution)," 16 but the figurehead of the new regime was General Mohammad Naguib, a popular hero of the 1948 Palestine War whom the Free Officers had cautiously asked to be their nominal leader. Naguib had replied simply: "Use me for any job at any level. I want to help you." 17

The first two years of the regime were a struggle to consolidate power. The September 1952 Agrarian Reform Act appeased the masses by limiting land ownership to 200 feddāns (a little over 200 acres) and by promising redistribution of the surplus among the fellahīn or rural peasants.

> Next, in an effort to achieve economic stability, the regime reduced expenditures and raised income taxes and certain duties. Also, the large deficit in the 1952 balance of payments was reduced by raising customs duties and clamping on strict import controls. 18

Policy changes followed which encouraged foreign investment by relaxing provisions governing the transfer of profit and capital, and by granting majority control to foreign corporate interests. Meanwhile, Nasser

turned to face his political opponents. By the end of 1954 he had skillfully outmaneuvered Naguib in the political arena and purged both the communists and the Muslim Brotherhood.

In 1955 Nasser emerged as an important regional spokesman. His foreign policy developed in reaction to three key events: the Bandung Conference of what are now called Third World nations welcomed Nasser as a hero in the struggle against Western imperialism and Soviet hegemony; the Baghdad Pact revealed Nasser's influence over leaders of other Arab countries; Israeli inoursions into the Egyption-controlled Gaza Strip spotlighted the ineffectiveness of a military weakened by the 1948 Palestine War.

The April 1955 conference in Bandung, Indonesia, nurtured the Egyptian leader's concept of 'positive neutrality' between the blocs of the Cold War. Among the delegates present with whom Nasser developed close ties were Chou En-Lai, Nehru, and Sukarno. So Nasser returned to Egypt with heightened prestige, and by the end of the year he had established a friendly bond with Josip Tito. In the years to come these leaders contributed valued advice and support to a Nasser intent upon a policy of non-alignment.

Meanwhile, the Americans were maneuvering to replace Britain and France as the chief foreign power in the region. In February 1955 Turkey and Iraq signed the Baghdad Pact, the precursor of the CENTO alliance which was to link NATO and SEATO in John Foster Dulles' strategic encirclement of the communist bloc. Although Nasser, who had refused to participate, considered the pact to be an infringement upon his growing prestige in the Arab world, the pact was also a measure of his success, for he "had succeeded during the preceding two months in preventing three other Arab countries, Jordan, Lebanon, and Saudi Arabia, from joining the coalition established by Dulles." [19]

Another key event of 1955 also occurred during February: an Israeli raid into the Gaza Stri left thirty-five Egyptians dead. In the face of Israeli aggression Nasser began to search for an arms supplier. Still a "fervent anti-communist", [20] Nasser tried repeatedly to buy weapons

from the United States, Britain, and France, but the Americans were put off by Nasser's refusal to sign the Baghdad Pact, the British were still miffed at having been turned out of Egypt, and the French were livid over Nasser's support of the Algerian liberation movement. According to Michel Bar-Zohar,

> the real success of the Franco-Israeli friendship, or alliance, was, I think, in 1954-55; and that was because at the time the Algerian war began and France was extremely anxious to have somebody who would fight against Nasser, against Egypt. . .[the] French people believed that Nasser, that Egypt, was the main supplier of arms and the main source of help for the Algerian rebels. This fact pushed France to help Israel more and more from the military point of view. . . ." 21

So France, Britain, and the United States all flatly refused Nasser's repeated requests. "Only after the refusals did the leader of the Egyptian government consider addressing himself to other suppliers." [22] On September 26, 1955, Nasser signed a major arms deal with Czechoslovakia.

During 1955 and 1956 other factors developed which pushed Nasser into a closer relationship with the Soviets. These factors were the financing of the Aswan Dam and the combined Israeli-British-French attack on the Suez Canal.

The Egyptian Minister of Finance was warmly received in Washington in November 1955, and by December 19th he had received an offer of $54 million toward the $500 million needed to begin work on the dam. The British followed with an offer of $16 million, and on February 11th, 1956, Eugene Black of the International Bank of Reconstruction and Development signed an agreement to loan $200 million at 3-1/2% interest over 20 years. Still, Nasser was reticent to borrow such a huge sum.

> Gamal and his friends had grown up haunted by the foreign debt accumulated by the Khedive Ismail. Ismail's reckless borrowing had been the pretext for the

> British (originally Franco-British) seizure of Egyptian sovereignty. [23]

Furthermore, Nasser was suspicious of conditions that might be imposed in exchange for the loans. As a result, he delayed too long, and on July 11, 1956, according to Nasser biographer Jean Lacoutre,

> [t]he U.S. State Department released a communication directly to the press, without any preliminary notification of Cairo, which announced with unparalleled cruelty that because of the "weakness of the Egyptian economy" and the "instability of the regime," Washington had decided not to help finance the High Dam. [24]

Nasser responded on July 26, 1956, by nationalizing the Suez Canal.

Nasser's popularity soared. For the people of Egypt and the Arab World the Suez Canal Company was a symbol of foreign exploitation. The Franco-British enterprise drew approximately $100 million in yearly revenues at the time. This addition to the national budget would counteract the need for any loans to finance the Aswan Dam.

Meanwhile, the West was reacting. While United Nations diplomats challenged the legality of the nationalization, military leaders drew up plans for direct intervention. On October 29th, 1956, Israel attacked Egypt in the Sinai penninsula. Two days later, as Egyptian counteroffensives and popular resistance slowed Israel's progress toward the Canal, Britain and France joined the war with airstrikes, paratroop and tank assaults, and naval support. The Egyptian Air Force was wiped out, and within a week the Egyptian ground troops were decimated.

In the West the war is sometimes called the Seven Day War, but more often it is labelled according to one of the chief Western objectives: the Suez War, the Suez crisis, the Suez incident. The Arabs see the war from a different perspective; they call it the 'tripartite aggression'.

For years the Western powers denied any collusion with Israel, but the memoirs of chief British, French, and Israeli participants in the campaign -- memoirs published ten or more years after the fact -- clearly demonstrate that such denials were outright lies. Even the

military code name for the assault -- 'Operation Musketeer' -- underscores the 'all-for-one-and-one-for-all' strategy of Israel, France, and Britain.

Selwyn Lloyd of England isolates the chief objectives of the war:

> First, we had a special part to play in preventing a general conflagration in the Middle East. Second, Nasser was a menace and must at least be checked. Third, the Canal had to be brought back under some kind of international control. [25]

The French officer and Deputy Commander-in-Chief of ground forces, General Andre Beaufre, emphasizes the importance of Lloyd's second objective. "The military objective of the operation was termed: secure the Canal Zone. I do not think that it was really the aim. . . The real one was to put out Nasser. . . ." [26]

Whatever the objectives of the operation, it was obviously a military defeat for Egypt. More than 1000 Egyptians died, at least 2000 were wounded, and over 6000 were captured -- compared to total Anglo-French losses of 32 dead, 130 wounded, and 1 missing. For the Israelis it was a resounding victory, although their claim that "[a]t a cost of less than 180 men killed and captured, Israel routed half the Egyptian army," [27] doesn't take into account the importance of Franco-British actions. Eventually, however, General Dayan admitted the significance of French and British airstrikes.

> Oh, it was terribly important because otherwise I should say that <u>we</u> [sic] had to start that way. One cannot in a desert warfare really commit infantry forces without, I should say, gaining a major amount of air superiority earlier. [28]

At any rate several of Israel's chief goals were achieved, as an excerpt from General Dayan's diary indicates.

> Three major purposes were achieved: freedom of shipping for Israeli vessels in the Gulf of Aqaba; an end to the Fedayen terrorism; and a neutralization of the threat of

> attack on Israel by the joint Egypt-Syria-Jordan military command. . . . [29]

For Britain and France the military victory failed to achieve the desired goals.

> Instead of keeping the Canal open, ensuring the flow of oil to Europe, curbing Nasser's activities and the growing power of the Soviet Union in the Middle East, by mid-November the Canal was blocked, Western Europe was suffering from a shortage of oil, Nasser's prestige and that of the U.S.S.R. had been considerably strengthened, whilst the prestige of the Anglo-French had just about disappeared. [30]

In the words of Selwyn Lloyd: "Without a doubt it was a diplomatic defeat for Britain and France. We were condemned by an overwhelming majority as they voted at the United Nations." [31] General Beaufre lamented that "the Suez adventure was a <u>preventive</u> [sic] operation launched at a moment when the decolonizing 'disease' was too far advanced for it to prevent." [32]

The Egyptians were thus able to blame their defeat by Israel on French and British intervention, and after 1956 "Nasser was the symbol of a new Arab dignity in the face of the imperialist powers." [33] After 1956 Nasser's doctrine of 'positive neutrality' gave way to 'pan-Arabism' which, in February 1958, manifested itself in the political union of Egypt and Syria as the United Arab Republic (U.A.R.).

Meanwhile, Egyptian economic problems continued to grow. During 1957 and 1958 the Western powers had instigated an economic blockade of Egypt while the assets of the Canal Company were largely frozen by Western banks. Eventually, Egypt was obliged to reach a compromise with the Canal Company.

> Changed in form and, thanks to the recovery of its assets and the collection of indemnities, in possession of a not negligible capital, it was to begin a second

> career from 1959 on with a name slightly different but with tradition unchanged. [34]

On the domestic front in the late 1950's "the traditional bourgeoisie was beginning to make fabulous profits, enjoying some of the highest profit rates in the world at that period." [35] But for the masses of Egypt the regime "had not resolved any of the economic problems of the Egyptian capitalist road." [36] Meanwhile, the regime continued to borrow huge sums from the Soviets as well as from Western sources.

> The regime's leaders never intended to substitute Russian for British dependence. On the contrary, they tried to acquire the maximum freedom by maneuvering between the two blocks to promote industrial diversification and capitalist national development. [37]

Gradually, however, Egypt began to rely more heavily on aid from the U.S.S.R. In 1958 the Russians provided initial funding and technical staff to begin the High Dam project at Aswan, and in 1960 a second round of Soviet aid for the dam was granted.

> Henceforth Egypt would be, above all, dependent on the Soviet Union for delivery of hundred of thousands of special parts indispensable to heavy industry, which for a long time it would be unable to manufacture itself, since it did not possess the qualitatively advanced infrastructure necessary for their production. [38]

Despite these and other economic ties, such as massive Soviet rearmament contributions, Nasser resisted a complete ideological shift to communism. Indeed, 1959 brought brutal repression of Egyptian and Syrian communists. "In fact, concentration camps were opened in Egypt and Syria where hundreds of Communists and leftist political figures were imprisoned for years." [39] This action, reluctantly ignored by the Soviets, alienated a large and influential segment of Syrian society. When Nasser then turned against the traditional bourgeousie by nationalizing, first, in 1960, two major banks in Egypt, and later, in

1961, "all the financial and banking enterprises and most of the important industrial and commercial companies," [40] the Syrian opposition staged a coup d'etat against their own government and then withdrew from the U.A.R.

> After 1961 Egyptian "socialism" was a cover-up for the domination of the major levers of the production process by the Egyptian state bourgeousie and for the systematic removal of the working masses from any real responsibility in that process. [41]

The result of Nasser's 'Arab Socialism' was the creation of a new social class of bureaucrats, drawn from the ruling military caste, who replaced the traditional bourgeousie and transformed Egypt into a state capitalistic society. 1962 and 1963 brought about major reorganization of the government to administer the programs and enterprises acquired from the private sector.

In 1962 another event occurred which would eventually cause severe repercussions in Egypt. Across the Red Sea, a coup d'etat toppled the government and brought civil war to the Yemen. Nasser, at the urging of Anwar el-Sadat, ordered Egyptian troops to intervene on the side of the rebels. Supporting the revolution in the Yemen seemed at first to be an opportunity for Nasser to reassert his influence in the Arab world after the split with Syria, but the war in Yemen served mainly as a further drain on the Egyptian economy and military power.

> Within two months, the number of Egyptian troops increased from 100 to an estimated 8,000; and it soon became evident that the main brunt of the war would have to be borne by the Egyptian army. In 1963, the number of Egyptian troops in the Yemen rose to 20,000; then it increased to 40,000 in 1964 and reached a staggering 70,000 in 1965. [42]

Saudi and Jordanian backing of the counter-revolutionaries in the Yemen strained relations between these countries and the Nasser regime, and the failure in April 1963 of Egypt, Syria, and Iraq to establish a

federation further undermined Nasser's goal of pan-Arabism. Then, late in 1963, the near-completion of Israel's project to divert the headwaters of the Jordan river prompted a reconciliation among the Arab states. "For the next two and one-half years, the Arab world was to experience a period of peaceful coexistence and inter-state co-operation." [43]

At home, however, the Egyptian regime had become a police state in which dissident elements were repeatedly crushed. The unsolved economic problems of Egypt were the motivating force behind popular unrest, but the harsh response of the police, who since 1956 had taken over the task of repression from the military, stifled any criticism of the regime. In the meantime, Israel was presented as the scapegoat for Egypt's internal problems, and much of Egypt's meager resources were channeled into the military caste which was more intent upon the realization of profit than the defense of the Egyptian people. The people, forcibly removed from any position of power, relinquished responsibility for their defense to the corrupt military caste.

A related shift toward militarization to mask economic difficulties was going on in Israel at this time. The end of German reparations and drastic cuts in foreign aid, accelerating unemployment, as well as increased resistance by the Palestinians, contributed in 1965 to growing feelings of anxiety and uneasiness in Israel; "in a word, there was a crisis of confidence." [44] The Zionist leadership, according to Egyptian historian Mahmoud Hussein,

> then suggested the only solution compatible with the vital realities of the state: to give renewed primacy to its military structure by recreating a state of dynamic tension at the borders and, if need be, by provoking open conflict in order to transfer the crisis from the interior to the exterior. . . . [45]

Meanwhile, in Hussein's opinion, Nasser was afraid to arm his own people lest they revolt against the repressive regime which had failed

to solve any major internal problem. Instead, Nasser engaged in a battle of rhetoric against Israel.

> In May 1967 Nasser, unaware that the war prepared by Israel was imminent, was attempting to convince the Egyptian and Arab masses that he was prepared to win the war instead of preparing them to win it. [46]

Yet on May 16th Nasser moved beyond rhetoric and ordered the Indian commander of the United Nations contingent in the Sinai to withdraw; on May 22nd he decreed the blockade of the Strait of Tiran; on June 3rd "he continued to resist the pressure of Abdel Hakim Amer and Shams Badran, who maintained that the first to strike would be the victor." [47] Early in the morning of June 5, 1967, Israeli planes flew devastating strikes against Egyptian, Syrian, Jordanian, and Iraqi airfields. Israeli intelligence reports had been so accurate that dummy planes were allegedly left intact while actual aircraft were destroyed on the ground.

The 1967 war is often called the Six Day War; the Arabs call it al-hazīmah, the Defeat, or al-naksah, the Setback. The Egyptian forces were vanquished in only four days, during which time they "had lost 10,000 men and 1500 officers, in addition to the 5000 men and 500 officers taken prisoner by the Israelis." [48]

Mohamed Heikal cites three indisputable reasons for the remarkably efficient Israeli victory.

> Fact one is that we are facing an enemy in receipt of exceptional aid. Fact two is that this enemy has utilized the resources he received with exceptional skill. Fact three is that in tackling him with our own resources -- which were not inconsiderable -- we acted with exceptional ineptitude. [49]

On June 9th Nasser announced his resignation. Immediately people began to gather in front of parliament to protest the move. Hundreds of thousands, some say more than a million, demonstrated throughout the night and into the morning of June 10th. One Egyptian who recalls

taking part in the demonstration claims that the crowd spent hours chanting "ahaa, ahaa, laa tintahaa," which, loosely translated, means "Fuck you! Don't quit!" [50] On June 10th Nasser withdrew his resignation.

The people's choice was more than a vote of confidence for Nasser and a rejection of Zakariya Muhi El-Din, his proposed replacement. It was a choice between refusing to surrender and outright capitulation. Also, the popular demonstration "Marked the beginning of the direct role of the masses on the political stage, the beginning of new responsibility." [51]

The regime's propaganda machine immediately set out to sell the people the idea that popular resistance movements would be ineffective and that only a strengthened and state-controlled military would be able to defeat the enemy. The military was purged of high-ranking officers deemed responsible for the poor performance against the Israelis; many of them were put on trial for treason. Then, in February 1968 when many of the officers were granted clemency by the courts, the popular movement again took to the streets. This time the anti-government demonstrations turned into riots. In addition to protesting the clemency, the demonstrators were demanding the right to freedom of speech. Finally, after several days the army was called in to intervene, first with tear gas and barricades, then with weapons, and ultimately with arrests of several hundred of the spontaneous leaders of the revolt.

The state power immediately set out to separate the factions which had united during the February protest. Strict censorship kept communication among the factions to a minimum. At the same time, the country was divided, militarily and administratively, into one zone near the enemy and the Canal and another away from direct conflict. Meanwhile, the authorities moved to appease the popular movements by allowing electoral participation in issues of little to no importance, by permitting the masses to vote for "bodies devoid of any real power. . . thus leaving politics to the politicians." [52]

The regime stifled protest by the masses for fear that if the people were armed they might overthrow the government instead of combating Israeli aggression. In the meantime, during 1968, the Israelis were establishing settlements in the occupied territories, exploiting natural resources, such as Sinai oil, and attempting to "transform the cease-fire borders into de facto permanent borders." 53

> They constructed a rocket base in Sinai, which was soon destroyed by the Egyptian army. The Israelis responded by dispatching a helicopter commando force to the heart of Upper Egypt, where it demolished the electric power installations at Naga Hammadi. This was the signal for an upsurge of the Egyptian patriotic mass movement. 54

The government was obviously unwilling or unable to respond to these actions. On November 20, 1968, the people of Mansura, a small but regionally important town in the Delta, took to the streets to demand retaliation for the Naga Hammadi raid and insist upon freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and especially freedom from persecution by the Egyptian secret police. Within days the strikes, protests, and demonstrations had spread to other communities, the largest and most important of which was Alexandria where, on Saturday, November 23rd, high school and university students distributed leaflets calling for a revolt. On Sunday the people of Alexandria took to the streets. "Sha'arawi Gum'a -- Murderer!" and "Down with Sha'arawi Gum'a!" were among the slogans chanted by the protestors who blamed the Minister of the Interior, an original member of the Free Officers, for the widespread police repression. For years under Gum'a's rule the people had lived in fear of being dragged from their homes at any hour of any day to be interrogated, tortured, executed, or imprisoned.

On Monday, November 25th, soldiers opened fire with machine guns, leaving scores of dead on the streets. Lacking a consistent political leadership, the protestors, at least in Mahmoud Hussein's opinion, merely ran out of energy. "The volcano which erupted for three days simply exhausted itself; but its banked fires continued to burn in its

very depths, awaiting the right time and the right place to blaze up again." 55

In 1969 the Nasser regime adopted a more clearly defined policy toward Israel, a policy which became known as 'the war of attrition'.

> On the Egyptian side, it consisted of the massive use of artillery against Israeli fortifications on the East Bank of the Canal, while at the same time increasingly numerous and highly skilled commandos crossed the Canal to carry out sabotage operations inside the enemy lines. Finally, picked marksmen were permanently stationed on the Canal with orders to shoot at anything that moved. The military objective of these operations was to prevent the cease-fire lines from becoming new de facto frontiers between Israel and Egypt. 56

The Israelis, outmanned and outgunned along the Canal and lacking the element of surprise attack, chose to retaliate by shifting the front to the Red Sea coast. They picked the sixty-man garrison on Chadwan Island as the target for their new offensive, but instead of an easy rout of the Egyptian troops, the Israelis met with stiff resistance. "The island was defended, inch by inch, over a twenty-four-hour period, until the Egyptian ammunition was exhausted." 57 The garrison "refused to the end of surrender." 58

The Zionist forces then abandoned this tactic in favor of increased air-strikes, setting no limits to their penetration into mainland Egypt. "They bombed civilian as well as military targets -- such as a factory at Abu Zaabal and a school at Bahr El-Bagar -- causing hundreds of deaths." 59 Nasser, faced with the impossible choice of outright surrender or mass mobilization of the Egyptian people, called on the Russians to intervene.

> After a prolonged period of hesitation, they [the Russians] realized that they were obliged to intervene in a more direct manner -- and particularly to send Russian pilots to fly the planes that were to protect

> the cities -- while at the same time constructing a network of missile bases which would have to be maintained and commanded by Russian specialists, at least for a while. [60]

Within a matter of weeks Israeli aircraft had disappeared from Egyptian skies.

Russian intervention forced the United States, by now the chief Western power supporting the Israelis, to reevaluate its position and press for a concrete cease-fire strategy. The result, in July 1970, was the Rogers Plan. On July 23rd, the eighteenth anniversary of the 1952 revolution, Nasser announced his acceptance of the cease-fire agreement.

Throughout the war of attrition Nasser had worked to defuse popular demands to participate directly in the conflict. A central strategy had been to support the Palestinian movement, thereby shifting the responsibility for dealing with Israel away from the Egyptian people. The Palestinian people saw Nasser's acceptance of the Rogers Plan as a betrayal, and Palestinian controlled radio stations in Egypt immediately began to foment agitation against Nasser. Without hesitation Nasser struck back. "The two major Palestinian radio stations, located in Cairo, were closed without warning. At the same time, several hundred of the most politically active Palestinian students were expelled." [61]

Meanwhile, King Hussein was planning an even more severe attack on the Palestinians operating out of Jordan. On September 17, 1970, Jordanian troops began a battle with the Palestinians which lasted for eleven days. The assault, however, failed to suppress resistance, especially in Amman and in the north of Jordan. Hussein and Yasser Arafat came to Cairo where they agreed to accept Nasser's arbitration. "For the immediate future, Nasser had achieved one of his objectives: he had allowed the Palestinian movement to be weakened while representing himself as the only one capable of protecting it." [62]

On September 28, 1970, two days after establishing the precarious truce, Nasser died of a cardiac arrest. Despite his failures and

mistakes, Nasser was remembered with pride and devotion during the mourning ceremonies.

> Over five million Egyptians gathered around his coffin in Cairo: the impoverished masses from the capital, from other cities, and from the countryside; the workers, students, shopkeepers, and civil servants. The whole Arab world experienced his passing as a common national bereavement. [63]

These were the basic events on the Nasser era. When Ali Salem wrote the Oedipus Comedy in 1969, Egypt and Israel were still locked into a war of attrition, the people of Egypt were still facing enormous economic problems, and the voices of dissent were still being censored and suppressed. How Salem managed to make his audiences confront these issues through the February 1970 production of his play is the subject of the following pages.

IV. Ali Salem's Version: The Oedipus Comedy

The Oedipus Comedy is a serious play, tempered with humor. "Egyptians must be made to laugh in order to cry," asserts the playwright, "and I regard it as something of a triumph when my audiences do both." [64] Salem puts his theory to the test at the end of The Oedipus Comedy when Tiresias tells the audience "that even though you may have laughed while you listened to this story, I swear to you by all the gods that I never meant to make you laugh." [65]

Early in the play, when the City Council and the Citizens of Thebes are gathered to discuss the Beast which threatens the city, Tiresias admonishes the people for joking about the situation:

> Tiresias: People. Be serious. Merriment is a great thing. But the temples and tombs and great walls which you are sitting beside are not built on merriment. Very great, indeed, is one who can laugh in the face of catastrophes, but when jokes become demons who eat your

> sense of responsibility, when mirth becomes a shroud, when you call misery and suffering 'meriment' and 'mirth', then what is there that ties you to the world? Then all is lost. Whoever remains shall perish. [66]

Tiresias' appeal is to no avail. The people continue to mock him and to ignore his plea that everyone go out and face the Beast together. Finally, Tiresias gives up and leaves, but not without mocking the people in return:

> Tiresias: . . . You don't like what I say, of course. You don't like to hear this kind of talk. You want somebody to stand up and tell you jokes. To tickle you. (With bitter sarcasm) Oh, you courageous Citizens of Thebes. Every one of you is ready to traverse the seas, to meet crocodiles at the peak of the flood, to struggle with the gods, to sacrifice his life for the sake of hearing a new joke. May you find yourselves in a greater mess than the one you're in now. [67]

This condemnation of joking represents a very real concern in Egyptian society. Egyptians are famous throughout the Arab world for their sense of humor. Sometimes jokes provide a way of side-stepping censorship, but oftentimes joking becomes a way of avoiding responsibility for facing up to real and serious problems.

> Since Nasser and his regime were exempted from any criticism the Egyptians, lacking a truly responsive press, often resorted to the nuktah (the joke) as a safety valve. Indeed, after the 1967 war, the nuktah was so much relied on as a political and social commentary that 'Nasser publicly admonished the population for showing such levity at a time of crisis'. [68]

The Citizens are not the only characters in The Oedipus Comedy who resort to joking. The City Council makes a joke of the solution to the Beast's riddle.

Hor Muheb: . . . What is it that walks on four legs in the morning, walks on two at noon, on three in the evening, and after supper walks on five, and at daybreak crawls on its belly?

Uwnah: What's the answer?

Awālih: A man. (He struggles not to laugh.) Is anyone going to tell us no?

(They explode with laughter. . .) 69

Jokes, however, are only a secondary source of humor in Ali Salem's play. The playwright's choice of words often carries a comic impact" "It's got him by the butt," shouts a person mournfully as the Beast carries off an unsuccessful candidate for solving the riddle. 70 Puns are even more common than rude words. Wahsh, which means 'Beast', comes from the same root which means 'to miss someone' or 'to yearn for something'. Act II, Scene 1, is filled with such puns, most of which don't translate well. The segment which comes closest to carrying the full impact of the pun is critic Mā Hay Kāh's pompous speech on television:

> Mā Hay Kāh: The preordained, savage struggle between human beings and Beasts, toward which some artists have turned their attention, makes us feel an extreme sense of longing for that savage conflict. 71

The prime source of humor in the play, however, is the absurdity of the situations. Salem takes a situation which would normally be frighteningly real, distorts the circumstances to the point of making them seem ridiculous, and thereby manages to broach subjects which would normally be banned by the censor. When, for example, Awālih beats Kā'it to death during interrogation and then writes a fictional confession to explain the prisoner's demise, the situation is carried to the point of absurdity.

> Awālih: . . . The suspect was confronted with irrefutable proof of his theft of the treasures of Rā' -- (The young [police]man pauses and glances at Awālih in

astonishment.) Write, man. Why are you stopping? Of his theft of the treasures of Rā' from the temple storehouse. When confronted with the proof, he broke down and committed suicide by throwing himself from the window on the fourth floor.

The Policeman: There aren't any windows on the fourth floor.

Awālih: Then from the fifth floor.

The Policeman: There aren't any on the fifth floor.

Awālih: Just write, man. Don't tire me out. It's just a technicality.

The Policeman: A technicality?

Awālih: It doesn't mean an actual window. It's a symbolic window. [72]

Kā'it was arrested merely for having asked how Oedipus had solved the riddle. Anyway, Awālih is in a hurry to keep a date at the cinema so he orders the young Policeman to throw the body off the roof.

The Policeman: (With utter dismay) Off the roof?

Awālih: Didn't you say the fourth and fifth floors don't have any windows? (Very angry) Why are you making it so difficult for me to deal with you? Well, where else can you throw him from, then? Don't be a fool.

The Policeman: (On the point of a severe collapse) I'm sorry. Go ahead, sir. Go ahead and go to the cinema. You don't want to miss the Mickey Mouse cartoon. [73]

The threat of arbitrary arrest, detention, and torture during the Nasser era was a very real danger, but these dangers and the spector of censorship or reprisal against an author who challenges the censor are not the only reasons for the comic treatment of the subject. John Waterbury, an American translator and critic of Ali Salem's work, locates the central issue.

> Possibly the average Egyptian could not endure a purely dramatic probing of his life; its mediocrity and tawdriness would be hard to swallow without some comic sweetening. In any case, the allegorical tragicomedy has become Ali Salem's trademark. 74

Egyptian critic Mahmūd Amīn al-'Ālim holds a different view in regard to <u>You Who Killed the Beast</u>.

> I don't know why Ali Salem calls his play a comedy. It is absolutely not a comedy -- [neither the fact] that its second act is overflowing with vivid irony [nor] that colloquial language predominates would qualify it for that. 75

So why does Ali Salem call his play a comedy? Both critics have valid points. The use of colloquial language in a serious play is still the exception to the rule in the Arab world, but as Amīn al-'Ālim indicates, the use of irony and colloquial speech do not automatically make the play a comedy. What Amīn al-'Ālim overlooks, however, are the jokes, the puns, the absurd situations, and the overall juxtaposition of serious and comic elements throughout the play. Waterbury is closer to the mark when he calls it a tragicomedy, for the play treats a serious subject with comic style. So why didn't Salem call it <u>The Oedipus Tragicomedy</u>? Perhaps the distinction is implicit: the Oedipus story is usually a tragedy. Perhaps Ali Salem calls his play a comedy precisely because it isn't. Nevertheless, however you categorize it, <u>You Who Killed the Beast</u> is a funny play, tempered with seriousness.

<u>Synopsis</u>

<u>You Who Killed the Beast</u> is a short, fast-moving, three-act play. The pace results not from continuous flow of action but from continuously changing situation, especially in the second act.

The situation at the beginning of Act I is explained by Tiresias: a Beast is threatening the city; it has eaten all who have tried to solve

its riddle. The action begins as the Citizens gather to watch the latest unsuccessful attempt. Despite the reward offered by the City Council, no one else will step forward to face the Beast. Each member of the Council lays the blame on the others, and they continue to bicker until Queen Jokasta appears and warns them that they will be fired if the riddle is not solved. Oedipus comes forward from among the Citizens and volunteers to face the Beast. Instead of the money offered as a reward, Oedipus demands that he become King and marry Queen Jokasta. Once he has obtained the consent of the Queen, the City Council, and the Citizens, Oedipus goes out to meet the Beast. When he returns, the Citizens refuse to hear him; instead they chant and sing his praise: "You who killed the Beast."

The scene shifts to the throne room where King Oedipus meets with advisors from the City Council who inform him that they have discovered that Oedipus is descended from divine origins. Oedipus dismisses them and receives Kāmi, a friend who was playing chess with Oedipus at the beginning of the play. Kāmi, it turns out, was the only witness to Oedipus' encounter with the Beast, but before Kāmi can relate what he saw, he is snatched away by the Chief of Police, Awālih. Such things are undesirable but necessary, explains the Chief. The first act comes to a close as Tiresias appears and questions the necessity of such actions.

The structure of the play changes in Act II. In a series of vignettes the effects of Oedipus' rule are illustrated. Oedipus promised to create five thousand years of civilization's inventions for the Citizens, and the first scene shows how these inventions have saturated the lives of playwright Senefru's family. The second scene reveals Hor Muheb, Director of the University of Thebes, teaching his students that Oedipus is divine, and the third scene pictures what happens to one who questions Oedipus' actions, as Chief of Police Awālih beats a Citizen to death during interrogation. In scene four Awālih and Jokasta plot to undermine Oedipus, and Awālih makes a deal with Uwnah, Head of the Chamber of Commerce, to divide the profits from Oedipus'

inventions. Shadow puppet figures worship the shadow of Oedipus Rā' in scene five, and in scene six Oedipus confronts the City Council to discover why the people have begun to bow down to him in the temple. The Council rationalizes their actions and flatters Oedipus into submission. Scene seven, the final scene of Act II, shows the propaganda movement in full swing: as Oedipus delivers empty rhetoric to the Citizens, Awālih coerces Senefru into participating in the crowd's chanting and singing. Once Oedipus has ended his speech and retired to the palace, however, news arrives that the Beast has returned.

Scene one of Act III follows a line of action similar to the first scene of the play, but this time Awālih instead of Tiresias explains the situation. He reads a report from Hor Muheb's 'Beast experts', claiming that the Beast is, in fact, a new Beast and not the one which Oedipus already confronted. Awālih then solicits advice from the Citizens, and when they scoff at his hypocrisy, the Chief of Police tries to arrest the entire city. He is thwarted by Tiresias, however, and the City Council members return to bickering as they did at the beginning of the play. This time the members of the Council have a vested interest in Oedipus; if Oedipus were to die, confronting the Beast, his inventing would cease and their profits would come to an end. Jokasta overrules the Council, however, and sends for Oedipus who incites the Citizens to face the Beast together.

The result is a disaster, a total defeat. Oedipus consults Kreon and Tiresias during scene two in order to find out what went wrong and to discover a new course of action. Kreon accepts responsibility for the defeat, but he lays the blame on the character of his men. The solution is twofold, Kreon claims: we must learn everything we can about the Beast, and we must rebuild the men of Thebes. Tiresias agrees, but he recognizes that the true enemy is the fear which has been bred into the Theban people, and he holds Oedipus responsible for allowing Awālih to spread such a climate of fear. Oedipus banishes Awālih and then goes out to confront the Citizens with the long-overdue

truth. "I did not kill the Beast," he tells them, but the crowd is deaf to his words. Their only response is to sing: "You who killed the Beast."

The talking resumes as Tiresias introduces the final scene. Only the one who knows how to free the people from fear, anxiety, and doubt, he asserts, has the right to the title Ruler. Oedipus responds by claiming to be blind, and he slips away into obscurity. Kreon marches out alone to meet the Beast. The Citizens drag his body back inside the city walls as Tiresias steps forward to deliver his summation and his challenge to the people: whatever the individual price, the people must work together to bring about the solution.

These are the basic events of You Who Killed the Beast. Sophocles, in Oedipus the King, tells a detective story; Oedipus unravels the mystery of his origins and discovers that he is the criminal responsible for the plague. Salem's account focuses on actions related to the Beast; his Oedipus becomes a detective only toward the end of the play when the Beast returns to Thebes. The Sphynx never returns after the traditional Oedipus defeats it; instead, a plague descends upon the Greek Thebes. The plague in Salem's version is not a disease except in a metaphorical sense. The social attitude which stems from fear of police repression is the plague diagnosed by Oedipus to be the cause for the people's inability to defeat the Beast. Salem's Oedipus never investigates his origins. His detective work is limited to discovering the plague of fear created by the Theban bureaucracy.

Ali Salem compresses the events of the traditional Oedipus story into one play, and he transforms the Greek legend into an examination of Egyptian politics. In the process he creates a play rich in literary and historical allusions while revealing the common, universal problems of a ruler -- any ruler -- in a corrupt society.

PART TWO: THEMATIC CONSIDERATIONS

There is a political dimension to the traditional Oedipus story, a dimension usually overshadowed by psychological, metaphysical, or generic considerations. The human Oedipus is unaware that he is guilty of crimes which will bring about his downfall; Oedipus the unsuspecting victim of fate struggles vainly to overcome the adverse prophecies of the Oracle; Oedipus the tragic hero is an otherwise admirable individual defeated by a terrible hidden flaw.

David Grene, co-editor along with Richmond Lattimore of The Complete Greek Tragedies, locates the political dimension of the traditional Oedipus story by searching for a common theme in Sophocles' Theban Trilogy instead of by evaluating each play separately. By comparing the three plays Grene isolates factual inconsistencies, particularly of character, which lead him to suggest that "it is the theme and not the man that matters." [76] For Grene this theme centers in

> the story of a ruler who makes a mistaken decision, though in good faith, and who then finds himself opposed in a fashion which he misunderstands and which induces him to persist in his mistake. [77]

The key word here is ruler. Grene discusses character in terms of political function: "Behind the figure of Oedipus or Creon stands the tyrant of the legend; and behind the tyrant of the legend, the meaning of all despotic authority." [78] The primary theme of Ali Salem's play is political leadership. What does it mean: to rule? Is Oedipus truly a ruler or is he a mere pawn in the hands of the Theban City Council? These are the fundamental questions to be considered in the first of the following four sections of Part Two.

The second section deals with questions about the Beast. Lowell Edmunds in The Sphinx [sic] in the Oedipus Legend claims that "it is unnecessary to go beyond the comparative evidence of Greek legend and myth to see that kingship is what the story is about." [79] In Salem's

play the sphynx or Beast is a symbol of aggression which threatens Thebes from without while the City Council engages in repressive activities which threaten the city from within. Thus, an investigation of the Beast-symbol in Salem's play reinforces the conclusions of section one in terms of the problems faced by a ruler in a corrupt society.

Section three examines questions of responsibility and accountability. A common interpretation of the Oedipus story centers on the role of fate in determining the hero's destiny. H.D.F. Kitto, however, discusses this motif in terms of logos, the logical world-order, rather than in terms of a divinely ordained fate. "Every detail in the Tyrannus is contrived in order to enforce Sophocles' faith in this underlying logos," remarks Kitto in Greek Tragedy.[80] In Salem's play fate is not divinely ordained, but there is a logical world order which is manipulated by the City Council. What has been thus far lacking in critical accounts is an understanding of the end of Salem's play in terms of this notion of manipulation. Ignorance, blindness, fate -- 'I didn't know', 'I couldn't see', 'they made me do it' -- these are the traditional excuses offered by Oedipus in defense of his crimes. In the case of Ali Salem's character, they are more than excuses -- they are the Oedipus Alibi.

The fourth thematic consideration goes beyond the absence of incest and patricide to uncover latent sexual characteristics in Salem's play. In modern Egypt society is dominated by males, unlike ancient, matriarchal Egyptian society. Post-Freudian interpretations of the Oedipus complex have emphasized the importance of the power struggle instead of the mother-son relationship. In light of these psychological interpretations and the dominance of the male in modern Egyptian society as well as in Salem's play, the struggle for power among the ruling elite is once again the primary focus of The Oedipus Comedy.

In each of the four sections which deal with thematic considerations the background information is incorporated into the discussion in order to emphasize the range of allegorical parallels.

Oedipus could be any ruler in any society, but the parallels with the Nasser era are always strongest.

I. The Oedipus Conspiracy: Oedipus -- Ruler or Pawn?

What are the qualifications of a ruler? Does solving the riddle and defeating the Beast give Oedipus the right to wear the Theban crown? Are intellectual capabilities, patriotic motivations, and material goals also essential? Is popular approval more important that hereditary claim or divine right? What is the traditional basis of order in Theban society, how is tradition maintained, and what circumstances supercede tradition?

Qualifications

First, which set of qualifications apply to which position? As The Oedipus Comedy begins, the City Council and the Theban Citizens assemble to find a new candidate for solving the riddle posed by the Beast. Oedipus volunteers, and the City Council, with little hesitation, accepts. Clearly a willingness to risk death is the only essential qualification for approval.

Oedipus, however, refuses the Council's offer of riches as a reward and demands the Theban crown instead. "The position of King is open. Let me be appointed King." [81] Qualifications still seem unimportant to the Council at this point. They give their consent after considering only the extent of their power over the King. If he becomes a hindrance to the Council, they will overthrow him.

Jokasta and Kreon are not so readily swayed. The Queen finally asks Oedipus to state his qualifications. "My intellect. My ingenuity. My cleverness," [82] replies Oedipus. "If only your qualifications included your love for Thebes," [83] objects Kreon, Commander of the Theban Guards. Oedipus responds with a reaffirmation that intelligence

is his most important attribute. "I don't love anything you can grasp with your hands. I love principles, ideals, and ideas." 84

But how can patriotic love and ideals be measured or evaluated other than in terms of a leader's goals and the actions he plans to take to fulfill them? Indeed, Jokasta's next question forces Oedipus to explain his goals in concrete terms. "What do you intend to do for Thebes? she inquires. His answer is that after solving the riddle and defeating the Beast he intends to build a civilization defined as "five thousand years of humanity's inventions." 85 Among the inventions he plans to create are "printing presses, cars, airplanes, electricity, electronics, the telephone and the radio." 86

The Council agrees, but Oedipus demands the approval of the people. "It must be the people who agree to my appointment. You might appoint me today and fire me tomorrow. If the people appoint me, no one can reject me." 87 The Citizens agree, but Oedipus insists upon one more condition: that he marry Jokasta. The Queen protests: "Don't forget that you are a common man, neither a child of Amun nor a child of Rā'." 88 Oedipus counters: "Let one of the children of Amun or the children of Rā' be the one to solve the riddle." 89 But the Chief of Police persuades the reluctant Queen to give her consent.

> Jokasta: . . . For the sake of Thebes -- and only for the sake of Thebes -- I sacrifice all the religious conventions. . . . 90

Three initially separate issues surface during this sequence of events. Oedipus' qualifications are considered first in reference to his willingness to face the Beast, second in terms of his ability to rule, and third in regard to his marriage to Jokasta. The police dossier on Oedipus contains little more than a description of his physical characteristics and an account of his recent activities, but despite the lack of information, the Theban leadership, unwilling to face the Beast themselves, agrees to send Oedipus to solve the riddle. Only when Oedipus insists upon the throne of Thebes do they investigate his qualifications. His intelligence and his material goals convince

the Theban leaders and the Theban Citizens. Then, when the question arises of marriage to Jokasta, heredity and divine origins are considered. Meanwhile, two important precedents are set: first, Oedipus demands popular approval of his appointment; second, Jokasta sacrifices religious conventions by giving her consent.

Propaganda Campaign

As soon as Oedipus returns from the Beast to claim the crown, the City Council begins a campaign to make the people believe that Oedipus is a god. The morning after Oedipus is crowned Pharaoh, Hor Muheb arrives with news that the name 'Oedipus' was discovered in the temple archives on seven papyrus documents that "contain nothing but the names of gods or human beings descended from the gods." [91] Moments after Oedipus has dismissed Hor Muheb with instructions not to announce his 'discovery', Awālih appears with similar news derived from the reports of his detectives. "Listen, Awālih," explains Oedipus coldly. "I am a human son of a human being. Do you understand? The secret of my true greatness is that I am a human being -- the first human being to rule Thebes." [92] Awālih then requests a list from Oedipus -- a list of 'enemies of the regime'. His plan is to suppress any public dissent or opposition and to cancel any effect of Oedipus' appeal for popular approval. Indeed, when Oedipus' next visitor, his friend Kāmi, reveals that he spied on Oedipus during the encounter with the Beast, Awālih snatches the witness away. Kāmi is never seen or heard from again.

The City Council's campaign soon becomes a three-pronged assault. Uwnah, Head of the Chamber of Commerce, saturates the market with 'Oedipus-and-the-Beast' paraphenalia. Books, toys, music, television, and radio proselytize the heroic Oedius 'who killed the Beast'. Meanwhile, Hor Muheb, Director of the University of Thebes and Chief Priest of Amun, propagandizes the divinity of Oedipus, despite the King's explicit instructions to the contrary. In a lecture to the university students, for instance, Hor Muheb argues "that it would be

impossible for a human being to solve the riddle unless he be of divine origin. And therefore, Oedipus was able to solve the riddle." 93 Awālih's job as Chief of Police is to search out those who doubt the truth of the propaganda campaign. One victim of police brutality is Kā'it, a Citizen who ends up chained to a stone column in a temple crypt while Awālih interrogates him about "spreading rumors that Oedipus did not kill the Beast." 94 Since Oedipus provided no list of 'enemies of the regime', Awālih has resorted to what he calls 'the old lists'.

> Awālih: You see, your Majesty, our family -- the family of Awālih -- has held the office of Chief of Police for four hundred years. But I've noticed a strange thing. The lists which contain the names of enemies of the regime are the same. We bequeath them father to grandfather. Sometimes a few names are added; sometimes a few names are dropped; but the lists are basically the same. 95

The name of Kā'it is apparently high on Awālih's list. "Whenever a new King is chosen, you always arrest me and beat me, and you always ask me the same questions," accuses Kā'it moments before dying from torture. 96

The extent of the propaganda campaign is revealed to Oedipus when the Citizens bow down to him and address him as Oedipus Rā' during prayers at the temple. When the King confronts the bureaucrats with this news and demands an explanation, they provide a detailed description of the religious foundation of society.

> Uwnah: . . . The gods have ruled the people of Thebes for thousands of years. The worship of the Pharaoh isn't merely a sacred custom. It is a national heritage. We can't just come out suddenly and tell the people that the King is an ordinary human being.
> Hor Muheb: Moreover, the educational curriculum in all its phases says so. It's impossible to change it. And the prayers say so. All the customs and traditions and

songs and parables say so. It's a pyramid, your Majesty. A pyramid made up of beliefs and concepts. A very large pyramid. This pyramid is built on a very solid foundation. This foundation says that a Pharaoh is a god. If we came along now and said that he's just an ordinary man, the pyramid would collapse. Everything would become confused, and there would be chaos and calamity for all of us. Especially the Priests of Amun. 97

Oedipus argues that the people should be taught evolution instead, but he inadvertently reveals that he, too, has been duped into believing that past pharaohs were divine. Hor Muheb interrupts and contradicts him: "Actually, they were all wretched human beings like us. And some of them were beggars, too, but we had to make them into gods." 98

Eventually, the bureaucrats convince Oedipus that he is not the only one affected by the divinity campaign.

Uwnah: . . . The people respect us more when they know that our leader is a god. But if they knew that the one who employs us is a common man, they would flaunt us, and we wouldn't know how to make them work.

Hor Muheb: It is a matter of prestige, your Majesty. 99

The real concern of the City Council, however, is money, not prestige. The truth comes out when the Beast returns to threaten the city. The Council members refuse in the name of Pharaonic Tradition to allow Oedipus to risk his life again, and Kreon accuses Uwnah of hypocrisy.

Kreon: These Pharaonic Traditions are your life, aren't they, Uwnah? You, as Head of the Chamber of Commerce. Why don't you speak the truth for once in your life? The truth is that you are afraid lest anything happen to Oedipus. You are afraid for the goose who lays the golden eggs. If anything happened to him, the chain of inventions would stop, and your shops would close. 100

Summary

So who is really ruling Thebes? Oedipus' bravery and determination to face the Beast prove ineffective for he never really kills the Beast. He applies his intelligence to material inventions and loses sight of his ideals, such as an improved education system and modernized temple rites. While he toils in the factories, Uwnah, Awālih, Hor Muheb, and their fellow profiteers are enjoying the rewards of the King's creativity. And most of the inventions are useless luxuries which do little to improve the lives of the common Citizens. At the same time, the ruler's hereditary claim to the throne, a claim based upon supposed divine origins, is propagandized as the only important quality of the King. In short, the qualifications which Oedipus stressed are manipulated for the material gain of a small group instead of for the welfare of the Theban Citizens while the one qualification which Oedipus discounted as unimportant is transformed into the sole basis of his rule.

Oedipus is not the only pawn of the bureaucracy, however. The wealthy bureaucrats also manipulate the Queen and the Citizens of Thebes. Jokasta has been conditioned to believe in her divine heritage, but she also recognizes her humanity. "It's true I am a Queen," she informs Awālih. "And a descendant of the gods, as well. But I'm a human being, too." [101] Her complaint is lack of attention from Oedipus who is busy, day and night, in the factories. In response to the Queen's request that Awālih engineer an 'accident' to eliminate the King, the Chief of Police reminds her of the crucial function Oedipus now performs in the economic community and the immense popularity which the King enjoys in light of his inventions, his supposed divinity, and his initial insistance upon popular approval of his coronation. Awālih suggests two courses of action; first, that Jokasta rely upon 'a woman's weapon' and concentrate on preserving her beauty; second, that they encourage the people to love Oedipus in hopes that the King himself will make a mistake that leads to his downfall. In an example of the Queen's

religious indoctrination, Awālih encourages Jokasta to enlist divine intervention in favor of their schemes. Away goes Jokasta to the Temple of Amun to ask Isis to convince Horus to aid them in their conspiracy.

The Citizens are also manipulated into perpetuating religious propaganda. Senefru, a playwright whose works sometimes pass the censor and reach production, discusses his latest play to reach the stage.

> Senefru: In my latest play, I said the most daring things possible, and I didn't use symbols or resort to history. I write with extreme boldness, and I am ready to sacrifice my life in order to write whatever I want to write. I already demanded in my latest play that we attempt a new study of the myth of Isis in light of the true needs of the people -- and without disregarding what some of the people have done in terms of destroying styles which are out of step with our ability to create civilization, especially in the period of time which immediately follows the flood of the Nile.
>
> Awālih: (Shouting) Could anything be more daring than that? [102]

Senefru has been forced by Awālih into making this speech because Oedipus has insinuated that the Chief of Police has stifled freedom of speech. This sequence occurs early in the play when the first Beast threatens the city. A similar situation develops when the Beast reappears. In response to Awālih's appeal for help from the Citizens, a voice from the crowd evaluates Theban democracy.

> Awālih: Dear Citizens of Thebes. Motivated by the rule of true democracy, we have gathered here today to solicit your opinion. How do we put an end to this Beast?
>
> (A person among the Citizens speaks without our seeing him or knowing the source of his voice.)
>
> The Person: Hypocrite. What is it to us? Everything you do, you do by yourself. Why change today? What are

> the Citizens of Thebes, anyway? In good times forgotten and in bad times remembered. [103]

Awālih reacts by attempting to arrest the entire city. Democracy in Thebes is obviously a sham, a pretense, a manifestation of the propaganda campaign. Not only are the Citizens inundated with worthless products that only serve to glorify the Theban leadership; not only are the media programmed with lies about the divinity and heroism of Oedipus; not only does the police force suppress all dissent; but all these things happen in the name of democracy. Yet each and every Citizen is willing to allow Oedipus to solve their problems for them instead of tackling them themselves. Everyone has become so conditioned to the manipulations of the City Council and the Chamber of Commerce that they are afraid to take any responsibilities upon themselves. The police, the priests, and the profiteers are the true rulers of Thebes. Oedipus, Jokasta, and the individual Citizens are pawns in a bureaucratically controlled contest for power and wealth.

Comparison

How do Nasser, Akhnaton, and the Greek Oedipus compare with Salem's Oedipus in terms of the concepts thus far considered? In other words, how do these rulers compare in regard to intelligence, patriotism, material goals, hereditary claim, and divine origins? To what extent is any of these characters truly a ruler?

The Greek Oedipus wins the Theban crown by solving a riddle. His intelligence brings him to power and later on brings about his downfall. Salem's Oedipus uses his intelligence to defeat the professional chess players of Thebes, to answer the riddle posed by the Beast, and to invent material goods for the Citizens of Thebes. Circumstantially, both characters are intelligent; conceptually, however, their intelligence differs. Salem's character is clever, ingenious, and shrewd; his intelligence is applied outwardly toward material goals. The Greek Oedipus directs his intelligence inwardly according to the

Socratic dictum: 'Know thyself'. Never does Salem's Oedipus investigate his origins, he never really defeats the Beast, and he never truly achieves his ideals. His plans to organize "new rituals in the temple" and to establish "a new system of education" [104] might have aided the Citizens to know themselves better, but these idealistic goals are soon overshadowed by his drive to invent gadgets.

'Living in Truth' is the epithet employed by Akhnaton. [105] The Pharaoh glorified his physical deformities in the so-called 'naturalistic' art of Amarna. The 'truth' of his deformities became the foundation of 'truthful representation' in art. Perhaps in a reference to Akhnaton's abnormal, elongated skull, Chief of Police Awālih's dossier equates Oedipus' intelligence with "his large mental capacity." [106]

Gamal Abdel Nasser was also known to be intelligent. He was the brains behind the 1952 revolution and a politician of "astounding tactical brilliance" [107] who, for almost twenty years, apparently outwitted rival factions at home while struggling to manipulate East and West on the international scene. He, like Salem's Oedipus, was also an avid chess player.

How do the characters compare in terms of patriotic love and material goals? The traditional Oedipus demonstrates his concern for his subjects by his willingness to sacrifice himself for the sake of ending the plague. In fact, finding and banishing the criminal believed responsible for the plague is this character's only apparent material goal -- material in the sense of the welfare of the Theban people. Akhnaton, supposedly the incarnation of the sun-god Aton, based his rule on the deity's love for all creatures of nature, and some Egyptologists claim that the Pharaoh "conceived a totally materialist creed. . . that Aten [sic] was more concrete and less spiritualized than any god of Egypt." [108] In other words Akhnaton may have demonstrated his love for his subjects in a material way.

Nasser also expressed his concern for his subjects in terms of material goals: combating foreign aggression while bridging five

thousand years of civilization through industrialization and commercial development projects. The Egyptian people are proud of their country's heritage -- its ancient history, its largely Islamic value system, its modern struggle for independence -- but Egypt is still dreadfully poor in a material sense, and many Egyptians continue to toil in much the same manner as their ancient ancestors. Indeed, the Egyptian people envy the material wealth of the West, and many tend to blame foreign exploitation for Egypt's lack of material progress.

Larger differences surface when the characters are examined in terms of hereditary claim to the throne. The Greek Oedipus is a direct descendant of Laius and Jocasta, but his heredity is unknown when he assumes power. He is chosen by the people for defeating the Sphynx, and according to the practice of a matriarchal society, he marries the Queen. At any rate, Oedipus is never considered to be of divine origin -- although he is sometimes believed to possess magical or mystical qualities.

Akhnaton, however, was considered to be a divine incarnation of the sun-god Aton. Furthermore, as the son of Queen Tiy, Akhnaton had a potential hereditary claim to the throne, a claim known to himself and to his subjects. This claim was conditional, however, for succession in ancient Egypt was based upon matrilineal tradition which states that the daughter of the Queen is heir to the throne. If no daughter exists, the brother of the Queen and his female offspring inherit the crown. If, as Velikovsky suggests, Nefertiti was the daughter of Queen Tiy's brother Ay, then Akhnaton ruled by virtue of his marriage to Nefertiti rather than by reason of his royal blood. Smenkhkare and Tutankhamun ruled because they married daughters of Nefertiti, and Ay became ruler when the rest of this matrilineal line died out. If Nefertiti was not a daughter of Ay or Tiy, Akhnaton violated matrilineal custom by usurping the crown. This challenge to tradition may have been the seed of all subsequent conflict with the social order, but another factor may have been more critical. Queen Tiy was not of royal descent; she was a commoner married to Amenhotep III. Thus she may have been the initial

cause for social unrest in Thebes when she tried to perpetuate her own matrilineal line, whether through Ay and Nefertiti or directly through her son, Akhnaton. Moreover, the Pharaoh's name-change, religious conversion, and relocation of the capital show that he renounced much of the tradition he inherited. No evidence exists to indicate that popular approval was required for him to become Pharaoh, but his change of religion clearly lost him the support of the priesthood and may easily have eroded popular support as well.

Nasser was elected to rule Egypt. The people chose him over Naguib, and they reasserted their choice after the 1967 war by refusing to accept Nasser's resignation. His popularity was due, in part, to his willingness to challenge foreign aggressors and exploiters. Another factor was his common origin. He was born in a poor section of Alexandria to a family with roots in Upper Egypt. Above all, he was an Egyptian, "the first ethnic Egyptian to rule in Egypt since the demise of the pharaohs." [109] He had no hereditary claim to rule; the Free Officers put an end to the monarchy after the forced abdication of King Farouk. Nasser, like Salem's Oedipus, was "the first human being to rule Thebes." [110] Yet by the end of his reign, Nasser was almost considered divine. He and his staff promoted an image of the leader as a larger-than-life, heroic figure, and many of the poorly educated population, accustomed to absolute rule, willingly accepted Nasser's leadership in much the same way that their ancestors had accepted the rule of the pharaohs. Nasser's charisma brought dignity and prestige to a people sensitized by years of exploitation by foreign armies, governments, and corporations, and eventually, "President Nasser's own prestige became inseparable from that of Egypt." [111] More than a decade after his death, Nasser's portrait still adorns the walls of homes throughout the Middle East and North Africa. During his reign he propagandized the greatness of the Egyptian people and the Arab nation while glorifying himself as their leader. By his own admission, "what the Arabs needed was a leader who could fill the 'role in search of a hero'," [112] and his people nearly worshipped him in that capacity.

Conclusions and New Questions

All four figures considered in the preceding comparison are clearly similar in terms of qualifications and goals. The greatest differences relate to the origins, heredity, and divinity of the King. Ali Salem's Oedipus, Akhnaton, and Nasser are each propagandized as divine or nearly divine. In each case the motivation behind the propagandized divinity is a desire to preserve the power base of the ruling class. The Greek Oedipus, however, is never the subject of such propaganda. The people of the Greek Thebes never considered their King to be more than a demi-god. Ali Salem apparently dismisses the parallels between his Oedipus and the traditional character when, at the end of the play, he allows Tiresias to pass the following judgement: "It isn't important for us to know what happened to Oedipus, for he has become, as one of the people said, the property of the poets." [113]

In response to Jokasta's inquiry about his origins, Salem's Oedipus replies: "It isn't important, your Majesty, whether I'm from Mitanni or Babel. Or from any place on earth." [114] Velikovky argues the possibility that Akhnaton was raised in Mitanni by King Dushrata as the Greek Oedipus was brought up in Corinth by King Polybus, but Salem's Oedipus clearly considers his origins unimportant. "All that concerns you," he assures Jokasta, "is that I get rid of the Beast." [115] He tells the Chief of Police that his dossier is insignificant. "The important thing is that I know how to solve the riddle." [116] Evidently, Salem is ruling out the importance of parallels with Akhnaton and the Greek Oedipus and emphasizing the significance of the problems facing Theban, or perhaps modern Egyptian, society.

The Greek Oedipus and Akhnaton both possess hereditary claims to the throne, but neither Salem's Oedipus nor Nasser has such a claim. Furthermore, the Greek Oedipus and Akhnaton both ruled over apparently matrilineal societies while Salem's Oedipus and Nasser headed societies with strong patriarchal features. These features -- and the roles of

women in modern Egypt and in Ali Salem's play -- will be explored in greater depth in a subsequent section.

Is the sexual level of the Oedipus story overshadowed by the political dimension of Ali Salem's play? Who or what is the Beast? Is the Beast ever truly defeated? What is the riddle and what is its solution? What is the Plague that threatens the Citizens of Salem's Thebes? To what extent is the ruler responsible for solving the problems of his people?

II. The Oedipus Conflict: The Beast -- Aggression or Repression?

The Beast at the Border

> In a place not far from Thebes and on the single road open to the lands of the north, a strange Beast has appeared. They say it has the head of a beautiful woman and the body of an animal of huge size. They call it 'Abūl-Hūl' -- Father of Fear -- the Sphynx. [117]

Egypt's failure in the 1967 war with Israel was a national trauma. The initial catastrophy of the first six days gave way to a 'war of attrition' which continued to claim Egyptian lives until the Rogers Plan for a cease-fire was implemented in 1970. In 1969 and early 1970, when You Who Killed the Beast was written and performed, Israeli pilots were penetrating deep into Egyptian territory, and to the Cairo audiences "the lands of the north" plainly meant Israel. The Beast at the border was the Israeli army and airforce and the war they had brought with them onto Egyptian soil. While appearing as weak and helpless as a woman in the eyes of the world, Israel had shown itself to the Arabs as a dangerous monster -- the Father of Fear.

The war which had begun in 1967 was the second of two wars with Israel which Egypt suffered during the Nasser era. The Egyptian forces had been vanquished in the 'tripartite aggression' of 1956, but Nasser had managed to transform an open and shut military defeat into a

political victory. When Israel crossed Egyptian borders again in 1967, Nasser's failure was finally exposed.

Literary critic Mahmūd Amīn al-'Ālim equates the first appearance of the Beast in Ali Salem's play with 1956 and the second with 1967. [118] Like Salem's Oedipus, Nasser never truly solved the problem in 1956, but he allowed his subjects to believe in his success. Israel withdrew from the Sinai and Egypt kept the Suez Canal, but the Palestinian problem continued to grow and the Canal Company soon resumed financial control of Egypt's waterway. Meanwhile, as a result of Nasser's apparent political success against foreign aggression, the Egyptian president's popularity soared. The growth of pan-Arabism also dated from the events of 1956.

Nasser had become more than an Egyptian; he was a spokesman for the Arab world. The Arabs outnumbered the Israelis by a huge margin when counted together, but they have seldom acted successfully as a group. Instead, the Arab countries have encountered Israel separately, and it has always been to Israel's advantage to deal with isolated Arab countries rather than a united Arab nation.

Tiresias tries to explain the need for solidarity against the Beast when it makes its first appearance. "The objective of the Beast," he claims, "is quite plain. It eats the clever ones in the country one at a time. Later on it won't take any time at all for it to eat all the stupid ones at once." [119] The Arab nation divided is thus doomed to fail, but if the country to which Tiresias refers is considered to be Egypt alone, the same conclusion holds true. The solution Tiresias suggests is to "confront the Beast as a group." [120] But the Citizens as well as the City Council reject the seer's advice, and Oedipus marches out alone to deal with the first appearance of the Beast.

Later, when the Beast returns, the Theban King urges the public to join the struggle. "Citizens of Thebes," shouts Oedipus, "I am asking you in the name of life to go out and meet the Beast and put an end to him." [121] Tiresias supports the King's appeal. "At last we return to

the starting point. This is what I said the first time. The people themselves must take the responsibility of protecting themselves against the Beast." [122]

Here Salem's allegory diverges sharply from the facts of history. Nasser was reluctant to respond to the events of 1967 by arming a population which might revolt against the repressive police state he had helped to create. Unlike Salem's Oedipus, Nasser was unwilling to risk preparing his people to win the war. [123]

Not all critics interpret the Beast-symbol in the manner thus far considered. Yūsuf Shawqī, for instance, who composed the music for You Who Killed the Beast, makes a case for two separate Beasts. Shawqī agrees that the second Beast is Israel, but he insists that the first was the monarchy which Nasser and the Free Officers abolished when they came to power. His argument, however, fails to take certain facts into account. First, before Oedipus volunteers to combat the Beast, Awālih and Jokasta make it clear that the old King is already dead and that his murderer is still at large. Salem's Oedipus is never directly implicated in the crime, but Awālih's police dossier on Oedipus reports a rumor "that he escaped from Mitanni after killing his father or causing his death." [124] Second, Shawqī's interpretation ignores the fact that Oedipus eventually admits that he did not kill the Beast when it first appeared. Despite the efforts of the City Council and Hor Muheb's so-called "Beast experts" to prove the existence of two Beasts, the two are obviously the same creature.

Nasser is generally credited with planning the revolution which ended the monarchy in Egypt, and he was President during two separate encounters with the same foreign aggressor, but his election to the presidency doesn't quite fit with the 1952 revolution or the 1956 war. He did not become the official leader of Egypt as an immediate result of King Farouk's ouster, and he was already in power when the tripartite aggression occurred. Yet despite this incongruity with the situation in Ali Salem's play, audiences and readers alike have favored the Israeli-Beast interpretation of the allegory.

Nevertheless, other critics favor the Akhnaton allegory. According to this interpretation, the Beast could be equated with the Habīri, a captive people already found in Egypt in the early XVIIIth Dynasty (c. 1559 to 1085 B.C.). Perhaps these Habīri were the early Hebrews whom Moses led out of bondage. Yet there is no record of a war during Akhnaton's reign, and biblical scholars have yet to agree on an exact date for the Exodus. Estimates range from the time of Hatshepsut to Rameses II, a range of more than two hundred years.

Velikovsky takes a different approach. The Sphynx of the Oedipus legend originated in Egypt, and Velikovsky discovers that it appears in feminine form only during the XVIIIth Dynasty. Among the figures represented as female sphynxes were the goddess Hathor and the Pharaoh Queen Hatshepsut, and many of these sphynxes were destroyed during Akhnaton's reign. Among those which escaped destruction were representations of Akhnaton's mother, Queen Tiy, as a winged sphynx. Akhnaton's father did not fare as well. Amenhotep III's name was obliterated on all inscriptions and monuments. "By destroying his father's name, the king tried to erase the memory of his sire. By destroying a person's name, his ka, or soul in afterlife, was also delivered to destruction." [125] This destruction, coupled with Akhnaton's change of name and religion as well as his relocation of the capital, signifies a sharp attack on the social order itself, perhaps equivalent to Nasser's overthrow of the monarchy. In relation to Ali Salem's play, however, closer parallels exist in terms of the Sphynx -- or sphynxes -- destroyed by the young pharaoh. Akhnaton did not fully succeed in eliminating the sphynxes because he spared those which represented his mother. Salem's Oedipus was also unsuccessful in struggles against the Beast -- or Beasts.

'Abūl-Hūl' is the Arabic name for sphynx, and Salem's use of the name indicates a connection between his Beast and the Sphynx of the traditional Oedipus legend. There are, however, important differences. Salem's Beast is masculine despite its woman's head. The beast of the Nasser era was obviously metaphorical, or genderless, but it appeared in

a clearly male-oriented and operated society. The sphynxes of Akhnaton and the traditional Oedipus story are definitely feminine and explicitly sphynxes rather than beasts. Another important difference is related to origin. The Beast at the border in Ali Salem's play is plainly a foreigner. The monarchy of King Farouk was inherited from an Albanian, Muhammad Ali; and the Israeli's were also intruders from 'the lands of the north'. The Sphynx of the traditional Oedipus story is foreign to Greece, but it originates in Egypt, 'the lands of the south'. Indeed, with the exception of Velikovsky, scholars have never been able to explain clearly why such an eminently Egyptian element as a sphynx should appear in a Greek legend.[126] The sphynxes of Akhnaton's era, however, unless rationalized as sexuality transfomred and imported from the Old Kingdom capital in Lower Egypt, were local creations. At any rate, the sphynxes were still native to the Egyptian Empire.

In terms of land of origin, sex, and especially political relevance, the closest parallel to Ali Salem's 'Abūl-Hūl' is the beast of the Nasser era. Salem's audiences readily recognized the symbol as the conflict with Israel, the recurring war with the Beast at the Border. The people were clamoring to know the reasons for their defeat. Ali Salem, with The Oedipus Comedy or You Who Killed the Beast, dared to broach the issue in public.

The Riddle

> There is a Beast, and there is a riddle -- but not the riddle you're thinking about. There's another riddle, and not one of you has thought to ask it. People, these riddles are what philosophers and thinkers and other such people gather together to discuss at night by the light of the moon in order to entertain themselves and forget their worries. Why would a Beast ask riddles? Why would a Beast use its mind? A Beast uses its muscles and its paws, its fangs and its claws. Have you

> ever heard of a snake coming up to somebody and asking him a riddle? Have you ever heard of a lion playing "hide-and-seek" with anyone? People, be reasonable. The riddle is just a trick. The Beast's aim is very clear. I find it strange how you don't see it. 127

According to Tiresias, what the Citizens fail to see is that the Beast is eating clever individuals because the group is afraid to act together. "If the story of the riddle is true," predicts Tiresias, someone among you will certainly know how to solve it." 128 But the people ignore him. Instead of facing up to the problem, the Citizens make a joke of it. The few who dare to challenge the Beast are more concerned with visions of the reward than they are with the riddle. As Oedipus comments in regard to Professor Bitāh's failure: "It isn't possible to think about the reward and the riddle at the same time." 129

Those who try to win the reward are not the only individuals governed by selfish motives. The members of the Council are more concerned with safeguarding their own interests than they are with the security of Thebes. In regard to the first appearance of the Beast, for example, Hor Muheb forbids any other professor from risking an encounter with the Beast. His goal is to protect himself and his colleagues at the university. Kāmi witnesses Oedipus' attempt to solve the riddle, but his main concern is soliciting a job from his old friend. When the Beast reappears, the Council members refuse to risk losing Oedipus, the source of their recent profits. Kreon alone seems concerned with the safety of Thebes, but even he ignores the need for group action. Instead, he proceeds alone and dies for the sake of individual glory. Senefru avoids the issue entirely out of fear for himself and his family while Kā'it dares to ask about the riddle primarily out of selfish curiosity.

The universality of the riddle and its solution are a reflection of the need for a unified attitude in the face of a common threat. Oedipus finally reveals the riddle of the City Council: "What is it that walks on four legs in the morning, on two at noon, and on three at night?" 130

The answer is 'man' in the sense of mankind or human beings in general. The City Council immediately distorts the riddle by particularizing it. "What is it that walks on four legs in the morning, walks on two at noon, on three in the evening, and after supper walks on five, and at daybreak crawls on its belly?" [131] The answer is 'man' in the sense of one individual male over the course of one particular day. In the City Council's version, the man even enjoys sex after dinner. Given this distortion it is no surprise later when Awālih remarks that "people doubt the solution." [132]

For the audiences of Ali Salem's play the real riddle was the problem of Israel. 'Why was Egypt so easily defeated?' Oedipus and Tiresias convince the people to attack the Beast as a group, but still they fail. Kreon finally isolates the reason for the defeat. "Somehow there must be something wrong with our men, and the ones responsible must be the ones in charge of building them into men." [133]

The Plague

Fear is the governing principle of Theban society in You Who Killed the Beast. In a land where poverty and suffering are widespread, fear of not getting one's own share or fear of losing whatever one already has in the basic cause of greed for wealth and power. Fear is the plague which has sapped the strength from the social organism and driven the people to pursue their individual goals and forget about society as a whole. Tiresias explains the difference between fear and ordinary diseases.

> All the diseases of which we are aware have symptoms which are well-known and plain, but the symptoms of fear are misleading and deceptive. Whenever fear spreads to a person's heart, it mixes with his blood, his brain, and his dreams. The man and the fear become one thing; the man himself becomes fear walking on two feet. Then the man ceases to be a man. He changes into something

> brittle, and brittle things are easily broken by any misfortune. [134]

For most of the Theban Citizens fear does not mean cowardice. As Kreon explains: "The people of Thebes are very bold, and they have never been afraid of death. Death, in the view of the Theban people, is the transition to another life, a better life." [135] Those who fear death are the members of the City Council and the Chamber of Commerce. They don't believe in an afterlife. They only use religion as a means of maintaining order and protecting their possessions.

The Council members are afraid to risk facing the Beast themselves, so they solicit volunteers from among the Citizens. Only a few greedy people with nothing to lose and much to gain are willing to put themselves on the line for personal glory or financial reward, and no one agrees to gamble his life merely for the sake of Thebes. Even after Oedipus apparently solves the riddle, the City Council is afraid to make the solution known to the public. They fear that public knowledge of the riddle and its solution might jeopardize the economic system which makes them rich. In fact, the bureaucrats are so afraid of dissent and doubt that they imprison and tortune individuals whose curiosity impels them to inquire about the riddle.

The result is such a widespread climate of fear and repression that a family man like Senefru is afraid even to talk on the telphone. As a playwright he scribbles mythified nonsense instead of honest, socially relevant drama, and he closes his eyes and ears to the blatant propaganda which saturates the Theban media. And his fears are justified. Senefru's friend, Kā'it, dies in prison under torture inflicted by Chief of Police Awālih.

Torture is the method Awālih uses "to maintain the prestige of the Pharaonic system." [136] Tiresias describes what torture means beyond the obvious physical pain: "Torture -- fragmenting all the beautiful and vile things inside a man, and then arousing the most repulsive things: resentment, hatred of everything." [137]

Even Awālih is a product of conditioning. He uses torture because it is the method utilized by his family throughout the four hundred years they have controlled the police department. But when his activities are brought to light, and when he is banished by Oedipus, Awālih reveals his escape plan. As Tiresias points out: "You were afraid, too, so you came prepared with a work contract in another country." 138

The Citizens are afraid of living, not dying. Fear has, indeed, permeated Theban society. It is a sickness, a plague, which affects more than individual members. As Tiresias explains, fear infects society as a whole.

> Fear is indivisible, Awālih. Fear is a collective sickness. The people of Thebes are a complete, living organism. Like any society in the world, anything that happens to any part of this organism affects the social organism in its entirety. 139

The plague, like other symbols in Ali Salem's allegory, bears interpretation on several levels. In Salem's play the plague is a metaphor which describes a social attitude. The society is sick because fear is widespread. The repressive activities of Awālih's police force are the primary cause of Salem's plague of fear.

In the Greek legend the gods inflict the plague on the Theban people because they are unknowingly sheltering a criminal. This plague is a punishment, an outbreak of an actual disease.

No record exists of a plague during the time of Akhnaton unless one accepts the argument that this was also the time of Moses. Was Moses actually an Egyptian, as Freud suggests in Moses and Monotheism? Was the lawgiver of Judaism actually Thothmes, the sculptor of Amarna, a follower of the monotheistic pharaoh? 140 Whoever he was or might have been, the seven plagues of Moses could correspond to the plague in You Who Killed the Beast.

The plague of the Nasser era, however, was definitely police repression. The fear of unwarranted arrest and imprisonment, of

arbitrary torture and execution, was a fact of life in Nasser's Egypt. Audiences recognized the character of Awālih as the current Minister of the Interior, the dreaded Shaarawi Gumaa. One of the original Free Officers, Gumaa rose in power to become one of the most feared individuals in the government, the head of the repressive secret police. The fact that Ali Salem dared to confront such a powerful figure speaks highly of his commitment to use art as a means of uncovering an important truth. Unlike Senefru, Salem uses myth to shed light, not to extinguish it. Salem's allegory indicts the secret police as a major contributor to the plague of fear.

The Beast Within

> Perhaps Oedipus will solve the riddle and the problem of the Beast. But the Beast within you -- who is going to kill it? The idiotic Beast which always makes you wait until someone comes to solve your problems for you. [141]

The name of the Beast is 'Abūl-Hūl' -- Father of Fear. Hor Muheb's experts would have the Theban Citizens believe that there are more than one Beast "of the same genus and species," [142] but there is clearly only one Beast at the border. Is there, in fact, another Beast within the city walls? Within the hearts of the Theban people? Or are there traitors, confederates or accomplices of the Beast, engaged in sabotage and subversion, spreading the plague of fear inside the city while the Beast attacks from outside?

Oedipus and Tiresias finally convince the unprepared Citizens to confront Abūl-Hūl as a group. When the crowd swarms outside the gate, Oedipus and Awālih are left behind.

> Oedipus: Why aren't you going with them, Awālih?
>
> Awālih: What about internal security, your Majesty? Who will maintain order in Thebes?
>
> Oedipus: It looks to me like the city is empty.

> Awālih: On the contrary. Agents of the Beast are probably all over the city.
>
> Oedipus: I don't see anyone but you and me. So it must be one of us. [143]

Awālih, Hor Muheb, and Uwnah turn out to be the real cowards in Thebes for none of these 'Agents of the Beast' endangers himself in the ill-fated struggle which immediately follows this exchange, the conclusion of the first scene of Act III.

III. The Oedipus Alibi: Responsibility and Accountability

A Question of Responsibility

Citizens and leaders alike, the people of Thebes share a common attitude. Everyone is willing to accept the benefits of good fortune, but no one will bear the responsibility for misfortune. "Whenever there are job openings which require big brains, you all come forward," remarks Jokasta as she reprimands the City Council. "But whenever there is real trouble, you all pretend to be numbskulls." [144] Later, an unidentified Citizen makes a similar accusation when Awālih tries to foist the job of dealing with the Beast onto the Citizens' shoulders.

> The Person: Hypocrite. What is it to us? Everything you do, you do by yourself. Why change today? What are the Citizens of Thebes, anyway? In good times forgotten and in bad times remembered. [145]

'Passing the buck' is evidently a way of life in Thebes. The people want neither to take responsibility nor to be held responsible. The Citizens, for instance, rely on their leaders to solve the problems of poverty and suffering for them. They expect a hero like Oedipus to defeat the Beast alone. The Theban leadership is also guilty. The Council shirks the duty of dealing with the Beast. Awālih, Uwnah, and Hor Muheb stay behind when the rest of the people finally confront Abūl-Hūl. Only Kreon joins the battle and when the Theban people are

defeated he accepts the responsibility. Like former President Nixon, however, he accepts the responsibility but not the blame. The fault, he claims, belongs to those who build the men of Thebes.

Jokasta, too, looks for others to solve her problems. She gets frustrated when Oedipus ignores her and spends all his time in the factories, and so she expects Awālih to eliminate the inattentive king. But assassination proves impractical. The Council members, including Awālih, depend on Oedipus for his profitable inventions, so the queen and her chief of police turn to the gods for assistance. Awālih sends Jokasta to the temple of Amun to ask Isis to enlist Horus' aid. The gods themselves are part of a tradition which states that order can be maintained only when the people believe in the divinity of the pharaoh.[146] Consequently, the people worship Oedipus Rā' and apparently pass their prayers to other gods through him.

Oedipus is also irresponsible. He is too busy proving how clever he is as an inventor to bother checking on the activities of his subordinates. When he comes to power, he delegates the business of government to the same corrupt bureaucrats whom he criticized before his coronation. Perhaps his most blatant public transgression is when he shirks the responsibility of telling the people the truth about the Beast and the riddle.

As the play comes to close, Oedipus appears to have lost his sight. As his vision dims, he becomes aware of how little he has actually seen throughout the play. But does he really go blind? Is blindness only his excuse, his alibi, for his many failures as a ruler?

Blindness

Direct references to blindness occur only five times in You Who Killed the Beast. The first is Tiresias' admonition to the police chief: "I am blind in the eyes, Awālih. Your problem is that your heart is blind."[147] The rest of the references are made by Oedipus. Never does Salem's Oedipus raise his hand to put out his eyes. His

comments -- his words rather than his actions -- are the only indications that Oedipus has lost his sight.

Each of the four references made by Oedipus occurs in response to a challenge or outright accusation. The first occasion is a retort to Tiresias' allegation that Oedipus is responsible for allowing Awālih to spread the plague of fear.

> Tiresias: . . . What does it seem to your Majesty that Awālih is doing?
>
> Oedipus: I don't know.
>
> Tiresias: It is your responsibility to know.
>
> Oedipus: Even if Awālih were spreading fear in the country -- and that is something I don't know, and besides, it isn't my responsibility -- Awālih was here before I became king.
>
> Tiresias: And yet you permitted him to keep working and using the same methods which his family has been using for four hundred years.
>
> Oedipus: (With extreme anguish and confusion) What methods? I don't understand anything. Lately it's become clear to me that I have been blind. [148]

Oedipus banishes Awālih from Thebes without admitting any responsibility for allowing the police chief to operate. Then the king is faced with a challenge: what is he to do next? Oedipus responds by pleading with his advisors and by falling back on the excuse of blindness.

> Oedipus: Tiresias, Kreon, my dearest friends. Don't leave me. I don't know what to do. For the first time I feel I'm not seeing my way. For the first time I feel I'm blind. You are the eyes with which I see. What do we do? [149]

Kreon suggests two courses of action from a military point of view. Everything possible must be learned about Abūl-Hūl, and the men of Thebes must be remade. In reference to the latter problem, Tiresias

recommends that Oedipus begin by telling the Citizens the truth about his encounter with the Beast. The people, however, are still afraid to hear the truth. They feign deafness as readily as Oedipus feigns blindness. Tiresias tries again to explain the challenge Oedipus faces.

> Tiresias: . . . Indeed, the true point of departure for remaking men and setting free all the creative abilities inside them is that we free them from fear and anxiety and doubt.
>
> (The light appears gradually in the throne room. Oedipus and Kreon)
>
> Oedipus: How do we do it, Tiresias? How?
>
> Tiresias: I know a million answers to a million questions, but that question baffles all the philosophers. That is the true riddle. Whoever knows the answer will make the greatest civilization on earth. Whoever knows how to liberate man from fear deserves to be father of the sages and philosophers. Indeed, he and he alone, your Majesty, is worthy of the title 'Ruler'.
>
> Oedipus: The light is dim in the palace this evening. I don't see well. [150]

Moments later Oedipus makes a final reference to blindness as he slips away, ostensibly to take a journey in search of the solution, but actually to avoid facing both the responsibility for his failure and the challenge of rebuilding the fear-ridden people of Thebes.

> Oedipus: I am going to look for the solution myself. At the peak of my glory I discovered that there are still things I don't know. I will go. I will begin a long trip in order to learn. Kreon, take my hand. Show me the gate. I was thinking it was the light that was dim. (In pain) Ahh. I didn't know that there might be all this darkness in the world. [151]

The king's alleged affliction is not convincing. Abstracted from the text, the instances cited above indicate evasiveness, not blindness.

Egyptian literary critic Mahmūd Amīn al-'Ālim considers the blindness of Salem's Oedipus to be a mere contrivance, an unsuccessful attempt by the playwright to maintain continuity with the traditional Oedipus story. Without questioning the validity of Oedipus' self-proclaimed blindness, Amīn al-'Ālim isolates an important contradiction. Salem's character "knew before he became king that Awālih was carrying out repressive activities." [152] When, for example, Oedipus insinuates that Awālih has been suppressing freedom of speech, the chief of police defends himself by intimidating Citizens like Senefru into denying the existance of censorship. But after Oedipus is crowned king, he closes his eyes to Awālih's actions. He even allows Awālih to dispose of Kāmi, his friend and chess partner, without resistance and with little demand for an explanation.

Nasser also had a favorite chess partner, his close friend and colleague, Abdel Hakim Amer. One of the original Free Officers, Amer was granted the post of field marshal under Nasser. Before the 1967 war Amer had advised Nasser to attack first so Israel wouldn't win by virtue of surprise. After the defeat Nasser purged the military to pacify the masses who were clamoring for scapegoats. Nasser held a dinner party, invited Amer, and, as the party ended, had Amer arrested. It is doubtful that he intended for his friend to die; he kept Amer in protective custody in the field marshal's own villa after thwarting Amer's first attempt at suicide. Amer's bitterness and depression continued, however, and finally he managed to take his own life. "He succeeded in procuring poison, apparently through the intervention of Salah Nasr, chief of the mukhabarāt [secret police]." [153]

Kāmi's chess playing, his hopes for appointment to a government post under his powerful friend, and his subsequent arrest for knowing the truth of Oedipus' failure to defeat the Beast, suggest that he might represent the ill-fated Amer. The time frame, however, is incongruous. Kāmi disappears as Oedipus comes to power. Abdel Hakim Amer died as Nasser's reign was nearing its end.

Nevertheless, this comparison underscores an important similarity between Nasser and Salem's Oedipus. Neither was willing to accept the responsibility for failure. Nasser had closed his eyes to the possibility of defeat. He had covered his ears to the advice of Amer, and when defeat came, he sacrificed his friend rather than face the responsibility himself. Nasser never lost his eyesight; he never became physically blind. Instead, like Salem's Oedipus, he shut his eyes to failure, and whenever possible, he shifted the blame to someone else.

The Greek Oedipus, however, is never evasive. His driving passion is to discover the truth, not to hide it. His blindness is a self-inflicted, physical punishment, an ironically appropriate punishment: when equipped with the sense of sight, the Greek Oedipus is unable to see the truth; in blindness he gains possession of acute, inner vision.

Akhnaton may have been both physically and politically blind. Velikovsky cites several pieces of evidence to prove the former. First, he draws from Herodotus an account of a blind pharaoh who went into exile, possibly during the XVIIIth dynasty. Next, he refers to a letter written to Akhnaton from a vassal king in Palestine which reads in part: "Although a man sees the facts, yet the two eyes of the king, my lord, do not see. . . ." [154] Velikovsky infers from this that the pharaoh had lost his eyesight, but another interpretation is possible. During Akhnaton's reign many vassal states were threatened by foreign invaders, and apparently the pharaoh ignored repeated requests for military assistance. Perhaps the Palestinian king was suggesting political rather than physical blindness. A stronger case, however, is made when Velikovsky, with the help of Egyptologist Walter Federn, retranslates a crucial word in a hymn composed shortly after Akhnaton's reign.

> The sun of him that knew thee hath set, O Amun.
> But he that knoweth thee, he shineth.
> The ~~foreeeurt~~ [sight] of him that assailed thee is in darkness,
> while the whole world is in sunlight.

Whoso putteth thee in his heart, O Amun,
lo, his sun hath risen. 155

Perhaps Akhnaton lost his eyesight or closed his eyes to the turmoil on the empire's borders. The Greek Oedipus definitely blinds himself. Nasser never went physically blind, but he refused to see his failures. Salem's Oedipus pretends to be blind when he needs an alibi. He is too proud to admit that he has failed to rid his city of the Beast at the border or the Beast within which spreads the plague of fear. He has failed as a Ruler.

Pride

If a man walks with haughtiness
of hand or word and gives no heed
to Justice and the shrines of Gods
despises -- may an evil doom
smite him for his ill-starred pride of heart! 156

The Greek Oedipus is so proud of his ability to solve riddles that he applies his intelligence to the case of Laius' murderer. He discovers that he himself is guilty. Ironically, he who was so proud of his ability to see the truth discovers that he has been living in ignorance of his guilt.

Akhnaton exhibited his pride in a different way. To compensate for his physical deformities, Akhnaton glorified them. He substituted for the impersonal, formalistic art of his predecessors a highly personal, representational style which glorified his deformities instead of hiding them. The pharaoh adopted for himself the epithet 'Living in Truth', but he ignored the truth of his own egotism. In the realm of religion he "instituted a religion of love -- but also of self-adoration." 157 He replaced the pantheon of Egyptian gods with a single deity, Aton, of whom he was supposedly the earthly incarnation.

Nasser, too, was a man whose pride masked his insecurity. He was a shy man, but he was also an Egyptian, and the people of Egypt had for

centuries been forced to humble themselves before their foreign conquerors. Nasser's charisma contributed greatly to the restoration of national pride, prestige, and dignity. Eventually, however, Nasser lost the ability to separate his nation's image from his own.

> As the perceived leader and spokesman of Egypt and the Arab world, he grew increasingly sensitive to criticisms levelled at him or at his regime. While he saw fit to indulge in the most bitter personal attacks on other leaders, any reciprocal criticism usually engendered a wave of indignation on his part. 158

Salem's Oedipus is also a victim of pride. When the divinity compaign is in full swing and the Citizens have begun to worship him in the temple, Oedipus finally confronts the City Council. First, the Council members confuse him with a rationalization of the pharaonic tradition which depends upon popular belief in the divinity of the king. Then they further cloud the issue by flattering Oedipus when he reveals the Beast's riddle.

> Awālih: (He exaggerates) Ahh. It's impossible that anyone in Thebes could ever solve it, your Majesty.
>
> Hor Muheb: And what is the solution, your Majesty?
>
> Oedipus: Man.
>
> Awālih: Oh, my goodness. Oh, my. Bravo, your Majesty. Bravo.
>
> Uwnah: And your Majesty wanted us to believe that you are an ordinary person. It's impossible for an ordinary human being to solve this riddle. I am certain that your Majesty is of divine origin or at least that you are vested with a divine soul.
>
> Oedipus: Do you think so?
>
> Uwnah: Certainly.
>
> Oedipus: (Delighted) Thank you. (He rises to withdraw and they bow to him.)
>
> Hor Muheb: (Scornfully) Humph. Is that the riddle?

Uwnah: Isn't that the riddle that was assigned to us in elementary school? [159]

Their appeal to his vanity is successful. From this point on, Oedipus ceases his ohallenge to the divinity campaign and stops trying to reveal the truth to the Citizens. He quite simply succumbs to the City Council's flattery.

Summary

The Greek Oedipus is proud of his ability to deduce the truth. He applies his deductive intelligence to the riddle of the Sphynx, to the unsolved murder of Laius, and finally to the mystery of his own identity. He discovers himself guilty of patricide and incest, and although he committed these crimes in ignorance, his pride in his intellectual capabilities makes him challenge his fate or, at least, the natural order or logos. He takes the responsibility for his mistakes and punishes himself by putting out his eyes with Jokasta's broach.

Akhnaton's pride may have been based on feelings of inadequacy. He glorified his physical deformities while rejecting traditional notions of beauty. According to Velikovsky's thesis, the pharaoh willfully obliterated his father's name, thereby destroying the soul in the afterlife, and he "knowingly made his mother his consort not only on the throne but also in bed, as well as fathering a child by her." [160] He made himself the center of sexual life in the family and the center of religious life as an incarnation of the sun. Proud of his ability to recognize the truth, he referred to himself as 'Living in Truth' while closing his eyes to the reality of political unrest in his empire. Perhaps, by the end of his reign, he had lost his physical eyesight as well.

Nasser's chief intellectual capability was an ability to manipulate the truth. He tried to increase material prosperity, but his pride blinded him to his many failures. Instead of facing up to responsibility, he feigned ignorance. He punished others for their

faults while closing his eyes to his own. Above all, he knew what was going on inside his country: 'he became the virtual decision-maker; and the participation of others in the decision-making prooess. . . was, in the final analysis, almost wholly dependent on their own accessibility to Nasser himself." [161] The military, spies, and police could hardly have acted without Nasser's approval; nor would the people have submitted so passively to repression had they not put their trust so completely in their charismatic leader. Nasser's authority "conferred a degree of legitimacy to the official representatives of the regime. Though discredited because of their repressive power, they were tolerated as carriers of a fragment of Nasser's authority." [162]

Salem's Oedipus is also proud of his intelligence, a faculty which combines several capabilities. He is able to deduce solutions to riddles, to invent material goods, and to recognize the true nature of the repressive government. He becomes so immersed in his image as a great inventor, however, that he ignores the crimes of his staff. He shirks responsibility for his failures, and when confronted with the truth, he pretends to be blind and sneaks out of the city.

Symbols -- Clear or Cloudy?

> 'Have you seen the play?'
> 'Not me. It's one of them plays that means something else. You know. She keeps a china dog on the mantlepiece, but it isn't a china dog at all, it's 'er ex-husband, and 'e breaks the dog, the new boyfriend does, and she goes mad. Not gets mad, you know; goes mad. 'Ighbrow. But I suppose if you want to be a Dame you got to act 'ighbrow plays. What was you thinkin' of 'avin' for your supper? [163]

These comments, made by housekeeper Mrs. Tinker in Josephine Tey's The Singing Sands, betray a common attitude toward symbolic plays. Theatre director Peter Brook, however, defines 'symbol' more precisely in his widely read book, The Empty Space.

> A false symbol is soft and vague: a true symbol is hard and clear. When we say 'symbolic' we often mean something drearily obscure: a true symbol is specific, it is the only form a certain truth can take.[164]

A brief consideration of symbolism, in terms of Jung's distinction between directed and subjective thinking,[165] reveals the common ground of Tey's and Brook's definitions. A symbol is soft and vague when it lacks truthfulness. 'Subjective' need not imply falseness, nor 'directed' the only truth. The truth behind the 'china dog' symbol is more the product of directed, conscious rationalization than subjective, unconscious behavior. The 'china dog' is a directly reasoned signal to psychologists that a certain condition exists, but readers untrained in psychology might fail to recognize this signal. The symbol-user's behavior is contrived to match the psychological theory rather than generated as a truthful symbolization of a natural, unconscious condition. Thus, Tey's symbol appears soft and vague.

The symbols used by Ali Salem in The Oedipus Comedy or You Who Killed the Beast are neither soft nor vague. They do, however, reveal the truth on several levels. As an allegory, the play stands up to specific historical and literary interpretations. On a universal level, it makes a strong statement about political leadership in a corrupt society. Whichever interpretation is applied, however, the symbols reveal the same common truths. Fear is the plague which infects the social organism: the Father of Fear, the Beast of the Border, is only one carrier of the plague; the Beast within society is the repressive government whose agents spread the plague of fear among the people; the Beast within the individual is his own selfishness -- conditioned by the forces of aggression and repression to think only of himself, the individual lives in terror of losing his own share. Indeed, the real riddle is the one confronting the Ruler: How does a Ruler rid his society of the plague of fear? The solution lies in the remaking of mankind, not the individual man. Individualism in Salem's Thebes is unrelated to the common right to life, liberty and the pursuit of

happiness. Instead, it is the right to get whatever one can take with the least possible cost or effort. Thus the fundamental principle of the American Declaration of Independence is absent from Thebes. In its place is an attitude encapsulated in a recent Prudential-Bache Securities slogan: "In this great land of ours each of us has a right to build a life that is rich and rewarding." 166

Conclusion and New Questions

The political dimension of Salem's play overshadows the psychological, metaphysical, and generic considerations usually associated with the traditional Oedipus story. They are not, however, entirely absent. Fate is merely disguised as an economic rather than a metaphysical force. The City Council and the Chamber of Commerce are the real manipulators of destiny in Salem's Thebes. Oedipus is a proud man who succumbs to bureaucratic flattery. He fails as a ruler because he falls victim to the machinations of the politico-economic power elite.

Oedipus is not a tragic hero, not only because of the comic elements included in his story, but because he refuses to face up to his failures heroically. His pride enables him to close his eyes to corruption, and his self-centered personality inspires little pity or fear. Indeed, he is a chief perpetrator and perpetuator rather than victim of fear.

The major thematic level of the traditional Oedipus story which is missing from Ali Salem's play is the psychological Oedipus. He is not a man whose 'unconscious drives' bring about his downfall. In fact, the sexual aspect of Oedipus' crimes is ignored completely by Ali Salem. While this omission sharpens the political focus of the play, it may also reveal an unwillingness to deal with issues of sexuality.

The following section, an examination of character in Salem's play, includes discussions of nationality and sexuality as well as comments about social institutions. Are Salem's characters fully developed

individuals or representative social types? Are they predominantly Greek or Egyptian? Male or female? How are family, business, and bureaucracy treated in The Oedipus Comedy or You Who Killed the Beast?

IV. The Oedipus Complex: Character Interpretations

Nationality and Social Function

Ali Salem names four of his characters acoording to the traditional Greek legend: Oedipus, Jokasta, Kreon, and Tiresias. The rest of Salem's characters are definitely Egyptian, and they fall into two general categories, the Egyptian leaders and the Citizens of Thebes. The Egyptian leadership includes: Awālih, Chief of Police; Hor Muheb, Chief Priest of Amun and Director of the University of Thebes; and Uwnah, Head of the Chamber of Commerce and Chairman of the City Council. The Citizens of Thebes are sometimes shown as individuals, such as Senefru, Kā'it, and Kāmi; and they are sometimes presented as groups, such as artists, police, tradespeople, or crowds.

Egyptians

The Egyptian bureaucrats are the real power in Thebes. Uwnah, as Head of the Chamber of Commerce, is a material propagandist who transforms Oedipus' inventions into tools for reproducing the traditional ideology that keeps the pharaoh and his bureaucracy in power. Uwnah floods the market with Oedipus-and-the-Beast paraphenalia; his is the hand whose fingers hold the city's pursestrings.

Hor Muheb, named for the Horemheb [sic] of Akhnaton's era who, as a general, re-conquered Egypt after Akhnaton's fall, and as a scribe, restored administrative order to the Egyptian Empire, is depicted by Ali Salem as both the director of the University of Thebes and the Chief Priest of Amun. From these positions of influence Hor Muheb brainwashes the people of Thebes. He is the literary propagandist who distorts

history and current events into dogma which glorifies and even defies King Oedipus Rā'. He is the mouthpiece of the bureaucracy.

Awālih is a musical propagandist who inculcates tunes and jingles into the minds of the masses, but as Chief of Police he is also the strong arm of repressive authority. Like Shaarawi Gumaa, the Minister of the Interior during the latter years of the Nasser era, Awālih terrorizes the people, stifles dissent, and suppresses opposition. He himself, without claiming divinity, is a product of the hereditary-rule ideology; his family has been operating the police force in Thebes for four hundred years.

Together, these greedy and power-hungry manipulators share in the profits flowing into the treasury from the marketing of Oedipus' inventions. They go to any length of exploitation, repression, and propaganda to maintain and increase their own profits.

