Your file Votre référence

Our file Notre référence

NOTICE

The quality of this microform is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original thesis submitted for microfilming. Every effort has been made to ensure the highest quality of reproduction possible.

If pages are missing, contact the university which granted the degree.

Some pages may have indistinct print especially if the original pages were typed with a poor typewriter ribbon or if the university sent us an inferior photocopy.

Reproduction in full or in part of this microform is governed by the Canadian Copyright Act, R.S.C. 1970, c. C-30, and subsequent amendments.

AVIS

La qualité de cette microforme dépend grandement de la qualité de la thèse soumise au microfilmage. Nous avons tout fait pour assurer une qualité supérieure de reproduction.

S'il manque des pages, veuillez communiquer avec l'université qui a conféré le grade.

La qualité d'impression de certaines pages peut laisser à désirer, surtout si les pages originales ont été dactylographiées à l'aide d'un ruban usé ou si l'université nous a fait parvenir une photocopie de qualité inférieure.

La reproduction, même partielle, de cette microforme est soumise à la Loi canadienne sur le droit d'auteur, SRC 1970, c. C-30, et ses amendements subséquents.

Canada

SOCIOLOGY OF POPULAR DRAMA IN MEDIAEVAL· EGYPT:
IBN DĀNIYĀL AND HIS SHADOW PLAYS

AMILA BUTUROVIĆ

A Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of
Graduate Studies and Research in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy

McGill University, Montréal
December, 1993.

© Amila Buturović

Canada

AMILA BUTUROVIĆ, Ph.D.

shortened title:

Popular drama in mediaeval Egypt: Ibn Dāniyāl and his shadow plays

ABSTRACT

Name: Amila Buturović

Thesis: Sociology of Popular Drama in Mediaeval Egypt:
Ibn Dāniyāl and his Shadow Plays

Degree: Ph.D.

....

This thesis discusses the shadow play in mediaeval Arabo-Islamic societies, and the most outstanding playwright in that genre, Ibn Dāniyāl (d.710/1310). Despite the lack of other extant plays, it is shown that the shadow play had a long and dynamic tradition in mediaeval Islam, as attested to by various written sources that refer to it through two 'frames' of perception: as allegory and as theatre. These two frames indicate that there is a close link between the intrinsic development of this theatrical genre and the coinage of allegorical expressions geared to the understanding of the cosmological order. The principal features of the shadow theatre are analyzed in the light of theatrical semiotics, focusing on Ibn Dāniyāl's trilogy *Kitāb Ṭayf al-khayāl*. It is argued that Ibn Dāniyāl's dramaturgy, emphasizing a collective social experience, relies strongly on the peculiarities of the genre in the process of foregrounding the playwright's ideological concerns. Ibn Dāniyāl's possible worlds, seeking to harmonize the contending ideologies of Mamlūk society, are familiar yet saliently delimited, as the theatrical frame through which they are induced is consciously highlighted.

RESUMÉ

Nom: Amila Buturović

Thèse: Sociologie du drame populaire en Égypte
                      médiéval: Ibn Dāniyāl et son théâtre d'ombres

Grade: Ph.D.

....

Cette thèse traite la tradition du théâtre d'ombres dans les sociétés arabo-islamiques médiévales, et l'auteur le mieux connu de ce genre, Ibn Dāniyāl (m. 710/1310). Malgré le manque d'autres pièces extantes, il est démontré que le théâtre d'ombres eût une longue et dynamique tradition dans l'Islam médiéval, comme d'ailleurs le témoignent diverses sources écrites qui s'y réfèrent à travers deux 'cadres' de perception: comme allégorie ainsi que comme théâtre. Ces deux cadres indiquent donc qu'il existe un lien proche entre le développement intrinsèque de ce genre théâtral, et la formulation d'expressions allégoriques ayant pour but la compréhension de l'ordre cosmologique. Les charactéristiques principales du théâtre d'ombres sont analysées à la lumière de la sémiotique du théâtre, en examinant la trilogie d'Ibn Dāniyāl, *Kitāb Tayf al-khayāl*. Il est soutenu que la dramaturgie d'Ibn Dāniyāl, qui accentue une expérience sociale collective, s'appuie fortement sur les particularités du genre pour mettre en évidence les préoccupations idéologiques de l'auteur. Cherchant à harmoniser les idéologies concurrentes de la société Mamlūk, les 'mondes possibles' d'Ibn Dāniyāl, tant bien que familiers, sont clairement démarqués, pendant que le cadre théâtral par lequel ils sont induits est consciemment souligné.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD

During the past several decades Ibn Dāniyāl has been praised as one of the wittiest men of letters in mediaeval Arabo-Islamic culture, and his work as a pioneering expression of Arabic drama. This sweeping recognition of Ibn Dāniyāl's artistic stature, coming after a long period of almost complete obscurity, has unfortunately stopped short of substantial attempts to understand the particularity of his art. The conceptual ambiguity related to the development of dramatic art in mediaeval Arabo-Islamic culture, the semantic difficulty of the primary source, and an inadequate critical apparatus have resulted in a disturbing neglect of Ibn Dāniyāl as a playwright. Instead, what we find in modern scholarship is a meagre attempt to accommodate Ibn Dāniyāl into the thriving literary heritage of mediaeval Arabs, without accounting for the aesthetic and ideological value of his dramaturgy.

Perhaps the main incentive for this treatment of Ibn Dāniyāl as everything but a playwright has come due to a continuous, albeit now outdated, debate whether Islamic culture has ever been able to incorporate dramatic art into its ethos. While my answer to this question is affirmative, I have felt it necessary to elaborate on a theoretical justification for such an answer by contemplating Ibn Dāniyāl's work in reference to two issues: one, the shadow play as a genre of theatre that carries a number of

features not found in drama proper, and two, the historical continuity of this genre in mediaeval Arabo-Islamic societies. The former issue is approached through several theoretical tools (namely, theatrical semiotics with an emphasis on the possible world and frame theories), which are examined through concrete examples of Ibn Dāniyāl's dramaturgy. The latter issue, on the other hand, is confronted in reference to various historiographical, literary, philosophical, and Sufi writings that shed light on both the continuous presence of the shadow play in mediaeval Islamic societies as well as the varied frames through which it is observed.

This thesis is therefore an attempt to break through the evasive characterization of Ibn Dāniyāl's art by focusing the analysis on the specific features of his dramaturgy and its ideological implications.