The victims of persecution are themselves not so much individuals as representative types. Senefru is an example of the colorfully-costumed artists whose works are censored; he is also the head of a household, a family man intimidated by the likelihood of police surveilance and overwhelmed by the bureaucratic propaganda machine. Kā'it is a typical innocent suspect, kidnapped and tortured by the police. Kāmi is an old friend of Oedipus who expects a government job because of who he knows and not because of what he can do; he is also an accidental witness who knows too much for his own good. Most of the Citizens, however, appear only as mindless members of the crowd, conditioned to chant approval for any actions of the government. On the few occasions when a Citizen dares to object or criticize, he does so only as an anonymous voice; this anonymity reaches an extreme when the Citizens appear as mere shadow puppets, worshipping a shadow king.

Egyptians in Disguise

One character unafraid to speak openly is Tiresias, the narrator of The Oedipus Comedy. Not only does he introduce and conclude the play,

but he also appears at critical moments to warn the Citizens and challenge the authorities. He is the voice of Thebes, the conscience of Thebes, and more, as the following passage demonstrates.

> Kreon: . . . In my capacity as Commander of the Guards in Thebes, I refuse to allow anyone to be arrested on account of his opinions. Tiresias, in particular. No one is able to doubt his great love for this city. Tiresias was born in Thebes. Tiresias is Thebes.
>
> Person 1: When we were born, he was there.
>
> Person 2: My father told me that he was there before he was born.
>
> Person 3: My g-g-g-great-granddaddy heard from his g-g-g-g-great-granddaddy that Tiresias was there before he was born.
>
> Kreon: If you imprison Tiresias, then you are imprisoning all of Thebes. If you ask Tiresias to be silent, then you are muzzling every mouth in Thebes. [167]

Later in the play the Chief of Police tries to arrest the entire city because someone in the crowd cursed the soul of Awālih's father. Tiresias steps forward to take the blame, but the police balk at Awālih's command to arrest him. Tiresias explains the officers' dilemma to their chief.

> Tiresias: I am sorry, Awālih. It is illegal to arrest me. You know that I am allowed to curse once in every hundred years. Never mind. It just happened to be your turn this time.
>
> Awālih: But the last one you cursed was my grandfather, Uncle Tiresias.
>
> Tiresias: As your luck would have it. I am sorry. [168]

Salem clearly locates his play in "Egyptian Thebes, not Greek Thebes." [169] If, indeed, "Tiresias is Thebes" as Kreon claims, then he is Egyptian. Furthermore, he, unlike the Greek Tiresias, has been granted a special immunity from police action.

Oedipus is the protagonist in a struggle to bring material prosperity to Thebes. He advocates human rights and values in a society where religious and economic bureaucracies wield power through police repression. Salem's title character, like his Greek counterpart, is a man of reason and intellect, traits which bring him to power, bolster his pride, and hasten his downfall. Still, his personality is less important than the situation his society faces.

Jokasta in The Oedipus Comedy is a two-dimensional character. She is a divine queen, a supposed descendant of Amun and Rā', and she is a woman with unfulfilled sexual desires. Salem explores neither of these dimensions in depth. Instead, Jokasta appears mainly as a pawn in an economic power struggle in which the bureaucracy calls the moves.

Kreon is the faithful Commander of the Theban Guards. He, too, is sometimes manipulated by the bureaucrats, but his overriding concern is the safety of Thebes. The Greek Creon is the brother of Queen Jocasta, but Salem gives not even the slightest hint of such a relationship.

Salem's Tiresias does share certain traits with his Greek counterpart -- both are blind, both are endowed with gifts of prophecy and longevity -- but Salem bills his character as "Tiresias himself in his well-known dimensions as a character in ancient Greek literature."[170] Yet Salem adds certain characteristics and omits others. He gives his Tiresias pointedly political dimensions -- freedom from arrest, the right to criticize and even curse members of the government -- and he omits the androgynous aspects of the Greek Tiresias. In short, Salem's Tiresias is Egyptian Thebes disguised as a Greek.

Why the disguises?

On one level the use of Greek names can be viewed as an expression of a more universal situation than one represented by only Egyptian or Greek characters, but even when direct associations with a wider domain are made, the modern Egyptian case is always stressed. One example is

Oedipus' speech to Jokasta in which he describes his travels prior to reaching Thebes.

> For many years, your Majesty, I have wandered from region to region, from country to country. I travelled the seas and crossed the ocean to the country of Mexico, searching for the universal woman, the beauty of beauties, princess of princesses, and queen of queens, until I met you, your Majesty. [171]

Salem explains Oedipus' excursion to Mexico as an allusion to Thor Heyerdahl's voyage across the Atlantic in a papyrus boat. [172] Heyerdahl hoped to demonstrate a possible oonnection between Egyptian and Mayan civilizations. Salem's Oedipus, however, apparently finds that his real concern is his Egyptian homeland, personified by Jokasta.

Another example of the universality of Salem's play is illustrated by Tiresias' description of the threat posed by the Beast.

> . . . Indeed, Citizens of Thebes, Abūl-Hūl devours cities and countries. Understand this well. If it left Thebes now, it would come back another time. After that it would go to the rest of the cities of the world. Citizens of Thebes, it is not for the sake of Thebes alone, but for the sake of all cities. Let us go to meet the Beast. We will be victorious no matter what. If we annihilate the Beast, then we will sing our own praises. The people will sing their praises. And if it annihilates us, then that means we are not entitled to life and in fairness we die. With that begins a new age on Earth, an age of the end of mankind and the victory of Beasts. [173]

The Father of Fear is not just an Egyptian problem. It is a threat to all mankind. Tiresias warns his people that if they ignore the Beast, it will destroy civilization throughout the world, not just in Egypt.

The choice of Greek names for the highest levels of leadership can also be interpreted as a reflection of Egyptian resentment toward the foreign powers which have ruled or interfered with the affairs of Egypt for centuries. The important characters in Ali Salem's play are representatives of institutions; in their struggle for wealth and power the bureaucrats manipulate Oedipus and Jokasta, the foreign-named figureheads of the government. This interpretation seems unlikely, though, because Kreon and especially Tiresias avoid manipulation while the Egyptian Citizens are dominated by it.

Ali Salem clearly sees the leaders of Thebes as figures cast from the same mold. When asked whether Jokasta, Kreon, Uwnah, and Hor Muheb represented actual people in the allegory of the Nasser era which equates Oedipus with Nasser and Awālih with Shaarawi Gumaa, Salem quipped: "There's no difference. They're all members of the Chamber of Commerce." [174] Obviously, then, the power of the economic institution is seen by the playwright as a more important element than the nationalities or personalities of the characters.

Nasser had to contend with the traditional monied and propertied classes to accomplish his material goals, and Oedipus met with analogous opposition from the City Council and Chamber of Commerce of Thebes. While Oedipus worked in the factories, Uwnah, Hor Muheb, and Awālih divided up the profits among themselves.

Kreon, however, is a separate case. He takes part neither in the hoarding of wealth nor in the promotion of Oedipus' divinity. When Oedipus accuses the City Council of conspiring to deify him, Kreon denies any interest in the divinity campaign. His dedication to duty differs sharply from the dedication to wealth of the other Council members. "It makes no difference to me, your Majesty. I don't have time. I'm responsible for training the guards to protect Thebes. I don't have time for anything else." [175]

Indeed, Kreon reiterates his concern for Thebes throughout the play, and he repeatedly accuses the council members of harboring selfish economic motives. In short, Kreon is a much more sympathetic character

than Salem indicates with his off-the-cuff comment about members of the Chamber of Commerce. In 1969 and 1970 Egypt was in the midst of a war. Perhaps Kreon is presented in a positive light because of the need to restore people's faith in the military.

But why wasn't Kreon's military function incorporated into the character of Awālih or Hor Muheb? Why wasn't Kreon the Chief of Police and Hor Muheb, like his counterpart from the Akhnaton era, both a general and a scribe?

First, it was necessary to separate the military from the police; the former was the only hope of a country at war while the latter represented the greatest internal threat to Egyptian society. Second, Hor Muheb could not be both a positive figure as a military commander and a negative figure as director of the literary propaganda machine. Hor Muheb is both Director of the University of Thebes and Chief Priest of Amun, functions which demonstrate the close ties between education and religion in modern Egypt.

Nationality, then, is clearly less important than the social functions of the characters. Furthermore, the use of Greek names is less important as a means of emphasizing the universality of Egypt's problems than as a means of avoiding censorship. Indeed, the strongest reason for telling an Egyptian story and evaluating Egyptian problems in the light of ancient myth and history is the power of the Egyptian censor.

Awālih is the censor in Ali Salem's play, and he is also the most thoroughly developed character. According to Mahmūd Amīn al-'Ālim, the play should have been named for Awālih since he is the only character with clearly defined personality traits and dramatic actions. [176] But he is also a symbol of repressive power, the personification of a hypocritical government which preaches democracy while stifling freedom of speech. "There is a thing called democracy, you cattle," shouts Awālih when the Citizens refuse to identify themselves before speaking. [177] They know that they would be arrested if they spoke their minds freely.

Psychology and Sexuality

What appears to be lacking in Salem's play is a psychological depth of character. Most of his characters have only superficial personality traits which serve mainly to emphasize Salem's political allegory. The absence of any references to incest and the presence of only veiled hints about patricide also underscore the political message instead of focusing on psychological characteristics.

The lack of emphasis on the sexual crimes of the traditional, Greek story, however, does not mean that sexuality is entirely missing from The Oedipus Comedy. Salem's characters definitely manifest sexual traits which reflect conditions in a patriarchal society.

The conflict between matriarchal and patriarchal social systems is sometimes considered to be an integral part of the traditional, Greek version. For example, Robert Graves suggests that Oedipus was an actual historical figure who lost favor with his subjects not because of actual patricide and incest but because he tampered with the social order. "Did Oedipus, like Sisyphus, try to substitute patrilineal for matrilineal laws of succession, but get banished by his subjects?" 178 A similar conflict may have been occurring in Egypt at the time of Akhnaton.

In Salem's play, however, no such conflict is evident. Despite Jokasta's position as queen, the society she rules is distinctly patriarchal in nature. Thus, Salem's Thebes is closer to modern, patriarchal Egypt than it is to the Egypt of Akhnaton or the Greek Thebes of the traditional Oedipus.

The next topics of discussion -- matriarchal and patriarchal societies and related features in The Oedipus Comedy -- center on the importance of the father figure in both Salem's play and modern Egyptian society. This father figure not only defines a basic political feature but also leads to the final topic of this section -- a psychological examination of The Oedipus Comedy in terms of post-Freudian interpretations of the Oedipus complex.

Matriarchal Societies

Succession in many ancient Mediterranean civilizations, including Egypt, was based upon a matrilineal tradition which states that the daughter of the queen is heir to the throne. If no daughter exists, the brother of the queen and his female offspring inherit the crown. While social scientists acknowledge the existence of this practice, they often fail to recognize its greater cultural significance.

> Despite the anthropologically recognized importance of matrilineal descent in Egyptian culture, art historians continue to misinterpret Egyptian art and life by applying to it the familiar conventions of their own patriculture. 179

The widely accepted notion that sibling rulers lived in incest is, according to feminist scholar Nancy Luomala, an example of such misinterpretations.

> There is no evidence that the queen would have sexual relations with her brother-king. The sister and brother of the ruling pair could each have a consort or consorts for sexual relations, but these spouses were not included in the possession and transmission of property.[180]

Luomala isolates a parallel between the fluctuations in the power of queens and the changing popularity of certain religious symbols.

> The Old Kingdom and Middle Kingdom (2800-1700 B.C.). . . saw the ascendancy of the pharaoh's power, which was paralleled by an increase in the importance of the solar deity Re [sic] and the vegetation-god Osiris over the cow-goddesses who had been so prominent on earlier monuments. . . By the Eighteenth Dynasty, however, the arts reinstated the goddess symbols of horns, sun disk, uraeus snake, and vulture in depiction

of female royalty. From that time onward, the queens of Egypt became increasingly important and prominent. [181]

Patriarchal Societies

The Islamic conquest signalled the beginning of a patriarchal era in Egypt, and later invasions by Persians and Turks, who converted to Islam, reinforced the patterns of male dominance. All the customs which subjugate women to men may not be the result of Koranic dictates, however; according to many modern Muslims, practices such as wearing veils were imported by the foreign invaders.

Nevertheless, modern Islamic society clearly provides men with privileges denied to women. Laws governing marriage and divorce, control of property, the right to work outside the home, and, in some cases, even the right to pray in the mosque, are all plainly organized in favor of men. Although promiscuity is officially discouraged for both men and women, only women are executed for it. Meanwhile, polygamy is solely a male prerogative.

According to Muslim concepts of sexuality, men and women develop sexual desires in contrasting cycles. This contrast is exemplified in the notion of 'aqel (intelligence, responsibility). Young girls are said to possess this trait in abundance, but as women grow older, their sexual desires increase while their seductiveness decreases. Consequently, responsible, rational thinking is replaced by slyness and deceit. The same process is said to operate in reverse for males. A boy is considered untrustworthy, irresponsible, and lacking in common sense. As a man ages and his sexual desires decrease, there is hope that he will develop 'aqel and become wise and responsible. [182]

According to feminist writer Fatima Mernissi, Islamic views of sexuality contrast sharply with Christian and Freudian concepts. In Mernissi's words, "Freud views civilization as a war against sexuality. . . The Muslim theory views civilization as the outcome of satisfied sexual energy." [183] Furthermore, according to Mernissi's

analysis of the Islamic view, female sexuality is not a passive force, as Freud suggests, but an active force that must be controlled if social order is to be maintained. The fundamental premise of the Islamic concept of sexuality is that sex itself is essentially good. It is a mere sample of the pleasures promised in Paradise. Evil occurs when the social order is threatened by uncontrolled sexual desires. Mernissi contrasts these notions with Christian concepts of sexuality. In the Christian view sex is primarily evil. It is original sin, shameful in essence.

The threat to the social order posed by uncontrolled sexuality is the basis for seclusion, the division of Islamic society by gender into two separate realms. Under this system women are restricted to the home while men are allowed access to the community. Supposedly this system allows women greater power within their family circles, but in practice seclusion often subjugates them to their husbands or husbands' relatives.

Men are allowed greater freedom of movement in the community because they are expected to earn a living for their families. Thus, although Muslim women have always had the right to possess property and other wealth, men often gain and exercise at least partial control over these possessions. Exceptions include doweries which serve women as insurance in case of divorce. Still, because men have greater financial obligations, they receive greater proportions of inheritances. According to Islamic law, a man's share of an inheritance is therefore twice that of a woman.

The major division of Islam into Sunni and Shiite factions is also related to inheritance -- but inheritance of religious authority rather than possessions. After the death of the prophet Muhammad the Sunnis advocated choosing his successor by concensus of male tribal leaders. The Shiites insisted that the male descendants of the prophet's son-in-law, 'Alī, should become the supreme religious authorities. In both cases, whether by male concensus or male succession, the patriarchal nature of the system is manifest.

Modern Egypt is predominantly Sunni Muslim, but it is less orthodox than many other Islamic countries. It has also witnessed many changes in women's rights. Egyptian women no longer wear veils, and many of them work outside the home in offices, schools, hospitals, shops, or domestic service. The number of women receiving education is also increasing, and birth control is now encouraged, promoted, and subsidized by the government. Modest dress and behavior are still expected, however, and many Egyptian men and women are openly suspicious of Western customs which appear to advocate promiscuous, immodest behavior. Egyptians also recognize the hypocrisy of visitors from more orthodox Islamic countries, like Saudi Arabia, who sometimes drink alcohol and chase women while vacationing in Egypt.

Sexual Elements in Salem's Play

Jokasta is not without power in Salem's Thebes. At the beginning of the play she stops the Council's bickering and presents them with an ultimatum: either they solve the riddle and the problem of the Beast or they will be fired. When Oedipus volunteers to face the Beast, she makes the final decision to accept his offer. Later in the play, when the Council refuses to send Oedipus to meet the new Beast, Jokasta overrules their decision and puts aside the Pharaonic tradition which bars the king from participating in dangerous activities.

Nevertheless, Awālih has a great deal of influence over the queen. When she demands to know why he hasn't found the murderer of the old king, the Chief of Police forces her to reconsider when he reminds her that she herself had encouraged him to perform only a superficial investigation. Later, when Jokasta and Awālih meet privately, the reason for the cover-up investigation becomes apparent. The two had conspired to arrange an 'accident' to dispose of the old king. Awālih, however, refuses to arrange a similar 'accident' for Oedipus.

Jokasta's vengeful scheming is motivated by her sexual frustration. When Oedipus first proposed marriage in a flattering speech to the

queen, Jokasta responded in typical Muslim fashion. She appeared shy and modest in spite of her true feelings. She agreed mainly because Awālih told her that his secret investigations revealed that she was greatly attracted to Oedipus.

After the wedding, however, Oedipus ignores the queen and spends all his time working in the factories. Instead of confronting Oedipus with her feelings, Jokasta responds deviously by plotting with Awālih. Her chance to dispose of Oedipus arises when the new Beast arrives. She sends her husband to face the danger, hoping he won't return. One of the Citizens, though, recognizes her real intention. "Brother, isn't that just like a woman? She wants a man to be the one to perish." 184

According to the concepts of sexuality in a Muslim society cited earlier, a woman supposedly becomes more deceitful as her sexual desires increase and her beauty decreases. Jokasta's sexual desires have clearly not been fulfilled, and her beauty is apparently insufficient. As her reply to Awālih's suggestion indicates, her attempts to augment her charms have been unsuccessful.

> Awālih: Your weapon, your Majesty, is a woman's weapon. More powerful than the atomic bomb which Oedipus intends to invent. Take care of your beauty, your Majesty. There are perfumes that have become available in the city in the past few days which could dazzle the most level-headed of men. There are fragrances which can dazzle even a priest, your Majesty.
>
> Jokasta: Perfumes and oils and ointments and powders. I haven't left anything out. But it's no use. He's busy with his inventions. 185

Despite Jokasta's efforts, she fails to attract Oedipus's attention. When he proposed marriage, he described Jokasta as "the universal woman, the beauty of beauties, princess of princesses, and queen of queens." 186 But he also claimed: "I don't love anything you can grasp with your hands. I love principles, ideals, and ideas." 187

Apparently he loved Jokasta's beauty in principle rather than in reality.

Jokasta is not the only woman in Salem's play, nor is she the only character considered beautiful. Nefer is the ancient Egyptian word for 'beauty'; [188] it is also the name of one of Salem's characters as well as the root of another chaaracter's name, Senefru. Akhnaton's wife, Nefertiti, lived during the eighteenth dynasty in the fourteenth century B.C. Senefru established Egypt's fourth dynasty and ruled as pharoah from 2650 to 2600 B.C. In Salem's play, however, the woman named Nefer is married to Senefru. Their scene together juxtaposes ancient and modern elements while demonstrating the extent to which the propaganda campaign has reached into the private lives of the Theban Citizens. The scene also reveals the nature of family life in Salem's Thebes.

Nefer and Senefru live in a home which is decorated in the style of the pharaonic era, but many of their furnishings are more modern. They possess, for instance, a telephone, a radio, and a television set. Senefru is clearly the head of the household. Nefer eventually submits to his decisions after initial bouts of complaining. There is definitely an argumentative tone to their relationship, but Senefru always has the final word. Nefer, however, is not without power. When Senefru slams down the telephone receiver and handles the other appliances roughly, she reminds him that she is "the one who will have to pay them off." [189] Senefru's exasperation and frustration stem from the propaganda campaign which has brought them Oedipus-and-the-Beast programs, music, toys, and books. Nefer is much less bothered by these circumstances, despite the fact that she is the one who apparently does the shopping in the marketplace filled with Oedipus paraphenalia.

Nefer and Senefru have a son named Ahmus, a name based on the ancient Egyptian word 'mose' which means 'child'. [190] In fact, Salem lists the boy only as 'the child'; his name is used only by his father. Senefru always adopts a gentle tone when talking to his son, a tone which contrasts sharply to the one he uses with his wife. Nefer's role

is clearly limited to that of wife and mother in a family which is controlled by the husband and father.

Jokasta and Nefer are the only female characters who appear in The Oedipus Comedy, but another is mentioned briefly. Awālih has to cut short a torture session because his wife is expecting him to take her to the cinema. Awālih rushes off to keep his date and to avoid his wife's vexation. Thus each of the women in the play is presented as argumentative and inclined to fuss and complain.

The Sphynx of the Greek legend is female, but the Beast in Ali Salem's play is male, despite the fact that "it has the head of a beautiful woman." [191] Even its name is masculine; Abūl-Hūl means Father of Fear. Thebes, however, is feminine. Tiresias refers to the city as the "Bride of the Nile" [192] and the "Mother of Heroes, Mother of Civilization." [193] Thus the city, like the female characters, appears as wife and mother to the male.

Masculine forms of address are widely used. Characters call each other "brother" [194] or "uncle", [195] while announcers and public speakers address their audiences as "gentlemen." [196] The solution to the riddle is 'man' in a general sense, but the City Council distorts the meaning to make it more specifically 'a man'. The course of action suggested after the defeat by the Beast is to rebuild 'men'.

The importance of male ancestors is also underscored repeatedly in the play. Tiresias claims that only a ruler deserves the title "father of sages and philosophers." [197] Hor Muheb chides Oedipus for behaving disrespectfully toward "one as old as your father." [198] In relation to his lists of criminals, Awālih proudly declares that "we bequeath them father from grandfather." [199] Even the Citizens measure generations in terms of their male ancestors. This is indicated by their response to Awālih when he threatens to arrest Tiresias.

Person 1: When we were born, he was there.

Person 2: My father told me that he was there before he was born. [200]

Person 3: My g-g-g-great-granddaddy heard from his

> g-g-g-g-great-grandaddy that Tiresias was there before he was born. [200]

An insult to one's male ancestors is taken personally. When a voice from the crowd curses the soul of Awālih's father, the Chief of Police tries to arrest the entire city. "Everyone is under arrest until you bring me the one who cursed me." [201] Tiresias, who is allowed to curse someone once every hundred years, takes the blame, much to Awālih's dismay. "But the last one you cursed was my grandfather, Uncle Tiresias." [202]

Tiresias is definitely a masculine authority figure in Ali Salem's play. The blind seer retains none of his usual androgynous qualities in spite of the fact that Salem bills his character as "Tiresias himself in his well-known dimensions as a character in ancient Greek literature." [203]

Greek sources offer conflicting explanations for Tiresias' blindness. In one version Athene blinds Tiresias when he inadvertently sees her bathing; the goddess later takes pity and compensates him with the ability to "understand the language of prophetic birds." [204] In another version Hera and Zeus summon Tiresias to settle a dispute; Tiresias takes Zeus' side, and Hera strikes him blind, but Zeus counters her punishment "with inward sight, and a life extended to seven generations." [205]

The subject of the dispute between Hera and Zeus is sexual pleasure; Zeus contends that women derive more pleasure from sex, and Hera takes the opposite point of view. Tiresias is called as an expert witness because legend has it that Tiresias was temporarily transformed into a woman. Once again the Greeks give varying accounts of how the metamorphosis occurred, but nonetheless, this 'well-known dimension' of the ancient Greek character is conspicuously absent in Ali Salem's Tiresias.

All of the Greek-named characters in Salem's play lose sexually defined qualities which do not fit the patriarchal society of Salem's Thebes. Kreon and Jokasta are not presented as brother and sister, an

important relationship in a matriarchal society. No evidence is ever presented to show that Jokasta is Oedipus' mother. Oedipus is apparently guilty of neither particide nor incest. Awālih's police dossier only hints at sexually motivated crimes.

> There are a lot of rumors about him. That he escaped from Mitanni after killing his father or causing his death. And there's another rumor that he's running away from a support and alimony case.[206]

None of these rumors is ever substantiated. Oedipus' only real crime is failure as a ruler. Salem's Thebes is clearly a patriarchal society, and Salem's Oedipus repeatedly refers to his subjects as "my children." [207] Oedipus is a political father who fails to care for his political children.

The Psychological Dimension of Salem's Play

Freud suggests that a neurosis can be a cultural as well as an individual phenomenon. After tracing the development of a neurosis through various stages of early trauma, defence, latency, outbreak, and partial return of repressed material, Freud invites his readers

> to take a step forward and assume that in the history of the human species something happened similar to the events in the life of the individual. [208]

The Egyptian people of the Nasser era, faced with Israeli aggression and internal police repression, established a collective 'reaction formation'. Like the people of Salem's Thebes, they learned to respond to danger either by making a joke of it or by relegating the responsibility for dealing with it to an authoritarian leader.

Salem's play deals with these social neuroses and the national traumas from which they spring. The playwright lays the blame for the fear on the shoulders of the ruler. The Beast and its agents within the city are not the primary causes of the plague. They spread the disease, but Oedipus allows the epidemic to proceed unchecked. The people of

Thebes grant him supreme authority, but he fails to live up to his responsibility.

According to Freud's so-called Great Man Theory, "the masses have a strong need for an authority which they can admire, to which they can submit, and which sometimes dominates them or abuses them"[209] But why do people have such a strong need? One answer, particularly applicable to an Islamic society, is that the word Islam itself means 'submission' or 'resignation'.[210] The Arabic language is filled with expressions, such as in shā' allah (God willing) and mā shā' allah (God knows what), which allow individuals to shirk responsibility. Freud, however, suggests an answer which covers a wider range of paternalistic societies. "Freud's answer is that the need springs from a longing for the father, the father who lives in each of us from childhood." [211]

Post-Freudian interpreters of the Oedipus complex have de-emphasized the sexual aspects of the myth and placed greater stress on the struggle for power evident in the parent-child relationship. One of the first to voice this notion was Carl Jung.

> Very early he saw with considerable clarity what contemporary post-Freudians have driven home, that it is the emotional interplay between the parents and children which is primary, not the sexual attraction between children and parents. [212]

Karen Horney takes a similar position.

> Fixations on the parents, she believes, do not arise for biological reasons. The fixations, the attachment of the boy to the mother, of the girl to the father, arise from describable conditions in the family relationships.[213]

Horney admits that sexual stimulation by the parents may contribute to these conditions, but more important are the anxieties which often compel a child "to cling to one of the parents if there is thus a possibility of receiving assurance." [214]

While Horney endeavors to explain the attraction between a child and a sympathetic parent, Harry Stack Sullivan seeks an explanation for the conflict between a child and its parent of the same sex.

> Sullivan attached fundamental importance to the rule of parents, especially the mother or her surrogate in infancy and childhood. But this role is not a sexual one, even in the wider sense in which Freud conceives sexuality. The feeling of familiarity which a parent has toward his or her child of the same sex is said to lead to an authoritarian attitude, which, of course, produces resentment and hostility in the child. 215

Erich Fromm establishes a connection between psychological and political interpretations of the Oedipus myth and complex. Fromm claims that the Oedipus myth

> has to be understood not as a symbol of the incestuous tie between mother and son, but as a rebellion of the son against the authority of the father in the patriarchal family; and that the marriage of Oedipus and Jocasta is only a secondary element, only one of the symbols of the son's victory, who takes over his father's place and with it all his privileges. 216

This struggle for power, according to Fromm's analysis, implies a conflict between the individual and his society.

> Fromm regards both the Oedipus complex and neurosis as expressions of a conflict between man's legitimate striving for freedom and independence and those social arrangements which frustrate man's striving for self-fulfillment, happiness, and independence. 217

To reach his conclusions Fromm examines the entire Theban trilogy of Sophocles.

> If we consider the "trilogy," not merely "King Oedipus" as Freud did, we find that the theme which runs through the three works is the conflict between father and son.

> In "King Oedipus" the conflict is expressed by the killing of Laios [sic]. In "Oedipus at Colonus," the conflict is between Oedipus and his two sons. In "Antigone" it is the conflict between Creon and Haemon. 218

Furthermore, according to Fromm:

> An analysis of the whole Oedipus trilogy will show. . . that the struggle against paternal authority is its main theme and that the roots of this struggle extend far back into the ancient struggle between patriarchal and matriarchal systems of society, family and religion. 219

Thus Fromm reaches a conclusion which parallels that of David Grene, who states: "Behind the figure of Oedipus or Creon stands the tyrant of the legend; and behind the tyrant of the legend, the meaning of all despotic authority." 220

Ali Salem's message is clearly political. The Oedipus Comedy is a skillfully disguised commentary on the Nasser era and a timely response to the trauma of the 1967 defeat. The playwright treated his subject symbolically in order to avoid censorship. Hidden among his literary and historical allusions is a challenge to the forces of political repression, including the despotic authority who heads the government.

Salem disguises his characters not only to give his story a more universal impact, nor only to avoid government censorship. He uses symbols and metaphors to reach an audience which has been conditioned to close its eyes to the truth. Would the Egyptian audiences have responded to a more direct and less symbolic treatment of the issues raised by Ali Salem in The Oedipus Comedy or You Who Killed the Beast? Bruno Bettelheim claims that "metaphors are more likely than a purely intellectual statement to touch a human chord and arouse our emotions, and thus give us a feeling for what is meant." 221 Salem's allegory undoubtedly dramatized the concerns of audiences who, on one hand, were eager to discover an explanation for their recent military defeat, but

who, on the other hand, were discouraged from openly discussing the issue by the government's repressive attitudes and practices.

PART THREE: FROM SCRIPT TO PERFORMANCE

I. Music

Music is an important part of Arab theatre, but in Salem's play, music is also a thematic concern. The songs mentioned by the radio announcer, for example, illustrate the extent to which music is used as romantic propaganda that glorifies Oedipus' encounter with the Beast.

> The Voice of the Announcer: Now, for your listening pleasure: first, a choral arrangement of "You who killed the Beast" and "How I miss your love, you Beast;" then we'll hear from the charming vocalist, Kaamiil Bahh, in a new song, "My lover is a Beast in his quarrels and a Beast in his affections." Finally, we'll hear "Make a Beast of me, too, my Beast." 222

Senefru turns off the radio before the music begins. Only one of the songs mentioned by the announcer is ever actually heard. That song, "You who killed the Beast," is both a musical and thematic refrain of Ali Salem's play.

The song first appears as a rhythmic chant which the Citizens use to drown out Oedipus' words of explanation when he returns from his first encounter with the Beast. 223 Later, whenever Oedipus appears in public, his subjects respond in a similar manner, sometimes chanting and sometimes singing the refrain. 224 On certain occasions the lyrics are modified to fit the situation. For example, when Jokasta decides to send Oedipus to face the allegedly new Beast, the Citizens express their approval with a chorus of "He who solves the riddles." 225 When Uwnah and Awālih make a deal to share the profits from Oedipus' inventions, they celebrate by singing "We who killed the Beast." 226 When Hor

Muheb asks the other members of the Council to explain how the Beast died, Awālih sings a mocking answer: "He who killed the Beast." 227

Chief of Police Awālih is the one responsible for transforming "You who killed the Beast" into a popular song, although Tiresias blames the entire City Council for "inculcating the necessary tunes in the minds of the people." 228 Awālih's contribution, both as composer and as enforcer of the song's popularity, becomes clear in a scene he shares with Senefru. While Oedipus addresses the crowd with empty rhetoric, most of the Citizens sing the required chorus. Senefru, however, fails to participate.

> Awālih: (He says gently) Why aren't you singing? I've been watching you. You've been standing here for an hour without singing.
>
> Senefru: (He plucks up courage a little) Sir, you haven't been singing either.
>
> Awālih: I am the composer, Senefru.
>
> Senefru: (He tries to feign hoarseness in his voice) Because my voice is hoarse today.
>
> Awālih: Is that so? If your voice is hoarse, you could whistle. You could hum. Harmonize with the music. What are you? Made of stone?
>
> Senefru: Frankly --
>
> Awālih: Ahh. Speak frankly.
>
> Senefru: Because I have a tin ear.
>
> Awālih: I beg to differ. Senefru. In reality your ear is quite musical. Only it's dirty. I'll clean it for you.
>
> Senefru: (He pleads in a low voice) Awālih. I take refuge in Amun.
>
> Awālih: (Whispering) Come with me quietly. Unless you want the people to know that your ears aren't clean. And that would be so embarrassing.

> Senefru: I'll go home and wash my ears, and I'll come back to sing right away.
>
> Awālih: You wouldn't know how. It's a matter for a specialist. [229]

The police chief and his victim disappear for a few moments, and then Senefru rushes headlong back onstage, singing at the top of his voice. His resistance is finally broken.

That resistance to the propaganda campaign is demonstrated in an earlier scene when Senefru is at home, trying to relax with his family. His child is playing with Oedipus-and-the-Beast toys and reading the Beast Primer. The radio offers only songs about the Beast, and the television presents only Beast-oriented programs. Meanwhile, Nefer adds to her husband's exasperation by playing "You who killed the Beast" on her harp.

Senefru, for reasons which might seem unclear to a reader of the script, orders his wife to stop playing. The script does not indicate that Nefer is singing the lyrics, only that she is playing an instrument. Dr. Yūsuf Shawqī, however, who composed and conducted the music for the original production of the play, claims that Nefer's song was not merely instrumental. "It was a set of lyrics which I set to a popular song." [230] The song had far-reaching effects, as Shawqī explains.

> The repercussions of this small tune were really great because it was not sung just by Senefru's wife. It was, in the play, reiterated by the public. It assumed progressively higher and higher echoes to the point that the audience, almost by heart, learned both the lyrics and tune, and when they were leaving the theatre at the end of the evening, they used to sing that song on the street. Which was a little bit embarrassing for both the Minister of the Interior, against whom the tune was directed, and the cast of the theatre, because it kind of constituted a certain political danger -- to the

point that the Minister of the Interior sent the Minister of Culture over to view the play to see if there is any good reason to suspend it. But the Minister of Culture at the time, being a real artist, Dr. Tharwat Ukāsha, was so amused by the play, and he was so pleased to hear what he heard and to see what he saw, that he insisted I should teach him how to sing that particular tune. [231]

Shawqī is well qualified to judge both the political and musical aspects of the play. He works as First Undersecretary of Culture and as a professor of music. He teaches at the Institute of Music in Giza where he experiments with choral harmony, an untraditional approach to music in the Arab world, and he teaches classes at the American University in Cairo where he presents historical background and structural explanations of traditional, tetrachordal Arab music. Although he received his doctorate in vertebrate paleontology from Harvard University, his first love is music. He often composes music for theatrical events, and he is an accomplished performer on the 'oud, the predecessor of the Western lute.

Shawqī chose a predominantly Western orchestra to play his music. He utilized flute, oboe, clarinet, and bassoon for the wind instruments, various brasses and horns, with the exception of the bass tuba, and violins, violi, celli, and contrabass for the strings. Consequently, he used predominantly Western modes instead of the quarter-tone scales and tetrachordal improvisation common in Arab music. For certain numbers, however, he used Arab instruments or specially designed instruments appropriate for individual characters. Above all, when he composed the music and made his choices of instrumentation, Shawqī remained sensitive to the political and temporal contradictions inherent in the play.

> Shawqī: The music I made for this play was Egyptian contemporary music. It had to tell that this play is taken away from its original time. You know, the method itself is old, but the presentation itself had the

reflection upon the political situation in Egypt at the time.

Scott: The juxtaposition of the modern things with the ancient things that --

Shawqī: Yes, for instance, the telephone, the tape recorder, the advertisement on television. . . Mainly, the music was what you would call incidental music to accompany certain scenes or to impart certain innuendos. . . . 232

The primary musical theme, however, was "You who killed the Beast," and Shawqī varied his arrangements of the piece as it recurred throughout the play. In an effort to use native instruments in a manner compatible with a Western orchestra, Shawqī sometimes used an Egyptian nāy, played in the vein of a Western recorder, and he sometimes used the 'oud, played in the style of an old harp or harpsichord. For instance, although the script calls for Nefer to play the harp, Shawqi himself performed the music on the 'oud. Another example of a special case was Tiresias.

Shawqī: Very special for this play, I used the guitar for Tiresias, because Tiresias was a very special person, and he needed a very special instrument that could at least give the flavor of a narrator. And a narrator needs to be accompanied either by a string solo instrument or a wind solo instrument, and since he was reciting what was, in a way, some sort of poetry, he had to be accompanied by a guitar. And being a blind man in the play, a blind man was more fitted to play the qithāra -- the guitar -- or any such simple musical instrument than anything else. 233

In fact, as photographs provided by the Egyptian Theatre Archives indicate, Tiresias played not a guitar but a specially designed instrument, strung in six double courses like a 12-string guitar and shaped like a large balalaika with chopped-off corners to transform its

basic triangle shape into a five-sided box. Furthermore, Tiresias and Nefer used the same or duplicate instruments, and, as Shawqī explains, neither of them performed their music live.

> Shawqī: No, it was recorded, and it was a playback. But Galāl al-Sharqāwi, who played Tiresias, has a very sharp musical ear, a very good memory, as far as music is concerned, and he learned his part so well (and I managed to teach him the stoppings of these particular notes) that it sounded exactly, and you could see, that the man on the stage was actually sounding the notes that were on tape. [234]

The music for the entire show was recorded in advance in Yūsuf Shawqī's studio and played back during performance on the theatre's sound system. Unfortunately, the theatre has since been gutted by fire, and the archives have no copy of the soundtrack. Despite repeated efforts by Shawqī to locate a privately owned copy of the tape, the music remains unavailable.

The most important functions of music in the play are to enhance the mood and, above all, to underscore the central message. Ali Salem tries to push his audience beyond laughter in an effort to locate a solution for his country's most pressing difficulties. The solution he suggests is voiced by Tiresias.

> And indeed, it is strange that man, who was for thousands of years and who will remain unto eternity, is the single solution to all riddles. Indeed, man will remain the only true tune, the true, clear song among all the bad melodies throughout the passing of the ages. [235]

II. Spectacle

> The Place: Ancient Thebes -- Egyptian Thebes, not Greek Thebes. . .

The Time: Long ago, the distant past. 236

The original 1970 production of You Who Killed the Beast hardly looked like an Egyptian let alone Greek setting. Nor did the visual elements of the production denote a particular era in history. Instead, the designers created a fantasy world, perhaps intended to reinforce the universal message of the play while sheltering the Egyptian aspects of the theme from the censor's scrutiny.

You Who Killed the Beast follows the reign of Oedipus from his rise in power to his abdication. Each of the three acts culminates with the fall of the curtain, and the various scenes within the acts are separated by lighting changes. The first and third acts require the same basic locations -- the interior and the exterior of the pharaonic palace. These locations are also included among the numerous brief scenes of Act II.

The playwright describes one basic setting which encompasses most of these locations. A stone amphitheatre encloses the following elements: the walls of Thebes, capable of supporting the weight of certain Citizens; the city gates; the courtyard or gathering place in front of the palace, the gates, and the temple; the balcony of the palace; the road to the temple, guarded by statues of rams; parts of the palace and temple interiors. Attention could be focused on the appropriate part of the set by changes in lighting or by addition of mobile elements, such as table and chairs for the City Council, a podium for the Director of the University, or a throne for Oedipus.

The second act poses several special problems, and the playwright suggests

> that the director refer to puppetry technique: the untra-violet rays, the black stage, shadow puppetry. And it is imperative that the director assign some of the scenes to the puppets themselves. 237

Before turning to playwrighting, Ali Salem worked in the Cairo Puppet Theatre where he gained first-hand experience with the techniques he describes. The term 'ultra-violet rays' refers to the so-called

'black light' utilized in Western nightclubs during the 1960's. In puppetry technique the light is used in conjunction with special, brightly-colored, luminous paints. 'Black stage' refers to the black curtains and darkened environment in which the glowing objects appear to float. [238]

The al-Hakīm Theatre company, a government sponsored group, named after Egyptian playwright Tawfīq al-Hakīm, produced the play in the 1200-seat Muhammad Farīd Theatre in Cairo. The auditorium of the theatre served as the amphitheatre described in the script, and Tiresias, played by director Galāl al-Sharqāwi, entered and exited through the audience. These staging choices eliminated the need for incorporating the amphitheatre into the stage setting and emphasized the inclusion of audience members among the citizenry of Thebes.

Thus, through the staging of the play, the audience became part of a common spatial environment, but the set and costume designs helped create a temporal link. According to the script, the time frame is "long ago, the distant past" [239] of ancient Egyptian Thebes, but the juxtaposition of modern technology and various pharaonic elements suggests the temporal contradictions of twentieth century Egypt, a land simultaneously ancient and modern, a place where the products of industrialization coexist with relics of earlier millennia. In production, however, the anachronisms suggested by the script were achieved in a different manner. The set design was neither realistic nor historical, and the pharaonic elements, such as statues of rams to guard the temple road, were eliminated. In their place appeared a structure of primitive simplicity, decorated in an abstract, futuristic fashion.

The only available evidence of the production is a collection of black-and-white snapshots, retained by the staff of the Egyptian Theatre Archives. [240] The show was video-taped for television, but the film was never released, probably for political reasons. [241] The overall impression revealed by the photographs, however, is a collage of geometric patterns. The city gate was apparently a large circle or

sphere with a curved opening to allow for entrances and exits, but most of the set was composed of flat surfaces, straight lines, and sharp angles. Stairs and platforms were arranged in front of the gate to create a multi-level performing space with a rectangular, building-block quality.

Stage left of the gate the city wall extended toward the palace where it formed a sharp angle and continued downstage as the palace wall. On top of this wall appeared a balcony. Below, openings in the palace and city walls were concealed by draperies which were in turn hidden by decorative panels, painted in abstract curves and swirls. The panels were used for exterior scenes and the draperies for the throne room in the palace interior. The throne was a curved, wicker chair, shaped somewhat like an eggshell. It was suspended by two ropes or cables and could thus be quickly raised or lowered during a change of scene.

No photograph is available of the entire stage setting, but two snapshots of the stage right area reveal its use for both Senefru's home and Jokasta's boudoir. The picture of Senefru and Nefer reveals a large circle up right center, the size of the city gate. Further right appeared a crescent shape of similar height and then a wall unit which angled downstage in a manner similar to the city and palace walls stage left but on a smaller scale. During the scene in Senefru's home, draperies concealed the lower portions of the walls, but when the scene shifted to Jokasta's boudoir, the curtains were drawn to reveal the queen's perfumes and cosmetics. The large circle contained a screen for use as a television during Senefru's scene, but the circle and crescent were masked by draperies during the scene in the boudoir. In both scenes stairs and low platforms remained in the foreground.

The specific colors used in the production design are, of course, not evident in the black-and-white photographs, but the pictures do provide some general clues. First, solid colors predominated in both the background and the costumes. Background surfaces consequently appeared smooth, lacking in texture, and generally two-dimensional,

qualities common in Middle Eastern shadow puppetry. Second, lighter shades were used for the background and darker ones for the costumes. The resultant contrast made the characters more readily visible. Third, reflective material was chosen for crowns and for some costume trim. This helped draw attention to the major characters who wore the more elaborately trimmed costumes.

Most of the costumes were designed from the same basic patterns. The men wore short-sleeved tunics over long-sleeved, turtleneck shirts. The tunics extended below the hips, covering the tops of the trousers. Ordinary Citizens wore plain pants; others wore pants cut in telescopic sections or tiers which decreased in stages as they approached the feet. Palace guards and government officials sported capes in addition to their tunics and trousers. Some of the principals wore belts, and most of the important characters had costumes with added trim. None of the costumes had collars, but some had applique patches around the neck or sides of the tunics or along the seams of the trousers.

The script calls for two female characters, but the photographs show that at least three women appeared in the production. Jokasta's costumes were specially designed, but those of Nefer and a female Citizen who may have been an understudy were similar to the costumes worn by the men. They wore shirts and tunics, but instead of trousers they wore dark stockings with light-colored skirts which extended below the knees. Their tunics were tucked into the skirts. Slippers or low-cut shoes were the common footwear for men and women.

All the Citizens wore shoulder-length wigs of plain hair, tied in place by headbands. Kreon also had a plain wig, but the other members of the City Council had fancier, more stylized hair pieces. Hor Muheb's shoulder-length ringlets, for instance, resembled gilded Afro braids. Awālih's wig covered his ears and glimmered as if made of glass beads or sequins sewn onto a cloth cap. Uwnah's wig was also made with shiny, metallic material, but it was shorter and left his ears visible. Oedipus's short, dark hair showed beneath a small, cylindrical crown which was built into a gilded skullcap that wrapped around his ears like

sideburns. Thus, despite similar costumes, each of the principal characters had a unique hairpiece to establish his individuality.

Tiresias, however, wore no wig at all. Instead, his own dark hair was cut in a Prince Valiant or early-Beattle style. His costume was similar to those of the other characters except that it was much darker in color.

Jokasta was a special case. Although she sometimes wore a gilded or beaded crown, she also appeared with her own long, dark hair falling in waves to her bosom. Her costumes were also unique. She wore high-heeled pumps instead of slippers, and she wore pant suits made of glossy fabric and decorated with shiny trim. On some occasions her midriff was bare and on other occasions it was covered. She also had a choice of capes -- a dark-colored royal robe with shiny trim, and a light-colored shawl of flimsy, opaque material. The top of her outfit was low-cut, and her arms were bare.

Three types of properties were used: primitive weapons like spears, probably drawn from stock; actual appliances, such as the blender which Uwnah shows to Jokasta as a sample of Oedipus' inventions; and specially-made items. The latter category included hand-made musical instruments, such as those used by Nefer and Tiresias, and certain novelty items of exaggerated size to emphasize their symbolic significance. Yūsuf Shawqī described the reasoning behind the construction of two of these items. Pointing to a sofa large enough for three people, he explained that

> there was a telephone as large as this piece of furniture telling you exactly how it is -- when you are speaking on the telephone you are actually speaking to the whole world. There was absolutely no privacy in telephone communications. And then the Minister of the Interior at the time of the Pharaoh, whose name was Awālih, discovered that some inventor made a tape recorder as small as yours [approximately 1-1/2" x 4" x 6"], and he wanted him to make him smaller and smaller

> and smaller tape recorders for his own purposes. So you see the contrast between the telephone which is absolutely private being so huge and the tape recorder that could be a huge sound system being made into a thumb knuckle. [242]

The predominant visual qualities of the production were solid colors, smooth surfaces, and strongly outlined shapes. The walls which enclosed the playing areas made a shallow background for the characters dressed in comic-book capes and wigs. Nothing heavy or massive was included that would detract from the two-dimensional, cartoon environment.

The logo which appeared on the cover of the program was a boldly outlined cartoon of Oedipus grappling with a dragon. The blue and grey Beast with red eyes and tongue more closely resembled the fairytale opponent of St. George than the composite creature called the Sphynx. Oedipus, in yellow, red, black and white, looked like a refugee from the hall of comic-book super-heroes, and one could easily have expected a caption to read: "Bang!" "Zap!" "Crash!" or "Pow!" The cartoon logo thus epitomized the fantasy world of the production which was substituted for the Egyptian environment described in Ali Salem's script.

In conclusion, the total design -- sets, costumes, properties, even the program logo -- seem to have been created with four basic ideas in mind. First, the subject matter of the play was politically sensitive, so realistic representations of Egyptian environment would have been potentially dangerous. Second, since Oedipus' inventions spanned 5,000 years of civilization, primitive and futuristic elements had to coexist in the fantasy world of the play. Third, the exaggerated decor contributed comic contraditions which paralleled the political and temporal contradictions of the subject matter. Finally, design choices were ultimately governed by a severely limited budget.

III. The Production Budget

The Theatre Archives kept a copy of the budget which Galāl al-Sharqāwi, general manager of the al-Hakīm company and director of You Who Killed the Beast, submitted to the Ministry of Culture's Organization of Theatre, Music and Folk Arts.

Designer Magdī Rizq was paid 40 Egyptian pounds (£. E. -- roughly equivalent in U.S. dollars) to design and build sets, costumes and properties. He was allotted 425 £.E. for sets, 722 £.E. for costumes and 92 £.E. for props and furniture, but since building materials were most expensive, he spent 933 £.E. of the total on the set, distributing 20 £.E. for props and the balance for costumes.

Table Two shows the basic budget.[243] Asterisks indicate items which cost more than originally planned because of the extended run of the show. A total of 92 performances were given over a three month period. The 1200-seat Muhammad Farīd Theatre was filled to standing-room capacity for every performance. Ticket prices were set by the government at a maximum of 2 £.E.

Table Two - Production Budget

Writing	(Ali Salem)	500 £.E.
Direction	(Galāl al-Sharqāwi)	250 £.E.
Actors (from outside the regular company)		650 £.E.*
Set Design	(Magdī Rizq)	40 £.E.
Set Construction (estimated)		425 £.E.
Costumes (estimated)		722 £.E.
Props and Furniture (estimated)		92 £.E.
Music Composition	(Yūsuf Shawqī)	100 £.E.
Studio and Recording Costs		162 £.E.*
Costume Cleaning/Maintenance		150 £.E.*
Programs and Publications		100 £.E.
Publicity		500 £.E.*
Total		3,691 £.E.

IV. The Critics

There is an old saying about theatre critics: 'It doesn't matter what they say about you -- as long as they spell your name right'. Aside from a production notice in al-Gumhūrīyah (The Republic) which referred to the playwright as 'Alī Isma'īl, the popular press seems to have mastered the spellings of the artists' names. Except for one Western scholar who thought the play was about Minotaurs, the academic press appears to have recognized (if not approved of) the novelty of Salem's approach to the Oedipus legend.

The Popular Press

The Theatre Archives in Cairo saved many of the newspaper and magazine items related to the production of You Who Killed the Beast.[244] The popular press followed the play from early rehearsals through the run of the show, and the extant articles fall into three general categories: publicity notices and other production releases, reviews which ranged from superficial plot synopses and performance evaluations to in-depth critical analyses, and background information about artists and their activities behind-the-scenes.

Early production notices listed members of the cast and highlighted the participation of a star performer, Magdah al-Khatīb, as Jokasta. Included in the cast were students of the High Institute of Theatre Arts who were reportedly making their professional acting debuts as minor characters. The show was cast by director Galāl al-Sharqāwi but shortly into the rehearsal period the director took over the part of Tiresias in addition to his other duties. Al-Sharqāwi was also apparently responsible for deciding to bill the show under its alternate title, You Who Killed the Beast.

Rehearsals reportedly began on January 5, 1970 at the Pocket Theatre. After the al-Hakīm Company finished the first show of its season the company opened Ali Salem's play at the Muhammad Farīd

Theatre. The show was produced under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture's Organization of Theatre, Music, and Folk Arts.

When the show opened late in February, critics greeted it with a mixture of confusion and enthusiasm. For example, an unidentified columnist in Sabāh al-Khayr (Good Morning) had only questions. "What exactly is this?" he inquired on February 26, 1970. [245] On the same day, however, in another column of Sabāh al-Khayr, critic Abdallah al-Tūkhī proclaimed that while the skies of the theatre are too often "clouded with fog," You Who Killed the Beast was "a beam of light shining briliantly" through those clouds. [246] He praised both Salem and al-Sharqāwi for their best writing and directing to date, and he singled out Farūq al-Nagīb for his performance of Awālih. Al-Tūkhī was especially excited about the play's message. Comparing the play to the current situation in Egypt, he emphasized the significance of Oedipus' solution: Man must be rebuilt "from the inside." [247] He also highlighted Tiresias' advice to the Citizens not to make a joke of everything.

The humor of the play and the importance of the solution were also mentioned enthusiastically by Muhammad Galāl in a February 28th article in al-Idhā'a (Broadcasting). In the critic's opinion, Salem's "profound satiric comedy" achieves the "difficult balance" of art and thought. [248] Galāl also focused on Tiresias' claim that "man is the only true solution." [249] Applying these words to the Egyptian public, Galāl maintained that "Ali Salem aims his philosophy at us: I -- you -- each of us -- is the solution." [250]

On March 3rd critic Diyā' al-Dīn Baybaras of al Kawākib (The Stars) described the earthquake of laughter generated by the play, but on March 5th Sālih Mūrsī of Sabāh al-Khayr was less enthusiastic. While acknowledging the power of the dialogue to make the audience laugh, he criticized the play for its unusual treatment of the Oedipus myth and for Salem's use of colloquial speech instead of the elevated language of Modern Standard Arabic.

On March 8th 'Abd al-Fitāh Rizq of Rūz Yusūf (Rose of Joseph) and an unidentified writer in al-Akhbār (The News) concentrated on praising the production instead of commenting on the script in much depth. Ahmad Abu Kaff, however, in an April 20, 1970 issue of al Musawwar (The Illustrated), presented a hitherto unrecognized dimension of Ali Salem's You Who Killed the Beast. Citing Velikovsky's thesis, Abu Kaff announced that "Oedipus is none other than the Pharoah Akhnaton of the 18th Dynasty." [251]

One final extant review appeared on March 11, 1970. In a three-page article in al-Kawākib critic Ragā' al-Naqāsh compares Salem's play first to Sophocles' version and then to Arab treatments of the Oedipus myth. Al-Naqāsh judges Salem's play inferior to Sophocles' tragedy on the basis of the depth of philosophical issues and in terms of the poetry of Sophocles' language. The critic stresses, however, the contemporary applicability of Salem's play. "The play is written for us, ourselves, for our era, for the days which we are living." [252]

Meanwhile, other articles concentrated on behind-the-scenes activities. Interviews with Salem, al-Sharqāwi, and Farūq al-Nagīb -- the formerly unknown actor who had achieved such success in his role as Awālih -- appeared from time to time during the run of the show, but these articles were outnumbered and often overshadowed by accounts of a scandalous altercation between theatre critic Sāfī Nāz Kāzim and members of the al-Hakīm Theatre Company. Apparently the critic was greeted with a barrage of insults and abusive language when she arrived to see Salem's play. Various versions and explanations of the altercation were reported, but the motivation appears to have been an article about nepotistic casting practices which had been published by al-Musawwar, the magazine for which Sāfī Nāz Kāzim worked. Kāzim, however, was apparently not the one responsible for the accusatory article which so offended al-Sharqāwi and other members of the al-Hakīm Company. At any rate, the controversy eventually resulted in al-Sharqāwi's resignation as managing director.

The Academic Press

In the wake of Ali Salem's success with The Oedipus Comedy or You Who Killed the Beast the academic community began to pay closer attention to the playwright and his plays. Western critic John Waterbury and Arab critics Mahmūd Amīn al'Ālim, 'Alī al-Rā'ī, Nadia Farag (-Badawi), Galāl al-'Ashrī, and Sa'd Abū Ridā provided a wide range of comments about the play.

John Waterbury in an American Universities Field Staff Report makes the following allegorical interpretations of the Beast, or sphynx, in Salem's play.

> The sphynx symbolizes the enigmas of the West, its technological and scientific sophistication, and, more specifically, the life and death riddle posed first by Western imperialism and latterly by Israel. [253]

Mahmūd Amīn al'Ālim compares Salem's Oedipus to Western versions. According to his analysis, the important difference between Salem's Oedipus and Cocteau's -- as well as between Salem's and Sophocles' characters -- is that Salem's Oedipus knew that the Beast was not defeated. Amīn al-'Ālim stresses the importance of applying Salem's version to contemporary events, and he criticizes the play for ending too late. What he fails to consider is the possibility that Salem intended to show Oedipus sneaking away precisely to avoid shouldering responsibility.

'Alī al-Rā'ī also stresses the contemporary applicability of Salem's play. He credits Salem with cutting out the dead wood in order to concentrate on political issues of responsibility and accountability specifically related to the 1967 defeat. Nadia Farag takes a similar approach, claiming that Salem's play "is certainly and clearly a refutation, on stage, of Abdel Nasser's society."

Sa'd Abū Ridā, a Saudi Arabian writer, takes a different approach. He explores a wide variety of oppositions which surface in Salem's treatment of the Oedipus myth, but he concerns himself more with

identifying manifestations of these oppositions than with understanding the political meanings they convey. Absent from Abū Ridā's study are political references to the Egyptian revolution of 1952, the wars of 1956 and 1967, the near deification of Abdel Nasser and the repressive activities of Nasser and his colleagues.

Conclusions and Comparative Criticism

If the behind-the-scenes controversy between the theatre staff and magazine critic Sāfī Nāz Kāzim appears to be little more than gossip, then Oscar Wilde's definition of history should be taken into account: "Gossip is charming. History is merely gossip. But scandal is gossip made tedious by morality." [254] On the surface the incident is a record of immoral behavior, unrelated to the production of Ali Salem's play. According to Yūsuf Shawqī, however, Sāfī Nāz Kāzim was an ardent admirer of Nasser who may have used the unrelated issue of casting policies -- however applicable such criticism might have been -- as a means of belittling a show which criticized the leader. On the other hand, according to 'Alī al-Rā'ī, Sāfī Nāz Kāzim is one of the best drama critics in Egypt. At any rate, her only extant article about the play deals mainly with background information about the playwright.

Indeed, those critics in the popular press who endeavored to analyze the script did so cautiously. A few writers mentioned the war with Israel and the need to 'rebuild men' in the wake of the defeat, but no critic came right out and condemned Nasser or Minister of the Interior Shaarawi Gumaa by name. As Yūsuf Shawqī points out, the performances "constituted an absolute danger even to those who go and see them." [255] So critics obviously had to exercise caution when writing about the play. For instance, when asked nearly thirteen years after the fact about Ahmad Abu Kaff's comparison, based on Velikovsky, of Oedipus and Akhnaton, Ali Salem likened the critic's dilemma to a playwright's: "You know, critics can't always say exactly what they mean either." [256]

Most critics concentrated on comparing Salem's play to Sophocles' original. While many critics emphasized the differences between the versions, few recognized the similarities. None of the critics in the popular or academic press pointed out the increased emphasis on the political aspects of the original myth which Salem created by omitting the sexual aspects.

After Nasser's death, the academic press spoke more readily of specific political issues, but no one seems to have recognized Oedipus' blindness as a blatant alibi for his unwillingness to see. Not only does Oedipus refuse to take individual responsibility, but he also refuses to take part in a solution that requires all Citizens to participate. Instead, he slinks away into oblivion. Such a powerful indictment was, of course, impossible to make at the time of the production, but it is still lacking in retrospective analyses.

Above all, what is missing in critical response to the play is a comparison of You Who Killed the Beast with major works of modern world theatre. Many critics mention Cocteau's The Infernal Machine without attempting to analyze it or compare it with Salem's play. Other potential candidates for comparison are Thornton Wilder's The Skin of Our Teeth and Dario Fo's The Accidental Death of an Anarchist.

The Infernal Machine is a satire which reveals how readily humankind submits to hierarchies of responsibility. It shows how man lays the blame for his troubles on divine forces as if human beings were mere components in a cosmic machine. Cocteau drops hints that, while military, government, and economic forces are powerful manipulators of human destiny, even these hierarchies are part of a greater machine. Even gods report to higher gods.

Thus, Cocteau treats deities as cogs and wheels in a machine which is beyond mankind's control. What remains unclear from Cocteau's play is whether we are supposed to believe in the possibility of escape from such a machine. Although Cocteau is probably using his play to mock mankind's tendency toward blaming human failures on forces beyond human control, his play tends to reaffirm this tendency rather than supplant

it. What clouds the issue is Cocteau's adherance to the sexual elements of the Oedipus story. The order in which Cocteau wrote the four acts of The Infernal Machine reveal his inability to escape the tragic elements of the original myth. Act II, the playwright's initial inspiration, deals with an incompetent hero's attempt to defeat the Sphynx. Later, Cocteau composed Act I and then Acts III and IV because his first creation fell short of being a full-length play. For Act I Cocteau transformed the ghost scene from Hamlet into a haunting of Thebes by the ghost of Laius. Then, for Acts III and IV, Cocteau shifts his emphasis to the marriage of Oedipus and Jocasta, and his story returns to the fatal dictates of the original myth.

Ali Salem avoids entangling his Oedipus in the crimes of incest and patricide. By omitting these elements Salem has already escaped the dictates of tradition. Consequently, Salem is able to concentrate on challenging the notion that Oedipus is governed by some immutable divine force, and the playwright is able to focus upon the political struggle which is usually overshadowed by sexual elements. The Theban bureaucracy is the fatal force in Salem's play. The bureaucrats perpetuate conditions which breed fear among the Theban people, and even these fear-mongers have been conditioned to behave according to the traditions of their society. In Salem's play, however, society itself has created the fatal machine which manipulates all aspects of life. Divinity is not a force which determines behavior; it is a concept propagandized by the society's corrupt leaders. Therefore, society itself clearly possesses the potential to alter its own destiny. If the Citizens can join in the business of government, then society's problems can be surmounted. Had Salem confined his Oedipus to an unlawful marriage with Jokasta, then his hero would have become inescapably bound to a preordained fate, and the hero's society would have been completely excluded from participation in the quest for solutions to their problems.

Thornton Wilder's The Skin of Our Teeth is an optimistic play about mankind's will to survive. Written in response to widespread anxiety

during 1942, the darkest year of World War II, Wilder's play shows George Antrobus and his family struggling first against the elements, then against the moral order, and finally against themselves. Each of these obstacles is emphasized in a separate act of the play: in Act I the characters cope with an approaching glacier, a natural disaster which threatens to sweep mankind into oblivion; in Act II sin brings punishment in the form of a great flood and Wilder's characters escape in the nick of time; in Act III, the aftermath of a world war, the characters learn to combat the inner conflicts and turmoil which have nearly extinguished life and hope from the human race. Wilder's characters are representative types, allegorical symbols of a variety of historical figures and personality traits. Antrobus, the family name, is similar to the Greek word, anthopos, which means 'man'. Thus, the family symbolizes all mankind. The individual characters are also symbolic. George Antrobus can be interpreted to be the biblical Adam, father of the human race; he is also an all-American family man and provider; he is an inventor, an intellectual whose contributions to society enable humanity to survive. Maggie, Mrs. Antrobus, is Eve, an all-American mother, the dependable sustainer of the family whose practical attitude balances her husband's idealism. Sabina, the family maid, represents the biblical Lilith figure and the mythical Sabine woman, simultaneously mankind's temptation to sin and his inspiration to create. Henry Antrobus is a manifestation of Cain, the disturbed and destructive son who perpetually counteracts the forces of progress for which his father stands. Wilder's characters inhabit an anachronistic world in which time is compressed into an eternal present. Act I focuses on prehistoric time, Act II on the biblical era, and Act III on modern recorded history; but throughout the play Wilder juxtaposes past and present events within an absurdly comic theatrical environment in which characters are actors who perform their parts day after day in repetitious cycles or spirals.

Ali Salem's comic allegory was written in response to the shadow of defeat which followed the 1967 war. His principal character can be

interpreted to be the traditional Oedipus of Greek drama, the controversial pharaoh Akhnaton, or the modern political leader, Gamal Abdel Nasser; but above all, Salem's Oedipus is a national father figure, a universal ruler responsible for the survival of his people and the progress of his civilization. Oedipus faces three major obstacles: external aggression, symbolized by the Beast at the border; internal repression, personified by the powerful members of the corrupt Theban bureaucracy; and individual imperfection, manifested as pride in his intellectual capabilities. Salem's Oedipus strives to create five thousand years of material progress, and he transforms Theban civilization into an anachronistic juxtaposition of modern technological inventions and ancient pharaonic traditions. Oedipus fails to overcome his obstacles, but his struggle challenges society to put aside selfish motives and act together for mutual benefit. Above all, the play is optimistic. It calls upon the people to participate in the process of government. Only if they fail to take part is their society doomed.

The Accidental Death of an Anarchist is about the misuse of power. The police have lost a suspect: he fell/jumped/was pushed from the police station window depending upon which official version of the story one accepts. It soon becomes clear that the suspect was actually innocent, and thanks to the efforts of a maniac who happens to discover the suspect's file in an unattended cabinet, the story may be brought to public attention. The maniac handcuffs the police to the bars of the windows and leaves the key with a well-intentioned newspaper woman. As he goes he sets a bomb and poses a dilemma for the newspaper woman: set them free and the true story will be captured before it can go two blocks; let them die in the explosion and become a murderer in the name of truth. The newspaper woman thinks it over quickly and runs away, leaving the police to die in the explosion. But the maniac returns with word that the critics disapproved of this ending. So they reenact it, the newspaper woman sets the police free, they handcuff her to the bars and leave her to die in the explosion. Once again the maniac appears to

remind the audience that neither solution is an easy one but that it is a decision which must be faced.

Awālih in You Who Killed the Beast tortures to death an innocent suspect, writes a fake confession for the victim, and then has the body thrown from the roof of the police station. The events of Salem's play are treated just as absurdly as those created by Dario Fo, but in both cases the central issue is the same: the misuse of power. The chief difference lies in the playwrights' definitions of individuality. Salem equates individuality with selfishness and stresses the need for people to act together as a social organism. Fo treats individuality as a desirable protection against corruption; he challenges the individual to act alone, if necessary, to combat society's injustices. Salem leaves his Citizens and his audiences with a challenge similar to the one posed by Dario Fo's maniac: take part in the solution or suffer the consequences. Ironically, Awālih is the character who voices Ali Salem's challenge. "There is a thing called democracy, you cattle." 257

PART FOUR: THE PLAYWRIGHT AND HIS PLAYS

I. Ali Salem

The characteristic which stands out in my mind after numerous meetings with the playwright in 1983 is Ali Salem's intensity. Whether he is involved in supervising the business details of his theatre troupe, addressing a crowd of students and faculty as a guest lecturer at the American University in Cairo or merely engaging in an informal conversation, Salem speaks in rapid-fire bursts of energy and expresses himself with confidence and clarity. He seems always to be on stage.

Born in 1936 in Shūbra al-Khayma, a northern suberb of Cairo, Ali Salem left the city with his family in 1941. His father, a military policeman whose desire to be an artist had been thwarted by economic realities, was transferred to the coastal town of Damietta where Ali spent most of his youth. His father, however, encouraged Ali to develop

his own artistic talents, but Ali tried several trades and businesses before settling into a career in the theatre. He worked briefly in public transportation and as a clerk for the Ministry of Public Health, and he studied literature at Ain al-Shams University and the American University in Cairo before stumbling into a job as a puppeteer at the Cairo Puppet Theatre.

> It was there that he met his wife, Faiza, who designs and makes puppets. Puppets and children are still an important part of his life and one of his dreams is to create an itinerant puppet theater troupe to bring theater to all the children in the Nile Valley. 258

Salem's father died in 1957 while Ali was serving in the Egyptian army. Ali later lost his younger brother in the 1967 war; as a playwright Salem has drawn from these events as well as from his experience with the Egyptian bureaucracy and his background in the urban areas of the country.

Despite his public image as a playwright, producer and director, Ali Salem is a very private individual. When asked to provide details about his life and career, he refers to John Waterbury's outline of basic biographical information and is reticent to add more than superficial updates to that material. He does, however, have a semi-official, personal biographer -- 'Abbas El Tonsy of the American University in Cairo -- who plans eventually to publish an in-depth account of Ali Salem's career.

II. Ali Salem's Plays and Dates of Composition

in-Nās illī fī is-sāma it-tāmina	1962
(The People Who Are in the Eighth Heaven)	
Hadas fī 'izbit il-ward	1962
(It Happened at the Farm of Roses)	
Wālā il-'afarīt iz-zurq	1964
(Not Even the Wily Devils)	

ir-Rāgil illī dihik 'a-l-malāyika — 1966
(The Man Who Fooled the Angels)

Bīr il-qamh — 1967
(The Well of Wheat)

Ughnīya 'alā-l-mamarr — 1967
(Song on a Mountain Pass)

il-Bufayh — 1967
(The Buffet)

'Afarīt masr ig-gadīda — 1968
(The Phantoms of New Egypt)

Kūmīdīya Uwdib aw Inta illī qatalt il wahsh — 1968-69
(The Oedipus Comedy or You Who Killed the Beast)

il-Mulūk yudkhulūn il-qarya — 1970
(The Kings Enter the Village)

il-Malāhiz w-il-muhāndis — 1970
(The Superintendent and the Engineer)

'Amalīyit Nūh — 1974
(Operation Noah)

il-Kātib f-ish-shahr il-'asl — 1976
(The Writer's Honeymoon)

il-Kātib w-ish-shahāt — 1976
(The Writer and the Beggar)

Bākālūrīyūs fī hakm ish-shu'ūb — 1978
(Baccalaureate in Ruling Peoples)

il-Mutafā'il — 1979
(The Optimist)

Adaptations:

Tabīh il-malāyika — 1968

Hubb la yintahī — 1969

Madrasit il-mushāghibīn	1971
il-'Iyāl it-tayibīn	1972
Ru'it il-qalb	1973

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The Oedipus Comedy

(or You who Killed the Beast)

by Ali Salem

Translated by William Scott

March 1982

The Oedipus Comedy
(or You Who Killed the Beast)

by Ali Salem

Presented by the al-Hakīm Theatre in February 1970 under the direction of Professor Galāl al-Sharqāwi.

The Artists:

Decor	Magdi Rizq
Costumes	Fawzi Abū Shāl
Music	Yūsuf Shawqī
Stage Management	Galāl Tawfiq
Production Management	Farūk 'Abd al-Bāqī
Assistant Director	Māhir 'Abd al-Hamīd

[s.13]

The Characters

Oedipus: A young man, living in Thebes. No one knows for certain where he came from.

Jokasta: Queen of Thebes.

Hor Muheb: Chief Priest of Amun and Director of the University of Thebes.

Uwnah: Head of the Chamber of Commerce and Chairman of the Theban City Council.

Awālih: Chief of Police in Thebes.

Kreon: Commander of the Theban Guards.

Tiresias: He is Tiresias himself in his well-known dimensions as a character in ancient Greek literature.

Chorus: Citizens of Thebes.

Secondary Characters...

[s.14]

Distribution of Roles

Oedipus	Ahmad 'Abd al-Halīm
Jokasta	Magdah al-Khatīb
Tiresias	Galāl al-Sharqāwi
Awālih	Farūq Nagīb
Hor Muheb	'Abd al-Hāfiz al-Tatāwi
Uwnah	Fu'ād Ahmad
Senefru	Muhammad Nūh
Kreon	Anwar Ismā'īl
Kāmi	Mahmūd al-'Irāqī
Kā'it	Muhammad al-'Inānī
Nefer	Tahānī Rashīd
Citizens of Thebes	Students of the High Institute for Theatre Arts

[s.15]

Act I

The Place: Ancient Thebes -- Egyptian Thebes, not Greek Thebes. The Citizens have climbed the high walls of Thebes, and they view with anxiety something outside the city. To the left is the balcony of the Pharaonic palace, part of the palace itself, and part of the Temple of Thebes, around which are some statues of rams, standing as if to guard the road to the temple.

The place is enclosed by a stone amphitheatre in the middle of which is a circular stone table. Around it are four chairs. The table and seats are allocated for sessions of the City Council. The amphitheatre is allotted for seating the Citizens of Thebes. Downstage right sit two characters, Oedipus and his friend Kāmi, engaged in a quiet chess match. Upstage shimmers with dim light. Tiresias, as an old man, approaches. He moves downstage where he comes clearly into view by the audience.

The Time: Long ago, the distant past. [s.18]

Tiresias: Gentlemen. You who dwell in this city. I will tell you a story of another city, a story of Thebes. Thebes, Bride of the Nile and capital of the ancient world, Thebes of the great temples and rising commerce. Thebes today is wretched and sad. Poverty and suffering have found their way to my beautiful city for the first time in its long history. (A moment of silence) In a place not far from Thebes and on the single road open to the lands of the north, a strange Beast has appeared. They say it has the head of a beautiful woman and the body of an animal of huge size. They call it 'Abūl-Hūl' -- Father of Fear -- the Sphynx. The Beast poses riddles to travellers and kills anyone who doesn't know the solution. During the past three months he has killed every man of the caravans approaching Thebes. Whether by land or by way of the great Nile. Many have gone out to solve the riddle and recover the reward, but none have returned. [s.19]

The latest one to give it a try is Professor Bitāh, Professor of Creative Brain Studies and Royal Skull Surgeon.

(In another area Oedipus speaks with his friend.)

Oedipus: How much money is the City Council offering as a reward?

Tiresias: (Overlapping his speech) 50,000 golden Theban guineas. Professor Bitāh will receive it if he solves the riddle.

(Tiresias exits quietly at the same time that the Queen enters on the balcony.)

Jokasta: (Summoning) Kreon.

Kreon: (He throws back an answer from on top of the wall.) Yes, your Majesty.

Jokasta: Is he there yet?

Kreon: He's on his way, your Majesty. (Shouts of the Citizens arise.) He's almost there. Yes, there he is.

Uwnah: (He raises his voice.) He's there, your Majesty. He made it. He's standing in front of the Beast, thinking. He's clutching his brain. [s.20]

Oedipus: (Calmly) Doesn't he know how to think without clutching his brain?

(A sudden cry of horror from the Citizens, then a deep silence prevails on the stage.)

Person: (Mournfully) It's got him by the butt.

Kreon: It took him behind the hill. No one can see them.

Person: Maybe it isn't his leg. Maybe the leg belongs to somebody who went before him.

Another person: By Amun, it is his leg. How well I know it. He always used to kick me with it at the University.

Person: (He cries out in a tearful voice.) Oh, God. Protect him, Rā'. It's tearing him to pieces.

(The Citizens come down from atop the walls. A profound sorrow has overwhelmed them. They take their places on [s.21] the stone steps of the amphitheatre, and the

members of the City Council turn to the round, stone table.)

Oedipus: Listen?

Kāmi: What?

Oedipus: It sounds like someone is chewing something. Crunching something.

Kāmi: Something like what?

Oedipus: The University Professor, to be precise. Go ahead, Kāmi. Move your king. Checkmate. He would have solved the riddle if that's what he had gone out there to do.

Kāmi: Well, did he just go out for a stroll? You really have some strange ideas, Oedipus.

Oedipus: Not at all. He went out thinking about the reward. It isn't possible to think about the reward and the riddle at the same time.

(By the time Oedipus finishes his speech with his friend, the City Council have taken their places at the table, [s.22] and the Citizens have taken their seats in the stone amphitheatre.)

Oedipus: Come on. Let's go sit among the people.

(Oedipus and his companion sit among the Citizens.)

Hor Muheb: I've said it from the beginning. It's a conspiracy to eliminate the intellectual wealth of Thebes. First the Beast eats the Professor of Mathematics and now the Professor of Creative Brain Studies. Therefore, (he assumes an oratorical posture) be it known that I, Hor Muheb, Chief Priest of Amun and Director of the University of Thebes, hereby proclaim my opposition to any professor from the University going out to solve the riddle. Consider this decision final.

Uwnah: Well, then who will go?

Hor Muheb: (Angrily) How should I know, Uwnah? I don't know. I'm not the one responsible.

Awālih: Oh, yes you are. You're responsible for riddles, puzzles, equations, and things like that which can only be solved by

people who are good at thinking. And the people who are good at thinking are the university professors. [s.23]

Hor Muheb: That's true. But I can't lower the standards of my professors. If the beast would send us lectures, theses, and dissertations, nothing would stand in the way. But puzzles and empty talk? I refuse to stoop so low.

Uwnah: All right. Refuse. Until the city dies of hunger. Not one caravan has entered the city for three months.

Hor Muheb: That is your concern. You in your capacity as Head of the Chamber of Commerce are eager for commerce to continue and for your treasury to be filled again.

Jokasta: Are you going to quarrel? Did I bring you here in order to figure out how to get rid of the calamity which is threatening the people, or so you can bicker among yourselves in public so the people can see how stupid you all are?

Awālih: Your Majesty, we are merely exchanging points of view.

Jokasta: Do you have the audacity to speak, Chief of Police? [s.24]

Awālih: Why not, your Majesty?

Jokasta: You don't know? Where is his Highness the King? Where is your Lord, your benefactor, the King of Thebes? If he were here he would have solved the riddle in one minute.

One of the Citizens: God have mercy on him. He was just as stupid as anyone else.

(The Citizens explode with laughter. The Chief of Police glances at them menacingly and they stop laughing.)

Jokasta: He was killed at the crossroads, five days' journey from Thebes. Isn't that so? Who killed him? Did you look for him, Chief of Police? Answer me.

Awālih: (He stammers.) Your Majesty. The investigations. I mean, the secrecy of the investigations.

Jokasta: Answer. I command you to answer.

Awālih: Your Majesty, I can't talk about secrets in public.

Jokasta: Go ahead and answer in public. Did you find the killer?

(He glances around in confusion, then he leaves the gathering and approaches her.)

Awālih: (In conversation aside with the Queen. In a low and nervous voice.) [s.25] Your Majesty, didn't you tell me not to search?

Jokasta: I said that?

Awālih: Ahh, you told me not to search very much, then. He was fated to die. As the oracle foretold.

Jokasta: That's right. I'm sorry, Awālih. I wasn't thinking.

Awālih: Please be careful. Think of the trouble you almost stirred up.

(Awālih returns to his place amid the assembly. Oedipus rises from among the Citizens and cries out resolutely.)

Oedipus: Awālih. Chief of Police. He should go and solve the riddle.

The Citizens: (With a voice like thunder) Yes. He should go and solve the riddle.

Awālih: (Thunderstruck) Me? You mean me?

Oedipus: You are the Chief of Police. You're supposed to be the most deliciously clever one in this town. (He directs his speech to the Citizens in an attempt to convince them.) Whenever there is a crime, the Chief of Police puts his mind to it and with his superior intellect he figures out who the criminal is. However mysterious a [s.26] crime is considered to be, the Chief of Police is supposed to know how to solve it.

Kreon: That is a valid argument. You're the Chief of Police because you're the most clever person in Thebes.

The Citizens: True.

Awālih: (He has noticed that the rope has begun to tighten around his neck.) No, it is not true. Strike me dead if it is. How should I know how to solve the riddles and crimes? In these things I am the most stupid of God's creatures.

Hor Muheb: What do you mean?

Awālih: Just what I'm saying.

Oedipus: (Challenges him) Well, how do you know who the criminals are, then?

Awālih: How should I know who they are? I only arrest them. I am the arresting officer. His Majesty the King, God be merciful to him, was the one who knew who they all were. He'd give me lists with their names and addresses. Arrest them. Leave these. Beat those. [s.27] (Crying out in fervent plea) So do you still think I'm clever?

The Citizens: No. You're stupid.

Awālih: (He returns to his seat, muttering.) Stupid. Stupid, but alive.

Kāmi: (Almost admiringly) You son of a --

Jokasta: Please. Get to the point. Proceed. The problem must be solved tonight.

Awālih: Everyone, I want to warn you about something grave. The food supply in Thebes won't last more than another week. And after that --

A Voice from the Citizens: And after that we'll eat each other.

(The Citizens break out laughing.)

(Tiresias appears noisily from offstage. It is to be noted that Tiresias appears and disappears at any time.)

Tiresias: People. Be serious. Merriment is a great thing. But the temples and tombs and great walls which [s.28] you are sitting beside are not build on merriment. Very great, indeed, is one who can laugh in the face of catastrophes, but when laughter becomes a cemetery in which the future of the country lies buried, when jokes become demons who eat your sense of responsibility, when mirth becomes a shroud, when you call misery and suffering 'merriment' and 'mirth', then what is there that ties you to the world? Then all is lost. Whoever remains shall perish.

One of the Citizens: What do you want us to do, Tiresias? Sit down and cry?

Tiresias: That's just what you are doing. Weeping, wailing, flailing yourselves and lamenting. Do you remember what weeping is? Tears flow down the cheeks. Do you understand the meaning of despair? (He circles among them as if he wants to implant his words in the depths of their minds.) Is despair stupid laughter, naive optimism, and ridiculous mockery of everything? These are the shadows with which you have surrounded yourselves in order not to know the truth. Senefru. Senekht. Atun. Kā'it. [s.29] So on and so forth. Every house in Thebes has already had one of its children devoured. What are you waiting for?

Hor Muheb: Tiresias, impassioned rhetoric will never solve our problems. There is no call to give in to anger. We must think calmly.

Uwnah: The fundamental problem, Tiresias, is that there is a riddle. And we need someone to solve it.

Awālih: That's right. Not someone to sit here and discourse about jokes and merriment and mockery. Do you want to make the people miserable or what? Why don't you leave the people alone?

Hor Muheb: If we find someone to solve the riddle, the Beast will go away and leave us alone. That's what we need to do.

Tiresias: Lies. Distortion. That isn't the real issue.

Awālih: What do you mean: That there isn't any Beast? That there isn't any riddle?

Tiresias: There is a Beast, and there is a riddle -- but not the riddle you're thinking about. There's another riddle, and not one of you has thought to ask it. People, these riddles are what philosophers and thinkers and other such people gather together to discuss at night by the light of the moon in order to entertain themselves and forget their worries. [s.30] Why would a Beast ask riddles? Why would a Beast use its mind? A Beast uses its muscles and its paws, its fangs and its claws. Have you ever heard of a snake coming up to somebody and asking him a riddle? Have you ever heard of a lion playing 'hide-and-seek' with anyone? People, be reasonable. The riddle is just a trick. The Beast's aim is very clear. I find it strange how you don't see it.

Awālih: (Scornfully) We don't see it and you do?

Tiresias: I am blind in the eyes, Awālih. Your problem is that your heart is blind. Citizens of Thebes, listen. The objective of the Beast is quite plain. It eats the clever ones in the country one at a time. Later on it won't take any time at all for it to eat all the stupid ones at once.

Oedipus: What is the solution, Tiresias?

Tiresias: Confront the Beast as a group. If the story of the riddle is true, someone among you will certainly know how to solve it. [s.31] If it's a hoax, then you'll eat him.

A Voice from the Citizen: What if he eats us?

Tiresias: Let him eat you, brother. Are you any better than the ones he already ate? Either way your problem will be solved. Whether he eats you or you eat him.

(Silence falls over the crowd.)

What do you say? You don't like what I say, of course. You don't like to hear this kind of talk. You want somebody to stand up and tell you jokes. To tickle you. (With bitter sarcasm) Oh, you courageous citizens of Thebes. Every one of you is ready to traverse the seas, to meet crocodiles at the peak of the flood, to struggle with the gods, to sacrifice his life for the sake of hearing a new joke. May you find yourselves in a greater mess than the one you're in now.

(The laughter of the Citizens rises up as Tiresias quietly exits.)

Awālih: The man has no right to come and insult the citizens [s.32] in the presence of the City Council. All our lives we've put up with him. But the circumstances which we are passing through now don't permit us to allow anyone to confuse people's thinking and to destroy their morale. Therefore, I ask that the Council allow me to arrest him.

Kreon: (He rises, shouting.) I object. In my capacity as Commander of the Guards in Thebes, I refuse to allow anyone to be arrested on account of his opinions. Tiresias, in particular. No one

is able to doubt his great love for this city. Tiresias was born with Thebes. Tiresias is Thebes.

Person 1: When we were born, he was there.

Person 1: My father told me that he was there before he was born.

Person 3: My g-g-g-great-granddaddy heard from his g-g-g-g-great-granddaddy that Tiresias was there before he was born.

Kreon: If you imprison Tiresias, then you are imprisoning all of Thebes. If you ask Tiresias to be silent, then you are muzzling every mouth in Thebes.

Hor Muheb: We're getting away from our subject. [s.33]

Uwnah: Yes, indeed. That is not the subject.

Oedipus: No. It is the subject.

(Awālih rises to his feet, fuming with rage. He moves toward Oedipus.)

Awālih: What do you mean? What are you insinuating? Speak frankly.

Oedipus: You know what I mean.

Awālih: You mean that I'm restricting freedom of speech. You mean that I'm keeping the people from speaking.

Hor Muheb: That's enough, Awālih. You're going to start a quarrel.

Awālih: No. I can't let this point go by without clarifying it.

(He turns to face the Citizens and shouts at them threateningly.)

Did I ever prevent any one of you from speaking?

(Some of the policemen standing nearby move into a semi-circle around the Citizens.)

Speak up. Is there anyone who wants to say something, but just doesn't know how? [s.34]

(He reaches out his hand and snatches one of those sitting and stands him on his feet.)

Senefru. Speak up. You work as a playwright. Every year one of your plays is produced in the temple square. (He changes his tone.) It would have been possible to keep your work from being produced. Isn't that so?

Senefru: Yes.

Awālih: What did you say in your latest play? Go ahead. Speak up so Oedipus will know we have freedom of speech here.

Senefru: (In a whisper) Which play? The one you prohibited?

Awālih: (In a low, spiteful voice) The one which was permitted, you imbecile.

(Senefru speaks confidently while Awālih keeps on gripping him by the shoulders.) [s.35]

Senefru: In my latest play, I said the most daring things possible, and I didn't use symbols or resort to history. I write with extreme boldness, and I am ready to sacrifice my life in order to write whatever I want to write. I already demanded in my latest play that we attempt a new study of the myth of Isis in light of the true needs of the people -- and without disregarding what some of the people have done in terms of destroying styles which are out of step with our ability to create civilization, especially in the period of time which immediately follows the flood of the Nile.

Awālih: (Shouting) Could anything be more daring than that? Is there a country in the world which permits speech of this type to be spoken upon its stages? So you see, we do permit it. But on the condition that it is in an artistic framework. There are things, however, that cannot be said in a proper artistic framework. It isn't we who prevent them. The responsible artists themselves prevent them. (He directs his speech to a group of the Citizens [s.36] who are wearing colorful outfits.) Isn't that so, you artists? And I know you will respond responsibly.

The Group: Yes.

Awālih: Be seated. (He faces Oedipus.) You must understand, Oedipus, that we are not barbarians. We are civilized. In fact, we are

more civilized than the country from which you came.

Kreon: (With extreme anger) All right. Enough fooling around. Thebes is facing a calamity. While Awālih is defending himself and exhibiting his abilities at rhetoric, who will rid us of the Beast?

Awālih: Why don't you get rid of it? Go solve the riddle. You're the Commander of the Guards and the one responsible for repelling any external aggression. Please bring the hostilities to a stop.

Kreon: I am a fighter. I bring about understanding with my sword, and I know how to die below the walls of Thebes in front of any enemy who tries to approach my city. But I don't know anything about solving riddles. [s.37]

(The Queen comes out onto the balcony.)

Jokasta: Are you still quarreling? You still haven't discovered anyone with a brain big enough to solve the riddle? Whenever there are job openings which require great brains, you all come forward. But whenever there is real trouble, you all pretend to be numbskulls. Within a quarter of an hour by the sandclock, if no one comes forward to solve the riddle, the City Council may consider itself dismissed. (She directs her speech to the Citizens.) Citizens of Thebes -- the wisest, the most clever, the most experienced, the one with the biggest brain -- come forward and solve the riddle.

Oedipus: I will, your Majesty.

(Oedipus comes out from among the Citizens and faces the balcony where the Queen stands. He stands where the crowd can see him. His name rings out from the Citizens' mouths: Oedipus. . . Oedipus.)

Jokasta: Where are you from, Oedipus?

Oedipus: It isn't important, your Majesty, whether I'm from Mitanni or [s.38] from Babel. Or from any place on earth. All that concerns you is that I get rid of the Beast.

Jokasta: Chief of Police. What do you know about Oedipus?

(Awalih speaks to one of his men.)

Awālih: The Oedipus dosier.

(The man gives him the file. He opens it and reads.)

Awālih: Oedipus. Eyes: Wheat-colored, tending toward brown. Distinguishing marks: Two swollen feet.

Jokasta: Are you going to describe him to me? Isn't he standing right in front of me?

Awālih: There are a lot of rumors about him. That he escaped from Mitanni after killing his father or causing his death. And there's another rumor that he's running away from a support and alimony case. Intelligence: He enjoys a large mental capacity. Since establishing himself in Thebes a month ago, he has been able to defeat every professional chess player. Degree of Dangerousness: He's doesn't have any dangerous political activity -- he sometimes visits the Temple [s.39] of Amun before the important chess matches.

Oedipus: All this is insignificant. The important thing is that I know how to solve the riddle. What will you give me?

Uwnah: If you solve the riddle, you get fifty thousand gold coins, and I, in my capacity as Head of the Chamber of Commerce, hereby commit the Chamber of Commerce to pay you fifty thousand more.

The Citizens: Aaah.

Hor Muheb: And we will appoint you Assistant Priest. That way you can make a hundred more pieces of gold per month -- in addition to a priest's clothing allowance. And we will promote you to Priest after two years.

Oedipus: I didn't ask you how much you'll pay me or what you'll appoint me. I said what will you give me?

Hor Muheb: What do you want?

Oedipus: Thebes.

The Citizens: (Astonished) Thebes?

Oedipus: Yes. The position of King is open. Let me be appointed King.

The Citizens: King? [3.40]

Oedipus: Yes. It's the only position I'm suited for.

Hor Muheb: What do you think?

Awālih: My opinion is that we agree.

Uwnah: And if he becomes a hinderance to us?

Awālih: It's no problem. We'll just say that he's against Amun, and we'll overthrow him.

Jokasta: Why do you want to become King, Oedipus? What are your qualifications for a post as grave as this?

Oedipus: My intellect. My ingenuity. My cleverness.

Kreon: If only your qualifications included your love for Thebes.

Oedipus: I don't love anything you can grasp with your hands. I love principles, ideals, and ideas.

Jokasta: And if you succeed in solving the riddle and become King, what do you intend to do for Thebes?

Oedipus: I will catapult it through the next five thousand years. I will make five thousand years worth of humanity's inventions. In short, I will make civilization. Civilization: printing presses, cars, [s.41] airplanes, electricity, electronics, the telephone and the radio.

(Shouts of questions rise up from all those present. What? What? What does that mean? What does it all mean?)

Oedipus: It means only one thing. Let's not waste our time. If I solve the riddle, then I must become the King of Thebes. Agreed?

Awālih: We agree.

Oedipus: And the people?

Awālih: What about the people? We're in charge here.

Oedipus: It must be the people who agree to my appointment. You might appoint me today and fire me tomorrow. If the people appoint me, no one can reject me. Citizens of Thebes. Do you agree?

The Citizens: We agree.

Oedipus: One more thing.

The Citizens: What? [s.42]

Oedipus: That I marry the Queen.

(A silent moment)

Jokasta: You impudent, brazen, insolent -- How dare you demand to marry one who is descended from Amun?

Oedipus: From my point of view, your Majesty, you are neither a queen nor the offspring of the gods. To me you are the most beautiful woman the gods have created.

(Jokasta hides her face shyly as Oedipus continues to speak.)

For many years, your Majesty, I have wandered from region to region, from country to country. I travelled the seas and crossed the ocean to the country of Mexico, searching for the universal woman, the beauty of beauties, princess of princesses, queen of queens, until I met you, your Majesty.

Jokasta: I respect your point of view. And I see that it is a point of view deserving further discussion. But all this does not give you the right to marry a queen. Don't forget that you are a common man, neither a child of Amun nor a child of Rā'. [s.43]

Oedipus: So be it, your Majesty. I must obey. Let one of the children of Amun or the children of Rā' be the one to solve the riddle.

(He draws away from her. Voices of protest and indignation arise from the Citizens. Awālih approaches the Queen and exchanges a conversation with her aside.)

Awālih: Go ahead, your Majesty. Agree. This Oedipus fellow pleases you very much.

Jokasta: How do you know.

Awālih: Secret investigations.

Jokasta: And if he turns out to be a fake?

Awālih: Impossible, your Majesty. I know what I'm talking about.

(He returns to his place.)

Jokasta: Citizens of Thebes. For the sake of Thebes -- and only for the sake of Thebes -- I sacrifice all the religious conventions. And more than that: I sacrifice myself for the sake of Thebes'

salvation. Oedipus, I agree.

(The shouts of the Citizens rise up and commotion prevails.) [s.44]

Hor Muheb: A little order.

Uwnah: There's no time. Go ahead, Oedipus.

(Oedipus marches past the Citizens while they shout and cheer. Suddenly Tiresias appears and blocks the Citizens' way.)

Tiresias: (Crying out in apprehension) People. People. Wait. What is this? What are you doing? Perhaps Oedipus will solve the riddle and solve the problem of the Beast. But the Beast within you -- who is going to kill it? The idiotic Beast which always makes you wait until someone comes to solve your problems for you. And you give him anything. Have you ever read anywhere about somebody becoming King merely for solving a riddle? I beg of you to reconsider. Think twice before you do anything. Suppose Oedipus wasn't here among you. What would you do? [s.45]

A Person: There he goes, philosophizing again. Why should we suppose anything if the man is here and he's going to resolve the mystery?

Another Person: How should I know? It seems to me like he just wants to make a speech.

Tiresias: People, quit joking.

Jokasta: What is going on, Tiresias? Do you want to convince us that all of us are wrong and only you are right?

Tiresias: Is the majority right, your Majesty? The truth remains true because it is true. Right remains right because it is right. If all the people of Thebes stood up and said the Nile does not exist, would it cease to exist?

A Person: Uncle, be quiet. Don't confuse us.

(The Citizens pay no attention to him and resume cheering rhythmically: Oedipus, Oedipus, kill the Beast.)

Tiresias: (With utter despair) People. People. People. (He exits.)

(Oedipus exits through the gate in the wall and the Citizens gather on top of the wall to observe. They are still shouting and cheering.) [s.46]

A Person: The Beast is behind the hill.

. . . : It still hasn't shown itself.

. . . : Oedipus is still walking. Come on out, Beast.

. . . : Hey, Beast. Oedipus made it to the hill.

. . . : Oh, boy. Oh, terrific. He just keeps marching like he doesn't give a damn.

. . . : He's gone behind the hill. He's no longer visible. He's no longer in sight.

The Citizens: (In one voice) Oh, Rā', protect him.

A Person: Oedipus. He's back. He's raising his hand on high. He's coming. He's running.

A Person: (With great joy) Oedipus solved the riddle. Oedipus killed the beast.

(Cries of exhilaration break forth on the stage. The Citizens dance joyfully and exchange kisses. They go to meet Oedipus at the gate of the wall, and then they carry him on their shoulders. Flowers fall upon him from every side.)

Oedipus: (He tries to raise his voice in order to top the sound of the crowd.) Children of Thebes. My children. [s.47]

(His voice is lost in the crowd.)

The Citizens: (They chant rhythmically.) "You who killed the Beast."

Oedipus: Hear me.

The Citizens: "You who killed the Beast."

Oedipus: I want to say something.

The Citizens: "You who killed the Beast."

(He loses power completely over the Citizens. Tiresias appears at the side of the stage. He, too, shouts in desperation.)

Tiresias: Listen to him. Let him speak. Let him speak, people.

The Citizens: "You who killed the Beast."

(The light fades, the shouting dwindles, and the stage is immersed in complete darkness.)

(The light appears gradually on the throne room in the Pharaonic palace. Oedipus sits on the throne, dressed in the royal mantle. [s.48] On his head is the crown. Hor Muheb enters and bends in a long bow.)

Hor Muheb: Morning of goodness, your Majesty.

Oedipus: Morning of goodness, Hor--

Hor Muheb: The High Council of Theban Priests awaits your instructions.

Oedipus: Make today's meeting after sunset. We will speak with you about the organization of new rituals in the temple and about the organization of a new system of education which I intend to establish.

Hor Muheb: As you wish, your Majesty.

Oedipus: Do you want anything else?

Hor Muheb: Last night while I was searching through some documents of Amun and Rā' preserved in the archives of the temple, I noticed that the name 'Oedipus' appeared on seven papyrus documents. And so I was astonished, your Majesty, because these documents contain nothing but the names of the gods or human beings descended from the gods.

Oedipus: What do you mean?

Hor Muheb: I mean, your Majesty, that your Highness is certainly of divine origin. [s.49]

Oedipus: (He thinks over his words.) I, my Highness, am of divine origin. And you discovered this story last night?