By placing the emphasis on the dramatic features of Ibn Dāniyāl's work, I have steered clear of philological aspirations to resolve the syntactical and lexical intricacies of the written text. Though I have used all available manuscripts so as to explore different semantic possibilities, I have reconciled myself with the difficulty to decipher, harmonize, and translate numerous linguistic incongruities arising from the archaic language, colloquialisms, puns, gibberish, not to mention the copyists' errors incurred during the re-writing of the manuscripts. Of the five manuscripts at my disposal -- Istanbul MS., El Escorial MS., and three Cairo MSS., -- I have used the

Istanbul MS. as the main text. Despite some errors and shortcomings, this manuscript seems to be most comprehensive and detailed, as it involves a number of passages not found in the other three manuscripts. The existing *éditions critiques* have been consulted as well, particularly the late Paul Kahle's recently published *Three Shadow Plays by Ibn Dāniyāl*.

Nonetheless, it needs to be emphasized that the lack of adequate lexical sources for this kind of 'middle Arabic' has occasionally compelled me to create a text out of the already existing text, a task which I undertook both as a reader and a critic. In that sense, I have abstained from accounting for all semantic and grammatical assumptions I have made in my translations. Reading the text over and over again has convinced me that a full understanding of its linguistic labyrinth, if ever achieved, will require a much more profound understanding of the plebeian culture in mediaeval Muslim societies.

***

My supervisor, Dr. Issa J. Boullata, has been judicious and patient throughout my research. I am indebted to him for his continuous encouragement and valuable advice. I am also grateful to Dr. Darko Suvin for raising my awareness of a number of theoretical models applicable to a study of this kind. Special thanks go to Dr. Michael Sells for his timely support which contributed to the acceleration of the writing process.

I would like to point out that the main portion of my research was undertaken at the time of tragic personal circumstances. The brutal siege of my homeland Bosnia, the destruction of its material and immaterial foundations, and particularly the loss of my beloved sister and father have often confined me to passivity. I hereby thank all those who encouraged me to continue my work at the moments when such an undertaking appeared extremely difficult.

My mother has never ceased to be a source of inspiration and strength. To her, still suffering under the siege of Sarajevo, I dedicate this thesis.

Montréal
December, 1993.

Chapter One

STUDIES ON THE SHADOW PLAY AND IBN DĀNIYĀL:
METHODOLOGICAL ALTERNATIVES

To determine the socio-cultural status of the shadow play in mediaeval Arabo-Muslim societies assumes the understanding of an array of meanings attributed to this kind of theatrical presentation. As a theatre genre, the shadow play has gained a considerable amount of popularity, the exact degree of which is difficult to specify on the basis of the extant sources. Consequently, in the absence of a more systematic assessment of the shadow play tradition in the writings of mediaeval Muslim thinkers, the enigma that surrounds its historicity still remains. Though there has been a number of studies that have tried to solve at least some of its aspects, I believe that the establishment of a precise chronological pattern for the appearance and dissemination of this tradition in mediaeval Muslim societies calls for a much more thorough consideration of inter-regional and inter-cultural borrowings.

As it is, all we know is that the shadow play most probably arrived in Muslim societies from the Far East.[1] It was known in

---

[1]See Rāshīd al-Dīn's *Jāmiʿ al-tawārīkh* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1911), ed. Blochet, 2: 63; H. H. Howorth, *History of the Mongols* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1986) 1: 159-60. V. Mair traces the origins to India. From India, he argues, the

al-Andalus, in North Africa, in the Middle East. It seems to have
been practiced on both popular and courtly levels. Recently, the
controversy that surrounds its institutional setting, deriving
primarily from the etymological alternatives to the Arabic term
khayāl/khiyāl, has further confirmed how little we really know
about this tradition.[2] Consequently, the scarcity of written plays,
a lack of genuine interest in this art on the part of medieval
literary historians, a relatively wide but fractional network of
supplementary sources, and the semantic ambiguity related to the
terms associated with this kind of performance art have all
contributed to its being treated as a marginal, even "low and
vulgar" expression of Muslim literary tradition that carries no
value in the larger cultural scheme. Says Landau:

> For generations the "Shadow-Play" was
> nearly the only amusement which even the
> humblest could enjoy. The Shadow-Theatre,
> the artistic level of which is not high,
> could flourish even in a country torn by
> internecine wars and strifes, which
> delayed its cultural development and
> impoverished its inhabitants. Hence the
> popular character of the Shadow Theatre in
> the Arab countries, especially in Egypt and
> Syria.[3]

---

genre spread independently to China, Central Asia, and the Near East, which
means that the Chinese influence is only secondary. See his *Painting and
Performance: Chinese Picture Recitation, Its Indian Genesis and Analogues
Elsewhere* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1988), 39-54.

[2] S. Moreh, *Live Theatre and Dramatic Literature in the Medieval Arabic World*
(New York: New York University Press, 1992); also his article "Live Theatre in
Medieval Islam," in *Studies in Islamic History and Civilization in Honour of
Professor David Ayalon*, ed. M. Sharon (Jerusalem, 1986), 565-611.

[3] J. Landau, "Shadow PLays in the Near East," *Edoth* 3.1 (1947-48), 23.

Landau has not only misunderstood the peculiarities of the shadow theatre, but also failed to make a functional link with its social conditions. As such, Landau's assessment is an example of a lack of integrational perspective which, unfortunately, is also echoed in a number of modern studies on the shadow play and Ibn Dāniyāl.[4] Even more discouraging is the example of H. A. R. Gibb who pays tribute to Ibn Dāniyāl for having attempted to give Arabic drama "a literary connexion", but argues that Ibn Dāniyāl could not elevate it from its "rudimentary state". Thus, concludes Gibb, "Arabic drama was stillborn."[5]

Regardless of Gibb's pessimistic evaluations, it can be safely assumed that the prevailing view argues in favour of Ibn Dāniyāl's unique wit in composing dramatic entertainment in mediaeval times,[6] and it can be comfortably acknowledged that there has been a significant progress in scholarly studies in recent times. Nonetheless, the fact remains that little has been done to contemplate these plays on their own, that is, as a body of dramatic art which, as such, deserves a thorough analysis.

---

[4]For a good assessment of some scholarly works on Ibn Dāniyāl see M. M. Badawi, "Medieval Arabic Drama: Ibn Dāniyāl," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 13 (1982), 87-90 (henceforth *JAL*). His criticism of Landau is quite detailed, as he brings out specific mistakes made by this author. See p.87.

[5]H. A. R. Gibb, *Arabic Literature , an Introduction* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 149.

[6]See G. Jacob, *Geschichte des Schattentheaters im Morgen- und Abendland* (Osnabruck: Biblio Verlag, 1972); P. Kahle, "The Arabic Shadow Play in Egypt," *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society* 4 (1940) 21-34 (henceforth *JRAS*); Badawi, "Medieval Arabic Drama," 83-107; P. Molan, "*Charivari* in a Medieval Egyptian Shadow Play," *Al-Masāq (Studia Arabo-Islamica Mediterranea)* 1 (1988), 5-24.

Instead, Ibn Dāniyāl's plays have been treated mainly as carrying a historical and typological value, and rarely artistic merit. His name is thus more frequently mentioned in historical than literary studies, and particularly so in socio-historical discussions on Mamlūk Egypt.[7] However, Ibn Dāniyāl has in many respects become a synonym for the shadow play in these sources, and in turn, the shadow play is almost unexceptionably discussed with references to his plays. Such an equation, regardless of the fact that his plays were, after all, built around the genre of shadow plays, is bound to lead, directly or indirectly, to inaccurate generalizations and a loss of focus.

Perhaps it would be useful to review some of the findings of modern scholarship on the issue. One cannot generally speak of a consistent and systematic scholarship, primarily because of the diversity in its composition and orientation. For here are included works on social history, literature, mysticism, philosophy, etc., and they all pursue their aims through different methodologies.

---

[7] A. ᶜAbd al-Rāziq, *La femme au temps des Mamlouks en Egypte* (Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie, 1973); B. Shoshan, "High Culture and Popular Culture in Medieval Islam," *Studia Islamica* 73 (1991) 67-107 (henceforth *SI*); U. Haarmann, "Regional Sentiment in Medieval Islamic Egypt," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 43.1 (1980), 55-66 (henceforth *BSOAS*); also his "Arabic in Speech, Turkish in Lineage: Mamlūks and Their Sons in the Intellectual Life of Fourteenth Century Egypt and Syria," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 33.1 (1988), 81-114; B. Flemming, "Literary Activities in Mamlūk Halls and Barracks," *Studies in Memory of Gaston Wiet*, ed. M. R. Ayalon (Jerusalem: Institute of Asian and African Studies, 1977), 16; whereas in R. A. N. Nicholson's *Literary History of the Arabs* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1907) there is no mention of Ibn Dāniyāl at all.

Schimmel's discussion on the shadow play, for example, has little in common with Haarmann's, yet they both, in their respective methodological and theoretical frameworks, offer beneficial insights for a fuller picture on where the shadow play stood in mediaeval Islam.[8] Here, I will review those studies that contemplate the dramatic features of the shadow play, as well as the artistic value of Ibn Dāniyāl's plays. Though, as I remarked, the two are not mutually exclusive, they can still be differentiated according to the emphasis in these writings, particularly in recent times when more focused studies began to emerge.

Though there had been some knowledge of Ibn Dāniyāl earlier,[9] the general awareness of the significance of this subject-matter was raised in the first half of this century by two distinguished German Orientalists, first Georg Jacob[10] and then Paul Kahle.[11] Their long-term dedication to the subject led

---

[8]A. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 277-78; Haarmann , "Arabic In Speech," 110.

[9]To mention some works: C. Niebuhr, *Travels Through Arabia*, trans. R. Heron (Beirut: Librarie du Liban, n.d.); E. Littmann, *Arabische Schattenspiele* (Berlin: n.p., 1901); etc.

[10]See his *Geschichte*; also "Drei arabische Schattenspiele aus dem 13. Jahrhundert, in *Kelete Szemle* (Budapest) 2 (1901); *Muḥammad b. Dāniyāl: Escorial Codex, textproben mit 2 Licht-drucktafeln*, (Eralangen: Mencke, 1902); "AgTb ad-dTn al-wā'iẓ bei Ibn Dāniyāl," *Der Islam* 4 (1913).

[11]Kahle, "The Arabic Shadow Play,"; also, *Der Leuchtturm von Alexandria: Ein Arabisches Schattentheater aus dem Mittelalterlichen Ägypten* (Stuttgart: Kommissionverlag Freinz Steiner,1930); "A Gypsy Woman In Egypt In the 13th

them to the conclusion that Ibn Dāniyāl was one of the most interesting but most difficult authors in Arabic literature.[12] While Jacob's interest eventually spread onto a more general history of shadow theatres within which Ibn Dāniyāl certainly occupied a significant place,[13] Kahle, inheriting his colleague's work, continued in a more focused manner and worked primarily on Ibn Dāniyāl's, but also on some other, post-Dāniyālic shadow plays which he discovered in the course of his research in Egypt.[14] In a way, the writings of both Orientalists have become indispensable for a scholarly endeavor on the subject: they introduced us systematically to Ibn Dāniyāl, placed considerable importance on his plays within the more general scheme of interest of the Orientalist tradition, and managed to break through the philological complexity of these plays. Oddly, however, Kahle's long promised *édition critique* of Ibn Dāniyāl[15] has finally been published, fifty-two years after its announcement and many years after his death, complemented by D. Hopwood's critical apparatus and M. Badawi's introductory

---

Century A.D.," *Jounal of the Gypsy Lore Society* 29 (1950), 11-15; "Muḥammad Ibn Dāniyāl und sein zweites arabisches Schattenspiel," *Miscellanea Academica Berolinensis* (1950), 155-167; "The Medieval Shadow Play in Medieval Egypt (Old Texts and Old Figures)," *Journal of Pakistan Historical Society* (1954), 85-115.

[12]Kahle, "The Arabic Shadow Play," 23.

[13]His *Geschichte* is the corollary of that direction in research.

[14]Kahle, "The Arabic Shadow Play," 26.

[15]"I am publishing the Arabic text of the plays in Leiden, the translation with the commentary will follow in a short time." *Ibid.,* 34.

remarks.[16] At one earlier stage in his work, Kahle also cooperated closely with Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī towards the preparation of a critical edition (a task initiated but not completed, by Jacob). And indeed, this joint endeavor resulted in the publication in 1948 of an expurgated edition that omitted "unfitting" passages, under the title *Thalāth masrahiyyāt* ᶜ*arabiyya*..[17] This work, however, only the introduction to which is Kahle's while the rest of the authorship is by al-Hilālī, has remained in obscurity and of little use to anyone interested in the intricacies of Ibn Dāniyāl's text.