Hor Muheb: Yes, your Majesty.

Oedipus: You are an extraordinary man. You never waste time. At any rate, you may leave now. I'll think about all this later.

Hor Muheb: We don't want to postpone the announcement of this matter too long, your Majesty. The commitment to scientific truthfulness makes it imperative that I announce it.

Oedipus: The scientific truth? That you are a liar, I know, but you even try to substantiate your lies with truth. Leave now. Don't mention this matter for the time being.

Hor Muheb: As your Majesty commands. (He bows and exits.)

(Awālih enters.)

Awālih: Morning of a flooding river, your Majesty.

Oedipus: Greetings, Awālih.

Awālih: I have an appointment with your Majesty this afternoon, but there is [s.50] an important matter I discovered last night, and I had to come appraise you of it, your Majesty.

Oedipus: Apparently many people discovered many important things last night. What is it now?

Awālih: The moment your Majesty demanded to become king, I dispatched my detectives to inquire about your origins. No offense, I hope, your Majesty. I had to do it. It's my personal responsibility.

Oedipus: Yes, yes. Get to the point.

Awālih: The inquiries and the reports which have come to me prove, your Majesty, that you are descended directly from divine origins.

Oedipus: You don't say?

Awālih: By the life of Horus, your Majesty. Whom I have never in my life sworn by.

Oedipus: This Horus is the god of what?

Awālih: The god of the police, your Majesty.

(Oedipus rises from his chair, grabs Awālih, and speaks to him coldly.) [s.51]

Oedipus: Listen, Awālih. I am a human son of a human being. Do you understand? The secret of my true greatness is that I am a human

being -- the first human being to rule Thebes. Do you understand? Make your colleagues understand this. Try to help me realize the dreams of Thebes. Do you understand?

Awālih: It's not my fault. The investigations say so.

Oedipus: Do you think I'm stupid? The investigations always say whatever you want them to say.

Awālih: I'm sorry, your Majesty.

Oedipus: Go see to your work.

Awālih: All right. If your Majesty would please give me the lists of criminals --

Oedipus: What criminals?

Awālih: The enemies of your rule, your Majesty.

Oedipus: My rule? I haven't ruled yet. I was only just appointed yesterday.

Awālih: Is that such a short time, your Majesty? Half the city is probably already against you. The envious and spiteful and reckless -- all the crackpots -- and those whom we call [s.52] enemies of the regime. So if your Majesty pleases, just give me the lists which contain their names and addresses so we can arrest them.

Oedipus: I know nothing about 'enemies of the regime.' There are enemies of Thebes, and that's your job. If anyone does something against Thebes, you are the one responsible for stopping him.

Awālih: Ah. Every leader has his own method. His Majesty the King who was before your Majesty handed me the lists three days before he took over the throne. That way he could sit back and rule for fifteen years without any enemies. He was very well-liked.

Oedipus: So much so that when he died, murdered, no one cared enough to find out who killed him. Isn't that so, Chief of Police?

Awālih: He will ultimately be found, your Majesty. I will keep using the old lists.

Oedipus: The old lists?

Awālih: You see, your Majesty, our family -- the family of Awālih -- has held the office of Chief of Police for four hundred years.

[s.53] But I've noticed a strange thing. The lists which contain the names of the enemies of the regime are the same. We bequeath them father from grandfather. Sometimes a few names are added; sometimes a few names are dropped; but the lists are basically the same.

Oedipus: Awālih, I have no time for this matter. You're the one who is supposed to know how to do his job. That is the safeguarding of the internal security of Thebes. So go ahead and do it.

Awālih: At your service, your Majesty. (He bows and exits.)

(Kāmi enters. He is the friend of Oedipus who was playing chess with him at the beginning of the play.)

Kāmi: (In a casual manner) My goodness. Look at all this splendor.

Oedipus: Welcome, Kāmi.

Kāmi: Who would've believed it? Is it true, oh, Rā'? So tell me, Uncle, what kind of a job do you have for me?

Oedipus: (Anxiously) Kāmi, be serious. [s.54]

Kāmi: (Still gushing with laughter) Ha ha. (He sings.) "You who killed the Beast." When you ran out to solve the riddle, I was running behind you. I hid behind the hill to see how you would solve the riddle.

Oedipus: What do you mean?

Kāmi: Nothing.

Oedipus: Kāmi, stop fooling around. You are now standing in the Royal Court. You would be better off not to speak so informally.

(Kāmi bursts out laughing again and at this moment a hand reaches out from behind the throne and grabs him by the scruff of the neck. Then it disappears with him quickly. Oedipus watches in astonishment as Awālih appears from behind the throne.)

Oedipus: What brings you here, Awālih? Where did you come from and how?

Awālih: (With a coldly reserved voice) Such things are inevit-

able, [s.55] your Majesty. True, it isn't very desirable. But it is necessary.

Oedipus: Necessary?

Awālih: You will discover later that it is necessary. No offense, I hope, your Majesty. This is my personal responsibility. (He bows and exits.)

(The light disappears on Oedipus, gazing out in front of himself in astonishment and confusion. Meanwhile, Tiresias appears in the corner of the stage.)

Tiresias: Indeed, the gravest of atrocities and the most violent of catastrophes always begin in this manner. Awālih spoke about things which are undesirable but necessary, but he didn't tell us why they are undesirable. Or why they are necessary.

(The lights disappear as the curtain falls.)

Act II

(The second act is composed of numerous, fast-moving scenes. This poses a greater burden upon the director and the designer of the decor, and so, in order to find easy solutions to the problem of quick changes, it is preferable that the director refer to puppetry technique: the ultraviolet rays, the black stage, shadow puppetry. And it is imperative that the director assign parts of some of the scenes to the puppets themselves.) [s.58]

Scene One

(In the livingroom of Senefru's house. The furnishings are semi-contemporary, but Pharaonic style predominates. The same thing holds true with respect to the clothing. Senefru is seated, reading a magazine. He turns the pages in a manner which betrays his discontent. A small child is playing with a toy. Senefru's wife is playing a large harp. Also visible in the livingroom are a large television, a radio, and a telephone. The phone rings.)

Senefru: Hello. Yes, this is Senefru. Listen, Kā'it. Later. Later. Later. We'll meet tonight. Good-bye.

(He slams the receiver down.)

Nefer: Be careful of the telephone. You'll break it. [s.59]

Senefru: Kā'it is so stupid. I've told him a thousand times. Not everything can be said on the telephone. But whenever he calls he starts babbling. A thousand times I've told him I have a home and I want to raise my son. Idiot.

The Child: (He grabs the toy.) Papa. Fix it for me. This toy.

Senefru: Give it to me, dear. I'll fix it for you. Go do your homework assignment. It'll be ready by the time you finish studying.

(The Child grabs a large book and retires to a corner.)

Nefer: This evening will be very pleasant. A very beautiful play. So don't go out tonight.

(Senefru gazes at her with boredom.)

The Announcer: As for now, we have the great critic, Mā Hay Kāh, with the program, "A Word and its Answer."

(Professor Mā Hay Kāh appears on the television screen.)

Mā Hay Kāh: The pre-ordained, savage struggle between human beings and Beasts, toward which some artists have turned their attention, makes us feel an extreme sense of longing for that savage conflict. I say this in regard to the publication [s.62] this week by the author Abū Kh. Kalat of a book entitled Philosophical Reflections upon the Dead Beast.

(Senefru gets up and turns off the television.)

Nefer: What is it? What's wrong with you? Why can't you be content? You want to smash the television and smash the radio. And smash the telephone. It doesn't matter to you if you break them. I'm the one who will have to pay them off.

Senefru: (He is almost weeping.) I beg of you, Nefer. Please. Be quiet. Leave me alone.

Nefer: Am I bothering you? What's wrong with you?

Senefru: Nothing is wrong with me. Everything has become so Beastly -- (He catches himself.) I mean --

(The lights fade gradually.) [s.63]

Scene Two

(The lecture hall at the University of Thebes. Dozens of students are sitting in the auditorium. Only their heads are showing. Standing in front of them is Hor Muheb.)

Hor Muheb: We dealt in the previous lecture with the situation in Thebes prior to the appearance of the Beast, and in this lecture we will cite in detail the important reference works on this subject -- inasmuch as they will ascertain for us, in an irrefutable manner, that

it is impossible, under any conditions, that any human being be able to solve the riddle which the Beast presented. I say that it would be impossible for a human being to solve the riddle unless he be of divine origin. And therefore, Oedipus was able to solve the riddle. Examine critically pages 15 to 340 of my own doctoral dissertation in which I discuss in detail the divine origins from which descended [s.64] his Royal Majesty Oedipus Rā'. I return to the subject of the lecture: Oedipus has put an end to the Beast and brought to Thebes prosperity, wealth, and the modern inventions which have made Thebes the greatest city in the world.

(Darkness gradually spreads while a large screen lights up, and a silhouette of Oedipus of towering stature appears. In front of him are tens of thousands shouting.)

Oedipus: My Children. Children of Thebes. We celebrate today the fifth commemorative celebration of the Killing of the Beast.

The Citizens: (They cheer and chant rhythmically.) "You who killed the Beast."

(The lights gradually fade out.) [s.65]

Scene Three

(In a narrow crypt inside one of the temples. Awālih is interrogating Kā'it, one of the citizens of Thebes. Kā'it is chained to a stone column and beside him is a low-ranking Policeman.)

Awālih: It is corroborated by our investigations that you have been spreading rumors that Oedipus did not kill the Beast. Wherever you went, you said so. In the coffee houses and bars and cemeteries and on the telephone.

Kā'it: I didn't say that.

Awālih: Well, what did you say?

Kā'it: I only asked one question. What was the riddle?

Awālih: And what business is it of yours? Why do you ask?

Kā'it: I want to know. And I believe there are a lot of people who want to know. [s.66]

Awālih: Very good. We'll get to the point. Who, then, are those who want to know?

Kā'it: I swear to you by Horus --

Awālih: Don't swear by Horus. Don't cause any more trouble for yourself.

Kā'it: I swear by all the gods that I don't know anyone specifically.

Awālih: Liar. Then how do you know that there are other people who want to know? Are you an esteemed astrologer who predicts the future from the stars?

Kā'it: (He speaks with great difficulty as he is in a condition of extreme exhaustion.) Listen, Awālih. I'm fed up with this game. Whenever a new king is chosen, you always arrest me and beat me, and you always ask me the same questions. I just want to know, for god's sake. I just want to know. Does that make me a heretic?

Awālih: Don't try to evade the question. Stop beating [s.67] around the bush. How do you know that there are people who want to know? Answer me.

(Kā'it doesn't answer. Awālih repeats the question. The young Policeman raises Kā'it's head and let's go of it. It falls to his chest.)

The Policeman: (Fearfully) He's dead.

Awālih: (Calmly) All right. So what's the big fuss?

The Policeman: (With utter confusion) I'm telling you, he's dead. He's dead.

Awālih: He's a free man, brother. Everyone is free to do whatever he wants to do. Tell me. How long have you been on the job?

The Policeman: A week.

Awālih: That explains it. Tomorrow you'll get used to it. Sit down and write the report.

(The Policeman grabs a piece of paper and a pen, and he writes while his hand shakes violently.)

Awālih: (Proceeding) The suspect was confronted with irrefutable proof of his theft of the treasures of Rā' -- (The young man pauses [s.68] and glances at Awālih in astonishment.) Write, man. Why are you stopping? Of his theft of the treasures of Rā' from the temple storehouse. When confronted with the proof, he broke down and committed suicide by throwing himself from the window on the fourth floor.

The Policeman: There aren't any windows on the fourth floor.

Awālih: Then from the fifth floor.

The Policeman: There aren't any on the fifth floor.

Awālih: Just write, man. Don't tire me out. It's just a technicality.

The Policeman: A technicality?

Awālih: It doesn't mean an actual window. It's a symbolic window. When you've advanced a little, you'll understand. And you'll get used to it. Close the file. I have to go now. I have a date at the cinema. (He looks at his watch.) Hey, I'm half an hour late. (He looks at the corpse.) God destroy your house, old man. Isn't this a fine day off? Now what am I going to tell my wife? Excuse me.

The Policeman: What should I do with him? [s.69]

Awālih: He isn't very heavy. You can carry him up and throw him off the roof.

The Policeman: (With utter dismay) Off the roof?

Awālih: Didn't you say the fourth and fifth floors don't have any windows? (Very angry) Why are you making it so difficult for me to deal with you? Well, where else can you throw him from, then? Don't be a fool.

The Policeman: (On the point of a severe collapse) I'm sorry. Go ahead, sir. Go ahead and go to the cinema. You don't want to miss the Mickey Mouse cartoon.

(The lights fade gradually.) [s.70]

Scene Four

(The royal throne room. Jokasta moves about angrily. Meanwhile, Awālih stands in silence.)

Jokasta: All day and all night he's at his factory, busy with his inventions. Since the day I married him, I haven't seen him more than four times. It's true I am a Queen. And a descendant of the gods, as well. But I'm a human being, too.

Awālih: What is my responsibility in all this, your Majesty?

Jokasta: You're responsible for allowing me to agree to marry him. You are the one who told me to agree.

Awālih: I had no way of knowing, your Majesty, that he would behave like this.

Jokasta: Since you are ignorant and don't know anything, why did you make me give my consent? (She mimics him.) "Agree, your Majesty. [s.71] This young fellow Oedipus will please you very much. And if he turns out otherwise, I will be responsible, your Majesty." Go ahead, wise one. Take the responsibility.

Awālih: What should I do, your Majesty?

Jokasta: You should know, Awālih. Do you want me to teach you your job, too. You know what to do. Just like you did with the one before him and the one before him. Accidents happen every day. Who can prevent an accident?

Awālih: This time I can't do it, your Majesty.

Jokasta: Why not this time? You were able to do it every other time.

Awālih: Before this the people weren't asking questions. The old king died -- long live the new king. Ahmas goes -- Rameses comes. Mina goes -- Tahtamas comes. The people couldn't care less. But the situation is different with Oedipus. They are the ones who appointed him. Besides, he's the one who created all of these inventions for them. And even if we persuaded the people, there is still a very large group of Theban citizens who make a living from [s.72] all this. That

group is very powerful. These men have a lot of influence. Brother Uwnah and Brother Hor Muheb are the clearest examples. The moment Oedipus invents something, they take it and manufacture it and sell it. Very many people benefit from it. If anything happened to Oedepus, they wouldn't keep quiet, and we would be exposed, your Majesty.

Jokasta: And the solution? Certainly there is a solution.

Awālih: Your weapon, your Majesty, is a woman's weapon. More powerful than the atomic bomb which Oedipus intends to invent. Take care of your beauty, your Majesty. There are perfumes that have become available in the city the past few days which could dazzle the most level-headed of men. There are fragrances which can dazzle even a priest, your Majesty.

Jokasta: Perfumes and oils and ointments and powders. I haven't left anything out. But it's no use. He's busy with his inventions.

Awālih: All right. The only thing left is the old stand-by. [s.73] Our family's specialty. It's true, it takes time. But it's guaranteed in the end.

Jokasta: Well. What is the old stand-by?

Awālih: Whenever he makes something good, he increases the number of people who love him. So my job is to increase the number of people who hate him. Of course, you know the rest.

Jokasta: How are you going to get them to hate him?

Awālih: Simple. It's a very easy thing. I'll allow them to love him. (Pause) He will do our work for us, your Majesty. Rest assured. I beg you in the name of Isis to ask Horus to guide our hands.

Jokasta: I will go tonight to pray in the temple of Amun and make your request.

Awālih: (He bows.) Thank you, your Majesty.

(The Queen leaves the stage.)

(Uwnah appears, arriving from the entrance, holding some of the new appliances in his hands.)

Awālih: Yes. How industrious you are. These inventions will all [s.74] turn to gold. And the gold, after all, pours into the City

Council and the Chamber of Commerce.

Uwnah: Of which you, of course, are a member, my brother.

Awālih: Unfortunately, what do I get?

Uwnah: You get an automobile, a yacht, and a helicopter. And every one of your children gets a small automobile -- not to mention the fixed sum that comes to you every month. What more do you want?

Awālih: Nothing. Only that you open your eyes a little. All of these things that you mention are crumbs next to what you get.

Uwnah: Is that all? I'll give you my eyes. How many Awālih's do we have? Ask and ye shall receive.

Awālih: Will you lose anything? Our friend invents and you profit.

Uwnah: You mean we. (They sing.) "We who killed the Beast."

(They burst out laughing.)

(The light fades gradually.) [s.75]

Scene Five

(On the large screen shadow figures of the Theban Citizens kneel down as if they are praying and sing in a voice which has awe-inspiring reverence. Oedipus stands before them.)

The Citizens: Oedipus Rā'. "You who killed the Beast." Oedipus Rā'.

(The lights fade.) [s.76]

Scene Six

(The royal throne room. Oedipus sits on the throne and in front of him are Awālih, Hor Muheb, Kreon and Uwnah. Oedipus is extremely agitated.)

Oedipus: What is going on behind my back? How did this story get started? I want to know.

Hor Muheb: Calm yourself, your Majesty. We are the ones who want to know.

Oedipus: Today the citizens were kneeling down to me when the Pharaonic procession went by. They knelt down to me in the temple today while I was praying.

Uwnah: They are honoring you, your Majesty.

Oedipus: Didn't they honor me before? They never used to kneel down to me. They used to call me Oedipus -- just plain Oedipus. Now I'm Oedipus Rā'. Did you issue a proclamation that I am a god? [s.77]

Awālih: Never, your Majesty. But it's possible maybe the news leaked out.

Oedipus: Leaked out?

Awālih: Nothing remains hidden, your Majesty. Isn't that so, Hor Muheb? Speak up. Why are you standing silent?

Hor Muheb: As a matter of fact, your Majesty. Truthfully. In my opinion. That is, from my point of view. I maintain --

Oedipus: So you intend to lie. The more you say "as a matter of fact" and "truthfully" the more you intend to lie.

Hor Muheb: No, your Majesty. I'm not going to lie. All people now know that your Majesty descends from divine origins.

Oedipus: I instructed you not to tell this story.

Hor Muheb: We aren't telling it, your Majesty. We're teaching it.

Oedipus: You're teaching it, too?

Hor Muheb: Yes, in the various phases of education.

Oedipus: I didn't issue orders for that.

Hor Muheb: No offense, I hope, your Majesty. With all due respect to your Majesty, this isn't your Majesty's domain. This subject [s.78] is a scientific fact, and scientific facts must be made known. Truthfulness demands --

Oedipus: (He rises from the throne, shouting.) Truthfulness? The truth is that you are lying.

Hor Muheb: I am not a liar, your Majesty. It is a disgrace to say something like that to one who is as old as your father. It is also shameful to scream in front of people older than you. And the story isn't a lie. It's true, isn't it, Awālih?

Awālih: Indeed.

Oedipus: True? Then you two know that I am a god and I myself don't know? And you don't want me to scream? Kreon, speak up.

Kreon: I'm sorry your Majesty. It's better that I stay away from any political matters. If the guards enter into domestic or foreign politics, the outcome won't be good. I am at your service, your Majesty, in anything concerning arrangements for the protection of Thebes.

Oedipus: Then it doesn't concern you whether the King of Thebes is a human being or a god? [s.79]

Kreon: It makes no difference to me, your Majesty. I don't have time. I'm responsible for training the guards to protect Thebes. I don't have time for anything else.

Oedipus: (With true sadness) Thank you, Kreon. Go ahead and go in peace.

(Kreon draws himself up in a military salute and withdraws.)

Oedipus: Kreon is a serious man. All that concerns him is the defense of Thebes.

Hor Muheb: And we also, your Majesty, are concerned with the defense of Thebes.

Oedipus: Well, there is a vacant position. I want somebody to protect me from you.

Uwnah: Your Majesty, you are looking at the subject from a very romantic point of view. You have to look at the matter realistically. The gods have ruled the people of Thebes for thousands of years. The worship of the Pharaoh isn't merely a sacred custom. It is a national heritage. We can't just come out suddenly and tell the people that the king is an ordinary human being.

Hor Muheb: Moreover, the educational curriculum in all its phases says so. It's impossible to change it. And the prayers [s.80] say so. All the customs and traditions and songs and parables say so. Its a pyramid, your Majesty. A pyramid made up of beliefs and concepts. A very large pyramid. This pyramid is built on a very solid foundation. This foundation says that a Pharaoh is a god. If we came along now and said that he's just an ordinary man, the pyramid would collapse. Everything would become confused, and there would be chaos and calamity for all of us. Especially the priests of Amun.

Oedipus: I have a different point of view. We have to make the citizens understand that there is something called the law of evolution. You must teach this subject. True, there were divine kings -- or children of gods --

Hor Muheb: (Interrupting) Do you believe those stories, your Majesty? Do you, too, believe that there were divine kings? Actually, they were all wretched human beings like us. And some of them were beggars, too, but we had to make them into gods.

Oedipus: Why did you have to? I don't see the necessity for it at all. [s.81]

Uwnah: Your Majesty, do you think that this matter concerns you alone?

Oedipus: Of course it concerns me alone.

Uwnah: Not at all. It concerns us more than you.

Oedipus: Why?

Uwnah: The equipment and offices and agencies and institutions which the City Council supervises -- we were charged to operate them as efficiently as possible. The people respect us more when they know that our leader is a god. But if they knew that the one who employs us is a common man, they would flaunt us, and we wouldn't know how to make them work.

Hor Muheb: It is a matter of prestige, your Majesty.

Uwnah: Of course. Do you think that if the people knew that Khofu wasn't a god that they would have built a pyramid for him? Or

that they would have laid even one single brick on another for him?

Awālih: The point is that your Majesty is still new and you don't have knowledge on Pharaonic matters. It is we who are keeping calamity at bay for your Majesty. [s.82]

Oedipus: Calamity.

Uwnah: Of course. For example, there are people who doubt the story of the Beast and the story of the riddle. And they want to know what the riddle was. Of course, their intention isn't just to know the riddle. All they really want to do is sabotage. Imagine, then, if the people knew that you are an ordinary, common man. All of them would taunt you. I tell your Majesty, we are protecting you from a disaster. Only one doesn't like to speak.

Oedipus: What is so frightening about the riddle? I'll tell you the riddle. (He thinks a little.) What is it that walks on four legs in the morning, on two at noon, and on three at night?

Awālih: (He exaggerates.) Ahh. It's impossible that anyone in Thebes could ever solve it, your Majesty.

Hor Muheb: And what is the solution, your Majesty?

Oedipus: Man.

Awālih: On, my goodness. Oh, my. Bravo, your Majesty. Bravo.

Uwnah: And your Majesty wanted us to believe that you are an ordinary person. It's impossible [s.83] for an ordinary human being to solve this riddle. I'm certain that your Majesty is of divine origin or at least that you are vested with a divine soul.

Oedipus: Do you think so?

Uwnah: Certainly.

Oedipus: (Delighted) Thank you. (He rises to withdraw and they bow to him.)

Hor Muheb: (Scornfully) Humph. Is that the riddle?

Uwnah: Isn't that the riddle that was assigned to us in elementary school? Well, why didn't anyone know how to solve it?

Awālih: Every child in Thebes knows this riddle and knows its solution as well.

Hor Muheb: Well, how did the Beast die?

Awālih: (He sings.) "He who killed the Beast." Uncle, why should we concern ourselves? The important thing now is to think of a riddle which is a little more difficult and tell it to the people. Some of them are beginning to ask questions.

Hor Muheb: I'll tell you one. (He thinks.) What is it that walks on four legs in the morning, walks on two at noon, [s.84] on three in the evening, and after supper walks on five, and at daybreak crawls on its belly?

Uwnah: What's the answer?

Awālih: A man. (He struggles not to laugh.) Is anyone going to tell us no?

(They explode with laughter. Meanwhile, the stage darkens gradually.) [s.85]

Scene Seven

(The large square in front of the Pharaonic palace. Its features have changed: there are many shops in front of which the Citizens stand, selling the newest equipment, and advertising them with rhythmical jingles and slogans. Tiresias appears and the voices of the Citizens become inaudible.)

Tiresias: Indeed, the popular song now is "Oedipus Who Killed the Beast." Everyone sings the same song for the new Pharaoh who in one stroke has transcended five thousand years. The Citizens of Thebes have begun to enjoy inventions the likes of which are yet to be seen for a long time, and the City Council did well in taking advantage of all those inventions by inculcating the necessary tunes in the minds of the people and at the same time by holding the money in some few people's treasure troves. Nor did the City Council forget to issue a communique concerning the riddle and the solution which Oedipus presented to the Beast. The solution was Man. [s.86]

And indeed, it is strange that man, who was for thousands of years and who will remain unto eternity, is the single solution to all riddles. Indeed, man will remain the only true tune, the true, clear song among all the bad melodies throughout the passing of the ages.

And it is also strange that this truth, which is as obvious as the appearance of the sun in the Theban day, should be absent from the minds of many of the composers who make music for the people.

(Tiresias disappears at the same time that Oedipus appears on the balcony of the palace, and the Citizens rush to the square in front of the balcony.)

Oedipus: Children of Thebes. My children. We celebrate today the Feast of the Killing of the Beast.

The Citizens: (They sing.) "You who killed the Beast."

Oedipus: I still remember the day as if it happened yesterday. When I went out to the Beast --

The Citizens: "You who killed the Beast."

Oedipus: There was one single thought which dominated and controlled [s.87] my senses. A strong belief that this Beast --

The Citizens: "You who killed the Beast."

(Out from among he crowd comes Awālih, clutching Senefru, and he stands with him at the front of the stage away from the people. Oedipus is still delivering his speech, but we don't hear him.)

Awālih: (He says gently) Why aren't you singing? I've been watching you. You've been standing here for an hour without singing.

Senefru: (He plucks up courage a little.) Sir, you haven't been singing either.

Awālih: I am the composer, Senefru.

Senefru: (He tries to feign hoarseness in his voice.) Because my voice is hoarse today.

Awālih: Is that so? If your voice is hoarse, you could whistle. You could hum. Harmonize with the music. What are you? Made of stone?

Senefru: Frankly --

Awālih: Ahh. Speak frankly.

Senefru: Because I have a tin ear.

Awālih: I beg to differ. Senefru. In reality your ear is [s.88] quite musical. Only it's dirty. I'll clean it for you.

Senefru: (He pleads in a low voice.) Awālih. I take refuge in Amun.

Awālih: (Whispering) Come with me quietly. Unless you want the people to know that your ears aren't clean. And that would be so embarrassing.

Senefru: I'll go home and wash my ears, and I'll come back to sing right away.

Awālih: You wouldn't know how. It's a matter for a specialist. One moment. Come with me.

(He exits with him from the sidescene. The voice of Oedipus rises.)

Oedipus: I was thinking of one thing: Thebes must become the greatest city in the world, and in order to become great, it must --

(Senefru enters, rushing headlong, singing in a loud voice with enthusiasm and true harmony.)

Senefru: "You who killed the Beast." [s.89]

(Oedipus stops still and the Citizens gaze in astonishment at Senefru who continues the song with zeal. His singing gradually transforms into bitter weeping. He leans against a corner at the front of the stage, and he collapses into a sitting position. He weeps in a low voice.)

Oedipus: And so, my children. The Beast died.

The Citizens: "You who killed the Beast."

(Oedipus waves to them with his arms and disappears inside the palace. At that very moment a terrible cry arises from a person in agony. The Citizens stand in their places as if nailed to the ground by alarm. One of the people enters headlong from the wall. His face and

his entire body are covered with blood. The man cries out unceasingly in horrible screams, and he throws himself to the ground among the Citizens.)

The Man: A Beast. A very large Beast. Just outside the wall. He ate my leg. Ahh. I'm going to die.

The Citizens: A Beast. [s.90]

(The Man's movement ceases. The Citizens exchange glances in apprehensive silence.)

Senefru: (Through tears) Then the Beast is back.

Awālih: You coward. How could the Beast come back? Weren't you singing just a moment ago that Oedipus killed the Beast?

Senefru: (Terror has overwhelmed him.) Yes. Yes. Then it's another Beast. A second Beast. Oedipus killed the first Beast. Oedipus killed --

(He tries to sing and he is unable. He proceeds to cry in a low voice. All his body has been taken over by shaking with profound wretchedness.)

The Curtain Falls

Act III

Scene One

(As occurred at the beginning of the play. The Citizens of Thebes sit on the stone benches, and this time despair has taken possession of them. The members of the City Council sit in the middle. Awālih stands, holding a large piece of paper. He reads from it, addressing the Citizens.)

Awālih: Citizens of Thebes. The City Council assigned me to present a report explaining the dimensions of the present situation with regard to the attack of the Beast at the city walls.

First: The City Council asserts that this Beast is a new Beast, and he is of the same form as 'Abūl-Hūl,' the Sphynx, except that he is of a smaller size than the old Beast, which Oedipus killed. This is according to the reports presented by the Beast-experts and authorized by Professor Hor Muheb. [s.92]

Second: The beast attacked thirty-five people of whom he devoured thirty -- five sustained fatal injuries which ended in death. Conveyance to the House of Eternity has been completed with all due respect, and the cost has been charged to the account of the Chamber of Commerce. The City Council thanks Brother Uwnah for the noble gesture.

Third: We don't have certain proof that the Beast is posing riddles, but by the example of the old Beast and since the new Beast is of the same genus and species as the old Beast, it has therefore become clear in a semi-certain way that the new Beast also poses riddles to travelers and demands the solution. Therefore, it has been decided to convene this gathering which brings all the people of Thebes together to discuss the problem and procure a solution to it. Long live Thebes! Long live the people of Thebes, always and forever and ever able to kill Beasts anywhere. Long live Oedipus.

The Citizens: (They sing.) "Who killed the Beasts."

Awālih: Issued in the permanent abode of the City Council at the Temple of Amun; [s.93] signed, on behalf of the City Council: A. M. Awālih.

Awālih: Dear Citizens of Thebes. Motivated by the rule of true democracy, we have gathered here today to solicit your opinions. How do we put an end to this Beast?

(A person among the Citizens speaks without our seeing him or knowing the source of his voice.)

The Person: Hypocrite. What is it to us? Everything you do, you do by yourself. Why change today? What are the Citizens of Thebes, anyway? In good times forgotten and in bad times remembered.

Awālih: (Angrily) Who said that? Whoever said that, let him stand up. (His anger increases.) Whoever it was, stand up. (He disguises his anger and tries to be tactful.) Whoever you are, why be afraid? Tell us your name so we can put it down in the minutes of the Council. (He leaves his place and searches among the Citizens.) Who was it? [s.94] The voice came from this direction. Who spoke? Whoever wants to speak, let him raise his hand, ask for the right to speak, and tell his name. There is a thing called democracy, you cattle.

(He turns his back on them, leaves them, and returns to his place.)

A Voice: Shut up and stop lying, Awālih. (In a whisper) A curse on your father's soul.

Awālih: (He stands up suddenly in astonishment and turns on them.) Who dares to curse me? Who's being abusive now? (Exploding) No, it isn't me who's being abusive. Whoever cursed, stand up at once. Nobody wants to talk? (He glances at the policemen.) Police, arrest Thebes.

The Policeman: Thebes?

Awālih: Yes. Thebes. All of it. The Citizens and the City Council and Oedipus and Jokasta. The whole world is under arrest. No one stirs from his place. Everyone is under arrest until you bring me

the one who cursed me. (Extremely agitated, he is almost weeping.) Me? Awālih? Cursed? [s.95]

Hor Muheb: Calm down, Awālih.

Awālih: (Savagely) Keep quiet, Professor. You're under arrest, too. This isn't a joking matter. Don't say a word unless I tell you to. (He faces the Citizens.) A curse on my father's soul? Cursed be the soul of the mightiest among you, one by one. Who was it that cursed? You don't want to talk? All right. Let's be seated. (He sits on the ground.) Do we have anything else to do? No one is going home today. (He speaks with the Policeman.) Listen, my son, you and he. If anyone moves, shoot an arrow into his heart at once. Even if it's me. I want to see how I can be cursed. (His voice is choked with emotion.) So, after all my service, you barbarians, you curse me. For years I've been working for you night and day. And in the end I am cursed. All right, I'll teach you --

Tiresias: (From among the Citizens) I did it, Awālih.

(It is plain that it wasn't Tiresias who cursed.) [s.96]

Awālih: Come here. Come up here to me and show yourself. Who is that? (Tiresias stands.) Tiresias! Go ahead and take him. (Not one of the Police moves, and they stand confused.) Follow your orders, soldier, you and he.

Tiresias: Don't be foolish, Awālih. There is no use in arresting Tiresias, my son. Have you forgotten, or what? It was the first lesson you learned when you were small. Even if you've forgotten, the soldiers haven't.

Awālih: (Helplessly) Isn't it a disgrace to curse me, Uncle Tiresias? By the life of Horus, if you weren't an old man, something bad would have happened to you today.

Tiresias: I am sorry, Awālih. It is illegal to arrest me. You know that I am allowed to curse once in every hundred years. Never mind. It just happened to be your turn this time.

Awālih: But the last one you cursed was my grandfather, Uncle Tiresias.

Tiresias: As your luck would have it. I am sorry. [s.97]

Uwnah: Making peace is good. Like your father did, Awālih.

Awālih: All right. Set him free. Release Thebes. People, I beg of you. There are conventions we must honor. If anyone wants to say something, go ahead and say it. But tell us your name first. We must know the name of anyone who wants to speak. Otherwise, our democracy will be destroyed from its foundations, and the Beast will eat us. Do you want the Beast to eat us? Of course not. So, then, nobody says anything unless he tells his name. And if he doesn't, then any one of you can tell on him. All right. We have finished. Permit me a word. My opinion is that the one responsible for putting an end to the Beast is Kreon in his capacity as the one in charge of guarding and protecting Thebes. Therefore, I propose that we assign him the duty of putting an end to the Beast.

Kreon: If it is the aim of Awālih to put an end to me and the Theban Guards, we have no objection to going into combat with the Beast. But if the goal is to exterminate a Beast whose size, as you say, is as big as a pyramid, who has the face of a woman [s.98] and the body of an animal, then the matter will take me a long time.

Hor Muheb: Do we understand from this that you are afraid to enter into the battle with him now?

Kreon: Understand, Hor Muheb, I do not know fear. All the lessons and drills which the Theban Guards know are based on the condition that the combatant fights a warrior like himself. The Theban Guards know how to fight with arrows and spears and chariots and catapults. They know how to meet in single combat. They know how to wrestle. But the Theban Guards don't know how to fight the Beast.

Awālih: Attack it like it was an army.

Kreon: There's more to that than just fighting. What you are suggesting is a mass-suicide operation. In order for us to wage war against a Beast like this, we must know its size. We must know the thickness of its skin. What is the range and scope of its vision? In what place would a blow be effective? How does it move? What is its

speed? [s.99] When does it sleep, and for how many hours? When we know all these things, we will modify our training on the basis that our enemy is a Beast whose characteristics are determined to be such and such. His strong point is this. His weak point is that. This is war. And supposedly the intelligence apparatus belonging to Awālih should have brought all this information to us. Only it seems they were busy with something else. This is the method I know. There is another, easier way. His Majesty the King, Oedipus Rā', can rid us of the second Beast just as he rid us of the first one. And there is no call for anyone to inconvenience himself.

(He says his last sentence with bitterness mixed with sarcasm.)

Hor Muheb: The Pharaonic Traditions forbid exposing the Pharaoh to any likelihood of danger.

Kreon: Didn't he run the risk before?

Hor Muheb: He had not yet become Pharaoh. [s.100]

Uwnah: It is imperative to respect the Pharaonic Traditions, regardless of the danger to which Thebes is exposed. These traditions are our life.

Kreon: These Pharaonic Traditions are your life, aren't they, Uwnah? You, as the Head of the Chamber of Commerce. Why don't you speak the truth for once in your life? The truth is that you are afraid lest anything happen to Oedipus. You are afraid for the goose who lays the golden eggs. If anything happened to him, the chain of inventions would stop, and your shops would close.

Hor Muheb: (Agitated) I won't permit insulting words like these to be spoken in the City Council.

Uwnah: Nor I.

Awālih: Me neither.

Kreon: Oh, really? Why don't you arrest me at once? Does anything matter to you? Haven't you just a little while ago arrested Thebes?

(Jokasta comes out onto the balcony.)

Jokasta: What is it? What's wrong? What's this meeting for? [s.101]

Kreon: The Beast has appeared, your Majesty.

Awālih: Another Beast, your Majesty. A second Beast.

Jokasta: Have you notified Oedipus?

Uwnah: King Oedipus is in the factory working on his most important inventions, your Majesty.

Jokasta: All the same you must notify him. He's the one who specializes in solving riddles and killing Beasts.

Awālih: Precisely, your Majesty. Good thinking. Oedipus Rā' is the specialist.

Hor Muheb: The Pharaonic Traditions, your Majesty --

Jokasta: There are no such traditions. All the Pharaonic Traditions diminish and have no value when Thebes is exposed to danger. (She directs her speech to the Citizens.) Citizens of Thebes. It has been proven in practice that Oedipus is the most clever of the clever. Therefore, Oedipus is the one to solve the riddle.

The Citizens: Yes. "He who solves the riddles."

A Voice: Brother, isn't that just like a woman? She wants a man to be the one to perish. [s.102]

(Awālih turns to the citizens.)

Awālih: Didn't I say if anyone wants to speak he has to tell his name? Do you want me to get upset again? Who spoke?

The Citizen: We don't know.

(Oedipus comes out onto the balcony, and merely by his appearance the Citizens sing.)

The Citizens: "You who killed the Beast."

Oedipus: What is it? What's wrong with you? Is something the matter?

Jokasta: Another Beast has appeared, your Majesty. The people have entrusted me to inform your Highness of their desire for you to go out and solve the riddle and kill the Beast.

Oedipus: (He faces the Citizens.) Do you want me to kill the Beast?

The Citizen: Yes.

Oedipus: I am ready. I will go out and solve the riddle and kill the Beast. And if another Beast comes, I will go solve the riddle and kill him. But afterwards, when I die, what will you do?

The Citizens: Die? Oedipus die?

Oedipus: Yes. Oedipus will die. [s.103]

The Citizens: Oedipus is a god.

Oedipus: No. Oedipus is human.

(Hor Muheb intervenes in the dialogue.)

Hor Muheb: It is true that Oedipus is human -- but of divine origin. And men who are of divine origin don't die, but rather, they are conveyed to the afterworld to become ruler of it as well. You know well that a Pharaoh rules both the world and the afterlife. This is what his Majesty has in mind. (With determination to Oedipus) This is what you mean, your Majesty.

Oedipus: Hear me. We don't want theories to obstruct our thinking. We don't want words to confuse us. Whether a Pharaoh dies or gets transported to an afterlife, whether he rules there or not, all this doesn't concern us. We must respect the factual and practical reality. The reality is that one of these days my heart will stop beating; my lungs will stop breathing and my mind will stop thinking; the blood will cease to spread through my veins. With that [s.104] my existence will end. With that my embalming will be carried out in the House of the Dead like anyone among you.

Awālih: May it never happen to you, your Majesty.

Oedipus: Hold your tongue, Awālih. (To the people once again) When it happens, what will you do? All the civilization I have made -- what will happen to it? The paved roads, the electrical equipment, the electronic equipment, the cars and the planes, the fifty centuries which we squeezed into a few years -- what will happen to them? Will a Beast coming from the desert demolish all this civilization? I have begun to

feel that all this colossal construction of civilization is a fragile structure which any Beast will be able to destroy when I am conveyed to the House of Eternity. Torment will follow me because I left all this civilization to those who are unable to preserve it. Citizens of Thebes, I am asking you in the name of life to go out and meet the Beast and put an end to him. For your sakes, for the sake of those who will come after you, for the sake of Thebes. [s.105]

Tiresias: (He rises to his feet among the Citizens.) At last we return to the starting point. This is what I said the first time. The people themselves must take the responsibility of protecting themselves against the Beast. If there is a riddle, the people must set out to solve it. And if there is fighting, then let the people go out to fight, to defend themselves. Did everything that has happened have to occur just to make you understand this obvious truth? Beasts don't pose riddles just for the fun of it. Beasts attack cities in order to devour them. There are small animals that confront the individual person, like snakes and wolves, and there are Beasts that confront groups. And there is 'Abūl-Hūl' -- Father of Fear. Indeed, Citizens of Thebes, Abūl-Hūl devours cities and countries. Understand this well. If it left Thebes now, it would come back another time. After that it would go to the rest of the cities of the world. Citizens of Thebes, it is not for the sake of Thebes alone, but for the sake of all cities. Let us go to meet the Beast. We will be victorious no matter what. If we annihilate the Beast, then we will sing [s.106] our own praises. The people will sing their praises. And if it annihilates us, then that means we are not entitled to life and in fairness we die. With that begins a new age on earth, an age of the end of mankind and the victory of Beasts. Citizens of Thebes together: to the Beast.

The Citizens: (They thunder.) To the Beast. To the Beast.

(The crowd pushes toward the wall. Jokasta disappears from the balcony. Oedipus still stands, gazing with pride at the Citizens of Thebes who are exiting the stage

with extreme fervor. None remains from the group except Awālih.)

Oedipus: Why aren't you going with them, Awālih?

Awālih: What about internal security, your Majesty? Who will maintain order in Thebes.

Oedipus: It looks to me like the city is empty.

Awālih: On the contrary. Agents of the Beast are probably all over the city.

Oedipus: I don't see anyone but you and me. So it must be one of us.

(Shouts are raised on high and the dust swirls up across the walls with a huge growl from the Beast. The sounds of the battle rise. The lights fade.)

Scene Two

(Oedipus sits, collapsed on the throne, his head laid back and his eyes closed. His body is wretchedness itself. Kreon stands before him, and spots of blood and mud have covered his clothes and his face.)

Oedipus: How did it happen, Kreon? What exactly happened?

Kreon: I don't know, your Majesty. Nobody knows. I only know one thing. We were defeated. Abūl-Hūl routed the people of Thebes. We couldn't stand before him. No one knew exactly who we were fighting or what we were fighting. For the first time in the history of Thebes, its people were unable to hold out in combat. Thebes the Great, Mother of Heroes, Mother of Civilization, was unable to stand up to the Beast in battle. [s.108]

Oedipus: It was your responsibility, Kreon. The responsibility of the Guards. They were in the frontlines. One thing is for certain. Something is lacking in the preparation and training of the Guards.

Kreon: Your Majesty, I am, indeed, responsible for the defeat;

just as any leader is responsible for victory or defeat. But why was I defeated?

Oedipus: Is there nothing to justify the defeat?

Kreon: I'm not justifying the defeat. I bear my full responsibility. That isn't the issue; the issue is something else. Amidst the cries of the wounded and the dying, in the middle of the dust of battle and in front of the dreadful roar of the Beast, my mind suddenly felt calm and serene. I am responsible for weapons drills, but isn't it true that it is a man who fights with the weapons? Who is it who trains the men?

Oedipus: Trains them in what?

Kreon: Trains each one of them to become a man. More precisely, who is responsible for building men in this city? We deployed our forces correctly. We took our positions correctly. [s.109] Our weapons were powerful and undamaged. Our zeal was great, and our faith was strong. But there was something wrong -- I don't know what. I know the people of Thebes well. The people of Thebes are very bold, and they have never been afraid of death. Death, in the view of the Theban people, is the transition to another life, a better life. So why did so many people fail to stand their ground until they died or until we annihilated the Beast? Is it because we don't know anything about the Beast? Maybe. Only that isn't a sufficient reason. A plague has afflicted the people of Thebes, a strange sickness. What is it? I don't know. Who is responsible for it? I don't know. Somehow there must be something wrong with our men, and the ones responsible must be the ones in charge of building them into men.

Oedipus: The defeat has changed you to a poet, Kreon. Thebes has lost a leader and gained a poet.

Kreon: If you mean to insult me, your Majesty -- well, I can't feel anything now. I can't even feel disgrace. [s.110] Something is wrong inside me, too. The plague has penetrated to the depth of my being.

Oedipus: In regard to my responsibility for building men in Thebes, you know what I've done, Kreon. I have done the utmost possible. I have advanced Thebes thousands of years. I have invented for the people everything men will make in the future.

(Tiresias appears.)

Tiresias: You have also invented, your Majesty, the worst invention in history. Fear. The single invention which is undermining all the other inventions, the most repulsive disease of mankind, more loathsome than the plague, the single sickness which changes human beings into things. All the diseases of which we are aware have symptoms which are well-known and plain, but the symptoms of fear are misleading and deceptive. Whenever fear spreads to a person's heart, it mixes with his blood, his brain, and his dreams. The man and the fear become one thing; [s.111] the man himself becomes fear walking on two feet. Then the man ceases to be a man. He changes into something brittle, and brittle things are easily broken by any misfortune.

Oedipus: Tiresias, these are grave words. Ugly. My entire objective was the well-being of man in Thebes. My intention was to liberate him from fear.

Tiresias: You set him free from one direction, and people other than you shackle him with fear from another direction. What does it seem to your Majesty that Awālih is doing?

Oedipus: I don't know.

Tiresias: It is your responsibility to know.

Oedipus: Even if Awālih were spreading fear in the country -- and that is something I don't know, and besides, it isn't my responsibility -- Awālih was here before I became king.

Tiresias: And yet you permitted him to keep working and using the same methods which his family have been using for four hundred years. [s.112]

Oedipus: (With extreme anguish and confusion) What methods? I don't understand anything. Lately it's become clear to me that I have been blind. (Shouting) Awālih.

(Awālih appears at once from behind one of the curtains.)

Awālih: Yes, your Majesty.

Tiresias: Awālih is like the air. Always present everywhere.

Oedipus: What have you done to the people, Awālih?

Awālih: Nothing, your Majesty. If you don't believe me, ask them.

Tiresias: (Scornfully) Hmph. They would deny it. One who is afraid always gives you the answer you want.

Awālih: If you mean that some individuals are subjected to treatment that isn't. . . isn't. . . (He searches for a word.). . . isn't nice, then there might be just a few individuals -- not all the people of Thebes -- and it had to be done.

Oedipus: Why?

Awālih: For the security of Thebes, your Majesty.

Tiresias: We aren't speaking about traitors and evildoers and thieves [s.113] and criminals. All these are rotten parts of the social organism. We mean something else, Awālih. You know who we mean.

Awālih: I understand what you mean. There are people who say that your Highness didn't solve the riddle. And people doubt the solution. No one was with your Highness and the Beast. And there are people who say that the second Beast is really the first. So maybe we overdid it with some people, but it was necessary to prevent the people from talking that way -- to maintain the prestige of the Pharaonic system.

Oedipus: How do you prevent them, Awālih?

Awālih: By all possible methods, your Majesty.

Tiresias: All possible methods. That means only one method. Torture. Fragmenting all the beautiful and vile things inside a man, and then arousing the most repulsive things: resentment, hatred of everything.

Awālih: It's clear how much you want to condemn me. The problem [s.114] isn't with this ugliness. Whenever three or four are subjected to treatment which isn't. . . isn't. . .

Oedipus: Isn't right?

Awālih: Ahh -- isn't nice. But that doesn't mean -- this is not to say that all the citizens of Thebes are affected.

Tiresias: Fear is indivisible, Awālih. Fear is a collective sickness. The people of Thebes are a complete, living organism. Like any society in the world, anything that happens to any part of this organism affects the social organism in its entirety.

Awālih: All right. I'm sorry.

Oedipus: Sorry for what?

Awālih: I am apologizing for my error. Because I wasn't taking notice of this story of the social organism. Haven't we always employed the same methods? Affairs were going well, and no one ever complained to us. Why are you complaining about them now?

Tiresias: You will never understand, Awālih. You belong to another world. [s.115]

Oedipus: Awālih, before sunrise you must be outside the walls of Thebes.

Awālih: As you wish, your Majesty. I also took this possibility into consideration. Therefore, I secured a work contract with Babel. (He takes some papers out of his pocket.) And to whom should I submit my files, your Majesty?

Oedipus: What files?

Awālih: The lists of criminals.

Oedipus: Take them with you.

Tiresias: Do you see now that fear is a social disease? You were afraid, too, so you came prepared with a work contract in another country.

Oedipus: If you delay even one moment, I will subject you to treatment which isn't nice.

Awālih: (He mutters in anger as he is going out.) All our lives we were working with this method, and no one told us the story of the social organism. What makes it so different now? [s.116]

Oedipus: (In utter desperation) Kreon.

Kreon: Your Majesty. Command me anything. I am prepared to sacrifice everything for Thebes. And for you, your Majesty.

Oedipus: Tiresias, Kreon, my dearest friends. Don't leave me. I don't know what to do. For the first time I feel I'm not seeing my way. For the first time I feel I'm blind. You are now the eyes with which I see. What do we do?

Kreon: From a military point of view we must know everything about Abūl-Hūl. And we must remake the men of Thebes. Give me well-made men and I will give you victory.

Oedipus: Where are Hor Muheb and Uwnah:

Kreon: I didn't see them in battle, but whenever there are any profits, they'll turn up at once to leap on them.

Oedipus: How do we remake men, Tiresias?

Tiresias: The people of Thebes love you, your Majesty. Let that be the beginning. Let us preserve this love and strengthen it. Any [s.117] attempt at concealing the truth from the people will cost us in the end. I don't know whether your Highness killed the Beast last time or not. Let the truth be what it may. But there is a truth which Thebes must understand. You must make them understand that the individual, whatever his strength and ingenuity, can't always kill the Beasts by himself -- even if you had solved the riddle, even if you had killed the Beast. Go ahead, Oedipus. Begin. We don't have time to waste.

(Oedipus goes out onto the balcony, accompanied by Tiresias and Kreon.)

Oedipus: Children of Thebes. My children.

(The people gather.)

Oedipus: We have lost a battle. But the entire war is still ahead of us. And I want to announce some of the facts to you. Awālih has been banished from Thebes. This means that there is no longer any place for fear among us. There won't be anything in Thebes to hinder the growth and creativity of men. And there [s.118] is something else you must understand well in order to conquer Abūl-Hūl. It is impossible

for one man by himself to kill Beasts which attack cities. I did not kill the Beast the first time.

The Citizens: (They sing.) "You who killed the Beast."

Oedipus: You are the ones who said so. When I came back, I didn't say that.

The Citizens: (They sing.) "You who killed the Beast."

Oedipus: But that wasn't exactly the truth.

The Citizens: (They sing.) "You who killed the Beast."

Oedipus: I beg you --

The Citizens: (They sing.) "You who killed the Beast."

(His voice is lost in the singing.)

(The lights fade.) [s.119]

Scene Three

(A single spot of light appears gradually on Tiresias at the front of the stage. Meanwhile, the rest of the stage remains dark.)

Tiresias: It was easy for us to banish Awālih from Thebes, but it is impossible to banish him in a moment from the hearts of the people. I already knew this unhappy fact, but it was necessary for Oedipus to see for himself what fear does to people. It is possible for them to praise him mistakenly. It is possible for them to support fakery vehemently, and it is possible for the truth to be lost among them. Even the most noble feelings, like zeal and daring, might be symptoms of this plague. Fear. Indeed, the true point of departure for remaking men and setting free [s.120] all the creative abilities inside them is that we free them from fear and anxiety and doubt.

(The light appears gradually in the throne room. Oedipus and Kreon.)

Oedipus: How do we do it, Tiresias? How?

Tiresias: I know a million answers to a million questions, but that question baffles all the philosophers. That is the true riddle.

Whoever knows the answer will make the greatest civilization on earth. Whoever knows how to liberate man from fear deserves to be father of the sages and philosophers. Indeed, he and he alone, your Majesty, is worthy of the title 'Ruler'.

Oedipus: The light is dim in the palace this evening. I don't see well.

(Kreon looks about in surprise.)

Kreon: Really, your Majesty? Aren't the torches at their full power?

Oedipus: Strange. I don't see well.

Kreon: The solution has begun to glitter in my brain, your Majesty. [s.121]

Oedipus: Don't speak, Kreon. Carry it out with all the zeal of youth. Tiresias will be with you.

Kreon: And you, your Majesty?

(Oedipus rises from the throne.)

Oedipus: I am going to look for the solution myself. At the peak of my glory I discovered that there are still things I don't know. I will go. I will begin a long trip in order to learn. Kreon, take my hand. Show me the door. I was thinking that it was the light that was dim. (In pain) Ahh. I didn't know that there might be all this darkness in the world. Go back, Kreon.

Kreon: Your Majesty --

Oedipus: That is an order. The last command Oedipus gives.

(Oedipus exits.)

Kreon: Everyone in Thebes must pay a great price. And with this price we buy Thebes. We buy the life of Thebes. Everyone must do his best.

Tiresias: Explain. [s.122]

Kreon: I'll show you in a practical way.

(Kreon goes out to the courtyard where the lights appear gradually.)

(Kreon marches to the courtyard with pride, his head held high. The people climb the wall as he goes outside.)

Person 1: Kreon is going to meet the Beast alone.

The Citizens: Alone?

Person 2: Come back, Kreon.

Person 3: He's going right up to the Beast with his hand on his sword and his head held high.

The Citizens: Alone --

A Person: He'll bring back information about the Beast.

Person 1: We've got to follow him.

(A cry from the group. Some leap outside the wall and return, carrying Kreon's lifeless body on their shoulders.)

(The Citizens gather around the corpse as [s.123] the lights gradually fade and concentrate around Tiresias at the front of the stage.)

Tiresias: Kreon has paid the price -- the price it takes to make the people of Thebes understand that death is inevitable for the sake of life, that in death the individual won't lose anything but his fear, that annihilation is better than a life threatened by Abūl-Hūl, Father of Fear, the Sphynx, the Beast. It isn't important for us to know what happened to Oedipus, for he has become, as one of the people said, the property of poets. But Thebes will remain until eternity the property of its people, of those who have begun to be well aware of the solution. And after thousands of years, those among you who visit my beautiful city of Thebes will see the great temples and the rest of what man has made everlasting, challenging time and the Beasts of the desert. Oh, people. Oh, you who live in this city and you to whom I have told my city's story, know that even though you may have laughed while you listened to this story, I swear to you by all the gods, I never meant to make you laugh.

(Curtain)

[s.124]

Introduction to Mahmoud Diab's Messenger from Tumayra Village

Messenger from Tumayra Village is a war story, a love story, a tale of exploitation and revolt. Above all, the play tells of a people's quest for truth, knowledge and justice. Within the microcosm of an imaginary Delta village, Mahmoud Diab dramatizes the plight of rural Egyptian peasants with sensitivity and truthful simplicity. His play also personalizes Egyptian attitudes toward the Palestinian issue, the heart of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

What shines through most powerfully in Diab's play is the humanity of his characters. The sometimes blatant simplicity of their reactions is nevertheless realistic. The people these characters represent -- the poor, illiterate masses of remote, rural Egypt -- are, in fact, disarmingly naive about the outside world.

Ahmad Abū 'Ārif is Diab's central character and Tumayra's principal messenger. He is the hub of an informal communications network which handles a wide variety of message traffic, and his mission is to provide answers for the many questions posed by the village peasants. Their chief topics of concern are the three major message categories of the play: war and the political situation which encompasses it; land and the economic conditions which determine its use and ownership; and people, the social attitudes they represent and the individual problems they dramatize.

Messages about war, land, and people provide one line of investigation, but interpretation of Diab's play also entails examination of language, law, and religion, the three chief contextual features of Tumayra's communications network. For example, there are at least 182 direct references to religion in the play. Such expressions often introduce or finalize a message, but they are seldom part of the message itself. Like greetings and farewells, they punctuate conversations and provide a framework for communication.

Mahmoud Diab's play is also a message from the playwright to his literary and theatrical audiences. In this sense, the play is part of

a wider communications system, and its reception is therefore indicative of broader Egyptian attitudes than those represented by Diab's characters.

Many people in Cairo literary and theatrical circles are familiar with Mahmoud Diab's work as a playwright in the 1960's and 70's. Few, however, have paid much attention to Rasūl min qaryit Tumayra (Messenger from Tumayra Village). According to Ismā'īl Diab, the playwright's brother, Mahmoud's play was briefly produced in Algeria and Iraq, but only amateurs have performed it in Egypt, the homeland of the playwright. [1]

Some sources say Messenger from Tumayra Village has been secretly banned, others that the script is merely out-of-print, and a few that its message is too obvious. Most of the Cairo theatre community, however, is frankly ignorant and non-committal where Messenger from Tumayra Village is concerned. In Egypt, as well as the West, the play is still an un-opened letter.

MESSAGE ONE: WAR

Is Diab's account of the war consistent with historical fact? Does war-related information come to light in a manner consistent with available sources of news? What sources are accessible in Tumayra village? How do Diab's characters interpret the news? Do they truly represent Egyptian attitudes and concerns? The first steps toward answering these questions are a review of the history of the 1973 October war and an analysis of Tumayra's view of the conflict. These are the subjects of the following section.

I. The October War

On the Day of Atonement -- at 2:00 p.m. local time on October 6, 1973 -- Yom Kippur rituals in the western Sinai peninsula and the Golan

Heights abruptly ceased as Egyptian and Syrian forces launched a massive, coordinated offensive which shattered Israeli defences in the occupied territories. The October War -- sometimes called the Yom Kippur war by Zionists and the Ramadan war by Muslims -- lasted nearly three weeks and cost thousands of lives. Among Egyptians the war is commonly known as the Crossing in reference to the successful operation by Egyptian forces along the Suez Canal.

The combined Arab offensive of 1973 surprised the whole world. Of particular note was the improved quality of the Arab armies. Israel faced a new enemy which neither surrendered nor retreated. Eventually, the tide turned against the Arabs, and they failed to regain most of the territory they had lost in 1967. They did, however, regain their dignity while shocking Israel out of the complacency it had exhibited for nearly six years.

Mohamed Heikal, former editor of al-Ahrām and confidant of both Nasser and Sadat, explains the initial success of the surprise attack in terms of Israel's mistaken notion of an unchanging balance of power.

> How did it happen that the Israelis were completely surprised, strategically as well as tactically? In my opinion the Israelis completely misunderstood history. The difference between myth and history -- and this is one of the pitfalls of Zionism, which is liable to confuse the two -- is that in myth you are dealing with something fixed, static, past, whereas history is a changing process. . . The Israelis completely misunderstood the balance of power between Arabs and Israel. A military or political balance between the 100 million Arabs and the 3 million Israelis cannot be kept forever. [2]

Although Egypt and Syria were the principal Arab combatants in the 1973 war, their forces were later supplemented by units from nations throughout the Arab world. Egypt, however, was the country which planned and led the attack, and since Egypt's role in the war is the

focus of Diab's play, the following summary deals mainly with the activity on the Egyptian front.

What conditions developed in Egypt between 1967 and 1973? What defensive measures had to be taken before offensive plans could be developed? What was the chief obstacle created by the Israelis and how did the Egyptians surmount it? Through what phases did the war progress before the United Nations could supervise a cease-fire? Who was to blame for the eventual Egyptian defeat? What lessons did the 1973 war teach? Egyptian answers to these questions are the necesssary first step toward understanding Mahmoud Diab's Messenger from Tumayra Village.

'War of Attrition' -- The End of the Nasser Era

Egypt's first task after the 1967 defeat was survival. Egypt had to find a way to defend itself during the 'War of Attrition' which lasted until Nasser's acceptance of the Rogers Plan in July 1970. Within weeks of the 1967 defeat the Soviets had begun to re-equip Egyptian ground forces, but Egyptian air-defence remained a shambles until January 1970 when Nasser travelled secretly to Moscow to appeal for direct Soviet intervention. By April 1970 Soviet men and equipment had put an end to the Israeli air attacks. Meanwhile, however, the Egyptian people had paid heavily for the 'War of Attrition'. The Israelis

> had reduced the Canal Zone cities -- Port Said, Suez, Ismailia -- to a ghostly shambles, blitzed and rubble strewn. Hundreds had died before the civilian population, a million of them, could be evacuated and absorbed at great economic and social cost into the teeming cities of the Delta. [3]

'No War No Peace' -- The Beginning of the Sadat Regime

When Nasser died in September 1970, Anwar el-Sadat was vice-president of Egypt. According to the constitution, Sadat took over the office of president. Politically weak at first, in May 1971 Sadat dismissed his opposition in a move called the 'Corrective Revolution'. Ali Sabry and Sharawi Gumaa were two of the most powerful figures who fell in this action, and because they represented the pro-Soviet group in Egyptian politics, Sadat immediately set out to mend relations with the Russians. Egypt still needed Soviet arms, and Sadat had labelled 1971 the 'Year of Decision' as a promise that war with Israel was imminent. Yet he repeatedly renewed the 1970 cease-fire, and 1971 ended without the promised attack. This brought the usual crop of satirical jokes from the Egyptian press "along the lines that Sadat, rather than extend the cease-fire, had issued a decree extending 1971 instead." [4]

By 1972 Egyptian patience was wearing thin. January brought student riots, prompted not only by the repeated postponement of the war, but also by the increased police repression of the Sadat regime. Lt. Gen. Saad el Shazly describes the situation in a February 1972 entry in his political diary.

> In public the leadership called for an all-out struggle against the enemy and promised full support to the armed forces in that effort. In private the leadership's paramount concern was to preserve a regime of autocratic privilege, which it upheld by lying to its citizens and then spying on them to see if they believed the lies. [5]

Meanwhile, Sadat had encountered increasing difficulties with the Soviet Union. Promised shipments of arms had not been delivered, and U.S. - Soviet detente seemingly indicated that the Russians were prepared to accept the status quo between Egypt and Israel. In exasperation Sadat ordered the Russians out of Egypt in July 1972.

At first Sadat succeeded in blaming the Soviets for the failure of the Egyptian war effort, but the Egyptian people soon resumed their protests against the Sadat regime. In December 1972 Sadat arrested more than a hundred student leaders, and new rioting erupted in the wake of the arrests. Paradoxically, Sadat was preaching new political freedom for his people while stifling their protests and consolidating power for himself. In March 1973 he declared himself Prime Minister in addition to President and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces.

Mohamed Heikal summarizes the situation faced by Sadat's subjects in 1973.

> By 1973 the economy of Egypt was under an almost intolerable strain. Industrial developments, the High Dam, and the burden of the war in the Yemen had made the early and middle sixties a period of extreme difficulty. Then had come the 1967 defeat and the need for an almost complete rebuilding and re-equipping of the army. In five years between 1968-1973 Egypt spent $8-9,000 m. on the war effort. For the Egyptian people it had been a decade of sacrifice and austerity, such as no people could be expected to put up with indefinitely.[6]

In short, Sadat faced a combined economic, political, and military dilemma. The deterioration of the economy was closely tied to prior military failures as well as to current military spending. Protests about the economy led to an increase in police repression which, in turn, led to further protests. Meanwhile, public outcry about the apparent lack of military activity led to further repression and further protests. If Sadat had made public his military plans, he could have countered much of the criticism levied against him. To do so, however, would have warned the Israelis, and the success of the attack hinged on the element of surprise.

Preparations for War

During the final years of the Nasser era preparations were already being made for renewed fighting. Annual large-scale maneuvers, which began in the autumn of 1968, established a routine that set the stage for the 1973 surprise attack. Meanwhile, as Egyptian and Israeli forces skirmished during the war of attrition, Egyptian military leaders formulated plans for both defensive and offensive operations.

Immediately after Sadat had consolidated his political power in May 1971 he appointed a new Chief of Staff, Lt. Gen. Saad el Shazly. When el Shazly assumed his new command, he found two somewhat nebulous, plans in effect. Operation 200 was a defensive plan geared primarily toward transferring air-defence responsibilities from the Soviets to the Egyptians. Operation Granite was a general plan of attack aimed unrealistically at the total recapture of occupied territories in Sinai. El Shazly's initial assessment of Egyptian capabilities, however, indicated four basic weaknesses: the air force, the air-defence or SAM system, the continually improving Israeli defences, and the lack of Egyptian combat experience. With these considerations in mind el Shazly concluded that a large-scale offensive would be impossible. The most that could be hoped for was a limited attack that would put the Egyptians in a defensive posture along the east bank of the canal.

El Shazly tackled problems of defence by establishing extensive training programs and massive reorganizations of military hierarchies from top to bottom. New equipment and arms, primarily from the Soviets, meant little if the Egyptians lacked the ability to use these materials. El Shazly also studied Swedish mobilization plans and applied his findings to the Egyptian system.

Meanwhile, el Shazly set about clarifying plans of attack. By July 1971 plans had been begun for Operation 41, "an offensive limited at least to the seizing of the Key Sinai passes 30-40 miles east of the canal." [7] This plan, which took the place of Operation Granite, was

later re-named Granite Two. A more modest plan, however, was formulated as an alternative. This offensive was code-named the High Minarets.

> This would be based more closely on the actual capability of our armed forces, as opposed to some notional capability after untold arms shipments. Its objective was the limited goal I had set of a five or six-mile penetration. By September 1971, though nobody outside a tight handful of our planning staff had ever heard its name, the outline of The High Minarets had been drawn. It was Egypt's first realistic offensive plan. [8]

Granite Two and the High Minarets steadily developed during 1972. In the meantime Egypt's air-defence system improved dramatically. As the annual maneuvers approached in the autumn of 1973, the Egyptian forces were mobilized for the surprise attack.

> It was in September 1973, less than a month before our assault, that October 6 was finally selected as D-Day. In the Islamic calendar, that would be the tenth day of the month of Ramadan in the year 1393. During the month of Ramadan in the Christian year 624, the forces of the Prophet Mohammed won their first victory at the Battle of Badr. Operation Badr named itself. [9]

The Israelis had also been busy during the inter-war years. Lt. Gen. el Shazly describes in great detail the formidable Bar-Lev Line which the Israelis had erected and the Egyptians had prepared to demolish. El Shazly's lengthy description, quoted below in its entirety, shows the incredible magnitude of the obstacle which the Egyptians had to surmount.

> Consider the obstacle. To a modern army, rivers and canals present little challenge. Amphibious tanks and armored personnel carriers spearhead the assault and establish a bridgehead on the far bank. Mobile, pre-fabricated bridge sections are brought up, unloaded,

locked together and swung into place within minutes. By the time the main body of the army arrives, the crossing is ready.

But the Suez Canal was unique. Unique in the difficulties its construction presented to an amphibious assault force. Unique in the scale of defences the enemy had erected on top of those natural obstacles. It was only 195 -- 200 yards wide. But to all who saw it, the Suez Canal seemed an impassible barrier.

The first obstacle stemmed from the fact that the canal is an artificial waterway through sand, and sand erodes. To prevent it, the canal banks have been lined with concrete walls, rising above the water line and dropping steeply to the canal bed. The canal has a tidal rise and fall. At high tide the water flows a yard below the top of the concrete wall, at low water two yards, and on the southern stretch, three yards below. Amphibious vehicles cannot leap, labrador like, from banks a yard or more high, at least not without serious risk. Even if they did, how could they climb out the other side?

The second obstacle was a gigantic sand dune the enemy had raised along the length of the eastern bank. For six years, Israeli bulldozers had laboriously piled the sand ever higher -- their most sustained efforts coming, naturally, at likely crossing points. There the barrier towered 60 feet high and as thick at its base. (The slopes of the bank rose at 45-65 degrees depending on the stability of the sand.) The barrier ran so close to the canal that its western face, which would confront our assault, merged with the steeper gradient of the canal banking.

Above this formidable barrier rose the third obstacle: the 35 forts of the Bar-Lev line. Heavily dug in, their shelters are safe against anything less than a 1,000 pound bomb, with firing positions giving all-round cover. Each fort is self-contained and equipped to hold out under seige for a week, protected by minefields and barbed wire. On the average, there is one fort every three miles; but at likely crossing points they are clustered only 1,000 yards apart. To man all 35 took only an infantry brigade. To reinforce them, Israel had allotted three armored brigades: 360 tanks. The tanks would take up firing positions every hundred yards between the forts. Two roads ran the length of the sand barrier, one along its crest, the other just behind it. Hidden from our view, the enemy could maneuver their armor to reinforce any sudden weak point. If the enemy were alerted long enough before the assault to get the tanks to the barrier, the entire front would be swept by machineguns and anti-tank fire. If our men did brave all that and cross into the Sinai, how rapidly they could expect counterattacks would also depend on the warning we gave the enemy. Depending on the distribution of their armor behind the canal, we reckoned the enemy might be able to mount counterattacks of tank company and tank battalion strength within 15-30 minutes, and in the worst case at armored brigade strength within two hours of the start of our assault.

But how could we even get across the water? The fourth barrier was a secret one. Deep inside the sand rampart the enemy had embedded reservoirs filled with inflammable liquid, their outlets controlled from the nearest forts. In minutes, the liquid could gush into the canal, turning its surface into an inferno.

> That was the obstacle: the canal and the enemy defenses. The enemy had shown the obstacle to visiting military experts from all over the world. All had declared it to be insurmountable. Our task was to surmount it. [10]

Mohamed Heikal evaluates the strategy which had led the Israelis to entrench themselves along the canal.

> Israel's building of the Bar-Lev line was a victory for politics over strategy. Until the end of 1967 the Israeli Army had a plan by which they could meet an Egyptian attack by retreating to the passes, but they preferred to dig in on the canal because they wanted, as Dayan said, to be buzzing in the ears of Nasser and the Egyptian people. They forgot that it was not their genius but our failure that handed them victory in 1967 on a plate. [11]

The Crossing

Out of the glare of the afternoon sun on October 6, 1973, 222 Egyptian jets thundered eastward at zero altitude. Immediately, thousands of Egyptian ground forces joined the assault, storming Israeli positions along the entire 110 mile length of the Suez canal. Frogmen had already sabotaged the underwater napalm outlets when Egyptian engineers began laying the first floating bridge segments, and hoards of soldiers equipped with high-pressure water cannons were soon cutting through the sand barrier on the east bank. Meanwhile, commando units armed with portable missile launchers rushed past the Bar-Lev line and ambushed Israeli tanks. Egyptian Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Saad el Shazly describes in his memoirs the new balance of power which had been established by the morning of October 7th.

> By 0800 hours the battle of the crossing had been won. The three armored brigades and one infantry brigade

defending the Bar-Lev line had been virtually annihilated: 300 of the enemy's 360 tanks destroyed; thousands of men killed. Our losses were five aircraft, 20 tanks, 280 killed -- 2.5 percent of the aircraft we had deployed, two percent of the tanks, 0.3 percent of the combat troups. In 18 hours we had put across the canal 90,000 men, 850 tanks and 11,000 vehicles. [12]

Egypt continued pouring troups, arms, and equipment across the canal to reinforce the bridgehead and prepare for the inevitable Israeli counter-attacks. When these attacks came on October 8th and 9th, they were easily repulsed. The High Minarets phase of Operation Badr had been achieved; the canal had been secured and the Bar-Lev line destroyed. The question remained whether Operation Badr could also comprise Granite Two, an assault on the Sinai passes some 30-40 miles inland. To do so, however, would mean leaving the cover of the SAM missile air-defence unbrella. Nevertheless, on October 10th Egyptian GHQ ordered an eastward advance to begin. That night Egypt suffered its first major losses as 90 percent of the 1st Infantry Brigade's men and equipment were destroyed by Israeli air attacks. [13] The following day, despite Chief of Staff el Shazly's objections, General Ismail, the Egyptian Minister of War, insisted that another attack be mounted. El Shazly bitterly denounced that decision in his memoirs: "So began the first catastrophic blunder by GHQ from which all other blunders followed." [14]

To reinforce the projected assault on the passes GHQ ordered reserve units to join the Second and Third Armies east of the canal. According to el Shazly, this redeployment left the west bank forces critically depleted. "Our total reserves in the operational area behind our two armies were thus being stripped to that single brigade of 100 tanks from the 4th Division. It was a grave error." [15]

On Sunday, October 14th, Egypt began a four-pronged attack toward the passes in central Sinai. In Mohamad Heikal's estimation,

> what had been open for Egypt to accomplish on 7 October was no longer there to be achieved on 14 October.
>
> As soon as the Egyptian armour started its forward movement in the early hours of Sunday, and left the cover of its air defences, it became an easy prey to Israeli strikes from the air. [16]

Losses suffered on October 14th outnumbered the combined losses in the war to date. Still, along the east bank of the canal Egypt's position remained far superior to Israel's. On the west bank, however, Egyptian forces were much more vulnerable. Consequently, on October 15th, el Shazly recommended the withdrawal of two armored divisions to restore unbalanced west bank defences near Ismailia. GHQ refused and, in el Shazly's judgement: "So began Blunder Number Two." [17]

The Counter-Crossing

At one o'clock in the morning on October 16th the Israelis began Operation Gazelle. Gen. Ariel Sharon and 200 men in amphibious tanks crossed the canal just north of the Great Bitter Lake near Ismailia, divided into raiding parties, and set out "in search of anything that was worth attacking." [18] Gen. Sharon's orders had been to establish a bridgehead, but Sharon disregarded these orders. Like the character Sergius in Shaw's Arms and the Man, who threw a regiment of calvary against a battery of machine guns and won the battle because the enemy had brought the wrong ammunition, Sharon succeeded despite the odds against his operation. Maj. Gen. D. K. Palit, former military attache at India's embassy in Cairo, assesses the situation:

> By any formal reckoning Operation Gazelle [sic] should have been judged a failure. On the morning of D-plus-one day, there was no bridge and hardly a bridgehead. Instead of a division across the Canal, only a small force of less than a brigade strength had managed to cross. Furthermore there had been some damage caused to

> the bridging equipment by shelling; so not until that night, at the earliest, could a bridge be built. A counter-attack of even minimal strength from West bank reserves at any time on the 16th would have wiped out General Sharon's bridgehead. [19]

Egypt failed to counteract Operation Gazelle for two main reasons. First, GHQ failed to recognize the scope of the operation. This was primarily a problem of communication among intelligence units. According to Mohamed Heikal, "this failure in communication was the biggest mistake Egypt made in the whole war." [20] Indian General Palit analyzes the situation which led to this failure.

> It is obvious that information channels from forward troops back through formation headquarters to GHQ were not nearly as smooth and efficient as they should have been. An Army long inured to positional warfare, such as the Egyptian Army was, with its six years of defensive attritional doctrine, is apt to get office bound in its staffing procedures. Reports are sent in writing instead of being telephoned or carried by liason officers; Intelligence assessments are made at fixed-time committee meetings instead of the round-the-clock service which fast moving warfare demands. Perhaps this is what went wrong with the field Intelligence system in the Canal Zone. [21]

The second reason for Egypt's failure to counteract Operation Gazelle was a lack of sufficient reserves once the threat was finally recognized. For nearly two days the Israelis consolidated their bridgehead. Sharon's unimpeded raiding parties destroyed unsuspecting SAM missile facilities, allowing increased penetration of the zone by Israeli aircraft. Meanwhile, Israel rapidly multiplied its combat strength in the area of Deversoir. General el Shazly describes the dangerous ratio of forces which had developed by October 17th.

Less than 40 percent of our resources were massed in the combat zone. For the Battle of Deversoir we were pitting three armored brigades and one infantry brigade against an enemy force of six armored brigades and two infantry brigades -- an enemy superiority of two-to-one. And our plan of attack was calculated to worsten our chances. [22]

The failure of Egypt's high command to commit sufficient forces to the Battle of Deversoir was, in Gen. el Shazly's words, "Blunder Number Three." [23] By Thursday, October 18th, the Israelis "had won the Battle of Deversoir." [24] El Shazly continued to demand the redeployment of forces from Sinai, but Sadat still refused. "We will not withdraw a single soldier from the east to the west," Sadat reportedly insisted on October 19th. [25] El Shazly, however, defends his demand for a limited withdrawal.

> To suggest the withdrawal of all our troops from the east under such a situation is madness. To refuse to withdraw the suggested four armored brigades is a combination of madness, ignorance and treason. This was our fourth and fatal blunder. [26]

Diplomacy

The political strategy which paralleled Operation Badr was code-named Operation Spark. [27] Initially, Operation Spark paved the way for the surprise attack. Later, it entailed mustering support from the other Arab nations in the form of an oil embargo. Finally, Operation Spark dissipated into cease-fire negotiations which were increasingly dictated by the United States and manipulated by the Israelis.

A limited oil embargo began on October 17th. King Faisal of Saudi Arabia, thinking that the United States had promised to press Israel to accept Arab demands for a return of territories captured in 1967,

initially avoided a full-scale cutback of production, but his patience was spurned by the United States.

> The very next day President Nixon formally asked Congress for $2.2 billion in emergency funds to finance the massive airlift of arms to Israel that was already underway. [28]

Faisal interpreted Nixon's action as a betrayal and immediately decreed further cutbacks. Within five days all shipments to the United States had been suspended. Decreased supply led inevitably to higher prices which American consumers were forced to pay. In Mohamed Heikal's analysis, however, the timing of the oil boycott ultimately benefited the corporate middlemen.

> Paradoxically, it was at a moment when there was supposed to be an energy crisis and when the USA lay under an Arab oil boycott that the profits of the American oil companies reached unprecedented heights. [29]

Nevertheless, the 1973 oil boycott was far more successful than a similar attempt had been in 1967. Higher prices created world-wide alarm among consumers, and finally the Arab oil producers could be seen acting in unison.

The oil weapon, however, had little bearing on the cease-fire arrangements which began at roughly the same time that the oil embargo was initiated. Sadat first expressed willingness to establish a cease-fire in a speech to the National Assembly on October 16th. Unaware that Israeli infiltration was already underway on the west bank, Sadat announced that Egypt was "prepared to accept a cease-fire on condition that Israel withdraw forthwith from all the occupied territories to pre-5 June 1967 lines, under international supervision." [30] According to Lt. Gen. el Shazly, the president did not, however, feel compelled to pursue a cease-fire until the fall of Deversoir.

> Sadat, who had rejected the advice of the Soviet Union on October 12 to seek a ceasefire, and who continued to reject that advice until, too late, he accepted it on

> October 19, now found himself begging for Soviet help. [31]

According to Mohamed Heikal, Soviet reconnaissance photographs, which finally revealed the extent of the Israeli counter-crossing, provided the impetus for Sadat's change of attitude about a cease-fire.

> It was probably the day before this, on Thursday, 18 October that President Sadat saw the extent of Israel's thrust across the canal, because that day Kosygin was able to produce aerial photographs of the battle area which had been flown to him. [32]

Soviet pressure in the United Nations eventually resulted in Security Council Resolution 338 on October 22, 1973.

> But Resolution 338 had made no provision for policing the complex, uncertain ceasefire lines, and Israel, alleging (inventing, according to Shazly) Egyptian violations, lost no time in pressing home the encirclement of the Third Army to the east of the Canal. By nightfall on 23 October, it had closed the trap: the road to Suez, the beleaguered force's only supply line, was in Israeli hands; two divisions, 45,000 men with 250 tanks, were completely cut off. [33]

The superpowers responded to the situation by adopting Security Council Resolution 339 which modified the cease-fire lines called for in Resolution 338.

> Yet on the day after Resolution 339 had been adopted, Wednesday 24 October, the Israelis were still moving their troops forward. President Sadat sent identical messages to Brezhnev and Nixon: 'You must,' he said, 'be in force on the ground to witness for yourselves Israeli violations of the ceasefire.' [34]

Sadat appealed to Nixon for recognition of Israeli violations and a return to the cease-fire lines of October 22nd, but Nixon replied that

"from here the true facts are impossible to determine." [35] Mohamed Heikal discounts the validity of Nixon's claim.

> The Americans, as well as the Russians, were photographing the battle area every hour or so. It was perfectly possible for the Pentagon to compare the situation on the 22nd, when Suez was not encircled and Adabiyah not occupied, with the situation that had developed by the 24th. [36]

Indeed, American reconnaissance aircraft had been flying over the war zone since at least October 15th. [37] Furthermore, both the United States and the Soviet Union possessed sophisticated satellites geared to provide photographs of amazing precision. Mohamed Heikal, testifying to Soviet satellite capabilities, remarks: "It is not to be supposed that the Americans were behind in this department." [38]

The Egyptians maintain that the entire Israeli operation west of the canal was guided by American reconnaissance and supplied by massive shipments of American equipment.

> Israel paid a high price for her adventure west of the Canal, an adventure she would not have dared stage had it not been for the American airlift which transported 20,000 tons of the most modern weaponry and ammunition in 1432 sorties that came directly to Israel's front-line thus saving her time and effort of carrying it all to the front. [39]

Meanwhile, as the Israeli advance continued west of the canal, the Egyptian position in Sinai was rapidly deteriorating. Lt. Gen. el Shazly describes the situation which had developed during Israel's cease-fire violations.

> By October 24 our military position was as bad as it could be. The Third Army -- two reinforced divisions, about 45,000 men and 250 tanks -- was completely cut off. They had four days' food and water. They were dominated by enemy armor on top of our own west bank

ramparts. Out of range of our surviving SAM units, they were open prey to enemy air attacks. They could not fight their way west: air strikes had already destroyed most of Third Army's limited stock of crossing equipment. They could not be relieved: enemy air and armor superiority was such that we could not break through. And after the enemy air force started

> systematic work, the Third Army soon had 600 casualties needing evaluation. Hopeless. [40]

The Soviet Union, furious at what appeared to be American encouragement of Israeli cease-fire violations, warned the United States that Soviet forces were prepared to intervene directly in order to enforce the cease-fire. The United States responded on October 25th by declaring

> a grade-three nuclear alert, the first of its kind since President Kennedy had outfaced the Kremlin in the Cuban missile crisis of 1962. It had hardly gone into effect than the Soviet threat -- real or imagined -- was dissipated. With the help of two more Security Council resolutions, a United Nations emergency force arrived in the battle zone. [41]

Disengagement negotiations began on October 27th at Kilometre 101, a landmark on the Cairo-Suez road. Meanwhile, Henry Kissinger began his so-called 'shuttle diplomacy'. Months of negotiations followed during which Sadat maneuvered for a separate peace. Ignoring Syrian and Palestinian claims, Sadat acquiesced to nearly every Israeli demand communicated by Kissinger.

On January 17, 1974, Sadat's 'go it alone' negotiations resulted in a disengagement agreement which allowed limited Egyptian forces to remain on the east bank and relocated Israeli forces some 15 miles inland. The United Nations patrolled a narrow strip of land between the Egyptian and Israeli zones. Sadat abandoned all demands for the return

of occupied territories and promised to reopen the Suez Canal to Israeli shipping. The Syrians were left to negotiate a separate agreement.

Conclusions

So the October War ended in a stalemate. Egypt had gained a few miles of territory along the Suez Canal, but otherwise the situation remained much the same as it had been after the 1967 war. The June 1967 defeat or 'setback' had developed into a 'war of attrition' which, in 1970, gave way to a state of 'no war - no peace'. The 1973 'war of liberation' resulted only in a state of 'no victory - no defeat.' [42]

Nevertheless, the October War proved that the Egyptian military had been transformed into a competent and highly-motivated combat force. Initial successes were not, as Mohamed Heikal points out, exploited with sufficient energy or imagination, but the plan for Operation Badr was excellent. "For five days the victory for Arab arms was almost complete, and no praise can be too high for the men of all ranks who made it possible." [43]

Indeed, the performance of the Egyptian military did much to restore Arab dignity after the ignominious defeat of 1967. Furthermore, Israel and its chief ally, the United States, had been forced to reevaluate Arab power in the Middle East. According to American historians David Hirst and Irene Beeson:

> The war, the creditable military performance of the 'blood Arabs' and the economic disruption wrought by the 'oil Arabs' had come as a shock to a superpower predisposed to look at the Middle East through Zionist spectacles. [44]

The October War also taught several important strategic and tactical lessons. Lt. Gen. Fouad Nassar, Director of Military Intelligence and Reconnaissance for the Egyptian Ministry of War, identifies one such lesson.

> The October 1973 War has shattered the myth of the geographical security of borders. Prior to October 1973, Israel achieved military victories from borders it considered unsafe, while in October 1973, it was defeated from lines it regarded as very secure. [45]

Mohamed Heikal reaches a similar conclusion:

> The successful crossing of the Suez Canal and the overrunning of the Bar-Lev line proved the vulnerability of static defence lines and shattered the Israeli doctrine of the efficacy of 'secure natural frontiers'. The closure of Bab el-Mandeb and the 'oil weapon' added their own commentary on this doctrine. [46]

The primary reason for the vulnerability of static defence lines is explained by Lt. Gen. el Shazly. "Invariably, the main reason why defensive lines collapse after penetration -- the Maginot line in 1940, the Siegreid line in 1945 -- is the absense of mobile reserves." [47]

El Shazly's contention in regard to insufficient reserve forces applies to the crossing as well as the counter-crossing of the canal. The surprise of the crossing caught Israel without the necessary forces to thwart the attack. Later, Egypt left critically weakened reserve units to guard the west bank of the canal, particularly in the highly vulnerable area of Ismailia and Deversoir. According to Egyptian Lt. Generals Adly Hassan Said and Farouk el-Sheikh, the October War underscored the importance of that region.

> It established and demonstrated, in Egypt's military geography, that the first strategic objective for whoever crosses the Suez Canal from the East, was the town of Ismailia, followed in importance by the towns of Suez and Port Said, in consideration of the fact that they control the Canal's entries. [48]

The issue of reserve strength in the Ismailia-Deversoir corridor was the primary cause of friction between President Sadat and his Chief of Staff, Lt. Gen. el Shazly. Although Sadat refused to follow

el Shazly's recommendation to redeploy, he blamed his chief of staff for failing to crush the Israeli counter-crossing.

> On October 16 I ordered Chief of Staff Said Hussein al-Shazli [sic] to go to Deversoir to handle the counter-attack on the spot. It wouldn't have been difficult on that day to deal with the infiltrating forces; it was a race against time. If he had carried out the orders that both Marshal Ali and I had given him, and at the times fixed by me -- to beseige the area around the Bitter Lakes and so stop the advance of the trickle of men that had already crossed and confine them to the narrow strip they had captured -- it would have been easy to destroy them. Once there, he could have done it in a matter of hours. [49]

Sadat's assessment does not, however, take into account that neither he nor his staff at GHQ had realized the scope of the Israeli operation until several days later. Nevertheless, in spite of the fact that subsequent events proved that el Shazly's recommendations had been well-founded, Sadat persisted in blaming him. Sadat later claimed in his memoirs, In Search of Identity, that he had secretly relieved el Shazly of command on the night of October 19th. [50] According to el Shazly's memoirs, The Crossing of Suez, the dismissal did not take place until December 12, 1973.

In el Shazly's judgement the ultimate responsibility for the outcome of the war belongs to the man who had appointed himself Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces -- President Anwar el-Sadat.

> The President had thrown away the greatest army Egypt had ever assembled. He had thrown away the biggest airlift the Soviet Union had ever mounted. He had thrown away the greatest collaborative effort the Arabs had achieved in a generation. [51]

Mohamed Heikal blames Sadat for more than the military defeat. Heikal's analysis of Sadat's entire career focuses on the eventually

assassinated leader's unwillingness to allow any challenge to his personal judgement. In Heikal's opinion, Sadat insisted upon playing the part of the only one qualified to make crucial decisions -- even when such decisions were, in reality, beyond his capabilities.

> In retrospect it can be seen that Sadat's chief mistake was to sacrifice long-term strategic assets for short-term tactical manoeuvres. [sic] It is true to say that after the October War he had a greater opportunity than had fallen to any ruler of Egypt in modern times -- greater than was open even to Mohamed Ali or to Nasser. But he threw it all away. . . His approach to problems was based on fantasy, not on reality. Lack of knowledge and understanding could be concealed for a time by the make-believe contemporary world of cameras and microphones, but as soon as the actor was removed, the stage he had occupied was seen to be deserted, the scenery and props dismantled, and the audience vanished. [52]

Sadat carefully controlled the flow of wartime information to his subjects. Mahmoud Diab skillfully dramatizes the way in which news of the war reached the people of rural Egypt. The sources available to Tumayra and the validity of the information they impart are the principal subjects of the next section of this study.

II. Tumayra's View of the War

Messenger from Tumayra Village is not a story about the fighting of the 1973 war. Mahmoud Diab uses the fictitious characters and environment of Tumayra to show how information about the war reached the people in remote rural areas and how these peasants reacted to the news they received. Diab chooses Ahmad Abū 'Ārif as his central character and as the villagers' news authority. Abū 'Ārif is an old peasant who, over the years, has taught himself to read. He has since transformed

his compulsion to read into an habitual scrutiny of daily newspapers. But newspapers are not Tumayra's only source of news. Other sources include domestic and foreign radio broadcasts, letters from and personal appearances by soldiers, and even gossip.

Six of Diab's principal characters provide or represent different sources of news and information about the war. Fikrī Abū Ismā'īl, a young soldier briefly home on leave before the war, hints at an upcoming, important military operation. Mahrūs, a young boy who owns a tempermental transistor radio, hears the first official communique which announces the surprise attack. Ahmad Abū 'Ārif not only provides newspaper perspectives, but also interprets and explains for his fellow villagers the news from other sources. Hājj Dasūqī, Fikrī's uncle, listens to foreign news broadcasts and provides a deeper political perspective than Abū 'Ārif is equipped to comprehend. Gābir Abū Sa'īd, a soldier at the front who never appears in person, writes a letter home which indicates that the Egyptian forces have been forced to sit out a cease-fire in spite of their desire to resume fighting. Sutūhī, a young man whose physical disabilities have barred him from the military, reports gossip about popular resistance in the combat zone, and he longs to take part in the underground movement.

The story unfolds during September, October, and November of 1973. The first three scenes of Act I occur in late September. These scenes introduce the principle characters and establish a sense of life in Tumayra. Fikrī's visit during these scenes provides a pre-war, military point-of-view.

The fourth and final scene of Act I takes place on October 6th when the villagers first learn that the war has begun. Mahrūs becomes important because he owns a radio. The first two scenes of Act II also transpire in October. Scene 1 shows the villagers sharing Abū 'Ārif's proud explanations of apparently accurate official news reports which proclaim widespread Arab victories. This scene probably happens between October 7th and 17th. Scene 2 would occur between October 17th and 22nd, after the counter-crossing but before the first cease-fire.

During this scene Hājj Dasūqī, who apparently listens to foreign radio broadcasts, belittles Abū 'Ārif's grasp of the situation and predicts that the superpowers will soon push for a cease-fire. The final scene of Act II is set during November when Hājj Dasūqī's predictions have apparently come to pass, but a letter from Gābir Abū Sa'īd in Sinai reveals that the army is still eager to fight. The Group encourages Abū 'Ārif to travel to Cairo for answers to all their questions.

Act III compresses the next two consecutive November days into three scenes. The second scene deals with Abū 'Ārif's experiences in Cairo, and the third witnesses his return to Tumayra. Scene 1 shows Sutūhī in Abū 'Ārif's place as watchman at Dr. Bāhir's orchard in Tumayra. During this scene Sutūhī provides a new perspective of the war. Rumors and gossip fuel Sutūhī's description of the popular resistance movement and lead him to fantasize about joining the struggle.

Table Three chronologically correlates information from a variety of sources. Month by month and scene by scene Diab's characters take turns providing new messages and new perspectives. The mood among Tumayra's peasants fluctuates according to the latest news reports.

The following discussion of Diab's principal wartime messengers -- Fikrī, Mahrūs, Abū 'Ārif, Dasūqī, Gābir, and Sutūhī -- elaborates upon the information outlined in Table Three. Included in the discussion are excerpts from Diab's play and quotations from official and historical sources. Did Egyptian news sources reliably report the events of the war? Did the news actually unfold as Diab suggests?

<u>Fikrī Abū Ismā'īl</u>

Although Fikrī is an important character in several respects, he is especially important, in terms of the war, as a personification of an idealized military hero. Already judged honorable, brave and generous by his fellow Tumayra peasants, Fikrī has recently won military

Table Three - Tumayra's News of the War

Chronology Act/Scene	Chief Messenger	Source or Means of Communications	Subject of Message Content of News	Reactions to News Popular Response	Actual History of Wartime Events
September I. 1-3	Fikrī	Soldier on Leave	Hints of Important Upcoming Operation	Ignorance	Pre-war Secrecy
October I. 4	Mahrūs	Initial Radio Communique	News of Surprise Attack	Wonder	Operation Badr (October 6th)
II. 1	Abū 'Ārif	Newspapers Radio Reports Map #1	Explanation of Crossing	Pride	Sinai Battles
II. 2	Dasūqī	Foreign Broadcasts Map #2	News of Counter-Crossing and Signs of Interference	Confusion	Operation Gazelle (Oct. 16th-24th)
November II. 3	Gābir	Letter from the Front	Hope for Renewed Fighting	Dismay	Cease-fire Kilometre 101 Kissenger
III. 1	Sutūhī	News and Gossip Map #3	Rumors of Popular Resistance Movement	Determination	Disengagement Negotiations

recognition by earning the rank of corporal. News of this promotion generates an enthusiastic speech from Abū 'Ārif.

> Abū 'Ārif: . . . By God, if they knew how valuable you are and how much we respect you, they'd have made you an officer. You're a very worthy man, Fikrī. [53]

Fikrī describes his situation more modestly.

> Fikrī: Thanks be to God. I'm doing all right. I keep my eyes and ears open. I'm good with weapons and I've got a good reputation with our officers. [54]

Abū 'Ārif later describes the depth of Fikrī's personality.

> Abū 'Ārif: . . . He's good and tactful and polite, but when it comes to justice, he's like a panther. [55]

Fikrī attributes much to his military training.

> Fikrī: The military has opened my eyes and taught me a lot . . . It taught me that justice isn't lost as long as there are men to search for it. [56]

Whether or not the Egyptian people actually viewed the military with such respect prior to October 1973 is questionable. The 1967 defeat had made Arab armies the laughing stock of the world. Nevertheless, Fikrī's idealized personality is definitely indicative of the strong and widely-held desire to renew the fighting and restore Arab dignity. This desire undoubtedly motivated Egyptian soldiers to fight heroically when the war finally came.

Fikrī's presence in Tumayra during September 1973 raises another important question. Would an enlisted man have been allowed leave in the critical weeks before the October War? At least in terms of reserve units, the answer is 'yes' according to Lt. Gen. el Shazly

> From January to October 1, 1973, we summoned and then released our reservists 22 times, sometimes for a few days, sometimes for two weeks. The practice perfected the system. More important, the enemy got used to our mobilizations. They became routine training.

On September 27, 1973, we began yet another mobilization, telling the reservists they would be released on October 7. We summoned another batch on September 30, saying we would release them on October 10. On October 4, as a final touch, we demobilized 20,000 reservists (some of those who had been called on September 27). The enemy was lulled. [57]

A young soldier like Fikrī with pressing family business could easily have been granted two or three days leave without disturbing preparations for battle. Indeed, juggling troops was part of the plan to enhance the surprise. Refusing to grant leave might have raised suspicions and threatened the secrecy of the operation.

The question remains whether or not Fikrī knew that war was imminent. Twice during his September visit to Tumayra in the early scenes of the play Fikrī refers to an important, military project. [58] Initially, the prophetic impact of Fikrī's words does not register with his family and friends, but retrospectively, they hasten to remember or imagine subtle changes of behavior in Fikrī. Armed with hindsight they assume that Fikrī had had advance knowledge of the war.

Yet Operation Badr was such a closely-guarded secret that President Sadat did not allow his close confidant, Mohamed Heikal, to know about it until September 10th. [59] And according to el Shazly, orders pertaining to Operation Badr did not begin to filter down the military chain-of-command until October 1st when field commanders were first notified.