The scholarship on the subject after Jacob's and Kahle's endeavors have revolved either more directly around Ibn Dāniyāl, or on issues which were indirectly linked to him. Within this former category is the Egyptian Ibrāhīm Hamāda, who in 1963 published a critical edition, motivated in many respects by Kahle and Jacob. But, like al-Hilālī before him, Hamāda too omitted large sections containing "obscene words" (*kalimāt fāhisha)*, constrained partly by his own strict morality and partly, I would suspect, by a fear that he would not find a publisher. And just like al-Hilālī, he too subjected to severe sanctions one of the most powerful aspects of Ibn Dāniyāl's plays without which they are

---

[16]Kahle (ed.),*Three Shadow Plays by Muhammad Ibn Dāniyāl* (Cambridge: E. J. W. Gibb Memorial Series,1992). The book has come to my attention in the later course of my own research in 1993.

[17]Kahle wrote earlier that many parts of the text are simply not publishable, not even in the East. In "The Arabic Shadow Play," 34.

certainly not what they are intended to be.[18] Furthermore, by relying on one manuscript only, Ibrāhīm Ḥamāda committed his work to the same mistakes the transcriber had done, in addition to his own mistakes related to the misunderstanding or misreading of the manuscript. In spite of all these drawbacks, his merit lies in the fact that his study was for decades the only available study on the subject, serving many subsequent writers on Ibn Dāniyāl.[19]

A number of shorter studies on Ibn Dāniyāl published in the past decade have contributed to a better evaluation of this author and his work. M. M. Badawi's article published in *Journal of Arabic Literature* 13 (1982) is perhaps most enlightening with regard to what Ibn Dāniyāl's plays are all about. Here Badawi gives a short historical introduction, discusses some of the modern writings on Ibn Dāniyāl, and offers story-lines of the three plays with a brief literary analysis. Though this study is too short to deal with the literary complexity of the plays and even elaborate sufficiently on the issues raised by Badawi himself, it enables its reader to evaluate, at least provisionally, the importance of these plays within the mediaeval literary heritage. Also, because it

---

[18] I. Ḥamāda, *Khayāl al-ẓill wa tamthīliyāt Ibn Dāniyāl* (Cairo: Al-mu'assasa al-miṣriyya al-Cāmma,1963); based on MS. in Dār al-kutub al-Miṣriyya, Aḥmad Taymūr Collection, No.16.

[19]Moreh "Live Theatre," "Khayāl al-ẓill ," and *Live Theatre*; E. R. Bosworth, *The Medieval Islamic Underworld* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1976); Badawi, "Medieval Arabic Drama," A. Ḥ. Yūnus, *MuCjam al-fūlklūr* (Beirut: Maktab Lubnān, 1983); CAbd al-Rāziq, *La femme au temps des Mamloukes* ; etc.

stimulatingly connects the fragmented writings on Ibn Dāniyāl and pinpoints the gaps that arise in their interaction, this article stirs its reader's awareness that there is still much to learn and say about Ibn Dāniyāl.

In a similar line of approach that brings out dramaturgic and literary features of the plays, P. Molan, in his article "*Charivari* in a Medieval Egyptian Shadow Play*," offers "one element of a full scale analysis of *Tayf al-khayāl*."[20] This relatively short article is indeed very refreshing and powerful: it sorts out the structure of the first play, *Tayf al-khayāl*, through the seven distinguishable components recognized in the structures of Noruz and of Carnival, its European analogue, and places the emphasis on the *charivari*-type of practice therein. The article is one of those rare works which concentrate fully on the text, exploring its richness and interpretative potential, both in terms of its formal composition and in the creation of its characters, more specifically, the character of *shaykh* ᶜAflaq. Unfortunately, the article is perhaps a bit too exclusive in its approach. Though there is a plot outline in a few introductory paragraphs, too large a leap is made from the actual level of awareness about the play. I cannot see how anyone who is not fully familiar with the intrinsic finesse of *Tayf al-khayāl* could truly appreciate Molan's article, given the fact that no edited text of the play was available to the general public at that time. In a way, by ignoring

---

[20] Molan, "*Charivari,*" 5.

this inaccessibility of the source, Molan has inadvertently highlighted this gap in knowledge as well as a kind of methodological hopscotch which surrounds the scholarship on Ibn Dāniyāl and the mediaeval shadow play.

In addition to these several studies which concentrate on Ibn Dāniyāl, there has been a number of works which indirectly touch upon Ibn Dāniyāl's plays but contribute significantly to a new awareness of them. Among such studies, S. Moreh's achievements are perhaps most outstanding, though, it seems to me, Moreh has yet to round up his antithetical arguments. With regard to the shadow play, Moreh explains the etymological alternative to the term *khayāl al-ẓill,* which has been usually translated as "the shadow of spirits."[21] He makes a typological distinction between *khayāl* and *khayāl al-ẓill* by looking into different historical sources. He concludes that

> it is evident that the term *khayāl/khiyāl*
> is well established in the sense of "live
> play" from at least the ninth century; in the
> tenth century it is employed as a synonym
> for *ḥikāya,* which it eventually supersedes.
> The shadow play, on the other hand,
> receives its first mention only in the
> eleventh century, in Ibn al-Haytham, and
> then, specifically as *khayāl al-ẓill,* in Ibn
> Ḥazm. The qualification of *khayāl* by *al-
> ẓill, al-izār, al-sitāra,* etc., is reasonably
> clear evidence for the reference of the

---

[21]See Landau's article "Khayāl al-ẓill," in *EI* (New Edition) 3:742; also I. Hamāda *Khayāl al-ẓill* ; F. Saᶜd, "Khayāl al-ẓill al-ᶜarabī" in *Al-Nāshir* (February, 1934), 166; A. Ḥ. Yūnus, *Mu ᶜJam al-fūlklūr* (Beirut: Maktab Lubnān, 1983), who all adopt the Persian version of the *status constructus* .

> simple term to a type of performance from
> which it was necessary to differentiate
> this new import from the Far East. [22]

Moreh's findings are of manifold value. One, they demonstrate a historical continuity within the dramatic heritage in mediaeval Islam, in which the genre of shadow play is given a separate place. Two, they demonstrate that Ibn Dāniyāl greatly capitalized on this continuity by using "khayāl in all its shades of meaning for puns and paronomasia".[23] Three, they show that mediaeval Muslim writers distinguished well among different types of performance arts, dismissing the misconception that their usage of the terms was random due to a general lack of popularity of these genres. And four, they trace a whole series of literary sources which disclose the diversity of themes employed by shadow play artists.

cAbd al-Ḥamīd Yūnus is another Arab author who has examined the shadow play in mediaeval Muslim societies. Because his main interest lies in Arab folklore, his main concern is to incorporate the shadow play within the body of folkloric expressions. In that process, however, Yūnus falls into certain contradictions. He traces back the Chinese origins of this theatre and its arrival in the Muslim lands via the Mongols, attributing to it an oral mode of composition and transmission and thus placing

---

[22]Moreh, "Live Theatre," 60-61.

[23]Ibid., 46.

it automatically within folk literature.[24] Oddly, for him Ibn Dāniyāl's plays are an extraordinary example of such a literature, and he does not attempt to explain the existence of clear authorship within that collective body of popular compositions. Nevertheless, Yūnus still offers significant contributions particularly towards the elucidation of the sociological value of this genre, even though he too avoids assessing those "controversial" passages in Ibn Dāniyāl's plays.

For Fārūq Saᶜd, too, Ibn Dāniyāl is important inasmuch as he represents the most rounded and reliable primary source of the time.[25] But, contrary to many other authors who view Ibn Dāniyāl as the only author worth scholarly attention, Saᶜd pursues his interest through a number of post-Dāniyālic *mukhāyilūn*, like ᶜAlī al-Naḥla, Ḥasan al-Qashāsh, Rāshid b. Maḥmūd al-Dimashqī, etc. He gives a long and detailed bibliographical reference to the historical development of the genre in the Muslim world and attempts a schematic categorization of closely related kinds of the shadow play. Also, in line with Landau's argument, Saᶜd corrects the grammatical fallacy of the term inverting the *status constructus khayāl al-ẓill* to *ẓill al-khayāl*. This proposition, later refuted by Moreh,[26] enables him to consider as a kind of the

---

[24]*Muᶜjam*, 11-12, 24-25.

[25]F. Saᶜd *Khayāl al-ẓill al-ᶜarabī* (Beirut: Dār al-āfāq al-jadīda, 1984); as well as a synopsis of this book in an article under the same title, published in *al-Nāshir* (February, 1983) 166-180.

[26]See above, p.10.

shadow play anything that relates to the term *khayāl*. And Saᶜd does it so indiscriminately, opening the door to a whole series of references without a sound methodological justification. His bibliography, therefore, must be thoroughly re-examined although it is certainly extensive and useful. Furthermore, his synthetic review of different elements that go into the shadow play performance (music, dance, drama) are certainly original, even though he cites them primarily to build on his argument that there is an artistic continuity and a logical evolution from the shadow play and related genres (*khayāl al-raqṣ, khayāl Jaᶜfar al-rāqiṣ, khayāl al-izār, etc*) to other forms of screen performances and, ultimately, film. [27]

In 1983 another study on the shadow play by an Arab author was published: Abū Zayd's *Tamthīliyāt khayāl al-ẓill* (Cairo: Dār al-Maᶜārif). This study too is a potpourri of historical and literary approaches, concerned with the development of the art in the Far Eastern and Middle Eastern cultures. The main emphasis, of course, is placed on the Arab world and Ibn Dāniyāl, with quite a long analysis of his three *bābāt*. But, Abū Zayd's main goal in the discussion of the topic is primarily to elevate it from what he sees as too casual an attitude towards it on the part of fellow Arab scholars. His work is thus expository and eclectic, summarizing and surveying the previous writings of both Arab and

---

[27]Pages 166, 238-39 of the article. It is worth mentioning that this line of interest recalls Landau's in his *Studies in Arab Theatre and Cinema* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1958).

Western authors, with useful, but not sufficiently critical or original, comments of his own.

Finally, as the last but certainly not the least, it is important to assess the significant contribution of C. E. Bosworth's *The Mediaeval Islamic Underworld* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976). Though essentially writing on the *Qaṣīda Sāsāniyya*, Bosworth gives an excellent introduction to the underworld classes and their significance in shaping the socio-cultural scene of mediaeval Islam. Due to the fact that in the second play of Ibn Dāniyāl, *Ajīb wa Gharīb,* one of the characters introduces himself as one of the Banū Sāsān, Bosworth examines the play's value by shedding light on this very rich sub-culture which he sees as pivotal for social historians. His analysis is primarily linguistic for it is their *argot* that Bosworth is interested in, as well as its etymological explanations. Though his interest in Ibn Dāniyāl is only marginal, he provides us with very powerful insights into the linguistic complexity of Ibn Dāniyāl's plays and thus removes some of the obstacles towards their understanding. For, as most of the scholars agree and as the orientations of the scholarship shows, this linguistic maze-like puzzle is what has to be dealt with from as many angles as possible, even if we assume that some of its parts may never be solved.

In my examination of modern scholarship on Ibn Dāniyāl's plays two main methodological and conceptual objections arise:

one, that the shadow play should cease to be seen ephemerally, that is, as an accidental historical phenomenon which only marginally contributed to the artistic richness of the mediaeval Islamic world, and, in line with that, Ibn Dāniyāl's plays should no longer be perceived as an entity which centripetally absorbs different generalizations made about the genre. Two, that his plays are dramatic expressions in spite of all possible digressions and shortcomings, and that they need to be approached through a methodological consistency and within an adequate theoretical framework. The dramaturgy behind these plays is to be examined in all its features, as a well-defined body which cannot be manipulated by our ethical norms or *a priori* criteria for good/bad art. The task then is bringing out the value from the text rather than imposing extraneous judgments on it.

My premise will be that the genre of shadow theatre can be viewed in light of theatrical semiotics, which defines dramatic art through the specification of four indispensable elements: (1) the presentation of human relationships (2) organized into a story (3) to an audience (4) by conscious and present agents.[28] This will allow me to avoid the ongoing debate whether Arab world really knew theatre in mediaeval times or not.[29] To my mind, this

---

[28]D. Suvin, "Approaches to Topoanalysis and to the Paradigmatics of Dramaturgic Space," in *Poetics Today* 8.2 (1987), 312.