> For the next 48 hours only they were to know this. Their divisional commanders could be told on October 3 (D minus 3), their brigade commanders on October 4 (D minus 2), battalion and company commanders on October 5 (D minus 1) and their platoon commanders and men not until D-Day itself, six hours before H-Hour. [60]

So enlisted men like Fikrī could have had no access to the well-kept secret of war, but anyone aware of the widespread maneuvers which

the Egyptians had been holding every autumn since 1968 could have interpreted increased military activity as an important but routine event.

Diab does not challenge the villagers' conclusions by reminding them of routine maneuvers. Instead, the playwright allows Fikrī to seem like a prophet, a welcome herald who brings the long-awaited message that the country is finally on the verge of war.

Mahrūs

But Fikrī's news seems prophetic only in retrospect. The herald who actually brings news of the Crossing is a boy named Mahrūs. His source of information is a transistor radio, and he shares his news with his fellow villagers.

> Mahrūs: I was sitting in front of our house while my mother was inside, fixing dinner. I was holding this radio, turning the stations and looking for a song I like, but the radio's busted, and I can only hear one out of every ten words.
>
> The Group: (Anxiously, as if they hadn't heard the news before) And then?
>
> Mahrūs: After a while the announcer broke in, saying --
>
> The Third Peasant: (Prompting) Yes?
>
> Mahrūs: This is communique number one from our armed forces.
>
> Abū 'Ārif: (With extreme concern) And then?
>
> Mahrūs: He said that word had just come over the wire.
>
> Abū 'Ārif: What did it say?
>
> The Group: It said that our armies were moving.
>
> Mahrūs: Yes. It said that our armies were on the move. [61]

The Group which is led by Mahrūs includes at least half a dozen Tumayra peasants. Among them are Sutūhī and Bura'ī (servants of Hājj Dasūqī, Fikrī's uncle) and Hāmid Abū Ismā'īl (Fikrī's younger brother).

The Group seeks out Abū 'Ārif in the final scene of Act I. They find him alone on the bench in front of Dr. Bāhir's orchard, reading the last of the morning newspaper. When the Group approaches excitedly, demanding that Abū 'Ārif read them the newspaper account of the military situation, he is initially bewildered for he has read no such news. At first the Group doubts that Abū 'Ārif can actually read: one of them insists that the old man only looks at the pictures. The illiterate peasants have always made fun of Abū 'Ārif's compulsive reading -- his name actually means 'Father of Knowing', but they mockingly refer to him as 'Father Newspaper' behind his back. Now, however, the Group cannot disguise their disappointment when Abū 'Ārif appears unable to enlighten them.

Abū 'Ārif eventually grasps the situation when he realizes that the information from the radio communique could not possibly have been in the newspaper. "Does a morning paper bring afternoon news?" he exclaims, rebuking Mahrūs. [62] He proceeds to interrogate Mahrūs, and in spite of the boy's hazy memory, Abū 'Ārif deduces that Egyptian forces have crossed the Suez Canal into Sinai.

> Abū 'Ārif: (Shaking with excitement as he realizes the consequences of the matter) And since we've entered Sinai, we must have broken the Bar-Lev Line . . . This means war, children. [63]

In an effort to elaborate Abū 'Ārif almost confuses the issue.

> Abū Ārif: . . . To put it simply, we've moved from a state of "No war and No peace" to a full-scale, comprehensive war.
>
> A Voice: . . . What does comprehensive war mean?
>
> A Voice: . . . It means no holding back. [64]

Throughout the play Abū 'Ārif reports his information accurately. His analysis of the transition from "No war and No peace" to "full-scale, comprehensive war" is a common historical explanation. Abū 'Ārif's fault is his pride in his knowledge. He often tries too obviously to give his statements greater authority and impact by

flaunting his newspaper vocabulary. Later in the play the limits of Abū 'Ārif's comprehension become apparent, but for now, with his successful initial analysis, Abū 'Ārif has earned the Group's respect, and he soon replaces Mahrūs as its leader.

The Group is, of course, eager for further news. Unfortunately, the radio is no longer working, and Mahrūs refuses at first to let anyone else touch it. Having lost the spotlight to Abū 'Ārif, Mahrūs is reluctant to relinquish control of his own source of information. Eventually, the Group shames him into sharing the radio, and when Abū 'Ārif finally determines that only new batteries are needed, the Group begins to take up a collection for replacements.

At this moment Umm Fikrī arrives in search of her son Hāmid. Her business with him is temporarily forgotten, however, when she learns that her other son is at war. Four young men, in addition to Fikrī Abū Ismā'īl, represent Tumayra in the army: Gābir Abū Sa'īd and Husayn Bū 'Awadillah work with anti-aircraft artillery; Ibrāhīm Abū Sharaf and Muhammad Abū Sālih serve elsewhere in the war zone; tanks are Fikrī's specialty.

The Group, which was so excited just moments before, has now grown concerned at the thought of friends and relatives in danger. Hāmid, filled with pride at the image of his brother's potential glory, grows exasperated at the change of mood his mother's forebodings have wrought. "All the people are delighted and merry, and you are turning it into a sad occasion," he brashly admonishes Umm Fikrī. [65] Abū 'Ārif diplomatically interjects an explanation of the high regard the village holds for its fighting men.

> <u>Abū 'Ārif</u>: . . . It's an honor for whoever fights today, woman. An honor for us and for Tumayra that one of our children is among the fighters. It's the war of liberation, Umm Fikrī. [66]

Honor and courage are traditional Arab values, but so are humility and patience.

> The Arabs know that war is not a criterion of how civilised people are, but rather a test of their ability for patience, for developing caution aganist [sic] falling into its evil arms, and last but not least, for learning not to be arrogant or conceited when the fortunes of war smiled on them. [67]

Act I comes to a close as the village peasants pool their meager resources and set off to buy new batteries. Everyone is eager for news, and no one more so than Umm Fikrī who begs to be allowed to contribute if only Abū 'Ārif will promise to keep her informed.

Abū 'Ārif

The opening scene of Act II takes place several days later -- sometime between October 7th and 17th. Abū 'Ārif is enjoying his role as the village news authority. His ability to read and his prior knowledge of the general history of the situation have enabled Abū 'Ārif to interpret newspaper and radio reports and keep the Group informed about the progress of the war. No longer do they call him 'Father Newspaper'. Abū 'Ārif is now 'Father of All the News'. [68]

The first week of the war brought success to Egyptian forces, and news reports of their actions were generally accurate. President Sadat recollects ordering his staff to keep everyone informed of all developments. "In this war we'd like the people to know the truth, good or bad. We'd like them to expect to hear the truth, whatever it may be, at all times." [69] Lt. Gen. el Shazly specifies two early exceptions to Sadat's directive.

> Before the war, we resolved to avoid the lies and exaggerations which had so damaged the Arabs' reputation in previous battles. This time our communiques would tell the truth.
>
> There were, I confess, two exceptions. Our initial communiques embroidering the charge that Israel had

attacked first were untrue, though sanctified by long Israeli usage of the same ploy. And none of those photographs of our crossing were genuine. [70]

The charge against Israel was made to keep the United States and other pro-Zionist western powers off guard as long as possible. The ban on photographers at the Crossing was practical rather than strategic. "We expected far bloodier resistance than we met," explains el Shazly, "and we did not need the complication of photographers." [71]

At any rate, the news which has reached Tumayra is good. Among the villagers, initial surprise, awe, and wonder have changed to pride. Abū 'Ārif puts the Group's enthusiasm to voice in a speech to his daughter, 'Ayisha.

Abū 'Ārif: (With the self-reliance and confidence of an expert) Everything is fine, as God wishes it. Our Lord wanted us to survive to see days that were sweeter than dreams, 'Ayisha. It's like being dead and brought back to life. . . The whole world is amazed. They're standing on one leg. Nobody believed that Arab soldiers could be so daring. [72]

'Ayisha, however, has more personal concerns. She is secretly engaged to Fikrī Abū Ismā'īl who, along with four other young men from Tumayra, are somewhere in the midst of the fighting. None of Tumayra's soldiers has yet written a letter home, and 'Ayisha is anxious for news of her beloved. She is also concerned for her father who has become so wrapped up in news of the war that he has begun to neglect his family responsibilities. He rebukes 'Ayisha when she tries to get him to leave the Group and come home.

Abū 'Ārif: So while the world is standing on one leg, you want me to sit down with your mother? Go ahead, 'Ayisha. Go on home. And tell your mother to calm down a little and stop making such a fuss. [73]

'Ayisha is not the only one concerned about the safety of a loved one. Fikrī's mother, sister, and brother are also anxious, and an old

peasant named Abū Sharaf is worried about his son, Ibrāhīm. When Abū Sharaf briefly takes time from his work to join the Group, Abū 'Ārif illustrates his explanation of the Crossing for Abū Sharaf's benefit by drawing a map in the sand. The map not only locates the principal battlefields; it also illustrates the naiveté of Tumayra's peasants.

Abū 'Ārif: . . . (He draws a long line on the ground with his staff.) Do you see this line?

The Group: (With complete understanding) It's the Suez Canal. . . .

Abū 'Ārif: (He draws a point with his staff at the upper end of the line.) And do you see this?

The First Peasant: Suez.

Abū 'Ārif: (Indignantly) Port Sa'īd, stupid.

Voices: (Drawing the attention of the First Peasant) It's Port Sa'īd, my brother.

The First Peasant: (Apologetically, he looks at the point again.) Yes, by God. It is Port Sa'īd. (Abū 'Ārif draws a point at the bottom of the line.)

The Group: That's Suez.

Abū 'Ārif: (Pointing with his staff) All of this part, then, is Sinai. . . Occupied Palestine is here, Sīdī. (He points to the branch which Abū Sharaf was carrying.) The place where the branch is. All right?

The Group: Great.

Abū 'Ārif: So where, then, is Syria?

The Group: Where?

Abū 'Ārif: (He points with his staff beyond the branch.) Here. And here are the Golan Heights you were asking about.

Abū Sharaf: Very far away, too.

Sutūhī: But where is Tumayra, Abū 'Ārif?

Abū 'Ārif: (He falls into confusion for a moment.) Tumayra? We're standing on it. [74]

Unknown to Abū 'Ārif and the Group, Israeli counter-attacks may already have been inflicting heavy Syrian losses. As early as October 9th, according to Mohamed Heikal, Sadat considered warning his people of a possible Syrian defeat. "Lets go to the people," Sadat reportedly suggested, "and tell them that we are going to fight even alone. I can talk to them as Churchill talked to the British in 1940." [75] Egyptian forces, however, were still holding firm in western Sinai, and Egyptian morale was at a peak. Consequently, Sadat rejected the apparently unnecessary option of rallying his people with a Churchill-like appeal. Instead, Sadat ordered a massive assault on the Israeli-held Sinai passes, an operation allegedly intended to take pressure off the Syrian front. Lt. Gen. el Shazly outlines what he considers to be the absurdity of Sadat's decision. "Egypt could have forced Israel to switch resources from Golan to Sinai only by posing a significant threat to the security of Israel. At no point did our forces have that capacity." [76]

Furthermore, in el Shazly's analysis, the attack could not have forced Israel to transfer armor from Golan to Sinai because "Israel had eight armored brigades in Sinai, more than enough to contain any Egyptian attack." [77] Besides, the Sinai operation took place on October 14th, two days after the Syrian front had stabilized. [78]

When the supposed diversionary campaign was actually mounted on October 14th, Egypt suffered its heaviest losses, especially of men and tanks, in the war to date. Simultaneously, the quality of official news communiques changed. Henceforth, according to el Shazly, "the veracity declined until, with the enemy penetration at Deversoir, they succumbed to straightforward lying." [79]

No hint of bad news occupies the minds of Abū 'Ārif and the Group as Act II, Scene I, comes to a close. After Abū 'Ārif has explained his map of the war zone, the peasants of Tumayra go about their business, inspired by a vision of ultimate Arab victory.

Hajj Dasuqi

On the evening of October 19th Mohamed Heikal visited President Sadat to discuss an important development. "I had for some time been worried because it appeared we were losing the information war," recollects Heikal. [80]

> After the first days of the Canal crossing when, if anything, our reports underestimated our achievements, the information services seemed to have suffered a sort of heart attack. Almost nothing came out of them. People lost confidence and went back to their old habit of listening to foreign broadcasts. [81]

Between October 17th and 22nd, the time-frame of Act II, Scene 2, rumors of the Israeli counterattack conflicted confusingly with official news reports. The government continued to insist that a mere 'pocket' of enemy forces had infiltrated the African side of the Suez Canal while, in fact, the Israelis were hourly expanding their control of the canal's western bank.

Tumayra's first indication that official news reports were no longer accurate comes from Hājj Dasūqī. Recently returned from a business trip, the Hājj has brought news "that the Jews took Suez and Ismā'ilīya." [82] The Group has heard only that enemy units were fighting near Deversoir, south of Ismā'ilīya and north of Suez. Dasūqī's information apparently comes from foreign sources which the village peasants refuse to heed. They label the Hājj a traitor, a saboteur of morale, and dismiss his news as "slander and lies." [83]

Most of Egypt's population was, in 1973, and remains today, too poor to own radios and too uneducated to evaluate the quality of whatever limited information might filter down to them. Among the rural peasants of Tumayra, Hājj Dasūqī is the only one rich enough to own a radio that could receive foreign broadcasts. Wealthy and powerful by Tumayra standards, the Hājj has a reputation for greedy and ruthless behavior. Whatever Dasūqī's source -- whether gossip encountered during

business travels or 'lies and slander' from foreign media -- the village peasants distrust the Hājj and suspect anything associated with him. From the outset the Group has avoided acknowledging the Hājj as a valid source of news. Even on the first day of the war, when the batteries had failed in Mahrūs' radio, the Group had refused to consider Dasūqī's radio as an alternative.

Abū 'Ārif: Is there another radio in the village?

The First Peasant: Hājj Dasūqī's radio. (Then to Hāmid) Your uncle, Hāmid.

Hāmid: I don't have any uncles.

Abū 'Ārif: Let Hājj Dasūqī take his radio straight to hell. Don't get upset, Hāmid.

Hāmid: Why should I get upset?

The Third Peasant: Wouldn't he let us listen to his radio?

Bura'ī: On his radio all the news would be a lie.

Abū 'Ārif: We'd be sure to find him turning it to the enemy broadcasts. The man has a split personality.

(The last sentence descends on their heads and silences their tongues.)

Mahrūs: (With uncertainty) What does that mean, Uncle Ahmad?

Abū 'Ārif: It means that for him the whole world is on one side. And his own interests are on the other.[84]

Abū 'Ārif's description of Dasūqī as a 'split personality' reinforces the Group's attitude toward the Hājj, but Abū 'Ārif's penchant for reciting expressions without fully understanding them emphasizes the superficiality of the old man's perceptions. In Act II, Scene 2, after conflicting reports about the Israeli counter-crossing have thrown the Group into confusion, Abū 'Ārif finally compares information with Dasūqī. The Group gathers around as the Hājj watches Abū 'Ārif draw a second version of his canal-zone map.

(Abū 'Ārif draws a small circle beside the line.)

The Group: That's al-Murra Lake.

Abū 'Ārif: One of the bitter lakes along the canal. Are you with me?

Dasūqī: Go on.

Abū 'Ārif: (Using his staff for explanation) Our army crossed from here to here. And it broke the Bar-Lev Line and kept on fighting courageously from here to here. (He makes a mark along the line.) . . . So what did the Zionists do? They worked out a subterfuge and formulated it and went inside like this. (He draws a line perpendicular to the first line, crossing through the circle.) They slipped away like thieves -- but that is possible because the line of confrontation is long, and only God is ever vigilant. And this is a war of ebb and flow.

The Group: And only the final result matters. [85]

Dasūqī, however, does not share Abū 'Ārif's optimism. The Hājj proceeds to denigrate Abū 'Ārif's simplistic analysis and to remind the old man of political realities.

Dasūqī: We aren't living alone in the world, Ahmad. The world is full of countries. And the super-powers have interests in every area and from every perspective. Why else would they be super-powers? The world is no longer as it was. Now, if someone screamed on one side of the earth, somebody on the other side would get a headache. Well, what do you think, Abū 'Ārif? It seems you've been asleep.

Abū 'Ārif: I don't understand what you're trying to say, Hājj.

Dasūqī: I'm trying to tell you that conferences are going on all the time among the nations. And after an hour or two they'll say: That's as far as you go. You and he must stop where you are.

Abū 'Ārif: You mean that we have to stop the war? And leave the Zionists on the west of the canal? And we can't

lift a hand against them?

Dasūqī: What do the super-powers care about besides their own interests?

Abū 'Ārif: (In agitation) I reject this talk in its entirety.

Mahrūs: And anybody who believes it is a traitorous war-criminal.

Dasūqī: The sea of politics is vast, Abū 'Ārif. If you keep swimming in it for a year, you won't get anywhere. You can only understand so much, and then your mind stops. (Pointing to the map which Abū 'Ārif has drawn) This is as far as your mind is able to go. As for other matters, they are for other people. [86]

Abū 'Ārif refuses to believe Dasūqī's words. After the Hājj and his henchman, Musaylihi, have withdrawn, Abū 'Ārif shouts defiantly to the Group: "They only want to destroy our morale." [87] He orders Mahrūs to turn on the radio, and it plays a battle hymn as the Group departs and Scene 2 comes to an end.

Gābir Abū Sa'Īd

By the time of the United Nations cease-fire resolutions on October 22nd and 24th, the Egyptian public no longer knew what to believe. From one source they might hear predictions of victory and from another evidence of defeat. By November, however, the fighting had obviously stopped, and the question on many minds was: 'When is it going to start again?'

The final scene of Act III discovers a despondant Abū 'Ārif and a frustrated Group. Hājj Dasūqī's predictions of super-power intervention have apparently come true. Abū 'Ārif's questions and comments have become rhetorical lamentations.

Abū 'Ārif: . . . What I'd like to know is what are the intentions of a country like America towards us: It gives

the Zionists an unlimited supply of weapons to make war with us -- Phantom jets, tanks with electronical control systems, remote-control artillary, napalm, blue plague -- and yet they keep saying they want peace in the region. But how's it going to come about? Honestly, isn't it mind-boggling?

Mahrūs: It's like you told us, Uncle Ahmad. It's politics.

Abū 'Ārif: And politics are secrets and tricks in the dark and damnable intentions and I don't understand it at all. [88]

Abū 'Ārif includes the Soviet Union in his deliberations.

Abū 'Ārif: . . . Let's say this is America and these are its policies. But why are the Soviets keeping quiet? Why are they following America's line? They let America stalk about arrogantly with no challenge in the region. I tell you it's mind-boggling. [89]

The Group reminds Abū 'Ārif of the extensive knowledge he has already shared with them, but the old man puts his and the Group's perceptions into a wider perspective.

Abū 'Ārif: . . . What do all of you know compared to what there is in the world? All that you know is less than one word in a book this high. (He gestures slowly with his hand.) What do I know compared to what al-Sādiq Abū 'Umar knows? Or the editor-in-chief of this paper? Or the Minister of Culture? [90]

Al-Sādiq Abū 'Umar grew up in Tumayra but moved to Cairo years before and eventually became a successful reporter. Abū 'Ārif's fascination with newspapers stems from al-Sādiq's influence. Mention of Abū 'Umar to the dejected Group, however, generates an idea: Why not write to al-Sādiq for explanations? Better yet, why not go to him in person?

Just as Abū 'Ārif begins to weigh the practicality of such an expensive trip, Gābir Abū Sa'īd's mother arrives with a letter from her son. The Group gathers around to hear Abū 'Ārif read aloud the news from the front lines. Writing from an artillery unit deep in Sinai, Gābir tells of Egyptian victories in the early fighting and of the frustration the soldiers feel at having to obey the terms of the cease-fire.

> The Voice of Gābir: And don't any of you think the war is over . . . It's only a vacation is what young Hasan says who is here with me. All the boys here say that we will fight again. [91]

Gābir's enthusiasm raises the spirits of the village peasants and rekindles their hopes for eventual Egyptian victory. The Group's excitement develops into a plan to send Abū 'Ārif to Cairo in order to find out -- from military headquarters and especially from al-Sādiq Abū 'Umar's newspaper -- the truth about the current situation. Act II ends as Abū 'Ārif's travel preparations begin.

Sutūhī

A young man named Sutūhī provides most of the gossip which circulates in Tumayra. Sutūhī, a household servant and errand-boy of the Hājj, often taps his master's sources and contributes this information to the Group. He also follows Abū 'Ārif's explanations very closely, especially those related to the activities of the popular resistance.

Sutūhī is motivated by a frustrated desire to participate in the war. The same age as Fikrī Abū Ismā'īl, Sutūhī was rejected by the military board of selection because of his physical disabilities. According to Mahmoud Diab's description of the character,

> Sutūhī . . . suffered an accident as a child. His bones were fractured and his growth stunted. Now, a sickly

> protrusion sticks out the front of his chest. His left arm is paralyzed and his body is feeble. [92]

Unfit to be drafted into active military service, Sutūhī keeps his eyes and ears open for an honorable alternative. When the first news of war reaches Tumayra, he begs Abū 'Ārif for suggestions, and the old man responds with cautious diplomacy.

> Sutūhī: . . . Am I of no use to the army, Abū 'Ārif? No use at all?
>
> Abū 'Ārif: (Cautiously) Military conscription means selection, Sutūhī. They take one for the military, and they leave another one for the internal home front. And each of them is useful.
>
> Sutūhī: But I could be useful in the military, too, even if I just serve things for them. (Pause) I wish they would take me. [93]

Sutūhī soon discovers a service he is equipped to provide. He spies on Hājj Dasūqī for Abū 'Ārif and the Group. Through Sutūhī they learn of the counter-crossing and predictions of a cease-fire.

The gossip grapevine, according to western historians David Hirst and Irene Beeson, became an increasingly important source of information as the war turned against Egypt.

> It did not take long for the people, in Cairo and the country as a whole, to sense that something had gone badly wrong, and already, on 17 October, news was spreading by word of mouth that the situation at Deversoir was far more serious than the army command or the newspapers admitted. News has a way of filtering through the strictest censorship even, or perhaps especially, in wartime. In spite of the desert the front was at some points virtually adjacent to the densely populated rural heartlands. Wounded men, ambulance drivers, hospital staff gave away 'military secrets' unwittingly and these spread through the populace with amazing speed. Soon, rumor had it that the

> Israeli army had not only set up bridgeheads, it was moving on the capital itself. The effect was electric. [94]

The situation which Hirst and Beeson describe could, perhaps, have developed into a wide-spread, popular resistance movement, but President Sadat chose not to rally his people.

> This time, the gamut of emotions -- anguish, grief, joy, pride and hope -- that any people feels when its fighting sons are being truly put to the test, possessed the nation. 'Give us arms,' was the cry. Now something of a Battle of Britain was gaining ground. No one would have blamed him if, like Churchill in 1940, he had admitted the full measure of the nations peril.
>
> Instead, he did his best to hide it. Rather than put his trust in the army commanders and the people, in Egyptian and Arab 'self-reliance' -- the phrase so often on his lips since the expulsion of the Soviet experts -- he turned in desperation to the superpowers. [95]

Sutūhī's first awareness of resistance fighters comes from Abū 'Ārif in Act III, Scene 2.

> Abū 'Ārif: . . . Our boys in the west are like the ones in the east. They don't keep quiet. Every bullet they fire hits one of the enemy. And every shell they shoot from our cannons hits one of their tanks. And the army on the west side isn't alone. The popular resistance is there, too. And the Fedayeen commandos and everyone our Lord has given the strength to carry a weapon. Even if it's just a stick.
>
> Sutūhī: (Breathlessly) All the people there are fighting, Uncle Ahmad?
>
> Abū 'Ārif: All the people.
>
> Sutūhī: There isn't a draft? No examinations and selections? No 'take this one and leave that one'?
>
> Abū 'Ārif: There isn't anything like that.

Sutūhī: (Reflecting) Nothing at all.

(Sutūhī sinks into a wistful fantasy.) [96]

Sutūhī's fantasies continue, and gradually he becomes obsessed with dreams of joining the fight. At the beginning of Act III, while Abū 'Ārif is travelling to Cairo and Sutūhī is watching over the orchard, Sutūhī draws the latest version of Abū 'Ārif's map for the old man's daughter. After locating the war zone, he becomes increasingly a part of the situation he describes.

> Sutūhī: And where is Deversoir, Sutūhī? Right here. (As he puts a dot in the middle of the stretch between Ismā'ilīya and Suez.) The war of popular resistance is still raging there, 'Ayisha. All the people are fighting. Without selections or inductions. Anyone who can carry a weapon -- even if it's only a stick -- everybody's fighting . . . . The way from here to there is easy to understand. They go out from here to al-Sālihīya. (As he puts a dot farther away) And from there through al-Ma'āhidī to Ismā'nīya. They say the road that goes there is paved. And in Ismā'nīya we turn off to the right like so and keep going. Just a little. And we meet the Zionists in front of us.
>
> 'Ayisha: You don't mean to say you plan to go there, Sutūhī? [97]

As 'Ayisha realizes how disturbed Sutūhī has become, Abū Sharaf arrives with a letter from his son, Ibrāhīm. Since Abū 'Ārif is not available to read it, Abū Sharaf goes off in search of someone else. The opening soene of Act III ends as 'Ayisha reveals her own worries and Sutūhī tries to console her.

> 'Ayisha: (In misery) Everybody sent their family letters, Sutūhī. Except Fikrī. Even though I made him promise not to forget to send one.
>
> Sutūhī: If he was able to write a letter, he would send one . . . Don't worry . . . All of a sudden you'll look up

> and there he'll be in front of you. In person. And a smile on his face. [98]

al-Sādiq Abū 'Umar

The last two scenes of Mahmoud Diab's play deal with Abū 'Ārif's round-trip journey to the Cairo newspaper office of al-Sādiq Abū 'Umar. The Tumayra-born journalist never appears, however. Al-Sādiq is, in fact, one of several unseen-but-important characters whose name is often mentioned or whose presence is frequently anticipated.

Questions about the war and about the wider political situation are not the only lines of inquiry Abū 'Ārif hopes to pursue. Other questions deal with the land. Mahmoud Diab dramatizes Tumayra's struggle for land in a way which parallels Egypt's fight to regain its territory from Israel. The land issue is also vital to the Palestinian people, and the following section provides historical background information on land distribution in Egypt and Palestine as a prelude to discussion of the land issue in Diab's play.

MESSAGE TWO: LAND

Diab's story of peasant revolt against unscrupulous landlords is not mere invention. Peasant uprisings are a matter of historical record. Many, perhaps most, of these disputes concern the land. The land which feeds the people is often owned by absentee landlords, but sometimes it is expropriated and exploited by wealthy residents within a village community.

The first three parts of this section deal with the land issue from historical perspectives, primarily Egyptian but also Palestinian. Part four deals with Diab's play in light of historical parallels and possible symbolism.

I. Egypt before the Revolution

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, most Egyptian land virtually belonged to the state in the person of its ruler. Administrative control of landed property was relegated to feudal lords who essentially purchased from the ruler the right to levy taxes. As long as regional lords met their tax payments, they were free to govern as they chose and to keep any surpluses for themselves.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Muhammad 'Alī abolished this system and laid the basis for the development of private ownership rights. His policies entailed reclassification and redistribution of land among its cultivators.

> It was divided into three grades according to its fertility; and every villager received a strip of each grade, making a holding of 3-5 feddans. These holdings . . . gradually became the peasants' private property. Muhammad 'Alī's policy might, on the face of it, have led to an equitable distribution of land, but, in actual fact, a thin stratum of large landowners had become sharply differentiated from the mass of fellahs by the end of the century. [99]

Initially, Muhammad 'Alī's land reforms merely constituted a new, direct system of taxation from which privileged intermediaries -- the ruler's principal competitors for power -- had been removed. Gradually, however, large estates began to accumulate, especially among the ruling family. Technological advances brought improvements in agriculture which resulted in widespread reclamation of heretofore uncultivatable land. Although much of this land was distributed among peasant farmers, large land grants went toward the settlement of Bedouin tribes, to influential government officials, and to relatives of Muhammad 'Alī.

> The family with the largest holdings of land in Egypt in the nineteenth century was unquestionably that of the ruling house of Muhammad 'Alī and, in that family, the

> largest landowner of all was always the ruling prince. [100]

But the formation of large estates was not the only important nineteenth-century change in the distribution of landed property.

> Some large landowners lost their property; some increased theirs at the expense of other people; medium-sized properties were formed; the fellah's small properties were fragmented, and often completely disappeared; and a class of landless peasants began to form. [101]

Among the poor, the ability to pay land taxes depended upon the productivity of the land. A bad harvest could put a fellah's taxes in arrears and enable someone richer to assume both the land and its tax burden. "The constant levying of men for the army and the corvee was an equally important cause of deserted villages, neglected fields, and forfeiture of land." [102]

By mid-century debt and dispossession had become a significant determinant of land distribution. As Egypt's rulers invested ever more heavily abroad, the domestic economy became more solidly based on cash payment instead of traditional payment in kind. An urban elite developed which joined owners of large and middle-sized estates in the practice of investing monetary wealth in land which could be leased or rented to tenants or sharecroppers. Village elites lost little time in following such examples.

> The population of Egyptian villages in the nineteenth century could be roughly divided into simple fellah families and rich families of notables. The heads of the notable families . . . concentrated a considerable proportion of the village's religious and secular offices in their hands. In fact, they and their families ruled all aspects of village life. They thus came to control a large part of village lands, which they converted into their private property. [103]

Another factor which, at mid-century, led to changes in land distribution was the enactment of inheritance laws.

> Under Muslim inheritance law an extremely large number of persons of varying degrees of kinship are entitled to share an estate; and not more than one-third of a person's property may be transferred by will. [104]

The effects of applying inheritance law to land ownership included fragmentation of small, middle, and large estates.

> Besides the effects of inheritance, many large landowners were high officials or otherwise engaged in politics, and the fate of their property was often linked with their political position or their relations with the ruler. [105]

As inheritance laws and fluctuating political popularity fragmented large holdings, and as tax burdens relieved small holders of their lands, the number of middle holders (5-50 feddans) increased to 35 percent of total available land by the end of the century. [106]

During the second half of the nineteenth century the demand for land increased while the supply of reclaimable lands decreased. By 1876 the Egyptian ruler had ceased to make large-scale land grants. Meanwhile, as agricultural prices outpaced prices of imports, many rich merchants competed for additions to their estates which could be developed for further profits. Thus, the land market witnessed stronger competition for lands already owned.

The fluctuating cotton market also contributed to increased demand for land. During the early 1860's when Egyptian cotton filled the void left by the American Civil War, monetary profits from foreign sales temporarily soared. Government spending, however, far exceeded income from trade surpluses. The Egyptian ruler, the Khedive Ismā'īl, borrowed heavily from France and England to finance extensive modernization projects, such as the Suez Canal and the Cairo Opera House, both of which were opened in 1869. The cotton boom ended abruptly, however, and Egypt's loans came due.

Ironically, perhaps, in light of the Egyptian government's history of foreclosing on tax delinquent properties, England foreclosed on Egypt's national debt. In 1882 the British occupation of Egypt began. Ostensibly limited to administrative control of the Egyptian economy instigated to insure the retrieval of investments, the British occupation was also motivated by Egypt's strategic importance as the junction of Africa, Asia, and Europe. Thus, the British used Egypt not only as a profitable market but as a military garrison to protect their empire.

With British occupation, fluctuations in the sizes of ruling class estates diminished, but rich middle-holders -- particularly absentee landlords based in urban areas but also village leaders and other notables in rural areas -- continued to expand their lands at the expense of the poor. Hence there arose a growing class of landless peasants.

Gabriel Baer of Hebrew University, Jerusalem, summarizes the history of nineteenth century land distribution in terms of five basic trends which appear below as outlined by Baer in A History of Landownership in Modern Egypt 1800-1950.

1. The Muhammad 'Alī family's private estates increased spectacularly until the end of the 1870's, when the lion's share was transferred to the state; the ruling family continued, however, to be the largest landowner in the country.
2. High officials and village notables grew in importance as landowners until after Ismā'īl's reign when new strata pushed them aside. Their families kept the estates, to some extent, but soon ceased to belong to either of these classes. Subsequently very few high officials became large landowners.
3. The settlement of Bedouin tribes was accompanied by an accumulation of large estates in the hands of their tribal heads, the shaikhs.

4. The 'ulamā' or religious leaders lost their leading position early in the century.
5. From the 1880's onwards a new class, the urban rich, rapidly became the chief class of landowners. [107]

As land-related changes continued along these lines during the first half of the twentieth century, the Egyptian agricultural cooperative movement began to develop. The government stifled a 1907 attempt by an Egyptian philanthropist named Omar Lutfy to form such organizations, but "by 1911 seventeen agricultural cooperatives had been founded, along with a General Central Syndicate to coordinate their efforts." [108] By 1925, 139 cooperatives shared a membership of 20,673. [109]

As the number of cooperatives increased, government control strengthened and regulation grew stricter, especially during the economic crisis spurred by World War II. Meanwhile, cooperatives expanded upon their basic supply and marketing functions and consolidated their financial power. In 1949 the Egyptian Agricultural Credit Bank was converted into the Agricultural Cooperative Bank. "By 1952, cooperatives numbered 2,103 and claimed a membership of 746,836." [110]

II. Post-Revolution Reform

Muhammad 'Alī's land reforms eventually led to private property rights, and the British occupation between 1882 and 1936 did nothing substantial to alter the ownership trends which had been established. Distribution of land had become so unbalanced by 1952 that rural Egypt was suffering incredible poverty while its corrupt leadership, personified by King Farūq, enjoyed nearly limitless privilege. Less than two months after the July 1952 revolution, the Free Officers of Gamal Abdel Nasser passed the first in a series of land reform laws.

> The first Agrarian Reform Law was issued by the new regime in September 1952, and put the maximum limit for

land ownership at 200 feddans per person . . . In 1958 the second Land Reform Law put the maximum ownership at 300 feddans for the person together with his wife and his dependent children. The third law, in 1961, lowered the maximum to 100 feddans per person without mentioning the family. Then in July 1969, it was decided that the maximum ownership should be 50 feddans per person and 100 per family, but a transitional period of two years was allowed for its implementation. [111]

Land reform was one of three modernization programs which the new regime promoted. Industrialization and land-reclamation goals were also pursued.

> The three elements were interrelated. The agrarian reform was supposed to divert private capital from the land market to industry; land reclamation was to increase the area available for redistribution and hence the number of beneficiaries; land reform, reclamation, and industrialization were all expected to contribute in different ways to employment, the growth of income, and greater equality. [112]

Nasser-era land reforms were not, however, determined by revolutionary upheavals among the rural peasants. As with all such developments since Muhammad 'Alī, land reform was legislated and executed from the top of Egypt's socio-political hierarchy rather than instigated by the working masses at the bottom.

> The principal aim of the Egyptian land reforms was to abolish the large estates and to create a vast class of small-holders. Thus, the reform was, in principle and practice, more akin to the liberal [sic] ideal of 'a regime of small peasant properties' rather than to any collectivist [sic] or socialist [sic] ideals. [113]

Large-holders, of course, objected to fragmentation of their estates, but Nasser's redistribution "of 17 percent of the cultivatable

land to benefit some 250,000 families, or about 8 percent of the fellahin" [114] generated greater enthusiasm from the lower classes.

Meanwhile, agrarian cooperatives continued to expand and multiply -- albeit under ever more strict government control. The early land legislation during the Nasser era changed both form and function of cooperatives. Membership after 1952 was no longer voluntary. "Formally, private ownership was maintained; in practice, a system of strong government tutelage was instituted." [115] In function, the new organizations grew increasingly production-oriented while continuing to regulate supply, marketing, and financing.

Throughout the Nasser era the government bureaucracy grew in size and complexity, however, and agricultural cooperatives sometimes became mired in administrative red tape. Sadat's economic policies also "had a dampening effect on the cooperative movement." [116] Nevertheless, cooperatives are still a cornerstone of the agricultural sector of the economy.

> For all their considerable faults, the cooperatives have complemented the regime's increased investments in agriculture by providing a means to bring expanded credit, improved agricultural inputs, and new farming techniques to the countryside. There is evidence that the peasants have regarded the cooperatives as a force for progress and as a tangible sign of the regime's commitment to reform, if not revolution, in the countryside. Moreover, overall production levels have undoubtedly been raised as a result of the cooperative efforts, even if the benefits were largely siphoned off to the more privileged groups in rural Egypt. Despite their failures, the cooperatives have brought more than red tape to Egypt's peasants. [117]

In general, post-revolution Egypt has progressed from an economy based almost entirely on agriculture to an economy in which manufacturing and services also form major sectors. Egypt's rural

population, however, has outgrown both its agricultural production capabilities and its arable land resources. Consequently, three-quarters of rural Egypt's population -- nearly twenty million people -- remain landless peasants, untouched by redistribution programs and other land reform measures.

III. The Palestinian Land Issue

Egypt and Palestine developed similar landed property rights during the nineteenth century. Both countries progressed during the Ottoman era from state ownership administered by regional tax collectors to private ownership directly taxable by the state. Palestine, however, remained under Ottoman control throughout the nineteenth century while Egypt maintained some degree of independence. After World War I and the British Mandate, both regions were ruled by the dictates of western economic interests, and the economies of both Egypt and Palestine gradually conformed to capitalist conditions. In both countries cash payment became a basic means of exchange.

> During Ottoman times, the Palestinian village was more or less a self-supporting unit, insulated from the fluxuations in the economy of modern capitalist economies and dependent for its prosperity on climate more than on any other condition. Exchange of goods was of minor significance; the use of money was limited.[118]

In both countries the cash-economy forced many peasants to sell their lands. The decline in availability of reclamable lands and its accompanying increase in demand joined with the larger burden of tax payment in currency to establish a growing class of urban landlords. This trend became particularly strong in Palestine where money lenders often repossessed lands which had been put up as collateral for tax related loans.

> Depletion of land, an increase in the tax burden, and a decline in the proportion of male wage-earners due to the

Turkish government's war involvement, forced many villagers to turn to urban money-lenders. Many turned over their land to owners from the cities in exchange for tax relief. The peasants were allowed to remain on the land while the owners paid the taxes -- until, of course, the land was sold to Zionist settlers. [119]

In Palestine land was measured not in feddans but in dunams, a smaller unit which equals 900 square meters. The distribution of land prior to World War II defines the rift between the landlord and tenant classes.

> Only 250 families owned over 4 million dunams of land; among them were the clans of major political leaders . . . The top 116 families averaged over 10,000 dunams each. This small class of landlords (5,300 people in the 1931 census) owned almost as much land as was cultivated by 60,000 farmers. [120]

The major difference between Egypt and Palestine in terms of how land was acquired is the lack of large-scale land grants in Palestine.

> The landlord class did not originate from a political grant of land in return for service to the state, but from a tribal sheik's claim to a crop as revenue or from the city merchant's demand for repayment of debts. Thus, the landlord class was often urban based, with little attachment to the land or interest in agriculture. [121]

A chief difference between the Egyptian and Palestinian landlord classes was the national allegiance of the owners. Egyptian landlords accumulated vast estates in Egypt, but landlords in Palestine often claimed citizenship in foreign countries. An infamous example of a foreign-based family which sold huge quantities of land to the Zionists is the Sursock family of the Lebanon.

> The name Sursock occupies an invidious and recurrent place in this story. The Sursocks were a Levantine family of high breeding and immense wealth who spent much

> of their time in Western Europe. They also owned some of the richest land in Palestine. In a series of transactions from 1891 to 1920 they sold it all to the Zionists. . . .[122]

Such transactions were uncommon in Egypt where the British occupation generated more isolationist tendencies. Egypt had at least a nominal government which gave some focus to the growing nationalist movement. In Palestine, however, the British maintained administrative control over a much more diverse population. Consequently, while both countries developed rich landowning classes, Egypt's large-holders were typically Egyptian while Palestine's were representatives of a variety of nationalities. Those native to Palestine were more often than not alienated from the lands they owned because they treated their holdings as financial investments instead of maintaining direct interest in agricultural production.

The crucial difference between Egypt and Palestine, however, was the rise of Zionism. The Zionist takeover of Palestine proceeded in three phases to dispossess the native people of their lands. Those phases are as follows: dispossession by sale, dispossession by force, and dispossession by law.

The first phase began with the foundation at the beginning of the twentieth century of a Zionist land-purchasing agency called Keren Keymeth. By 1936 this agency had acquired extensive holdings for exclusively Jewish beneficiaries. Fifty-two percent of the land had been purchased from large, absentee landlords; 24.6 percent from large, local landlords; 13.4 percent from government, church, or foreign companies; and only 9.4 percent from small Palestinian farmers who actually lived and worked on the land.[123] Of the small holdings sold to the Zionists some forty percent had been transferred before 1900, before the establishment of Keren Keymeth, and before the Palestinians realized the extent of the Zionist plan. Formerly, a transfer of ownership had not greatly affected renters and sharecroppers. The

Zionists, however, evicted non-Jewish tenents, leaving these people without homes or livelihoods.

Between 1935 and 1939 the native Palestinians repeatedly rebelled as Zionist immigration increased. The British repressed these revolts so strongly that by the time World War II erupted the Palestinian leadership had been destroyed. When the western powers emerged victorious from the World War, they allowed their horror over the genocide of six million European Jews to determine the fate of native Palestinians. On May 14, 1948, the creation of Israel was declared and the dispossession-by-sale phase of Zionist expansion gave way to dispossession-by-force.

> The outcome of the 1948 War and the ceasefire agreements between Israel and the Arab countries left Israel in control of some 20.5 million dunums of Palestinian land, much of it originally owned by Palestinians who had either been driven from their towns and villages or left because of the war. [124]

After the war, lands which had temporarily been abandoned by non-combatants, fearful for their safety, were expropriated by the Zionists. Dispossession-by-force had already been practiced, however, before the war. One notorious example was the massacre at Deir Yassin on April 10, 1948, where two-thirds of the villagers were slaughtered in their beds by the militant Irgun and Stern gangs. [125]

Another phase in the operation to seize Palestinian lands immediately followed the 1948 War. Dispossession-by-law entailed classification of all temporarily abandoned lands as 'absentee properties'. Any Palestinian still in the country but away from his property during the fighting faced extensive court battles.

> If a man could endure three years of running about in an attempt to prove his ownership, and if he then succeeded, he had to pay taxes which were levied for the time the houses were unoccupied and the land uncultivated. [126]

Few Palestinians could afford the legal battle, let alone the accumulated tax burden. Consequently, most so-called absentees eventually forfeited their claims. Meanwhile, the Zionists passed further regulations which allowed the state to expropriate any land deemed essential to national security.

> Some idea of the extent of the disaster suffered by the Palestinian Arabs can be gleaned from the fact that of about 807 towns and villages in Palestine in 1945, only 433 were still standing in 1967. Of these, 328 are in the West Bank and the Gaza strip and 105 more inside the borders of Israel. In other words, 374 Arab towns and villages, or 45 percent of all Arab settlements in Palestine, disappeared after the creation of Israel. [127]

In conclusion, the Zionists acquired Palestinian land by three principal methods. First, land was purchased, chiefly from foreign-based speculators with no real attachment to their holdings. Next, Palestinians were forced from their lands by the Israeli army as well as by the Zionist underground. Finally, Israel legalized its expropriations by labelling Palestinian owners absentees or by declaring their lands vital to national security. Egyptians, however, lost land to Israel only through war and chiefly as a result of the 1967 defeat. Otherwise, the Egyptian people faced land distribution primarily as an internal problem based upon inequities among indigenous social strata.

IV. The Tumayra Rebellion

The situations and characters Diab creates are realistic representations of actual historical conditions. Tumayra's peasant rebellion symbolizes both the wartime battle of Egypt to regain its occupied territories and the peacetime struggle of rural Arabs to maintain possession of their homes and farms. A key issue in the Arab-Israeli wars has always been the expropriation of land. Diab's story clearly shows the vital importance of land to the people of Egypt, but

the play also reveals similarities between Egyptian and Palestinian struggles to retain ownership of their land.

The Swindle

Messenger from Tumayra Village begins and ends with the land. From the sunrise which brings the first scene, to the sunset which falls with the final curtain, the land is an important issue. When the play begins, Fikrī Abū Ismā'īl has returned from the army to attend to a family crisis. 'Ayisha, Abū 'Ārif's daughter and Fikrī's sweetheart, reports the central facts of the controversy.

> 'Ayisha: They say that your uncle, Hājj Dasūqī, has a piece of paper from your father, may he rest in peace, sealed with his seal, and that he sold him your land on the canal.
>
> Fikrī: (Amazed) My father!!
>
> 'Ayisha: And that he was paid in full before he died. [128]

Fikri's reaction is an immediate and swift denial.

> Fikrī: (Shouting) It's a forgery. My father didn't sell his land, 'Ayisha. It isn't possible. When did he sell it to him? Why did my uncle keep silent about it for seven years? My father died seven years ago, 'Ayisha. [129]

Nevertheless, by the time Fikrī reaches home in the second scene, a few doubts have surfaced. Consequently, Fikrī asks his mother for confirmation

> Fikrī: . . . Isn't it conceivable that my father really did sell him the land, Mother? . . .
>
> al-Umm: . . . Your father, Fikrī? Your father sell his land? And sell it without telling me? . . . These were his last words to me: Ragīya, I want to leave the children enough land to support them until they can stand

on their own. Would your father sell the land, Fikrī?

Sa'dīya: . . . He wasn't in debt to anybody so he'd've had to sell.

al-Umm: He wouldn't take a step without telling me. Give me your advice, Ragīya, he used to say. Would he sell a feddan behind my back?

Fikrī: . . . Then my Uncle Dasūqī is a swindler.

al-Umm: Yes, a swindler and a slanderer. He hasn't got even a shred of conscience. [130]

Act I, Scene 2, outlines the details of Dasūqī's swindle. As Fikrī learns the basic facts of the case from his mother, Umm Fikrī, and his sister, Sa'dīya, Fikrī's younger brother, Hāmid, arrives with one of the two men who allegedly witnessed Dasūqī's contract. Bura'ī Abū Zaydān, however, is deeply in debt to the Hājj, and despite his misgivings, Bura'ī refuses to admit his part in the swindle. As Bura'ī avoids incriminating himself, Hājj Dasūqī arrives with his second witness, Musaylihi. Musaylihi confirms the Hājj's story, and Dasūqī adds a rationalization of the seven-year delay in acting on the alleged contract.

Dasūqī: . . . I told myself my brother Ismā'īn's children are in a miserable state. So let them eat the crops until they grow up and stand on their own. And here you are, a grown-up man, and soon you'll be your family's legal guardian. So. My duty is finished. And now I need the feddan. I want to build a house with a view on it. [131]

Fikrī, however, counters with strong accusations.

Fikrī: You took my father's signet ring on the day he died. We were little and we didn't know anything. My mother was overwhelmed with sorrow over my father's death, and when she got over it, everything was in your hands. My father didn't sell his land. And these two bore false witness on a forged contract. [132]

When Musaylihi admonishes Fikrī, the young man turns to his family for confirmation of his authority and reiteration of their stance on the issue.

Musaylihi: Are you children going to be enemies of your uncle?

Fikrī: (Calling) Sa'dīya.

Sa'dīya: Yes, my brother.

Fikrī: Come here, girl . . . Tell me frankly, Sa'dīya. Will you let your uncle have the feddan which is on the canal?

Sa'dīya: . . . It's up to you to say, my brother. You're the man in the family. Whatever you say goes.

Fikrī: And you, Hāmid?

Hāmid: Not even a clump of soil from it.

Fikrī: And you, Mother?

al-Umm: I'd rather have my body chopped into a thousand pieces than see him take one handful of the land your father spent his blood to work.

Fikrī: Do you hear, Uncle Dasūqī?

The Hājj: Children's talk. It's just useless chatter and it won't get you anywhere.

Fikrī: I swear by my honor, by the honor of my sister Sa'dīya the chaste. And by every bead of sweat that flowed from my father onto his land. The feddan will be returned to us -- even if it costs me my life.[133]

Fikrī returns to the military with two or three months of active duty left to serve on his enlistment. September passes, and Hājj Dasūqī appears to be awaiting Fikrī's return before expropriating the land. Then, on October 6th, as reports of the Crossing reach Tumayra, news also arrives that the Hājj plans to sabotage his family's crops. Gradually, Hāmid makes sense of his mother's news about Dasūqī.

Hāmid: I don't understand what you're talking about. Tell me exactly what he did.

al-Umm: He made a deal with Musaylihi to bring some men up to our land again tomorrow. (To the Group) Do you know what for? To pull out our young crop from the feddan that rightfully belongs to us. (Hāmid is thunderstruck.) People, he wants to take our land by force. There isn't anybody there to stand up to him. [134]

The news of the war, however, takes precedence over more personal problems. As Act I concludes, the fate of the feddan remains unresolved.

Act II begins on the banks of the village canal at the edge of the disputed feddan. 'Ayisha has returned to the site where Fikrī had proposed and the two had agreed to marry upon Fikrī's return to civilian life. As 'Ayisha reminisces, Hāmid appears from among the crops. In his elder brother's absence, Hāmid has taken it upon himself to defend the feddan. 'Ayisha, however, explains her doubts to Hāmid.

'Ayisha: I don't believe what they say. If your uncle had wanted to pull up your crops, he would have pulled them up a week ago. When all this first began.

Hāmid: He didn't find anybody to do it for him. That's all. His own men wouldn't raise a hand against us. And the people on the other side of the canal refused. They said it's a crime.

'Ayisha: If that's how it is, then what are you afraid of?

Hāmid: Musaylihi kept going around to the farms. Every day to a different farm. And I heard that he found some people at Abū Taqīya's farm who said they'd do it. And they're going to do it tonight. [135]

Soon, Abū 'Ārif and the Group arrive. Hāmid's mother has delegated them to persuade her son to come home. Their arguments fail, however, to change Hāmid's mind. Only when Sutūhī arrives with news updating the situation, does Hāmid relent. Sutūhī has made up a story to tell Dasūqī's hired men from the neighboring village.

Sutūhī: . . . Don't worry. No one is coming from Abū Taqīya. Not today or tomorrow.

Abū 'Ārif: How do you know?

Sutūhī: (Slyly) It seems -- but God only knows for sure-- that someone made up a story to tell them.

The Second Peasant: What story?

Sutūhī: That the men of Tumayra are lying in ambush for them in the fields with rifles, and whoever comes over will get shot. [136]

The next scene takes place at Hājj Dasūqī's house when the Hājj returns from a business trip. When Dasūqī learns that his sabotage plans have not been carried out, he demands an explanation from Musaylihi.

Musaylihi: Everything's turned out against us, Hājj. That's all. Abū Taqīya's men turned and quit on us, and may God cut them off for it.

Dasūqī: Why didn't you do something?

Musaylihi: I was going to go to them today and find out why they didn't come.

Dasūqī: Talking isn't going to accomplish anything. . . Take your boys and do whatever you have to do. [137]

Sutūhī, however, eavesdrops on the conspiracy. He himself was fired for refusing to take part in Dasūqī's scheme, but Sutūhī refuses to leave his customary position at the Hājj's door.

When the Group arrives to see Dasūqī about the feddan and the war, Abū 'Ārif diplomatically maneuvers the Hājj into a commitment to delay his expropriation of the land.

Dasūqī: . . . And as for the matter of the ownership of the feddan, I'm waiting for Fikrī to come home. I want to see how he plans to solve it. He'll be back in a few days. It won't be long. [138]

The final scene of Act II discloses two important developments pertaining to the land dispute. As the scene begins, Sutūhī complains

of the beating which the Hājj had inflicted on him. The Hājj had apparently deduced that Sutūhī's reports to the Group had thwarted his plans. No longer is Sutūhī employed by the Hājj or able to keep the others informed of the Hājj's actions.

> Sutūhī: He found me sleeping and came down on me with his stick. I woke up from my sleep, terrified and screaming. If he had done it when I was awake, I would have shown him. But he beat me while I was sleeping. And he ran after me. And he told me, if I ever see you in front of my house again, I'll kill you and destroy your corpse. As if he owned the ground of the road as well. [139]

The other land-related action which taken place at the end of Act II is Abū 'Ārif's decision to go to Cairo. Among the many questions the old man plans to ask are inquiries about the legality of Dasūqī's actions. The Group hopes that al-Sādiq Abū 'Umar might be able to exert pressure on the Hājj through some newspaper editorial.

During Act III, however, while Abū 'Ārif is away, Sutūhī provokes the Hājj into a public declaration of intent.

> Dasūqī: . . . I won't wait anymore. The contractor wants to go to work. Tomorrow I'll let him lay the foundation stones on my land.
>
> Hāmid: (Rebelliously) What land?
>
> Dasūqī: On my feddan by the canal.
>
> Buracī: The land is cultivated, Hājj.
>
> Dasūqī: I am free on my land. And I'll do with it as I please.
>
> The Group: (Muttering) What kind of talk is this?
>
> Hāmid: That land isn't yours, Hājj Dasūqī.
>
> Dasūqī: It's my land. And I'm going to take possession of it tonight myself. (To Musaylihi) And with me will be all my men and their boys, Musaylihi. In the morning it must be ready for the contractor. [140]

When Abū 'Ārif returns in the last scene of the play, the villagers learn that they must stand up to Dasūqī themselves. Sutūhī incites the Group to revolt.

> Sutūhī: Why are we still sitting here? Let's go. (The Group rises in agitation and anger.)
>
> Sutūhī: I'll go there ahead of you. And the first bullet from his carbine will be mine. Don't any of you take it before me. By the time he can reload the carbine for a second shot, you'll have a hold of him. With your hands on his throat.
>
> The First Peasant: Everyone get his pick-axe and come on, boys. [141]

Most of the village peasants had avoided confronting Dasūqī throughout the play. They resort to armed resistance only when no other option appears open to them. Historical parallels with Dasūqī's swindle and Tumayra's revolt come to light in the following discussion of Diab's setting.

The Setting

Mahmoud Diab describes each of his five basic settings in detail. Most of the action takes place in front of Dr. Bāhir's orchard where Abū 'Ārif works as a watchman. One scene takes place in the courtyard of Fikrī's home, another in front of Hājj Dasūqī's house, another at the Cairo newspaper office of al-Sādīq Abū 'Umar, and two scenes occur beside a Tumayra canal. Each of these scenes does more than locate the action and establish a realistic sense of environment. Each place also represents a variety of historical factors which provide symbolic reminders of both Egyptian and Palestinian struggles for land.

Dr. Bāhir is an unseen character who personifies an absentee landlord. His nationality is never revealed, but he is probably a native or resident of Egypt because foreign ownership is less common there than it was in Palestine. The ownership of Dr. Bāhir's orchard

never comes in question during Diab's play, however, but a sign hangs above the orchard gate which silently stakes the Doctor's claim. A vocal reminder occurs near the end of Act II when 'Ayisha admonishes her father for neglecting his duties.

> Ayisha: . . . The soil in the orchard is drying up from a lack of watering. If Dr. Bāhir knew, what would he do with you, Father?
>
> The Second Peasant: Has your father ever failed to irrigate it? All right, then. Can't it wait for two more days? [142]

The man most directly associated with the orchard is Ahmad Abū 'Ārif, watchman and general caretaker of the property. Five scenes occur at the orchard, and even when Abū 'Ārif is away from his post, his presence is maintained by a small wooden bench which defines his chief duty -- to keep an eye on the landlord's property. Abū 'Ārif spends a good deal of time seated on his bench reading the newspaper, and the other peasants identify the old man so closely with the bench that no one sits on it when Abū 'Ārif is away. Even Sutūhī, whom Abū 'Ārif appoints temporary watchman during the trip to Cairo, refuses to sit directly upon the bench. He finds instead a place of his own on the ground beside the bench. Thus, Dr. Bāhir's orchard serves not only as a reminder of absentee ownership but also of the way labor responsibilities are delegated among the people who actually live on or near the land.

Most of Tumayra's villagers are peasants who depend upon what little land they own or tend for their food and livelihood. The Abū Ismā'īl home exemplifies the way in which most of Tumayra's peasants would live. Indeed, most rural peasants in Egypt and Arab Palestine would dwell in homes similar to Fikrī Abū Ismā'īl's. The setting, which only appears once, reveals a few interior rooms covered by a roof, and a central 'courtyard', or work area, open to the sun. The home is small, built of mid-brick, and bounded by an exterior wall, which, like a fence, separates the family from their neighbors and provides some shade

and privacy. The poverty of the environment is indicated primarily by the primitive simplicity of the objects it contains. For example, a niche carved into the earthen walls holds an oily wick which can be burned for a dim and smoky light. A stone grinder defines the function of the courtyard as a working environment.

Hājj Dasūqī's house is undoubtedly larger and more elaborately furnished and decorated than his late brother Ismā'īl's home. More of the house would be sheltered by a roof and less would be limited to subsistence and survival. For example, Diab describes the window of a reception room which looks out onto the street. Such a room would be a luxury for most of those who dwell in Tumayra. Dasūqī represents the minority of Egyptian and Palestinian villagers -- those who have gained some wealth and prestige in rural communities. Dasūqī exemplifies the rural leaders, the village notables, who often own or control 5 to 50 feddans of land which they rent to sharecroppers. Dasūqī is not a farmer; he hires others to do both agricultural and household work. Only the facade of Dasūqī's house is shown in the play, and seldom does Dasūqī openly reveal the devious side of his personality, which he keeps hidden behind a mask of respectability. He is outwardly religious because he has made the pilgrimage to Mecca and earned the title of Hājj, but his behavior contradicts his title. The facade of his house is decorated with reminders of his pilgrimage -- paintings of boats, planes, camels, palm trees or religious shrines -- but the obvious expense of such a trip is also a reminder of Hājj Dasūqī's wealth. In short, Dasūqī represents an increasingly powerful force on the contemporary rural scene -- the rich peasant landlord.

> Under the conditions prevailing today, [1975] this stratum of rich peasants . . . carries a decisive political weight in the Egyptian countryside, as they have been elevated in the social hierarchy by gaining possession of more land to till or control. In fact, all significant agrarian policy measures -- whether technological or institutional -- have tended to shift the center

> of politico-economic gravity away from the old landed aristocracy and in favour of this new privileged stratum of rich peasants . . . .[143]

In Palestine, rich landowners were more commonly based in towns and cities. In Egypt, both urban and rural landlords controlled the agricultural regions. In Diab's play, Hājj Dasūqī and Dr. Bāhir represent, respectively, the rural and the urban rich.

Al-Sādiq Abū 'Umar is another unseen but important character. Tumayra born and bred, al-Sādiq has escaped the poverty of the village by pursuing an education. His family must have been well-to-do to afford the luxury of training al-Sādiq for the newspaper profession. Al-Sādiq represents a hope for a better life in the small but growing petit-bourgeousie of Egypt. He can also be considered a representative of the Palestinian people in two ways. First, many Palestinians have been professional people -- doctors, lawyers, teachers, engineers -- and second, many Palestinians found themselves banished from their homeland because they were outside the borders of Israel during the 1948 War and subsequently denied the right to return home. Al-Sādiq is reportedly in Europe when Abū 'Ārif comes to Cairo. The setting of his newspaper office is actually only the entry hall and information desk, but the silhouette of Tumayra appears as a shadowy background throughout the Cairo scene. Periodically, the villagers stir to life, posing a visual reminder of the rural environment which surrounds the city.

Two of Diab's scenes take place on the banks of the Tumayra canal, the site of the disputed <u>feddan</u>. The struggle for the land beside the canal is, of course, indicative of the October War and the fight for the Suez Canal, but Tumayra's waterway also demonstrates how essential irrigation is to Egyptian agriculture and how vital agriculture is to the Egyptian people. Fikrī's family owns only two <u>feddans</u>. To lose one would mean the end of independent subsistence. Yet the family is too proud to relinquish their rightful property in exchange for Uncle Dasūqī's promises of charity. The Egyptian people also refused to accept the seizure by Israel of the Sinai peninsula. Egypt went to war

to retrieve its land by the canal, and Tumayra stages a revolt when Dasūqī tries to steal a single, canal-side feddan.

MESSAGE CONTEXT

Language, law, and religion are intricately woven into the fabric of Egyptian society. Arabic is the language of the holy Koran, the word of God as revealed to His messenger, Muhammad. Islamic law has been largely supplanted in Egypt by Western secular law, but religion is still a dominating and pervasive feature of daily living. Nevertheless, language, law, and religion can be considered separately in order to explain the context in which Mahmoud Diab's messages about war and land are communicated. The fourth contextual feature to be discussed is the theatricality of Diab's play.

I. Language

One of the factors which contributes greatly to the realism of Diab's story is his skillful use of language. Characters reveal their backgrounds through words and expressions which define not only individual traits but also common cultural and environmental circumstances. The greetings Diab's characters exchange and the titles they use are commonly understood throughout Egyptian society. Diab's dialogue also conveys a strong sense of Tumayra's rural nature. Not only do the characters refer to farm-related activities, but they also clothe their ideas in rural metaphors and proverbs. They express their problems and concerns in down-to-earth, practical terms.

Egyptian titles and forms of address can sometimes be confusing to foreigners. Characters often call each other uncle, brother, daughter or aunt as an indication of respect rather than family relationship. The term 'doctor' is often used by Egyptians in deference to someone who is well-educated, regardless of whether the person possesses an academic degree. Such may be the case with Dr. Bāhir whose profession is never identified. Ustāz (feminine: ustāza), 'professor', is a similar title

of respect conferred upon learned individuals, such as Ustāz al-Sādiq Abū 'Umar and Ustāza Sāmiya Shākir. Sayid is roughly equivalent to 'mister', but the word is often contracted to Sīdī or simply Sīy. It is used as a mark of formal esteem as, for example, Sīy Fikrī -- Mister or Master Fikrī. [144]

Arabic boasts a wide variety of greetings which may not have consistent English equivalents. Ahlan wa sahlan, or simply ahlan, can mean 'hello' or 'welcome'; ma'a salāma, either 'good-bye', 'farewell', or 'go in peace'. Greetings are often exchanged as if they were signs and counter-signs: 'Morning of goodness' might elicit a variety of replies, such as 'morning of light' or 'morning of jasmine'. [145] Other greetings, as well as titles, proverbs, and figures of speech, sometimes carry a religious significance, a topic which will be discussed in a subsequent section.

There are at least ten readily recognizable proverbs in Diab's play. Several are clearly identified as such. For example, as Abū 'Ārif tells Sāmiya, a young newspaper woman in Cairo: "meeting you is sweet enough . . . It's like a proverb we have that says: A good welcome is better than a good meal." [146]

Sometimes, the actual proverb is left unstated, its meaning implicit. Such is the case with a comment made by Dasūqī: "Well, they are my children, too -- as the proverb says." [147]

Family bonds are the subject of several proverbs. "You're our uncle and we're like your children," Fikrī explains to Hājj Dasūqī, adding a proverb for emphasis: "The fingernail is tied to the finger." [148] Later in the play, an unidentified peasant relates a proverb to Hāmid which explains the Group's reticence to get involved in a family dispute.

> A Voice from the Group: He's your uncle. You're his brother's children. And the proverb says: Woe to him who steps between an onion and its skin. [149]

Another peasant uses a proverb to explain the ironic inequities of ownership as manifested in Mahrūs' possession of a radio: "Earings go

to the one with no ears." [150] On a different occasion, 'Ayisha cites a proverb to put Sutūhī's lot in life into a wider perspective. "Some are more miserable than others," she tells Fikrī. "But it's true what they say: Seeing other people's problems makes your own problems light." [151]

Diab's characters often express themselves metaphorically. Abū 'Ārif, for instance, refers proudly to Tumayra's sons in the army as "the best five seeds to sprout and grow in our village." [152] Later, Abū 'Ārif rebukes Mahrūs for beating the radio to make it work: "Is the radio a donkey that'll walk if you hit it?" [153] Fikrī's mother characterizes Hājj Dasūqī metaphorically when she admonishes the Group for standing idle while "the wolves are eating your neighbors," [154] and the First Peasant later labels Dasūqī a fox. [155] When Hāmid despairs of his and the Group's limited perspective on wartime events, he voices his thoughts in rural terms: "It isn't right to live my whole life in ignorance like an ox in his clover." [156]

Sometimes the borderline between metaphor and proverb is unclear. This is the case with Fikrī's comment about Sutūhī's reluctance to seek a new job: "The scrap of bread that brings disgrace isn't very tasty." [157]

The routine chores of farm life are the subjects of numerous comments made by Tumayra's villagers. "I have a hen that's been laying eggs for about a week," [158] recalls 'Ayisha excitedly when she discovers that Fikrī is not only home on leave but invited to breakfast. Fikrī responds politely with an appropriate proverb: "An onion given in love is a lamb." [159] Later, when Abū 'Ārif inquires after 'Ayisha's brothers and sisters, she replies: "They're still turning the waterwheel." [160] On another occasion, when Abū 'Ārif has finished reporting war news to the Group, Abū Sharaf resumes his burden and returns to work: "Someone load me up, children," asks Abū Sharaf, and two members of the Group help raise a tree limb to the man's shoulder. [161] Abū 'Ārif had used Abū Sharaf's tree limb to represent Palestine in the map he had drawn on the ground.

Abū 'Ārif frequently augments his rural vocabulary with more learned phrases gleaned from his reading. He describes his children as "short on production and long on consumption," [162] and he labels Hājj Dasūqī "one hundred percent imperialist." [163] Abū 'Ārif's newspaper jargon sometimes leads to confusion. For example, Hāmid misunderstands Abū 'Ārif's use of the expression 'the Third World'. "It's a good thing we're the Third World," he remarks, "and not the fourth or fifth." [164]

Nevertheless, Abū 'Ārif usually manages to explain things in a manner which the other peasants can comprehend. Instead of confusing the Group with technical terminology to describe a reconnaissance satelite, he refers to it as a moon.

> Abū 'Ārif: . . . Every day there's a new invention. Every hour a discovery. Who would have believed they could throw a moon into the sky? And that it can turn and circle and be deployed for espionage? It's possible that at this very moment, a moon is up there, spying on us. It sees what we're doing and it hears what we're saying. And it takes pictures of us, too. [165]

The village peasants rely heavily on Abū 'Ārif's explanations, but they often express their own ideas in even more basic, rural terms. When, for example, a peasant on the fringe of the Group rises to his feet to voice his concern over conflicting news of the war, he phrases his question as follows:

> A Peasant in the Rear: . . . I want somebody to solve this problem for me. Why is America angry with us? They come down on us and we haven't done anything wrong to them. We haven't beaten their families. We haven't trampled their crops. We haven't stolen a single ear of corn from their fields. So why are they locking horns with us? [166]

Mahmoud Diab's play is filled with rural imagery -- 'Ayisha carrying a bundle of cornstalks, Abū Sharaf shouldering a large tree limb, Sutūhī "sinking under a load of palm leaves that is way out of

proportion to his size." [167] But Diab's use of language continually reinforces the play's visual imagery and consistently emphasizes the rural simplicity of life in Tumayra Village.

II. Law

Several questions of law arise in Mahmoud Diab's play. The most obvious issue is the legality of Hājj Dasūqī's attempt to take possession of the feddan by the canal. A related issue is Dasūqī's alleged take-over of the local agricultural committee. Questions about these issues fall into two, basic categories.

Historically: What system of law has developed in modern Egypt? Is the system religious or secular? Is there a history of peasant revolt when rule of law has failed to bring justice? What are the steps which Egyptian peasants traditionally take to settle disputes? How has the Egyptian government acted in recent years to curtail crime in rural areas? How do Arabs traditionally settle disputes?

Symbolically: Does Dasūqī's expropriation of the feddan by the canal compare to Israel's conquest of Sinai and the Suez Canal? If Egypt's claim to occupied territories is legitimate, then is Tumayra's peasant revolt analogous to the October war? How are Egyptian and Palestinian struggles for land related?

The history of law in modern Egypt has been a record of the transition from a traditional religious system to a Western secular system. Prior to the nineteenth century, learned religious scholars called 'ulamā' (ulema) exercised judicial authority based on sharī'a, an idealistic ssytem of religious law which stemmed from the teachings of the prophet Muhammad. Throughout the history of Islamic jurisprudence, the ulema had always been controlled to a great extent by the ruler and therefore lacked fully independent authority. The ruler or his agents often interfered in court cases, sometimes to influence the verdict and sometimes to curb judicial corruption. Neither form of intervention strengthened the judiciary's position, and ultimate executive control

became an important precedent when Western secular influences began to change Egypt's system of law.

> Thus secularization of the legal system in Egypt, which started in 1798 with the French invasion and continued under Muhammad 'Alī and his successors, had its roots deeply embedded in Islamic history.[168]

Many popular reforms, innovations and reorganizations of the legal and judicial systems took place under Egypt's nineteenth century rulers. Courts were revamped, their jurisdictions more clearly defined. Administrative changes and law code revisions were also made. By mid-century "the country seemed to be enjoying a stable and smooth-running legal system. The whole system was, however, dependent upon the caprice of the Khedive." [169] Public confidence in the emerging rule of law was occasionally undermined by the confusion of rapid change, but gradually the Egyptian people adapted to the new system. The establishment of Mixed Courts in 1876 and National Courts in 1883 stabilized the judicial system and brought many leading European jurists into the Egyptian system. By the turn of the century the legal profession had substantially raised its standards and improved its image. Many lawyers in the first half of the twentieth century became key figures in the rising nationalist movement and grew increasingly involved in politics.

Meanwhile, the status and jurisdiction of Islamic courts decreased. "The Sharī'ah [sic] Bar was never able to gain the same prestige as the National Bar." [170] Islamic jurists generally attained a lower level of education, and their jurisdiction was limited to matters of personal status, such as marriage and divorce. They became an increasingly conservative force in an ever more liberal and secular society. In 1955 sharī'a courts were abolished and their workloads transferred to the secular system. "By January 1, 1956, Egypt had a single secular legal system which had jurisdiction over all persons and all justiciable issues in the country." [171]

Courts and rule of law are not, however, the only or even the most common means of settling disputes in Egypt. If direct, personal

discussions fail to bring a resolution, then local residents are approached and asked to mediate. Only when these steps prove fruitless are law courts drawn into the process -- unless, of course, one of the disputing parties is attempting to manipulate the court system to his advantage. Such is apparently the case with Hājj Dasūqī who has managed to authenticate a forged contract in probate court. Diab gives no evidence and makes no suggestions that the Hājj has bribed or otherwise corrupted court officials. Dasūqī's contract has apparently been properly drawn and witnessed. The character and qualifications of his witnesses, however, are not unassailable. Fikrī's mother describes Dasūqī's witnesses in a bitter speech to her eldest son.

> al-Umm: Who witnessed it for him? Bura'ī Abū Zaydān and Musaylihi? One is up to his eyes in debt to your uncle, and your uncle could ruin his house. The other lives under your uncle's table night and day like a dog. Why wouldn't they bear witness?!! [172]

Fikrī's mother and sister outline the plan of action which Fikrī must be prepared to follow.

> Fikrī: What's to be done now, Mother?
>
> al-Umm: Go to him and talk it over with him. Stand up to him and let him know that he has to take you into account.
>
> Fikrī: (At a loss) But he's my uncle. What can I do to him? All my life I've honored him and respected him and treated him like my father . . . .
>
> Sa'dīya: You're the oldest. There's nobody but you to stand up to him.
>
> Fikrī: . . . And if he doesn't pay any attention to what I say?
>
> al-Umm: Then let the men of the village judge between you.
>
> Sa'dīya: Is there anybody in the village who would dare to judge him? . . . They're afraid of him.

Fikrī: . . . Suppose they judge in my favor, and he disregards their judgement. What should I do?

al-Umm: . . . You are a man. So do what a man would do. And in this case, nobody would put the blame on you. [173]

When Fikrī explains his plan of action to one of Dasūqī's witnesses, he stresses his willingness to seek legal recourse.

Fikrī: If you went to court, would you swear?

Bura'ī: (Taken aback) What would take me to court!?

Fikrī: I would.

Bura'ī: Do you intend to go to court?

Fikrī: I intend to do a lot, Uncle Bura'ī. And the whole village must know. Fikrī Abū Ismā'īl has come of age and outgrown his guardianship. I am a man by law and a man in fact.

Bura'ī: . . . Does anybody deny this?

Fikrī: A tough and determined man. I'll take up the matter with kindness and persuasion in the beginning, and then with the men of the village, and then with your religion and your fear of our Lord. You and the other one who witnessed with you. And if things don't turn out right, then there are courts and lawyers and prosecutors. [174]

Disputes concerning ownership of land have frequently arisen in Egypt since the development of land property rights in the nineteenth century. Village notables had increased their ability to acquire land through devious bureaucratic maneuvers.

> They had a large and sometimes decisive say in fixing tax assessments; they determined virtually alone the classification of land for purposes of taxation; and they decided which land should be classed as 'unproductive', and therefore exempt from taxation for a considerable period. [175]

Instances of village leaders expropriating lands of deceased neighbors are also a matter of historical record. [176] Exploited peasants often resisted expropriations, however.

> In their struggle against the landlords the peasants had recourse to demonstrations, strikes, seizure of crops and land, and sometimes armed attacks on the mansion of the landlord. . . . [177]

Peasant uprisings occurred repeatedly during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As late as 1951, "widespread agrarian unrest occurred in Egypt as well as Syria." [178] Rebellions were often crushed and their leaders subjected to severe legal penalties. The story told by Abū Sharaf to Hāmid Abū Ismā'īl dramatizes the issue.

> Abū Sharaf: . . . One day when I was your age, your uncle, Hājj Dasūqī, was possessed by a devil. He wanted to harm us, and so he went out one night to set fire to a half a feddan of our cotton. It was a good harvest, and the cotton was ready for picking. I was all heated up, too, just like you. And do you know what I did? I went and burned up two of his feddans. [179]

The conclusion of Abū Sharaf's tale reinforces the villagers' fears of Dasūqī and distrust of the judicial system.

> 'Abū Sharaf: A disaster came down on us -- police, prosecutors, courts -- and it didn't leave us a moment free to rest. We had to sell a feddan to cover the expenses from the lawsuits. And of course he won. I was held in custody for two months. Do you know why, Hāmid? Because your uncle burned our cotton in secret. He didn't tell anyone. But I announced it to the whole world. I swore that I would burn his cotton.
>
> Bura'ī: (Muttering) And he wants me to testify against him. [180]

Dasūqī's bad reputation extends beyond ownership disputes to the operation of the local farm cooperative.

> Abū 'Ārif: May the man drop dead from shame. His belly is more vast than the Atlantic. He took over the Agricultural Committee and sucked its blood. Every other month he snatches part of a feddan from somebody. [181]

Abuses of agricultural cooperatives became an officially recognized problem during the Nasser era. In 1966 Nasser's government organized a Committee for the Liquidation of Feudalism. [182] The purpose of the committee was to investigate allegations of corruption within the cooperative system. The committee discovered a trend among members of boards of directors to control and manipulate profits for their own benefit. [183] Meanwhile, poor peasants frequently attempted to share in illegal ventures as opportunities arose. Government officials were also found to be generally unqualified, inefficient, or corrupt.

Nasser's final initiative to curb abuses of the cooperative system was a law passed in 1969. "It provided a revised legal framework for the cooperative movement, which confirmed the intention to extend further administrative control" [184]

Diab's play clearly dramatizes the historically recognized struggle of Egyptian peasants to maintain control over the lands which feed them and the agricultural organizations which are supposed to serve them. Among the questions which remain to be considered are those which relate to symbolic parallels with the October War and the larger issue of Palestine.

The October War, from Egypt's point of view, was primarily a fight to regain Egypt's territory beyond the Suez Canal which had been unlawfully seized by Israel. Tumayra's struggle to reclaim the feddan beside the irrigation canal is obviously similar to the wider conflict. By juxtaposing the war and the peasant revolt, Diab clearly means to compare them. By identifying land as the central issue, Diab also draws attention to the heart of the Palestinian problem -- the unrelenting quest for a homeland. The Palestinian poet, Mahmūd Darwīsh, eloquently indentifies the same central issue in one of his most famous poems.

"Waiting for the Return"

The huts of my loved ones are upon the sands,
And I am staying awake with the rain.
I am the son of Ulysses
    who waited for the mail from the north;
A sailor called him, but he didn't go.
He anchored the boats and took to the highest mountain.
Rock! upon which my father prayed,
    shelter the revolutionary!
I will not sell you for precious pearls.
Nor will I ever leave . .
        I will never leave . .
            I will not leave . .
The voices of my loved ones travel with the wind,
    storming the citadels.
Wait for us, Mother, at the door. We are coming back.
This time won't be what the expect.
The wind blows as the sailor wills,
    and the ships overcome the tide.
What will you cook for us, Mother? We are coming back.
They've plundered the oil jars, the flour sacks, too.
Bring us the herbs and grasses from the field.
    We are hungry.
The footsteps of my loved ones
    are the moaning of rock in an iron grip.
And I am staying awake with the rain.
I gaze in vain into the distance.
I will remain . .
        Upon the rock . .
            Beneath the rock . .
                Eternally resisting. 185

Darweesh, like Diab, fills his writing with rural imagery, an important motif in modern Palestinian poetry.[186] Earth, rock, soil, and the life which clings to them are Darweesh's symbols of Palestine and the Palestinian people.

Diab uses a less permanent symbol for Palestine -- the severed tree limb which Abū 'Ārif uses to represent Palestine in the map which he draws on the ground. The limb, however, still bears living leaves. Perhaps it can still be grafted back onto the Arab tree.

III. Religion

The five pillars of Islam -- testimony, prayer, fasting, alms-giving, and pilgrimage -- define the basic attitudes and behavior of Tumayra's peasants. These fundamental religious practices also provide important clues to the symbolism of Diab's play. Another essential religious consideration is the Islamic concept of holy war.

Testimony - Shahāda

Al-shahāda is the Muslim profession of faith. To bear witness that 'there is no God but the One God, and that the prophet Muhammad is his messenger' is the most important tenet of Islam.[187] Throughout Diab's play, the characters emphasize their comments and remarks -- no matter how important or trivial -- with religious testimony. They swear by God or His Prophet almost every time they speak, and they repeatedly acknowledge that every occurrence depends upon the will of God. Usually, these expressions, such as 'by God' or 'God willing', are parenthetical additions to conversation, but when Abū 'Ārif asks Fikrī if he believes how deeply ingrained the newspaper reading habit has become, Fikrī responds by interjecting a formal religious testimony.

Abū 'Ārif: . . .Do you believe, Fikrī --

Fikrī: There is no God but Allah.

Abū 'Ārif: That for me, if a day passes when I don't read the paper, I get so worried that I can't sleep all night? [188]

In this case, Fikrī's comment is more than the context of a conversational message. It is the message itself, the actual content of the idea he wishes to convey.

Diab's characters take religious testimony quite seriously. To lie, to break a promise, or to bear false witness, are grave transgressions of religious faith. Thus, Bura'ī and Musaylihi avoid swearing falsely on the Koran, Islam's holy book. Although they have been coerced by Hājj Dasūqī into giving false testimony, they refuse to compound their sin by blaspheming, by taking the name of God in vain. The following passage indicates the extent to which a character will go to avoid incriminating himself.

Fikrī: Tell me, Uncle Bura'ī. Is it true that my father sold his land to my uncle, Hājj Dasūqī, before he died?. . . The feddan adjacent to the canal. Do you know it?

Bura'ī: I know it.

Fikrī: Did my father sell it to my uncle and receive the money for it?

Hāmid: . . . Speak up, Uncle Bura'ī. Didn't you sign the contract?. . .

Bura'ī: Do I know how to sign my name, Hāmid?

Hāmid: You signed with your seal.

Bura'ī: What do you mean, my seal?

Fikrī: . . . Did he sell it to him or didn't he?

Bura'ī: . . . Why don't you go ask him, Fikrī?

al-Umm: (Sarcastically) Go ask his father?

Bura'ī: Go ask his uncle. What is it to me?

Fikrī: . . . Sit down, Uncle Bura'ī. Rest. You're tired. . . .

Hāmid: All right, then, are you ready to swear on the Koran?

Bura'ī: (In agitation) Why should I swear? What is this swearing business? Why don't you go to the one concerned and make him swear? I am a sick man and you drag me over here to do this to me?

al-Umm: What are we doing to you, Bura'ī?

Bura'ī: What is this making me swear on the Koran? Am I in court or on trial? This is too strange. [189]

Eventually, Bura'ī confesses the truth, but only after months have passed and Hājj Dasūqī is ready to take possession of the land.

Bura'ī: It's a lie. How can he take it? It isn't his land. It's the children's land. He took my signature ring from me by force, and he used it on the paper. [190]

A common formula for testimony is to swear "three times by God." [191] Hāmid, Hājj Dasūqī, and Sutūhī emphasize their oaths in this manner, but Fikrī chooses a different way.

Fikrī: I swear by my honor, by the honor of my sister Sa'dīya the chaste. And by every bead of sweat that flowed from my father onto his land. The feddan will be returned to us -- even if it costs me my life. [192]

Later, however, he reiterates his oath in religious terms. "This land will never belong to my uncle, 'Ayisha. Never, by the life of the Prophet." [193] To invoke the Prophet Muhammad is highly emphatic and usually marks the end of discussion and debate. When, for example, Abū 'Ārif returns from Cairo, the statement which finally forces him to tell his story is 'Ayisha's religious injunction: "By the Prophet, tell us, Father." [194]

Generally, religious expressions are not subjects for discussion. They are, instead, the framework for discussion and a recurring reminder that God, for Muslims, is the ultimate context for all things.

Prayer - Salat

Muslims are required to pray five times daily at specific times -- morning, mid-day, afternoon, sunset, and evening. The call to prayer is broadcast from the mosque for all to hear. Furthermore, Friday is set aside as a day of public worship. "It is the bounden duty. . .of every Muslim personally to attend noon prayer with the congregation at the mosque." [195] In addition to required worship, informal prayers are often interjected spontaneously into conversation. Diab's characters only give voice to this latter category of prayer, probably, at least in part, because for actors to pretend to pray would be considered blasphemous.

When Muslims pray, they do not pray to Muhammad. They honor the Prophet, but they do not worship him. Occasionally, however, they invoke the Prophet's name in their prayers. For example, the Third Peasant gives thanks for good news from the front by promising "a thousand prayers to God in the name of the Prophet." [196]

Prayers of thanksgiving and praise are frequently offered throughout the play, but they are outnumbered by prayers for aid or assistance. Tumayra's peasants often ask God to bestow his blessings and protection, to bring peace, wisdom, and happiness, to guide them in their actions, and to provide for their health and welfare. Seldom, however, do they ask for specific material things. An exception occurs when Abū 'Ārif explains the capabilities of an American reconnaissance satellite. Bura'ī responds with an indirect request: "Our Lord is great. He can give us whatever He gave them." [197]

Diab's characters also curse on occasion, but they never do so blasphemously. Usually, they call for a disaster or calamity to strike, expressions roughly equivalent to condemning someone to Hell. The devil is sometimes identified as the instrument of a curse, as, for instance, when Abū Sharaf comments that Dasūqī must have been "possessed by a devil" [198] when he burned half a <u>feddan</u> of cotton. The devil, however, is only recognized as an agent of God's wrath, as 'Ayisha's explanation

of Dasūqī's behavior indicates: "God's curse is on him. Satan is making him do it." [199]

Vulgarity is another method of chastizing someone. Of the many insults which Sutūhī hurls at the Hājj, the one which finally hits its mark is simply a farting noise. [200] None of Diab's characters, however, stoop to naming any specific vulgar terminology. Etiquette is such a valued framework for behavior that vulgarity would reflect more on its user than it would on the object of an insult. Of course, religion is the ultimate guide for etiquette, and, as Fikrī's mother remarks: "Whoever respects our Lord God is respected by Him." [201]

Fasting - Saum

The annual Islamic month of collective fasting is called Ramadan. From dawn to dusk Muslims abstain from food, drink, and sex. Some take the opportunity of the Ramadan fast to quit or at least cut down on their smoking habit. The fast is observed by all believers in a community unless they are suffering from illness, in the midst of travelling, or engaged in warfare.

Individual fasts are sometimes undertaken by Muslims as a sign of piety or penance, but Ramadan is the only compulsory Islamic fast. The major purpose of Ramadan is to reestablish a sense of awareness and communication with all that is considered holy. It is also a time for social cohesion, especially during the evening hours when believers gather together to share food and religious faith.

The exact dates of Ramadan vary from year to year. "As a result of the Muslim lunar calendar which is about 11 days shorter than the solar year, within a cycle of 33 years Ramadan moves through all the seasons." [202] In 1973 Ramadan coincided with the October War. While the battle ensued, the majority of Egyptians observed the fast and the religious practices it entails. Soldiers, however, were excused from fasting during the fighting. President Sadat describes the reluctance

of his command center staff to exercise their right to disregard fast on October 6th.

> Our instructions, based on the expert opinion of Islamic law, were that nobody should be fasting -- but I wasn't sure this was the case. "Why aren't you smoking?" I asked the assembled group. "Why isn't anybody having a drink of some kind? This operation requires your utmost attention and concentration." I noticed they were very embarrassed, so I ordered some tea for myself and lit my pipe -- whereupon they began to smoke and ordered tea. 203

The decision to wage war during Ramadan was highly significant.

> "At the root of the fast of Ramadan is the fast of the Jewish Day of Atonement, [Yom Kippur] the 'Ashura'. This was a day of penitence for the sins of the past year, and was connected with the Jewish New Year." 204

Ramadan was intended to supersede the twenty-four hour fast of Yom Kippur as well as the summer solstice fast of the pre-Islamic Arabs, Laylat al-qadr. Furthermore, the first Ramadan was historically associated with God's revelation of the Koran to Muhammad. Most important in terms of the 1973 October War, however, was Ramadan's connection with the Battle of Badr, the Prophet's first major military victory against non-believers. Although Islam drew heavily from Judaism, Christianity, and pagan sources, the new religion was meant to supplant its precursors. The victory at Badr was taken by Muslims as a sign that their cause had been granted divine sanction.

Operation Badr, the code-name for the October assault, began on Yom Kuppur at the beginning of Ramadan. Thus, the Egyptian operation symbolically celebrated the rise of Islam while challenging the Jews who had entrenched themselves in Sinai. 205

In Mahmoud Diab's play his characters refer on several occasions to the fast. "Don't be late to break the fast," 206 Umm Fikrī tells Hāmid as the first day of the war draws to a close and Act I comes to an end.

The sun is about to set, and the time is approaching for the family to share some nourishment after a day of abstinence.

The opening scene of Act II also takes place shortly before sunset, and 'Ayisha tries in vain to convince her father to leave the Group and break the fast at home with his family. [207] The pressure of fasting has made Abū 'Ārif and Mahrūs behave impatiently, and they soon become involved in an argument over the use of Mahrūs' radio. The scene closes with Sa'dīya's arrival. She has brought food for Hāmid who has refused to leave their feddan unguarded. Sutūhī, however, has frightened away the would-be saboteurs, and Hāmid is able to join his family at home to break the fast. [208]

These few references to fasting would, of course, require no explanation for Muslim readers or audiences. To them the fast of Ramadan is as commonplace as Christmas is in the West. Diab never names Ramadan or Operation Badr, so the significance of these events coinciding is never openly revealed. However, explanation is necessary for Westerners who have been led by Zionist media to think of the 1973 hostilities as the 'Yom Kippur' War.

Almsgiving - Zakāt

Giving alms to the poor is another pillar of faith in the Muslim religion. Al-zakāt is the obligatory poor tax which is collected at mosques, and al-sadāqa is the term for voluntary donations. Diab mentions neither of these explicitly, but he does raise the issue of charity. His characters exhibit pride in earning their living through honorable work and loathing for dependence upon charity for survival. The poverty of the Tumayra peasants is also apparent, especially on the two occasions when they pool their money and on the afternoon preceding Abū 'Ārif's departure for Cairo when he borrows clothing suitable for the trip.

The first reference to charity comes in the second scene of Act I when Fikrī argues with Hājj Dasūqī about the feddan.

Fikrī: Should we die of hunger, Uncle Dasūqī? All we have are two feddans, and they're barely enough to keep us alive.

Dasūqī: My house is open to you and to everyone else.

al-Umm: Save your house for your false witnesses.

Musaylihi: You've got no right to say that.

Fikrī: Do you want us to live on charity, Uncle? [209]

This passage also indicates how close Fikrī's family is to poverty. One who is even more dependent upon Dasūqī is his servant, Sutūhī. "He burns my blood with work, night and day, for just a scrap of bread." [210] Later, Sutūhī loses his job and is left without any means of supporting himself until Abū 'Ārif travels to Cairo and leaves Sutūhī to care for the orchard. Even then Sutūhī hesitates to eat the food 'Ayisha brings him.

'Ayisha: (She spreads out the bundle in front of him.)
Eat, Sutūhī. (Pause) Are you ashamed to take it?
Aren't you working in my father's place? So go ahead and eat, Sutūhī.
(Sutūhī hesitantly reaches out his hand, tears off a morsel, shoves it into his mouth and chews it slowly and absentmindedly. . . .) [211]

All the village peasants are poor in terms of money. When they pool their resources to buy batteries, each contributes an 'irsh -- about one cent -- toward the purchase. [212] Later, the Group takes up a collection to finance Abū 'Ārif's trip. Each of the peasants contributes a riyāl -- a coin worth about a nickel. The fact that such small sums are so valuable to the peasants of Tumayra and so scarce dramatizes their poverty more than words could possibly convey. Yet the villagers share what little they have. In addition to money they contribute their best pieces of clothing so Abū 'Ārif won't be ashamed to visit important people.

Pilgrimage - Hajj

The fifth pillar of Islam is one which most Muslims cannot afford to make -- the pilgrimage to Mecca. The hajj, as the pilgrimage is called, is consequently an optional expression of faith. It is, nevertheless, desirable, and it brings great prestige to those who can afford to make it. Hājj Dasūqī bears the title of one who has made the pilgrimage, and the facade of his house is suitably decorated with painted pictures of scenes from his trip.

Hājj Dasūqī, ostensibly a man of moral worth, is actually a devious fraud. His hypocrisy is recognized throughout Tumayra village. Religious hypocrisy is considered a serious fault by Muslims. Indeed, one of the first Arab plays was an adaptation of Moliere's Tartuffe, an expose of religious hypocrisy.

Diab's characterization of Dasūqī is not, however, a challenge to Islam. The rest of the villagers are devoutly religious. Dasūqī only feigns his belief.

Perhaps Diab intended to symbolize a different challenge through his characterization of the Hājj. Islam drew heavily from Judaism and Christianity. Perhaps these religions could be considered 'uncles' of Islam. If so, Hājj Dasūqī's expropriation of his nephew's property could be interpreted symbolically as a reminder of Zionist expropriations of land belonging to Palestinian Muslims.

The characterization of Sutūhī as a physically broken and dispossessed servant of the Hājj could reinforce this interpretation. Sutūhī suffered a terrible accident in his youth which left him crippled for life. Palestinian nationalist aspirations suffered a comparable devastating blow when Britain thwarted early attempts to gain independence. Sutūhī, like the Palestinians, developed an irrepressible hatred for his oppressor. He dreams of joining the underground movement and terrorizing his enemies. These dreams are not focused only on the Zionist forces. They are also directed against Dasūqī.

> Sutūhī: I wish I could be a judge, Hājj Dasūqī, to pass judgement on you. I'd take the yoke from a water buffalo and put it around your neck. I'd hitch you to the waterwheel. And I'd drive you in circles with a whip until you got dizzy a thousand times over. [213]

Sutūhī is the chief instigator of violent resistance against the Hājj. His opposition, clandestine at first, becomes more openly radical as the play progresses. At the end, it is Sutūhī who leads the revolt against the religious hypocrite who steals land from the poor and helpless.

Holy War - Jihād

Another important element of Islam which is sometimes considered an additional pillar of faith is jihād -- holy war. Jihād is a collective, social responsibility to defend the faith. Any Muslim who dies in battle during jihād is guaranteed a place of honor in paradise.

Anwar el-Sadat describes the religious fervor of Egyptian troups during the October War.

> Our soldiers on the Canal didn't wait for the order to cross. The moment the 222 aircraft passed overhead at zero altitude, crossing simultaneously into Sinai, their pent-up feelings and long-checked ardor were released. They pushed their boats into the Canal from behind the fortifications and crossed the Canal immediately, shouting: "Allahu Akbar!" (Allah is greater!). [sic] [214]

Allahu Akbar actually means 'God is Greatest', and Lt. Gen. el Shazly claims credit for suggesting the broadcast of this battle cry from loudspeakers during the Crossing. [215] Mohamed Heikal, however, reports that information services began to invent stories of the Prophet walking among the soldiers and telling them that God was on their side.

> I felt this sort of exhortation to be inappropriate. By implying that the success of the crossing was due to a

> miracle, it diminished the part played by the troops who had been engaged in the battle and who had behaved with such conspicuous bravery and enterprise. There were signs of growing religious fanaticism as war fever mounted. . . . [216]

One of the rationalizations for declaring a holy war was Israel's occupation of Jerusalem, a city sacred to Jews, Christians and Muslims. Diab's characters recognize Jerusalem as the center of the controversy. After Abū 'Ārif has drawn his first map of the war zone, the Group discusses the options open to Egyptian and Syrian troops.

> The Group: What will they do?
>
> Abū 'Ārif: Well then, our army has got to break through from this side. And the Syrian army has to break through from the other side. The two armies aim to meet here. . .
>
> Abū Sharaf: Into Jerusalem, then.
>
> Abū 'Ārif: Bravo, Abū Sharaf. (To the Group) This man is well-informed.
>
> Abū Sharaf: (Calmly) May God grant us the chance to meet at the Holy Mountain of Arafat. [217]

Perhaps Abū Sharaf is implying that the invading armies would join forces with Yasir Arafat's Palestinian fighters. Another possible interpretation is that the Holy Mountain of Arafat is the name of a mosque in Jerusalem. In either case, the religious fervor of Diab's characters is an appropriate representation of popular Arab sentiments.

IV. Theatricality

Diab uses a variety of techniques to give his story theatrical impact. Sound effects reinforce the visual elements provided by Diab's detailed settings. For example, Sa'dīya turns a stone grinder during the second scene, punctuating the dialogue and emphasizing the tension of the confrontation with Hājj Dasūqī. Later, when Abū 'Ārif is

visiting the newspaper office in Cairo, shadowy tableaux of life in Tumayra serve as a reminder of the village he has left behind. During one of these moments, the sounds of barking dogs accompany the appearance of Hājj Dasūqī and Musaylihi, interjecting, without the use of dialogue, a commentary on their personalities. [218] Other sound effects employed by Diab include the offstage noise of passing cars, trucks, and buses.

Diab does not mention any incidental music, but the addition of musical transitions between scenes would be in keeping with common theatrical practice in Egypt. Music is, however, directly integrated into the play in the form of battle hymns which occasionally ring out from Mahrūs' transistor radio.

Other important audio effects include the sound of Gābir's voice, which overlaps Abū 'Ārif's reading of the young soldier's letter to his family and friends in Tumayra. The sounds of gunfire and distant explosions accompany Gābir's voice and increase the tension of the scene.