[29]Shmuel Moreh lists different authors who argued against such a heritage in the Arabo-Islamic world in the Preface to his book *Live Theatre*. On the other hand, some are quite affirmative in recognizing its existence. For example, Kahle wrote: "When we realize that in these works [Ibn Dāniyāl's] we possess the only surviving examples of Arabic dramatic poetry of the Middle ages [*sic*],

debate has become outdated, in face of the growing awareness that the scope of the traditional Aristotelian definition of drama does not surmise various non-Hellenic dramatic heritages and therefore has to be revised. Since the shadow play corresponds to the criteria of the above definition, my thesis will accept this theatre as a mature expression of dramatic art, and its primary concern will be to understand the dramaturgy that characterizes it. Such a task will be conducted through the application of several conceptual frameworks:

One, the theory of Possible Worlds (PW), that can relate to the twofold perception of the shadow play in mediaeval times: as a performance art which is for the present analysis best represented in Ibn Dāniyāl's three plays, and as an allegory that is geared to a metaphysical explanation of the relationship between God and His creatures. Though there is an epistemic link between these two perceptions, in the sense that they are both "as if" models, it seems important to differentiate between their respective frames of reference. Furthermore, though the performance art and the figurative shadow play expectedly fall within similar spatio-temporal boundaries, they hardly touch upon each other, except in the instances when, for example, some mystical writers explore the cognitive depth of the figurative

---

their unusual importance is unquestionable." "The Arabic Shadow Play," 23. Also, Badawi, "Medieval Arabic Drama;" Yūnus, *MuᶜJam;* Ḥamāda, *Khayāl al-ẓill,* etc.

shadow play by making concrete references to the staged plays of the kind.[30] Examples of this kind greatly supplement our knowledge, because they demonstrate the exploration of different themes through this genre, quite different from those offered by Ibn Dāniyāl in his famous three plays.

Two, accepting the notion that theatre is a social phenomenon, my thesis will try to identify the institutional setting behind the shadow play, and the audience it attracts. This will relate to Goffman's theory of "frames," assuming, as Goffman puts it, "that definitions of a situation are built up in accordance with principles of organization which govern events -- at least social ones -- and our subjective involvement in them." [31] Defining the socio-historical context will have a twofold aim: one, viewing Ibn Dāniyāl's plays as a historical category, and two, understanding, primarily from textual extrapolations, the process of communication between Ibn Dāniyāl and his target audience. Because we lack historical sources which could tell us about the character of this audience, it seems to me that the most plausible attempt at its identification in sociological terms is through a twofold analysis: one, the analysis of linguistic, stylistic and ideological messages in Ibn Dāniyāl's plays; and two, a selective analysis of the extant historiographical writings

---

[30]This is the case, as will be discussed later, with Ibn al-Fāriḍ's *Al-tā'iyya al-kubrā*..

[31]E. Goffman, *Frame Analysis* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1974), 10.

which would show the relevance of these messages within the prevalent system of values.

Three, building the analysis of Ibn Dāniyāl's plays around Bakhtin's notion of "grotesque realism," which focuses on the human body and its liberation "from the oppression of such gloomy categories as 'eternal', 'immovable', 'absolute', 'unchangeable', and instead exposure "to the gay and free laughing aspect of the world, with its unfinished and open character, with the joy of change and renewal."[32] Though Bakhtin's analysis pertains to a different ideological framework which molds his terminology in a specific manner, I believe that the method of his evaluation of Rabelais' text through this emphasis on the plebeian spirit is readily applicable to the imagery in all three plays of Ibn Dāniyāl. For, one of the most conspicuous characteristic of all three plays of Ibn Dāniyāl is that they address their audience through a humorous demystification of the Mamlūk etiquette and its elusive morality. What is, then, the function of laughter and does it have any political implications? Humour, which is a common element in all three of Ibn Dāniyāl's plays[33], is clearly Ibn Dāniyāl's strategy employed to link his audience to specific contradictions that he chooses to expose. Ibn Dāniyāl's grotesque representations, which are unanimously considered exceedingly

---

[32]M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World,* trans. H. Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 123.

[33]Landau erroneously argues that humour prevails in <u>all</u> shadow plays, in "Shadow Plays," 63. We cannot make such a generalization, particularly if we consider the references by Ibn al-Fāriḍ, Ibn ᶜArabī, Ibn Saᶜīd al-Maghribī, etc.

obscene, ludicrously illustrate the dynamism of the common people's life and their ability to juxtapose profanity to the norm.

And four, by examining the dramaturgy of Ibn Dāniyāl's pieces, I hope to shed more light on the ongoing discussion about its thematic and formal orientation, and understand whether this was a popular or courtly entertainment or whether, as has been suggested in a number of studies, it "liminally" cuts through different social strata? In other words, does the shadow play in general and Ibn Dāniyāl's play in particular, pertain to the level of the $^c\bar{a}mma$ or the $kh\bar{a}$șșa, or, is it perhaps intertwined with both?

It has to be emphasized, however, that these theoretical frameworks are deeply intertwined and cannot be adopted in sharply distinguishable categories. Their respective relevance will now be discussed in separate terms, but their combination is, I hope, what can contribute towards a panoramic elucidation of Ibn Dāniyāl's plays and their context.

1.Possible Worlds

The interest here lies not with the philosophical realm where the concept of possible worlds is defined in logical terms,

but with its elaboration as a "cultural construct."[34] For, as Pavel puts it, fiction in many respects functions "as a means of checking the explanatory power of logical hypotheses and models."[35] The relevance of the possible world theory for this study lies in the fact that Ibn Dāniyāl's plays offer an alternative to the actual through the creation of an imaginary state of affairs presented in a shadow theatre. The audience, positioning itself within the existing system of values, interacts with the presented state of affairs by inducing a possible world. Away from the theatre setting, when used as a metaphor in the mystical or literary writings, the shadow theatre in its technique serves to induce a possible world in the mind of the readers. Though my concern in the induction of a possible world is primarily the theatre setting, it will be interesting to explore the differences between the two realms of thought so as to make a clearer distinction between the two perceptions of the shadow theatre in mediaeval Islam. It has to be emphasized that the need for a parallel discussion is derived from the common aspects which appear in the metaphorical shadow play and the theatre genre, because, as Suvin puts it,

> both metaphoric and narrative texts can in
> contemporary semiotics be treated in
> terms of the implied *possible worlds*,
> specifying a state of affairs which differs

---

[34]U. Eco, *The Role of the Reader* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), 221.

[35]T. Pavel, *Fictional Worlds* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1986), 2.

from the "normal," and analyzable as if
based on counterfactual conditionals or "as
if" hypotheses.[36]

In theatre, "dramaturgic story and spacetime induce, by the interaction between the existents, events, and relationships being ostended and the audience for which they are ostended, a specific Possible World."[37] The emphasis on the interaction between the stage and the audience is particularly significant because of the necessity to understand and re-interpret the signs from the stage through the prism of the existing cultural parameters. Though there certainly may be differences in this interpretive process among individual spectators, it is assumed that there is a common projection of what the performance text portrays. For that, common cultural denominators are needed which will allow for the recognition, de-semantization and re-semantization of a theatrical sign. As Eco explains, "in the *mise en-scène* an object, first recognized as a real object, is then assumed as a sign in order to refer back to another object (or to a class of objects) whose constitutive stuff is the same as that of the representing object."[38]

---

[36]Suvin, "The Chronotope, Possible Worlds, and Narrativity," *Proceedings of the International Comparative Literature Association, XIth International Congress* 2 (Paris, August 1985), 34.

[37]Suvin, "The Performance Text as Audience-Stage Dialog Inducing a Possible World," *Versus* 42 (1987), 15.

[38]Eco, "Semiotics of Theatrical Performance," *The Drama Review* 21.1 (1977), 111.

The specificity of the shadow theatre calls for further elucidation of the nature of ostended signs. The absence of human beings as visible dramaturgic agents and their replacement with one-dimensional shadows certainly carries some drawbacks that have to be "corrected" by different means. Here, the function of dramaturgic agents is conducted through an audio-visual transmission of the roles from the puppeteer to his figures. The function of the stage is assumed by a white screen onto which the shadows are projected. This screen determines the boundaries of "a spatio-temporal *elsewhere* represented as though actually present for the audience."[39] The set of relations on that stage is threefold: the puppeteer, the figures, and the shadows. Their synchronization is not on a functional level only, for it is the puppeteer's conscious "acting" along with his skill to coordinate the movement of the figures that ultimately achieves an "elsewhere". Moreover, the usage of props is considerably reduced, and their presence usually specifies the approximate spatial boundaries of the action (e.g. indoors/outdoors; sea/land; city/country-side; etc.). A supplementary communication, because of this limited usage of props, is done through the use of some narrational guides, which means that these are not altogether excluded. However, in spite of all these drawbacks, it is important to remember that in such a fictional space, regardless of what a limited scope of performance the visible vehicles of

---

[39]K. Elam, *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama* (London: Methuen, 1980), 99.

action may have, "we are," as Suvin puts it, "in final analysis always dealing with human relationships."[40]

Eco's argument that every sign, "after being a mere presence, a figure of speech, becomes an ideological abstraction,"[41] is very well demonstrated in the shadow play where only the contours of the figures are visually functional, so their completeness calls for an instantaneous association with certain types. In the case of Ibn Dāniyāl's characters, the process of association can be conducted on ethnic, professional, or gender lines.

As argued already by the Prague School, stage semiotization occurs the moment any object is put on the stage, and from then on the audience's assumption is a signifying function of all that they see therein.[42] The significance of this "bracketing" of an action by the dramaturgic space, when perceived through the context of the mediaeval Arabo-Islamic world in which Ibn Dāniyāl wrote, is of great relevance. Since we cannot determine the character of the audience on the basis of the extant historiographical sources, what remains is understanding the target audience on the basis of the plays in combination with the understanding of the milieu. Therefore, it seems useful to derive

---

[40]Suvin, "The Performance text," 4.

[41]Eco, "Semiotics of Theatrical Performance," 16.

[42]For elaborate discussion on the theatrical principles set up by this school see L. Matejka and I. R. Tutnik. *Semiotics of Art: Prague School Contributions* (Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press, 1976).

some insights from the theory of frames towards a better definition of certain social conditions and venues through which the communication between Ibn Dāniyāl and his audience took place.

2.Theory of Frames

In his book *Frame Analysis,* Goffman wrote: "I assume that definitions of a situation are built up in accordance with principles of organization which govern events -- at least social ones -- and our subjective involvement in them."[43] He advances his theory by defining primary frameworks which allow the individuals to locate, perceive, identify, and label "a seemingly infinite number of concrete occurrences" within a social structure.[44] In addition to natural primary frameworks which are of purely physical character, the social ones provide a background understanding for events. In that sense, they are used in any given occurrence, and, in Goffman's view, "taken all together, the primary frameworks of a particular social group constitute a central element of its culture."[45] The primary frameworks also control the transformation of values of one and the same thing or concept. An interesting, and now famous, example of such a

---

[43]Goffman, *Frame Analysis,* 21.

[44]*Ibid.,* 21.

[45]*Ibid.,* 27.

transformation offered by Goffman, is a woman in the mirror sale: the irregularity will arise in a mirror sale if, instead of examining the quality of the mirror-frame, the woman adjusts her hair, just like an irregularity would arise if she examined the quality of the mirror-frame in a beauty salon, instead of adjusting her hair.[46]

In many respects, Goffman's theory of frames as 'the "interpretation schemata" is similar to what Eco defines as "cultural encyclopaedia," which constitutes our system of values and the consequent presuppositions which enable us to interpret different relations among things that surround us. [47]

In theatre, "the central understanding is that the audience has neither the right nor the obligation to participate directly in the dramatic action occurring on the stage."[48] That means that there is a conscious creation of a frame which is derived, but simultaneously cut off, from the empirical world. The awareness of this transgression is crucial, because of the understanding of "certain fixed limits of time and place according to rules freely accepted but absolutely binding."[49]

---

[46]*Ibid.*, 39-40.

[47]Eco, *The Role*, 220-22.

[48]Goffman, *Frame Analysis*, 125.

[49]J. Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study in the Play Element in Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955), 28.

In this thesis, the stress on the transgressions of frames from ordinary to theatrical is to draw the line between the historical situation in the Mamlūk society which formed its own system of values and its counterpart in the theatrical setting where Ibn Dāniyāl explores the alternatives to these values without putting at risk their ludic aspect.