The playwright occasionally repeats a sequence for emphasis. For example, Gābir's promise to keep fighting is repeated at the end of the play as the Tumayra peasants arm themselves and set out to do battle with Hājj Dasūqī. Segments of Fikrī's love scene with 'Ayisha also recur as flashbacks when 'Ayisha privately reminisces on the bank of the Tumayra canal.

> The Voice of Fikrī: (From deep in 'Ayisha's memory) Whenever we stop work or when I get to leave the tank for a little while, I sit down and think about you, and I say I wonder what she's doing now. I see you walking out the door of your house and coming here. When you're in front of the stove with the fire lighting up your cheeks. And I see you in the middle of the field, glancing around as if you're looking for me. And your beautiful voice rings in my ears. I call out to our Lord in my secret thoughts to take care of you, 'Ayisha. [219]

Fikrī's fate is left unresolved until the final scene of the play. Diab carefully builds suspense through his characters' anticipation of news as well as through their expectations of meeting characters who do not appear. Dr. Bāhir and al-Sādiq Abū 'Umar, Abū Taqīya and the men Dasūqī hired to destroy crops on the disputed feddan, are among Diab's unseen-but-important characters. The Officer, who appears in the final scene, never communicates audibly with the other characters on stage, but they nevertheless guess the nature of his news when he gestures consolingly to Hāmid.

Inference often augments direct statement or action in Diab's play. Sometimes, however, Diab is blatantly melodramatic. Gābir's vocalization of his letter to the accompaniment of battle sounds is one example. Another is the characterization of Hājj Dasūqī who, on one occasion, even gnashes his teeth. Dasūqī is more than a moustache-twirling villain, however, and his scheme to swindle his nephew's family is more than a superficial struggle for the 'deed to the ranch'. He is the personification of Egyptian land ownership and a symbol of Zionist expropriation of Palestinian land.

Despite occasional melodramatic moments and a somewhat predictable ending, Diab's play successfully communicates the naivete of rural Egyptians. What the characters lack in sophistication they make up for with legitimate simplicity and sincerity. The people in Messenger from Tumayra Village are important as representations of real human concerns and as contextual instruments. In other words, they are simultaneously messages and messengers, the subject of the following section.

MESSENGERS AND MESSAGES

Rasūl, the Arabic word for 'messenger' which Diab uses in his title, is also the religious term used to signify the prophet Muhammad. Although many of Diab's characters play the roles of messengers during the course of the play -- Fikrī delivering the newspaper, Sutūhī

relating news about the Hājj, Mahrūs and Gābir providing news of the war -- Diab's chief messenger is Abū 'Ārif whose daughter, 'Ayisha, bears the name of the prophet's favorite wife.

At the center of communications throughout the play is Abū 'Ārif, listening, reading, interpreting, and always seeking to explain the situation to the other peasants. They bring him messages which deal with people, with human problems, with personalized perspectives of life, land and war. They entrust Abū 'Ārif with the responsibility of making their concerns known in Cairo. The following passage summarizes the many messages Abū 'Ārif is expected to transform into questions for al-Sādiq Abū 'Umar.

> The First Peasant: But make sure to ask about everything, Abū 'Ārif. And don't forget a word of what they tell you. Come back ready to explain everything to us.
>
> Bura'ī: And bring me some medicine, Ahmad. Maybe Cairo medicine will be useful.
>
> Mahrūs: And advise Ustāz al-Sādiq Abū 'Umar to stick Hājj Dasūqī with a few words in the newspaper. Maybe they'll hurt him enough to make him see justice.
>
> A Peasant: And pass by the Ministry, Abū 'Ārif. Don't forget. Let them know what's happening with the Agricultural Committee. Tell them they are burning up our blood.
>
> The Second Peasant: And don't forget to ask Ustāz al-Sādiq about our Palestinian Arab brothers, too. Ask him where they'll go after this. That's the question.
>
> The Peasant: And don't forget my question. Why is America locking horns with us?
>
> Umm Fikrī: And ask about Fikrī, Abū 'Ārif. And I'll pay you a riyāl.
>
> Hāmid: And ask about Ibrāhīm, too. Don't forget him.

Bura'ī: The most important thing for you to tell him is: If Gābir Abū Sa'īd sent a letter from the front, saying we'll fight, then what is the talk in the paper? And tell him Uncle Bura'ī is sick.

Abū 'Ārif: Don't worry. I'll arrange everything in my mind. The most important, and then the next important. I'll explain everything to you. About America and China and the Soviets and I won't leave anything out.

Mahrūs: And about Geneva, Uncle Ahmad.

Abū 'Ārif: I won't leave anything out.

Mahrūs: And then bring some batteries with you for the radio. [220]

Abū 'Ārif's mission fails. He finds no one willing to answer Tumayra's questions. Mahmoud Diab's Messenger from Tumayra Village has thus far received a similar response from the Cairo theatre community. Perhaps Diab's story is too obvious to Egyptians. Maybe the peasant revolt the play dramatizes is considered by censors to be too dangerous a provocation in a society where large numbers of people are exploited by wealthy landowners like Hājj Dasūqī. Possibly the play has been suppressed because it draws attention to Sadat's failure to rally his people and help them solve their many problems. Whatever the explanation, Diab's play has generally been ignored in Egypt. Yet Messenger from Tumayra Village remains a sensitive and realistic treatment of conditions in rural Egypt and a symbolic reminder of Arab attitudes toward the Palestinian issue. Certainly, the play deserves greater attention than it has received.

THE PLAYWRIGHT AND HIS PLAYS

I. Mahmoud Diab

Mahmoud Diab was born in 1932 in Ismā'ilīya. He grew up in this small town by the Suez Canal which would later become a battlefield during the October War. Mahmoud's brother, Ismā'īl Diab, recalls the

playwright's early fascination with theatre and movies. Mahmoud reportedly enjoyed entertaining his family with impersonations of movie stars like Clark Gable.[221]

Mahmoud's career as a playwright brought recognition as early as 1965 when his first play, in literary Arabic, won a prize from the Academy of Language. Later, Diab wrote increasingly in colloquial Arabic and concentrated on the problems of rural Egyptians. His controversial Bāb al-Futūh was allegedly banned in 1970, but it was eventually produced in 1976 by Egypt's National Theatre Company. Another of his plays, al-Zawbā'a (The Storm), was translated into English and published in Mahmoud Manzalaoui's 1977 anthology.

Diab's sensitivity is apparent in his plays, but it also influenced his personal life. Perhaps because of repeated conflicts over censorship, Diab ceased writing after 1979. He suffered a series of nervous breakdowns, and he became increasingly isolated from family, friends and colleagues. In October 1983 he died, and the event of his funeral elicited a mere paragraph of recognition from Egypt's leading newspaper, al-Ahrām.

II. Mahmoud Diab's Plays and Dates of Composition

al-Bayt al-qadīm (The Old Home)	1965
al-Gharīb (The Stranger)	1967
al-Zawbā'a (The Storm)	1967
Layāli al-hīsād (Harvest Nights)	1968
al-Duyūf (The Guests)	1968
al-Piāno (The Piano)	1968

al-Halafīt 1969

(The Halafīt)

Bāb al-Futūh 1969

(Bāb al-Futūh)

Rasūl min qaryit Tumayra 1974

(Messenger from Tumayra Village)

Ard la tinbat al-zuhūr 1979

(Earth Which Won't Grow Flowers)

Notes to Introduction to Diab's Play

[1] Personal interview with Ismā'īl Diab, March 24, 1983.

[2] Mohamed Heikal, The Road to Ramadan (London: William Collins Sons, 1975), p. 43.

[3] David Hirst and Irene Beeson, Sadat (London: Faber and Faber, 1981), p. 21.

[4] Ibid, p. 125.

[5] Saad el Shazly, The Crossing of Suez (San Francisco: American Mideast Research, 1980), p. 140.

[6] Heikal, Ramadan, p. 204.

[7] el Shazly, p. 28.

[8] Ibid, p. 29.

[9] Ibid, p. 39.

[10] Ibid, pp. 7-9.

[11] Heikal, Ramadan, p. 45.

[12] el Shazly, pp. 232-33.

[13] Ibid, p. 241.

[14] Ibid, p. 243.

[15] Ibid, p. 247.

[16] Heikal, Ramadan, p. 226.

[17] el Shazly, p. 253.

[18] Hirst and Beeson, p. 158.

[19] D.K. Palit, Return to Sinai: The Arab Offensive, October 1973 (New Delhi: Palit & Palit, 1974), p. 138

[20] Heikal, Ramadan, p. 231.

[21] Palit, p. 139.

22 el Shazly, p. 259.

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid, p. 260.

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Messenger from Tumayra Village

by Mahmoud Diab

Translated by William Scott

August 1982

Characters of the Play

1 -- Ahmad Abū 'Ārif

Approximately fifty years of age. A peasant and watchman in an orchard -- "The Orchard of Dr. Bāhir". A man whose personality and language has been formed from habitual reading of one of the daily newspapers over the years.

2 -- 'Ayisha

Daughter of Ahmad Abū 'Ārif. About twenty years old. Pretty and pleasant. She is living a love affair which has left a shadow of sorrow on her face.

3 -- Fikrī Abū Ismā'īl

A young man of Tumayra Village. A recruit. Reknowned in the village for his goodness and respectability. He is a compassionate man.

4 -- Sutūhī

A young man of Fikrī Abū Ismā'īl's age. Sutūhī, however, suffered an accident as a child. His bones were fractured and his growth stunted. Now, a sickly protrusion sticks out the front of his chest. His left arm is paralyzed and his body is feeble. He appears melancholy and highstrung.

5 -- Hāmid Abū Ismā'īl

A young man, not yet twenty years old. Reckless and stubborn.

6 -- Umm Fikrī

An Egyptian peasant mother, with all the rugged and compassionate nature of such people, and who has a deep-seated feeling of sorrow.

7 -- Sa'dīya Umm Ismā'īl

Sister of Fikrī and Hāmid. Seventeen years old. An Egyptian orphan from a poor home.

8 -- Bura'ī

A peasant of about fifty who is always sick. Emaciated. Sickness has worn him down, and he walks with his back bent. He doesn't appear onstage until after the rest of the group, and then he immediately sits down to rest. He complains a lot.

9 -- Mahrūs

A young peasant who is lucky enough to own a transistor radio.

10 -- Hājj Dasūqī

One of the influential men of the village. Violent, power-hungry and egotistical. He is Fikrī Abū Ismā'īl's uncle. [s.3]

11 -- Musaylihi

A constant follower of Hājj Dasūqī. He isn't of sufficient social status to be Hājj Dasūqī's friend, but he isn't his hireling either. Nevertheless, Hājj Dasūqī is seldom seen without Musaylihi.

12 -- Abū Sharaf

A man of about fifty. The trials of life have defeated him, and so he has resigned himself to a state of complacent tranquility. His face frozen and his voice hoarse and monotonous, he seems immune to all emotion.

13 -- The Peasants

Three Egyptian peasants whose ages range between forty and fifty.

14 -- Umm Gābir

A mother. Another Egyptian peasant.

15 -- Sāmiya Shākir

A modern, young newspaper woman.

16 -- The Clerk

His name is 'Ezzat. He is a clerk at the information desk of the newspaper.

17 -- The Group

Other than those characters of the village already mentioned, the public includes a number of village men of various occupations.

18 -- A photo-journalist and a young army officer.

The time of the play

(Between September and November 1973) [s.4]

Prologue

(Introduction to the Village of Tumayra)

(With the rise of the curtain the stage is immersed in shadows. Then the light falls upon a group of citizens of Tumayra, arranged in the way in which we will see them throughout the play. They have already gathered in the foreground. In front of them is Ahmad Abū 'Ārif, and in his hand is the carefully folded newspaper he is always reading. Mahrūs is embracing an old transistor radio. The rest of the principal male characters of the play are among the citizens of Tumayra -- with the exception of Hājj Dasūqī, Musaylihi, and Fikrī Abū Ismā'īl. As for Bura'ī, he enters late, panting, and he sits near the group, squatting on his heels.)

The Group: The name of our village is Tumayra.

Abū 'Ārif: (Confirming with obvious self-confidence) Yes, Tumayra. It's an old name, as old as the sun.

Hāmid: We don't know who named it. Tumayra.

Mahrūs: (Pointing to Ahmad Abū 'Ārif) And not even Ahmad Abū 'Ārif knows.

Abū 'Ārif: But. . . Tumayra must have a meaning.

The Group: Tumayra means: Our village.

(Soft lights fall upon the village at the far left of the stage.)

Hāmid: Tumayra is a very small village.

Mahrūs: Say: A rural settlement.

Abū 'Ārif: The train doesn't stop here, and its name isn't mentioned on the map.

Sutūhī: It's houses are drab. They're built with clay from the land.

The First Peasant: Nighttime comes and the darkness takes the village into its bosom.

Sutūhī: You don't see the houses. [s.5]

Abū 'Arīf: But we are inside them. Pressed together. Piled up. We keep each other warm until we go to sleep.

Hāmid: And you don't see us.

Sutūhī: For we are sleeping in the darkness.

The Group: Only we can see each other inside Tumayra.

(The light falls on the front of Dr. Bāhir's Orchard as we will see it in the first scene of Act One. The sounds of early morning in the village are heard, and during the following segment, the sound of a bus is heard approaching from afar.)

Abū Sharaf: Tumayra is like any village -- like any market town or rural settlement. In it are both good and bad.

Hāmid: But the bad people can be counted on the fingers of one hand.

Sutūhī: In it are people who are perishing for a scrap of bread.

Mahrūs: And there are wealthy people, too.

The Second Peasant: But the wealthy among us are also very few.

Bura'ī: (From his place) And there are also those like me who have been sick all their lives.

Abū 'Ārif: Some of Tumayra's children have done well and gone away. We never see them any more, but are proud of them for they are still our children.

The Group: Tumayra is fertile. No matter how many leave or are taken away, Tumayra bears and raises spirited young men to take their places. Tumayra is our village.

(The light fades from the group with the approaching sound of the bus.) [s.6]

ACT I

Scene One

(A road leading to the village, passing in front of a large fruit orchard. Behind the low fence appear the tops of the fruit trees, and facing the spectators is the orchard gate. It is a wooden gate, primitively constructed of crisscrossed wooden posts. Over the gate is a sign written in bad lettering -- 'Dr. Bāhir's Orchard'. The gate is opened slightly. On the left is a small wooden bench on which is piled an old, heavy overcoat, and placed on top of that is a crude staff. On the right of the orchard passes a farm road. We are conscious of it during the movement of traffic.

(The time: In the early morning at sunrise. The sound of a bus approaches, and then it stops at the right of the orchard. It stops long enough for one of the passengers to get off, and then it continues down the road, its sound fading into the distance.

(Fikrī Abū Ismā'īl in military clothing. On his arm is a Corporal's insignia. It appears as if he had just got off the bus. He holds a large cloth bundle under one arm and in his hand is a filled basket. In his other hand he clutches a daily newspaper. He gives the bus a glance as it pulls away, and then he turns calmly toward the village. He throws a thoughtful look at it. Then he directs a glance at the bench. He calmly proceeds toward the bench, puts down his basket and his bundle beside it, and sits upon it, awaiting the appearance of its owner. Ahmad Abū 'Ārif comes out of the orchard gate in a hurry. He turns directly to the right as if to catch the bus; however, he is surprised to see that it has already moved

away. So he stops, following it with an exasperated gaze while Fikrī smilingly watches him.)

Abū 'Ārif: (Talking to himself in annoyance) Why didn't he stop? Is the world going to fly away? (He falls silent and turns his eyes to the ground around him.) Maybe he threw it before he went. (But he doesn't find anything.) Oh, brother. Not a thing. (He turns on his heels hopelessly.) What a pity. We won't know what went on in the world yesterday.

Fikrī: (While he is still in his place) I have the newspaper, Uncle Ahmad.

Abū 'Ārif: (Surprised by the presence of Fikrī) What's that? Fikrī Abū Ismā'īl here? A thousand thanks to God for your safety. (Fikrī gets up, smiling, to embrace him.) With open arms. With open arms, Fikrī. (The two men embrace.) [s.7]

Fikrī: I just now got off the Omnibus. (He extends the newspaper to Abū 'Ārif.)

Abū 'Ārif: A hundred welcomes. (He accepts the newspaper.) Did the driver make you carry the newspaper? He shouldn't have.

Fikrī: Man, it's not as if it were a sack of wheat. It's only a newspaper, Abū 'Ārif.

Abū 'Ārif: And if there were two sacks on wheat, you would have carried them all the same. I know you too well. You are the epitome of generosity and goodwill, Abū Ismā'īl. Sit down and relax. You've brought the morning sun with you.

(The two men sit beside each other on the bench. Abū 'Ārif lights a quick, exploring glance on the first page of the paper. Then he decides to put it aside for the time being.)

Abū 'Ārif: (As he folds up the paper) Let it go for now. I have the whole day to read it.

Fikrī: (Joking) Are you still addicted to reading the paper, Uncle Ahmad?

Abū 'Ārif: How could anybody break such a habit?

Fikrī: (With a pleasant smile) While I was coming here, I said to myself, when I get off the bus, I'm bound to meet Uncle Ahmad Abū 'Ārif in front of the orchard, guarding it with the newspaper in his hand. (The two men laugh a little.) Most watchmen carry gunpowder. You carry a newspaper. (They laugh.)

Abū 'Ārif: It's gotten into my blood. Do you believe, Fikrī --

Fikrī: There is no God but Allah.

Abū 'Ārif: That for me, if a day passes when I don't read the paper, [s.8] I get so worried that I can't sleep all night? My mind keeps worrying about the world. Until the next day's paper comes. (Fikrī laughs lightly.) The people of Tumayra aren't aware of the value of the newspaper. They just use it as a subject of gossip about me. They really do. They gossip about me. Do you know what they call me these days? Abū Newspaper! See how our village is, Sīy Fikrī?

Fikrī: (Smiling affectionately) They only mean to laugh with you, Abū 'Ārif.

Abū 'Ārif: Whether they mean it or not, what do they understand, these ignorant people? They're just Third World people -- unlike us, of course. (Fikrī laughs.) You're laughing. All right, I'll ask you: Who in our village has heard of Liza Minelli?

Fikrī: Who's he?

Abū 'Ārif: Liza Minelli. She's a movie actress. In a film called Cabaret. This film defends the Zionists. Only two people in our village know about this: Ustāz al-Sādiq Abū 'Umar who wrote about it in the newspaper and me who read it. What do you say to that?

Fikrī: The truth is that you are a well-informed person. Nothing escapes your attention.

Abū 'Ārif: (With self-confidence) The world desires the enlightened man, Sīy Fikrī. Anyway, (He takes a quick glance at the paper.) haven't you ever met al-Sādiq Abū 'Umar in Cairo?

Fikrī: No, by God, I haven't. I'm in Ismā'ilīya, you know.

Abū 'Ārif: But I thought you were going to Cairo.

Fikrī: Even if I did meet him, I don't suppose he would know me.

He left the village a long time ago. He's bound to have forgotten me. [s.9]

Abū 'Ārif: By God, if he saw you, he probably would remember you. He's a great newspaper man, so it's impossible he'd forget anything.

Fikrī: The world is full of problems, Uncle Ahmad, preoccupying people's minds.

Abū 'Ārif: You know, SIy Fikrī, al-Sādiq Abū 'Umar was the one who got me hooked on the newspaper. When he first landed the job, I was spinning with joy. I felt like our village had become famous, because a man of influence had come from it. I began to buy newspapers just to see his name in print -- right there along with the big names.

Fikrī: And from that day the newspaper hasn't left your hands?

Abū 'Ārif: I haven't missed a word of it. From the headlines to the final period on the last page. (Pause) Frankly, al-Sādiq Abū 'Umar is a man to be proud of.

Fikrī: Our village has raised many children we can be proud of.

Abū 'Ārif: So what do you do in the military? God willing, you'll keep getting promoted right up to the top rank.

Fikrī: Thanks be to God. I'm doing all right. I keep my eyes and ears wide open. I'm good with weapons and I've got a good reputation with our officers.

Abū 'Ārif: Well, of course. You stand tall wherever you are. May our Lord increase your wisdom. Have you been promoted yet or not?

Fikrī: (Showing the two stripes to Abū 'Ārif) I got the second one a couple of months ago.

Abū 'Ārif: (He runs his hands over the stripes with pride.) And you deserve it. By God, if they knew how valuable you are and how much we respect you, they'd have made you an officer. You're a very worthy man, Fikrī.

Fikrī: God bless you. You're very kind. [s.10]

Abū 'Ārif: We're proud of all our men in the army. You're the best five seeds to sprout and grow in our village.

Fikrī: Our village is full of good men, Abū 'Ārif. It's people are all sweetness.

Abū 'Ārif: If only they were more enlightened and more aware of the world.

Fikrī: (Sighing) It's not in their hands. As you know very well. (Pause) Pardon me, but I have to get going.

Abū 'Ārif: (Standing in protest) Get going where? What about tea?

Fikrī: Thanks anyway, but there's no need --

Abū 'Ārif: What am I, a stranger? Someone you despise?

Fikrī: It's not that, Abū 'Ārif.

Abū 'Ārif: Then sit down while I go inside and heat up the tea. It won't be more than a couple of minutes.

Fikrī: The truth is I don't like tea on an empty stomach.

Abū 'Ārif: (With enthusiasm) Then you'll eat breakfast with me. (It is obvious that Fikrī is refusing.) By God, you can't leave until you've eaten.

Fikrī: That's too much, Uncle Ahmad.

Abū 'Ārif: (Continuing) You aren't going to eat breakfast with anyone but me.

Fikrī: (Throwing up his hands in resignation) If you insist.

Abū 'Ārif: You've got to drink your tea, so sit down, Fikrī. You're a good man, my brother. (Fikrī sits in resignation.) 'Ayisha's already overdue to come and bring breakfast. (Pause) I don't know what's holding her up today. (He casts a probing glance toward the village and a moment passes in silence.) [s.11]

Fikrī: (The mention of 'Ayisha's name catches his attention and stirs up an emotional reaction in him which he tries to hide.) She -- how is she, Uncle Ahmad?

Abū 'Ārif: 'Ayisha? Fine.

Fikrī: (Continuing) And your other children. How are they?

Abū 'Ārif: Just as you left them. Short on production and long on consumption. God save us, they'll eat anything.

Fikrī: (With a short laugh) May our Lord protect them

Abū 'Ārif: And may he protect you. (He glances toward the village and then springs up and yells.) Hurry up a little, 'Ayisha. (To Fikrī) There, the provisions have arrived. (He laughs and Fikrī smiles.) But I'll go inside and heat up the tea. A couple of minutes and I'll be back, so don't you dare move away from here.

(Fikrī can no longer control his feelings. He glances longingly toward the village, watching 'Ayisha as she comes into sight. Then 'Ayisha appears, carrying in her hands a breakfast bundle. Fikrī gets to his feet ecstatically. 'Ayisha takes two steps, and then her eyes fall on Fikrī. She stops, bewildered, as the surprise has frozen her in place.)

'Ayisha: (Stammering) Fikrī.

Fikri: 'Ayisha. (He steps toward her, longingly.) Morning of goodness, 'Ayisha.

'Ayisha: (Still under the spell of surprise) Morning of light, Sīy Fikrī. Thank God you're safe.

Fikrī: Thank you. And how are you?

'Ayisha: Fine, Sīy Fikrī. When did you get here?

Fikrī: Just now. (He takes the bundle from her.) Here, let me.

'Ayisha: I had a feeling in my heart that I was going to see you. All the way here you were on my mind and I was saying: I wonder when you're going to come back [s.12] so we can see you again, Fikrī. And here you are. (She smiles shyly with a beautiful smile.)

Fikrī: My time's almost up. Only two or three months and I'll finish my time in the army, and you'll see me morning and night.

'Ayisha: Is it true, Sīy Fikrī?

Fikrī: I don't suppose it'd be much more than that.

The Voice of Abū 'Ārif: (Calling from behind the wall) Fikrī. Abū Ismā'īn.

Fikrī: Yes, Uncle Ahmad.

Abū 'Ārif: Is 'Ayisha there yet?

'Ayisha: Good morning, Father.

Abū 'Ārif: Put the breakfast down, 'Ayisha. I'll be right there.

'Ayisha: Yes, Father. (Fikrī puts the bundle on the bench, and 'Ayisha leans over it to untie the knot, glancing furtively at Fikrī with love and happiness.)

Fikrī: (Whispering) I sat next to your father, not wanting to leave because I knew you'd come. He insisted that I eat breakfast with him, and I said to myself: Thank God I didn't have to invite myself.

'Ayisha: (Alarmed) Are you going to eat breakfast with my father?

Fikrī: What frightens you about that?

'Ayisha: Oh, the shame. There isn't anything worthy of you.

Fikrī: Am I a stranger, 'Ayisha?

'Ayisha: If I'd known, I would've fried you some eggs. I have a hen that's been laying eggs for about a week.

Fikrī: Like the proverb says: An onion given in love is a lamb. [s.13]

'Ayisha: (Shyly) Because you are very dear to us, Fikrī.

Fikrī: Our Lord knows my heart concerning you, 'Ayisha. ('Ayisha is overcome with shyness. Fikrī looks attentively at her face for a while with passionate love.) Your beautiful face never leaves me, 'Ayisha. Whenever we stop work or when I get to leave the tank for a little while, I sit down and think about you, and I say I wonder what she's doing now. I see you walking out the door of your house and coming here. When you're in front of the stove and the fire lighting up your cheeks. And I see you in the middle of the field, glancing around as if you're looking for me. And your beautiful voice rings in my ears. I call out to our Lord in my secret thoughts to take care of you, 'Ayisha.

'Ayisha: (After a short pause) I'm so glad to came back, Fikrī.

Fikrī: What do you do with your time, 'Ayisha? Tell me exactly and then I'll be able to see you when I'm far away.

'Ayisha: Like you said, Fikrī. Only you forgot something. All day and all night long my heart is possessed by you. I go to the canal every day, and on my way back from the fields at sunset, I stand for a while on the viaduct with my feet nailed to the ground, saying: I wonder what Fikrī is doing right now.

Fikrī: (With a whisper after throwing a watchful glance at the orchard gate) If you come to the canal today, you can meet me there, like we used to do.

'Ayisha: (Whispering excitedly) I will. (Pause) Are you going to stay with us very long this time?

Fikrī: I only have thirty hours. Because I had to spend the night in town with one of the soldiers from my unit.

'Ayisha: (In sorrow) Then you can't stay? [s.14]

Fikrī: I would have liked to stay longer. But it isn't in my hands, 'Ayisha. I had a hard time getting even a two-day pass.

'Ayisha: Why is it so difficult?

Fikrī: Because we're training for a big project these days. And if it hadn't been for my mother's letter, I couldn't have come.

'Ayisha: (With interest) Has your mother sent for you?

Fikrī: Yes, she sent for me. And she said it was absolutely necessary for me to be present. Have you seen her, 'Ayisha?

'Ayisha: Every morning I pass by your house and say good morning to her. I just saw her as I was coming here.

Fikrī: What's the matter with them? What's happening in our house?

'Ayisha: (Cautiously) Didn't she tell you in the letter?

Fikrī: (Apprehensively) She didn't say. What happened? Tell me.

'Ayisha: (Hesitating) Nothing. (Evading the questions) When you see her, she'll tell you.

Fikrī: (His anxiety has increased) If you know something, tell me. I can't help worrying. What happened?

'Ayisha: They say -- only by the life of the Prophet, don't get upset.

Fikrī: I won't get upset. Tell me, 'Ayisha.

'Ayisha: They say that your uncle, Hājj Dasūqī, has a piece of paper from your father, may he rest in peace, sealed with his seal, and that he sold him your land on the canal.

Fikrī: (Amazed) My father!! [s.15]

'Ayisha: And that he was paid in full before he died.

Fikrī: My father!!

'Ayisha: And they say that the paper was witnessed by two people from our village.

Fikrī: No. Who?

'Ayisha: They say Musaylihi and Bura'ī Abū Zaydān.

Fikrī: That's impossible. It doesn't make sense.

'Ayisha: (Sympathetically) No one in the village believes the story.

Fikrī: (Shouting) It's a forgery. My father didn't sell his land, 'Ayisha. It isn't possible. When did he sell it to him? Why did my uncle keep silent about it for seven years? My father died seven years ago, 'Ayisha.

'Ayisha: Please don't get upset, Sīy Fikrī. I wish I hadn't told you.

Fikrī: (Bitterly) Strange. What's happened to my uncle -- my father's brother -- to do this? He already has the best land in the village. There aren't even enough hands to cultivate it. And he's got heaps of money. He doesn't need it, so why should he covet our land?

'Ayisha: God's curse is on him. Satan is making him do it.

Fikrī: From the day he took over as our guardian he hasn't allowed us to enjoy anything from our property. We beg him for every penny he gives us. But still we keep on being patient, saying never mind, he's our uncle. But has it gone so far that he should take our land from us by fraud?

'Ayisha: (Soothingly) Not all of it, Sīy Fikrī. It's only the

feddan by the canal.

Fikrī: (Crying out) Not even a single handspan. How many feddans do we have, 'Ayisha? We've only got two. (Then in fury) By God if he doesn't make peace with me and tear up the paper he's forged [s.16] -- and right in front of me -- I'll raise hell with him. I won't be silent. (He rushes toward his basket and his bundle.)

'Ayisha: (In an attempt to pacify him) He's still your uncle, Sīy Fikrī.

Fikrī: Whoever eats my flesh is no longer my uncle. Goodbye, 'Ayisha. (And Fikrī rushes off, headed toward the village.)

'Ayisha: (She follows in apprehension.) But wait and eat breakfast. I wish I hadn't told you. Take care of yourself, Fikrī. Make no mistake. The man is spiteful and merciless. (Fikrī has already disappeared from view. 'Ayisha comes to a standstill, tormented by pain.) May god strike me dead for telling him.

(Ahmad Abū 'Ārif comes out from the orchard gate, carrying a teapot, blackened with smoke, and two small glasses. He is surprised that Fikrī has gone, and so he immediately turns to look toward the village.)

Abū 'Ārif: (Shouting) Fikrī Abū Ismā'īl. Why have you gone? I made the tea. (Then to 'Ayisha) What happened, 'Ayisha?

'Ayisha: (Feeling guilty) It seems he. . . didn't know the story about his Uncle Hājj Dasūqī.

Abū 'Ārif: I hope you didn't let your tongue get out of control.

'Ayisha: (Sadly) I didn't know he'd get so upset. (Abū 'Ārif turns toward the bench in exasperation.)

'Ayisha: He had to find out.

Abū 'Ārif: Fikrī won't be quiet. I know him. He's good and tactful and polite, but when it comes to justice, he's like a panther.

'Ayisha: Hājj Dasūqī's got no right to do this.

Abū 'Ārif: May the man drop dead from shame. His belly is more vast than the Atlantic. He took over the Agricultural Committee and sucked its blood. Every other month he snatches part of a feddan from

somebody. And he doesn't leave anybody out -- not even his brother's orphaned children. [s.17]

'Ayisha: I don't know why he's like that.

Abū 'Ārif: (Continuing) He doesn't fear God, and he's never satiated. The man is one hundred percent imperialist.

(Blackout)

Scene Two

(The courtyard of Fikrī Abū Ismā'īl's house later the same day -- a low wall separates the house from the streets. On the far left is a wide, rustic gate and built into the outside wall is a relatively high stone bench, or mastaba, upon which there is a grinder for cracking grain. In the middle, facing the audience, is a small mastaba, slightly lower than the other one. Next to it is a door to the interior of the house, and the door is darkened by age. To the right of the door is a small niche in the wall, used for putting a small wick to burn for light at nighttime. It has left black soot marks on the edges of the niche.

(The night falls on the grinder. Already seated is Sa'dīya , turning the grinder and taking the grain from a small basket at her side. She divides her attention between turning the grinder and following what goes on around her, giving an occasional quiet, wistful glance at Fikrī and her mother. Fikrī's mother is squatting on her heels at the left of the mastaba, preoccupied with her worries. Fikrī sits on the mastaba. He has already put on his gilbāb, a rustic, gown-like cloak, and he is still taking off his military boots, untying the knots

absentmindedly. In front of him, toward the edge of the mastaba, are his slippers. The sound of the grinder continues for a while.) [s.18]

Fikrī: (Turning to his mother in pain) Isn't it conceivable that my father really did sell him the land, Mother? (Sa'dīya stops turning the grinder to listen sharply.)

al-Umm: (Disapprovingly) Your father, Fikrī? Your father sell his land? And sell it without telling me? (Fikrī signs and bows his head.)

al-Umm: (Continuing) These were his last words to me: Ragīya, I want to leave the children enough land to support them until they can stand on their own. Would your father sell the land, Fikrī? [s.18]

Sa'dīya: (Quietly) He wasn't in debt to anybody so he'd've had to sell.

al-Umm: He wouldn't take a step without telling me. Give me your advice, Ragīya, he used to say. Would he sell a feddan behind my back?

Fikrī: (After a pause, shouting suddenly in anger) Then my Uncle Dasūqī is a swindler.

al-Umm: Yes, a swindler and a slanderer. He hasn't got even a shred of conscience. (A brief moment passes.)

Sa'dīya: (As she continues turning the grinder) At least he could've told himself: Those are my brother's children.

Fikrī: And the people who bore false witness on the contract for him? Weren't they afraid of our Lord's wrath?

al-Umm: Who witnessed it for him? Bura'ī Abū Zaydān and Musaylihi? One is up to his eyes in debt to your uncle, and your uncle could ruin his house. The other lives under your uncle's table night and day like a dog. Why wouldn't they bear witness?!!

Sa'dīya: They'd bear witness that his name came in the Koran and they'd swear to it. (A silent moment. Fikrī puts his military boots aside and stands up distractedly.)

Fikrī: What's to be done now, Mother?

al-Umm: Go to him and talk it over with him. Stand up to him and let him know that he has to take you into account.

Fikrī: (At a loss) But he's my uncle. What can I do to him? All my life I've honored him and respected him and treated him like my father. Whenever I'd see him, I'd kiss his hand and hold my tongue.

Sa'dīya: You're the oldest. There's nobody but you to stand up to him. [s.19]

Fikrī: (To his mother after a pause to contemplate) And if he doesn't pay any attention to what I say?

al-Umm: Then let the men of the village judge between you.

Sa'dīya: Is there anybody in the village who would dare to judge him? (She goes on turning the grinder.) They're afraid of him.

Fikrī: (To his mother) Suppose they judge in my favor, and he disregards their judgment. What should I do?

al-Umm: (In a decisive tone) You are a man. So do what a man would do. And in this case, nobody would put the blame on you. (The gate to the house is pushed open and Hamid enters. Appearing behind him is Bura'ī Abū Zaydān, a man eaten by disease. Fear and doubt appear to be a part of his nature.)

Hāmid: Come on, Uncle Bura'ī. Come on in. (Sa'dīya stops turning the grinder, and everyone's eyes turn with hidden fury toward the newcomer.)

Bura'ī: (In his typically weak and hesitant fashion) Peace be upon you.

Fikrī: (Without enthusiasm) And upon you peace.

Bura'ī: (Shaking hands with Fikrī apprehensively) Greetings, Sīy Fikrī. Thank God you're safe and well.

Fikrī: God keep you safe and well, too, Uncle Bura'ī. (Hāmid squats on his heels beside his mother, following the situation attentively.)

Bura'ī: Well, my brother, since you've come home, why haven't you come to look in on us. We are next-door neighbors.

al-Umm: (Muttering sarcastically) Neighbors, by God. Next-door neighbors.

Sa'dīya: (Muttering) Praised be such neighborliness. (She turns the grinder without any concentration.) [s.20]

Bura'ī: Your brother Hāmid told me you wanted me, and by God I stood up and came here straight away -- even though I'm sick and it's hard to stand up straight.

Fikrī: Sit down and rest, Uncle Bura'ī.

Bura'ī: (He sits painfully on the edge of the mastaba.) God gladden your heart. You're a prince, the son of princes. (His eyes fall by chance on the mother.) By God I'm tired, Ragīya. It's as if there's a feud between me and this disease.

al-Umm: Whoever respects our Lord God is respected by Him.

Bura'ī: (Protesting) And am I neglectful in His service, Ragīya?

al-Umm: (Inflexibly) See why Fikrī wants you, Bura'ī.

Bura'ī: (Reluctantly, as in reality he is aware of the matter) Why do you want to see me, Sīy Fikrī?

Fikrī: (He bides his time for a moment.) I have one question, Uncle Bura'ī. I didn't want to ask you in your home, in front of your children.

Bura'ī: A good one, I hope.

Fikrī: Tell me, Uncle Buraī. Is it true that my father sold his land to my Uncle, Hājj Dasūqī, before he died? (Bura'ī is struck by the question, and he bows his head. The grinder stops.)

Fikrī: The feddan adjacent to the canal. Do you know it?

Bura'ī: I know it.

Fikrī: Did my father sell it to my uncle and receive the money for it?

Hāmid: (Springing up nervously) Speak up, Uncle Bura'ī. Didn't you sign the contract? (The grinder stops.)

Bura'ī: Do I know how to sign my name, Hāmid? [s.21]

Hāmid: You signed with your seal.

Bura'ī: What do you mean, my seal?

Fikrī: (Agitated) Did he sell it to him or didn't he?

Bura'ī: (He trembles and stands up nervously.) Why don't you go ask him, Fikrī?

al-Umm: (Sacrastically) Go ask his father?

Bura'ī: Go ask his uncle. What is it to me?

Fikrī: (He grabs ahold of Bura'ī calmly.) Sit down, Uncle Bura'ī. Rest. You're tired. (Bura'ī returns to the mastaba in fatigue.)

Hāmid: All right, then, are you ready to swear on the Koran?

Bura'ī: (In agitation) Why should I swear? What is this swearing business? Why don't you go to the one concerned and make him swear? I am a sick man and you drag me over here to do this to me?

al-Umm: What are we doing to you, Bura'ī?

Bura'ī: What is this making me swear on the Koran? Am I in court or on trial? This is too strange.

Fikrī: If you went to court, would you swear?

Bura'ī: (Taken aback) What would take me to court!?

Fikrī: I would.

Bura'ī: Do you intend to go to court?

Fikrī: I intend to do a lot, Uncle Bura'ī. And the whole village must know. Fikrī Abū Ismā'īl has come of age and outgrown his guardianship. I am a man by law and a man in fact. [s.22]

Bura'ī: (Flattering weakly) Does anybody deny this?

Fikrī: A tough and determined man. I'll take up the matter with kindness and persuasion in the beginning, and then with the men of the village, and then with your religion and your fear of our Lord. You and the other one who witnessed with you. And if things don't turn out right, then there are courts and lawyers and prosecutors.

Bura'ī: Would you really go that far?!!

Hāmid: (Threateningly) There are many other things. Besides this.

Fikrī: The military has opened my eyes and taught me a lot,

Uncle Bura'ī. It taught me that justice isn't lost as long as there are men to search for it.

The Voice of Hājj Dasūqī: (Asking permission to enter) God bless this house. (The gate is pushed open and Hājj Dasūqī enters. Behind him is Musaylihi. Hājj Dasūqī is in full array as a village dignitary.)

Bura'ī: (Like one who has found his rescuer) Hājj Dasūqī? (He hastens to meet him. The eyes of Fikrī and his family stare in gloomy silence at the ones entering.)

Dasūqī: (To Bura'ī, suspiciously) So you're here, Bura'ī. (Then to Fikrī) Greetings, Fikrī.

Fikrī: God bless you, Uncle. (Dasūqī extends his hand to Fikrī in a gesture of one who is used to having his hand kissed. Fikrī lingers a moment, and then he bows down and kisses his uncle's hand.)

Dasūqī: Aren't you going to greet Musaylihi? He's missed you a lot.

Musaylihi: We've missed you a lot, by God. (He shakes hands with Fikrī -- Hājj Dasūqī turns his eyes to those around him, and when they fall upon Sa'dīya, Sa'dīya averts her face and busies herself with turning the grinder.)

Dasūqī: (To Fikrī) I heard that you'd come -- what a surprise -- I was passing by, so I said: I'll stop and ask how you've been. [s.23]

al-Umm: (Scornfully) You are all kindness, Hājj Dasūqī.

Dasūqī: Well, they are my children, too -- as the proverb says. (Then to Bura'ī) And how are you Bura'ī?

Bura'ī: (As if he were awaiting an opportunity to complain) By God, I'm sick, Hājj.

Dasūqī: All your life you say you're sick. But here you are. (Musaylihi laughs.)

Bura'ī: Well, where would I go, Hājj?!

Dasūqī: Wherever people go, my brother. That's to say: We'll all be conquered by a meter of earth. (Musaylihi laughs.) In fact, our

cemetery is quite large.

Bura'ī: You're tempting fate, Hājj. Every time you see me you say this to me.

Dasūqī: You don't get well, but you don't stop complaining to us.

Bura'ī: Is it in my hands, Hājj Dasūqī?

Musaylihi: He's only joking, Bura'ī. Don't be so sensitive.

Dasūqī: (His eyes have stopped on Hāmid.) How are you doing. Hāmid?

Hāmid: (Ill at ease) Fine.

Dasūqī: But I keep hearing bad things about you.

al-Umm: What do you hear, Dasūqī?

Dasūqī: I hear that his tongue is longer than he is tall -- and that isn't good. (Then he turns toward Sa'dīya, who gazes at him and then bows her head at once.) And I hear that Sa'dīya, too, has grown up and learned how to speak out.

al-Umm: (To Sa'dīya, abruptly putting an end to the situation) Get up and make some tea, Sa'dīya. [s.24]

Sa'dīya: All right, Mother. (She gets up quickly to extricate herself and go outside.)

Dasūqī: There's no need for tea. It's enough to make sure you're all well.

al-Umm: (Scoffingly) You are all kindness.

Dasūqī: (To Fikrī) By the way, I heard that you intend to demand the guardianship of your brother and sister. Is it true?

Hāmid: What do you see, Uncle Dasūqī?

al-Umm: (To Hāmid) Let your brother speak.

Dasūqī: I have no objection, personally. Why should I object? (Then to Fikrī) When do you plan to do it, if God is willing?

Fikrī: (Resisting his internal agitation) As soon as I finish my time in the military.

Dasūqī: Do you have much more?

Fikrī: Two months. Three at the most. We have an important

project going on in the army. When we finish with it, they'll discharge us.

Dasūqī: God speed, then. May you be released in good health. Let's go, Musaylihi.

Musaylihi: After you, Hājj. (The two men turn and proceed calmly toward the gate. Meanwhile, Bura'ī can't decide whether the follow them or to stay; finally, however, he decides to follow them.)

Fikrī: (Calling out before the exiting group arrives at the gate) Uncle Musaylihi. (The exiting group stops and turns toward Fikrī.)

Musaylihi: Yes? Is there something else?

Fikrī: (Deliberately) The feddan that belongs to us -- the one beside the canal. Is it true that [s.25] my father sold it to my Uncle, Hājj Dasūqī, before he died. (Musaylihi is surprised by the question. He turns an inquisitive glance at Dasūqī.)

Dasūqī: Are you directing these words to me?!

Fikrī: That's not what I mean. I'm asking Uncle Musaylihi so I can hear what he has to say.

Musaylihi: Why ask me? Isn't your uncle, the Hājj, standing right there?

Fikrī: But I want to ask you. Didn't you sign the contract? (Sa'dīya's face appears from behind the door.)

Musaylihi: (Feeling protected and encouraged by Hājj Dasūqī's presence) Yes, my brother. I signed it. Have I denied it?

Fikrī: Then you have some idea of the subject? (Hājj Dasūqī follows the situation patiently.)

Musaylihi: Would your uncle, the Hājj, lie? You have no right to ask such a question, Fikrī.

Fikrī: (To Musaylihi) Just one word. Did my father sell it to him or not? Yes or no?

Musaylihi: If the Hājj says he bought the land, then he bought it. It isn't right to bicker with him about it.

Fikrī: Were you yourself present at the sale and purchase? Did

you see my father sell?

Musaylihi: Didn't I sign the contract? So that's that. Isn't that so, Hājj?

Hāmid: (Shouting out) Do you swear on the Koran?

Musaylihi: The Koran? Do you hear this, Hājj?

Dasūqī: What are you and your brother doing, Fikrī? Are you two interrogating me? Aren't you ashamed? [s.26]

Fikrī: (To Hājj Dasūqī) Since it's such a serious matter: Why did you stay silent while we kept on cultivating the land and eating the crops?

Dasūqī: Because I'm compassionate.

al-Umm: (Bluntly) What do you know about compassion, Dasūqī?

Dasūqī: (Ignoring the mother) I told myself my brother Ismā'īn's children are in a miserable state. So let them eat the crops until they grow up and stand on their own. And here you are, a grown-up man, and soon you'll be your family's legal guardian. So. My duty is finished. And now I need the feddan. I want to build a house with a view on it.

Fikrī: It'll never happen, Uncle. You won't get the feddan and you won't build a house on it either.

Musaylihi: What?

Dasūqī: Do you plan to do what Mamma says, Fikrī?

al-Umm: Is his mother wrong, Hājj?

Fikrī: I plan to do what's right -- for me and for my mother and my family. And I won't back down when I know I'm right.

Dasūqī: (Shouting) Are you calling me a swindler, Fikrī?!

Hāmid: The paper is a forgery.

al-Umm: And is this the first time you've done it, Dasūqī?

Dasūqī: (To the mother) Be sensible, Ragīya. Be careful what you say. You'd better watch out for your children's welfare. Make no mistake.

Fikrī: You took my father's signet ring on the day he died. We were little and we didn't know anything. My mother was overwhelmed with

sorrow over my father's death, and when she got over it, everything was in your hands. My father didn't sell his land. And these two bore false witness on a forged contract. (Bura'ī bows his head with feelings of guilt.) [s.27]

Dasūqī: Be careful what you say. Are you sure you want to oppose me? (Fikrī hesitates, clinging once again to his composure.)

Fikrī: I don't intend to make trouble. You're our uncle and we're like your children. The fingernail is tied to the finger.

Dasūqī: Then stop making trouble and put an end to the matter.

Hāmid: (Calling out) And lose the feddan to your trickery?

Fikrī: Should we die of hunger, Uncle Dasūqī? All we have are two feddans, and they're barely enough to keep us alive.

Dasūqī: My house is open to you and to everyone else.

al-Umm: Save your house for your false witnesses.

Musaylihi: You've got no right to say that.

Fikrī: Do you want us to live on charity, Uncle?

Dasūqī: Consider it whatever way you like, but make no mistake. I'm giving you good advice. However big you think you are, I still know what's best for you. The contract has been confirmed in probate court, and if you follow your mother's advice, you'll lose a great deal and gain nothing. Nothing at all. And then you'll say I wish I hadn't done it. He who gives warning is excused. (Dasūqī turns toward the gate, and Musaylihi goes with him. Bura'ī casts a servile glance at Fikrī and the rest of the family, and then he follows Hājj Dasūqī.)

Fikrī: (Calling out suddenly) But I will be content with the judgment of the men of the village.

Dasūqī: (Turning again toward Fikrī) What village!!

Fikrī: Our village. Tumayra.

Dasūqī: (He calmly points to his two witnesses.) The men of the village are here, and they both signed with me. Why are you silent, Bura'ī? [s.28]

Bura'ī: I'm a sick man. I'm not able to speak.

Fikrī: They aren't the men of the village. They're your men.

Dasūqī: But I won't accept anyone's judgment but theirs. Bura'ī and Musaylihi. So what do you say to that?

Fikrī: If that's how you want it. Then I'll tell you at the top of my voice and right here in front of your men -- so they'll be witnesses to this as well: All my life I have esteemed you and honored you and considered you my father. I forgot every bad word I heard from you and remembered only the good ones. You hit me many times and I always put up with it, saying: That's how a father raises his son. I never asked you to account for which of our things were in your possession. But from this day on, you are on one side and we are on the other.

Hāmid: So let each side take care of itself.

Dasūqī: So that's how it is?

Musaylihi: Are you children going to be enemies of your uncle?

Fikrī: (Calling) Sa'dīya.

Sa'dīya: Yes, my brother.

Fikrī: Come here, girl. (Sa'dīya comes in a hurry. Fikrī clasps her around the shoulders with his arm.) Tell me frankly, Sa'dīya. Will you let your uncle have the feddan which is on the canal?

Sa'dīya: (Frightened and confused) It's up to you to say, my brother. You're the man in the family. Whatever you say goes.

Fikrī: And you, Hāmid?

Hāmid: Not even a clump of soil from it.

Fikrī: And you, Mother? [s.29]

al-Umm: I'd rather have my body chopped into a thousand pieces than see him take one handful of the land your father spent his blood to work.

Fikrī: Do you hear, Uncle Dasūqī?

The Hājj: Children's talk. It's just useless chatter and it won't get you anywhere.

Fikrī: I swear by my honor, by the honor of my sister Sa'dīya the chaste. And by every bead of sweat that flowed from my father onto his land. The feddan will be returned to us -- even if it costs me my

life. (Sa'dīya struggles with her urge to cry.)

Dasūqī: Are you going to take up arms against me? You men are witnesses!!

Musaylihi: He must be losing his mind.

Fikrī: I'm leaving on the first bus in the morning. All it'll take is two or three months and I'll be back for good. You have that long to reconsider. If you want to keep on being our uncle and for us to keep on being your children, then confess the truth. If you don't choose to do so, then you'll have chosen the path I'll have to take. You will be the one responsible for whatever happens. (Sa'dīya suddenly bursts into tears. Fikrī, Hāmid and their mother rush to her. Hājj Dasūqī lingers for a moment, and then, defiantly, he turns around toward the gate, and Musaylihi follows him. As for Bura'ī, pity for the family overwhelms him for a moment, but he doesn't linger for long before turning to catch up with Hājj Dasūqī. Sa'dīya continues to cry.)

(Blackout)

[s.30]

Scene Three

(On the bank of a Tumayra canal which is almost hidden behind a hedge of grass. The viaduct situated on the canal is visible, as is the cultivated land that extends all the way to the horizon. Scattered in the distance are the tops of the date palms.

(The time: The hour of sunset on a September day.

(Fikrī is in rural clothing, standing with his back to the audience. He is awaiting 'Ayisha, and even though he appears calm, his mind is preoccupied with his worries. In his hand is a small stick, and the tapping of his hand on it reflects his internal anxiety. A moment passes and then Sutūhī appears. He is sinking under a load of palm

leaves that is way out of proportion to his size. As a child, his bones were fractured in an accident. Consequently, an unnatural protrusion sticks out from his chest, and one of his arms is atrophied. In general he appears to be ground under the weight of a life which doesn't offer him a moment's opportunity for leisure. Sutūhī crosses the stage on his way to the village. Suddenly, after he has already gone past Fikrī, he becomes aware of his presence.)

Sutūhī: (Coming to a stop) Evening of goodness, Fikrī.

Fikrī: Evening of goodness, Sutūhī.

Sutūhī: Why're you standing here by yourself?

Fikrī: I've got some things on my mind. I just wanted to think for a while in peace.

Sutūhī: You're worried about the trouble with your uncle. God help you.

Fikrī: (He bows his head and doesn't answer.)

Sutūhī: By God, your uncle stirs up trouble for everybody, Fikrī. Look what he does with me. He burns my blood with work, night and day, for just a scrap of bread. If only he'd be happy about it, but instead he hits me and insults me. By God, it wouldn't matter to him if the trouble he causes me made me leave the village and keep right on going.

Fikrī: Nobody forced you to work for him, Sutūhī.

Sutūhī: Working for my daily bread forces me, Fikrī.

Fikrī: The scrap of bread that brings disgrace isn't very tasty. [s.31]

Sutūhī: But how else do I make a living?

Fikrī: Does the whole world have to work for my uncle in order to make a living?

Sutūhī: Who'd agree to hire me other than him?

Fikrī: If you'd look around, you'd find a thousand who'd hire you.

Sutūhī: (Sighing with a feeling of bitterness) That's just talk. When do you leave?

Fikrī: Tomorrow, God willing.

Sutūhī: You're lucky. (He equalizes the position of his burden on his shoulder.) If only the army would take me, my brother. At least that would give me a break from your uncle. They took you and they passed me by even though we are the same age, day for day. But couldn't I be of some use to the military, Fikrī? Couldn't I be useful even if it was just for carrying something -- like I'm carrying right now?!

Fikrī: The military isn't easy, Sutūhī.

Sutūhī: Is working for your uncle easy? Anyway, may our Lord bring you victory over him so you can save me from him. Good health go with you.

Fikrī: Go in peace, Sutūhī. (Sutūhī continues on his way. Fikrī follows him with his eyes until he disappears. Then he shifts his gaze and calmly contemplates the muddy, cultivated fields. Then he sits on a stone, bowing his head and scratching the ground with his stick.) ('Ayisha approaches from the fields. She is carrying a bundle of green cornstalks under her arm. She approaches Fikrī deliberately and covers him with a sympathetic look, and then she stops, reluctant to intrude on his thoughts.)

Fikrī: (As he has just become aware of the presence of 'Ayisha) You're here. (He stands up.)

'Ayisha: I came earlier and waited over there until Sutūhī went away. [s.32]

Fikrī: What a miserable man, 'Ayisha.

'Ayisha: Some are more miserable than others. But it's true what they say: Seeing other people's problems makes your own problems light.

Fikrī: (He reaches his hand to the bundle of cornstalks she is carrying.) Let me carry those.

'Ayisha: (Backing away) What a shameful thing. No, Sīy Fikrī.

Fikrī: It isn't right for you to carry it while I'm standing here.

'Ayisha: The ground will carry it. (She puts her bundle on the ground.) There. And don't get upset. (She laughs lightly, and Fikrī watches her as she laughs.)

Fikrī: Your laughter is very pretty, 'Ayisha ('Ayisha bows her head bashfully.)

Fikrī: The sweetest thing I remember when I'm away is your laughter.

'Ayisha: Laughter loses its taste when you're away, Sīy Fikrī.

Fikrī: Talk like that gets me upset.

'Ayisha: Anyone who upsets you shouldn't be alive.

Fikrī: My wish is that you'll always be happy and laughing. Whether I'm here or not.

'Ayisha: It's out of my control. When you're gone away, it seems like you're gone forever.

Fikrī: This time I won't be gone for long, and I'll bring a great present back with me.

'Ayisha: I only want you to come back safely.

Fikrī: And I'll bring a great present. Do you know what it is? [s.33]

'Ayisha: (Embarrassed) I don't know.

Fikrī: It's a golden engagement ring for you. ('Ayisha is thrown into confusion, and she bows her head bashfully.)

'Ayisha: (Whispering emotionally) I only hope you'll come home safely.

Fikrī: I'd planned on taking my mother and sister to talk to your father before I left. But unfortunately the problem with my Uncle Dasūqī came up, and it's left an unsuitable atmosphere.

'Ayisha: Everything in time. I'd rather wait for you until our Lord desires it.

Fikrī: Every delay may have some good in it. The days will pass quickly, and no one will even feel them passing. God willing, the first

thing I'll do when I get back: I'll scarcely change my clothes, and I'll come running to your family. And I'll bring the present with me.

'Ayisha: You'll find me waiting for you behind the door of our house, and I'll make tea for you myself. (Pause) What did you do about your uncle? I hope you reached a peaceful settlement.

Fikrī: Not really, 'Ayisha. My uncle's mind is all dried up, and he won't acknowledge the truth. He's holding on tight to the feddan with his hands and his teeth.

'Ayisha: He has no right. It's even against the law.

Fikrī: (Pointing to the nearby field of cultivated land) This land will never belong to my uncle, 'Ayisha. Never, by the life of the Prophet.

'Ayisha: It's your land. And may our Lord bring anyone who says otherwise to a most severe accounting.

Fikrī: I gave him time to reconsider. Whatever happens, he's still my uncle. And Hāmid and Sa'dīya's uncle. We don't want to lose him.

'Ayisha: Our Lord is great. He can guide him. (She looks around, suddenly alert.) I have to go, SIy Fikrī. [s.34]

Fikrī: So soon?!

'Ayisha: I'm afraid somebody's going to see us, and there'll be talk in the village.

Fikrī: Do you think I'd let a thing like that happen? Take your things and go.

'Ayisha: When are you leaving?

Fikrī: In the morning. Early.

'Ayisha: (In distress) Do you mean I'm not going to see you again?

Fikrī: Whether we get to see each other again or not, tomorrow will still be like today.

'Ayisha: (In pain) No, Fikrī. Tomorrow won't be like today.

Fikrī: (Joking in a friendly way) All right, but don't get

upset when I become your permanent neighbor and you have to see me every day.

'Ayisha: Oh, Fikrī. What a thing to say.

Fikrī: I'm just joking with you.

'Ayisha: (She wipes away a teardrop, flowing from her eye.) Don't joke in such a hurtful way.

Fikrī: All right. I'm sorry. Don't be upset with me. By the way, before I forget. I've brought you a little present. Something to remember me by.

'Ayisha: There's no need for that. I don't need anything to remember you.

Fikrī: It's just a simple thing. Not really worth mentioning. But I didn't have time to find something better.

'Ayisha: There wasn't any call to put yourself out. (Fikrī takes a headscarf, such as girls from the country use in the city, out of his pocket, and he holds it out to her. 'Ayisha is reluctant to take it.) [s.35]

Fikrī: Well, take it. You'll make me feel bad.

'Ayisha: (She reaches out her hand, and then she suddenly withdraws it.) I'm afraid somebody will see me with it, and they'll start to gossip.

Fikrī: (In distress) You're right. (Then, persistently) But how would people see it? Take it home and hide it and don't let anybody see it. (Pause) Go ahead and take it, 'Ayisha. You'll make me feel miserable.

'Ayisha: (She accepts the scarf and contemplates it affectionately.) May God never keep us apart again.

Fikrī: Hide it, 'Ayisha.

'Ayisha: All right. (She turns around to thrust the scarf into her bosom.) There. I hid it.

Fikrī: (He lifts the cornstalks from the ground and hands them to her.) Here. Go on. I hear people coming.

'Ayisha: (In grief, after she takes the cornstalks) Well, take

care of yourself, Fikrī.

Fikrī: All right. But pray for me.

'Ayisha: Our Lord God knows how often I pray for you. The important thing is to take care of yourself. Pay attention to your work and forget about the trouble with your uncle.

Fikrī: God helps me.

'Ayisha: And don't stay by yourself, thinking. Find a good friend and spend your time with him.

Fikrī: All right.

'Ayisha: (Fighting back her tears) And don't forget me. [s.36]

Fikrī: Could anyone forget a part of himself, 'Ayisha?

'Ayisha: Ma'a salāma, Fikrī.

Fikrī: I want to see your laughter before you go. (Ayisha forces a smile.)

Fikrī: Ma'a salāma, 'Ayisha. ('Ayisha averts her face to hide her tears, and she withdraws. Fikrī remains in his place, following her with his eyes. The light slowly fades away.)

(Blackout)

Scene Four

(In front of Dr. Bāhir's orchard, shortly before sunset. Ahmad Abū 'Ārif is sitting on the bench, his face buried in the newspaper. He is just on the verge of finishing the last page. His eyes, which are exhausted from reading throughout the day, are fixed upon the end of the page. He seems to be completely separated from what is around him.

(The First and Second Peasants appear, arriving from the field on their way to the village. Each of them carries

a work implement. They turn toward Abū 'Ārif, winking at each other and laughing.)

The First Peasant: (As he continues on his way) Evening of goodness, Abū 'Ārif.

Abū 'Ārif: (Suddenly noticing them) Evening of goodness. (He returns his attention to the newspaper.)

The Second Peasant: And how is this newspaper of yours?

Abū 'Ārif: (Provoked) Better than your father. (The two peasants laugh, and they disappear from sight.) [s.37]

Abū 'Ārif: (As he returns to the newspaper) What a backward world. (He mutters, reading the final advertisement on the last page.) The greatest Karate stars are gathered together in the greatest film of this or any season.

(He is interrupted by the din of a large group of citizens of the village, approaching on foot from the direction of the village, and forcefully attracting his attention. He is astonished by it. Then the Group appears in the same arrangement we witnessed before in the prologue. Anxiety, concern and zeal are evident in the Group, among which are the First and Second Peasants. In the forefront are Hāmid and Mahrūs, hugging the transistor radio. Not even Sutuhi lags behind this time. As for Uncle Bura'ī, he appears shortly afterwards with his broken-down footsteps, and he sits, exhausted, on the ground near the Group.)

Abū 'Ārif: (Stammering in astonishment) What's wrong with these people? Why are they gathering together?

(The crowd approaches Abū 'Ārif.)

Abū 'Ārif: Is this a public demonstration?

Hāmid: (Impatiently) What's the news, Abū 'Ārif?

Abū 'Ārif: (He ponders for a moment, hopefully at first, and then in doubt as he assumes that the Group doesn't have good intentions.) What news are you asking about?

Voices: He doesn't know?

Hāmid: Isn't that the paper in your hand?

Abū 'Ārif: (In vexation he stays seated on the bench.) There's a great deal of news in the paper. What news are you asking about?

The Second Peasant: It's plain he can't really read. He just stares at the pictures.

Abū 'Ārif: What pictures, man? Be objective.

Hāmid: Armies are on the move, Uncle Ahmad. [s.38]

Abū 'Ārif: (Alarmed) Armies?! What armies are on the move?!

The Second Peasant: Didn't I tell you? He just stares at the pictures.

Voices: (To the Second Peasant) Be quiet, 'Atwa, and let us ask him. (Bura'ī arrives late and takes his seat.)

Abū 'Ārif: (The news has shaken him, and he gets to his feet in astonishment.) What armies are moving, Hāmid?!

Mahrūs: Isn't there any news in the paper?

Abū 'Ārif: (He grabs the newspaper and turns through it with abrupt movements and a feeling of futility.) There's no news about armies moving. (Shouting suddenly) Speak up. What's going on? Have you all come here just to put my personal abilities to the test? (It appears to the Group that Abū 'Ārif has failed to meet their expectations. Abū 'Ārif tries to recover his self-confidence.) Isn't it possible that you know something I don't know? Tell me what the important details of the subject are, and I'll tell you whether or not I know. (A muttering among the Group reveals their discontent.)

Hāmid: (To Mahrūs) Speak up, Mahrūs. Aren't you the one who heard the news?

The First Peasant: My fear is he didn't hear anything.

Abū 'Ārif: Even if he had, would he have understood anything?

Mahrūs: (Feeling important) How can I talk with all this racket?

Hāmid: (Shouting at the Group) Who are we going to listen to, you or him?

The Second Peasant: What, have we tied his tongue? Let him speak. There's no need to bicker about it. [s.39]

(The Group falls silent. Bura'ī crawls a little closer to the Group, listening attentively.)

Mahrūs: I was sitting in front of our house while my mother was inside, fixing dinner. I was holding this radio, turning the stations and looking for a song I like, but the radio's busted, and I can only hear one out of every ten words.

The Group: (Anxiously, as if they hadn't heard the news before) And then?

Mahrūs: After a while the announcer broke in, saying --

The Third Peasant: (Prompting) Yes?

Mahrūs: This is communique number one from our armed forces.

Abū 'Ārif: (With extreme concern) And then?

Mahrūs: He said that word had just come over the wire.

Abū 'Ārif: What did it say?

The Group: It said that our armies were moving.

Mahrūs: Yes. It said that our armies were on the move.

Abū 'Ārif: (He turns his dazed attention to the newspaper.) Are you serious, boy?

Hāmid: Would he joke about a thing like this?

Mahrūs: Airplanes and tanks and all sorts of things for fighting.

Hāmid: My brother Fikrī is with the tanks.

The Third Peasant: (From among the Group) Didn't he say the artillery?

Mahrūs: I told you. All sorts of things for fighting.

The Third Peasant: Husayn, my sister's son, is with the artillery. [s.40]

Abū 'Ārif: Finish what you were saying, Mahrūs. They deployed. And then what?

Mahrūs: (Finishing the news abruptly, tired of repeating it) He said that we crossed.

Abū 'Ārif: (Utterly baffled) We crossed?! Crossed where?

Mahrūs: I don't know.

Abū 'Ārif: (In rage) Why didn't you ask?

The Group: Didn't we come here to ask you?

Mahrūs: Because the radio is busted.

Hāmid: (To Abū 'Ārif) We thought you must have had news in the paper.

Abū 'Ārif: (He takes a quick glance at the newspaper. Then he turns to face Mahrūs in defeat.) Didn't he say when we crossed?

Mahrūs: He said this afternoon.

Abū 'Ārif: (Furious with the Group, as his self-confidence has returned) Oh, you people are so intelligent. The armies made their move this afternoon. What paper is going to bring that news in the morning? Does a morning paper bring afternoon news? (To Mahrūs in particular) Do newspapers prophesize the future? (Pause)

Hāmid: But you've got to have some idea what's going on. You can make us understand.

Abū 'Ārif: (With confidence) Well, that's a different story. I'll study the matter, and then I'll explain it to you. (He turns to the newspaper on the bench and bows his head for a moment in thought. Then he questions Mahrūs.) It said our armies were on the move?

Mahrūs: Yes.

Abū 'Ārif: (Thinking) Planes and tanks. [s.41]

Mahrūs: (Finishing) And all kinds of fighting things.

Abū 'Ārif: Hmm. And it said we crossed?

The Group: Yes.

Abū 'Ārif: (After a brief pause) Then we must have crossed the Suez Canal.

Mahrūs: (Crying out) Yes. That's what it said. We crossed the Suez Canal.

Hāmid: (Striking Mahrūs in the chest) You are a walking disaster. How could you forget a thing like that?

Mahrūs: The voice was scratchy. And I only heard bits and pieces.

Abū 'Ārif: (Reaching his conclusions) Since we crossed the Suez Canal, our army must have entered Sinai.

Mahrūs: That's it exactly. The announcer said Sinai.

The First Peasant: What a fool. And he was the one with the radio.

The Second Peasant: Of course. Earrings go to the one with no ears.

Abū 'Ārif: (Shaking with excitement as he realizes the consequences of the matter) And since we've entered Sinai, we must have broken the Bar-Lev Line.

Bura'ī: What did we break, Ahmad?

Abū 'Ārif: The Bar-Lev Line. (Crying out) This means war, children. (Utterly astonished muttering is heard among the Group from the following voices.)

A Voice: I said it was war.

A Voice: He did know about it after all, my brother.

A Voice: Bless your wisdom, Abū 'Ārif. [s.42]

A Voice: By God, reading the paper really was useful.

A Voice: War. It means war.

A Voice: We said all along we'd go to war.

A Voice: Everything happens at the right time.

Abū 'Ārif: It's like a dream.

Hāmid: Does it mean my brother, Fikrī, is inside Sinai now?

The Third Peasant: And Husayn, too, my sister's son?

A Voice: Five of our boys are in the war.

The First Peasant: Everybody be quiet. Stop talking and let Abū 'Ārif speak.

The Second Peasant: Is it really war, Abū 'Ārif?

Abū 'Ārif: Yes. War. To put it simply, we've moved from a state of "No war and No peace" to a full-scale, comprehensive war. (The last sentence falls on their heads and silences their tongues.)

A Voice: (A man asks his neighbor) What does comprehensive war mean?

A Voice: (The neighbor answers) It means no holding back.

Bura'ī: (Suddenly) What does this Bar-Bell Line mean, Abū 'Ārif?

Abū 'Ārif: (Shouting at Bura'ī) Bar-Lev, Bura'ī. It's called the Bar-Lev Line. Either say it correctly or don't try to talk politics.

Bura'ī: All right. Take it easy, brother. I'm a sick man.

Abū 'Ārif: (Turning suddenly to Mahrūs) Let me have the radio, young man.

Mahrūs: (Holding on tight to the radio) I'm telling you the radio's busted. [s.43]

Abū 'Ārif: I'll make it work. Don't we have to know what's going on?

Hāmid: Give it to him, Mahrūs. Let him give it a try. What are you afraid of?

Mahrūs: (Agitated) What's the matter with you, brother? It's my radio and I'm free to do whatever I want with it.

The Group: (Annoyed) Turn it on then.

Mahrūs: (Stubbornly) Maybe I'll turn it on and maybe I won't. It's my radio.

Abū 'Ārif: The hell with you. You selfish brat.

Hāmid: (He grabs a hold of Mahrūs, and they start to struggle.) What kind of freedom is that? Turn it on, I tell you.

The Third Peasant: Let go of him, Hāmid. Let's see what he'll do.

Hāmid: Don't we have to know where Fikrī and the rest of the soldiers are now?

The Second Peasant: We want to listen to the broadcast, Mahrūs. The village is at war, my son.

The Group: Turn it on.

Mahrūs: All right. I'll turn it on. Only stop all the racket. (Complete silence)

Abū 'Ārif: Go ahead, Abū Radio. Turn it on. (Mahrūs turns the knob of the radio, and the Group clusters behind him. The eyes of the Group have fastened on the radio, following the movement of his fingers in anticipation. The radio doesn't work. No sound comes out -- Mahrūs strikes it a couple of hard blows with the palm of his hand.)

Abū 'Ārif: (To Mahrūs in annoyance) What're you hitting it for? What did it do to you? [s.44]

Mahrūs: It's my radio and I know how to make it work. (He hits it again.)

Abū 'Arif: Is a radio a donkey that'll walk if you hit it? Young man, these are delicate technological devices. You have to use intelligence.

Mahrūs: (Giving up on making the radio work) I told you it was busted.

Hāmid: (To Mahrūs) Man, give it to Abū 'Ārif.

The Group: (In anger) Give it to him.

Mahrūs: (Shouting at the Group) It won't work. It's very old. Here. Go ahead. Show me how to make it work.

Abū 'Ārif: (He takes the radio.) The hell with you and your radio.

(Mahrūs responds to the insult with indignant muttering. Abū 'Ārif turns the knobs of the radio in the midst of intense concern from the Group.)

The Third Peasant: Oh, Lord. Make it work.

The First Peasant: God's blessing on it. (A clatter emanates from the radio, reviving everyone's hope. However, a lasting silence abides.)

Abū 'Ārif: (He shoves the radio at Mahrūs in anger.) Here. Take it. And try not to break it.

Bura'ī: The radio is sick -- like me.

Mahrūs: I told you it was busted.

Abū 'Ārif: It's not busted at all. The batteries are just worn out. It needs new batteries.

Voices: Oh, no. [s.45]

Hāmid: What can we do, Uncle Ahmad? We can't just sit here eating away at our souls while the war goes on. We don't know what's happening.

Abū 'Ārif: If you had come earlier, I'd have stopped the last bus and asked the driver to bring us some batteries.

The Second Peasant: But the bus is gone. Isn't there any other solution?

Abū 'Ārif: Is there another radio in the village?

The First Peasant: Hājj Dasūqī's radio. (Then to Hāmid) Your uncle, Hāmid.

Hāmid: I don't have any uncles.

Abū 'Ārif: Let Hājj Dasūqī take his radio straight to hell. Don't get upset, Hāmid.

Hāmid: Why should I get upset?

The Third Peasant: Wouldn't he let us listen to his radio?

Bura'ī: On his radio all the news would be a lie.

Abū 'Ārif: We'd be sure to find him turning it to the enemy broadcasts. The man has a split personality.

(The last sentence descends on their heads and silences their tongues.)

Mahrūs: (With uncertainty) What does that mean, Uncle Ahmad?

Abū 'Ārif: It means that for him the whole world is on one side. And his own interests are on the other.

Hāmid: What can we do now, Abū 'Ārif?

Abū 'Ārif: We wait till morning. I'll get a newspaper and ask the driver to bring us some batteries from town. [s.46]

Voices: (Anxiously) Do we have to wait till morning?

Abū 'Ārif: What else can we do?

(Silence. Everyone has bowed his head in worry. Umm Fikrī rushes onstage from the village in alarm.)

Umm Fikrī: (Crying out) Hāmid. Has anyone seen Hāmid, my children?

Hāmid: Yes, Mother. Here I am. What's the matter?

Umm Fikrī: (In excitement and bitterness) Take this money and go up to town. Right now -- even if you have to walk the whole way. And send a telegram to your brother Fikrī.

Voices: Fikrī?

Hāmid: Why, Mother?

Umm-Fikrī: Tell him his mother is sick and dying. He has to come home.

Hāmid: But tell me what happened first. What's the matter?

Abū 'Ārif: What do you want Fikrī for, Ragīya?

Umm Fikrī: Because we're living in the midst of people who are totally evil. (To the Group) Every last one of you only cares about himself. Even when the wolves are eating your neighbors. (The Group exchanges glances in silence.)

The First Peasant: Whatever happened, could we do anything about it, Umm Fikrī? We're nobody compared to Hājj Dasūqī. It's not our fault.

Hāmid: Mother, what happened?

al-Umm: Your Uncle Dasūqī, Hāmid, is baring his canine teeth at us. The blackness of his heart is overflowing, and his hostility toward us is finally out in the open. Even fear and shame don't hold him back anymore. [s.47]

Hāmid: I don't understand what you're talking about. Tell me exactly what he did.

al-Umm: He made a deal with Musaylihi to bring some men up to our land again tomorrow. (To the Group) Do you know what for? To pull out our young crop from the feddan that rightfully belongs to us. (Hāmid is thunderstruck.) People, he wants to take our land by force. There isn't anybody there to stand up to him.

Hāmid: (Crying out) I'll stand up to him. I swear three times by God that if anybody crosses onto our land, I'll kill him. And I'm

going to tell him so myself.

Abū 'Ārif: (Grabbing Hāmid) Calm down, Hāmid. It's time to be level-headed, not rash.

Hāmid: This is our toil and our sweat, Uncle Ahmad. And the land is ours.

Abū 'Ārif: Whatever you say to him isn't going to be of any use. Besides, maybe what your mother heard isn't really true. Maybe it's just a rumor.

Hāmid: But my uncle would really do such a thing.

Abū 'Ārif: And he's likely to do even more. I know him. Nevertheless, deliberation and reason are imperative. So there's no need for you to be an anarchist.

al-Umm: What I heard is certain, Abū 'Ārif.

Abū 'Ārif: Tell us who you heard it from so we can judge. It may be that whoever said it just wanted to stir up trouble.

al-Umm: The one who told me. . . is someone inside this house. He doesn't have anything against us.

Hāmid: Who is he? [s.48]

(His mother is about to utter the name, but she suddenly realizes that it wouldn't be wise to announce it, and so she hesitates a little, casting her gaze in the direction of the village. Silence. All eyes turn toward the village.

(Sutūhī appears, coming from the village. Calmly, he turns a silent glance at al-Umm and Hāmid. His gaze and his silence are what show that he is the source of the news.)

al-Umm: (Proceeding) Someone who doesn't lie. And who doesn't want trouble for me or my children.

(Sutūhī sits beside Uncle Bura'ī in silence.)

Hāmid: (Suddenly slipping away) I'm going to stop him.

al-Umm: (Clinging to her son) Don't go to him by yourself. The man has the heart of an infidel. (Turning toward Bura'ī) His witnesses

are always ready to lie. And they'll probably make up something to accuse you for. (Bura'ī bows his head, feeling guilty.) Take this money and go straight up to town. Send for Fikrī to come home.

Hāmid: (In anger) Fikrī can't come, Mother. Fikrī has his own work to do.

The Group: Fikrī is fighting. (His mother doesn't understand at first.)

Hāmid: Don't you hear? Fikrī is at war. (Silence. The news has taken al-Umm by surprise. Sutūhī gathers up strength and rises to his feet in astonishment and wonder.)

al-Umm: (Stammering) He's fighting?

Hāmid: Our army is at war. And Fikrī is with them.

al-Umm: Is what he says true, Abū 'Ārif?

Abū 'Ārif: They announced it on the radio so it must be true.

al-Umm: (To Mahrūs) What did the radio say, Mahrūs?

Mahrūs: It said our armies were on the move. [s.49]

Abū 'Ārif: And we crossed the Suez Canal, we entered Sinai, and we broke the Bar-Lev Line, too.

(Al-Umm appears to have forgotten the subject of Hājj Dasūqī completely.)

Bura'ī: You didn't tell me, Abū 'Ārif. What does Bar Beef mean?

Abū 'Ārif: (Shouting at Bura'ī) It isn't called Bar Beef, man. It's named after Bar-Lev the Zionist.

Bura'ī: Well, why are you getting so angry? I don't care if they named it after a fig tree. I just want to know what it is.

The Second Peasant: Explain it to us, Abū 'Ārif. There isn't anything you don't understand.

(Al-Umm listens only distractedly to Abū 'Ārif's explanation. Meanwhile, the Group gathers to listen.)

Abū 'Ārif: The Bar-Lev Line is a military device. Quite formidable. A thing like mountains. The Zionists made it along the line of confrontation to prevent our army from crossing. Mountains

piled high with tanks, artillery, machine guns, and every instrument of death.

al-Umm: (Frightened) And our children went there?

Abū 'Ārif: And they broke through it. Since they crossed it, they must have broken through it.

al-Umm: And Fikrī is with them?

Abū 'Ārif: Is Fikrī less of a man than any of the others? Of course he's with them. He was probably the first one to go across.

Sutūhī: Fikrī is a real man. He's the same age as me and I know him well.

al-Umm: (Anxiously, but holding together) Are any of our children wounded, Mahrūs?

Abū 'Ārif: They went to fight a war, not to go for a stroll. Of course there are people wounded. Why else would it be an army? Sometimes people are resting in bed or playing and they get hurt. [s.50]

The Group: And so they die.

Abū 'Ārif: This is war, not a game.

Sutūhī: I fell down and got broken. But I wish I was fighting. Instead of working for scraps.

al-Umm: (To the Group) Isn't there any news of Fikrī?

Mahrūs: The radio is busted.

Sutūhī: Am I not the same age as Fikrī, day for day? The army took him and they passed me by. (To Abū 'Ārif) Am I of no use to the army, Abū 'Ārif? No use at all?

Abū 'Ārif: (Cautiously) Military conscription means selection, Sutūhī. They take one for the military, and they leave another one for the internal home front. And each of them is useful.

Sutūhī: But I could be useful in the military, too, even if I just serve things for them. (Pause) I wish they would take me.

al-Umm: (To the Group) What do you intend to do? Are you just going to stand by quietly?

Abū 'Ārif: What can we do? We're waiting till morning. To find out the news from the newspaper. And to get some batteries for the

radio. (To the Group) By the way, everybody, each of us needs to pay on the price of the batteries. So we can all listen. Agreed?!

Voices: Agreed.

Abū 'Ārif: An 'irsh [about one cent] from each of us. And we'll get some extra batteries as reserves.

Mahrūs: God keep you and bless you, Abū 'Ārif. (Directly to the Group) Now we're getting something done besides talk. [s.51]

al-Umm: (Absent-mindedly) Fikrī knew, but he wouldn't tell me when he was here last month. He said they were preparing for something big. But he didn't say what it was.

Abū 'Ārif: How could he tell you? These are military secrets and spreading them around would be treasonous to the army.

al-Umm: (Still distractedly) When he was embracing me, I saw in his eyes how he had something he wanted to say to me. He wanted to tell me something. By and by he took me in his arms and kissed my head, and he caressed Sa'dīya and kissed her and went to go. He didn't say a word. Not even the traditional words of farewell. And he's never done like that when he's gone travelling. He went with a tear in his eye.

Hāmid: (Shouting in anger) What does all this talk mean? All the people are delighted and merry, and you are turning it into a sad occasion. Do you think that your son Fikrī is fighting by himself? He has an army with him with its men and its equipment. And behind him is a country with all its people. And underneath him is a tank that can go through iron and a gun that shoots bullets that could cross entire countries until they stop at my uncle's house. So why are you so worried? Why are you making everybody else worry?

al-Umm: What did I say, Hāmid? I was just thinking out loud.

Hāmid: Trust in God, Mother, and keep your thoughts to yourself. Go ahead and go home. The sun is going to set in a little while, and we're still fasting. We've got to have something to break the fast with, don't we?

al-Umm: I won't move from here, Hāmid. Not until I'm satisfied.

Hāmid: My mother isn't herself.

Abū 'Ārif: Go ahead, Umm Fikrī, and rest assured. It's wrong to be worried. And why should you? This is the day we've been waiting for. And Fikrī is probably flying with joy -- as if it were his wedding day. It's an honor for whoever fights today, woman. An honor for us and for Tumayra that one of our children is among the fighters. It's the war of liberation, Umm Fikrī. [s.52]

The Group: We wish we were with them.

Abū 'Ārif: Do you know why they're fighting? Hmm? They're fighting for you and for Sa'dīya and Sutūhī and Bura'ī who is always sick and in debt. So all of us can live as human beings. Why is it a war of liberation? Only to liberate the land? No one should think of it that way. (Pause) Go ahead, Umm Fikrī, and don't worry. Praise our Lord that we lived to see this day. (Silence)

Umm Fikrī: (To Hāmid, calmly) I am going, Hāmid. Don't be late to break the fast.

Hāmid: All right.

Umm Fikrī: And don't go and try to confront your uncle before you talk to me and hear my advice (Hāmid turns his face away in anger).

Umm Fikrī: (To Abū 'Ārif) Keep me informed, Abū 'Ārif. All the news that comes to you. Tell me about it.

Abū 'Ārif: Today's first tidings were good, and God willing, I'll bring you great good tidings in the morning. (Umm Fikrī opens her fist and holds out three 'irūsh to Abū 'Ārif.)

Umm Fikrī: Here are three 'irūsh, Abū 'Ārif. Take them. Our share of the cost of the radio batteries you're going to buy. My share, Sa'dīya's and Hāmid's. Only be sure that every word they say on the radio reaches us.

(Umm Fikrī turns quietly and goes a few steps toward the village as the Group follows her with their eyes.)

(Curtain)

[s.53]

ACT II

Scene One

(Beside the Tumayra Canal. The same setting we saw in the first act.

(The time: Shortly before sunset.

(The place is completely empty. 'Ayisha appears, coming from the fields on the way to the village and carrying a small basket in her hand. Her mind seems distracted, but she suffers in silence. She glances first at the cultivated land of Fikrī Abū Ismā'īl's family, and then she calmly shifts her gaze to the rock upon which Fikrī was sitting at their last meeting. A dreamy moment passes, and as if she were recalling the details of the encounter, a small, sad smile trembles on her lips.)

Fikrī's Voice: (From deep in 'Ayisha's memory) The sweetest thing I remember when I'm away is your laughter.

('Ayisha sits on the waterway, quietly immersed in recollection.)

Fikrī's Voice: My wish is that you'll always be happy and laughing. Whether I'm here or not.

('Ayisha smiles a wide smile, ending it with a deep sigh. She reaches her hand in her bosom and withdraws the scarf which Fikrī presented to her. She feels it lovingly while she fixes her eyes upon it as if to see in it the face of its owner.

(Hāmid sneaks out from among the crops. In his hands is a pick-axe. He grasps it as if it were a weapon. He peers around cautiously before turning to 'Ayisha. 'Ayisha becomes aware of his presence, and so she quickly hides the scarf in her bosom.)

Hāmid: What's wrong, 'Ayisha?

'Ayisha: Nothing! (She stands up.)

Hāmid: When I saw you sitting here, I said I'll come see what's the matter. Is something bothering you?

'Ayisha: Nothing at all. I just. . . felt like sitting. (Pause) What's the news, Hāmid?

Hāmid: You're asking me? Your father is 'Father of All the News'. [s.54]

'Ayisha: Where is my father? Since the war began, we've hardly seen him. Hardly at all.

Hāmid: All the news is sweet, and it makes us happy, 'Ayisha. They say our army is advancing. Our men are like lions at the battlefront.

'Ayisha: Our Lord be with them at every step and defend them and protect them. (Pause) Haven't any letters come from Fikrī yet?

Hāmid: No. Not yet.

'Ayisha: (Pause) God willing, we will hear good news about him.

Hāmid: God willing.

'Ayisha: What are you doing here now?

Hāmid: I'm staying in hiding as you see. Waiting for them.

'Ayisha: Who are they?

Hāmid: The men my Uncle Dasūqī hired.

'Ayisha: (Alarmed) Why? Do you plan to confront them by yourself?

Hāmid: Yes. By myself. Am I too small? Am I too young? All right. Let them come this way and see what I'll do.

'Ayisha: Do you intend to commit a crime, Hāmid? That way you'll only make your uncle happy and give him the chance to get what he wants.

Hāmid: You're just repeating what my mother says. Like you've agreed on what to say.

'Ayisha: Well, why hasn't your mother done something? Is she going to let you sit here with a pick-axe in your hand, waiting to ambush people? By God, Aunt Ragīya is wrong to let this happen. [s.55]

Hāmid: She did as much as she could. She and Sa'dīya came and stayed for an hour, begging me to go home. And they were both crying.

'Ayisha: Why don't you listen to them, Hāmid?

Hāmid: (Nervously) And let our crops to be pulled up by the roots, 'Ayisha?

'Ayisha: I don't believe what they say. If your uncle had wanted to pull up your crops, he would have pulled them up a week ago. When all this talk first began.

Hāmid: He didn't find anybody to do it for him. That's all. His own men wouldn't raise a hand against us. And the people on the other side of the canal refused. They said it's a crime.

'Ayisha: If that's how it is, then what are you afraid of?

Hāmid: Musaylihi kept going around to the farms. Every day to a different farm. And I heard that he found some people at Abū Taqīya's farm who said they'd do it. And they're going to do it tonight.

'Ayisha: I don't know where you heard this story. But frankly, I can't help worrying.

Hāmid: Don't worry. My uncle thinks that because Fikrī is away, he can eat me up. He thinks I'm puny, a morsel he can put between his teeth to chew. But I'll stand up to him today and show him that nobody stays small forever. And that I won't be eaten up. Ever.

'Ayisha: And if you committed a crime -- God forbid -- or got hurt, would that make Fikrī happy?

Hāmid: If Fikrī was here, he wouldn't stand by quietly.

'Ayisha: He wouldn't be doing what you're doing.

Hāmid: Everybody does what he thinks is best. And this is my way. Go home, 'Ayisha. It's getting dark. I'm more than a match for them. So don't be afraid for me. And by the grace of God, you're going to hear about them before the rising sun. (He leaves her and slips away, disappearing into [s.56] the crops again. Meanwhile, 'Ayisha follows him with her eyes in anxiety and compassion. She hears an anthem, a battle hymn, ringing forth from a transistor radio, far away at first, and then it moves closer. 'Ayisha hurries to her bundle and

lifts it, intending to leave.)

The Voice of Abū 'Ārif: (Calling) Hāmid. Abū Ismā'īn. (The Group appears in their usual formation. No one is missing but Sutūhī and Hāmid. As for Bura'ī, he appears a little later as usual, and he takes his customary seat near the Group. In the foreground is Abū 'Ārif, clutching his staff in one hand and his newspaper in the other. Mahrūs is carrying the radio, but he seems irritated from being tied to the Group all the time.)

Abū 'Ārif: Turn off the radio, Mahrūs, so the batteries won't wear out. (His eyes fall on 'Ayisha.) Haven't you gone home yet, 'Ayisha?

'Ayisha: Evening of goodness, Father.

Abū 'Ārif: Evening of light. Where are your brothers and sisters?

'Ayisha: They're still turning the waterwheel. They told me to go ahead and go home. (She glances anxiously at the newspaper and then at the radio.) Is there any news, Father?

Abū 'Ārif: (With the self-reliance and confidence of an expert) Everything is fine, as God wishes it. Our Lord wanted us to survive to see days that were sweeter than dreams, 'Ayisha. It's like being dead and brought back to life.

The Group: Whatever happens is God's will. (Bura'ī arrives at last, and he takes his usual seat.)

Abū 'Ārif: The whole world is amazed. They're standing on one leg. Nobody believed that Arab soldiers could be so daring.

'Ayisha: (Rebuking) Yes -- and because of this we've hardly seen you at all.

Abū 'Ārif: So while the world is standing on one leg, you want me to sit down [s.57] with your mother? Go ahead, 'Ayisha. Go on home. And tell your mother to calm down a little and stop making such a fuss.

'Ayisha: Well, why are you all here? What's going on now?

Abū 'Ārif: We're looking for Hāmid Abū Ismā'īn. Where is he, anyway? (He calls out.) Hāmid. Abū Ismā'īn.

The First Peasant: His mother talked us into finding him and calming him down. And making him see reason.

'Ayisha: That's a good idea. He plans to stay in the field with a pick-axe in his hand.

Abū 'Ārif: (To the Group) Somebody go get him, children.

(The First and Second Peasants volunteer to fetch Hāmid. They go out and disappear into the crops.)

'Ayisha: (With hesitation and anxiety) Isn't there any news about the boys from our village in the war, Father?

Abū 'Ārif: Didn't I tell you we have the world standing on one leg?

'Ayisha: Haven't any of them sent any letters?

Abū 'Ārif: What kind of letters are they going to write in the middle of the fire, 'Ayisha? Think about it a little.

('Ayisha hangs her head in pain.)

'Ayisha: (After a short pause) I'm leaving, Father. Don't you want anything?

Abū 'Ārif: No, I don't want anything.

'Ayisha: The sun is about to set. Aren't you coming home to break the fast?

Abū 'Ārif: Maybe I'll come -- and maybe I won't. Hurry up a little, before night comes.

'Ayisha: May your evening be goodness. [s.58]

Voices: May yours be happiness. ('Ayisha exits with head bowed.)

Mahrūs: (Suddenly exploding) I want to go home, Uncle Ahmad.

The Group: (Exclaiming) Sit down, boy, and be quiet.

Mahrūs: (Furiously) What do you mean, sit down and be quiet? I'm tired and I want to go home and break the fast and rest for a while.

Abū 'Ārif: (Threatening quietly) You want to go home, Mahrūs?

Mahrūs: Why are you grabbing me and dragging me around with you? Yes, I want to go. And I should be free to go.

(He is on the point of moving into action, but Abū 'Ārif suddenly grabs him.)

Abū 'Ārif: Wait. You are free with yourself, yes. But not with your radio.

Mahrūs: What do you mean, Abū 'Ārif?

Abū 'Ārif: I mean there's nothing to keep you from going. But not the radio.

The Group: Right.

Mahrūs: (Shouting) It's my radio.

Abū 'Ārif: But the batteries inside it are ours. And we're the ones who bought them.

Mahrūs: Then you bought me and the radio both along with the batteries, is that it?

Bura'ī: Man, shut up, would you? You're giving me a headache. Why've you got such a big mouth?

Mahrūs: Take your batteries. I'm going. [s.59]

Abū 'Ārif: That isn't the agreement. We agreed to listen to the radio until the batteries wore out. (To the Group) Isn't that so, everybody?

The Group: Yes, it is.

Mahrūs: So you'll keep listening to the radio? Even if I die? And the Hell with me?

Bura'ī: Are you any better than anyone else?

Mahrūs: (Crying out weakly) All right, I'm not going. Are you happy? Here I am. Sitting down.

(He sinks to the ground in protest.)

Abū 'Ārif: Yes. That's more like it.

Mahrūs: Why don't you keep my problems, too? On your necks. And on your neck in particular, Uncle Ahmad.

(The First and Second Peasants appear from the middle of the field, dragging Hāmid.)

Hāmid: Don't strain yourselves. I'm not going anywhere.

The First Peasant: Listen to what the man says. And if you

don't like it, then do what you want.

The Second Peasant: Here's Hāmid, Abū 'Ārif.

Hāmid: Yes, Uncle Ahmad. What do you want?

Abū 'Ārif: What are you doing, Hāmid?

Hāmid: What business is it of yours?

The Group: (Disapprovingly) Ahheyh.

The Third Peasant: Your mother sent us. Doesn't that make it our business?? [s.60]

Abū 'Ārif: We're all fingers on the same hand. Whatever harms you, harms all of us.

Hāmid: Yā salām. Then why don't I feel the same way you do? I haven't seen any of you take his pick-axe and come stand with me.

Abū 'Ārif: Do you want us to turn it into a bloody battle? Is that what you want?

Hāmid: What I want is for all of you to stand up for what is right!

The First Peasant: We're with you in our hearts.

Hāmid: Are these hearts of yours going to protect our farms? Nothing's going to protect them but your pick-axes. Where are they?

The Third Peasant: What good are pick-axes? Your uncle has a carbine and we don't.

The Second Peasant: And even if we did have rifles. Would we kill people with them?

The First Peasant: And your uncle has money to hire lawyers and to pay for court cases. And he could wreck our homes.

The Group: And we don't have any money.

A Voice from the Group: He's your uncle. You're his brother's children. And the proverb says: Woe to him who steps between an onion and its skin.

Bura'ī: Even if someone did get the upper hand against your uncle, in the long run your uncle would still win.

Hāmid: (Shouting at Bura'ī) You be quiet, Uncle Bura'ī. Don't you say a word.

Bura'ī: (Shaking with anger) Why shouldn't I speak? What do you mean? Is what I said wrong? I'll say whatever I want to say, and no one can stop me. What do you mean, don't say a word?

Abū 'Ārif: What's happened to you, Hāmid? Why don't you let people say what they want to say? Why are you being so undemocratic? [s.61]

Hāmid: I don't understand it. If he wants to talk, then let him confess the truth. He can speak in front of all the people and tell us how he bore false witness on a forged paper.

Bura'ī: I'm not going to confess. I won't confess. And you aren't going to force me. And you're not going to get away with taking advantage of a sick man. (To the Group) That's the way it is, by God. Just because he sees that I'm sick, he wants to bully me.

Mahrūs: (Imploring) May I go home, Uncle Ahmad?

The Group: (In annoyance) You, young man, be quiet. Silence.

(Abū Sharaf appears, crossing on his way to the village. On his shoulder he carries a large tree limb, and its leaves are wet. He is a taciturn man of about fifty. His voice is hoarse and his inflection is measured. In general he seems to be a man who is resigned to a fate stronger than himself.)

Abū Sharaf: Peace be upon you.

Voices: And upon you peace.

Abū Sharaf: (He lingers a moment and lets his eyes wander, scrutinizing the faces around him.) What's the matter? What's wrong with you? Is something wrong, Abū 'Ārif?

Abū 'Ārif: Hāmid Abū Ismā'īn, Sīdī.

Abū Sharaf: (He casts a quiet glance over Hāmid.) What's the matter with him?

Abū 'Ārif: His head is full of a thousand swords. He might even commit a crime tonight.

Abū Sharaf: (Contemplating) You don't say. (He thinks a moment.) Take this from me children.

(Two men help to lower the branch from Abū Sharaf's shoulder to the ground.)

Abū Sharaf: (He rubs his shoulder, observing Hāmid calmly.) Why do you want to commit a crime Hāmid? [s.62] Do you want to go to prison? Or do you want to be hanged?

Hāmid: (Shouting) I only want to know: What business is it of yours what I do? If you were really compassionate, you'd let the Lord's mercy fall where it will.

Abū 'Ārif: What kind of talk is that? It's reckless, meaningless talk. Where is the mercy of our Lord if you kill or be killed?

Abū Sharaf: (Impartially) Be patient with him, Abū 'Ārif. (To Hāmid) So. What's going on?

Hāmid: (Furiously) What's going on? Here I am, sitting here trying to protect my land and my crops. Either stay here with me or go home to your own affairs. Either way you have my thanks.

Abū Sharaf: (In contemplation) Hmm. (Then, suddenly, and without coming out of his calmness) Listen, Hāmid. I'm going to tell you a story in just a few words.

Hāmid: What need is there for stories now?

Abū Sharaf: (Continuing) One day when I was your age, your uncle, Hājj Dasūqī, was possessed by a devil. He wanted to harm us, and so he went out one night to set fire to a half a feddan of our cotton. It was a good harvest, and the cotton was ready for picking. I was all heated up, too, just like you. And do you know what I did? I went and burned two of his feddans.

Bura'ī: (In distress) What happened to you, Abū Sharaf? On account of what you did? Tell him.

Abū 'Ārif: Those days won't ever be forgotten. In the history of Tumayra.

Abū Sharaf: A disaster came down on us -- police, prosecutors, courts -- and it didn't leave us a moment free to rest. We had to sell a feddan to cover the expenses from the lawsuits. And of course he won.

I was held in custody for two months. Do you know why, Hāmid? Because your uncle burned our cotton in [s.63] secret. He didn't tell anyone. But I announced it to the whole world. I swore that I would burn his cotton.

Bura'ī: (Muttering) And he wants me to testify against him.

Hāmid: But I'm not planning to burn anybody's cotton.

The Group: Do you intend to kill?

Abū Sharaf: (Proceeding) And from that day on I swore that if our land was burned, I would look to our Lord for compensation and plant the crops again in silence.

Hāmid: You're free to do whatever you like, but I'm not. If he splashes me with water, I'll splatter him with blood.

The Group: (Objecting) God forbid!

Abū Sharaf: (Calmly, to the Group) The recklessness of youth. Age, too, has its value. Wisdom doesn't come freely.

(Silence. The Group, in confusion, is having doubts about the soundness of this solution.)

Abū 'Ārif: (Threateningly) We'll go away and leave you to your fate, Hāmid.

Hāmid: Go ahead and leave.

Abū 'Ārif: You'll be sorry for it.

Hāmid: I'll never be sorry for doing what I think is right. (Pause)

The Third Peasant: What would you think, Abū 'Ārif, if we went to him?

The Group: Who?

The Third Peasant: Hājj Dasūqī.

(A stir of disapproval from the Group.) [s.64]

The Third Peasant: (To Abū 'Ārif) And you're the one who should talk to him.

Hāmid: And my uncle, Hājj Dasūqī: Will he understand this talk?

Abū 'Ārif: It's my duty to make him understand it.

Hāmid: But I'll stay here until you've talked it over with him. (He leaves with his pick-axe and disappears into the crops again.)

Abū 'Ārif: Let's go, children. Young man. Mahrūs. Get up and come with us. (Pause. Mahrūs hesitates at getting up.)

Abū Sharaf: Is there any news about the war, Abū 'Ārif?

Abū 'Ārif: Everything is fine. Don't worry.

Abū Sharaf: How so?

Abū 'Ārif: Our army is controlling the battleline, from Port Sa'īd to Suez, and the enemy's losses in Sinai and the Golan Heights are uncounted. Innumerable. Their casualties are heaped up, and the prisoners are unlimited. The airplanes are burning like locusts, and they're passing their armored vehicles over to us undamaged. And whatever isn't surrendered, we're burning.

Abū Sharaf: Thanks be to God. Our Lord is great.

Abū 'Ārif: Our Lord is pleased with us, Abū Sharaf. He honors us. And our heads are finally raised after being bowed down so long.

The Group: Look where we were before and look where we are now.

Abū Sharaf: (Calmly) And Ibrāhīm, my son. Isn't there any news about him?

Abū 'Ārif: He was in Suez, wasn't he?

Abū Sharaf: Yes. He was in Suez.

Abū 'Ārif: Then he must be with the Third Army. Inside Sinai.

Abū Sharaf: (After a moment of contemplation) Our Lord does whatever is best. (He bends toward the tree branch to lift it. But he returns and faces Abū 'Ārif.)

Abū Sharaf: Tell me, Abū 'Ārif. Where exactly are these Golan Heights?

The Third Peasant: They're in Syria, Abū Sharaf.

Abū Sharaf: (Calmly, to the Third Peasant) How do you know?

The Third Peasant: Abū 'Ārif told us.

Abū Sharaf: By God, he is thanked. (To Abū 'Ārif) Do they say that the shelling is fierce there?

Abū 'Ārif: The Syrian army is operating there.

Abū Sharaf: Is Golan far from Egypt, Abu 'Arif?

Abū 'Ārif: Of course it's far.

Abū Sharaf: Then if our army hasn't already gone there, wouldn't it be possible to go there and help?

Abū 'Ārif: Look SĪdĪ. (To the Group) You and he move over.

(The Group understands his intention at once. And so they make room for him to prepare to receive his topographical explanation.)

Abū 'Ārif: Even though the Syrian army doesn't need help. But I'll explain to you. (He draws a long line on the ground with his staff.) Do you see this line?

The Group: (With complete understanding) It's the Suez Canal. (SutūhĪ enters stealthily. He casts a watchful look toward Hāmid Abū Ismā'Īl's crops, and then he quietly joins the Group to follow the explanation.)

Abū 'Ārif: (He draws a point with his staff at the upper end of the line.) And do you see this?

The First Peasant: Suez.

Abū 'Ārif: (Indignantly) Port Sa'Īd, stupid.

Voices: (Drawing the attention of the First Peasant) It's Port Sa'Īd, my brother.

The First Peasant: (Apologetically, he looks at the point again.) Yes, by God. It is Port Sa'Īd.

(Abū 'Ārif draws a point at the bottom of the line.)

The Group: That's Suez.

Abū 'Ārif: (Pointing with his staff) All of this part, then, is Sinai. Isn't that nice?

The Group: Very nice. [s.67]

Abū 'Ārif: Occupied Palestine is here, SĪdĪ. (He points to the branch which Abū Sharaf was carrying.) The place where the branch is. All right?

The Group: Great.

Abū 'Ārif: So where, then, is Syria?

The Group: Where?

Abū 'Ārif: (He points with his staff beyond the branch.) Here. And here are the Golan Heights you were asking about.

Abū Sharaf: Very far away, too.

Sutūhī: But where is Tumayra, Abū 'Ārif?

Abū 'Ārif: (He falls into confusion for a moment.) Tumayra? We're standing on it. (A pause) The Zionist army is positioned on the circle like this. And so our army -- which is on the opposite side from where the Syrian army is -- will do what?

The Group: What will they do?

Abū 'Ārif: Well then, our army has got to break through from this side. And the Syrian army has to break through from the other side. The two armies aim to meet here. (Abū 'Ārif plunges his staff into the tree branch.)

Abū Sharaf: Into Jerusalem, then.

Abū 'Ārif: Bravo, Abū Sharaf. (To the Group) This man is well-informed.

Abū Sharaf: (Calmly) May God grant us the chance to meet at the Holy Mountain of Arafat.

Voices: Our Lord is great. He alone can bring us to victory. God willing, we will be victorious. [s.68]

Abū Sharaf: Someone load me up, children.

(Two of them help raise the branch to Abū Sharaf's shoulder.)

Abū Sharaf: It's always good to sit with you, Abū 'Ārif.

Voices: There is nothing better. (Sutūhī throws a glance at Hāmid's crops.)

Abū Sharaf: If it weren't for the work I have to do, I wouldn't leave you for a minute. Peace be with you. (He exits)

Voices: We have to get moving, too. We'll barely catch Hājj Dasūqī before sunset.

Sutūhī: Are you going to Hājj Dasūqī?

Abū 'Ārif: Yes.

Sutūhī: He's not at home. He's off traveling.

Voices: What a bad piece of luck.

Sutūhī: Why do you want him?

Abū 'Ārif: We want to find a solution to his problem with his brother's children.

The First Peasant: Before a crime is committed in the village.

Sutūhī: That's probably why you find him traveling. If anyone asks, they say he can't be found.

Bura'ī: God is the only one who knows how to reach him.

Abū 'Ārif: (In confusion) Then there's no use in our going.

Sutūhī: (Whispering cautiously) Don't worry. No one is coming from Abū Taqīya. Not today or tomorrow. [s.69]

Abū 'Ārif: How do you know?

Sutūhī: (Slyly) It seems -- but God only knows for sure -- that someone made up a story to tell them.

The Second Peasant: What story?

Sutūhī: That the men of Tumayra are lying in ambush for them in the fields with rifles, and whoever comes over will get shot.

(The Group is appalled, but at the same time it is marvelling at this solution. Sa'dīya appears on her way toward their fields. In her hand is a supper bundle.)

Abū 'Ārif: (Shrewdly) And who was it that made up this story for them, Sutūhī?

Sutūhī: God knows. It must be somebody from the village. Where else would he be from? (He becomes aware of Sa'dīya's appearance.) Where are you going, Sa'dīya?

Sa'dīya: I'm bringing food for my brother, Hāmid, to break the fast.

Sutūhī: Take Hāmid to break the fast at home, Sa'dīya. Tell him that Abū Taqīya's men aren't coming.

(Sa'dīya smiles with relief and disappears into the field while the eyes of the Group follow her in silence.)

Sutūhī: Honestly, Abū 'Ārif, would I be useless in the military?

(Pause) They didn't want to take me. They said my body is unsound. And I'm of no use to the army.

(Blackout)

[s.70]

Scene Two

(In front of Hājj Dasūqī's house. The facade is suitable for a man of Dasūqī's stature. Appropriate for a village dignitary. The door is particularly prominent, and it is raised three steps up from street level. Overlooking the street is the window of the reception room, and it is closed.

(The time: Before noon on an October day.

(Sutūhī is squatting down in front of Hājj Dasūqī's house, resting his back on the wall of the facade.

(A moment passes, and then the voice of Hājj Dasūqī is heard conversing with Musaylihi as they arrive from the side road. The sound attracts Sutūhī's attention, but he doesn't move from his place, even after they appear in front of the house.)

Hājj Dasūqī's Voice: Do you think I don't know how to carry out an oath, Musaylihi?

Musaylihi's Voice: What kind of talk is that, Hājj? What do you mean?

(The two men appear. Sutūhī buries his face between his knees.)

Dasūqī: I gave my word, Musaylihi. More than a week ago. And I've gone away and come back and the thing I swore to have done still isn't carried out. So you tell me what it means.

Musaylihi: Everything's turned out against us, Hājj. That's all. Abu Taqīya's men turned and quit on us, and may God cut them off for it.

Dasūqī: Why didn't you do something?

Musaylihi: I was going to go to them today and find out why they didn't come.

Dasūqī: Talking isn't going to accomplish anything. (His glance falls in Sutūhī's direction, and so he lowers his voice.) Take your boys and do whatever you have to do.

Musaylihi: (Alarmed) My boys, Hājj? But how can we do it? [s.71]

Dasūqī: There's no other way to get it done.

Musaylihi: How could we show our faces in the village after that? The village would eat us alive.

Dasūqī: How would the village find out?

Musaylihi: No, no, Hājj. Not us. I'll find another way.

Dasūqī: You are free. The only thing I want is for my oath to be carried out. (To Sutūhī) What are you sitting here for, man?

Sutūhī: (In distress) Didn't you fire me?

Dasūqī: Yes, I fired you. So what are you sitting here for?

Sutūhī: So do you still want me to go to work for you?

Dasūqī: No. I want you to go away.

Sutūhī: Go where? I've been here all my life. So I'll keep on sitting here. (He turns his face away.) That's strange. Didn't he tell me to go pull up people's crops or else he'd fire me?

Musaylihi: (Sternly to Sutūhī) Man, you are talking to Hājj Dasūqī. You'd better jump to your feet and stand up straight.

Sutūhī: So I got fired, didn't I? All right then. I'm not jumping and I'm not standing.

Dasūqī: (Shouting) If you know what's good for you, man, you'll speak with proper respect.

Sutūhī: (Obstinately, even though he is afraid) Didn't I get fired? All right then. I'll say whatever I want.

Dasūqī: I'm telling you. Get the Hell out of here.

Sutūhī: I don't feel like it. What is this? I'm not sitting inside your house. I'm sitting on our Lord's ground. [s.72]

Dasūqī: (He jumps for Sutūhī and pulls him up roughly by his clothing.) You're pushing me too far, man.

Sutūhī: All right. Let go of my clothes. My clothes won't take the strain. You fire us and then you beat us, too.

Musaylihi: (Releasing Sutūhī's robe and calming the Hājj) Let him go, Hājj. He's a nobody. Do you want to put yourself on the same level with him?

Sutūhī: (As he regains his breath and straightens his robe) From the way he handles my clothes, you'd think he was the one who gets them for me.

(He returns to his original seat.)

Dasūqī: All right, then, I'll go inside, Sutūhī the Dog. And I swear three times by God that if I come out and you're still here, I'll set you on fire.

(He pushes the door open and goes inside. Musaylihi follows him through the door.)

Sutūhī: By God, I'm not moving from here. I'm not going. Where would I go? How strange these people are. Does the road belong to them, too? (Pause) How strange. Either we cut down people's crops, or else we get fired. By God, I won't raise a hand to damage anybody's crops. Even if he kills me. I'll keep right on sitting here and see what he does.

(Sutūhī bows his head and withdraws into his meditations. A battle hymn is heard, ringing out from a transistor radio, and little by little it approaches. Then the Group appears, and at its head is Abū 'Ārif with his newspaper in one hand and his staff in the other. Mahrūs is carrying the transistor radio. Hāmid, however, is missing. As for Bura'ī, he arrives late, as usual.

(Sutūhī receives the Group with a grave face, and he stays frozen in place.)

Mahrūs: Look who's here. Sutūhī.

Abū 'Ārif: Morning of goodness, Sutūhī.

Sutūhī: (Grimly) Morning of light. [s.73}

Abū 'Ārif: They say Hājj Dasūqī's back. Is it true or is it just a rumor?

Sutūhī: He's back. And I got fired, too.

(The Group is surprised at the news.)

Abū 'Ārif: He's got no right. Why did he fire you?

Sutūhī: How should I know? Why don't you ask him?

Mahrūs: (Consolingly) Don't you get fired every couple of days? And you keep on working for him anyway.

Sutūhī: But this time there's no way back.

The First Peasant: Don't say that, man. He couldn't manage without you.

Sutūhī: Couldn't manage?

The Second Peasant: Where would he find anyone like you?

Sutūhī: He won't find anybody. It doesn't matter to me. But I'm not moving from here. I'll just wait and see what he does.

(Silence. Bura'ī appears at last and takes his usual seat.)

Abū 'Ārif: Where is he now?

Sutūhī: He's inside. (Then he stands up, suddenly and seriously.) Tell me, Uncle Ahmad. Is it true that the Jews took Suez and Ismā'ilīya? (The Group is struck a severe blow. And Abū 'Ārīf is astonished.)

Abū 'Ārif: (After he has recovered from the blow, he shouts out.) What are you talking about? That's an absolute lie.

The Group: A rumor. [s.74]

Abū 'Ārif: Who's the spy -- the despicable enemy agent -- who told you this?

Sutūhī: (Pausing for effect) Hājj Dasūqī.

(Silence. A moment of hestitation and consideration.)

Abū 'Ārif: (Whispering) Is he inside?

Sutūhī: Yes, he's inside. But tell me. Is it a lie or isn't it?

Abū 'Ārif: It's a lie.

Sutūhī: (In a loud voice) Why did he lie? Why are you lowering your voices? What are you afraid of?

Abū 'Ārif: We aren't afraid. We only came to talk to him about the land of his brother's children. And we don't want to turn the situation into a crisis.

Sutūhī: But he's got to be made to account for spreading news like that.

Abū 'Ārif: We'll settle it with him. And we'll take him to task for everything else, too. But not today. (To the Group, explaining the situation with Hājj Dasūqī) This is deliberately aimed at sabotaging our morale.

Mahrūs: But our morale isn't easily sabotaged.

The Third Peasant: It'll never be sabotaged.

Abū 'Ārif: The home front is like iron.

Mahrūs: He probably heard the news about Deversoir and thought the whole country was lost.

Bura'ī: So he doesn't really understand.

Abū 'Ārif: He's just being an opportunist. [s.75]

The First Peasant: He hasn't got any character.

The Second Peasant: Slander and lies.

Bura'ī: The only thing he cares about is his belly.

A Peasant in the Rear: Son of a bitch.

Abū 'Ārif: What does Deversoir matter? Is it a war or not?

The Group: Of course it's a war.

Abū 'Ārif: If it's a war, then it's like the sea. It ebbs and flows. What matters is how it ends. (Pause) Why would it enter anybody's mind to allege that they took Suez and Ismā'nīya?

The Third Peasant: It isn't even logical from a military point of view.

Mahrūs: (Mockingly) Unless they've finished off our entire army.

The Group: And that'd be impossible.

(Hājj Dasūqī's reception room window opens, and the Hājj appears in it. The commotion has disturbed him.)

Dasūqī: What is it with you people? What have you got everybody gathered here for, Abū 'Ārif?

Abū 'Ārif: (Regaining his calmness) We want to have a word with you, Hājj Dasūqī. If you'll permit.

Dasūqī: A word? About what?

Abū 'Ārif: Just a word. We don't mean any harm.

Dasūqī: (He looks around, studying the situation, and his glance falls on Bura'ī.) Are you still alive, Bura'ī?

Bura'ī: (In annoyance) Yes, I'm still alive -- as long as you [s.76] expect me to die I'm not going to. So what do you think about that?

(Hājj Dasūqī lets loose a laugh, and he closes the window.)

(Silence.)

Abū 'Ārif: Turn off the radio, Mahrūs. It's no good if the batteries wear out.

(Mahrūs turns off the radio.)

The First Peasant: It seems like he's trying to wear them out on purpose.

Mahrūs: (Angrily) Why should I try to wear them out? Do you think I'm a fool? May my soul expire before the batteries. May you tie me hand and foot.

(Hājj Dasūqī comes out, and behind him is Musaylihi. Sutūhī returns to his original pose.)

Dasūqī: (Examining the Group) My goodness. The whole village is here.

Abū 'Ārif: (Seriously, but with deliberate tact) The whole village, Hājj? Why -- how many people are there in the village?

Dasūqī: Get to the point. What do you all want, Abū 'Ārif?

Abū 'Ārif: We've come to you about a problem that's engaged public opinion in Tumayra.

Dasūqī: (Scoffingly) Does Tumayra have a public opinion? How pleased you must be, children. (He turns to Musaylihi, and Musaylihi laughs. The faces of the Group break into frowns.)

Abū 'Ārif: Aren't we all -- all of us in Tumayra -- people, Hājj?

Dasūqī: What's the matter with you these days, stirring up trouble in the village? Aren't you watching over the doctor's orchard anymore or what?

Abū 'Ārif: Let the doctor's orchard burn. (Pause) That isn't the problem we've come to ask you about.

Dasūqī: Well, then what are you coming to me for? Huh? (Mockingly to Bura'ī) Why have you all come to me, Bura'ī? [s.77]

(Bura'ī gestures with his hand in anger. Hājj Dasūqī turns to Musaylihi, and they laugh.)

Abū 'Ārif: (To Musaylihi) Why are you laughing, Musaylihi? To see you laughing one would think that you're a property owner, too.

(The Group forces a little laughter.)

Sutūhī: Never mind. Let them laugh. Their day of reckoning is coming.

Dasūqī: (To Sutūhī in anger) Are you still sitting here, you dog?

Sutūhī: (Agitatedly) You can't fire me and then turn around and curse at me.

Dasūqī: I'm going to have to train you.

Sutūhī: Am I a dog, people? Am I a dog?

A Peasant in the Rear: We know what a dog looks like -- and you don't look like one.

Dasūqī: (He shakes his head menacingly) Enough. (Then to Abū 'Ārif) So what's the problem, Abū 'Ārif?

Abū 'Ārif: Look Hājj. It's not worth making a long story out of

it. Just a few words.

Dasūqī: Say them and have done with me.

Abū 'Ārif: You know that Egypt is at war.

Dasūqī: If Bura'ī knows, then why shouldn't I?

(Musaylihi stifles a smile.)

Abū 'Ārif: (Proceeding) It pleases our Lord that five of Tumayra's boys are fighting. Among them is Fikrī Abū Ismā'īn. Your brother's son.

Dasūqī: You haven't come to remind me that Fikrī is my nephew? [s.78]

Abū 'Ārif: (Shrewdly) Don't be petty, Hājj. It's only an expression. A figure of speech.

Dasūqī: So? Get to the point.

Abū 'Ārif: What I mean to say is that our boys are there, fighting. And we aren't fighting. So it isn't right for us to betray them and stab them in the back. We should at least --

Dasūqī: I don't understand this talk.

Abū 'Ārif: The whole village knows about the trouble between you and your brother Ismā'īn's children. Concerning the feddan.

Dasūqī: Strange. What concern is it of the village?

Abū 'Ārif: Whether it concerns us or not, that isn't the problem.

Dasūqī: (Nervously) Well, what is the problem? Why don't you stop talking in circles and get to the point.

Abū 'Ārif: Some people came and told us that you intend to uproot the children's crops from the feddan in order to build on it.

(Hājj Dasūqī is astonished, and he turns to Musaylihi.)

Abū 'Ārif: (Anticipating) The people who told us don't live in Tumayra. They're from another farm village. And of course, we didn't believe them.

Dasūqī: You didn't believe them?

Abū 'Ārif: No, we didn't. We said: Hājj Dasūqī wouldn't do that to his brother's children. And especially since Fikrī is at war.

Dasūqī: Inasmuch as you don't believe it, what's the problem?

Abū 'Ārif: The slander -- the talk that's been going around -- isn't that a problem? We came so you could tell us what to say. To make them feel ashamed.

Dasūqī: Tell them what, for instance? [s.79]

Abū 'Ārif: Like what we just said. That you wouldn't take advantage of your brother's children. And especially since Fikrī is at war.

Dasūqī: (A contemplative silence) Of course I wouldn't take advantage of them. (Bura'ī smiles jeeringly.) But it seems like some people are determined to slander me. Who told you this story, Abū 'Ārif?

Abū 'Ārif: Some people from another village.

Dasūqī: (Turning to Musaylihi) Who are they, Musaylihi?

Musaylihi: I don't know, Hājj. This is the first I've heard about it.

Dasūqī: (To Abū 'Ārif) As a matter of fact, I did say something a few days ago. But I was angry at the time. Young Hāmid was insulting me behind my back -- using words that boys his age shouldn't speak -- especially about the uncle who raised him. But I'd never bring myself to take advantage of him. They are still my brother's children and I'm like a father to them. Whoever wrongs them -- from near or far -- wrongs me, too. Isn't that so, Musaylihi?

Musaylihi: It'd be their own fault, Hājj.

Abū 'Ārif: (To Hājj Dasūqī) That's just what we said. In your absence.

Dasūqī: But I still want to know who told you this story. (Silence. He turns toward Sutūhī.) Who was it, Sutūhī?

Sutūhī: How should I know?

Abū 'Ārif: That's all there is to it, Hājj. So the problem is solved.

Dasūqī: There wasn't any problem to begin with, Abū 'Ārif.

Abū 'Ārif: So much the better.

Dasūqī: (Proceeding) And as for the matter of the ownership of the feddan, I'm [s.80] waiting for Fikrī to come home. I want to see how he plans to solve it. He'll be back in a few days. It won't be long.

Abū 'Ārif: He'll come back with peace and victory, God willing.

Dasūqī: In any case, thank you all for coming. Please come inside and drink some coffee.

The Group: (Stiffly) No. Thank you. (A moment of silence.)

Dasūqī: Come Musaylihi. I want a word with you.

(The Hājj turns toward the door, and Musaylihi follows him with his head bowed, leaving the Group standing. A moment passes during which silence prevails over the Group. The Hājj is about to put his foot on the doorstep when Abū 'Ārif stops him.)

Abū 'Ārif: I tell you what, Hājj.

Dasūqī: Yes, Abū 'Ārif? Is there something else?

Abū 'Ārif: Do you have any idea about the military situation?

Dasūqī: (After a pause to consider) Do you?

The Group: We all have.

Dasūqī: (Mockingly) All of you? By God, there's something to celebrate. (Turning to Sutūhī) Do you have ideas, too? (And he laughs a scornful, little laugh. Then he turns to Abū 'Ārif.) What is the military situation, Abū 'Ārif?

Abū 'Ārif: (He gets ready to draw his map) You two move over.

(Individuals of the Group move out of the way, and Sutūhī moves closer to follow the explanation. Abū 'Ārif draws a long line on the ground with his staff.)

Dasūqī: What's that?

The Group: It's the Suez Canal. [s.81]

The First Peasant: (Whispering to his neighbor) He doesn't know what it is. Imagine.

(Abū 'Ārif draws a small circle beside the line.)

The Group: That's al-Murra Lake.

Abū 'Ārif: One of the bitter lakes along the canal. Are you with me?

Dasūqī: Go on.

Abū 'Ārif: (Using his staff for explanation) Our army crossed from here to here. And it broke the Bar-Lev Line and kept on fighting courageously from here to here. (He makes a mark along the line.) Isn't that pretty?

The Group: Very pretty.

Abū 'Ārif: So what did the Zionists do? They worked out a subterfuge and formulated it and went inside like this. (He draws a line perpendicular to the first line, crossing through the circle.) They slipped away like thieves -- but that is possible because the line of confrontation is long, and only God is ever vigilant. And this is a war of ebb and flow.

The Group: And only the final result matters.

Abū 'Ārif: The Zionist tanks that slipped away assembled here. (He plants his staff in the ground at the edge of the circle.) In Deversoir. With our army besieging them. Now, our Lord has given us minds, so let's use them. You tell me. Where could they go? There's only one thing to say. They walked up to death on their own feet. So they're doomed.

The Second Peasant: May the lives they lost be added to yours, Uncle.

Abū 'Ārif: I'll tell you a story to dramatize the situation. Imagine I came along one day and attacked your house. While you were inside, holding your rifle. And after I entered, you locked the door behind me. Would anyone say that I had taken possession of your house?

The Group: Of course not. [s.82]

Abū 'Ārif: (Proceeding) The truth is if my feet led me into a perilous situation, I would have come to my death on my own accord. Wouldn't I?

Mahrūs: And anyone who says otherwise is a traitorous war-criminal.

Abū 'Ārif: Even so, my brother, one hears strange things from the enemy broadcasts. What did they say? They said they took Suez and Ismā'nīya. Would anyone believe it, Hājj?

Dasūqī: By God, your speech fills my mind with tears, Abū 'Ārif.

Abū 'Ārif: (Proceeding with zeal) Our boys in the west are like the ones in the east. They don't keep quiet. Every bullet they fire hits one of the enemy. And every shell they shoot from our cannons hits one of their tanks. And the army on the west side isn't alone. The popular resistance is there, too. And the Fedayeen commandos and everyone our Lord has given the strength to carry a weapon. Even if it's just a stick.

Sutūhī: (Breathlessly) All the people there are fighting, Uncle Ahmad?

Abū 'Ārif: All the people.

Sutūhī: There isn't a draft? No examinations and selections? No 'take this one and leave that one'?

Abū 'Ārif: There isn't anything like that.

Sutūhī: (Reflecting) Nothing at all.

(Sutūhī sinks into a wistful fantasy.)

Dasūqī: May our Lord soothe your heart, Abū 'Ārif. You've put mine at ease. I wish to God they would let us keep fighting until we finish them off.

Abū 'Ārif: (In astonishment) Who would keep us from it?

Dasūqī: The super-powers.

The First Peasant: What do the super-powers have to do with it? What have they got to do with us? [s.83]

Dasūqī: They're almost done for. So the industrialized countries will call it off. They'll put an end to the war.

Abū 'Ārif: (Astonished) What are you saying?

Dasūqī: By your life, it's true, Abū 'Ārif.

Abū 'Ārif: Who would agree to it?

Dasūqī: We and they must agree to it.

The Group: It isn't possible.

Dasūqī: We aren't living alone in the world, Ahmad. The world is full of countries. And the super-powers have interests in every area and from every perspective. Why else would they be super-powers? The world is no longer as it was. Now, if someone screamed on one side of the earth, somebody on the other side would get a headache. Well, what do you think Abū 'Ārif? It seems you've been asleep.

Abū 'Ārif: I don't understand what you're trying to say, Hājj.

Dasūqī: I'm trying to tell you that conferences are going on all the time among the nations. And after an hour or two they'll say: That's as far as you go. You and he must stop where you are.

Abū 'Ārif: You mean that we have to stop the war? And leave the Zionists on the west of the canal? And we can't lift a hand against them?

Dasūqī: What do the super-powers care about besides their own interests?

Abū 'Ārif: (In agitation) I reject this talk in its entirety.

Mahrūs: And anybody who believes it is a traitorous war-criminal.

Dasūqī: The sea of politics is vast, Abū 'Ārif. If you keep swimming in it for a year, you won't get anywhere. You can only understand so much, [s.84] and then your mind stops. (Pointing to the map which Abū 'Ārif has drawn) This is as far as your mind is able to go. As for other matters, they are for other people. (Pause) Come, Musaylihi.

(Hājj Dasūqī and Musaylihi turn toward the door while Abū 'Ārif and the Group stare at them in a stupor. A feeling of frustration has taken a hold of them.

(Hājj Dasūqī and Musaylihi disappear behind the door.)

Abū 'Ārif: (He turns to the Group, suddenly shouting.) They want to destroy our morale. (In defiance) Mahrūs.

Mahrūs: Yes, Uncle Ahmad.

Abū 'Ārif: Turn on the radio.

(Mahrūs turns the knob of the radio, and a battle hymn is heard.

(Abū 'Ārif and the Group cast condescending and defiant glances at Hājj Dasūqī's house. They turn around and leave. Sutūhī follows them until they disappear, and then he returns alone. Distractedly, he stands, contemplating the map. Then he squats down and stares at the point that marks Deversoir, absorbed in thought.

(Blackout)

Scene Three

(In front of Dr. Bāhir's orchard.

(The time: About noon on a November day.

(Abū 'Ārif is on his bench, reading the newspaper in silence. The Group is all together, and they have seated themselves on the ground. An atmosphere of sorrow has settled upon them. Mahrūs embraces the radio. Sutūhī sits isolated at the side of the bench, suffering in silence from relentless bodily pains.

(Abū 'Ārif suddenly finishes reading the newspaper, and he closes it distractedly.)

Abū 'Ārif: Why don't you turn on the radio, Mahrūs?

Mahrūs: I told you the batteries are finished, Uncle Ahmad. Have you forgot already?

Abū 'Ārif: By God, I don't know what's happened to my head. [s.85] (Pause) We'll place an order with the driver to bring us some batteries. The radio is still good.

Mahrūs: Of course it's still good. Why wouldn't it be good?

Hāmid: Explain things to us, Uncle Ahmad. Why are you so quiet?

Abū 'Ārif: What should I explain, Hāmid?

Hāmid: Explain what you've read in the newspaper.

Abū 'Ārif: (Sorrowfully) Once I've explained it to myself, Hāmid, I'll explain it to you. (Pause) By God, you were right, Hājj Dasūqī.

Bura'ī: Right about what? He's never told the truth in his whole life.

Abū 'Ārif: Just like he said, Bura'ī, my mind has gone as far as it can go. It isn't capable of going any further. There's no use reading and writing anymore.

Hāmid: You'd make him happy, talking like that.

Abū 'Ārif: Should I lie, Hāmid? And tell you I understand politics?

The Group: Yes, you do understand.

Abū 'Ārif: (Angrily) Can you force me to understand? I don't understand a thing. And whoever says otherwise is only making fun of me.

The Third Peasant: Why are you coming down on yourself like this, Abū 'Ārif? There is no one in the village equal to you.

The First Peasant: What is it that you don't understand? They stopped shooting. So the war has stopped. And you explained it to us.

The Second Peasant: And they'll hold a peace conference. That is, everyone sits like Arabs: They talk and we talk. And they won't break up the meeting till everyone knows his limits. You explained that, too. [s.86]

Mahrūs: And peace is bliss. Like they say.

Sutūhī: And you told us that the popular resistance is still active in Deversoir. Isn't that so?

Abū 'Ārif: The newspaper says so.

Hāmid: Then the war isn't over. So why get yourself upset?

Abū 'Ārif: What makes me sad is that it's been proven that Hājj Dasūqī knows more than any of us. And he understands. He says things are going to happen, and that's how they turn out. That's what makes me sad.

Sutūhī: I wish I could be a judge, Hājj Dasūqī, to pass judgment on you. I'd take the yoke from a water buffalo and put it around your neck. I'd hitch you to the waterwheel. And I'd drive you in circles with a whip until you got dizzy a thousand times over.

Hāmid: (Calmly, with wisdom) There's no need for such talk, Sutūhī.

Sutūhī: Why not, Hāmid?

Hāmid: You aren't lacking in worries. And neither are we.

Sutūhī: Is it because he's your uncle?

Hāmid: Have I got any other enemy but him, Sutūhī?

Sutūhī: Did you see what he did to me, Hāmid? (To the Group) Did you see what he did to me? (He raises the collar of his gilbāb, revealing the upper part of his back, and he turns to the Group.) Look.

The First Peasant: We've seen it before Sutūhī, and we already got upset.

Sutūhī: Then get upset a little more. (To Hāmid) You haven't seen, Hāmid. Look at my back.

Hāmid: (In pain) I don't want to see anything. [s.87]

Sutūhī: No. Look at it so you'll know your uncle.

Hāmid: (Crying out) I know my uncle, Sutūhī. I have no lack of knowledge about him.

Sutūhī: He found me sleeping and came down on me with his stick. I woke up from my sleep, terrified and screaming. If he had done it when I was awake, I would have shown him. But he beat me while I was sleeping. And he ran after me. And he told me, if I see you in front of my house again, I'll kill you and destroy your corpse. As if he owned the ground of the road as well.

Hāmid: All right. Don't go there, Sutūhī.

Sutūhī: Then where should I go, Hāmid? And why should I? This is our Lord's earth. I've been here all my life.

Hāmid: You're still free. Go home to him so he can kill you.

Sutūhī: Who'd bring you news of his tricks, Hāmid? Don't I know, even now, what they're planning in secret? They must be planning

something against you. Do you really think he wouldn't harm you?

Hāmid: It isn't important. We're well-aware of him. We know him from first to last. Relax and be quiet.

(Sutūhī returns to his place, and he sinks into his thoughts.)

Abū 'Ārif: (He suddenly stirs from his day-dreaming.) What I'd like to know is what are the intentions of a country like America towards us: It gives the Zionists an unlimited supply of weapons to make war with us -- Phantom jets, tanks with electronical control systems, remote control artillery, napalm, blue plague -- and yet they keep saying they want peace in the region. But how's it going to come about? Honestly, isn't it mind-boggling?

Mahrūs: It's like you told us, Uncle Ahmad. It's politics. [s.88]

Abū 'Ārif: And politics are secrets and tricks in the dark and damnable intentions and I don't understand it at all.

(He bows his head. Silence reigns.

('Ayisha enters, carrying a bundle of food with her. Her condition has worsened. Her face is pale and emaciated. Her anxiety is clearly visible.)

'Ayisha: God give you health.

Abū 'Ārif: (Turning to 'Ayisha) What do you want, 'Ayisha?

'Ayisha: I'm bringing you some food, Father.

Abū 'Ārif: Who told you I wanted to eat?

'Ayisha: Do you have to tell us that you need to eat? (Turning toward Sutūhī) And because Sutūhī, too, must eat. (Sutūhī feels hurt by the humiliation of his situation. 'Ayisha hesitates a moment. She takes a glance at the newspaper and then at the radio.)

'Ayisha: Is there any news, Father?

Sutūhī: (He suddenly moves to get up.) By God, I'll go over there and sit. Whatever happens, happens.

Hāmid: (Getting up and grabbing him) It's like you really want him to kill you.

Sutūhī: Yes, I want him to kill me. There's no other way.

The Group: (In astonishment) For him to kill you?

Sutūhī: Yes, to kill me. And may he rot in Hell for it. Wouldn't killing me send him to Hell? And ruin his house?

'Ayisha: What's going on? What's wrong with you, Sutūhī?

Sutūhī: There's no need for me to live. What I've seen of life is enough. [s.89] And I don't have anything to cry over. But he loves his world. And he's dying to keep it. Happy with himself and with power over anything he touches. And I'm going to steal it all away from him. I intend to ruin him.

Hāmid: What is this crazy talk?

Sutūhī: Let go of me, Hāmid.

The Group: (Gravely) Be sensible, Sutūhī.

Abū 'Ārif: (He pulls Sutūhī by the arm.) Sit down and don't move. Don't add to our worries. Both of you. Don't open your mouths. (Sutūhī returns to his place and a silent moment passes.)

'Ayisha: Hasn't Fikrī sent a letter, Hāmid?

Hāmid: He hasn't sent anything,'Ayisha.

'Ayisha: Because Abū Sa'īd's house got a letter from their son, Gābir.

The Group: When?

'Ayisha: On my way here I saw them getting it.

The First Peasant: I said their letters would begin to show up, one after another. And this is the second letter to come.

Abū 'Ārif: Someone go bring it, children.

A Young Man in the Group: I'll go. (The young man exits in a hurry.)

The Third Peasant: My sister Nafīsa will go crazy if a letter from Husayn doesn't come today or tomorrow.

('Ayisha sits at the right of the bench and bows her head in distress.)

'Ayisha: Don't be angry, Hāmid. Fikrī will send a letter, too. [s.90]

Hāmid: I don't suppose anybody working in a tank has got time to send letters. Because the tanks are carrying most of the fighting in this war, 'Ayisha.

Bura'ī: Tell me, Abū 'Ārif. How big is a tank?

Abū 'Ārif: I've shown it to you in the newspaper, haven't I, Bura'ī?

Bura'ī: But what's in the paper is tiny. It isn't like what we hear.

Abū 'Ārif: This little tank is as big as your house.

Bura'ī: It still looks small to me.

Sutūhī: (He gets to his feet, his mind made up.) Don't anybody grab me. And don't worry about me. I'm just going to watch from a distance.

The Group: Be sensible, Sutūhī.

Sutūhī: I am sensible. But I won't be beaten while I'm sleeping, and I won't let him fire me like this. By God, I will go. Because, frankly, I want him to kill me. (He is slipping away to leave while the Group considers whether to overtake him. The First Peasant, however, blocks their way.)

The First Peasant: Leave him alone. Don't be afraid for him. Hājj Dasūqī isn't a dimwitted man who'd throw himself away on account of Sutūhī. The man is a fox. It won't be easy to get the better of him. Sit down and relax.

(The Group returns to its place. A gloomy silence reigns over the place.)

Abū 'Ārif: (Suddenly and without preamble) Let's say this is America and these are its policies. But why are the Soviets keeping quiet? Why are they following America's line? They let America stalk about arrogantly with no challenge in the region. I tell you it's mind-boggling. [s.91]

Mahrūs: Be patient, Uncle Ahmad. Keep faith in our Lord. By the Prophet, we'll bring them down -- with the weapon of oil.

Hāmid: Is the oil weapon stronger than tanks, Mahrūs?

Mahrūs: No less. Isn't that so, Uncle Ahmad?

A Peasant in the Rear: (He gets to his feet.) I want somebody to solve this problem for me. Why is America angry with us? They come down on us and we haven't done anything wrong to them. We haven't beaten their families. We haven't trampled their crops. We haven't stolen a single ear of corn from their fields. So why are they locking horns with us?

(He remains standing to await an answer, but everyone just stares at him in silence. And so he is seized by confusion and he sits down.)

Abū 'Ārif: If al-Sādiq Abū 'Umar were to come and visit the village, he would explain everything to us. And he could remove the veil from our eyes. One must confess the truth. And I'm not ashamed to say: I don't understand a thing.

The Third Peasant: By God, Abū 'Ārif, you make me angry. If you don't understand, then what are we supposed to say?

Mahrūs: If it wasn't for you, Abū 'Ārif, how would we know anything ourselves? You're the one who explained everything to us: the Phantom, and the Sam Six, and the Sky Hawk.

The First Peasant: And the Golan Heights. And the Maginot Line and the flying missiles.

Bura'ī: And the United Nations. And the Bar Loaf Line.

Mahrūs: (Calmly) The Bar-Lev Line, Uncle Bura'ī.

Bura'ī: It doesn't matter what its name is. It's gone. Finished. And it won't come back, will it?

The Second Peasant: All these things we know thanks to you, Abū 'Ārif. (Pause.) [s.92]

Abū 'Ārif: (As he stands up, preoccupied) What do all of you know compared to what there is in the world? All that you know is less than one word in a book this high. (He gestures slowly with his hand.) What do I know compared to what al-Sādiq Abū 'Umar knows? Or the

editor-in-chief of this paper? Or the Minister of Culture? The world is very wide, children. And science is progressing, day after day. Every day there's a new invention. Every hour a discovery. Who would have believed they could throw a moon into the sky? And that it can turn and circle and be deployed for espionage? It's possible that at this very moment, a moon is up there, spying on us. It sees what we're doing and it hears what we're saying. And it takes pictures of us, too.

(The Group looks up at the sky in astonishment, searching for the moon and the sun.)

Bura'ī: Our Lord is great. He can give us whatever He gave them.

Abū 'Ārif: (Continuing) Who among us knows anything. We are the Third World, children. (The Group bows its heads with feelings of sorrow.) It isn't just you. I, too, am with you.

Hāmid: It's a good thing we're the Third World and not the fourth or fifth.

'Ayisha: (She approaches her father sympathetically.) Father, I don't know why you're so upset. You're eating away at yourself. What benefit will you get from it?

Hāmid: He's right, 'Ayisha. Shouldn't everyone know something? It isn't right to live my whole life in ignorance like an ox in his clover.

'Ayisha: Can we eat or drink this talk, Hāmid? If we stay like this one more week, we'll die of hunger. There are people who specialize in this. They must understand everything. They see their work and we see ours. The soil in the orchard is drying up from a lack of watering. If Dr. Bāhir knew, what would he do with you, Father? [s.93]

The Second Peasant: Has your father ever failed to irrigate it? All right, then. Can't it wait for two more days?

Abū 'Ārif: (As if he hasn't heard anything 'Ayisha has said) What would you say, children, if I took it upon myself to send a letter to Ustāz al-Sādiq Abū 'Umar? I'd ask him as a special favor to come

visit Tumayra -- for just a day -- to explain everything to us and then go back again.

Mahrūs: Could he leave his work to come to us?

The First Peasant: He's probably forgot the village altogether.

Hāmid: And it wouldn't be nice for us to send for him to come. Whoever wants somebody and needs him to come has got to go to him in person. It's only proper etiquette.

Abū 'Ārif: (He has taken the idea to heart.) Should I go to him?

Hāmid: I didn't mean that you should go to him. I was only talking about proper etiquette.

'Ayisha: (Frightened at the idea) I know my father. By God, he'll go and do it.

Abū 'Ārif: (As he turns the idea over in his head) No. No, it's impossible. From here to Cairo is a long trip, and it costs a lot of money. (The young man who went to find Gābir Abū Sa'īd's letter returns. The letter is, indeed, in his hand, and behind him is Umm Gābir. So is Umm Fikrī.)

The Young Man: Here's the letter, Uncle Ahmad. (The Group rises, interested. Abū 'Ārif reaches for the letter.)

Umm Gābir: Read it to me, Abū 'Ārif, and may your life grow longer.

Umm Fikrī: (With a sigh of severe anxiety) Look at it word by word, Abū 'Ārif. Maybe he mentions Fikrī somewhere.

(Abū 'Ārif breaks open the envelope, and the Group clusters around him, pricking up their ears.)

Umm Fikrī: (Anxiously, to 'Ayisha) How are you, 'Ayisha, my daughter. [s.94]

'Ayisha: (She is no less anxious than Umm Fikrī.) May God bring you peace, Aunt.

Umm Fikrī: I hope to God Gābir mentions him. Muhammad Abū Sālih's letter didn't mention him at all.

'Ayisha: May God will it so, Aunt.

Abū 'Ārif: (He reads out loud what is in the letter.) My dear father, Sa'īd Abū Gābir of the people of Tumayra.

After I mention the 'Peace be upon you', the 'Praise of God' and 'His blessings', I send my greetings to you and especially to my mother.

Umm Gābir: God bless you, my son, and bring you to safety.

Abū 'Ārif: (He reads.) And to my sisters, each one by name, and to my brothers, each one by name, and to all of my village, one by one, and all the people of Tumayra.

The Group: God bless you and thank you.

Abū 'Ārif: (He continues reading.) Dear Father and Mother, I am writing this letter to you from a foxhole in the heart of Sinai. I don't know what part, but we fought a great deal, and we marched, oh, until we got where we are. My health is greater than great, and my gun is beside me.

Don't worry, though, and especially my mother, tell her not to worry. Everything is as well as anyone could possibly wish.

Umm Gābir: Praise and thanks be to God for His blessing.

The Voice of Gābir: (It follows the words of the letter while distant explosions are heard from one moment to the next.) We are very happy, Father, and we aren't lacking for anything. The boys who are with me send their greetings to you. They have made two vows. On victory day, when we go home, they will visit Tumayra, and they will stay a day with us and eat in our house. So make things ready right away.

The Group: They honor our village. Welcome. [s.95]

The Voice of Gābir: And don't any of you think the war is over. It isn't over, Father. It's only a vacation is what young Hasan says who is here with me. All the boys here say that we will fight again. I hope so, Father.

Mahrūs: (Triumphantly) We said it wasn't over. And we knew it, too.

Bura'ī: Well, what about what it says in the paper?

The Voice of Gābir: I want you to know, Father, that I brought down four Israeli planes myself. And I earned two stripes. And young Husayn Bū 'Awadillah --

The Third Peasant: (Crying out) My sister Nafīsa's son. What about him?

Gābir's Voice: Also earned a couple of stripes, but I don't know how many planes he shot down. I didn't ask him --

The Third Peasant: A thousand prayers to God in the name of the Prophet.

Gābir's Voice: Because I haven't met with him very often. He sends greetings to all his people and to the whole village.

The Group: God bless him.

The Third Peasant: The children of Tumayra are brave wherever they are.

Umm Fikrī: (Anxiously) What's next, Abū 'Ārif? Finish it.

Abū 'Ārif: (Concluding the reading of the letter) And peace be upon you. (A moment of silence passes. The Group is lost in thought. Umm Fikrī exchanges a sad, quiet glance with 'Ayisha. Umm Gābir reaches calmly for the letter, embracing it with a tender glance. Then she turns around to go.)

Umm Fikrī: (In astonishment) It didn't bring any news of Fikrī.

'Ayisha: (She is no less anxious than Umm Fikrī). It seems he isn't with him, Aunt. [s.96]

Hāmid: Mother, Fikrī is in tanks and Gābir is in the artillery. He's in one place, and they're someplace else. So why are you upset?

The Third Peasant: With your permission I'll go bring the good news to my sister.

Hāmid: Then pass by my Uncle Dasūqī's house and see if anything happened to Sutūhī.

The Third Peasant: Don't be afraid for him. God won't let anything happen to him.

Umm Fikrī: (In distress) I only wanted to hear one word from him.

Bura'ī: Whatever didn't come today will come tomorrow, Umm Fikrī.

(Umm Fikrī averts her face from Bura'ī.)

The First Peasant: There's only two from our village that we haven't heard anything from. Fikrī and Ibrāhīm Abū Sharaf.

'Ayisha: But tell me, Father, if you took a trip to Cairo, would you be able to find anything out about them?

Abū 'Ārif: (Becoming aware) Huhh? About who?

'Ayisha: About Fikrī Abū Ismā'īn and Ibrāhīm Abū Sharaf.

Umm Fikrī: (Excitedly) Are you traveling to Cairo, Abū 'Ārif?

Abū 'Ārif: (The idea is gaining power over him.) Who? Me?

'Ayisha: Go ahead and go, Father. Don't you want to meet al-Sādiq? Go and meet him and ask about Fikrī and Ibrāhīm.

Umm Fikrī: Would you do it as a favor to me, Abū 'Ārif?

Hāmid: Really. Why don't you go, Uncle Ahmad?

The Group: Go ahead and go, Abū 'Ārif. [s.97]

The Second Peasant: But Fikrī and Ibrāhīm are at the frontlines. How is he going to ask about them in Cairo?

Abū 'Ārif: (Infused with enthusiasm) I'd ask about them at headquarters. If I went, that is. And al-Sādiq Abū 'Umar would have to show me the way.

The First Peasant: Then it's solved. What are you waiting for? Rely on God's will.

Abū 'Ārif: But it's an expensive mission. And I don't have anything saved.

'Ayisha: I'll borrow some money for traveling.

Umm Fikrī: I'll pay you a riyāl [about a nickel]. If you'll only ease my mind.

The Second Peasant: We'll all pay.

Hāmid: If we get a riyāl from everyone, we'll have enough to cover it.

Umm Fikrī: I'll pay a riyāl.

Abū 'Ārif: Bear with me for a minute. A mission like this wants appropriate clothes. I'm going to enter the newspaper office and meet an important man in the midst of his colleagues. I would shame him in front of them. What would he tell them? Would he say this rude man is from our village? It wouldn't be right.

'Ayisha: Then tell them you came straight from the fields, and the train ride was long, and you didn't have time to change your clothes.

Abū 'Ārif: Who would I tell? Who, 'Ayisha? There are so many.

Umm Fikrī: Fikrī has a new galabīya. Wear it when you go. Aren't you the same size as him?

The First Peasant: I have some new slippers that I haven't even worn for a year. Put them on your feet while you're traveling. [s.98]

Umm Fikrī: Take Fikrī's slippers, too. They're in the same condition they were in when he bought them.

Bura'ī: And I have a shawl that's still in good shape. It was a present from my brother's children in town. I'll bring it to you.

The First Peasant: And take my father's cloak. It's valuable, too. Nobody's worn it since the day he died.

(Silence falls.)

Umm Fikrī: All right, Abū 'Ārif. Will you go?

Hāmid: What do you say, Uncle Ahmad?

Abū 'Ārif: (After a pause to contemplate briefly) If God wills it, then by God, I'll go.

(The Group seems satisfied.)

'Ayisha: (Enthusiastically) When will you leave, Father?

Abū 'Ārif: On the first bus tomorrow morning. Before sunrise I'll be in town, and God willing, I'll be at the newspaper office before noon.

Voices: In safety, God willing.

'Ayisha: Will you be gone for long, Father?

Abū 'Ārif: Why should I be gone very long? The day after

tomorrow, at the latest, I'll be back here.

The First Peasant: But make sure to ask about everything, Abū 'Ārif. And don't forget a word of what they tell you. Come back ready to explain everything to us.

Bura'ī: And bring me some medicine, Ahmad. Maybe Cairo medicine will be useful.

Mahrūs: And advise Ustāz al-Sādiq Abū 'Umar to stick Hājj Dasūqī with a few words in the newspaper. Maybe they'll hurt him enough to make him see justice. [s.99]

A Peasant: And pass by the Ministry, Abū 'Ārif. Don't forget. Let them know what's happening with the Agricultural Committee. Tell them they are burning up our blood.

The Second Peasant: And don't forget to ask Ustāz al-Sādiq about our Palestinian Arab brothers, too. Ask him where they'll go after this. That's the question.

The Peasant: And don't forget my question. Why is America locking horns with us?

Umm Fikrī: And ask about Fikrī, Abū 'Ārif. And I'll pay you a riyāl.

Hāmid: And ask about Ibrāhīm, too. Don't forget him.

Bura'ī: The most important thing for you to tell him is: If Gābir Abū Sa'īd sent a letter from the front, saying we'll fight, then what is the talk in the paper? And tell him Uncle Bura'ī is sick.

Abū 'Ārif: Don't worry. I'll arrange everything in my mind. The most important, and then the next important. I'll explain everything to you. About America and China and the Soviets and I won't leave anything out.

Mahrūs: And about Geneva, Uncle Ahmad.

Abū 'Ārif: I won't leave anything out.

Mahrūs: And then bring some batteries with you for the radio.

Abū 'Ārif: I want Sutūhī, Hāmid. Can you fetch him for me?

Hāmid: Fetch him for you? Why do you want him?

Abū 'Ārif: I want him to come sit on this bench. He can take

care of the orchard until I get back.

Hāmid: I'll go get him. (Hāmid goes out.) [s.100]

Abū 'Ārif: Run to the house, 'Ayisha. Tell your mother to prepare some special pastries to take as a present with me for the Ustāz. Isn't it unreasonable to go to him empty-handed?

'Ayisha: Right away. And I'll cook our rooster for you to take with you.

Abū 'Ārif: That's even better. Now run. ('Ayisha goes off quickly toward the village.)

Abū 'Ārif: (Shouting) Listen, 'Ayisha. ('Ayisha stops). Tell your mother not to open her mouth and ask me why I'm traveling. Understand? Tell her it's the unanimous decision of the whole village. And there's no room for discussion.

'Ayisha: All right, Father. (She goes off in a hurry.)

Abū 'Ārif: (Talking to himself with delight) By God, Abū 'Ārif, the day has finally come. You're going to enter the newspaper office. You'll go inside and meet with him face to face.

(Curtain)

ACT III

Scene One

(In front of Dr. Bāhir's orchard.

(The time: Shortly after sunrise on a November day.

(The curtain rises, and we see 'Ayisha just as she arrives to put a breakfast bundle on the bench. She stands alone, anxiously looking around her for Sutūhī.)

'Ayisha: (Calling out) Sutūhī. Sutūhī. (She waits in vain for a reply.) Where has he gone? (She takes a look inside the orchard and shouts.) Sutūhī.

(The First Peasant enters, carrying his pick-axe on his shoulder on his way to his field.)

The First Peasant: Morning of goodness, 'Ayisha.

'Ayisha: Morning of light. You haven't seen Sutūhī on your way, have you?

The First Peasant: I saw him a little while ago when he passed by in front of my house. And he said good morning to me.

'Ayisha: (With a sigh of relief) I was afraid something might have happened to him.

The First Peasant: (As he continues on his way) Don't be afraid. Someone like Sutūhī always comes out all right.

(He exits. Relieved, 'Ayisha steps toward the orchard gate. She takes a wistful look at the orchard and then closes the gate calmly. She drops onto the bench with a feeling of exhaustion from the effect of all the wakeful vigil and anxious waiting. She checks her bosom as if she is worried about the presence of the scarf which Fikrī gave her. In no time at all, she is immersed in her dreams.)

The Voice of Fikrī: (From deep in 'Ayisha's memory) Whenever we stop work or when I get to leave the tank for a little while, I sit down

and think about you, and I say I wonder what she's doing now. I see you walking out the door of your house and coming here. When you're in front of the stove with the fire lighting up your cheeks. And I see you in the middle of the field, glancing around as if you're looking for me. And your beautiful voice rings in my ears. I call out to our Lord in my secret thoughts to take care of you, 'Ayisha. [s.102]

'Ayisha: (She sighs deeply and mutters.) May our Lord bring you home safely, Fikrī.

(Sutūhī appears, walking from the village, weighted down with feelings of misery.)

'Ayisha: Where were you, Sutūhī?

(Sutūhī doesn't answer, and he approaches with his head bowed, and then he squats down beside the bench, giving himself over to depression.)

'Ayisha: While I was sitting here shouting for you, I said I wonder where he went. (Pause. Then with pity) What happened to you, Sutūhī?

Sutūhī: What happened to me, 'Ayisha? Am I still alive or not?

'Ayisha: Why won't you talk?

Sutūhī: I am talking. Can't you hear me?

'Ayisha: (Scolding) You aren't keeping your word to my father not to leave the orchard.

Sutūhī: I didn't leave it.

'Ayisha: Well, where were you just now?

Sutūhī: I went and took a quick look and came right back.

'Ayisha: Where? You didn't go to Hājj Dasūqī's house, did you?

Sutūhī: (Turning his face away) Yes. To the home of the Hājj, damn him.

'Ayisha: Why did you go? Didn't you promise my father an hour ago that you wouldn't go there?

Sutūhī: (He bows his head and doesn't answer.)

'Ayisha: By God, you shouldn't have done it. [s.103]

Sutūhī: (Nervously) What did I do, 'Ayisha? I just went to take a peek, and then I came back.

'Ayisha: Someone you hate, that you can't stand? Why do you go to him?

Sutūhī: Because I hate him.

'Ayisha: Marvelous. What do you want from him?

Sutūhī: (Calmly) I want him to kill me.

'Ayisha: All right. Just be quiet, then. Are you crazy?

Sutūhī: Yes. I'm crazy. (Then shouting) But by God, I'll keep after him until he kills me.

'Ayisha: (In astonishment) If anybody heard you, they'd think you were talking seriously.

Sutūhī: Well, what do you think?

'Ayisha: Sutūhī, would anyone in his right mind wish such a thing for himself?

(Sutūhī waves his hand in an expression of annoyance. A moment of silence passes.)

'Ayisha: But what's troubling you now? What makes you act like this?

Sutūhī: He didn't kill me.

'Ayisha: He didn't kill you?

Sutūhī: (Bitterly) Yes. He didn't kill me. He looked me over from top to bottom, and he spit on me. And then he went into his house. He didn't kill me. (A pause. Then, with persistence) Where could he go to get away from me? By God, I won't let go of him. Your father comes back tomorrow. I'll give up his bench, and then I'll be free for Dasūqī.

'Ayisha: (With sympathy) All right. It doesn't matter. Don't get yourself so upset. [s.104] I brought you some breakfast. Sit down and eat. The Solver of all problems will find a way tomorrow. (She breaks open the bundle of food.)

Sutūhī: (Dejectedly) I don't want to eat.

'Ayisha: Then you'll die of hunger before Hājj Dasūqī can kill you. So eating is better for you so you can stay alive for him.

(Sutūhī casts an inquiring glance at her. Then he turns his eyes to the food. Then he bows his head.)

'Ayisha: (She spreads out the bundle in front of him.) Eat, Sutūhī. (Pause) Are you ashamed to take it? Aren't you working in my father's place? So go ahead and eat, Sutūhī.

(Sutūhī hesitantly reaches out his hand, tears off a morsel, shoves it into his mouth and chews it slowly and absent-mindedly. A moment of silence passes.)

Sutūhī: (Turning calmly to 'Ayisha) When will Fikrī Abū Ismā'īn come back, 'Ayisha?

'Ayisha: (Surprised by the question and confused) What are you asking me for, Sutūhī?

Sutūhī: Your heart must be feeling anxious for him to come home.

'Ayisha: (In an attempt to conceal her true feelings) What do my feelings have to do with it? His mother's heart is the first to feel for him.

Sutūhī: And your heart, too. It doesn't lie. I know.

'Ayisha: (Astonished and anxious) How do you know?

Sutūhī: (Simply and with affection) I know everything. (Then, whispering) No one in the village knows but me. ('Ayisha looks inquiringly at Sutūhī for a moment.)

'Ayisha: (As she gives vent to her feelings) My heart is like a mute. It doesn't say a thing. There's nothing but fear in it. My heart is full of fear of what it doesn't know, Sutūhī. [s.105]

Sutūhī: The day Fikrī comes back, the fear will disappear. And nothing but good fortune will remain in it forever.

'Ayisha: If only he'd come home. Or if we heard some news about him to reassure us. May our Lord bring you word of him, Father.

Sutūhī: (After a silent moment) I know Fikrī very well. Because he's the same age as me to the day. Fikrī is a humane and upright man. Maybe he's the only one in Tumayra who'll agree to stand

up to Hājj Dasūqī and bear witness against him if he kills me. I myself want him to come back and be here on the day I'm killed.

'Ayisha: When Fikrī comes back, he won't let anybody lay a hand on you.

Sutūhī: Fikrī is a good man. You two are suited for each other. No one in Tumayra is as well-matched a couple as you two.

'Ayisha: (Absently) My father must be on the train from town now. In a little while he'll be in Cairo. May our Lord listen well to our prayers.

(A silent moment passes during which Sutūhī chews a new bite of food.)

Sutūhī: (Suddenly) You know, 'Ayisha, I have the whole map memorized.

'Ayisha: What map, Sutūhī?

Sutūhī: The map. (As he moves closer to 'Ayisha) I learned it from your father. Look. (As he draws a long line with his finger) Here is the Suez Canal. That's where the middle of the war is. (He puts a dot on the top of the line.) Here is Port Sa'īd. (And another dot at the bottom of the line.) And Suez is here. (Then a dot in the middle of the line) And here is Ismā'nīya.

'Ayisha: That's where Fikrī was.

Sutūhī: And where is Deversoir, Sutūhī? Right here. (As he puts a dot in the middle of the stretch between Ismā'ilīya [s.106] and Suez.) The war of popular resistance is still raging there, 'Ayisha. All the people are fighting. Without selections or inductions. Anyone who can carry a weapon -- even if it's only a stick -- everybody's fighting.

('Ayisha stares, completely absorbed in the drawing.)

Sutūhī: (Proceeding) The way from here to there is easy to understand. They go out from here to al-Sālihīya. (As he puts a dot farther away) And from there through al-Ma'āhidī to Ismā'nīya. They say the road that goes there is paved. And in Ismā'nīya we turn off to the the right like so and keep going. Just a little. And we meet the

Zionists in front of us.

'Ayisha: You don't mean to say you plan to go there, Sutūhī?

Sutūhī: Me? (Pause) I plan to kill myself and put an end to it all.

'Ayisha: (Gravely) Well, then, eat your breakfast and stop talking. You make my heart sore.

(Pause. Sutūhī chews a new bite. Abū Sharaf enters, calm and even-tempered, as usual.)

Abū Sharaf: Peace be upon you.

Sutūhī: And upon you peace.

Abū Sharaf: How are you, 'Ayisha?

'Ayisha: How are you?

Abū Sharaf: We praise God and thank Him for His blessings.

'Ayisha: And how is Aunt Zīna?

Abū Sharaf: Fine. Where's your father, 'Ayisha? Don't tell me he's already gone on his trip?

'Ayisha: He's gone. He took the Omnibus an hour ago.

Abū Sharaf: That's what I was afraid of.

'Ayisha: Why do you say that? [s.107]

Abū Sharaf: Well. (As he reaches his hand into his vest pocket to pull out his son's letter) Because my son Ibrāhīm sent me a letter from the battlefield. And I wanted him to read it.

'Ayisha: (With a deep sigh) You got a letter?

Abū Sharaf: Yes. And I said I'll bring it to Abū 'Ārif to read it to me before he goes.

'Ayisha: Didn't any letter come from Fikrī Abū Ismā'īn?

Abū Sharaf: God knows, my daughter. I didn't ask. Maybe he sent one, too.

'Ayisha: (To Sutūhī) Did Hāmid pass by you today, Sutūhī?

Sutūhī: He went by on his way to the field. But he didn't say anything.

Abū Sharaf: (Asking himself) I wonder who I can go to to read it?

Sutūhī: Go to Mitwāli Abū Husayn. He knows how to read writing, too.

Abū Sharaf: Should I go to him at home or in the fields? I don't know where he is now. (Pause) I'll go up to his house first. If he isn't there, he'll be in the fields. (He gets ready to go, and then he stops and turns back to 'Ayisha.) When your father gets home safely, let me know. I'll come to see him and sit with him for a while. Because sitting with your father fills the mind.

'Ayisha: (Choking) All right.

Abū Sharaf: May goodness come to you, my daughter. Peace be upon you. (As Abū Sharaf calmly leaves, 'Ayisha collapses on the bench.)

'Ayisha: (In misery) Everybody sent their families letters, [s.108] Sutūhī. Except Fikrī. Even though I made him promise not to forget to send one.

Sutūhī: If he was able to write a letter, he would send one.

'Ayisha: My heart, Sutūhī. It aches for Fikrī.

Sutūhī: No. Don't worry. Because I know Fikrī very well. All of a sudden you'll look up and there he'll be in front of you. In person. And a smile on his face. And he'll have five or six stripes on his arm. He'll tell you I came here myself, 'Ayisha, instead of sending a letter.

('Ayisha stares at Sutūhī's face for a moment with eyes wide. Then she bows her head and mumbles inaudibly. As if she is reciting a prayer.)

(Blackout)

Scene Two

(The setting of this scene is complex. Even though Tumayra village still forms the general background of the scene, and the walls of Dr. Bāhir's orchard stand in their place as we left them in the first scene of this act, the village setting remains only as a dark, misty presence in the background.

(On the right at the front of the stage the light reveals an information desk in the entry hall of 'The Newspaper'. The desk is a curved, wooden counter on top of which is a sign -- 'Information'. Behind the desk sits the Clerk in charge, and to the side of the desk are two fautielle chairs. A small table stands between them. The principal door to the newsroom is behind the desk.

(At the start of the scene we see the information Clerk, Ezzat, busy arranging some of the private letters of editors working for the newspaper. Meanwhile, we see the silouette of Sutūhī, still curled up beside the bench in front of Dr. Bāhir's orchard. Three figures, two men and a woman, cross through the entry hall, one at a time, before Abū 'Ārif appears in the newspaper building.

(Ahmad Abū 'Ārif advances into the entrance hall in full array. He has put on Fikrī's gilbāb, which we saw Fikrī wear in scenes two and three of the first act, and on his feet are Fikrī's slippers. Over his shoulders is the ancient, black cloak which, even though it is old, appears quite valuable. On his head is the new shawl, wrapped into a turban. He carries on his arm a large basket in which there is a sizable amount of food, necessary as gifts for the visit. In his hand, [s.109] as usual, is a newspaper. He proceeds into the hall, in

such reverence for the place at first that he moves his feet cautiously and lets his eyes wander around as if he is lost. Then he steps forward, by-passing the information desk.)

The Clerk: (As he notices Abū 'Ārif, he calls out to him.) Sayyid. You, Hājj.

Abū 'Ārif: (Turning to look inquiringly at the Clerk) Me?

The Clerk: Yes, you. (Abū 'Ārif walks up to the Clerk, smiling with confidence.)

Abū 'Ārif: Peace be with you.

The Clerk: And with you peace.

Abū 'Ārif: How are you?

The Clerk: Ahlan wa sahlan. Where are you going?

Abū 'Ārif: (Smiling) Me? I'm not going. I'm coming.

The Clerk: Well, what's your business?

Abū 'Ārif: All my business is with Ustāz al-Sādiq Abū 'Umar. Where do I find him?

The Clerk: Who did you say?

Abū 'Ārif: (Astonished) Al-Sādiq Abū 'Umar. Don't you know him?

The Clerk: (Becoming aware) Ahh. You mean Ustāz al-Sādiq 'Umar.

Abū 'Ārif: What did I just say? Where do I find him?

The Clerk: He isn't here.

Abū 'Ārif: Well, where did he go? [s.110]

The Clerk: Out on a journalistic assignment at large.

Abū 'Ārif: You don't say. (A contemplative pause. Then pointing at one of the two seats) Well, I hope you don't mind if I wait for him here until he gets back.

The Clerk: I tell you he is on a journalistic assignment. Abroad. In Europe.

Abū 'Ārif: (In admiration) Europe? You mean France and countries like that? I thought he was at large here. Europe, all at

once? Praise be to the Prophet. (Then the reality of the matter dawns on him.) You say Europe?

The Clerk: Yes, Europe. France and countries like that.

Abū 'Ārif: (In dismay) So it's impossible for him to return today or tomorrow?

The Clerk: Not for another month.

Abū 'Ārif: What a black day. What have I come here for, then?

The Clerk: I don't know. (Abū 'Ārif puts the basket on the ground. He is utterly perplexed.)

Abū 'Ārif: What a misfortune this is. So he didn't go to Europe until I came to him. By God, he has no right. Ask about him, Effendī, if you please. Maybe he's inside and you just aren't aware of it.

The Clerk: Who should I ask, Hājj? I know my job.

Abū 'Ārif: (Pointing to the information sign to indicate his understanding) I understand, of course, that it's your job. But I mean you should make sure, too. There's no harm in double-checking.

The Clerk: (Angrily) Listen, Uncle. I'm telling you --

Abū 'Ārif: (Interrupting) I understand exactly what you said. But [s.111] you don't understand the problem. Because I made a special trip all the way from the village. I came as fast as I could just to meet the Ustāz. I even brought him a present with me. (He points to the basket for confirmation.) I don't suppose it makes you happy that I came all this way just to find out he's gone. For you to ask someone else is no disgrace. Only God is all-knowing, Effendī. (The Clerk is bursting with exasperation, but he succeeds in controlling his nerves. At this moment Anisa Sāmiya Shākir, the newspaper woman, bursts in with energetic steps, and she heads directly for the Clerk.)

Sāmiya: (Fondly) Morning of goodness, Ezzat.

The Clerk: Morning of light, Ustāza Sāmiya.

Sāmiya: (She takes a quick look at Abū 'Ārif.) Do you have anything for me?

The Clerk: There's a letter for you from abroad. (While the Clerk goes to work to search for Sāmiya's letters, Sāmiya takes the

opportunity to scrutinize Abū 'Ārif and his basket.)

The Clerk: (As he hands the letter to Sāmiya) Here you are.

Sāmiya: Merci. (She takes the letter, and she falls back a step. She stands, leaning against the desk to examine the envelope, and then she goes to work to break the seal, directing her attention between one glance and another at what goes on between the Clerk and Abū 'Ārif.)

Abū 'Ārif: (As his perception of the disaster gradually increases) I tell you what, Hadrit --

The Clerk: (His patience has worn thin) Hājj, do me a favor. I have a lot of work. I don't have time for you.

Abū 'Ārif: My brother, you appear to be a socialistic man. So you aren't a bureaucrat or anything. And the foundations of socialism are that people share each other's misfortunes. I am now standing in the middle of a disaster. (He has drawn Sāmiya's attention completely.)

The Clerk: What disaster? That the man isn't here? [s.112]

Abū 'Ārif: Do you think that's all? If you thought about it, you'd see that there's more to it than that. Because the problem doesn't concern me alone. It concerns the whole village. Our village is called Tumayra. Where Ustāz al-Sādiq comes from. And the people of the village sent me especially to meet him. And they've sworn me to a thousand oaths.

The Clerk: How do I come into all this? Anyway, just to make you satisfied, I'm going to send you to ask someone else. (Calling out to Sāmiya) Ustāza Sāmiya.

Sāmiya: (While still in her place) Yes, Ezzat?

The Clerk: Is Ustāz al-Sādiq 'Umar anywhere to be found in Cairo?

Abū 'Ārif: (To Sāmiya) You know him, of course. There isn't anyone who doesn't know him.

The Clerk: Ustāza Sāmiya is a reporter for the newspaper.

Abū 'Ārif: Really? Ahlan wa sahlan. Which Sāmiya are you?

Sāmiya: (Perplexed) Sāmiya Shākir.

Abū 'Ārif: Ahlan wa sahlan. But of course I know you.

Sāmiya: (Astonished) You know me?

Abū 'Ārif: I know you intimately.

Sāmiya: (Stammering) Impossible.

Abū 'Ārif: (Remembering some of her articles he has read) If you don't believe me, listen to this: "Modern and Traditional Fashions Side by Side in the Suburbs." (Sāmiya is baffled. Abū 'Ārif rambles on.) "The Latest Styles on the Beach of Monte Carlo."

Sāmiya: I don't believe this. [s.113]

Abū 'Ārif: (As he smiles with pride at his knowledge) "The Mini-Skirt on Campus."

Sāmiya: What an astonishing thing.

Abū 'Ārif: You think I don't know you. But I've noticed that you haven't been writing for the last two months. Even though I've been waiting for you to write something about "Fashions and the War."

(The Clerk laughs a small laugh.)

Sāmiya: (Smiling in embarrassment) Indeed. I haven't been writing because I've moved to another department.

Abū 'Ārif: Our relative hasn't been writing either, I was surprised to see. But now I see he is traveling in Europe. (In pain as he returns to his problem) It would be all right if they would write in the newspaper to say that he is traveling. And to let anyone who intends to come to him know not to come. And here you see the result. Here I am now not knowing what to do. Does this seem right to you, Sitt Sāmiya Shākir?

Sāmiya: You are in a difficult position indeed.

Abū 'Ārif: It's a bad situation. Worse than anything that's ever happened before. And worse than anything that ever will happen. (Sāmiya smiles and shifts her attention to read the letter. Meanwhile, the Clerk busies himself with some of the paperwork at hand. Abū 'Ārif withdraws into gloomy contemplation.)

(Life in Tumayra stirs. In the dark, misty background of the village we see the silouette of Sutūhī, getting to his feet. He looks around, feeling weary and alone.

Then he walks away with his head bowed, and he disappears from view.)

Abū 'Ārif: (To the Clerk, submissively) Excuse me for asking, Hadritak.

The Clerk: Effendim?

Abū 'Ārif: Since your job is information. Isn't it possible for me to inquire with you about some things, too? And you could help me so it won't be impossible for me to go home to the village. So I wouldn't go home as empty-handed as I came. [s.114]

The Clerk: (Willing to grant some assistance) Things like what, for instance? (Sāmiya turns away from the letter to direct all her attention to Abū 'Ārif. While she listens to him, she is inspired by what appears to her to be a wonderful idea. The idea grows within her until it overpowers her and stirs her emotionally.)

Abū 'Ārif: So you'll understand the whole problem, I'll put it all into a few words. From the day our Lord granted us victory and our army made the crossing, I can't tell you how happy we were. The home front, that is. I am one of the people who could read the details of the crossings in this newspaper of yours -- and for your information, I don't read any other newspaper -- and my eyes have been crying tears of joy.

The Clerk: (Courteously) Fine sentiments, by God.

Abū 'Ārif: By the way, we have five boys from Tumayra in the army. Each one of them is equal to at least ten others. It's enough to tell you that among them is Fikrī Abū Ismā'īn -- for example.

The Clerk: (Prompting him to hurry) Fine. And so?

Abū 'Ārif: So what do we on the home front do? The first thing is we have to be up to the level of the war in all respects. And especially on the matter of national consciousness.

The Clerk: (Cutting him off impatiently) I'm with you in everything you say. But what are you getting at exactly?

Abū 'Ārif: Our village, which is called Tumayra, sent me as a messenger to our relative, Ustāz al-Sādiq, so I could learn some of the

problems occupying us from him and go back home to explain them. And because Hājj Dasūqī -- he is a man among us whom our Lord has made very wealthy -- he is saying things we don't understand, and he's getting everybody upset. And because in these political matters you could learn as much from us as you could by talking to the earth under your feet. We are only the Third World, you see.

The Clerk: (Interrupting, as he has already understood the subject) Do I understand from all this that you want to ask about politics? [s.115]

Abū 'Ārif: May God open the way for you. Politics. Our village sent me to learn the politics and go back and explain it to them. (The Clerk fights back his desire to laugh. Meanwhile, the sudden idea Sāmiya has had begins to ripen in her mind, and the impact of all Abū 'Ārif has said begins to show in her emotions.)

Abū 'Ārif: (Proceeding pleasantly) And you, of course, know the political situation: the war and the Security Council; the peace missions, the oil weapon; America and the Atlantic NATO nations. That is, the whole thing in its entirety.

The Clerk: (As he can no longer resist his desire to make a joke) Now I understand everything. You are, in short, a political envoy from your village.

Abū 'Ārif: May God bless you again. That's it. And I have some thirty questions arranged in my mind. Not counting the ones that come up along the way in the middle of conversation. (The Clerk suddenly bursts out laughing. Sāmiya lets her displeasure show. Abū 'Ārif is hard hit, but he waits until the Clerk has finished laughing.)

Abū 'Ārif: (Reprimanding calmly) Are you laughing at our village, Hadritak? (Pause) This laughter of yours reminds me of Musaylihi.

The Clerk: (In astonishment) Musaylihi? Who is Musaylihi?

Abū 'Ārif: Am I permitted to laugh at you now because you don't know Musaylihi?

Sāmiya: (Intervening with genuine affection for Abū 'Ārif)

What's the matter with you, Ezzat?

Abū 'Ārif: (To the Clerk with the same calm) Do you mean to say that you don't know Sutūhī, either? Or Bura'ī or Sa'dīya Umm Ismā'īn? (The Clerk laughs again.)

Sāmiya: (Angrily) Don't be impossible, Ezzat. What are you laughing about? [s.116]

Ezzat: Haven't you been listening to what he's been saying all morning?

Sāmiya: It's not right. Especially since he's related to one of our colleagues.

Abū 'Ārif: I'm not related to him, Sitt. I'm only from the same village. But we call him our relative because we're proud of him.

Sāmiya: (To Abū 'Ārif) I am very happy to meet you today. Please come with me for a moment.

Abū 'Ārif: (Doubtfully) Come where, Sitt Sāmiya Shākir?

Sāmiya: (Pointing to one of the chairs) Please, sit down and relax. Or I tell you what. It would be better for both of us to go upstairs.

Abū 'Ārif: Where upstairs? No, we'd better not. If you have something to tell me, then, with your permission, here is fine.

(He turns to his basket, picks it up, and calmly takes a glance at the Clerk. Then he turns around to the two chairs, puts the basket beside them, and sits down. Then he suddenly stands up, since he realizes that Sāmiya is still standing.)

Abū 'Ārif: (To Sāmiya) Please sit down. (Sāmiya sits, and then Abū 'Ārif sits. From time to time one of the newspaper staff appears, gives a curious look at Sāmiya, Abū 'Ārif and his basket, and then continues on his way.)

Sāmiya: (In an attempt to appease Abū 'Ārif) Are you angry with Ezzat? Don't be angry with him. It's a habit of his. He loves to make jokes.

Abū 'Ārif: (Plainly) I understand everything. Don't peasants

usually make city people laugh? [s.117]

Sāmiya: (Courteously) No. How could that be? On the contrary.

Abū 'Ārif: Look. Don't try to appease me. Because I don't have a psychological complex in that respect. And anyway, city people are right. Peasants don't know anything. But it isn't their fault in the opinion of Fikrī Abū Ismā'īn. May God make his day full of blessings.

Sāmiya: (In admiration) The truth is that you are a rare example of the kind of peasants I've seen.

Abū 'Ārif: God bless you. (A pause and then he continues.) Besides, today's peasant isn't like he used to be. He is a little more enlightened and aware.

Sāmiya: You understand them. Of course.

Abū 'Ārif: He doesn't flash his wallet in the open anymore. So if anyone wants to steal it, they'll have to steal him himself in person. (Sāmiya laughs a short laugh, and Abū 'Ārif laughs, too.)

Sāmiya: Terrific. (Pause) You didn't tell me what your name is, Hadritak.

Abū 'Ārif: Me? Ahmad Abū 'Ārif. From Tumayra. The village of Ustāz al-Sādiq Abū 'Umar.

Sāmiya: Ahlan wa sahlan.

Abū 'Ārif: Ahlan bīkī, Sitt Sāmiya Shākir.

Sāmiya: Would you like to drink some tea or coffee?

Abū 'Ārif: (Getting to his feet, feeling duty bound as a man to be the one to offer) No, by God. I won't drink anything.

Sāmiya: All right. Go ahead and relax. You don't have to drink anything. (Abū 'Ārif settles into the other chair.)

Abū 'Ārif: Meeting you is sweet enough. (He takes a quick glance at [s.118] the Clerk.) It's like a proverb we have that says: A good welcome is better than a good meal.

Sāmiya: (After a pause) Look, Uncle Ahmad. I'm going to speak frankly with you.

Abū 'Ārif: There's nothing better than frankness.

Sāmiya: I want to do a newspaper interview with you.

Abū 'Ārif: (Astonished) With me?

Sāmiya: Yes.

Abū 'Ārif: About what? It must be about my cloak.

Sāmiya: (With a tactful smile) No. Not about your clothes. The article will be about the war. The peasant and the war. I heard everything you said to Ezzat.

Abū 'Ārif: This clerk?

Sāmiya: Yes. And I found your talk very pleasant. I found in you the personality of an uncommon peasant. Cultured, following events in your reading. And you have ideas formed about a lot of things. A noble picture of the new Egyptian peasant. I thought I would present you as an example of the consciousness in the Egyptian village, which represents the large slice of the home front.

(Abū 'Ārif bows his head to think about what Sāmiya has said.)

Abū 'Ārif: From what I understand about newspaper interviews, you ask me questions and I answer. Isn't that so?

Sāmiya: Exactly so.

Abū 'Ārif: (Astonished) But I came here from Tumayra to ask questions. If I knew the answers, would I have come?

Sāmiya: I want you to be natural. I want you to answer with whatever you know. [s.119]

Abū 'Ārif: What do I know? I've got some thirty questions prepared in my brain. Besides whatever comes up in the middle of talking.

Sāmiya: All right, Sīdī. We'll stay away from those questions as much as possible.

Abū 'Ārif: Then what'll we talk about?

Sāmiya: We'll confine ourselves to generalities. With whatever you know.

(Abū 'Ārif bows his head in thought for a moment.)

Abū 'Ārif: (Hesitantly) But I've got to meet with someone first to ask my questions. I'm afraid that time is stealing away from us. If

I go back to the village without knowing anything, the people will curse me to my face.

Sāmiya: Let's take care of the subject together. I'll seat you with the political editor of the newspaper, and he'll explain anything you ask of him.

Abū 'Ārif: (With excitement) Meet with the editor? If you please, let me meet him. Afterwards I'll sit with you and give you whatever you want.

Sāmiya: It isn't possible. This article must make today's edition.

Abū 'Ārif: But you don't understand. I came here thinking that Ustāz al-Sādiq was here. I planned to stay at his home this evening. And I brought a gift with me for him, as you see. But since I find he's in Europe, I've got to go back to the village today. I barely have time for one mission at headquarters that I have to take care of and then I'll call on God's blessings and set out for home. And you'll do me a great favor if you take me to the editor you were talking about. You'll win a reward in heaven for it.

Sāmiya: (With a tone of voice closer to begging) We agreed to speak frankly. And I'm not going to hide anything from you. The article I want to do with you has a great and special importance to me. For two months I've been looking for a new, explosive article. [s.120] Something to create a stir. You are the best article I could do, so please help me and I'll try to help you. (Abū 'Ārif has bowed his head to think as Sāmiya's words have affected him.)

(The silouette of 'Ayisha passes in the background, stepping quietly, and then it disappears.)

Sāmiya: Well, Uncle Ahmad? What do you say?

Abū 'Ārif: (Wavering, as his objections have collapsed) But I'm afraid I'll be too late and won't succeed in doing anything. And I must go home today.

Sāmiya: (Fervently) Why are you going? Stay until tomorrow.

Abū 'Ārif: That wouldn't fit into my plans. I was under the

understanding that I'd stay with Ustāz al-Sādiq.

Sāmiya: Stay with us. Our home is spacious and my family will welcome you warmly.

Abū 'Ārif: Sitt, may our Lord bless you. There's no call for staying overnight. Let's be done and I'll go.

Sāmiya: By the way. My great grandfather lived in a village, too -- he was a peasant. Like you Hadritak.

Abū 'Ārif: God bless you, Sitt Sāmiya Shākir.

Sāmiya: All right. Are we agreed?

Abū 'Ārif: But they've got to be questions I understand. So there's no call for embarrassment.

Sāmiya: (Emotionally) Don't worry. They'll be very charming questions. (As she suddenly gets to her feet) Excuse me one minute. (As she turns quickly to face the information Clerk.)

Sāmiya: (To the Clerk) Give me the telephone, Ezzat.

Abū 'Ārif: (Handing her the telephone receiver) What's the story, Ustāza Sāmiya? I couldn't help noticing how long you've been talking. [s.121]

Sāmiya: (With enthusiasm and verve) An article that's never been done. (To the telephone) Hello, Lawāhiz, would you please connect me with Ustāz Rif'āt?

(While Sāmiya waits for an answer, Abū 'Ārif bows his head in thought, and life in Tumayra village stirs. We see the figures of the Group in their typical poses: in front of them is Mahrūs, carrying the transistor; the Group crosses the stage in silence, the silouette of Bura'ī appears after them by a little, and then they all disappear from sight.)

Sāmiya: Hello. Ustāz Rif'āt? (With feeling) I came across a rather startling subject, and I want to do it now. (Whispering) A peasant with a little bit of education. His village sent him to Cairo to inquire about the war and the question of peace. The entire range of international politics. Imagine. What do you think? Isn't it a

terrific subject? (Pause) It might take a whole page tomorrow. (A pause and then with feelings of victory) All right. I want a photographer right away. Is it possible? (Pause) I'm in the hall downstairs. Merci, Ustāz Rif'āt. (As she returns the receiver to the Clerk in happiness) What a great topic. (And she returns to Abū 'Ārif with liveliness.)

Sāmiya: Look, Uncle Ahmad. We'll sit here and talk a little, and later we'll go up to finish in my office. And don't be afraid, you won't get tired out. We'll go up on the elevator. Let's begin now thinking over the questions together. (As she eagerly takes pen and paper out of her handbag) You told me your name is Ahmad what?

Abū 'Ārif: Ahmad Abū 'Ārif. And I'm almost fifty years old.

Sāmiya: Great, and your village is named Tumayra? (As she writes)

Abū 'Ārif: Yes, Tumayra. It's a very old name. We tried to find where it comes from, but no one knows who named it. I don't even know.

Sāmiya: (Eagerly taking notes) Terrific.

Abū 'Ārif: (Anxiously) I tell you what, Sitt. I'm afraid I'll be too late [s.122] and I won't have time to ask questions or go to headquarters. Or buy anything.

Sāmiya: Didn't we agree that you would make yourself at home here. (Then an idea hits her suddenly.) Oh, God.

Abū 'Ārif: (Anxiously) What happened, Sitt?

Sāmiya: I just remembered something. (Calling out to the Clerk) Ezzat. Would you please talk to Lawāhiz and ask her to call Nūra 'Abd al-Hamīd at the radio station for me?

The Clerk: Right away. (As he lifts the telephone receiver.)

Sāmiya: (To Abū 'Ārif) You have come to us from heaven.

Abū 'Ārif: What do I have to do with this lady?

Sāmiya: She's my closest friend. And she's a radio announcer. I'll do you a great favor.

Abū 'Ārif: The greatest favor you can do me --

Sāmiya: (Interrupting) I'm going to let you speak on the radio.

Abū 'Ārif: (Breathlessly) On the radio? Me?!

Sāmiya: For an entire half hour.

Abū 'Ārif: (Taken by the idea) Oh, God, this is very nice indeed. It never even crossed my mind. (Then, in hesitation) But I'm in a hurry. I have errands to do and not much time.

Sāmiya: As long as you're going to stay, then all right. Why hurry? Between me and you is an opportunity that may never occur again.

Abū 'Ārif: It's an opportunity. But I --

The Clerk: (Interrupting) Go ahead and talk, Ustāza Sāmiya. [s.123]

Sāmiya: Excuse me. (As she moves quickly toward the telephone receiver)

Abū 'Ārif: (Stammering) What have I gotten myself into?

Sāmiya: Hello. Nūra? How are you Nu Nu? Yes, Sāmiya. Listen. I have a surprise for you, but it deserves a sweet reward. (A short pause) You've told me that you're looking for a new topic for the program, and I've found a juicy one for you. (She takes a glance at Abū 'Ārif, and then she continues with her conversation on the telephone in a whisper.)

(During Sāmiya's telephone conversation, and while Abū 'Ārif bows his head, the figures of Hājj Dasūqī and Musaylihi appear, crossing the background on their way toward the field. At the same time the incessant barking of dogs is heard in the village. As the figures of the two men disappear, the barking continues for a moment.)

Sāmiya: (Finishing her conversation on the telephone) All right, Nūra. Bye-bye. (As she returns the receiver to the Clerk, and as she turns radiantly to Abū 'Ārif.)

Sāmiya: Congratulations, Uncle Ahmad. Tomorrow at eleven o'clock you're going to talk on the radio.

Abū 'Ārif: But what use is talking on the radio when the children in our village aren't going to hear me? Our batteries are worn

out, and young Mahrūs is trusting me to take batteries back with me.

Sāmiya: The whole world will hear you.

Abū 'Ārif: But our village isn't going to hear.

Sāmiya: Sīdī, it doesn't matter. Just tell them. (Then she adds eagerly) And I'm going to do my utmost, also, to get you on television.

Abū 'Ārif: (Springing up in agitation) No. No, Sitt Sāmiya Shākir. I'm sorry. Thank you, but I've got errands to do. And I've got to ask the thirty questions I have in my mind. [s.124]

Sāmiya: All right, sit down and relax your nerves. (As Abū 'Ārif sits) You must trust me, and I will satisfy you completely. Consider me as your daughter. (As the photographer arrives with his camera equipment)

The Photographer: Yes, Sāmiya?

Sāmiya: Ahlan, Māhir. (She stands up.) It's good of you to come. (To Abū 'Ārif) Ustāz Māhir is going to take your picture, Uncle Ahmad.

Abū 'Ārif: (Appalled) You're going to take my picture, too?

Sāmiya: Well, what did you think? Aren't we going to devote an entire page to you?

Abū 'Ārif: A whole page? And you're going to publish my picture?

Sāmiya: Not just one picture.

Abū 'Ārif: (Blissfully) Well, how many shots of me are you going to take?

Sāmiya: A lot, you can be sure. (To Māhir) I tell you what, Māhir. Take a picture of him while he's sitting like this.

Abū 'Ārif: (Muttering) By God, you've lived to have your picture taken, Abū 'Ārif.

Sāmiya: Stay with me, Uncle Ahmad.

Abū 'Ārif: All right. And you'll take a picture of me in the cloak? Won't you?

Sāmiya: Just as you are.

Abū 'Ārif: But let me fix myself up a little. Do you mind? (Māhir smiles.)

Sāmiya: No objection.

(Abū 'Ārif gets ready for the picture. He leans back, proudly revealing the front of Fikrī's gilbāb under the cloak, and he draws a big smile on his face.) [s.125]

Sāmiya: Terrific.

The Photographer: (Preparing to take the picture) Stay like you are. Don't move. (And the flashbulb goes off.)

Sāmiya: Bring your basket and come, Uncle Ahmad.

Abū 'Ārif: The basket. That has my travel gifts in it.

Sāmiya: (Joking) Don't be afraid. We aren't going to take it.

Abū 'Ārif: Would I withhold it from you? Why would I take it back with me? (He picks up the basket.)

Sāmiya: Merci very much. We'll take a picture of you while you're holding your basket and standing here, beside the information desk and talking to Ezzat.

Abū 'Ārif: This clerk?

Sāmiya: Yes. Like you were standing.

Abū 'Ārif: And the paper in my hand, too?

Sāmiya: Of course. That's very important. The newspaper.

(Abū 'Ārif draws himself up into a suitable pose, revealing the front of the gilbāb.)

Māhir: (To Sāmiya as he prepares to take the picture) I don't understand a thing. What's the idea of the article, Sāmiya?

Sāmiya: It's a terrific story. I'll break into the world with it. "Messenger from Tumayra Village: Inquiries about the Problems of War and Peace".

Māhir: Great. (The flashbulb goes off and then the theatre goes completely dark.)

(Blackout)

[s.126]

Scene Three

(In front of Dr. Bāhir's orchard. The audience's perspective, however, has been changed. The orchard walls and gate have been shifted toward the left of the stage, and the horizon is revealed directly in front of the audience. The fields appear, spreading out within sight. Anyone arriving from the farm road steps directly onto the stage from the sidescene.

(The time: Shortly before sunset.

(The Group is sprawled on the ground in front of the orchard. The bench is unoccupied. Sutūhī is in his place beside the bench with his head bowed in worry. In the background where it is possible to observe the farm road sits the First Peasant, squatting down and awaiting the appearance of the Omnibus, so he can announce the news to the Group. Beside him stands 'Ayisha, waiting motionlessly. Bura'ī sits in his usual position near the Group. Hāmid sits in a conspicuous place. Beside him is Mahrūs and in his hand is the radio.

Mahrūs: (He turns the knobs of the transistor in a hopeless attempt to make it work.) Look, my brother, at our Lord's wisdom. Batteries the size of fingers get tired out and the radio stops working. (He shakes the radio and holds it up to his ear in agitation.) Say something, my brother. Even if it's just a word. I swear three times by God, if Abū 'Ārif hadn't've told me about technology, I'd've landed a blow on you. (Silence reigns. 'Ayisha leaves her place, exhausted by waiting, and turns toward the Group which greets her with a silent gaze.)

'Ayisha: I don't know. What could make the Omnibus so late?

Hāmid: It isn't time for it to come yet.

'Ayisha: If my father doesn't come on the one that's due, then he won't come tonight.

Mahrūs: But he said he had to come today at the latest.

The First Peasant: (Shouting as he leaps to his feet) It's here, children. (The Group jumps to their feet excitedly except for Sutūhī. The sound of a large vehicle is heard approaching.)

The First Peasant: (Sorrowfully) That isn't it. It's just a truck. [s.127]

(The Group returns hopelessly to their places, and so does the First Peasant.)

Burā'ī: (As he returns to his original position) The man is going to drive us crazy making us jump up every few minutes. As if we didn't have enough to worry about.)

(The sound of the truck fades away.)

The Second Peasant: What could be keeping Abū 'Ārif till the last bus? He must be happy staying in Cairo.

'Ayisha: Maybe Ustāz al-Sādiq is holding him. Making him stay.

Bura'ī: Maybe he went to visit the Sphynx.

Hāmid: He must be tired from searching for headquarters.

'Ayisha: (Apprehensively, as she sits down next to Sutūhī) My father's feet don't know the streets of Cairo. And they say Cairo is so big that people get lost in it.

The Third Peasant: Even if the whole world lost its way, would your father get lost? I wish everyone was like your father. (Pause.)

Mahrūs: (Still making futile attempts with the radio) A few good hits, my brother. I'm sure they'd be good for it.

The First Peasant: (Alerting the Group without moving from his place) Hājj Dasūqī is coming, children.

The Group: (Muttering with resentment) The hell with him.

Bura'ī: Tell him to take another way home, my brother.

(Hāmid turns to face away from the road. Sutūhī perks up at the mention of Hājj Dasūqī, and he stretches his neck to see him. Hājj Dasūqī appears, and with him is Musaylihi. The two of them whisper together and continue on their way toward the village, ignoring the Group. As

for the Group, they remain with their heads bowed, but they glance furtively at the two with hostility.

Sutūhī: (Suddenly straightening up onto his knee) Hājj Dasūqī. (Dasūqī turns toward him.) I'm here. (Hājj Dasūqī is stirred into casting a glance at Sutūhī, and then he takes in the Group with a hostile look. He continues on his way.)

Sutūhī: (He leaps up to stand on the bench.) Here I am, Hājj Dasūqī. Don't you want me?

Musaylihi: (Shouting) Mind your own business, half-wit.

The Group: (Muttering) Be sensible, Sutūhī.

'Ayisha: (Whispering to Sutūhī) What's come over you, Sutūhī? Why are you trying to bring disaster on yourself?

Dasūqī: (Trying to curb his anger) Leave him be, Musaylihi. (And he starts to go on his way.)

Sutūhī: Hājj Dasūqī. (He makes a farting noise. Hājj Dasūqī stops in anger.)

'Ayisha: Sutūhī!!

Musaylihi: (Shouting as he is on the verge of attacking Sutūhī.) Man, why are you so short on manners?

(Sutūhī fakes a high-pitched laugh. Dasūqī seizes Musaylihi's arm and stops him, and then he himself advances in utter calm toward Sutūhī, who awaits him, planted on top of the bench. Meanwhile, the Group follows him silently with their eyes. Suddenly, Hājj Dasūqī raises his cane to bring it down on Sutūhī. Sutūhī, however, jumps to the ground from the bench before the cane can strike him.)

Sutūhī: I won't be beaten by canes. Either the carbine or nothing. If you're a man, get your carbine and come on.

Dasūqī: (As he gnashes his teeth) I wouldn't dirty my carbine on a dog like you. A bullet would be wasted on you. [s.129]

Sutūhī: That's what people say when they're afraid. (To the Group) Do you men see? He's going back on his word.

The Group: Be sensible, Sutūhī.

Sutūhī: (To Hājj Dasūqī) Brave men speak a word and follow through. You spill out a lot of words and come back to lick them up.

Dasūqī: (As if he is about to explode) Me, you imbecile?

Sutūhī: Well, who else is there other than you? But I won't leave you alone. On my honor, I'm not going to leave you alone. Wherever you go, you'll find me leaping out in front of you, saying: Here I am.

Musaylihi: Let me get a hold of him and I'll strangle him.

Dasūqī: No. Leave him alone. Leave him, Musaylihi. Let him hasten his own fate. (Sutūhī guffaws.)

The Group: (Shouting vehemently) Be sensible, Sutūhī.

Sutūhī: I won't be eaten like a piece of meat and thrown away with the bones. I won't be beaten while I'm sleeping. No one spits on me. Nobody calls me a dog. I am through asking our Lord's guidance. I plan to put an end to this man. (Pointing at Hājj Dasūqī)

Dasūqī: Are you the one who's going to put an end to me, Sutūhī?

Sutūhī: Yes, me. Is there anybody else?

Bura'ī: (Smiling at Sutūhī's boldness) Well, God damn, Sutūhī.

Dasūqī: (Turning to Bura'ī) Are you laughing, Bura'ī?

Bura'ī: Yes. Why shouldn't I laugh? Don't I know how to laugh? Do you think because I'm sick, I don't know how to laugh? [s.130]

Sutūhī: (Scoffingly) He said they took Suez and Ismā'nīya. Don't think nobody cares what really happened. Or does he think there aren't any men in the village? (To the Group) Why do you keep silent? Like you're afraid. You only know how to say: Be sensible, Sutūhī, be sensible, Sutūhī. All this 'be sensible, Sutūhī' is going to send you straight to hell. By God, he'll think you're afraid.

The Group: (Scolding) What's going to scare us?

'Ayisha: That's enough talk, Sutūhī. What do you mean by all this? Do you intend to set the whole village on fire? If you weren't crying for yourself, you'd cry for these people. These people want to

live their lives in peace without getting caught up in other people's troubles. They have their own problems, Sutūhī.

Sutūhī: That's just common women's talk, 'Ayisha. Abū 'Ārif's daughter should know better.

Dasūqī: By God, you know how to talk, Sutūhī the Dog.

Hāmid: (Shouting at Sutūhī) Stop all this talk, Sutūhī, and get a hold of your tongue a little. We've got enough to worry about without all this talk.

Dasūqī: (To Hāmid with a grave calm) Are you the one who unleashed him on me, Hāmid?

Hāmid: (Defiantly) I'm not unleashing anybody on anyone else. When I want something done, I do it myself.

Sutūhī: Nobody's got a leash on me anyway. (Pointing to his head) Is this thing on top of me a brain or isn't it? (But Dasūqī doesn't turn to him) Do you think I'm a fool? You've got a stone in your head instead of a brain.

Dasūqī: (To Hāmid, ignoring Sutūhī.) It doesn't show very good upbringing, Hāmid, to sit still while a boy like this wags his tongue at your uncle.

Hāmid: Would my uncle make people's lives bitter and expect me to hold back from him? If my uncle walked on the path of truth, I'd put my neck in his power.

Dasūqī: Then you agree with what's happening?

Hāmid: What business is it of mine? Everyone is free to do as he pleases.

Musaylihi: It isn't right to talk that way, Hāmid. This is your uncle, and his kindness toward you shouldn't be treated ungraciously.

Dasūqī: You're right. Everyone is free, indeed, to behave as he pleases. (Pause) And I, too, am going to do as I please.

Sutūhī: So what are you going to do? I suppose you'll bring the carbine for me. Well, I hope you do it.

Dasūqī: (Ignoring Sutūhī) Tell me, Hāmid. Why hasn't Fikrī come home?

Hāmid: Do you want him to leave the war and come running to you?

Dasūqī: But the war is over.

The Group: It isn't over.

Sutūhī: (To Dasūqī in an attempt to get him to turn his glance at him) You want the war to finish like that because you are a defeatist. You haven't got any character.

Musaylihi: (Bursting with agitation) Let me at him, Hājj.

The Group: (Shouting at Musaylihi) What's wrong with you, brother? (A silent moment passes.)

Dasūqī: (To Hāmid) When does Fikrī intend to come, Ibn Ragīya?

Hāmid: I am Ibn Ismā'īn Abū Tālib. [s.132]

Dasūqī: When does he intend to come?

Hāmid: Go ask him.

The Group: When the war is over.

Dasūqī: Since that's how it is, Ibn Ismā'īn, I won't wait anymore. The contractor wants to go to work. Tomorrow I'll let him lay the foundation stones on my land.

Hāmid: (Rebelliously) What land?

Dasūqī: On my feddan by the canal.

Bura'ī: The land is cultivated, Hājj.

Dasuqī: I am free on my land. And I'll do with it as I please.

The Group: (Muttering) What kind of talk is this?

Hāmid: That land isn't yours, Hājj Dasūqī.

Dasūqī: It's my land. And I'm going to take possession of it tonight myself. (To Musaylihi) And with me will be all my men and their boys, Musaylihi. In the morning it must be ready for the contractor.

Hāmid: (To the Group) Do you people hear? And you hold me back and tell me to be sensible.

'Ayisha: (Whispering) May our Lord take your soul away from you before you reach the land.

Bura'ī: But it's a lie, Hājj.

Dasūqī: You be quiet, dead man.

Bura'ī: (Rising in agitation) I'm not dead. I'm wide-awake and I'm here to speak. And I tell you at the top of my voice that it's a lie, Hājj. [s.133]

Dasūqī: You dare to speak out against me, too, Bura'ī?

Bura'ī: Why shouldn't I speak out. I'll tell my side of the story, and what can you do to keep me quiet? Is it because I'm in debt to you? All right, whatever is in your hand, do it.

Hāmid: Let it be known, Hājj. If you come onto our land, you'll find me waiting for you.

Dasūqī: (After a pause) Come on, Musaylihi. Hājj Dasūqī and Musaylihi turn to go, and looks of sheer hatred follow them. (Silence reigns.)

Sutūhī: (As Hājj Dasūqī disappears, he makes another farting noise at him. And silence reigns once again.)

'Ayisha: Are you happy with what you've done, Sutūhī? What have we gained from your long tongue besides trouble?

Hāmid: I'm going to go up to the house and get my pick-axe. I'll go wait for him on the land.

Sutūhī: I'll go wait for him with you, Hāmid. Stop by my house on your way. (The Group gathers around Hāmid to try to calm him.)

The Second Peasant: Where are you going, Hāmid? Sit down, man. He's only threatening you. By God, he won't do anything.

Hāmid: This time he really means it. He won't be satisfied until he does it.

'Ayisha: But wait till my father comes.

Hāmid: I won't wait.

'Ayisha: It was my father who reached an understanding with him before and got a promise from him. So my father's the only one who can talk to him. [s.134]

Hāmid: Talking won't change his mind at this point.

The Group: Be patient, brother.

Hāmid: Be patient 'til when? Until our land is lost? Is that what you want? Get out of my way.

(He breaks free from the Group and turns toward the village. The Group follows him.)

The Group: Wait, Hāmid.

The First Peasant: (Leaping to his feet, shouting) He's here, children.

(Hāmid and the Group stop moving. They all prick up their ears to listen. The sound of the Omnibus is heard approaching. The Group rushes toward the field. Everyone goes out to meet the bus, and no one is left onstage except Sutūhī, Bura'ī, Hāmid and 'Ayisha.)

'Ayisha: (Intensely to Hāmid) Meet my father first, so you can take the good news to your mother and your sister. Tell him what happened. See what he says. Come on, Hāmid.

(Hāmid is unable to resist his desire to meet Abū 'Ārif. He goes with 'Ayisha on the heels of the Group. Bura'ī goes a few steps and returns to sit down in exhaustion. Sutūhī approaches the field and stops where the First Peasant was observing what happened in the distance. The bus comes to a halt.

The Group raises a clamor to welcome Abū 'Ārif with the normal words of greeting.)

Bura'ī: Has he come, Sutuhi?

Sutūhī: He's here, Uncle Bura'ī.

Bura'ī: Thank God he's come.

(The sound of the bus moves away and the commotion of the Group approaches. Bura'ī gets to his feet with great difficulty. Abū 'Ārif appears in his complete attire. From his arm dangles his empty basket, and in his hand is his newspaper. The Group is gathering behind him and around him in friendly welcome, but he, however, appears weighed down by a problem with which he doesn't know how to face the village.)

The First Peasant: Did God bring you success in your mission, Abū 'Ārif? [s.135]

The Second Peasant: How is Ustāz al-Sādiq? Is he married yet?

A Peasant in the Rear: Is there war or isn't there?

Mahrūs: I suppose the streets of Cairo are exciting, aren't they, Uncle Ahmad.

A Peasant in the Rear: I hope you found out about everything, Abū 'Ārif.

Abū 'Ārif: Be patient, my brothers. Take it easy. One at a time.

The Third Peasant: Who's he going to answer? Who? Leave him alone a little to rest. (Silence)

Sutūhī: Thank God you're safe, Uncle Ahmad.

Abū 'Ārif: God bless you, Sutūhī. What's the news?

Sutūhī: Your bench is just like you left it. Go ahead and take over.

Abū 'Ārif: (To 'Ayisha) How are the children, 'Ayisha?

'Ayisha: They kiss your hand, Father.

Abū 'Ārif: And your mother. How is she?

'Ayisha: She misses you.

Abū 'Ārif: I suppose she's sitting at home worrying. (He laughs a short laugh. Then to Hāmid) And what have you been doing, Hāmid?

Sutūhī: Hājj Dasūqī swore to take his land today.

Abū 'Ārif: What is this talk?

Hāmid: What is Fikrī doing, Uncle Ahmad?

The Third Peasant: Everybody let him rest a while. Go ahead and rest, Abū 'Ārif. You must be exhausted. [s.137]

(Abū 'Ārif sits on his bench and puts the empty basket beside him. The Group sprawls on the ground around him in silence. 'Ayisha sits down next to the bench. She is extremely anxious, and she stares at her father's face, awaiting news of Fikrī.)

Bura'ī: (Lowering his face to Abū 'Ārif's basket) This basket is empty. You didn't bring any medicine, Abū 'Ārif.

Abū 'Ārif: No, by God, Bura'ī. I didn't have enough money. And because you didn't tell me the name of the medicine.

Bura'ī: If you'd've told them what's wrong, they'd've known what medicine to use.

The First Peasant: Brother, he told you he didn't have enough money.

The Second Peasant: Traveling to Cairo is very expensive.

Mahrūs: And the batteries for the radio. Did you bring them, Uncle Ahmad?

Abū 'Ārif: No batteries either, Mahrūs.

Sutūhī: Well, what did you bring?

The First Peasant: He told you he didn't have enough money. Don't you understand?

The Third Peasant: Anyway, did he go just to bring batteries?

A Peasant in the Rear: (Shouting) Calm down a little. Let the man catch his breath.

(Complete silence. Abū 'Ārif gets ready to let loose his big surprise in an attempt to evade the real problem.)

Abū 'Ārif: (With feigned pride) Guess what, children?

The Group: (Excitedly) Good news?

Abū 'Ārif: I'm in the newspaper. (And he brandishes the newspaper.)

'Ayisha: This paper, Father? [s.137]

Abū 'Ārif: Yes, 'Ayisha. (He unfolds the paper.)

The Group: (With astonishment and admiration) Impossible.

The First Peasant: You yourself.

Mahrūs: Just like the peasants the newspaper writers go out and find.

Abū 'Ārif: And they took my picture, too.

Voices: You don't say? How sweet and lucky. Show it to us.

Abū 'Ārif: See how big my picture is?

'Ayisha: (She looks carefully at the picture.) It's very pretty, Father.

Mahrūs: Did you go on the radio?

Abū 'Ārif: I talked on the radio, too.

The Group: Impossible. (The newspaper changes hands.)

Sutūhī: Too bad the radio wasn't working. What did you say, Uncle Ahmad?

Abū 'Ārif: I'll tell you. But one thing at a time. Take it easy.

Voices: Show me his picture. Give me the paper, Mitwālli. (The faces take turns staring at the newspaper.)

Hāmid: What's Fikrī doing, Uncle Ahmad?

The First Peasant: (While examining the picture) By God, my father's cloak looks good on you in the picture, Abū 'Ārif. It can almost talk.

Sutūhī: Yes, it almost speaks out and says I'm his father's cloak. (Laughter. The newspaper reaches Bura'ī.)

Bura'ī: See how my aunt's shawl comes out in the picture, children? [s.138]

The Second Peasant: Al-Sādiq wouldn't even've known you when you met him with these clothes on Abū 'Ārif. (The newspaper returns to Abū 'Ārif's hand.)

Abū 'Ārif: Wait until you hear what I said.

The Group: What did you say?

Mahrūs: By God, I hope you stuck Hājj Dasūqī with some words that'll make him sting.

A Peasant in the Rear: You didn't forget the Agricultural Committee, did you? And how the rich people have taken it over?

Abū 'Ārif: (As he folds up the newspaper with extreme care) Do you think everything that can be said can be written in the newspaper? If you talk nonsense, are they going to write it down?

The Group: What, then?

Abū 'Ārif: You people are sound asleep in the honey of dreams. She chooses words and arranges them carefully. And there's nothing wrong with her embellishing my words with a few of her own. That's the way it's done, of course.

The Group: Yes. How do you mean?

Abū 'Ārif: Well, what do you think? You don't think she'd send just any old words to the presses, do you? Any sort of nonsense and gibberish? There's got to be selection and arrangement. And embellishment. That's why she's a journalist.

'Ayisha: Who is, Father?

Abū 'Ārif: Sitt Sāmiya Shākir. If you'd just calm down a little, I'd tell you everything.

The Group: Well, then, tell us. (A brief moment of silence as Abū 'Ārif gets ready to speak.)

Bura'ī: (Interrupting Abu 'Arif) Why don't you read us what you said in the paper, and then tell us your story? [s.139]

The First Peasant: Let him tell his story first, Bura'ī.

Bura'ī: Can't he read first?

The Second Peasant: We have all the time ahead of us we need for reading it. Let him speak.

Hāmid: (Shouting nervously) Don't read anything and don't tell us a story. Tell us what Fikrī is doing and reassure us. My mother is sick at home and wants to be reassured.

'Ayisha: Because Ibrāhīm Abū Sharaf sent a letter, Father.

Abū 'Ārif: When did he send it?

'Ayisha: Yesterday.

Mahrūs: And he says he was wounded, but he got better and went back to the front lines.

Hāmid: And there hasn't been any news yet about Fikrī. We've been waiting for you to come reassure us. Our patience is all worn out.

'Ayisha: By the Prophet, tell us, Father.

(Silence. Abū 'Ārif bows his head for a moment to think of an answer. Everyone waits in silent anticipation.)

Abū 'Ārif: So much for reading the newspaper. I'll tell you.

The Group: Tell us. (Hāmid sits down grudgingly and everyone listens.)

Abū 'Ārif: I arrived in town at the station.

The Group: Yes.

Abū 'Ārif: I got a ticket for the train to Cairo.

The First Peasant: Fine. What happened next? [s.140]

Abū 'Ārif: By eight o'clock, I was already crammed with my basket in the middle of the passengers. So many passengers that I didn't even know where they were going.

The Second Peasant: Because the population has gotten so big. Yes. And then?

Abū 'Ārif: By ten o'clock I was in Cairo at the Iron Gate Railroad Station.

Mahrūs: Is it really made out of iron?

The Group: (To Mahrūs) Brother, be quiet.

Abū 'Ārif: I struck out at random, going from one place to another. I lost, say, an hour, walking and asking the way.

'Ayisha: Because Cairo is very big, like we've heard. And then, Father?

Abū 'Ārif: To make the story short I arrived at the newspaper building.

The Group: Very nice.

Abū 'Ārif: I found a snoopy clerk there, and he called out to me. I went over to him and asked him about al-Sādiq Abū 'Umar.

The Group: What did he tell you?

Abū 'Ārif: He told me that he was traveling in Europe. That means France and countries like that.

Bura'ī: Oh, what a black day! What did you do?

Abū 'Ārif: I'm only telling you so you'll appreciate my situation and see what happened to me. You can judge for yourselves.

'Ayisha: Didn't you find out the way to headquarters, Father?

The First Peasant: Be quiet, 'Ayisha. What happened, Abū 'Ārif? He told you he was traveling. To these countries. [s.141]

Abū 'Ārif: It was a little before noon. Our Lord sent a newspaper woman to see me. One I also know very well. Her name is Sāmiya Shākir. (Proceeding) I knew her from the paper, of course. She got a hold of me. And she swore by her father's head to do a newspaper article with me called -- (He opens the newspaper and reads the title) "Messenger from Tumayra Village: Inquiries about the Problems of War and Peace."

Mahrūs: Did you make inquiries, Uncle Ahmad?

Abū 'Ārif: I'm coming to that. Questions and answers. They took my picture. I went up to her office and we sat down and we started talking. Questions and answers. And of course she was asking the questions.

The Second Peasant: And of course you were the one answering?

Abū 'Ārif: I was the one answering. Isn't that nice?

Hāmid: (Anxiously) Did you go to headquarters, Uncle Ahmad?

Abū 'Ārif: I'm coming to that.

'Ayisha: (In fear) I'm afraid that you didn't ask about Fikri, Father.

Abū 'Ārif: (Nervously) Can't you be patient, 'Ayisha? Why do you keep interrupting me?

'Ayisha: I'm at fault, Father. Go ahead and finish.

Abū 'Ārif: And so we spent a lot of time talking, she and I. And I asked her what time it was.

The Group: What time was it?

Abū 'Ārif: It was two o'clock, the hottest time of the day when everything is closed.

The Group: Aah.

Abū 'Ārif: But tell me honestly. When could I have gone to headquarters? [s.142]

[Name Omitted -- Hāmid?]: You had the whole day in front of you.

Abū 'Ārif: Are there any offices open after two o'clock? They all close down after the sun gets hot -- that's why they all open so early in the morning.

Hāmid: You still had all day today.

Abū 'Ārif: (Upset) Not one of you has asked me how I found a place to stay. Or how I managed to eat.

The Group: How?

Abū 'Ārif: I had to stay at a hotel, of course. And I had to pay ten riyāls for the night.

'Ayisha: What did you eat, Father?

Abū 'Ārif: I ate the food I took with me as a gift. What else could I do?

Sutūhī: Did you ask about politics or didn't you, Uncle Ahmad?

Abū 'Ārif: After I finished the interview with Sitt Sāmiya Shākir, we went looking for the political editor. But he'd gone and disappeared completely. They said he went home. So what could I do? I wandered through the streets like a vagrant. Totally lost. And I was all set to ask anybody I could find.

Bura'ī: And you didn't ask?

Abū 'Ārif: Who would you ask, Father? The people were all running. But I asked anyway. I came across a traffic policeman by chance. I found him standing, and I barely asked him a question and an accident almost happened. He told me, Uncle, leave me alone so I can see my work. But be honest. What should I have done? I'll be content with what you say.

Hāmid: And today at five o'clock in the morning. You didn't ask? And you didn't go to headquarters? [s.143]

Abū 'Ārif: (Nervously) When would I do all that? Since in the morning I was sitting at the radio station and the door was closed? What was in my hands to do? (In a desperate defense) I want you to put yourselves in my place and tell me what I could have done.

(A gloomy silence reigns over everyone.)

The Group: (Suddenly) So you didn't ask?

Abū 'Ārif: (With feelings of guilt) I didn't ask.

The Group: And you didn't go to headquarters?

Abū 'Ārif: I wasn't in a position to go.

A Peasant in the Rear: And you didn't find out why America is coming down on us? (Abū 'Ārif doesn't answer.)

The Group: (Indignantly) They why did you make the trip?

(Silence. Hāmid throws himself on the ground and bows his head. 'Ayisha no longer conceals her misery. Abū 'Ārif casts a despondant glance at the Group. With feelings of guilt he reaches his hand to the turban and unwraps the shawl from his skullcap and quietly hands it to Bura'ī.)

Bura'ī: Give it here, Abū 'Ārif. (He takes the shawl.)

Abū 'Ārif: (As he takes off the cloak) By God, if the red jinni -- the most powerful jinni of them all -- had gone, he couldn't have done more than I did. Where would he have gone? It's enough that I brought prestige to the village and got its name published in the newspaper. (He hands the cloak to the First Peasant.)

The Second Peasant: And Fikrī's robe and his slippers. (Abū 'Ārif takes a reproving look at him, but rather feebly.)

Abū 'Ārif: (To Hāmid) I owe your mother a riyāl, Hāmid.

The Group: And our money. (Silence) [s.144]

'Ayisha: (In anguish) Why didn't you ask about Fikrī, Father? Why didn't you think about the people who worry about him? You didn't think about his mother, his sister and brother. Not about anyone at all. You didn't have to have your picture taken. And you could've cut short talking to go and ask.

Abū 'Ārif: (Contritely) It wasn't possible, 'Ayisha. I was in no position. From the time I set foot in Cairo I was overwhelmed. All of a sudden I found myself riding on the bus on my way home. (A pause. Then in pain) I used to think I knew what was going on. But I've been robbed, 'Ayisha. I've been robbed.

The Third Peasant: (In objection) Didn't we say he'll come back understanding everything and he'll explain it all to us.

Sutūhī: We said he'll bring back words with him that'll put an end to Hājj Dasūqī for once and for all.

(The sound of a car is heard approaching from afar.)

Mahrūs: And here I didn't want to hit the radio. I kept saying 'technology'. But by God, I'll hit it now. (The sound of the car grows near and stops.)

Hāmid: (Standing up in sadness) I'll go to my mother and lie to her, Uncle Ahmad. I'll reassure her and tell her you asked about Fikrī and that he's in good health. If she asks you, tell her that you asked about him and he's in good health.

Sutūhī: Don't forget, Hāmid. If you're going to the field to wait for your uncle, stop by on your way so I can come with you.

The Group: Let him alone, Sutūhī.

The Second Peasant: Didn't we say to forget about it?

Hāmid: I haven't forgotten anything. I'm going to comfort my mother and go up to the field with my pick-axe.

The First Peasant: (He has fixed his gaze on someone coming from the background.) Who is that?

(All eyes turn to where the First Peasant is looking. A young officer [s.145] approaches with calm, steady steps. The Group stands up in curiosity, and Hāmid comes to a halt.)

The Group: (Whispering) It's an officer.

'Ayisha: Go to him, Father. (Abū 'Ārif hesitates.)

The Group: (Muttering) Go ahead and go to him. (Abū 'Ārif turns toward the Officer, and he meets with him apart from the Group. A brief, inaudible dialogue takes place between them.)

Abū 'Ārif: (He turns toward the Group and calls out.) Hāmid Abū Ismā'īn.

Hāmid: Yes? Is something wrong?

Abū 'Ārif: Come here. (Hāmid hesitates.)

The Group: (Encouraging him) Go ahead, Hāmid.

(Hāmid approaches the Officer and Abū 'Ārif. There is complete silence onstage as the Officer takes off his cap and puts it under his arm. His eyes are fixed upon Hāmid. Hāmid stands quietly. The Officer reaches out his hand to Hāmid to shake hands. Hāmid hesitates. He gives his hand to the Officer. The Officer puts his arm around Hāmid's shoulder sympathetically and turns with him toward the car. Abū 'Ārif stays in his place, appalled. The Group exchanges inquiring and perplexed glances. The Officer and Hāmid disappear from sight. The car starts running. The First Peasant breaks away to watch the car as it moves away. The whole Group runs behind him.)

'Ayisha: (She rushes to her Father.) What is it, Father?

Abū 'Ārif: I don't know. (The Group follows the movement of the car with their eyes.)

Bura'ī: What did he tell you, Ahmad?

The First Peasant: The car's going around that way toward the village. (Silence. The Group returns to Abū 'Ārif in confusion.)

Bura'ī: What did he say to you, Ahmad? What did the Officer tell you? [s.146]

Abū 'Ārif: He didn't say anything. He asked for someone related to Fikrī Abū Ismā'īn. I told him Hāmid is his brother.

(Silence. The Group hangs their heads in thought. A silent moment passes, and then, as if everyone realizes the truth at the same moment, their faces meet each other with frightened looks.)

Bura'ī: (In anguish) Children. This has happened in our village before. A number of years ago.

'Ayisha: (In dismay) Yes. Yes, it happened before. I was little. But I knew what was happening. (Crying out) Father.

(Silence reigns once again. 'Ayisha collapses on the ground crying. Abū 'Ārif touches Fikrī's robe in confusion and turns toward his bench, exhausted. The whole Group falls to the ground, one after another, and the stage grows dark. Except for a soft light on the horizon. From the heart of the silence a distant bugler is heard.

'Ayisha takes down the scarf from her hair in a distracted movement. She holds back from weeping as she unfastens the headscarf on her hair and throws it on the ground.

She withdraws the scarf which Fikrī gave her from her bosom and she stands up. She passes with it in front of the eyes of the Group to display it.)

'Ayisha: Do you see this? This scarf was a present from Fikrī Abū Ismā'īn. He gave it to me as a gift, and he told me it was to remind me that we were engaged to be married when he returned. I vowed not to wear it until we were married. But I'll wear it today. (Turning to her father) I'll wear Fikrī's scarf today, Father.

(She wraps her head with the scarf. Abū 'Ārif is completely bewildered. He tears his picture from the newspaper into pieces.)

Sutūhī: If he had come home, he would have stood up to Hājj Dasūqī. And he would have witnessed against him if he killed me. [s.147]

The First Peasant: Hāmid is busy with the Officer.

The Second Peasant: The fear now is that Hājj Dasūqī will take his land.

Bura'ī: It's a lie. How can he take it? It isn't his land. It's the children's land. He took my signature ring from me by force, and he used it on the paper.

'Ayisha: Why are we sitting here? What are we waiting for, people of Tumayra? Are we afraid? Fikrī wasn't afraid of anything when

he went to war. He went with a smile on his face.

Sutūhī: Fikrī was brave and strong.

'Ayisha: Are all the brave and strong gone from the village? Are they gone, Mahrūs? Are they, Mitawalli? Tumayra is full of men. Fikrī was always saying: Tumayra is full of brave men. Strong men.

Sutūhī: Why are we still sitting here? Let's go. (The Group rises in agitation and anger.)

Sutūhī: I'll go there ahead of you. And the first bullet from his carbine will be mine. Don't any of you take it before me. By the time he can reload the carbine for the second shot, you'll have a hold of him. With your hands on his throat.

The First Peasant: Everyone get his pick-axe and come on, boys.

(The Group turns toward the village in a rage, and Bura'ī is behind them. No one is left onstage but Sutūhī and Abū 'Ārif -- who is still tearing his picture into pieces -- and 'Ayisha -- who has withdrawn into herself and become completely silent. Sutūhī goes in through the orchard gate as the voice of Gābir is heard repeating the words on his letter.)

Gābir's Voice: The boys who are with me send their greetings to you. They have made two vows. On victory day, when we go home, they will visit Tumayra, and they will stay a day with us and eat in our house. So make things ready right away. [s.148]

(During this segment Sutūhī returns, carrying a small bundle of his clothing on his back. He steps away. 'Ayisha turns to Sutūhī.)

'Ayisha: Are you going by yourself, Sutūhī? Aren't you waiting for them?

Sutūhī: I'll lead them there. Don't be afraid about it. I know my way well.

(Sutūhī moves away calmly. 'Ayisha follows him with her glance until he disappears. Then the voice of Gābir is heard once again, and during this segment of the letter,

the Group comes back into view. Every individual of them is carrying his pick-axe. The Group passes on foot toward their goal, and Bura'ī appears after them, also carrying his pick-axe. Before the end of the segment Abū 'Ārif stands up, puts his hand behind the orchard gate, and takes out his rugged staff and follows on the heels of the Group. No one is left onstage but 'Ayisha.)

Gābir's Voice: And don't any of you think the war is over. It isn't over, Father. It's only on vacation is what young Hasan says who is here with me. All the boys here say we will fight again. I hope so, Father. I hope so, Father. I hope so, Father.

(Final Curtain)

[s.149]

General Summary

Cairo is the hub of a social order which, over the centuries, has been traditionally bureaucratic. Over-population has led, in recent decades, to the creation of many extraneous jobs which have been provided for the sake of people who would otherwise have no means of earning a living. Extensive hierarchies require complex procedures. To skip a rung in the bureaucratic ladder would deprive someone of livelihood. Consequently, getting a task done means many complications along the way.

Westerners have a name for the complex procedure of accomplishing research or business in the Egyptian capital. 'The Cairo Shuffle' means dialing a telephone number dozens of times before the overloaded system finally makes the proper connection. It means making an appointment which may or may not be kept and more than likely won't occur at the pre-arranged time.

'The Cairo Shuffle' usually entails going somewhere in person instead of relying on telephones. Taxis are a common means of negotiating traffic. The streets are alternatingly jammed or swarming, but constantly resounding with the blare of horns and the hum of motors. The atmosphere is saturated with noxious exhaust fumes which blend with the toxic vapours of openly sprayed insecticides to mask even the heavy aromas of open-air food markets. The sidewalks are frequently obstructed by parked cars, heaps of rubbish, piles of building materials, or crowds of pedestrians.

Making contact without a telephone appointment usually entails an initial trip to locate the desired establishment. Holidays and split-shift work schedules sometimes delay initial contact, and subsequent journeys may be necessary before the identities and schedules of personnel can be determined and appointments arranged. Often, however, permission by another office or official must be granted before the source which has finally been located can be authorized to provide any information. In these cases, the whole process must be repeated.

Egyptians are as subject to 'The Cairo Shuffle' as foreigners, but those who deal with it on a daily basis develop procedural short-cuts to by-pass obstacles and patient resignation to cope with frustrations. Rural Egyptians, however, are easily intimidated by the hustle and bustle of the city. They must rely on the guidance of city-wise friends or relatives.

So the idea of Abū 'Ārif accomplishing his mission alone in a single day is obviously absurd. Without sufficient money to pay even the price of a ticket on an overcrowded city bus, the old man is forced to wander the streets, asking his way as he goes. When he finally reaches the newspaper office and learns that his hoped-for guide is travelling in Europe, Abū 'Ārif becomes an easy prey for a journalist concerned only with the advancement of her own career.

Sāmiya Shākir in Diab's play is more realistically drawn than Ali Salem's Hor Muheb, but selfish motives govern the behavior of the scribes in both plays. Shākir solicits a story to further her career, and Hor Muheb writes the official account of the reappearance of the Beast.

Shākir and Hor Muheb are also propagandists. The former uses her interview with Tumayra's messenger to paint an idealized portrait of an Egyptian peasant; the latter teaches Theban youth to believe that the government is divinely guided.

Both characters are subject to their societies' respective hierarchies. Sāmiya Shākir follows orders from her editor and coordinates operations with newspaper, radio, and television staff. Hor Muheb is obligated to bow to King Oedipus Rā', but, as Director of the University of Thebes and Chief Priest of Amun, he participates in determining the quantity and quality of public information. Neither Hor Muheb nor Sāmiya Shākir endeavors to help people learn the truth.

The strong arm of the Theban bureaucracy is Awālih, the Chief of Police. Messenger from Tumayra Village has no such blatant personification of censorship, but Diab does question the accuracy and depth of the information available to his characters. Both playwrights challenge

their audiences to act, and act together, to solve their problems. The initial production of Salem's play provided an outlet for public emotion without posing the danger of insurrection. Perhaps Diab's play has thus far been produced only by amateurs and only for limited audiences because Diab moves beyond symbolic criticism of the regime and calls for peasants to arm themselves and rebel against the oppressors.

What are the official organizations and bureaucratic hierarchies which regulate theatre activity in Egypt? How do such institutions govern the composition, publication, and production of plays like The Oedipus Comedy or You Who Killed the Beast and Messenger from Tumayra Village? How has the bureaucracy changed during the Nasser, Sadat, and Mubarak eras? What are the required procedures for gaining the consent of censors? What kind of performance environments are available in Egypt? What institutions train professional and amateur theatre personnel? These are the questions to which are addressed the remaining pages of this general summary.

Theatre Institutions and Hierarchies

The Egyptian government subsidizes and administers a complex hierarchy of theatre operation. The Organization of Theatre, Music, and Folk Arts, as its title implies, operates in the three sectors outlined in Table Four. According to Yūsuf Shawqī, First Undersecretary of Culture, the organization "used to be headed by an undersecretary of state. . . ." [1] Now, however, the three sectors are headed independently, and each maintains autonomy from the others.

Another institution, as indicated in Table Four, operates as a separate and independent structure, parallel to the Organization of Theatre, Music, and Folk Arts. The Mass Culture Department's principal theatre program is called the Samir Theatre, a program named for the traditional Egyptian theatre-in-the-round.

Table Four - Principal Hierarchies

Ministry of Culture

(Wizārat al-Thaqāfah)

Organization of Theatre, Music, and Folk Arts

(Hay'at al-Masrah wa al-Mūsīqā wa al-Funūn al-Sha'bīyah)

Drama Sector
(Qitā' al-Drāmī)

Music Sector
(Qitā' al-Mūsīqī)

Folk Arts Sector
(Qitā' al-Funūn al-Sha'bīyah)

Mass Culture Department

(Idārat al-Thaqāfah al-Jumhūrīyah)

Sāmir Theatre
(Masrah al-Sāmir)

The Sāmir Theatre specializes in adapting popular legends and folk tales; it also provides a forum for beginning professionals to present revivals of already proven Egyptian plays. The Sāmir aims at low-income audiences which lack extensive theatre experience. The Theatre Organization, however, aims at established audiences and oversees a variety of performance companies, each of which specializes in a particular type of dramatic material. These specialties are indicated by the names of the troupes as outlined in Table Five.

In addition to the names of production companies, Table Five lists the Drama Sector's supporting departments. The Theatre Archives is an informal designation for the museum, the document files, and the Theatre Organization's research and record branches. Most of these are housed in a cramped office on an upper floor of the Cairo Puppet Theatre building, but some reorganization and expansion may take place after the renovation of the nearby National Theatre building. This project is scheduled for completion in 1984-85.

The National Theatre, the Cairo Puppet Theatre, and the Avant-Guarde Theatre, are housed in separate buildings in the downtown Cairo vicinity of Opera Square, Azbakiya Gardens, and 'Ataba Square. The Cairo Opera House, whose 1869 gala debut coincided with the opening of the Suez Canal, burned beyond repair in 1971. A parking lot now covers the city block upon which the reknowned theatre once stood. Azbakiya Gardens, once painstakingly tended but now neglected, are still bordered by Opera Square on one side and the Cairo Puppet Theatre and National Theatre on another.

The National's facility, facing Midān al-'Ataba, or 'Ataba Square, includes an elaborate nineteenth-century stage, named for Azbakiya Gardens. Behind the National stands the Cairo Puppet Theatre, topped by a half dozen or more floors of administrative offices. Adjacent to the National and the Cairo Puppet Theatres, but further from Azbakiya Gardens, the Avant-Guarde's building houses two performance spaces. The Zākī Tulaymāt Theater, named for a highly acclaimed Egyptian director of the mid-twentieth century, is the principal stage of the Avant-Guarde

Table Five --
The Theatre Organization
(Hay'at al-Masrah)

1. Central Office of the National Theatre
   (al-Markaz al-Qawmī lil-Masrah)

2. National Theatre Museum
   (al-Mathaf al-Qawmī lil-Masrah)

3. Department of Theatre Documents
   (Idārat al-Tawthīq al-Masrahī)

4. Department of Theatre Legacy Research
   (Idārat Buhūth al-Turāth al-Masrahī)

5. Department of Music Legacy Research
   (Idārat Buhūth al-Turāth al-Mūsīqī)

6. Department of Audio-Visual Recording
   (Idārat al-Tashjīlāt -- Sawt wa Ḍaw')

7. Administrative Offices
   (Mukātib Idārīyah)

National Theatre Troupe
(Firqat al-Masrah al-Qawmī)

Modern Theatre Troupe
(Firqat al-Masrah al-Hadīth)

Comedy Theatre Troupe
(Firqat al-Masrah al-Kūmīdī)

Avant-Guarde Theatre Troupe
(Firqat al-Masrah al-Talī'ah)

Roving Theatre Troupe
(Firqat al-Masrah al-Mutajawwal)

Youth Theatre Troupe
(Firqat al-Masrah al-Shabāb)

The Cairo Puppet Theatre Troupe
(Firqat Masrah al-Qāhirah lil-'Arā'is)

Children's Theatre Troupe
(Firqat al-Masrah lil-Atfāl)

Company. A smaller hall, named after the famous Egyptian poet, Salāh 'Abd al-Sabūr, produces experimental works which often carry strong political overtones. Outside the Avant-Guarde grounds is located one of the inner-city's crowded bus terminals. The entire area is constantly flowing with pedestrians and motorized traffic, and the air is laden with exhaust fumes. The din of voices, horns, and motors, reaches everywhere, like the sandy Saharan dust.

Cairo Theatre Troupes and Theater Buildings

The Cairo theatre community includes a variety of performance companies housed in some twenty theater facilities. The multiplicity of names for theaters and troupes can create confusion, so Tables Six through Twelve list these names and other pertinent data, such as season, repertoire and administrative authority. General locations are also described, and the Tables are organized by geographical district.

The observation deck of the Cairo Tower, a conspicuous city landmark, provides a useful vantage point for locating the vicinities in which the city's principal theatres are clustered. The tower is on the south-central area of el Gazira, an island in the Nile in the midst of metropolitan Cairo. The river flows south to north, providing a rough compass bearing. Most of Cairo's theaters are nestled into the modern, downtown districts near 'Ataba Square, Ramses Station, and Tahrīr Square. From the Cairo tower these districts appear to the east and northeast. To the west-northwest are several west-bank theaters. Far to the south-southwest, the tips of the pyramids are sometimes visible on the horizon through the heat haze. Another cluster of theatres is located in that direction in the vicinity of Giza.

Most Cairo theaters have proscenium stages and house 800 to 1600 people. Poor acoustics require amplification systems in the majority of these facilities. Many, such as the National, the Republic, and the Peace Theatres, are modelled after nineteenth-century European theaters. Others, such as the Sāmir, the Balloon, and the Farīd al-'Atrash

Table Six - Theaters Near 'Ataba Square

Theatre Company/Theater Building Location/(Arabic Name)	Admin. Auth.	Season	Repertoire
The National Theatre Troupe/Azbakiya Gardens Theater. Downtown Cairo Between Opera and 'Ataba Squares (Masrah al-Qawmī fi al-Azbākīya)	Government Organization --Theatre (al-Hay'a)	Fall, Winter, Spring	Classic and established Writers -- Arab and Western. Professional
The Cairo Puppet Theatre/Theater. Downtown Cairo between the National Theatre and Opera Square (Masrah al-Qāhira lil-'Arā'is)	Government Organization -- Theatre (al-Hay'a)	All year	Puppet Shows. Children's Theatre. Professional
The Avant-Guarde Theatre Troupe One: The Zākī Tulaymāt Theater Two: The Salāh 'Abd al-Sabūr Theater. Located beside the Cairo Puppet Theater and behind the National (Masrah al-Talī'a)	Government Organization -- Theatre (al-Hay'a)	All year	European, Egyptian, and World Drama. Generally political in content and experimental in form. Professional

Table Seven -- Theaters Near Rameses Station

Theatre Company/Theater Building Location/(Arabic Name)	Admin. Auth.	Season	Repertoire
The Egyptian Artists (al-Funūn al-Masrīyīn)/Theater: The Stage and Elaborately Decorated Auditorium of the Former Institute of Arab Music (Ma'had al-Mūsīqā al-'Arabi)	Private, Commercial (1983 -- Ali Salem)	Fall, Winter, Spring	Egyptian/Arab Contemporary Drama and Comedy. Professional
Formerly the 26 July Theater, now named after musician Farīd al'Atrash. Located behind the old Institute of Arab Music, just off Rameses Street. (Masrah Farīd al-'Atrash)	Private, Commercial	Fall, Winter, Spring	Egyptian/Arab Contemporary Drama and Comedy. Professional

Table Eight -- Theaters Near Tahrīr Square

Theatre Company/Theater Building Location/(Arabic Name)	Admin. Auth.	Season	Repertoire
The Modern Theatre Troupe (Masrah al-Hadīth) in The Peace Theater (Masrah al-Salām). South of Tahrīr and east of Garden City on Kasr al-'Aīnī Street.	Government Organization -- Theatre (al-Hay'a)	Fall, Winter, Spring	Egyptian/Arab Contemporary Drama and Comedy Professional
The United Artists Company (al-Fanānīn al-Mutuhhidīn) in The Freedom Theater (Masrah al-Hurrīya) Near Tahrīr, beside the American University.	Private, Commercial	All year	Contemporary Egyptian Comedy/Melodrama. Home of long-running Rāyā wi-Sikīna Professional
The American University in Cairo (AUC) houses two stages: The Wallace Theater and the Howe Theater. Located on AUC grounds beside Tahrīr Square.	Private, Educational	Fall, Winter, Spring	World Drama and Comedy in Foreign Languages -- e.g. English, French, Greek. Amateur

Table Nine - Cairo Theatres West of the Nile

Theatre Company/Theater Building Location/(Arabic Name)	Admin. Auth.	Season	Repertoire
The Balloon Theatre/Theater (Masrah al-Bālūn) is also called The Umm Kalsoom Theater (Masrah Umm Kalthūm). Located west of Nile Street, close to the river.	Private, Commercial	All Year	Egyptian/Arab Music and Musical Comedy Professional
The Sāmir Theatre/Theater (Masrah al-Sāmir). Located slightly south of the Balloon Theater on Nile Street.	Min. of Culture: Samir Theatre		Egyptian/Arab Rivals and New works based on Folklore and Music Professional and Amateur
The Star Theatre/Theater (Masrah al-Nagmi) located near Dokki Square.	Private, Commercial		Egyptian Popular Comedy and Farce Professional

Table Ten - Giza Theaters: The Pyramid District

Theatre Company/Theater Building Location/(Arabic Name)	Admin. Auth.	Season	Repertoire
The High Institute of Theatre Arts (al-Ma'had al-'Ālī lil-Funūn al-Masrahīya) Near Pyramid Road on the way to Giza Theater: The Institute Stage	Ministry of Culture		Student Renditions of Classic and Established Writers -- Arab and Western Amateur
The High Institute of Music (al-Ma'had al-'Ālī lil-Mūsīqā) and the Egyptian National Orchestra (Firqat al-Mūsīqā al-'Arabi) share the Sayid Darwīsh Theater near The High Institute of Theatre Arts.	Ministry of Culture and Government Organization -- Music (al-Hay'a)		Student Recitals, Amateur. Orchestral Performances, Professional.
The Sound and Light Show (Sawt wa Daw') at the Pyramids	Commercial	All year	Brief broadcasts of recorded history and statistios about ancient Egypt. Professional.

Table Eleven - Other Cairo Theaters I

Theatre Company/Theater Building Location/(Arabic Name)	Admin. Auth.	Season	Repertoire
The Comedy Theatre Troupe (Firqat al-Masrah al-Kūmīdī) at The Muhammad Farīd Theater. Located downtown, between 'Ataba and Ramses, north of Tahrīr. [Formerly, the home of the disbanded al-Hakīm Theatre Troupe]	Government Organization -- Theatre (al-Hay'a)	Closed; Destroyed by Fire in 1982. Renovations in Progress	Professional
The Republic Theatre/Theater (Masrah al-Jumhūrīya). Located downtown, near 'Ataba and Opera Squares.	Government Organization -- Music		Opera and Concert Hall Professional
The Ghouri Caravansarai (Wikālat al-Ghūri), formerly used as a performance space by a company directed by Laila Abou Saif. Located near al-Azhar Mosque.	Government Grants and Private Donations	Closed; Now a Crafts Center	Formerly: Professional and Amateur -- Experimental Drama

Table Twelve - Other Cairo Theaters II

Theatre Company/Theater Building Location/(Arabic Name)	Admin. Auth.	Season	Repertoire
The Fātima Rushdī or Floating Theatre/Theater (al-Masrah al-'Ā'im). On the east bank of the Nile, across the channel from Roda Island.	Private, Commercial	Summers Only	Egyptian/Arab Contemporary Comedy and Drama. Professional
The company which used to work at The Pocket Theater (Masrah al-Jayb) evolved into The Avant-Guarde Theatre Troupe. Located near the Cairo Tower on the west bank of the Nile.	Private, Commercial	Closed; now a film studio.	Formerly, a leading producer of serious Arab and World Drama. Professional
Comedian Fu'ād al-Handas/ The Zamalek Theatre (Masrah al-Zamālik). In the northern district of the island called el Gazira (al-Jazīra).	Private, Commercial		Popular Egyptian Music, Musical Comedy and Farce. Professional

Theatres, are proscenium stages housed under tents or geodesic domes. Some theaters, such as the Pocket Theatre and the Muhammad Farīd Theater, have been temporarily closed. The former has been converted into a film studio, and the latter, once the home of the al-Hakim Theatre Company which produced Ali Salem's You Who Killed the Beast in 1970, burned extensively in 1982. The National Theatre is also undergoing renovation as of 1983-84.

The decorative Islamic courtyard of the Ghouri Caravansarai was used as a performance space for several years, but disagreements among theatre administrators forced Laila Abou-Saif's company to give up the space in 1979. The Caravansarai has since been converted into a Crafts Center, but one would hope that the performance potential of the space will not be forgotten or remain neglected.

Most theatre activity is considered professional, but amateurs and students also have access to theaters. The American University in Cairo operates two theaters which it occasionally rents to western amateurs. The High Institute of Theatre Arts in Giza, a government sponsored and administrated training ground for Egyptian theatre professionals, also houses a proscenium theater which presents student productions.

Censorship

Theatre audiences represent large, potentially dangerous gatherings. Egypt faces such enormous economic problems that the society cannot risk allowing anyone to incite the masses to riot. Therefore, the supervision of political content on the Egyptian stage is much more strict than it is in the theatres of the West.

According to playwright Ali Salem, eight steps must be surmounted before a play can be approved for public performance. [2] Table Thirteen lists the offices and officials whose authorization must be obtained.

Table Thirteen - Censorship

1 -- The Artistic Department within the Theatre Troupe
2 -- The Managing Director of the Theatre
3 -- The Reading Committee of the Government Theatre Organization
4 -- The Theatre Organization's General Council
5 -- The Office of Censorship
6 -- The High Committee of the Socialist Union
7 -- The Legal Branch of the Socialist Union
8 -- The Minister of Culture

The names of these offices have occasionally been changed, but the procedure has remained the same for more than two decades. Many theatre professionals and government officials interviewed in 1980 and 1983 were reluctant to discuss specific instances of censorship, but most agreed that censorship was heavier under Sadat than Nasser. Indeed, many of the best Egyptian plays appeared in the late 1950's and the 1960's. Under Sadat censorship increased to the point that many theatre artists, playwrights and writers in other media emigrated to cities elsewhere in the Arab world.

The most important factors which determined censorship policies under Nasser and Sadat were politics and economics. Nasser encouraged leftist intellectuals to promote their political views through the medium of theatre. Some plays were polemical but many were subtlely critical of Nasser's policies without propagandizing a particular party line. Under Sadat, however, leftist writers found less encouragement for their social and political criticisms.

Sadat reacted harshly to political dissent, but his economic policies contributed at least as strongly as his politics to stifle creative work in the theatre. He removed government subsidies which had been established by Nasser, forcing theatre companies to fend for themselves or go broke. Some groups abandoned controversial material in

favor of crowd-pleasing musical-comedies, but rising inflation soon put theatre out of reach for most Egyptians.

At any rate, censorship has increased since the days of Nasser, as Trevor J. Le Gassick explains in "Arabic Theatre," his contribution to the 1984 edition of the McGraw-Hill Encyclopedia of World Drama.

> In recent years the play, like the short story and the novel, seems to have been more closely monitored and censored, and the major Egyptian intellectuals seem to be publishing less; an earlier confidence in the lack of internal threat to the regime no doubt made possible the luxury of greater freedom of expression than is perhaps the present case in Egypt. [3]

Publications

Egyptian playwrights do not receive royalties once their scripts are released. Playwrights earn money from the initial publication of their scripts, from participation in theatrical productions, or from occasional government grants. Egyptian theatre scholars face similar economic constraints. For instance, according to Hamdī al-Sukūt, Professor of Dramatic Literature at the American University in Cairo, a 20-25 page scholarly article might fetch 40 £.E. (about $40) if it were published in Cairo or Alexandria. On the other hand, a 2-3 page article printed in Saudi Arabia or Kuwait could bring the equivalent of $200. [4]

The distribution of published materials is also strictly regulated by the government. Controversial works are not available at established publishing houses, and used copies are harder to find now that open book stalls have been banned from the Azbakiya Gardens district.

Egypt and Egyptian Theatre

Theatre activity and theatre audiences clearly dwindled under Sadat, but Mubarak has apparently reversed a few of his predecessor's

policies. In what some critics call 'Mubarak's honeymoon with the left', the works of playwrights Alfred Farag and Nu'man 'Ashur (which were allegedly banned for political reasons during the seventies) have since been performed in Egypt. Nevertheless, political dissent is still a dangerous endeavor. During the spring of 1983 Sa'Īd Sālih, a popular comic actor and entertainer, allegedly made the mistake of telling, in front of an audience which included the provincial governor, a joke which was not part of his officially approved script. The joke, a witty improvisation in poetic meter and rhyme, barbed with political satire which supposedly compares Nasser, Sadat and Mubarak, is quoted below in transliterated Egyptian dialect with a line-by-line translation:

al-awalānī akkalnā mishsh
(The first one fed us wormy cheese)
al-tānī 'allamna nighish
(The second taught us how to cheat)
al-tālit la byihish walla byinish
(The third one doesn't bother to brush the flies away)

The actor-poet's wit landed him in jail. The joke, however, soon made the rounds from Alexandria to Luxor. [5]

Egyptians face crucial economic and social problems, and Egyptian theatre faces a difficult dilemma. Theatre is a luxury which few can afford. For example, two theatre tickets at 3 £.E. apiece (about $6 total) would be an absurdly extravagant expenditure for a middle class Egyptian worker who makes 50 £.E. per month. The cost of transportation to and from the theatre and of even simple refreshments like soft drinks would add to the impossibility of attending the theatre for most Egyptians. Meanwhile, the pressures of censorship usually strip the theatre of political content which challenges or criticizes the social order. Thus, much of modern Egyptian theatre is popular comedy geared solely to entertain indiscriminate tastes.

The hope of the Egyptian theatre is the imagination, dedication, and commitment of artists like Ali Salem and Mahmoud Diab. The Oedipus Comedy or You Who Killed the Beast and Messenger from Tumayra Village

don't preach the annihilation of Israel. They support efforts to stop Israeli expansion, and they spotlight the important contradictions the war with Israel has caused or aggravated. Above all, these plays reveal remarkable creative talent which deserves recognition and acclaim beyond the borders of the Arab world.

Notes to General Summary

1 Personal interview with Yūsuf Shawqī, 5 May 1983.

2 Personal interview with Ali Salem, 22 April 1983.

3 Trevor J. Le Gassick, "Arabic Theatre," McGraw-Hill Encyclopedia of World Drama, Stanley Hochman, ed. (U.S.A.: McGraw-Hill, 1984), I, 180.

4 Personal interview with Hamdī al-Sukūt, 21 May 1983.

5 Personal observation during April, May, and June 1983.

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Appendix A --

The Cultural Heritage of Egypt

The people of modern Egypt share a cultural heritage more than fifty centuries old. During its long history Egypt has experienced direct contact with many of the major civilizations and empires of the world.

Political History

Ancient Egyptian civilization developed along the Nile river valley where, in the fourth millenium B.C., the kingdoms of Upper and Lower Egypt were united under Pharaoh. For three thousand years war and trade with neighboring civilizations extended the influences of Pharaonic civilization beyond the kingdoms of Nubia and Punt to Ethiopia, Mesopotamia and Hind, beyond the Nile delta and the shores of Libya to Minoan Crete and the kingdoms of Greece and Ionia.

The classical era of the west witnessed the gradual decline of the Egyptian empire. A period of foreign rule began as armies from Ethiopia, Assyria, Persia and Greece contended for control over the peoples of the world. In 525 B.C. Egyptian autonomy came to an end, and Egypt became a province of the Persian empire, governed by a succession of Persian satraps. In 332 B.C. Alexander's armies brought Persian rule to a close, and Egypt began an era of involvement in the dynamics of the emerging Mediterranean civilizations.

By the beginning of the Christian era Egypt had become a Roman province. For six and a half centuries Egyptians paid tribute to Roman rulers -- from 30 B.C. to the caesars of Rome and from 284 A.D. to the emperors of Byzantium.

The advent of Islam brought Arab armies to Egypt. By 642 Byzantine rule had ended, and Egypt had become part of an empire that soon stretched from the Indus river to the Pyrenees. From 661 to 750 C.E. the Umayyad dynasty ruled Egypt from Damascus, and from 750 to 969 the

'Abbasid dynasty ruled from Baghdad. In 969 the Fatimid dynasty of north Africa established Cairo as the center of the fragmenting Islamic empire. In 1171 Saladin declared the Fatimid Caliphate at an end and founded the Ayyubid dynasty, but less than a century later the Ayyubid kingdoms of Egypt and Syria, weakened by the wars of the Crusades, fell under the control of the Turkish Mamluk Sultanate. In 1517 the Ottoman Turks conquered Syria and Egypt and destroyed the Mamluk Sultanate, and by the end of the sixteeneth century the Ottoman empire had established Turkish rule over most of the Islamic world.

In 1798 Napoleon began a three-year occupation of Egypt that was followed by the reign of an Albanian named Muhammad 'Ali. In 1882 the British stepped in to govern Egypt until 1936. In 1952 a group of army officers guided by Gamal Abdel Nasser ousted King Farouk, and Egypt became a republic.

Land and People

Between the Saharan desert and the mountains that border the Red Sea lies the Nile valley and the river delta. The river not only supports agricultural production, but it provides an internal transportation system augmented by the prevailing Mediterranean winds.

The mountains and the deserts of Egypt are much the same today as they were during Pharaonic times, but now the Nile no longer floods the farmlands with annual deposits of moisture and silt, and the ancient land of Nubia lies deep beneath Lake Nasser behind the Aswan dam. Since 1869 the Suez canal has connected the Mediterranean and the Atlantic with the waters of the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, improving Egypt's ability to handle trade from all over the world.

The Egyptian people number more than thirty-five million, and they have an annual population growth rate of nearly three percent. "The bulk of the population, with some Negroid admixture in the southern part of the Nile Valley, are of the same brunet-white physical type that is found

from northern India to Gibraltar and on both sides of the Mediterranean." [1]

Throughout the history of Egypt migrating populations have settled in the cities of Lower Egypt, but these groups generally avoided mingling with the mass of the population. Many of the rural people of modern Egypt resemble their ancient ancestors as represented by the portraits and sculptures of Pharaonic times.

More than ninety percent of the modern Egyptian population are Moslems. The conversion to Islam came from the Arab conquests of the seventh century, and the monotheism imposed upon the populace by Islam continued the trend toward peace, order and religious unity begun by the early Christians. Although religious minorities have persisted throughout the Islamic era, Islam has consistently dominated the lives of most Egyptians through fourteen centuries. Few modern Egyptians -- Moslems or Christians -- are more than vaguely aware of the religious heritage out of which both Christianity and Islam emerged; yet much of what is known about the religious mythologies of the ancient world has been learned by studies of ancient Egyptian temples, tombs and artifacts, and many of the basic tenets of the ancient myths have been assimilated by subsequent religions.

The ancient Egyptians developed a calendar based on their observations of the cyclical patterns of nature. In order to appease and influence the wide variety of deities believed to control the patterns of life, death and rebirth, the ancient Egyptian priests created elaborate forms of ritual enactment of their myths. [2]

The Egyptian pantheon of gods and goddesses was ruled by Osiris, the god of vegetation and regenerated life. The divine king Osiris represented the spirit of the changing seasons, and modern scholars and historians such as Muller, Frazer, Harrison, Gaster and Graves have traced many of the beliefs and customs of Christian and Greco-Roman mythologies to the early myths of Osiris. Dionysus, the New-Zeus of the Greek pantheon, was the Greek version of Osiris, and the Eleusian mysteries of Greece were ritual celebrations similar to the rites of

Osiris performed at Abydos, Busiris and Edfu. Tammuz, Adonis, Attis and the Roman Bacchus were also Osirian deities, and the Roman cults of Isis, the sister-wife of Osiris, were imported to Rome directly from Egypt. The Iseum of Pompeii dates from 105 B.C., and the cult rapidly spread to Rome, Herculaneum, and Roman cities in Africa, Gaul and Germania. The popularity of the cult and its secret doctrines continued in Rome until the fourth century.

Meanwhile, the spread of Greco-Roman civilization to Egypt failed to replace the worship of Ptah, Isis, Seth or Osiris with the worship of Zeus, Apollo or Dionysus. Instead, temples of the new gods sprang up beside those of the ancient deities. Only the advent of Christianity and Islam and the monotheistic doctrines enforced by these religions brought the era of widespread polytheism to a close. Nevertheless, while Islam has rejected all but the most fundamental tenets of ancient mythology -- such as the belief in life after death -- the ritual celebrations of the murder and rebirth of Osiris are alive today in the Christian rites of crucifiction and resurrection. [3]

At present the adherents of Christianity constitute the largest of the ethnic and religious minorities in Egypt.

> A breakdown for the ethnic and religious communities as reflected in the 1965 census indicates that there were 2,807,500 Christians, 96,660 of the non-Egyptian minorities -- Greeks, Syrians, Lebanese, Italians, Armenians, French, British -- and 2,484 Jews. [4]

Prior to the creation of a national homeland for Jews in Palestine the Jewish population in Egypt exceeded 60,000, but emigration in recent years has rapidly decreased that number.

The principal indigenous minorities of Egypt are the Copts, the Bedouin and the Nubians. The latter are the black people of Egypt, and while modern Egyptians are quick to resent any implication of racial discrimination, few Nubians have attained significant status in Egyptian hierarchies. [5] The inundations caused by the construction of the Aswan dam forced the Nubian people to leave their traditional homeland in Upper

Egypt and the northern Sudan. During the construction of the dam, Nubia attracted scholars from all over the world in an effort to save the relics of ancient and medieval times. The excavations and relocations of relics and artifacts were accompanied by the government sponsored resettlement of the Nubian people in newly constructed villages north of Aswan. Nevertheless, large numbers of Nubians, mostly men, live temporarily in the cities and farms of Lower Egypt, where they work primarily as servants and laborers.

> Regarding themselves as superior to Egyptians, [the Nubians] tend to be highly critical of things "Egyptian" and particularly of Egyptian politics. The Egyptians, on their part, affect a superiority to the Nubians.[6]

The Egyptian Bedouin, closely related to the tribes of the Arabian peninsula, now number only about 78,000. Gradually, economic necessity is forcing the Bedouin into the settled and cultivated regions, but many still live a purely nomadic lifestyle.

The Bedouin, the Nubians, and the Lebanese, Syrian and other Arab immigrants to Egypt are considered as indigenous inhabitants of Egypt because of their common language and religion. The Copts, however, represent the majority of the nearly three million Christian inhabitants of Egypt. Prior to the Arab invasion of Egypt in the seventh century, Egypt was almost entirely Christian, and the Copts were among the first converts to Christianity. The Coptic Church was the first Christian sect to establish a monastic tradition, and many Copts have engaged in scholarly and scientific pursuits.

> In the cities, the Copts have traditionally been white-collar workers in business and government; few of them are found engaged in manual labor. Although Moslem and Coptic villagers seem to have no antipathy to one another, in the cities there is a certain degree of tension, which at times flared into open hostility.[7]

Language

The Coptic language, which gave way in popular usage to Arabic in the sixteenth century but survives today in the liturgies of the Coptic Church, grew directly from the language of the ancient Egyptians. Knowledge of the Coptic language has helped modern scholars decipher the ancient hieroglyphic alphabets, an effort which took twenty-three years to complete.

The key to the mystery was the Rosetta Stone, a black basalt stele discovered in 1799 by one of Napoleon's soldiers.

> It measured 3 feet 9 inches in height, 2 feet 4-1/2 inches in width, and 11 inches thick. It was considerably damaged on three sides. It was made up of three panels, each in a different type of writing. Actually, it was inscribed in two languages but in three scripts. . . The upper register was written in hieroglyphic or pictograph style, examples of which had been observed previously by explorers in Egypt, but the script was still a completely unknown quantity. The middle panel was in Demotic, a form developed from the Hieratic writing, which was in turn a short-hand or cursive development of the hieroglyphic form.[8]

The bottom register was recognized as Greek and translated by one of Napoleon's generals. The hieroglyphic and Demotic registers attracted the attentions of the French orientalist Sylvestre deSacy, the Swedish diplomat J. D. Akerblad, and the Cambridge physicist and physician Thomas Young, but their efforts were only partly successful. The solution to the problem was finally developed by the French scholar Jean Francois Champolion who recognized that the hieroglyphics were neither purely ideographic nor purely alphabetic but a composite of phonetic signs and functional indicators.

> Philologists have found striking analogies of structure with both Asiatic and African languages; the importance

given in all these languages to consonants and the auxiliary role played by the vowels; the similarity of feminine and plural endings; the reduplication of the verbal stem and the use of causal prefixes. They have also discovered many words common to their vocabularies, some of which were pronouns and some more general words. Egypt has in fact three hundred roots in common with Semitic languages and over a hundred with northeast African dialects. [9]

The importance of the ancient language to modern Egyptians lies primarily in the increased knowledge they have gained of their own pre-Islamic heritage. Much of what modern Egyptians have learned about their ancient heritage has emerged as a result of the development of modern archaeology. The nineteenth century was the century of 'egyptologists' -- the early archaeologists who struggled to unearth the ruins of ancient Egypt. The methods of egyptology gradually improved as western science and technology became more sophisticated. By the beginning of the twentieth century archaeology had become a respectable pursuit, and knowledge of ancient Egyptian civilization steadily increased.

The living language of modern Egypt, however, is Arabic. Originally the language of a small group of people in the Arabian peninsula, Arabic became, in the seventh century, the language of the holy Qur'an and the foundation of Islamic culture. Islam, over the course of fourteen hundred years, has outgrown its Arabic parentage. It has become the predominant religion among people of numerous other language groups -- Persian, Urdu, Indonesian, Swahili and Turkish. Yet Arabic has remained at the heart of Islam -- not only as a language of religious instruction, but as a language of poetic beauty.

The Arabic alphabet consists of twenty-eight consonants, three long vowels, and seven diacritical marks. The consonants and long vowels may have as many as three forms, corresponding to the initial, medial and final positions in which the letters may occur in words. [10] Diacritical

marks include fatḥa, kasra, ḍamma, tanwīn, shedda, madda, and sukūn. Fatḥa, kasra and ḍamma are short vowels -- a, i, and u, respectively. Tanwīn is nunation -- the 'n' added when the short vowels at the ends of the nouns are doubled to indicate indefinite declension of case. [11] Shedda [12] is the symbol that indicates doubled consonants, and madda [13] indicates a lengthened hamza or glottal stop. Sukūn indicates a silence or absence of voweling. [14] Diacritical marks seldom appear in print, and consequently, many ambiguities of pronounciation arise. [15]

Arabic is a semitic language, one of the characteristics of which is the system of roots and patterns from which words are derived. Arabic roots are triliteral, i.e., composed of three basic consonants. Many words can be derived from a single root by means of patterns of prefixes, infixes, suffixes, doubled letters or quiescent letters. [16]

Verbs, nouns and particles are the Arabic parts of speech, and the verb is usually the root from which the other parts of speech are derived. Verb forms include active and passive participles, noun forms include pronouns and adjectives, and particle forms include interjections, prepositions, conjunctions and functional indicators of question, tense or emphasis.

There are two types of sentences in Arabic. A verbal sentence involves an expression of time or duration. [17] A nominal sentence involves naming or identifying. Arabic has no verb of being in the sense of the English verb 'to be'. Thus the English sense of 'the book is new' is expressed nominally in Arabic as 'the book the new'.

Modern Standard Arabic (also known as literary or classical Arabic -- al-fusha) signifies the written language promoted by pan-Arabists in hopes of reestablishing a unified Arabic-speaking empire. The vast majority of the people who speak Arabic, however, speak colloquial dialects which differ significantly from region to region and from tribe to tribe. The dialects of modern Egypt include Cairene, Upper and Lower Egyptian (referring to the dialects of the Nile valley and of the delta), and numerous tribal dialects of Coptic, Nubian, Bedouin or Berber characteristics.

Art and Literature

Much of the artistic heritage of Egypt stems from language. The ideographs and pictographs of ancient writing not only serve to embellish and explain architectural, sculptural and graphic representations; writing was itself a form of artistic expression. The intricacy and accuracy of the hieroglyphics are exemplified by the many figures of birds, a popular motif in both lingual and pictorial art. "The artist skillfully drew the characteristics of each species and gave them brilliant plumage -- blue, green and red -- never incorrect." [18]

The literature of ancient Egypt was largely religious and documentary, but several works of poetry have survived to the present. The Adventures of Wenamon, The Story of Sinuhe, The Tale of the Two Brothers and The Story of the Doomed Prince are among the oldest extant pieces of fictional literature or biographical narrative in the history of human civilization.

Between the Persian and Arab conquests of Egypt, interest in arts and letters declined as Egyptians concentrated on the concrete scholarly tasks of translating and absorbing the impact of Hellenism and Christianity.

> The elaboration in Egypt of Christian monasticism was a feature of this period, and the austerity and devotion of the Coptic speaking Christians were famous throughout the Christian world. . . Soon a whole literature, mainly translated from Greek into Coptic Egyptian, provided reading that included the works of Homer, Menander, Hesiod, Sappho, Pindar, and Aristophanes. [19]

Under the rule of the Arab dynasties of the Islamic empire the Egyptian imagination found expression primarily through poetry, storytelling, narrative literature, and a wide variety of visual and graphic arts. Egyptian artisans and craftsmen helped design and build the early mosques in Damascus and Jerusalem. Limited by religious prohibitions against representational art, Egyptian graphic artists

developed elaborate and intricate geometrical designs in every available material. Egyptians excelled in bookbinding and calligraphy as evidenced by the magnificant reproductions of the Qur'an and the decorative inscriptions in mosques and other public buildings of the period.

The art of storytelling was another significant Egyptian contribution to early Islamic literature. Although storytelling has been carried primarily by oral tradition of recitation and improvisational composition (the ability to recite and compose eloquently has been regarded as a cardinal virtue by the Arabs throughout their history), the art of storytelling gradually emerged as an important aspect of literary tradition. Tales of fantasy have always appealed to the Egyptian imagination, and it was from the Coptic and ancient Egyptian traditions that storytellers derived the bulk of the characters for their fantastic narratives. Later Islamic storytellers and writers began to exploit the characters of their own heritage in the Egyptian fashion, and from this tradition emerged tales such as those known to the west as the Arabian Nights.

The development of an Arabic literary tradition resulted from three major factors -- the transcription and reproduction of religious works such as the Qur'an and Hadith (traditions of the Prophet), the translation and composition of scientific, philosophical and artistic works, and the classification and communication of the administrative information and documents essential to the operation of the government bureaucracy. Arab scholars, particularly during the 'Abbasid dynasty, recorded much of the heritage of Greece and Persia in Arabic versions and translations. Many of the works of Aristotle, for instance, reached western civilization via the Arabs, and the medieval Christian era of scholasticism owes its foundation to the efforts of Arab scholars.

In the fourth century B.C. Aristotle wrote his Poetics, a work which, since the European Resaissance, has been the foundation of western aesthetics. The Roman and Byzantine empires kept the Aristotelian tradition alive during its first thousand years. Andronicus of Rhodes (fl. 30 B.C.), Alexander of Aphrodisias (fl. ca. A.D. 200), and Steven of

Alexandria (fl. ca. A.D. 616) each helped to carry ancient learning into the future.

After the beginning of the Islamic era, Arab scholars gradually began to accumulate documents and manuscripts written in Greek and Syriac. By A.D. 765 the 'golden age' 20 of the 'Abbasid capital in Baghdad was beginning, and with it came a period of scholasticism called kalam.

One of the early classifiers of the growing accumulation of material and the first important Islamic philosopher was Ya'qūb ibn Ishāq al-Kindī (d. after 870).

> In an important treatise intended to serve as an introduction to the study of philosophy in general and Peripateticism in particular. . . al-Kindī classifies the treatises of the Corpus Aristotelicum in what appears to have been the late Greek, possibly Athenian fashion, and the later Arab philosophers generally accepted this classification. First came the logical treatises in eight books, which included, according to the Arab syllabus, the Rhetoric and the Poetics. [21]

A translation movement soon emerged among the Syriac Christian minority, and Arabic versions eventually replaced Syriac versions of the ancient Greek texts. One of the Arabic versions of the Poetics is still extant. It was written by Abu Bishr Matta (d. A.D. 940). Recent translations of his manuscript have shed light on previously obscure passages of the Poetics. [22]

The chain of classifying, translating, and reclassifying cultimated in the Fihrist (Index or Catalogue) of a Baghdad bookseller named al-Nadīm. The scope of the project is enormous and follows the tradition of classifying the Poetics as a book of logic under section seven: Philosophy and the "ancient" sciences.

The work of cataloguers like al-Nadīm was carried a step further by Arab encyclopedists like Abū 'Alī ibn Sīna (980-1037), known to the west as Avicenna. The Shifā', though the most elaborate and complete, is but

one of a series of encyclopedic treatments that Ibn SĪna devoted to Aristotelianism. [23]

The last of the great Arab Aristotelians was Andalusian Ibn Rushd of Cordova (d. A.D. 1198). His commentaries on the Poetics contain a certain amount of editorializing, including the omission of apparent obscurities and irrelevancies in Abu Bishr's translation, and even the substitution of Arabic literary and linguistic examples for the original Greek ones.

Ibn Rushd, known to the Latin scholastics as Averroes, wrote so extensively about Aristotle, that a movement began shortly after Ibn Rushd's death to translate his Arabic writings into Latin.

> Between 1217 and 1230 Michael the Scot translated into Latin Ibn Rushd's commentaries on De Caelo et Mundo, De-Anima, De Generatione et Coruptione, Physica, Meta-physica, Meteorologica, as well as the paraphrases of Parva Naturalia, and De Substantia Orbis. Hermann the German, on the other hand, translated the epitomes of Poetica and Ethica Nichomachea between 1240 amd [sic] 1256. The remaining commentaries were gradually rendered by less celebrated scholars. All together, fifteen out of the thirty-eight commentaries of Averroes were translated into Latin directly from Arabic during the thirteenth century. [24]

Meanwhile, Egyptian poets were active in the development of Islamic mysticism.

> Among the great mystical poets of Arabic literature who were produced by Egypt, most important were Ibn al-Farīd (born 1181) and al-Busīrī (born 1213), whose panegyric of the Prophet, Ode of the Mantle, is considered the most perfect example of its kind. [25]

The language of Egyptian poetry since the spread of Islam has been Arabic. the poetic beauty of the Qur'ān and the intricate meters and rhyme patterns of pre-Islamic Arabic poetry set standards that have

endured into modern time. The paradigmatic structure of Arabic words is especially conducive to the perpetuation of complex metrical patterns, such as those utilyzed in the pre-Islamic mu'allaqāt. [26] The word mu'allaqa refers to objects suspended on high -- and particularly to the Seven Suspended Poems of pre-Islamic poetry. The poems were considered such important masterpieces that they were 'hung up' in public for all to see and admire.

Among the greatest of the early Arab poets were Shanfara and Imru'ul-Qais, both of whom composed lāmīyāt or L-poems -- so called because of the rhyme letter utilyzed at the end of each line. The structure of the poems themselves reflected the desert way of life of the Arab people. Each line of a poem is called a tent or bayt which consists of two hemistichs called flaps or misra'ayn. The meter of the poem is divided into feet or taf'īlāt which are made up of pegs or watid and ropes or sabab, and thus the meter keeps each tent from stretching or sagging and provides continuity and uniformity to the figurative community suggested by the poem as a whole.

The basic form of traditional Arabic poetry is the ode or qasīda which is still the word for poem in modern Arabic. (The word for poetry is shi'r.) From the qasīda were derived a number of specialized types of poetry which were codified by medieval literary critics:

> madīh (panegyric), hijā' (satire), fakhr (self-praise), rithā' (elegy), ghazal (amatory verse), wasf (description), and hikma (gnomic verse) and the artistic rhyming prose of the maqāma (session or discourse). . . . [27]

Arabic peotry reached a peak of development in the classical era of the 'Abbasid dynasty. The most famous of the classical poets was al-Mutanabbi, who reportedly once said of the Prophet: "With all his rhetorical talents. . . this Meccan was unable to express himself in verse." [28] Despite his heretical views, however, al-Mutanabbi composed poetry of such beauty and eloquence that it remained the standard of Arabic poetry well into the nineteenth century.

The 'Abbasid dynasty in Baghdad eventually gave way to the Fatimid and Ayyubid dynasties in Egypt, but the end of Arab rule in Egypt brought a period of artistic and intellectual stagnation that lasted into the nineteenth century. According to literary critics and historian Mustafa Badawi, "the same period which witnessed the emergence of the European Renaissance signalled the beginning of a process of decay in Arabic literature." 29 One possible explanation of this condition was the oppressive and stultifying influence of Turkish rule during the Ottoman empire.

> What historians of Arabic literature call the Ottoman Period, namely the three centuries following the Ottoman conquest of Syria and Egypt early in the sixteenth century, was marked by a general lack of vitality and imagination, a growing feeling of complacency and self-sufficiency and an apparent unwillingness or inability to explore new horizons. 30

Other Arab scholars, however, claim that the literary decline began much earlier. According to Mounah A. Khouri and Hamid Algar,

> there was a long period of literary decay and stagnation between the Mongols' destruction of the 'Abbasid dynasty in the thirteenth century and the emergence of Muhammad Ali's Egypt as an independent state within the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century. 31

Whether or not Turkish rule can be blamed for the lack of literary creativity among the Arabs, the eclipse of Ottoman power certainly inaugurated a new era of intellectual activity in the Arab world. Contact with the west brought to the Egyptian people new concepts of work and industry, of power and politics, of science, art and philosophy.

The modernization movement in Egypt was begun cautiously by Muhammad 'Ali, the Albanian-born ruler of Egypt whose interest in the west was centered on a desire to learn the secrets of western technology. The young Egyptians sent by Muhammad 'Ali to study at European universities

> could not remain immune from the cultural and intellectual values so closely related to the technological sciences. However, the adoption of western literary modes came much later than that of western technology or even western thought. [32]

Many of the concepts and practices imported from the west have raised challenges to traditional Egyptian ideas and values. The result has been a series of cultural revolutions -- in politics, in technology, in education, art and literature. Traditional medieval and theocentric education has given way to modern secular education. Literacy percentages have increased; the number of printing presses has multiplied; much of western imaginative literature has been translated. Journalism has spread and with it the dissemination of western political ideas which have promoted the growth of nationalism. The growth of nationalism has "produced an impulse to create not just traditional Arabic, but specifically modern local and topical literature." [33]

Although modern Egyptian literature is only one voice of the modern Arab consciousness, it has been a consistently important voice. Egyptian writers have experimented with the novel, the short story and the drama -- "forms hitherto to all intents and purposes unknown in the history of Arabic literature, and directly borrowed from the west. . . ." [34] Egyptian writers have also been instrumental in the development of "a new, highly westernized poetry bearing little relation to the old qasīda." [35] Yet despite the willingness of many Egyptian writers to experiment with western theories of literature, most of these writers have strived continually to express such experiments in terms of their own Arabic heritage. One aspect of their heritage which the Arabs hold in particularly high esteem is the art of poetry.

> Among the arts practiced by the Arabs throughout their history, from the pre-Islamic period to the present, none seems to surpass nor even to equal the art of poetry as the ultimate repository of aesthetic awareness. [36]

The development of modern Arabic poetry has passed through several stages. The earliest of these is Arab neo-classicism. Unlike the neo-classicism of the west, Arab neo-classicism does not rest upon Horacian or Aristotelian foundations, nor upon strict definitions or poetic unity. "Nevertheless, it is securely based upon the assumption that there are absolute and immutable rules and standards of judgement, valid for all time, to be found in the works of a glorious period of the past." 37 The neoclassical poet's task is the creative imitation of these works.

The precursor of Arab neo-classicism was an Egyptian poet, Mahmūd Sāmī al-Barūdī (1839-1904). Al-Barūdī often managed to combine a return to classical purity of form, such as is found in the works of the 'Abbasid poet al-Mutanabbi, with social themes drawn from his own environment and contemporary experience.

Neo-classicism soon spread to Palestine, Syria and Iraq, but in Egypt the most prominent successors to al-Barūdī were Ahmad Shawqī (1868-1932) and Hāfiz Ibrāhīm (1871-1932). Shawqī, unlike most neo-classical poets whose concern with social issues often led them to make moralistic or satirical attacks on the government, followed the classical tradition of <u>madīh</u> by composing panegyrics for the Khedive. Shawqī also composed verse dramas in the neo-classical poetic style.

Neo-classicism continued into the twentieth century, and even today neo-classical poetry is still popular and widely read and recited. Nevertheless, "already by the end of the nineteenth century a new type of poetry was being written, which is marked by a tension between form and content, between a relatively classical style and new romantic sentiments. . . ." 38

The work of the Syrian-born Egyptian poet Khalīl Mutrān (1872-1949) prepared a way for the emergence of romanticism in modern Arab poetry. Among the most important concepts advanced by Mutrān were the primacy of meaning and the importance of the unity of the poem. In addition to promoting thematic innovations, Mutrān attacked the limitations of classical and neo-classical forms. By composing a four-hundred line, monometered, monorhymed poem, Mutrān hoped "to destroy the qasīda pattern

after exhausting its poetic potentials and to show that it must be replaced by freer and more suitable forms of poetry." [39]

The transition from neo-classicism to romanticism "was a reflection in the field of literature of a much larger movement towards change and modernization or westernization." [40] Three major schools of romantic poetry emerged in the years between the two world wars. The Diwān group in Egypt included 'Abd al-Rahmān Shukrī (1886-1958), 'Abbas Mahmūd al-'Aqqād (1889-1964), and Ibrāhīm 'Abd al-Qādir al-Mazīnī (1890-1949). "Partly influenced by Mutrān and partly by the English romantic poets and critics, particularly Hazlitt and Coleridge," [41] the Diwān group set out "to consolodate the romantic trend generated by Mutrān" [42] in terms of the redefinition of Arab poetry as wijdān (emotional expression).

The work of the Diwān group was reinforced by the romantic trends established by the Mahjar group in North and South America. Gibran Khalil Gibran (1883-1931) was the best known of the North American Mahjar group -- a group strongly influenced by the American romantic and transcendental poets, particularly Whitman and Emerson. Gibran was also influenced by Nietzche, Blake, Rodin, the Bible and eastern mysticism. The South American Mahjar group produced poetry generally more conservative but often more original than the poetry of the northern Mahjar. The themes and forms of Andalusian lyrics inspired many of the southern Mahjar poets. Thus each branch of the Mahjar group contributed unique variations to the romantic trends established by the Diwan group in Egypt. The Mahjar poets had imigrated to America from Syria and Lebanon, but their poetry was widely read throughout the Middle East.

"Romanticism, as developed by the Diwān school and more effectively promoted by Gibran and the Mahjar poets, reached its height in the Arab world in the 1930's." [43] In 1931, Dr. Ahmad Sākī Abū Shādī (1892-1955) founded the Cairo poetry magazine, Apollo, which attracted a new group of romantic poets including 'Alī Mahmūd Taha (1902-1949) and Ibrāhīm Nājī (1898-1953) of Egypt and Abū al-Qāsim al-Shabbī (1909-1934) of Tunisia. The poets of the Apollo group brought to fruition the theories and ideas of the Diwān and Mahjar poets.

In 1936 Egypt wrested a limited and conditional independence from Britain, but the continued presence of European powers in the Middle East, the rapid, uncontrolled growth of the Jewish national home in Palestine, the outbreak of World War Two, and the subsequent creation of the Zionist state of Israel, generated a widespread feeling of anger and resentment among the Arabs. The growing disillusionment signalled the end of the Arab romantic movement.

> The second world war proved to be a significant landmark in the history not only of Arabic poetry, but of the whole of Arabic literature, just as much as it was a turning point in much of the social and political life of the Middle East. [44]

Young Egyptian intellectuals began, during the war, to pay increased attention to Marxist philosophy. The influence of Marxism soon began to show itself as a post-war literary movement developed called social realism. From 1946 onwards romanticism was condemned by critics "on the grounds of escapism, of its being literature of the ivory tower, or even of being 'adolescent' literature," [45] Many poets have consequently turned away from writing poems of nature, sunsets and roses and turned instead to poems that deal with social or political problems.

In the aftermath of World War Two, the 1948 War in Palestine and the 1952 revolution in Egypt, few Arab poets have escaped the influence of social realism. Among its chief proponents are 'Abd al-Wahāb al-Bayītī (1926-) of Iraq and Salāh 'Abd al-Sabūr (1931-) of Egypt. 'Abd al-Sabūr has written several dramas in verse, and his Ma'sāt al-Hallāj (The Tragedy of Hallaj) has been translated and published as Murder in Baghdad. 'Abd al-Sabūr has also served as editor of the Egyptian government's theatre periodical, al-Masrah (The Stage).

Another phase in the development of modern Arab poetry is the symbolist movement, the reaction against romanticism that has developed concurrently with the social realism movement. Symbolism has not been as popular in Egypt as it has been in Syria, Lebanon and Iraq. Badr Shākir al-Wayyab (1926-1964) of Iraq achieved acclaim in both the symbolist and

social realist movements, but the bulk of symbolist writing has emerged from Syria and Lebanon where strong ties with French culture are still apparent. The highly individual visions expressed through the symbolist poetry show the marked influence of contemporary French poetry and philosophy -- particularly existentialism and structural linguistics. [46]

A feature in contemporary Arabic poetry common to social realism and symbolism is the use of material drawn from mythology. Egyptian poets, however, "tend to draw their myths almost exclusively from Arab heritage, and especially from the world of the Arabian Nights," [47] while Lebanese and Iraqi poets "turn for their myths to the ancient world of the Near East no less than to the Arab heritage." [48]

The use of myth by Arab poets is an example of the influence felt in the Middle East from modern western poetry, particularly in the works of T. S. Eliot. "Apart from Shakespeare, very few English poets have in fact gained the fame of Eliot among the Arab reading public." [49] Eliot's poem, "The Wasteland," achieved widespread popularity in the Middle East in the aftermath of World War Two and the Palestinian debacle. The idea of a world in which the order of things has been shattered, of a land parched with thirst and awaiting the return of fertility, seemed to describe the specific conditions of the post-World War Two Middle East.

The impact of Eliot's poetic style also led to a "greater degree of freedom in handling form and meter" 50 in Arabic poetry. The result was yet another post-romantic phenomenon -- the free verse movement. The pioneer of the Arab free verse movement was Luwis 'Awad (1915-) of Egypt. 'Awad experimented with the use of a single taf'īlah instead of the traditional bayt as the basic unit of poetry. He also experimented with the colloquial language, creating vernacular poetry that challenged the sensibilities of language purists.

"Although 'Awad's work must be recognized as the first serious attempt at free verse, it was undoubtedly the Iraqi poetess Nāzik al-Malā'ikah who. . . laid the theoretical foundations for the development: of the free verse movement. 51 Al-Sayyab of Iraq and 'Abd al-Sabūr of Egypt also excelled in the use of free verse. In fact, few modern poets

have escaped the influences of the free verse movement, and many radical experiments at abandoning traditional form have led to the creation of 'prose poetry' in which the imaginative expression of thematic oppositions takes precedence over considerations of form.

The social realism, symbolist and free verse movements have all emerged in the wake of pre-World War Two romanticism. Few recent Arab poets have oonfined their efforts to a single movement. Furthermore, although Arabic poetry has come closer to Western poetry, it has never relinquished its own character or originality. In fact, the modern poets are now writing not only Arabic poems, but also Arab poems. The Western influence, therefore, was not one of enslavement through imitation but rather one of liberation. [52]

Music

Music, like poetry, has been a part of Egyptian culture since ancient times. Prior to the Ist Dynasty (c. 3300 B.C.), Egyptian music was largely percussive and perhaps entailed chanting or vocal improvisation. Instruments included a wide variety of clappers, shakers, rattles, drums, bells, whistles and flutes. [53]

During the Old Empire, vibrating reed instruments and several stringed instruments were developed. Singing emerged as an important expression of religious beliefs; hymns or laments, such as "the Destruction of the Dragon 'Apop" and "The Dirge of Isis and Nephthys," were recorded in hieroglyphic inscriptions; so, too, were songs of work and daily life, such as "The Song of the Thrashers." [54]

The Middle Empire witnessed the development of a lute-like instrument and several types of lyres. [55] With the military expansion of the Late Empire emerged the horn, used primarily as a heralding device, signalling workmen and soldiers and leading celebrational processions. [56] Several horns have survived, virtually intact, among

the treasures of Tutankhamun. Numerous graphic representations of musicians and dancers have also endured. [57]

Little is known about the nature of music in the ancient world. Scholars have drawn their conjectures from three fields of information: 1) from studying the capabilities of instruments and pieces of instruments which have survived or which have been clearly identified in graphic art; 2) from examining the spacial arrangements of hieroglyphic inscriptions considered to be music; and 3) from comparing Egyptian evidence with evidence from other ancient civilizations.

Musicologist Carl Engel in a discussion of the seven-stringed Egyptian lyre, favors the likelihood of a pentatonic tuning over the conjunct or disjunct tetrachords of a Greek heptachord. In an effort to disprove what he calls "a prevailing opinion among musical historians, that the Greeks derived their musical system from the Egyptians," [58] Engel cites dissimilarities of instrument size, proportion, and number of strings to reinforce his case. According to Engel:

> Pythagoras (B.C. 550) is recorded to have added an eighth string to the lyre, and to have introduced a diatonic order of intervals, consisting of two disjunct tetrachords. As he is said to have acquired his knowledge in Egypt, some writers have precipitately concluded therefrom that his innovation on the lyre was an introduction from Egypt. All evidence, however, in support of this opinion is wanting, while every ascertainable fact tends, as we have seen, to the opposite conclusion. [59]

The origins of Pythagorean theories remain obscure; however, the impact of Pythagoreanism is undisputable. On one hand, Pythagorean theories provided mathematical explanations of harmonic structure, intervals and modes, that have formed the basis of eastern and western music. On the other, Pythagoreanism provided a philosophical explanation of the mathematical structure of music. According to W.K.E. Gutherie, "the Pythagoreans studied mathematics in a cosmic context, and

for them numbers always retained a mystical significance as the key to the divine cosmos." [60] The mystical side of Pythagoreanism has also influenced the development of eastern and western music.

Underlying Pythagoreanism are the mystical Orphic doctrines and rites celebrated in worship of Dionysus. Pythagoras "discovered the numerical ratios underlying the intervals which the Greeks called consonant and used as the basis of their scale." [61] Pythagoras assigned certain values to the numerical relationships. The Greek scales "involve only the numbers 1 to 4 -- 1:2, octave; 3:2 fifth; 4:3 fourth. These numbers add up to 10, a sacred number for the Pythagoreans. . . ." [62] The Major Mode of western music is only one of many possible modes derived from this theory of intervals. Explained in terms of whole and half tones, the Major Mode is defined as whole -- whole -- half -- whole -- whole -- whole -- half. Explained in terms of quarter tones, of which there are twenty-four in an octave, the Major Mode consists of tetrachord 4-4-2 (whole-whole-half), junction note 4 (whole), and tetrachord 4-4-2 (whole-whole-half). The sum of the quarter-tone intervals of each tetrachord is 10, the sacred number of the Pythagoreans, a number that signified harmony and justice. The Minor Mode of western music consists of tetrachord 4-2-4 (whole-half-whole), tetrachord 4-2-4 (whole-half-whole), and a junction note 4 (whole). Again, the sum of the quarter-tone intervals of each tetrachord is 10.

The use of the diatonic scale has enabled western musicians to begin the Major or Minor Modes at any pitch. Gradually, the use of major and minor diatonic scales resulted in neglect of the other modes derived from Pythagorean theory. While the Orphic tradition underlying Pythagoreanism remained at the heart of western art and music, the direct correspondence between certain numbers and specific values gradually became unimportant. Meanwhile, eastern music lost track of the Orphic tradition and retained the mathematical form.

Pythagoreanism, like Aristoteleanism, reached the Arabs through the neo-Platonists. "There exists no Pythagorean literature before Plato, and it was said that little had been written, owing to a rule of

secrecy." 63 Arab scholars, however, eagerly assimilated diverse aspects of Greek learning during the early days of the Islamic empire. Among the important Arab scholars who wrote about music were al-Kindī, Ibn Sīnā and al-Farābī. Several of al-Farābī's works were translated into Latin during the Middle Ages. In Ihsā' al-'ulūm or Classification of the Sciences, al-Farābi treats music as a subdivision of mathematics. The treatise is organized as follows:

1. Grammar (lisān)
2. Logic (mantīq)
3. Mathematics (ta'ālīm)
   (a) Arithmetic ('adad)
   (b) Geometry (handasa)
   (c) Optics (manazir)
   (d) Astrology (nujūm)
   (e) Music (mūsīqā)
   (f) Statics (athqāl)
   (g) Mechanics (hiyāl)
4. Natural Sciences (tabī'ī)
5. Divinity (ilāhī)
6. Theology (kalām) 64

Al-Farābī distinguishes between practical music and theoretical music. Practical music, according to al-Farābī, is concerned with the production of melodies by natural and artificial instruments. Natural instruments include the larynx, the uvula, and the nose; artificial includes reed pipes and stringed instruments.

Al-Farābī divides theoretical music into five parts. Part one deals with fundamental principles of music, part two deals with ratios between notes, and part three applies to production of music in conformity to the capabilities of instruments. Part four concentrates on rhythm, while part five deals with melodic composition.

Another treatise attributed to al-Farābī has survived in a Latin version entitled De ortu scientarium. In the treatise al-Farābī defines sound as the product of substance in motion. Dividing sounds according

to pitch -- high, low, and medium -- al-Farābi defines music as the science of the ratio or relationship between sounds. The roots of the science are metre, melody and gesture.

> Gesture has been included in the sense of seeing which, by coincident motions and corresponding proportions, has been arranged to agree with metre and sound. This art, therefore, is included in two particular senses -- hearing and seeing. 65

The utility of music lies in the tempering of human character and in the cure of bodily ailments effected by the cure of the soul. The medical uses of music, however, had already been promoted by al-Kindī and put into practice in hospitals by the Ikhwān al-Safā'. 66

The influence of De ortu scientarium on medieval European scholars was negligible, but the influence of Ihsā' al-'ulūm was far-reaching. Meanwhile, the development of European musical instruments was being affected by Arab models.

> The words 'lute', 'rebec', 'guitar', and 'naker' (the old word for kettledrum. . .) are all in origin Arabic -- 'al-'ud, rabab, guitara, and naqqara. Large claims are now being made for the general influence of Arabian theory and practice upon European music evolution in the Middle Ages. 67

Music in the Islamic world grew not only from the ancient civilizations of Egypt and Assyria and from the classical era of Greece. Persian and Indian influences were also assimilated. Orthodox Muslims, however, have consistently considered music to be a frivolous activity. The polarization of values in Islamic society -- between good and evil, sacred and profane, literature and music, native and foreign, vocal and instrumental, amateur and professional, private and public, rural and urban -- has contributed to the growth of two separate musical traditions. Both traditions emerged in the thirteenth century in the wake of Sufi mysticism. Sufis believe that God is everywhere in every event. Sufi music is primarily a symbolic language called dhiker,

remembrance of God. Music, meditation, silence, chanting, self-hypnosis, trance, twirling, dancing, dieting and fasting were all methods of symbolic remembrance of God. The founders of the music traditions based upon Sufiism were a Persian named Jalaluddin Rumi, founder of the Mevlevi tradition, and a Turk named Hajji Bektash, a founder of the Bektashi tradition. The two traditions compare as follows:

Mevlevi	Bektashi
Classical music	Folk music
Aristocratic patrons	Common people
Literate poets	Illiterate artists
Literary tradition	Oral tradition
Suni	Shi'a
Chorus and orchestra	Solo performers
Meter	Free rhythm
Modal	Amodal

The Mevlevi and Bektashi traditions gradually transcended the restrictions of native origin; eventually each tradition, classical and folk, achieved similar formal expression in Arabic, Persian and Turkish cultures. Classical Middle-eastern music consists of suite, rondo, or similar composed structures. Middle-eastern folk music includes songs of work, such as fishing songs, irrigation songs, and herding songs. Weddings, births and other celebrations are occasions for folk songs, and even funerals are accompanied by singing. A death voice, a voice generally acclaimed to be the ugliest voice available, is chosen to lead the mourning. [68] The call to prayer, however, and melodic recitation of religious scripture, are not considered by Muslims to be musical forms. The call to prayer (azan), for instance, does not qualify as music, despite its predictable vocal embellishments between the tonic and the fifth. Another vocal technique, ululation, a high-pitched, loud, wailing or hooting sound, is widely practiced as a means of emotional release, and only occasionally appears in music.

Central to Middle-eastern music is improvisation, and central to improvisation is the notion of maqām.

> The development of a maqām is always determined by two primary factors: space (tonal) and time (temporal). The structure of a maqām depends upon the extent to which these two factors exhibit a fixed or free organization. The tonal-spatial component is organized, molded, and emphasized to such a degree that it represents the essential and decisive factor in the maqām; whereas the temporal aspect in this music is not subject to any definite form of organization. In this unique circumstance lies the most essential feature of the maqām phenomenon, i.e., a free organization of the rhythmic-temporal and an obligatory and fixed organization of the tonal-spatial factor. 69

The maqām is only one form of free rhythmic-temporal improvisation in Middle-eastern music. Other forms include the Persian taqsīm and gusheh, the Turkish mugām, the Egyptian layāli and mawwāl. The layāli is a non-textual improvisation based on Layla wa 'ain, a traditional love story about a mermaid. The mawwāl is a rhythmic-temporal improvisation based on a poetic text.

Free tonal-spatial improvisation within a fixed rhythmic-temporal pattern is also an important part of middle-eastern music, but it is definitely considered a lesser form. The Persian peshrev, the Turkish semāi, and the Arab muwashah, are examples of fixed rhythmic-temporal forms.

Seldom, however, is a fixed rhythm limited to repetition of simple 4/4 or 3/4 measures. More common are 6/8, 10/8, 9/4, 7/4, or even 28/8 or 64/8 patterns. Incorporated into the patterns are downbeats, upbeats and silences or rests. Adherence to the rhythmic-temporal form is as important in the performance of such pieces as is accomplished tonal-spatial improvisation. The rhythm patterns are often executed by the hands, groups of people clapping the same pattern. Often several

instruments will share the rhythm, each providing only certain, predetermined contributions to the rhythmic-temporal whole.

Many of the musical instruments of the Middle East show regional characteristics, but classical instruments, such as the lute (al-'ud), and popular instruments, such as flutes and drums, are common features throughout the Middle East. Egyptian instruments include the following:

kemangah - a bowed viol

kanoon - a zither or dulcimer

al-'ud - a short-necked lute

nay - a vertical flute

tabl - a small drum

nakakeer - a pair of large kettledrums derived from the ancient Egyptian nakkarah

sagat - brass castinets

darabukkeh - large wooden or earthen drums

tar - a tambourine (mainly played by women)

rabab - a one-stringed spiked viol (occasionally two-stringed)

baz - a small kettledrum

arghoul - a double-piped reed instrument. One pipe is a drone, often as much as ten feet long. Sometimes extra drones are added, at intervals of major thirds.

mizmar - a single-pipe woodwind instrument resembling an oboe.

Among the western instruments popular among Egyptian musicians are the cello and the violin, fretless instruments capable of producing quarter-tones. The violin is often heard in place of the more traditional rabāb.

Middle eastern music has influenced the development of western music in terms of the evolution of certain instruments, in terms of the spread of Pythagorean based structural theory, and even in terms of western forms. Turkish band music, for example, was developed among the

Janissaries, a Turkish military caste. When European monarchs encountered Turkish performances in the new form, they competed with one another to become patrons of Turkish style bands. Hence the emergence of the modern western marching band. Mozart incorporated characteristics of Janissary music in Abduction from the Seraglio, a piece that manifests driving, tapping rhythms, shifting melodies, constant changes from major to minor modes, and bass voices for Turkish characters whose lyrios reveal stereotyped meanness, evil and ruthlessness.

Jazz and blues musicians in the West have drawn inspiration from the music of the Middle East. Jazz experiments with rhythmic-temporal or tonal-spatial improvisations have been attempted by artists such as Robert Hunter of The Grateful Dead. Meanwhile, blues musicians have popularized the pentatonic music characteristic of the Nubian Egyptians. 70

Modern Egyptian musicians continue to experiment with traditional eastern and western forms. In the early twentieth century, Said Darweesh, composer of the new national anthem, wrote the first Arab operas. He died in the nineteen-twenties as Marconi's telegraph company brought radio and recording techniques to Egypt. Armenian and Greek movie companies relied heavily on musicians to carry otherwise weak productions, and theatre entrepreneurs used musicians for entra-act numbers to attract audiences. Meanwhile, the growth of radio and television has increased the number of jobs available to musicians, but it has also accentuated the division between respected classical musicians who get most of the good-paying jobs, and the less reputable folk musicians who still rely upon meager incomes from coffee-house audiences. 71

The people of modern Egypt share a cultural heritage more than fifty centuries old. Yet Egypt continues to foster diverse aspects of its enormous heritage. The ancient era is alive today in popular superstitions that have their roots in the myths of Isis, Osiris, Seth and Horus. It is alive in the scholarly pursuits of Egyptian-born

archaeologists and in the commercial transactions of antique dealers and tombrobbers. The Hellenistic era is alive in the schools and universities that teach Egyptian youth about Ibn Sina and Ibn Rushd, the scholars from whom the western world first learned of Aristotle and the philosophy of classical Greece. The Christian era is alive in the worship of the Coptic faith, and the Islamic era is very much alive in the teaching of the Qur'ān and in the voice of the muezzin as he calls the faithful to prayer. The modern era is alive in the ships that travel the Suez canal, in the irrigation projects that branch out from the Aswan dam, in the traffic jams of cosmopolitan Cairo, and in the hopes and aspirations of the people of the Egyptian republic.

Notes to Appendix A

1 Donald N. Wilber, United Arab Republic, Egypt: Its People, Its Society, Its Culture (New Haven: HRAF Press, 1969), pp. 45-46.

2 See Appendix B.

3 The Torah and the Bible are sacred to Muslims as well as to Jews and Christians. Although Muslims share many beliefs with Jews and Christians, Muslims consider Muhammad to be the last in a line of prophets which includes Moses and Jesus. Muslims do not, however, believe Jesus to be the divine son of God. Mecca, Jerusalem and Damascus are the three holy cities of Islam. The basic tenants of Islam are called 'the five pillars': belief in one God and Muhammad as his prophet, prayer, almsgiving, fasting, and pilgrimage to Mecca. The pre-Islamic era is known to Muslims as 'the age of ignorance', and although polytheistic practices are condemned as products of the age of ignorance, many shrines to local saints and holy men can still be found in rural areas. Offerings and prayers are often presented at such shrines in the hope that the saint or holy man honored there might intercede for the supplicant with God. Such practices, though, are not openly approved by orthodox believers.

4 Wilber, p. 40.

5 Ibid, p. 46.

6 Ibid, p. 50.

7 Ibid, p. 49.

8 F. Gladstone Bratton, A History of Egyptian Civilization (London: Robert Hale, 1967), p. 38.

9 Georges Posener, Dictionary of Egyptian Civilization (New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1959), p. 144.

10 For instance, the letter bā': initial -- بـ ; medial -- ـبـ ; final -- ـب .

11 There are three types of tanwīn, corresponding to fatḥa, kasra and ḍamma. For example, the declension of bayt, the word for house or tent, is as follows: nominative -- baytun; accusative -- baytan; genitive -- baytin. When a noun is definite, it is preceded by the definite article, al-, and it is voweled according to case by fatḥa, kasra or ḍamma. For instance, 'the house' is declined as follows: nominative -- al-baytu; accusative -- al-bayta; genitive -- al-bayti.

[12] The symbol for a double letter, ّ , appears over the letter to be doubled. An example of the use of shedda occurs in the second radical of Form II verbs: f''l (compare with Form I: f'l). Form II verbs generally express causative of intensive action.

[13] If alif-hamza-fatha is followed by a lengthening alif (آ), then the hamza and its vowel are dropped and only one alif is written with madda above it (ٰ). The alif-madda combination is pronounced the same as alif by itself.

[14] Sukun (ْ) appears above a consonant to indicate the absence to a vowel.

[15] If the English word 'careful' were written without vowels the result would be 'crfl'.

[16] The basic verb forms are I fa'ala, II fa''ala, III fā'ala, IV af'ala, V tafa''ala, VI tafā'ala, VII infa'ala, VIII ifta'ala, IX if'alla, and X istaf'ala. Other word forms are derived from the verb forms.

[17] There are two tenses in Arabic. The perfect tense indicates an action that has been completed, and the imperfect tense indicates an action that is still in progress. Other indications of tense (e.g., future action) are signalled by the use of prefixed or auxilliary particles.

[18] Posener, p. 29.

[19] Wilber, p. 120.

[20] For a discussion of the 'golden' and 'silver' ages of Arabic literature see H.A.R. Gibb, Arabic Literature (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963).

[21] Majid Fakhry, A History of Islamic Philosophy (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), p. 109.

[22] The publication of the Margoliouth edition of the Poetics represented the first translation based upon a serious study of all three extant manuscripts -- Parisianus 1741, Riccardanus 46, and Paris 2346 arabe. The 1928 detailed study in Latin by Jaroslaus Tkatsch of the Arabic version, and the recently discovered medieval Latin translations of the Poetics have inspired further efforts by twentieth century translators. The nineteenth century versions of Butcher, Vahlen, Christ, and Bywater -- based on the Parisianus 1741 -- have become out-of-date in light of the newly available material. Gudeman, Rostagni, and (in English) Gerald Else have all published versions based upon translations of the Arabic. Abu Bishr Matta's double rendering of the word 'catharsis', for example, as تنقى وتنظف , meaning 'to purify

and to cleanse', supports Else's choice to translate catharsis as 'purification' instead of 'purgation'.

23 F. E. Peters, Aristotle and the Arabs (New York: New York University Press, 1968), p. 105.

24 Fakhry, p. 307.

25 Wilber, p. 121.

26 For example, from the fā'il pattern (the active participle of Form I): wālid (father), 'ālim (learned), rākib (rider), tābi' (following).

27 Mustafa Badawi, An Anthology of Modern Arabic Verse (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. viii.

28 Gustave E. VonGrunebaum (trans.), A Tenth-Century Document of Arabic Literary Theory and Criticism: The sections on poetry of al-Baqillani's "I'jāz al-Qur'ān." (Chicago: n.p., 1950), p. 57.

29 Badawi, p. vii.

30 Ibid.

31 Mounah A. Khouri and Hamid Algar, An Anthology of Modern Arabic Poetry (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), p. 1.

32 Badawi, p. vii.

33 Ibid, p. viii.

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid, pp. viii-ix.

36 Khouri, p. 3.

37 Badawi, p. xi.

38 Ibid, p. xiii.

39 Khouri, p. 8.

40 Badawi, p. xiii.

41 Khouri, p. 8.

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid, p. 12.

44 Badawi, p. xvii.

45 Ibid, p. xviii.

46 Badawi, p. xx.

47 Ibid, p, xix.

48 Ibid.

49 Ibid.

50 Ibid.

51 Khouri, p. 16.

52 Ibid, p. 19.

53 Carl Engel, The Music of the Most Ancient Nations (1864; rpt. London: William Reeves, 1929), p. 253.

54 Ibid, p. 243.

55 Hans Hickman, Musicologie Pharaonique (Cairo: Librairie Heitz/Kehl, 1956), p. 157.

56 Hans Hickmann, La Trompette dans l'Egypte Ancienne (Nashville: The Brass Press, 1946), pp. 67-70.

57 See illustrations in Engel.

58 Engel, p. 199.

59 Ibid, p. 203.

60 W.K.C. Gutherie, "Pythagoras and Pythagoreanism," ed., Paul Edwards, The Encyclopedia of Philosophy (New York: Collier Macmillan, 1967), v. 7, p. 38.

61 Ibid.

62 Ibid.

63 Ibid, p. 37.

64 Henry George Farmer, Al-Farābi's Arabic-Latin Writings on music (New York: Hinrichsen, 1960), p. 9.

65 Ibid, p. 49.

66 Ibid, p. 50.

67 Percy A. Scholes, The Oxford Companion to Music (London: Oxford University Press, 1943), p. 672.

68 Interview with Egyptian lutist, Hamza ad-Dīn

69 Habib Hassan Touma, "The Maqām Phenomenon: An Improvisation Technique in the Music of the Middle East," Journal of Ethnomusicology (University of Washington, 1971), 15(1), p. 38.

70 "The Pentatonic Scale is very widespread. As its name implies, it gives only five different notes to the octave, and in the most common form of the scale these follow the scheme that happens to be represented by the black keys of the piano, beginning on F sharp (or by the white keys beginning with C and omitting F and B)." Scholes, p. 836.

71 Edward William Lane, An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians (1836; rpt. Cairo: East-West Publications, 1978), pp. 351-72.

Appendix B --

Theatre and Drama in Ancient Egypt:

The Ritual Celebrations of the Egyptian Myths of Divine Kingship

Most of the ruins and relics which have survived from the days of ancient Egypt were made to serve the dead, and consequently, as Pierre Montet, a French archaeologist and historian, wrote in Everyday Life in the Days of Ramesses the Great, "the modern world is inclined to believe that the Egyptians were born in mummy wrappings." [1] Their temples, which were called 'houses of a million years', and their tombs, which were known as 'houses of eternity', were built of the finest materials, and many tombs and temples have endured, whereas most of the houses of unbaked brick in which the people lived have crumbled into the sands. Pierre Montet sees the apparent preferred status of temples and tombs over dwelling places, not as a contradiction inherent in a society often dominated by a religious aristocracy, but as a demonstration of widespread belief in life continuing after death. According to Montet,

> it was because life on the banks of the Nile was good that the hearts of the Egyptians overflowed with gratitude to the gods who were lords of all creation, and it was this sense of delight which led them to seek to prolong the good things of life even into the grave. [2]

The belief that life could continue after death was the foundation of the religious myths developed by the Egyptians. The ritual celebration of these myths on festive occasions is, perhaps correctly, considered by some scholars to be the earliest known dramatic and theatrical activity in human history. Consequently, before turning to the evidence of Egyptian ceremonies, it is necessary to examine the mythology behind the Egyptian ritual celebrations, and to understand the importance of mythology in western aesthetics.

The central myth upon which such ritual celebrations were based was the story of the god Osiris. 3 The following account of the story is drawn from The Golden Bough, written by Sir James Frazer:

> Osiris was the offspring of an intrigue between the earth-god Seb (Keb or Geb, as the name is sometimes transliterated) and the sky-goddess Nut. . . When the sun-god Ra perceived that his wife Nut had been unfaithful to him, he declared with a curse that she should be delivered of the child in no month of the year. But the goddess had another lover, the god Thoth. . . and he playing at draughts with the moon won from her a seventy-second part of every day, and having compounded five whole days out of these parts he added them to the Egyptian year of three hundred and sixty days. This was the mythical origin of the five supplementary days which the Egyptians annually inserted at the end of every year in order to establish a harmony between lunar and solar time. On these five days, regarded as outside the year of twelve months, the curse of the sun-god did not rest, and accordingly Osiris was born on the first of them. . . On the second of the supplementary days she gave birth to the elder Horus, on the third to the god Set. . . on the fourth to the goddess Isis, and on the fifth to the goddess Nephthys. Afterwards Set married his sister Nephthys, and Osiris married his sister Isis.
>
> Reigning as a king on earth, Osiris reclaimed the Egyptians from savagery, gave them laws, and taught them to worship the gods. Before his time the Egyptians had been cannibals. But Isis, the sister and wife of Osiris, discovered wheat and barley growing wild, and Osiris introduced the cultivation of these grains amongst his people. . . Moreover, Osiris is said to have

been the first to gather fruit from trees, to train the vine to the poles, and to tread the grapes. Eager to communicate these beneficient discoveries to all mankind, he committed the whole government of Egypt to his wife Isis, and traveled over the world, diffusing the blessings of civilization and agriculture wherever he went. . . But his brother Set. . . with seventy-two others plotted against him. Having taken the measure of his good brother's body by stealth, the bad brother. . . fashioned and highly decorated a coffer of the same size, and once when they were all drinking and making merry he brought in the coffer and jestingly promised to give it to the one whom it should fit exactly. . . Last of all Osiris stepped into it and lay down. On that the conspirators ran and slammed the lid down on him, nailed it fast, soldered it with molten lead, and flung the coffer into the Nile. . . When Isis heard of it she sheared off a lock of her hair, put on mourning attire, and wandered disconsolately up and down, seeking the body. . . .

> Meantime the coffer containing the body of Osiris had floated down the river and away out to sea, till at last it drifted ashore at Byblos, on the coast of Syria. [4]

Eventually, Isis discovered the chest containing Osiris. A tree had sprung up and enclosed the chest in its trunk, and the wood of the tree had been hewn into a pillar at the king's palace at Byblos. Isis managed to recover the body and return to Egypt, where she went to Buto to see the younger Horus, her son by Osiris.

Once again, however, Set arrived, and upon spying Osiris's body, he cut it into fourteen pieces and scattered them abroad. Isis collected the parts -- except for the genitals -- and began a lament over them that was heard in heaven.

In pity for her sorrow the sun-god Ra sent down from heaven the jackal-headed god Anubis, who, with the aid of Isis and Nephthys, of Thoth and Horus, pieced together the broken body of the murdered god, swathed it in linen bandages, and observed all the other rites which the Egyptians were wont to perform over the bodies of the departed. Then Isis fanned the cold clay with her wings: Osiris revived, and thenceforth reigned as king over the dead in the other world. There he bore titles of Lord of the Underworld, Lord of Eternity, Ruler of the Dead. There, too, in the great Hall of the Two Truths, assisted by forty-two assessors, one from each of the principal districts in Egypt, he presided as judge at the trials of the souls of the departed, who made their solemn confession before him, and, their heart having been weighed in the balance of justice, received the reward of virtue in a life eternal or the appropriate punishment of their sins. [5]

The story did not end with Osiris's resurrection from the dead and elevation to ruler and judge of the underworld. The ghost of Osiris appeared to Horus the younger and urged him to avenge his father's murder. Thus arose a terrific battle between Horus and Set in which both deities suffered serious injury. Horus lost an eye in the conflict, but the eye was healed and restored by Thoth, the ibis-headed god of wisdom.

The significance of the story is two-fold. In the first place the accession of Horus signaled the unification of the Upper and Lower Egyptian Kingdoms. The pharaohs ruled as divine successors to Horus. The second significance of the resurrection of Osiris was the promise of immortality understood by all Egyptians.

> Thus every dead Egyptian was identified with Osiris and bore his name. From the Middle Kingdom onwards it was

> the common practice to address the deceased as "Osiris So-and So," as if he were the god himself. . . .[6]

Cults of divine kingship persist in modern Africa, and many of the rituals and myths of such cults bear striking resemblances to the rituals and myths connected with the worship of Osiris. For instance, according to Eva Meyerowitz in The Divine Kingdom in Ghana and Ancient Egypt, the Saharan falcon clan people carried the ancient religion with them as they migrated west to Timbuktu and south along the Volta River valleys of Ghana. James Frazer, in an effort to trace the origins of Osirian myth to the tribal religions of Africa, finds numerous parallels among the rituals and myths of the Shilluk people of the White Nile, the Baganda of Uganda and central Africa, and the many Bantu tribes from Rhodesia to South Africa. Frazer considers the possibility that Osiris may originally have been a human king or chieftan, and Frazer supports his case with the historically established human origins of Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and Confucianism.

Frazer devotes considerable attention, however, to the myths of Mediterranean and Middle Eastern civilizations, and from his studies emerge the possibilities of direct links between Osirian myth and the myths of Adonis, Attis and Dionysus, and in particular between the myths of Osiris and Christ. "In the faith of the Egyptians the cruel death and blessed resurrection of Osiris occupied the same place as the death and resurrection of Christ in the faith of Christians." [7]

The myths of the ancient civilizations were either suppressed by or incorporated into later religions. As poet and critic Robert Graves remarked in the forward to The White Goddess, "it is unfortunate that, despite the strong mythical element in Christianity, 'mythical' has come to mean 'fanciful, absurd, unhistorical'." [8]

The works of Frazer and Graves have been reassessed critically, both in terms of the relationship between mythology and religion and in terms of the origins of drama. Perhaps more importantly, however, mythology itself has been reassessed from a variety of scientific viewpoints.

The growth of a scientific approach to mythology has gradually ugmented the limited conceptions of myth about which Graves complains. n the eighteenth century appeared "the first serious modern treatment f mythology," [9] Giambattista Vico's Scienza nuova. Vico's theory of istory relied heavily upon mythology as the only means of discovering the religion, morals, law and social life of early society." [10] Myths, or Vico, were neither false narratives nor allegories. "They represent he collective mentality of a given age." [11]

A philological approach to myth interpretation emerged in 1856 with Max Muller's Comparative Mythology. "To understand a myth, asserted Muller, discover the etymology of names." [12] Muller's work, which included a study of Egyptian myths, opened the way for Sir James Frazer and the later linguistic and semiological approaches to mythology of Ferdinand de Saussure, Claude Levi-Strauss and Roland Barthes. Applying to anthropology de Saussure's linguistic distinction between signifier and signified, Levi-Strauss develops

> the thesis that myths incorporate and exhibit binary oppositions which are present in the structure of the society in which the myth was born. In the myth these oppositions are reconciled and overcome. The function of the myth is to render intellectually and socially tolerable what would otherwise be experienced as incoherence. [13]

Roland Barthes, using the techniques of semiology developed and refined by de Saussure and Levi-Strauss, redefines myth as "depoliticized speech." [14] For Barthes myth constitutes a metalanguage, the purpose of which is to hide the political significance of history.

The distorting power of myth had already been noted by modern psychologists. Freud, for instance, held that myths are probably distortions "of the wishful fantasies of whole nations, the [age-long] dreams of youthful humanity," [15] According to C. G. Jung, "modern psychology has the distinct advantage of having opened up a field of

psychic phenomena which are themselves the matrix of all mythology -- [i.e.,] dreams, visions, fantasies, and delusional ideas." 16

Historical, anthropological, philological and psychological studies of myth have culminated in a redefinition of myth as a type of communication. Collectively, myth includes legends and fables, narrative accounts of the basic activities of humankind. Individually, myth includes dreams, visions and fantasies, the unconsciously produced imaginings of the mind.

The impact of new concepts of mythology has resulted in numerous theories of literary criticism. Robert Graves, for example, claims that

> the language of poetic myth anciently current in the Mediterranean and Northern Europe was a magical language bound up with popular religious ceremonies in honour of the Moon-goddess, or Muse, some of them dating from the Old Stone Age, and that this remains the language of true poetry -- 'true' in the nostalgic modern sense of 'the unimprovable original, not a synthetic substitute'. The language was tampered with in late Minoan times when invaders from Central Asia began to substitute patrilinear for matrilinear institutions and remodel or falsify the myths to justify the social changes. 17

The language outlined by Graves is based upon tree-lore and upon seasonal observations of life in the fields, and many of the examples given by Graves are drawn from the myths of Dionysus, Adonis and Osiris. Of particular interest to Graves are the myths of Isis, whom he identifies as the White-goddess, the Moon-goddess, the Triple-goddess of prehistoric matriarchal society.

Another literary critic, Northrup Frye, takes a more scientific approach to myth: he categorizes myths according to season, and each season is related to a genre. Myths of spring are associated with comedies; myths of summer with romance; myths of autumn are associated with tragedy; myths of winter with irony and satire. Then, incorporating theories of mode, symbol, genre and myth into a circular

whole, Frye develops a structured procedure for getting to the heart, the core, the center, of a literary work. What is supposed to be at the center depends upon the work itself rather than the methodology of criticism. Thus Frye claims that his approach "attacks no methods of criticism, once that subject has been defined: what it attacks are the barriers between the methods." [18]

The relationship of myth to drama has been explored in depth by such scholars as Jane Ellen Harrison and Theodore Gaster. According to Gaster, myth is the connecting link between ritual and drama.

> Drama evolves from seasonal rituals. Seasonal rituals are functional in character. Their purpose is periodically to revive the topocosm, that is, the entire complex of any given locality conceived as a living organism. But this topocosm possesses both a punctual and a durative aspect, representing, not only the actual and present community, but also that ideal and continuous entity of which it is but the current manifestation. Accordingly, seasonal rituals are accompanied by myths which are designed to interpret their purely functional acts in terms of ideal and durative situations. The interpenetration of the myth and ritual creates drama. [19]

Working from this premise, Gaster examines evidence of primitive drama among the ancient Canaanite, Hittite, Egyptian and Hebrew civilizations. The Egyptian evidence is drawn from five sources: the Pyramid Texts, the Ramesseum Dramatic Papyrus, the Memphite Shabaka Stone, the Edfu Inscriptions, and the Ihernofrit Stele.

The Pyramid Texts, of which there are more than fifty dating from 2750 to about 2475 B.C., consist of pictures and accounts of the Osirian myth inscribed on the walls of tombs and temples. Although the presence of occasional dialogue and indications of action are considered by some scholars to warrant classification as drama, other scholars point out the lack of any direct indications that actual performances occurred.

The Ramasses Dramatic Papyrus, also called the Egyptian Coronation Drama, was discovered at Thebes in 1896, unrolled and pieced together by the Berlin papyrologist Hugo Ibscher, and first interpreted and published by Kurt Sethe in 1928.

> The papyrus itself was written in the reign of Sesostris [Senusret] I, a king of the Twelfth Dynasty (c. 1970 B.C.), but according to Sethe, the contents go back a further millenium and a half to the time of the First Dynasty (c. 3300 B.C.). This would therefore be the earliest literary specimen of Drama yet known. [20]

The text presents the myth of Osiris's rebirth as Horus in conjunction with a ritual format geared toward ensuring prosperity during the reign of the new king. The story, in the nature of a scenario of forty-six scenes, was enacted or recited at successive stations along the processional route taken by the royal barque. The cruise down the Nile led to the temple of Thoth of Letopolis, to HRY-THNW, to the Ibis Nome and to Buto; then the procession retraced its course to return to the Palace of the Gods. Many scenes were repeated at each stop along the way. Scenes include the staging of a ritual combat, the burial of the old king and his resurrection as his successor, the investiture and coronation of the new king, the celebration of a feast to which are invited the governors of the nomes, or administrative districts, of Egypt, the royal tour of the new realm, and various magical rites and offerings designed to perpetuate life and ensure fertility.

A similar text, called the Memphite Drama, is inscribed on the black granite Shabaka Stone now in the British Museum.

> It was written at the order of Shabaka, a king of the Twenty-fifth or Ethiopian Dynasty, who reigned about 711 B.C. In a preamble, however, the monarch states expressly that it was copied from an older, worn original. The latter is assigned by Sethe to the First Dynasty (c. 3300 B.C.), but arguments have been advanced

> by Rusch to show that it should more probably be dated to the Fifth Dynasty, some eight hundred years later (c. 2500 B.C.). [21]

The text, translated and published by Sethe in 1928, is similar in content to the Ramesses Papyrus, but more compact and less repetitious. The story is alternatingly narrated and enacted, and the performance ends with a hymn to Ptah, the chief deity of Memphis.

The Edfu Drama is inscribed on one of the stone walls of the temple at Edfu, and the text deals with the same myths and rituals presented in the Ramesses and Memphite documents. In one passage, however, appears the statement that the story is recited by a Precentor or Chief Lector. Gaster compares the role of the narrator [22] or Precentor to the role of "the Sanskrit sutradhara, the Greek choregos, the Moslem mulla of the Hosein pantomimes, and the medieval 'presenter' [of passion plays]." [23]

The Ihernofrit Inscriptions are of a different nature. Ihernofrit (also called Igernofret or Ikhernofret) was a 'mystagogue' [hry sst'] who officiated at the Abydos ceremonies during the reign of Sesostris (Senusret) III of the Twelfth Dynasty (c. 1870 B.C.). Gaster presents the translation of Ihernofrit's eight-line description of his duties after the German version of Schaefer:

> 17. I arranged the expedition of Wep-wawet when he went to the aid of his father.
> 18. I beat back those who attacked the Barque of Neshmet, and I overthrew the foes of Osiris. I arranged the Great Procession and escorted the god on his journey.
> 19. I launched the god's ship, and. . . Thoth. . . the voyage. I provided a crew for the ship of the Lord of Abydos who is called He-Who-Appears-in-Truth. I decked the ship with gorgeous trappings so that it might sail to the region of Peker.
> 20. I conducted the god to his grave in Peker.

21. I championed Wenen-nefru (unnefer), on the day of the Great Combat and overthrew all his adversaries beside the waters of Nedit. I caused him to sail in his ship. It was laden with his beauty. I caused the hearts of the Easterners to swell with joy, and I brought gladness to the Westerners at the sight of the Barque of Neshmet. It put in at the port of Abydos; and Osiris, the first of all Westerners, the Lord of Abydos, was conducted to his palace. [24]

Another aocount of the duties of an Egyptian performer is drawn from E. Drioton's Le theatre egyptien by Pierre Montet, who attributes the following statement to a stele at Edfu: "I accompanied my master on his travels, and never failed to recite. I gave my master his cues in all his speeches. If he was a god I was a king. If he slew, I raised to life again." [25]

Two major questions emerged in light of the Egyptian evidence. First, what link, if any, exists between the Egyptian ritual drama and the later theatre and drama of the Greeks? Second, were the Egyptian ritual celebrations truly dramatic or theatrical?

No direct influence upon the development of Greek theatre has yet been discovered. As theatre historian Oscar Brockett, who bases his brief study of Egyptian drama on the works of Gaster, remarks in The History of the Theatre:

> Even if we posit a direct influence, each should be given its proper credit. The Egyptians maintained an advanced civilization for about 3000 years (a period longer than that which separates us from the beginnings of Greek drama) and never progressed theatrically beyond the stage of ritual drama. Their failure, and that of the people of the Near East with almost as long a history, only serves to emphasize the enormous achievement of the Greeks. [26]

According to Aristotle, drama, in the form of tragedy, grew from the dithyramb, a ritual celebration of Dionysian myth. The Greek historian Herodotus, who traveled in Egypt in the mid-fifth century B.C., witnessed two performances there which prompted him to suggest that Dionysus might be a disguised version of Osiris, a claim reinforced by Plutarch in De Iside et Osiride. Modern compilers of mythologies -- e.g., Muller, Frazer, Gaster and Graves -- have pointed out many parallels and similarities between Egyptian and Greek myths, but none has uncovered conclusive evidence of a direct link between the two mythologies. L.R. Farnell skirts the question entirely in The Cults of the Greek States. His only reference to Osiris appears in rebuttal to the contention that sacramental rending of the god was among the practices of the Greek trieterica, a festival of Bacchus celebrated every three years.

Whatever the connection between Osiris and Dionysus, the many similarities inherent in their myths point to the likelihood of a common origin -- either from a pre-historic, matriarchal, fertility religion or from a common, archetypal personification of the cyclical forces of nature. If a bond exists between the ritual drama of Egypt and the drama and theatre of Greece, it is the common theme described by Robert Graves as "the single grand theme of poetry: the life, death and resurrection of the Spirit of the Year." [27]

Were the Egyptian ritual celebrations truly dramatic or theatrical? No physical ruin of an Egyptian theatre nor any record of one being built has survived from ancient times. The ritual performances (if, as the scant evidence suggests, performances actually took place) were confined to the temples and their environs. The chief measure of the theatricality of the ritual celebrations stems from the probable use of spectacle by the priests responsible for arranging festivities. Music, at least in the form of hymns and chants such as the Hymn to Ptah, probably added to the theatricality of the festivities.

Music and spectacle are among the six elements of drama outlined by Aristotle. Dialogue, another element of drama, appears in all three

extant Egyptian texts. Thought is reflected in the mythical significance of the conflict between good and evil personified in Horus and Seth. Plot, the structure of events, is evidenced by the strict adherence in the extant texts to the mythic events.

The major objection to classifying the Egyptian texts as drama lies in the absence of characterization. Even the Pharaoh, the only human figure in the texts, is presented as a divine being, the god Horus. Never does individual humanity enter into the stories, except, perhaps, in the interpretations of the human spectators. The key to human character is individuality. The Egyptian ritualized myths were perpetuations of an ideal, unchanging religious story. The Greek dramas were individualized interpretations of specific human problems. Thus, assuming that the religious myths and rituals of the Egyptians were enacted, the performances still fell short of the Aristotelian definition of drama as 'the imitation of character imagined in action', a definition which remains at the heart of western theatre art.

If the Egyptian texts fall short of drama, then into what category do they fall and of what value are they in the history of drama and theatre? Definition as 'ritual celebrations of myth' provides an answer to the first question and a clue to the second. The spontaneity and immediacy of celebration are elements lacking in many modern plays and performances. Hence the celebrational nature of the Egyptian ritualized myths is a valuable reminder to modern dramatists and theatre practitioners. If, as Peter Brook suggests, "we are rediscovering that a holy theatre is still what we need," then celebration may be a means of achieving our goal. [28] Without celebration, holy theatre becomes dull and deadly theatre. Without celebration, drama loses touch with its mythic origins.

Notes to Appendix B

1 Pierre Montet, Everyday Life in Egypt in the Days of Ramesses the Great (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1958), p. 1.

2 Ibid.

3 For a detailed study of Osirian myth in Arabic, see Dr. Abd al-Hamid Zayid, Abydus (al-Qāhirah: al-Hayah al-'ammah li shu'ūn al-matābi' al-amīrīya, 1963), 123 pp. Arab scholars, however, also rely on works such as Sir James Frazer's The Golden Bough.

4 Sir James Frazer, Adonis, Attis, Osiris, v. 2, in The Golden Bough (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1935), pp. 6-9.

5 Ibid, pp. 12-13.

6 Ibid, p. 16.

7 Ibid, p. 159.

8 Robert Graves, The White Goddess (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1948), p. 13.

9 Alasdair McIntyre, "Myth," The Encyclopedia of Philosophy, ed. Paul Edwards (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company & The Free Press, 1967), v. 5, p. 435.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid, p. 437.

14 Roland Barthes, Mythologies (New York: Hill and Wang, 1957), p. 143.

15 Carl G. Jung, Symbols of Transformation (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956), p. 24.

16 Ibid, p. 390.

17 Graves, pp. 9-10.

[18] Northrup Frye, Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 341.

[19] Theodore H. Gaster, Thespis (New York: Henry Schuman, 1950), p. 3.

[20] Ibid, p. 52.

[21] Ibid, p. 61.

[22] It is doubtful that the choregoi, the individuals responsible for hiring and maintaining the Greek choruses, acted as narrators. A more likely choice would have been the choryphaeus, the individual chosen as the leader of the chorus; however, this is also uncertain. See: Sir Arthur Pickard-Cambridge, The Dramatic Festivals of Athens (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), p. 348.

[23] Gaster, p. 63.

[24] Ibid, pp. 41-42.

[25] Montet, p. 297.

[26] Oscar G. Brockett, History of the Theatre (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1968), p. 8.

[27] Graves, p. 422.

[28] Peter Brook, The Empty Space (New York: Avon Books, 1968), p. 58.

Appendix C --
Theatre and Drama in Islamic Egypt:
The Shadow Puppet Tradition

With the advent of Islam came religious prohibitions which stifled what few attempts were made to create dramatic art and living theatre. [1] Music and dancing, for instance, were considered frivolous activities by orthodox Muslims, and representations of human and animal figures in art were considered forms of idolotry. Consequently, the chief outlets for artistic expression during the Islamic Middle Ages were geometric or floral designs used primarily for calligraphy or architectural decoration, and the art of poetry. No architectural evidence of theatre activity in the Islamic world prior to the nineteenth century has yet been discovered, but remnants of dramatic poetry written in the thirteenth century have survived. The plays, written by an Egyptian physician named Ibn Daniyal, mark the beginning of the Middle Eastern shadow puppet tradition.

There are three general categories of puppets: hand puppets, marionettes, and shadow puppets. While the first two categories entail the use of three-dimensional figures which could easily be construed by orthodox Muslims as idolotrous representations, shadow puppetry utilizes a two-dimensional effect created by light and shadow on a transluscent screen. On one side of the screen sits the audience and on the other side the puppeteer who uses control rods to operate the puppet figures next to the surface of the screen. A light source behind the screen shines past the puppet figures enabling the audience on the opposite side of the screen to see the shadow images cast on the screen. Perhaps because the shadow plays, unlike other types of puppet plays, "stress the phantom-like aspect of our own life's course," [2] or maybe because the shadow images cast on the viewing screen are one step removed from the puppet figures themselves, the shadow puppet theatre has persisted while other forms of puppet theatre have failed to develop in the Islamic world prior to modern times. As a means of stressing the

lifelessness of the puppet figures, the puppet-makers often punched holes in the puppets' bodies, and as a means of stressing the transitory nature of the shadow images, the puppeteers often began their performances with the recitation of a poem such as the 'Poem of the Curtain' of Mustafa 'Ali:

> That curtain which they set up signifies the
> veil [that hides God from man's eyes].
> That candle is the light of the Creator's might.
> Behind the curtain of Divine Wisdom, incessantly
> The images of people appear, one by one.
> But when the candle goes out, the shadows vanish.
> Their person and their splendor are borrowed and
> transitory. [3]

The Origins of Shadow Puppetry

The origins of puppetry are unclear, but according to Olive Blackman in Shadow Puppets, "the Shadow Show is usually regarded as the oldest form of Puppet Theatre." [4] The origins of shadow puppetry are also unclear, but three distinct shadow play traditions have developed in separate parts of the world: China, Southeast Asia (Java, Bali, and India), and the Middle East (Egypt, Syria, Turkey, and Greece). As Jeune Scott-Kemball points out in Javanese Shadow Puppets:

> Much thought has been given by scholars to the question whether the shadow play originated in one of these countries and then spread to the others, or whether it developed independently in different places. They have put forward various theories, but the answer to this problem may never be known. [5]

The earliest indications of shadow puppet activity come from China. According to Benjamin March in Chinese Shadow-figure Plays and their Making:

The story goes that the Han emperor Wu Ti mourned a lost love until he languished and the affairs of the state were imperiled. Rich rewards were offered to whomever would bring her back from the land of shades. Finally, one sorcerer, more clever than the rest, made a transparent image of the maiden, and permitted it to appear against a lighted screen in a doorway of the monarch's apartment. She moved, and talked to him, and though he might not approach too closely her incorporeal manifestation, he was content. [6]

Olive Blackman traces the origins of shadow puppetry to the same incident.

> This Chinese incident is said to have taken place in 121 A.D. But it is not until much later -- in the early part of the Sung dynasty [A.D. 969-1279] -- that pictures and writings provide evidence of the existence of Shadow Shows. [7]

The Chinese shadow plays, according to Blackman, fall into three categories: military, civil, and religious. The Javanese and southeast Asian shadow puppet plays are primarily religious, ritual celebrations of myths drawn from Indian sources, while the shadow shows of the Middle East (or Near East, as some writers refer to the same area, namely the land mass which joins Africa, Asia and Europe) are clearly secular in content. Jacob Landau speculates that the content of the Middle or Near Eastern shows may have been drawn from Greek sources, but he points out that

> even though the obscene element may have been acquired from Greek mimicry, perhaps through Byzantium, it still seems that the source of the Near Eastern shadow theater was in east and southeast Asia. [8]

Citing the tradition that shadow puppetry originated in China, Landau claims "it was from China, probably through the agency of the Mongolians, the neighbors of the Turkish tribes, that shadow plays were

introduced into the Muslim Near East in the twelfth or thirteenth century." [9] The manuscript containing the three shadow plays of Ibn Daniyal date from this period.

Ibn Daniyal and the Early Egyptian Shadow Puppet Theatre

Shams al-Din Muhammad ibn Daniyal was born in Mosul (Iraq) in 1248. Mosul at the time was second only to Baghdad as a center of learning in the 'Abbasid empire, and by the time he had reached the age of nineteen Ibn Daniyal was well versed in such theological subjects as Qur'an, the sacred revelation of Islam, Hadith, the sayings of the Prophet, and Tafsir, the exegesis or explanation of Qur'an. At the age of nineteen, however, Ibn Daniyal left Mosul for Egypt in the company of a group of writers and intellectuals who had grown dissatisfied with conditions in their native land. [10]

On route to Egypt through Syria and Palestine Ibn Daniyal encountered refugees and veterans of the Crusades, and upon arriving in Cairo he began studying medicine while continuing to write and publish poetry. As a practicing physician he became interested in the care and treatment of the mentally ill, an endeavor which undoubtedly provided material for many of his literary characterizations. Although he is most famous for his shadow plays, published collectively as Taif al-Khayal shortly after his arrival in Egypt, his later works included historical studies, such as a history of Egypt from the Arab conquest to his own era. He was well known for his sense of humor and humanism as well as for his literary accomplishments. He died in 1311 at the age of sixty-three. [11]

Ibn Daniyal wrote his shadow plays in poetry and versified prose, [12] and the prologue to the plays contains directions and advice which indicate that the plays were intended for actual production. The prologue also contains lists of lyrics considered suitable for musical accompaniment.

The first play, Taif al-Khayal (The Spirit of Imagination or The Spirit of the Shadow), deals with an old soldier named Wisal who is hounded by a lying matchmaker into marrying a woman who turns out to be incredibly ugly. Lifting the veil from his bride's face, Wisal discovers his error, and after threatening the matchmaker and her husband, he decides to go on a pilgrimage to escape his fate.

The second play in the collection is entitled 'Ajib wa Gharib (The Amazing and the Strange). The main characters are both rogues, but the play itself has no plot and the two rogues do little more than prepare the way for a gallery of market place character types who follow one another in a lengthy procession.

> First in the procession are various professions, whose exponents show their skill and praise their wares: a snake charmer, a quack doctor, a hawker of medicinal herbs, an ophthalmic surgeon, two acrobats, an astrologer, a sorcerer trading in amulets, an epileptic boy and a phlebotomist with all her treatments. These are followed by several animal tamers, who present their animals or let them show their clownish tricks: tamers of lions, elephants, and bears, Abu'l-Qitat (who tries to reconcile cats and dogs), a dancing teacher for dogs, a Sudanese buffoon, a bayonet swallower, a monkey owner, and a rope dancer. This gallery of characters, every one of whom recites or gesticulates in accordance with his role, is ended by an enamored man covered with self-inflicted wounds, a carrier of burning coal and a camel driver. [13]

The third play is a love story, al-Mutayam (The Love-stricken), which begins with a prize fight and develops into a celebration which is visited by a parade of characters of ill repute.

> Most of them are sinners or pathological types: a debauchee, wild with carnal appetites; a fat songster and winebibber; a pale, haggard youth who shuns wine and

> indoor sleeping; a mediator of other people's quarrels; a sick man; a man inclined to masturbation; another who snatches children from their beds to satisfy his fiendish lust on their tender bodies; an uninvited parasite; and the Angel of Death, who takes al-Mutayam's soul, after due repentance by the latter, driving the frightened guests away. [14]

Aside from characterization the central elements of Ibn Daniyal's shadow plays are his stress of comic misunderstanding, often conveyed by puns, and his stress of the obscene and vulgar. Music is also an important aspect of Ibn Daniyal's theatre, and music, puns, obscene comedy and stereotyped characterizations have remained at the heart of the shadow puppet tradition throughout its history in the Middle East.

Although various references to shadow puppetry in Egypt during the four centuries following Ibn Daniyal indicate that performances continued to be held, [15] no manuscripts of plays have yet been discovered from this period. In the meantime, however, another shadow puppet tradition was developing in the Middle East, a tradition that probably originated in Turkey and eventually spread to countries throughout the Ottoman empire. The tradition became known by the name of its chief character -- a rascal called Karaghoz.

The Karaghoz Shadow Puppet Tradition

The origins of the name 'Karaghoz' are highly controversial. In a dissertation entitled The Karaghiozis Tradition and Greek Shadow Puppet Theatre: History and Analysis, Linda Suny Myrsiades discusses a variety of approaches to the problem, approaches that seem largely to reflect the cultural biases of their respective adherents. [16] For instance, several Greek writers contend that Karaghoz (meaning 'black eyes' in Turkish) was originally a creation of a Greek named Giorgios Mavromates (meaning 'black eyes' in Greek). Other Greek writers trace Karaghoz to a fifth century Greek mime named Karamallo (a combination of the Turkish

'kara' for 'black' and the Greek 'mallo' for 'hair'. From the Arab point of view, Jacob Landau suggests that the puppet was originally named for Qaraqush, an Arab warrior in the Crusades who served under Salah al-Din (Saladin). Myrsiades, after reviewing these and other speculations, comes to the following conclusion:

> It appears that in the case of Karaghiozis' name the simplest explanation of it as Turkish for "black eyes" is the most authoritative. Desperate efforts to prove the figure a Greek, gypsy, Egyptian, or Frenchman notwithstanding, there is a strong case, if one deals with the name alone, for the Turkish claim that Karaghiozis as Karaghoz was a native figure. [17]

The problem of determining the origins of shadow puppetry in the Middle East is as complex as the etymology of the name Karaghoz. While the plays of Ibn Daniyal constitute the earliest concrete evidence of Middle Eastern shadow puppetry, Turkish traditions exist that trace the shadow theatre to the Seljouk conversion to Sufi mysticism between the eighth and eleventh centuries and to the mimetic performances of the Turkish meddah (praise-giver) and the orta oyunu (improvisational farce troupes) which developed between the ninth and fourteenth centuries. [18] Speculations about the emergence of the Karaghoz character also date back to these popular traditions. One such account is given by the seventeenth century Turkish historian Chelebi who claims that a blacksmith called Karagoz and a mason named Haciavad were actual individuals who were put to death during the reign of the Ottoman ruler Orhan (1326-1359). Chelebi's account bears a striking similarity to the Chinese legend of Wu Ti.

> Working together on the construction of a mosque for the sultan, the two companions constantly entertained the other workers with their jests. Consequently, construction on the mosque was impeded to such a degree that the sultan ordered the two men killed. Orhan was soon to regret the loss of his two lively subjects, and

> one Sheih Kusteri in order to console his lord erected a screen in one oorner of the palaoe and presented the sultan with a shadow performance using cutout figures of Karagoz and Haciavad. [19]

Sheih Kusteri died sometime between 1366 and 1400 and the inscription on his tombstone [20] in Brussa clearly identifies him as a shadow puppet player -- if not the legendary creator of the Karaghoz tradition. Myrsiades draws the following conclusions:

> it appears that the Karaghiozis performance developed out of a merger of mime performance and early shadow theatre entertainments in a process of gradual accretion over a period of years beginning possibly some time in the fourteenth century or earlier in Turkey and certainly by the seventeenth century. [21]

The question of which came first, the Egyptian or the Turkish shadow puppet theatre, is still a matter for speculation, but as Landau points out "one should first prove real contact between the Egyptian and Turkish theaters before assuming an influence of the former on the latter. . . . " [22] The first concrete evidence of contact dates from the early sixteenth century when Sultan Selim I, the Ottoman conqueror of Egypt, reportedly took a troupe of shadow play performers to Istanbul. [23] Eventually, the Turkish Karaghoz tradition spread to Syria, Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco, and according to Ibrahim Hamadah, a modern Arab historian, from the Ottoman empire to Europe via Greece and Sicily. [24] The Egyptian shadow theatre continued to develop independently, however, even as the Turkish character Karaghoz gained popularity with Egyptian audiences as 'Araghoz. [25]

The Karaghoz Plays and Performances

Until modern times and the increase in standards of literacy and the growth of national interest in preserving records of folklore heritage, the texts of shadow plays were transferred from one generation

of performers to the next primarily by oral tradition. Consequently, most extant shadow play scripts are primarily outlines of basic dialogue and actions of a cast of stereotyped characters, and individual puppeteers freely add to or vary these elements according to local conditions or personal tastes. Also, the plays often reflect national sentiments in addition to other cultural idiosyncracies. For example, the Greek Karaghiozis plays often convey a heroic aspect not present in Islamic plays. The heroic aspect of the Greek plays is a reflection of the nationalistic sentiments of a population that has only recently freed itself from Ottoman domination. The Turkish plays, however, reflect a different kind of struggle with authority. They are generally more satirical and aimed at internal institutions rather than foreign powers. The Arabic Karaghoz plays are closer in tone to the Turkish shows, although the Arab plays tend to reflect more provincial concerns rather than national or international problems.

Hundreds of Karaghoz scripts have been recorded in modern times, and so discussing them in detail is beyond the scope of this work. Instead, a review of the most popular subjects is presented. According to Jacob Landau, the best-liked subjects include:

> a. Karaghoz looks for employment under his companion Hagivad's guidance and demonstrates his lack of ability.
>
> b. Karaghoz tries to do forbidden things out of curiosity or lust; he is caught by the police, from whom only Hagivad can save him, on his promise to give an even gayer performance on the following evening.
>
> c. Hagivad teaches Karaghoz various games, which the latter misunderstands.
>
> d. Karaghoz manages to get himself into trouble and finds himself in an unpleasant situation.
>
> e. Plots, based on Persian love themes, the Arabian Nights, and Turkish popular legends. [26]

Two examples of the first category are The Muddleheaded Night Watchman [27] and Karaghoz, Victim of his Chastity. [28] In the former,

Hajivat arranges for the rental of the Drunkard's house to a Dame of doubtful morals. The Drunkard hires Karaghoz as a nightwatchman, but instead of doing his duty, Karaghoz tries repeatedly to enter the house against the Dame's wishes. Meanwhile, a Dandy, an Opium-smoker and an Arab Merchant gain entry by means of passwords which Karaghoz misunderstands and mispronounces. Finally, he manages to get inside where he becomes quite drunk and rowdy, upsetting the entire neighborhood. In the second play, Karaghoz is hired to guard the beautiful wife of a Turkish businessman. The wife, however, falls in love with Karaghoz who tries various means of disguising himself. First, he transforms himself into a bridge, but a parade of people suddenly appears and almost tramples him. Next, he "lies on his back and endeavors to pass himself off as a wooden post, which he does in a highly indecorous manner." [29] When some washerwomen hang their laundry on the post, Karaghoz thinks his scheme a success, but a moment later a slave arrives with some horses which he ties to Karaghoz. When the horses get restless, Karaghoz' troubles increase, but eventually he manages to escape in the carriage of a foreign ambassador. The husband returns and all ends well.

The Muddle-headed Night Watchman borders on Landau's second category, for Karaghoz oversteps his authority to visit a house he has been forbidden to enter. Another example of Karaghoz engaging in a forbidden activity occurs in The Opium Addict. In this play Karaghoz and his companions become intoxicated and end up in a brawl. Landau gives no examples of his plays that demonstrate his other categories except that in almost every play Karaghoz 'manages to get himself into trouble and finds himself in an unpleasant situation'.

The comic effects in Karaghoz plays often result from linguistic misunderstandings, from obscene or ridiculous situations, or from slapstick confrontations. Another source of comedy originates in the characters themselves. In addition to the characters already mentioned, the following character types often appear: dwarves, rowdies, bathhouse

stokers, negro slaves, wizards, demons, devils, and a wide variety of women and children, including members of Karaghoz' family.

Shadow play performances used to take place in coffeehouses and cafes, especially during Ramadan, the Islamic month of fasting from dawn to dusk. Nowadays, however, according to Andreas Tietze,

> the shadow stage has completely disappeared from the cafes. The setting where it still occasionally can be found are the extended family gatherings at the occasion of the circumcision, usually of an entire group, of boys of about 5-8 years of age. [30]

The use of the shadow theatre as a distraction at circumcision is one of the earliest traditions connected with shadow puppetry. Examples include "a princely circumcision feast in 1582" [31] and the circumcision of Karaghoz himself, as recorded by the Turkish historian Chelebi during the reign of Murad IV (1623-1640). According to Chelebi's account, Karaghoz "has been forced to undergo the operation in lieu of his fugitive son," [32] but Karaghoz is entertained at the event by a set of miniature shadow puppets who perform a play within the play.

The structure of shadow plays is similar throughout the Middle East. Myrsiades outlines five structural patterns evident in Karaghiosis texts:

> The first might be called the cumulative pattern in which a given event is repeated with variations. The second is a pattern in which the play proceeds linearly and sequentially to its conclusion. The third pattern is one of progressive development; it often exhibits the alternation of major and minor lines of action to create tension and suspense. The fourth is a mixed pattern often using both repetition and either linear or progressive development. It is more typically characterized as a diptich -- a play with two separate structures. The fifth pattern may simply be referred to as a ritual pattern. [33]

The ritual pattern is the least common pattern in the Islamic shadow puppet theatre since it deals primarily with non-Islamic agricultural rituals and myths. The 'Poem of the Curtain' which has already been cited is an example of the use of ritual based on Islamic beliefs.

Other structural elements evident in Islamic shadow puppet plays are the scene divisions (called fusul) which vary greatly in number, depending at least in part upon the complexity of the plot, and the use of music, both as a means of providing transition from scene to scene and as a means of expressing character. In The Muddle-headed Night Watchman, for instance, the Dame and her maid begin their scene with a song in Huzam mode, the Drunkard enters singing in Shehnaz mode, the Dandy sings two songs -- one in Rast and the other in Huseyni Ashiran, the Opium smoker enters with a song in the mode Isfahan, the Arab sings in Nihavend, and the Drunkard returns near the end of the play with a song in the mode Gulizar. The play is divided into a Prologue in which Hajivat recites the Poem of the Curtain, a Dialogue between Hajivat and Karaghoz, the Play itself in one act divided into eight scenes, and a short Epilogue shared by Hajivat and Karaghoz.

The Puppet Figures and the Scenery

Shadow figures are generally made of leather, although modern times have witnessed experiments with materials such as sheet metal, celluloid, and other synthetic materials. The Greek puppeteer Sotiris Spatharis describes the craftsmanship involved in working with leather. Similar accounts appear in sources that deal with Islamic puppetry, but Spatharis' account is the most detailed, and the end result is the same, regardless of where the figure is made.

> The best leather for this purpose is young calf. And it must be white. In his workshop, the craftsman will soak it and stretch it on a wooden frame. In a few days it will be dry and ready to be cut by the Karaghiosis

performer into the shape of his various characters. When the figure has been cut out, he then scrapes the leather with a piece of glass till it becomes transparent. If the leather is thick, this scraping process can take all day. Then he puts the leather figure over the paper pattern and fills in the details. With Indian ink he sketches in the fez, the waistcoat, the kerchief, the sword, etc. Then he puts the pieces of the figure together some are of two pieces, others four or even more. [sic] [34]

The figures average about a foot in height, and the limbs are connected to the body of the figure with pieces of gut thread, enabling the puppeteer to change the posture of the figure and to simulate movement. In 1924 a hinged mechanism was invented making it possible to change the direction in which the head faced. Although no evidence is available to indicate that the hinge invented in Greece has yet found its way to Egypt and other countries in the Islamic world, the contact among puppeteers in the eastern Mediterranean make the exchange likely. Spartharis, for instance, was once invited to perform in Egypt, but a misunderstanding brought about a cancellation of the trip. [35] The puppets are controlled by rods which are detachable from small sockets or 'anklets' built into the figure. In the Islamic world other holes were punched into the bodies of the figures to remind the orthodox that the figures were indeed lifeless.

The shadow screen is made of semi-opaque material, and the size of the screen varies depending upon the needs of the puppeteer and the limitations of the space in which he is required to work. A wide variety of scenery pieces are used, depending upon the play to be performed. A show piece such as a floral design [36] or a group of musicians [37] is usually projected onto the screen prior to the performance. Other scenery includes houses, trees, carriages, furniture, ships, and a wide selection of props. Also, groups of characters are often operated as a single unit or posed in the

background while the main characters engage in action. Reds, greens, browns and yellows are among the colors used, perhaps because they carry light well. Modern times have increased the lighting capabilities of the shadow theatre, although more primitive light sources are probably still required in rural areas.

Shadow Puppetry in Modern Egypt

The shadow theater flourished in the Ottoman empire mainly during the seventeenth, the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries," [38] but interest in shadow puppetry decreased in Egypt in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, perhaps because of the rapid growth of theatre and cinema. Nevertheless, modern times have resulted in the accumulation of shadow play manuscripts, such as the so-called Menzela Manuscript which dates to about 1706-07. [39] The reappearance in the MS of Ibn Daniyal's Abu'l-Qitat suggests the possibility of "a long, perhaps uninterrupted local tradition" in the Egyptian shadow theatre. [40] The same character reappears in the late nineteenth-early twentieth century Crocodile Play and the Coptic Cloister Play. Also, the Egyptian Ship Play "shows a striking similarity to the Turkish Boat Play," a reminder of the strong Turkish influence which established the 'Aroghoz tradition in Egypt. [41]

Although only one shadow theatre existed in Cairo at the turn of the century, the Ministry of Culture continues to foster the puppet theatre tradition. [42] Perhaps more importantly, the influences of the puppet theatre and other indigenous forms of entertainment are beginning to be felt in contemporary playwriting, although as Jacob Landau points out, "it is undoubtedly remarkable that so little influence has been exercised by the Arabic shadow play on the development of the modern Arab theater." [43] Yet experiments are taking place, both in form and content. In Yusuf Idris' The Farafir, an experiment with the samir form, "a peasant theatre-in-the-round which for centuries had entertained simple folk of the countryside," the central character, a wiley servant, often behaves in a clownish manner reminiscent of

Karaghoz. [49] On the other hand, in Farouk el-Demerdash's production of Alfred Faraj's The Barber of Baghdad, the movements of the characters are choreographed in the formal style of the puppet theatre.[45]

The future of shadow puppetry in Egypt is uncertain. While interest in the shadow theatre has increased in Turkey and Greece, interest seems to have declined in Egypt. In light of the uncertainty of the future, the following comment about puppetry seems especially appropriate: "The puppet's unsteady steps between the ceiling and the floor are a powerful reminder of our own precarious existence between heaven and earth." [46]

Notes to Appendix C

1 See the Qur'ān: II. 105, 135; IV. 48ff., 51 f., 76, 116 ff.; V. 60, 82; VI. 138 f.; IX. 1-17, 28, 36, 113; XXII. 17; XXXV. 14, 40; XLVIII. 6.

2 Jacob M. Landau, Studies in the Arab Theatre and Cinema (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1958), p. 9.

3 Andreas Tietze, The Turkish Shadow Theater and The Puppet Collection of the L. A. Mayer Memorial Foundation (Berlin: Gebr. Man. Verlag, 1977), p. 9.

4 Olive Blackman, Shadow Puppets (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960), p. xi.

5 Jeune Scott-Kemball, Javanese Shadow Puppets (The Trustees of the British Museum, 1970), p. 14.

6 Benjamin March, Chinese Shadow-figure Plays and their Making (Detroit: Paul McPharlin, 1938), p. 12.

7 Blackman, p. 3.

8 Landau, p. 11.

9 Ibid, p. 12.

10 Ibrahim Hamādah, Khayāl al-Ḍal wa tamthīlīyat ibn Daniyāl (al-Qāhirah: Wizā-rat al-thaqāfah wa al-'irshād al-qaumī, 1979), pp. 87-88.

11 Ibid, pp. 89-100.

12 In Arabic poetry, rhyme alone does not constitute poetry. Meter is the essential ingredient. See Appendix A.

13 Landau, p. 20.

14 Ibid, p. 21.

15 Ibid.

16 Linda Suny Myrsiades, The Karaghiozis Tradition and Greek Shadow Puppet Theatre: History and Analysis (Indiana University, PhD. Dissertation, 1973).

17 Ibid, p. 51.

18 Ibid, p. 38.

19 Ibid, pp. 45-46.

20 Ibid, pp. 41-42.

21 Ibid, pp. 53-54.

22 Landau, p. 23.

23 Ibid, p. 22.

24 Hamādah, p. 47.

25 Ibid, p. 62.

26 Landau, p. 16.

27 Tietze, pp. 29-54.

28 Blackman, pp. 50-54.

29 Ibid, p. 52.

30 Tietze, p. 21.

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid.

33 Myrsiades, p. 160.

34 Sotiris Spatharis, Behind the White Screen (New York: Red Dust, 1976), p. 135.

35 Ibid, pp. 75-76.

36 Tietze, Plate 1.

37 Ibid, Plate 2.

38 Landau, p. 17.

39 Ibid, p. 26.

40 Ibid, p. 27.

41 Ibid, p. 32.

[42] Farouk el-Demerdash, "Dix années de théâtre dans la Republique arabe unie," Le Théâtre Arabe, ed. Nada Tomiche (Paris: UNESCO, 1969), p. 139.

[43] Landau, p.

[44] Alī al-Rā'ī, "Some Aspects of Modern Arabic Drama," ed. R.C. Ostle Studies in Modern Arabic Literature (Wilts, England: Aris & Phillips, 1975), p. 167.

[45] el-Demerdash, p. 137.

[46] Landau, p. 9.

Appendix D --

Theatre and Drama in Modern Egypt:

The Emergence of Egypt as a Member of the World Theatre Community

History of Theatrical Activity in Modern Egypt

1. Nineteenth century

Jacob Landau, the first western scholar to publish a serious study of Arab theatre, isolates two factors which contributed to the growth of theatrical activity in Egypt during the nineteenth century: "rustic performances of a comical nature," such as were described by the Italian egyptologist Belzoni and the British travelers Lane and Walter, and performances by European troupes. [1] One of the earliest accounts of native performances is Belzoni's description of a play and an afterpiece, seen after a wedding ceremony at Shubra in 1815:

> When the dancing was at an end, a sort of play was performed, the intent of which was to exhibit life and manners, as we do in our theatres. The subject represented an Hadgee, who wants to go to Mecca, and applies to a camel-driver, to procure a camel for him. The driver imposes on him, by not letting him see the seller of the camel, and putting a higher price on it than is really asked, giving so much less to the seller than he received from the purchaser. A camel is produced at last, made up by two men covered with a cloth, as if ready to depart for Mecca. The Hadgee mounts on the camel, but finds it so bad, that he refuses to take it, and demands his money back again. A scuffle takes place, when, by chance, the seller of the camel appears, and finds that the camel in question is not that which he sold to the driver for the Hadgee. Thus it turns out, that the driver was not satisfied with imposing both on the buyer and the seller in the

price, but had also kept the oamel for himself, and produced a a bad one to the Hadgee. In consequence he receives a good drubbing, and runs off. -- Simple as this story appears, yet it was so interesting to the audience, that it seemed as if nothing could please them better, as it taught them to be on their guard against dealers in camels, &c. -- This was the play; and the afterpiece represented a European traveler, who served as a sort of clown. He is in the dress of a Frank; and on his travels, comes to the house of an Arab, who, though poor, wishes to have the appearance of being rich. Accordingly he gives orders to his wife to kill a sheep immediately. She pretends to obey; but returns in a few minutes, saying that the flock has strayed away, and that it would be the loss of too much time to fetch one. The host then orders four fowls to be killed; but these cannot be caught. A third time, he sends his wife for pigeons; but the pigeons are all out of their holes; and at last the traveller is treated only with sour milk and dhours bread, the only provision in the house. This finishes the play. [2]

British orientalist Edward William Lane, recording his observations in Egypt during the 1830's, describes similar performances. According to Lane, "the Egyptians are often amused by players of low and ridiculous farces, who are called 'Mohabbazeen'." [3] Performing at wedding and circumcision festivals, the mohabbazeen attracted auditors and spectators at the homes of the wealthy and in the public places of Cairo. Lane gives a brief account of one such entertainment, enacted before the Basha of Egypt. The story relates the adventures of an innocent fallah, or peasant, who is thrown in jail, and whose wife must bribe the clerk with food, the village chief with money, and the district governor with her body, in order to obtain her husband's freedom. Although Lane considers such performances "scarcely worthy of

description; it is chiefly by vulgar jests and indecent actions that they amuse and obtain applause." Lane recognizes the intent behind the farce of the fallah and his wife. [4] "This farce was played before the Basha with the view of opening his eyes to the conduct of those persons to whom was committed the office of collecting the taxes." [5] A factor which must have contributed to the farcical quality of the performance is also mentioned by Lane: "The actors are only men and boys, the part of a woman being always performed by a man or a boy in female attire." [6] Although similar practices were observed in Elizabethan English theatres (and in the modern, televised satires of Monty Python's Flying Circus), the Egyptian practice was based upon the strictly enforced division of Islamic society into separate and distinct male and female spheres. [7] Only gradually, after exposure to western theatre troupes, did Egyptian performances utilize actresses for female roles.

Lane describes a wide variety of other entertainments, including snake charming and animal acts, marketplace exhibitions of conjuring, juggling, music and dancing, public recitations of heroic and romantic tales drawn from history and legend, shadow-puppet performances, and a number of religious or seasonal spectacles and ceremonies. [8] Lane, however, does not mention witnessing any European theatrical performances. The first European theatre troupes to reach Egypt came from Italy and France in the wake of Napoleon's invasion, and most of the scant evidence of their activities comes from official circulars and regulations that reveal both official disapproval and popular appreciation of the European performances. Although one of Napoleon's generals reportedly established a theatre during the French occupation, the earliest undisputed French claim is an 1837 Alexandrian theatre of limited scope. [9] Meanwhile, Italian troupes arrived to entertain the large Italian minorities living in Cairo and Alexandria. A circular letter and appended list of theatre regulations, dated October 16, 1847, was retained among records in the London Foreign Office.

> The circular letter informed all concerned that, as the Italian theater was under the jurisdiction of the

municipal authorities, the latter intended to prevent any disturbance of the peace in the said theater. The appended document was entitled "Theater Regulations" (Regolamenti Teatrali) and embodied an introduction and six paragraphs. The introduction stated that the theater was under the jurisdiction of the municipal authorities. Paragraph 1 threatened all the employees of the theater with arrest if they showed discourtesy towards the public. Paragraph 2 affirmed that anyone -- none excepted -- who might try to make noise during the performance, would be driven out the first time that happened, and then debarred from all performances if this happened again. Paragraph 3 threatened all smokers in the theater hall with eviction. Paragraph 4 prohibited whistling, cane knocking, and feet shuffling in the hall. Paragraph 5 promised energetic action on the part of the authorities in other cases of disturbance that might arise. Paragraph 6 announced that a sergeant and eight policemen would hold themselves in readiness near the theater to enforce quiet. 10

The nature of the complaints that prompted circulation of these regulations is unknown, but as Landau points out, the disturbances must have been "a long-standing matter, if they aroused the proverbially apathetic municipal authorities of Alexandria to promise such drastic action and to detail a section of its small police force to enforce the warning." 11 Landau claims: "All this goes to show that the Italian theater had by then a standing of at least some years and was popular (undesirably so) [sic] with the natives." 12 Perhaps the disturbances were the results of spontaneous reactions by enthusiastic natives, untrained in western theatre customs and conventions. Another explanation, however, may have been friction between the natives and the foreign nationals, friction based on native resentment of the social and

economic privileges enjoyed by the foreigners. Such resentments certainly oontributed later in the nineteenth century to the growth of Egyptian nationalism. Indeed, the Egyptian theatre has often served as an important means of broaching sensitive social and political issues.

The first native Egyptian playwright was a young Jew who called himself James Sanua (Ya'qub ibn Rufa'il Sanu'). Sanua, an intellectual, a Freemason, and the founder of the Egyptian satirical press, "began experimenting with theatrical composition and production in 1870." [13] While continuing his work as a journalist, Sanua "found enough time to compose thirty-two Arabic plays and puppet shows, most of which championed the poor man's oause and directed resentment against the Khedive." [14] In 1872 the Khedive Isma'il closed Sanua's theatre when Sanua blatantly attacked the Islamic institution of polygamy.

Meanwhile, in Beirut, which at the time was a part of greater Syria, the first Arabic dramatic literature had already been written by a Maronite Christian named Marun al-Naqqash. Al-Naqqash wrote and produced three plays between 1848 and his early death in 1855 at the age of thirty-eight. In 1869 his plays were published in Beirut under the title Arzat Lubnan (Cedar of Lebanon). 1869 was also the year in which the Egyptian Khedive Isma'il opened the French-designed Suez Canal.

> It was for this occasion that the great Opera House in Cairo had been built and other smaller theater halls erected. So, during the seventies of the nineteenth century, a sizeable number of prominent Syrians connected with the stage emigrated to Egypt. [15]

Two of the foremost Syrian emigres were Salim Khalil al-Naqqash (Marun al-Naqqash's nephew) and 'Adib Ishaq. Al-Naqqash's work included an adaptation of Ghislanzoni's libretto for Aida and an original drama of romance and intrigue entitled al-Zalum (The Tyrant). [16] Ishaq contributed several translations and adaptations of western plays, including Racine's Andromache and Pgedre and Corneille's Horace. The production of these plays flopped, however, and Ishaq and al-Naqqash

turned to journalism, where "both were still to make their mark by their literary activity in the cause of Egyptian nationalism." [17]

Another prominent Syrian emigre who accompanied al-Naqqash and Ishaq to Egypt was an actor named Yusuf al-Khayyat, who continued on his own after al-Naqqash and Ishaq turned to journalism. In 1872 al-Khayyat appealed to the Khedive Isma'il for aid. The Khedive opened the doors of the Opera House to al-Khayyat, who chose as his first play al-Naqqash's The Tyrant.

> The contents of the play were, naturally enough, interpreted by the Khedive as a reflection on his own personal rule. Al-Khayyat and his troups were banished from Egypt and had to return to Syria. . . .[18]

Social and political unrest grew during the reign of Isma'il, and the reckless economic policies pursued by the government led to increased foreign interference in Egyptian affairs. By 1882 social turmoil had become so widespread in Egypt that the British felt compelled to protect their financial interests by assuming control of the government.

French and Italian influences, however, continued to dominate Egyptian theatrical activity well into the twentieth century, and Syrian emigrants continued to comprise the vanguard of the growing theatre movement. The most prominent of these individuals were Sulaiman al-Qardahi, Ishandar Farah, and Khalil al-Qabbani.

Al-Qardahi was the first to introduce women to the Egyptian stage.[19] The practice of men and boys playing female characters had been followed by Marun al-Naqqash in Syria in mid-century. The early Syrian emigres, Salim Khalil al-Naqqash, Adib Ishaq and Yusuf al-Khayyat, continued the practice in Egypt, where it had already been established. During the 1870's in Syria, women had begun to appear on stage, and the later Syrian emigres, al-Qardahi, Iskandar Farah, and al-Qabbani, apparently brought the new practice with them.

Al-Qardahi, like his predecessors, drew much of his material from French sources. In addition, he modified "both plot and acting to the

tastes of his audiences, instead of trying to mold their artistic appreciation." [20] His repertoire was largely made up of musical plays and comedies.

The "first serious competitor" of al-Qardahi was Iskandar Farah, whose repertoire was more inclined to serious drama than to musicals and comedies. [21] His repertoire "included adaptations of classical plays, such as Corneille's Le Cid, and modern French melodramas." [22] Upon arriving in Egypt, Farah joined a troupe led by al-Qabbani, but soon Farah established his own company in Alexandria. Eventually, however, "successions amongst his actors and the creation of new troupes forced Farah to leave for Syria again." [23]

For eighteen years Salama Hijazi (1855-1917), nicknamed 'the Caruso of the East' by his admirers, acted and sang as a member of Farah's troupe. In 1905, however, Hijazi formed his own troupe at 'the Arab Theatre' in Cairo. Born in Alexandria, Hijazi was "the first great Muslim to be associated with the modern Arab theatre." [24] The central element of Hijazi's theatre was music, and the popularity of his theatre led him "to introduce the practice of touring other Arabic-speaking lands. With his troupe he repeatedly toured Syria and North Africa (particularly Tunis)[sic]." [25]

By the end of the nineteenth century and the onset of World War One, three separate trends had begun to emerge in the Egyptian theatre. The trend toward serious drama had been established by Iskandar Farah. The trend toward musical drama had grown with the work of al-Qardahi, al-Qabbani, al-Khayyat and Hijazi. Finally, a popular comedy form had begun to develop in accordance with European and native influences. Known as comic acts (fusul mudhika) and performed mainly in city cafes and in rural areas, the comedy theatre, according to Landau,

> based its repertoire in Egypt on vulgar farces and pantomimes in the nineteenth century; and on rough burlesque, influenced to an extent by the commedia dell'arte, in the early twentieth. This popular theater

> was influenced by foreign revues and light comedies, probably shown to the European troops during the war. [26]

2. Twentieth Century

The twentieth century brought rapid change to the Egyptian theatre. Men of letters began to turn their attention to translating western dramatic literature and to writing their own plays. Three separate categories of entertainment emerged: classical, musical, and popular theatre. A proponent of the classical theatre was Syrian-born Jurj Abyad, a Christian and an actor.

Abyad's talent and feeling for the stage won him the support of Khedive 'Abbas II, who sent him, all expenses paid, to Paris, where "Abyad went to the Conservatoire and studied dramatic art with the renowned actor Sylvain." [27] The repertoire of the troupes Abyad formed after returning to Egypt in 1910 included Sophocles' King Oedipus, Shakespeare's Othello and Macbeth, and Pradon's Tamerlan, the heroic tale of a fourteenth-century Mongol warrior whose conquests extended from the Black Sea to the Ganges river. Despite Abyad's preference for tragedy and historical drama, however, he eventually had to give way to public demand and include light comedies in his repertoire.

> The service of Abyad to the theater lies mainly in his awakening the consciousness of the Arab theatergoer, in various countries of the Near East, to the existence and possibilities of the classical theater; and in educating collaborators and pupils to new artistic values, such as the need for exact translation of foreign dramas and serious preparation of every play. [28]

One of the main causes for the limited appreciation of the classical theatre, however, "was the preference of the Arab theatergoer for the musical theatre and for the popular comedy." [29] Two of the most renowned actors in the musical theatre are Fatima Rushdi, an actress who specialized in character parts that greatly appealed to the masses, and Yusuf Wahbi, the co-founder, along with Fatima Rushdi's husband, 'Aziz

'Aid, of the Ramses troupe in 1923. Wahbi's youthful facination with the theatre met with disapproval from his father, and so Wahbi secretly fled to Italy. "There he was fortunate enough, in his study of the theater, to be one of the pupils of Chiantoni." [30] After his father's death, Wahbi returned to Egypt, founded the Ramses company, and "soon became the public's favorite." [31]

Wahbi excelled in the roles of madmen and pathological characters, and his repertoire included numerous melodramas, such as The Madman (al-Majnun), The Black Devils (al-Shayatin al-sud), and The Victims (al-Dhaba'ih). He also presented various works by European playwrights, such as Ernest Feydeau and Tristan Bernard. [32]

"Along with the failure of Abyad's classical theater and the wide acceptance of Wahbi's musical theater, the popular theater developed rapidly." [33] The most important figures in the development and production of the modern popular theatre are 'Aziz 'Aid, Najib al-Rihani, and 'Ali'l-Kassar. 'Aid, the earliest of the three, performed with Iskandar Farah's troupe and co-founded the Ramses troupe with Wahbi in 1923 before turning to the popular theatre. He is considered "the creator of the so-called 'Franco-Arab revue,' a sort of full length French vaudeville somewhat modified for his local audience." [34]

Najib al-Rihani (1891-1949) began his theatre career in 1914, and before turning to the popular theatre, he performed with Hijazi, Abyad and 'Aid and with visiting European artists, such as Sarah Bernhardt, Coquelin, and Mounet-Sully. His most successful roles in the popular theatre were Kish Kish Bey, a misadventurous village elder who appealed to the common-sense attitudes of audiences, and Hasan, the slick drug dealer in Badi' Khairi's Hasan, Morqos and Cohen. "This frank satire, with malice toward none, made al-Rihani one of the best-liked comedy actors of his time, both on the stage and on the screen." [35] After his death in 1949, a street and a theatre were named after him, and his plays were collected and printed by a government commission.

'Ali'l-Kassar was al-Rihani's chief competitor. Al-Kassar's characterizations included a jocular Nubian named the 'Barbarin' and a

variety of foreign characters who conversed in comic, broken Arabic. Unlike al-Rihani, al-Kassar often incorporated music -- especially singing -- into his shows.

The consolidation of three distinct types of theatrical activity during the first half of the twentieth century, the establishment of an Egyptian film industry, the appearance of new playwrights, translators and critics from among the leading Egyptian men of letters, and the growth of public interest in the theatre, attracted the attention and support of the Egyptian government. Prior to the 1920's, government support of the theatre was generally limited to patronage of individual artists favored by the Khedive. With the advent of cinema, however, government policies began to change. [36]

> When the public began to abandon the theatres to turn to the cinema, the government gave support to the writers, partially subsidized the theatre, and formed a national troupe. [37]

Since 1926, the governmemt has awarded prizes every few years for distinguished playwrighting. It has often granted scholarships for young people to study abroad, and although some have failed to live up to expectations, others have returned to become central figures in the theatre and cinema. The best known of the latter group is probably Zaki Tulaimat. "He was sent to study at the Odeon in 1924 and since his return four years later his name has been connected with almost every attempt for the improvement of the theatre." [38] He founded the Conservatory of Dramatic Art in 1945 and the Modern Theatre company in 1951.

Jacob Landau gives the following summary of Egyptian theatrical activity during the first half of the twentieth century:

> 1. The Arab theater has made progress particularly in Egypt, while everywhere else it reached, at the utmost, the level of the Egyptian theater before the First World War, after passing through much the same stages of development.

2. It falls into three main categories -- classical, musical and popular -- of which only the last two are appreciated and attended by the masses.

3. The troupe directors have raised -- mainly because of competition -- the standards of their performances. Commercial considerations have become less all-important than hitherto and management of theater finances has improved.

4. Actors and actresses. . . are not only amateurs. Although these still try their luck, there is a steadfastly growing number of professional actors and actresses. They are usually bound to their troupes by contracts, which take after the European form. After years of experience they retire on a regular pension.

5. Singing and dancing continue to be important attributions of the actor. However, he is nowadays expected to act well, too. . .

6. Since the actor must sing, dance and act well, he cannot be proficient, at one and the same time, at stage direction and production. Studies in Europe and to a lesser extent in the United States have brought forward specialists in these various fields. . .

7. Egyptian troupes with growing frequency visit neighboring lands. . .

8. As a rule, the behavior of the public has improved considerably, even among the audiences of the popular theater. . .

9. Dramatic criticism has progressed somewhat in quality and even more in quantity: journals and dailies regularly devote space to serious reviews of the Arab theater and to lengthy, bold discussions of its problems.

> 10. Playwrighting has spread, from amateurish actors and troupe directors to the poets, writers, and other men of letters. Only seldom are plays "adapted" nowadays; a pedantic translation is generally demanded. . . 39

3. Post-Revolution Developments

The ouster of King Farouk and the establishment of a socialist republic in Egypt in 1952 generated inspiration and enthusiasm among Arab artists and intellectuals. One of the most important developments in post-revolution Egyptian theatre has been the emergence of the modern director.

Prior to the 1950's, most troupes were controlled by writers or by leading actors in the tradition, inherited from Europe, of the actor-managers and star-managers. In 1951 two young directors, Hamdi Ghayth and Nabi al-Alfi, returned to Egypt from France, bringing with them new ideas and techniques of directing. In the same year, Zaki Tulaimat established the Modern Theatre, and after the revolution, the Modern Theatre merged with the government's national troupe to become the National Theatre. "This fusion decided a group of senior students of the Conservatory to create a new troupe, The Freedom Theatre. . . . " 40 Unlike the Modern Theatre, the Freedom Theatre was not supported by the state, but by private financing.

The repertoires of the newly formed companies expanded to include accurately translated versions of the Greeks, of Shakespeare, Moliere, Ibsen, Strindberg, Gorki, Chekov, Sartre and Miller. In addition, the companies produced the plays of a growing number of Arab playwrights, such as Rashad Hijazi and Amin Yusuf Ghurab, both of whom primarily wrote local parlor comedies.

In 1962 the Pocket Theatre was formed as a laboratory for the presentation of works by foreign and domestic avant-guarde and political writers. For example, in its first season it produced Beckett's Endgame, direoted by Sa'd Ardash, Ionesco's The Chairs, directed by

Muhammad 'Abd al-'Aziz, and excerpts from Chekov, directed by Kamal 'Aid. In its second season the Pocket Theatre presented Brecht's The Exception to the Rule, under the direction of Farouk el-Demerdash, as well as several important new Arab plays: Tawfiq al-Hakim's absurdist/symbolist play, The Tree Climber; Yusuf Idris' existentialist/political drama, The Farfours; Sa'd Wahba's The Bridge of Mystery; and Alfred Faraj's The Barber of Baghdad, a play inspired by the Arabian Nights and the marionette theatre.

In 1962 and 1963 large numbers of young theatre directors and technicians returned from Italy, France and England to reinforce the trends begun in the fifties. Meanwhile, television made its debut in Egypt, and in 1962, after only two years of operation, the number of television companies had increased from three to ten. The increased demand for actors led to recruitment from among the senior pupils at the Conservatory and from among the amateurs of the University Theatre. Gradually, from the commercially oriented television groups and the more artistically oriented theatre companies emerged two separate approaches to theatre: on one hand 'theatre of quantity' and on the other 'theatre of quality'. [41]

The mid-1960's brought further government participation in the reorganization and promotion of theatre activities. In 1964 the government began to publish al-Masrah, a monthly theatre magazine that continued until 1970. [42] In 1965 the government's Ministry of Culture began a major reorganization program. Under the guidance of Dr. Tharwat 'Ukasha, a partisan of 'theatre of quality', a move began to raise the standards of production and to develop the artistic sensibilities of the theatre public. The reorganization effort excluded private theatre groups, such as the one performing under the name of Najib al-Rihani, but national troupes were affected. By 1966 the Ministry of Culture regulated the National theatre, the Pocket theatre, opera, operetta, the symphony orchestra, the puppet theatre, the national folkdance troupe, the popular theatre, the music-hall, and the circus. After 1966 the ministry took control of four more theatres comprising ten troupes: the

Comedy theatre, the Modern theatre, the al-Hakim theatre, and the World theatre; and the television theater also came under the authority of the ministry. After a year a further reorganization took place. Four sections within the ministry were created: dramatic theatre; operetta, music-hall, and circus; opera and ballet, and puppet theatre and folkloric dancing. Meanwhile, several artistic institutes passed from the control of the Ministry of Education to the Ministry of Culture. These institutions were the Conservatory of Dramatic Art, the Conservatory of Music, and the Conservatory of Ballet. [43]

Arab Playwrights and Dramatic Literature

The birth of Arabic dramatic literataure took place in Beirut in 1848 when Marus al-Naqqash, a Maronite Christian who had traveled to France and Italy, wrote and produced al-Bakhil, an adaptation in Arabic verse of Moliere's L'Avare (The Miser). Two years later al-Naqqash produced an original comedy entitled Abu'l Hasan al mughaffal (Abu'l Hasan the Gullible). Another adaptation of Moliere followed as al-Naqqash transformed Tartuffe into al-Hasud. Although al-Naqqash refrained from making organic changes in Moliere's plots, he "abbreviated or expanded the comedy at will, to suit the taste and the understanding of his audience." [44] He Arabicized the names of the characters and changed the locales of the plays, and he inserted oriental musical numbers that "were performed by an orchestra and choir and were often, but not always, related to the subject matter of the play." [45]

The first Egyptian playwright was James Sanua. Sanua drew heavily from Italian dramatists and from Moliere, and he became known by the popular nickname 'the Egyptian Moliere'. Sanua reflected in the language of his plays the colloquial Arabic of his audiences. "Thus he was not only the creator of the politico-satirical theater in Egypt, but also the innovator of its language." [46]

The Syrian emigrants and native Egyptians writing for the theatre in the nineteenth century contributed both original plays and free adaptations of western plays. Among the most prolific of the adaptors were Muhammad 'Uthman Jalal (1829-1898) and Najim al-Haddad (1867-1899). Jalal adapted works of Moliere, Racine and Corneille, rendering tragedies into literary Arabic with few changes, and more freely adapting comedies into the colloquial Arabic of Egypt. Al-Haddad translated more faithfully than Jalal, but al-Haddad often "interpolated various melodies in suitable spots (e.g., Romeo sings about his love to Juliet)[sic]. Otherwise, not many changes were introduced in the text." [47] Al-Haddad translated numerous plays from French, both native French plays and French versions of Shakespeare and the Greeks.

In the twentieth century the trend toward accurate translation grew as the classical theatre emerged. Arab poets contributed to the translation movement: "Khalil Mutran's translation of Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice. . . is almost throughout literal, even in trying to find suitable ways for expressing in Arabic the idioms of the Elizabethan Bard." [48]

Meanwhile, original Arab playwrighting progressed. At the turn of the century, a writer named Farah Antun began to produce and publish dramas that "displayed his constant concern for society's problems and intellectual ideas, rather than character development of conflict exploration." [49] Antun, like James Sanua, was an advocate of the use of colloquial language on stage, but unlike Sanua, Antun worked for a combined approach to the language problem. Antun advocated the use of classical language for translations of foreign works and for the dialogue of upper-class characters in Egyptian dramas. Antun relegated the colloquial dialect to lower-class characters, and he developed a third language especially for the use of women characters. He described the language as "a lightened classical along with an elevated colloquial." [50]

Perhaps the most famous Egyptian writer to contribute to the classical theatre was Ahmad Shawqi (1868-1932). An early advocate of

the Arab neo-classical movement in poetry, Shawqi "made a valuable contribution to the development of the lyric historical drama in Arabic." [51]

Five of his seven plays are in verse, and with the exception of one comedy, al-Sitt Huda, all deal with historical topics. 'Ali Bek al-kabir is set in eighteenth century Mamluk Egypt and deals with the conflict between love and duty, while Majnun Laila deals with the Bedouin code of honor that separates two young lovers. Masra' Kliyupatra treats the Roman conquest of Egypt by Octavian and the love of Anthony and Cleopatra. Qambiz relates the story of an ancient Egyptian noblewoman who agrees to marry Cambyses in an unsuccessful attempt to avoid a Persian invasion, and Amirat al-Andalus, Shawqi's only prose drama, deals with the love of a Muslim princess in Sevilla at the close of the 'Abbad dynasty and the emergence of the Almoravid dynasty. 'Antara is the story of the loves and heroic deeds of a legendary pre-Islamic poet.

Shawqi's sentimental and nostalgic treatment of historical situations reflects the neo-classical tendency to glorify the Arab past. The conflict between love and duty appears in all of his plays, most of which are set against a background of foreign invasion, a reflection of the Egyptian resentment of foreign domination.

The use of classical Arabic by Shawqi and by the translators of western dramas performed by Abyad's troupe reveals one of the major problems of the classical theatre. "Colloqial was thought to be too vulgar and unliterary, an attribute which continued to plague the Arabic theatre until quite recently." [52] Consequently, serious plays, most of which were written in literary Arabic, appealed only to the educated minority of the threatre public. Also, the literary language presents special problems for the actor. Often it generates a tendency toward monotonous recitation that interferes with realistic interpretation. [53]

The most famous modern Egyptian playwright is undoubtedly Tawfiq al-Hakim, whose plays began to appear in the 1930's. Al-Hakim was born in Alexandria in 1898, but he grew up in the Egyptian countryside.

According to Jacob Landau, al-Hakim spent time in jail after taking part in the unsuccessful anti-British uprising of 1919.

After his release from jail, al-Hakim went to study law at the University. During those years he developed an interest in the growing Arab theatre movement, and he began to write short plays. When he was granted a license to practice law, he went to France to prepare for a doctorate in law. There his interest in the theatre grew, and his output as a playwright increased. Upon his return to Egypt he spent several yeras in the provinces as a Public Prosecutor and then went on to work in the Ministries of Justice and Social Affairs.

Al-Hakim has published over fifty plays, including The Tree Climber, a surrealist play that was scheduled for production at the Chelsea Theatre in New York in 1979. [54] Although al-Hakim began his work in drama in the twenties and achieved public acclaim in the thirties, he has continued to exert a powerful influence on Egyptian drama. Now in his eighties, he is still active as a writer.

Al-Hakim writes both in the literary and the colloquial languages, drawing from a broad range of historical and mythical themes, and utilyzing a variety of symbolist, realistic and surrealistic styles. According to Mahmoud Manzalaoui, al-Hakim's

> characters are rarely memorable individuals, but they play their parts in a clash of ideas which is less purely cerebral, and more poetic, then Shavian drama; his inherited and borrowed themes are employed to express, or at least to display, philosophical concepts. [55]

Some of the major themes treated by al-Hakim are "the clash between the villagers' mentality and official 'thinking' [and] the horror of the vendetta." [56] Both of these themes are found in Song of Death, a one-act play that has been translated into several western languages, including English. [57] In The People of the Cave, al-Hakim utilyzes the legend, mentioned in the Qur'an, of the sleepers of Epheseus who awaken after centuries to discover a changed world, to create an analogy of the

Arab awakening to modern times or of the awakening from ignorance to Islam. Perhaps al-Hakim was influenced in the writing of the play by Calderon's La Vida ES Sueno, but it is likely that the Spanish playwright drew from a legend of Moorish origin. Indeed, the English version, Rip Van Winkle, may have been inspired during Washington Irving's stay at Alhambra in Granada. The Song of Death, written almost twenty years after The People of the Cave, shares with Garcia Lorca's dramas a stark, rural simplicity of character and setting, and a frank exploration of deep-seated emotional conflict. Based on the duality of the Isis-Osiris-Horus mythology, The Song of Death examines the social pressures that drive people to violent revenge.

Al-Hakim's plays are drawn from a wide range of historical periods. Muhammad, a historical drama about the life of the Prophet, Shahrazad, the story of the Arabian Nights princess, Pygmalion, King Oedipus, The River of Madness, The Soft Hands, and The Sultan's Dilemma, are a few of al-Hakim's many plays. He also has written novels, short stories, autobiographies, and numerous critical essays.

During the nineteen-forties and fifties, while al-Hakim continued to write, new playwrights began to emerge. Mahmud Taimur, already famous in the Arab world for his novels and short stories, turned to a style of playwrighting "taken directly from life" and which is less finished, but more natural than Shawqi's or al-Hakim's.[58] Among Taimur's plays are Bombs, Shelter 13, The Transgression, The Vigilant and Eva the Eternal. The latter, written during World War II, is considered by the author to be closest to his heart of all his plays.[59]

One of the group of writers whose first works appeared shortly before the revolution is Rashad Hijazi. Turned down by Zaki Tulaimat of the Free Theatre, Hijazi gained the support of Yusef Wahbi. Hijazi's plays include Houri from Mars and Our Master's Whip. The latter, a blatantly political attack on British interference in Egyptian affairs, was chosen by Nasser to be performed for the military along with al-Hakim's pro-socialism play, The Soft Hands.[60]

Youssef Idris wrote his first play, The Cotton King, in 1953-54. Of the plays he has written since, The Farafir has achieved international recognition and has been translated into English as The Farfours and as Flip Flap and His Master. A philosophical examination of the existentialist dilemmas faced by modern humanity, the play is also an exploration of the political institutions that stem from a master-servant division of society. Idris, "acclaimed throughout the Arabic-speaking world as its greatest short story writer," was born in 1927 and studied medicine at the University of Cairo before turning to literature. [61] Influenced by social realism and leftist politics, Idris' work is often pointedly political. Idris is also a devout advocate of establishing a purely Egyptian form of theatre.

> In a series of three articles entitled "Towards an Egyptian Theatre,". . . Yusuf Idris blasted those who recognized only the European forms of drama or who believed that those were the universal forms, and that for an Egyptian or a Kenyan or a Vietnamese to write a play, all he had to do was to take the ready-made moulds fashioned in Europe and pour into them an Egyptian or a Kenyan or a Vietnamese content. All peoples, he argues, have always had one dramatic form or another, and he called for exploring those forms and experimenting with them in order to arrive at a genuine national theatre. [62]

Another Arab writer whose works began to appear in the 1950's is Rashad Rushdy, who grew interested in theatre during high school when he belonged to an acting group. After attending university, Rushdy established himself as a writer and editor. He was the founding editor of al-Masrah, a government-sponsored theatre periodical published between 1964 nd 1970. One of his plays, A Journey Outside the Wall, explores an internal, psychological universe "governed by a built-in corruptibility that attracts evil from outside." [63]

During the 1960's, many new playwrights surfaced in the Egyptian theatre. Among these are Sa'd al-Din Wahbah, Mahmoud Diab, Ali Salem, and Mikha'il Romane. In The Newcomer, Romane examines the conflict between an individual and a rigidly automated society.

Mahmoud Manzalaoui tempers his enthusiasm for contemporary Arab playwrighting with a warning about the quality of critical literature which has grown up around the plays:

> Interesting though a good deal of it is, it must be admitted that some of the current critical literature appearing in Cairo is written in a coterie spirit, unaware of work elsewhere in the Arab world, neglecting earlier Arabic criticism, lacking historical perspective, and distorting the facts of world literature. [64]

Yet Egyptian drama is emerging as an important new voice in world literature, and Egyptian theatre is producing not only important native plays, but important plays from western literature. Anis Mansur's translations of Durrenmatt, Miller, Williams, Frisch and O'Neill were added in the 1960's to an Egyptian repertoire already rich with translations of major western playwrights. [65]

Above all, however, Egyptian theatre has been, throughout its history, a voice of social and political expression. In some cases the government has responded with strict censorship, but more often it has encouraged and supported theatrical activity.

Notes to Appendix D

[1] Jacob M. Landau, Studies in the Arab Theater and Cinema (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1958), p. 49.

[2] Ibid, pp. 50-51.

[3] Edward William Lane, An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians (London: East-West Publications, 1836), p. 384.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid, p. 385.

[6] Ibid, p. 384.

[7] See: Elizabeth Warnock Fernea and Basima Qaltan Bezirgan, editors, Middle Eastern Muslim Women Speak (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1977), pp. 135-65.

[8] Lane, pp. 351-503.

[9] Landau, p. 52.

[10] Ibid, p. 54.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid, p. 55.

[13] Trevor J. Le Gassick, Major Themes in Modern Arabic Thought: An Anthology (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1979), p. 21.

[14] Landau, p. 66.

[15] Ibid, p. 63.

[16] Ibid, p. 65.

[17] Ibid, p. 64.

[18] Ibid, p. 65.

[19] Women had already appeared on the Syrian stage, but prior to the twentieth century in both countries actresses were usually Jewish or Christian and seldom Muslim women.

20 Landau, p. 69.

21 Ibid.

22 For a detailed account of French influences on the Egyptian theatre see: Atia Abul Naga, Les Sources françaises du théâtre égyptien 1870-1939 (Alger: Bd Zighoud Youcef, 1972).

23 Landau, p. 70.

24 Ibid, pp. 71-72.

25 Ibid, p. 71.

26 Ibid, pl 85.

27 Ibid, p. 77.

28 Ibid, p. 79.

29 Ibid, p. 80.

30 Ibid, p. 82.

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid, p. 83.

33 Ibid, p. 85.

34 Ibid, p. 86.

35 Ibid, p. 89.

36 The Egyptian cinema dates from 1925. See: Landau, pp. 155-205.

37 Farouk el-Demerdash, "Dix années de théâtre dans la Republique arabe unie," Le théâtre arabe, ed. Nada Tomiche (Paris: UNESCO, 1969), p. 133.

38 Landau, p. 92.

39 Ibid, pp. 104-107.

40 El-Demerdash, p. 133.

41 Ibid, p. 137.

[42] Unlike popular commercial magazines such as al-Ithnayn and al-Kawākib, al-Masraḥ deals exclusively with theatre and cinema; many issues contain translations of western works by playwrights such as Brecht, Beckett, and Miller, while other issues contain original Arab plays.

[43] El-Demerdash, pp. 138-40.

[44] Landau, p. 57.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid, p. 66.

[47] Ibid, pp. 110-11.

[48] Ibid, p. 113.

[49] Le Gassick, p. 44.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Landau, pp. 126-27.

[52] Farouk Abdel Wahab, Modern Egyptian Drama (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1974), p. 20.

[53] J. Stetkevych, "Classical Arabic on Stage," ed. R.C. Ostle, Studies in Modern Arabic Literature (Warminster, Wilts, England: Aris & Phillips, 1975), pp. 161-66.

[54] "Yā Tāli' al-sharjarah," Al-Ahrām (al-Qāhirah: 24 April 1978), #25.

[55] "Mahmūd Manzalaoui, Arabic Writing Today Drama (Cairo: American Research Center in Egypt, 1977), p. 29.

[56] Ibid, p. 36.

[57] See bibliography.

[58] Landau, p. 153.

[59] Al-Masrah, July 1966, p. 16.

[60] Ibid, p. 30.

[61] Abdel Wahab, p. 35.

62 Ibid, p. 36.

63 Ibid, p. 35.

64 Manzalaoui, p. 39.

65 Al-Masrah, July 1966, pp. 28-29.

VITA

William Allen Scott

Born in Michigan in 1947

Graduated:

Defence Language Institute, Monterey, California, 1968

Western Washington State College, Bellingham, Washington,
Bachelor of Arts, 1974

University of Washington, Seattle, Washington,
Doctor of Philosophy, 1984