3.Bakhtin: Laughter as Purification[50]

If one of the characteristics of mediaeval Muslim writings is the acceptance of fixed conventions necessary for collective observance, then Ibn Dāniyāl's drama in many respects appears as an antidote which opposes that absolutism with relativism. Humour, grotesque images and a festive spirit are all discernible in his plays, reflecting greatly that which Bakhtin views as polarity in folk culture. Public/private, upward/downward, birth/death, are all polarities which cannot be separated from each other, they are like two sides of the same coin, though their separation was greatly the intention of the strict religious oligarchy in mediaeval times. Through humour and grotesque images there is an exposition of those aspects of bodily activities which are considered as carrying a "degrading" feature

---

[50]The views here are derived from M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. H. Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984). Consulted also are: D. Suvin, "The Subject as a Limit-Zone of Collective Bodies," *Discours social/ Social Discourse* 2:1-2 (1989), 187-197; Huizinga *Homo Ludens*, and C. Powell & G. Paton (ed.), *Humour in Society: Resistance and Control* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1988).

of human existence: copulation, voiding, exaggeration in food, sex,
leisure, etc. These are what transpose -- or, degrade -- the
spiritual cleanliness of man onto the hidden and unspoken
material level of his being, yet not to constrain it but to liberate
it. Says Bakhtin,

> eating, drinking, defecation and other
> elimination (sweating, blowing of the nose,
> sneezing), as well as copulation,
> pregnancy, dismemberment, swallowing up
> another body--all these acts are performed
> on the confines of the body and the outer
> world, or on the confines of the old and
> new body. In all these events the beginning
> and end of life are closely linked and
> interwoven.[51]

This liberation of the body through the equation of all its
features is also a prominent feature in all three plays by Ibn
Dāniyāl. With that juxtaposition of profanity and the norm, Ibn
Dāniyāl's world does not reject the established etiquette but
enriches it, shuffling the hierarchy list and giving equal
importance to every human act. It does this through laughter,
which thus acquires a functional value and creates an atmosphere
in which nothing is taboo and static but everything is fluid and
changeable. In Bakhtin's view,

> laughter purifies from dogmatism, from
> the intolerant and the petrified; it
> liberates from fanaticism and pedantry,
> from fear and intimidation, from
> didacticism, naïveté and illusion, from the

---

[51]Bakhtin, *Rabelais*, 317.

single meaning, the single level, from
sentimentality...It restores this ambivalent
wholeness. Such is the function of laughter
in the historical development of culture
and literature.[52]

4.Popular or Courtly Entertainment?

Much ink has been spilled on whether the mediaeval shadow

theatre was a courtly or popular entertainment. The arguments

have usually been construed either on the basis of language and

form, or on the basis of historiographical writings. Says Cachia:

> The answer is to be sought in a wider
> phenomenon: the coexistence in Arabic of a
> "high" literature, which for many centuries
> as conservative, formal and tied to a
> classical idiom magnificently developed by
> pre-Islamic poets and hallowed by
> Scriptures, and of more popular forms of
> self-expression couched in local dialects,
> less stable but also more varied and more
> immediately relevant to the concerns of
> the common people. These latter forms
> embrace what in the European tradition is
> known as folklore; but their reach is
> somewhat wider, in that they sometimes
> found their way into the courts of the
> mighty and the circles of the learned, some
> of whom, indeed, have been known to
> contribute to them; but when not actually
> despised as corruptions of a higher
> tradition, they were looked at best as
> entertainment.... The corpus has, therefore,
> gone largely unstudied and such pieces as

---

[52]*Ibid.,* 123.

were written down were usually first
recast into the 'literary' language. Only
when they gave rise to imitations in the
'high' style did they pass into the literary
canon. The dramatic presentations we have
noted all belonged to the realm of popular
art, and Ibn Dāniyāl's plays appear to have
been an attempt to bring them into
conformity with the élite.[53]

For Badawi too, the shadow plays were staged both for the
élite as well as for the masses. His conclusion is based on
historical sources primarily.[54] Kahle, on the other hand, argues
that Ibn Dāniyāl's poetic sophistication could relate only to the
educated and cultured members of the society.[55] While I agree
with the view that both of these criteria offer sufficient
evidence to support any of the advanced arguments, I believe that
we need to develop a more systematic and comprehensive
approach which could reconcile or modify all these views.
Because I am concerned here primarily with the dramaturgy of Ibn
Dāniyāl's shadow plays, I intend to approach the issue through a
content analysis of their different dimensions.

---

[53]P. Cachia, "The Theatrical Movement of the Arabs." *MESA Bulletin* 16 (1982), 11.

[54]Badawi, "Medieval Arabic Drama," 84.

[55]Kahle, "The Arabic Shadow Play," 23..

To discuss this, I will rely on the criteria developed by authors such as Van Erven,[56] Goodlad,[57] Bristol[58] and McGrath.[59] I believe that their application may allow for a more systematic evaluation of all artistic elements which constitute a shadow play.

However, as Bristol aptly points out, the process of specifying what is meant by popular or plebeian culture is rather delicate and difficult.[60] If, in the case of mediaeval Islam, we accept the two sharply distinguished categories of the $^c\bar{a}mma$ and the $kh\bar{a}\underline{s}\underline{s}a$, which, in spite of the existing imprecision to account for their complexity, refer to two different strata within the same socio-political structure, then we have to understand what cultural manifestations characterize each of them.

And if, indeed, we accept that the shadow play, particularly the one represented by Ibn Dāniyāl, pertains to the popular culture, then we have to deal with at least some of the following questions: one, does this theatre represent an organized social experience which informs about a social structure, and

---

[56]E. Van Erven, *Radical People's Theatre* (Bloomington: Indiana Univeristy Press, 1988).

[57]J. S. R. Goodlad, *A Sociology of Popular Drama* (London: Heinemann, 1971)

[58]M. Bristol, *Carnival and Theatre* (London: Methuen & Ltd, 1985).

[59]J. McGrath, *A Good Night Out. Popular Theatre: Audience, Class and Form* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1981).

[60]Bristol, *Carnival and Theatre*, 5.

particularly the moral relationships between individuals? Two, what kind of setting does it have and what kind of audience does it recruit? Three, are there provisions of historical insights into its socio-political predicament? Four, does it rely on forms and elements of contemporary popular culture (e.g. dialects, popular stories and legends, etc.)? And five, because laughter is almost always employed to attract non-theatre audience, does it link itself to specific political circumstances in a humorous way with the intention of demystifying the status quo and offering alternative possible worlds as inputs for change?[61] I believe that a thorough consideration of all these questions can pave the way for a better examination of the embedded cultural practices and expectations, define more comprehensively the concept of popular entertainment, and enable us to identify the channels of communication between Ibn Dāniyāl's shadow play and his audience.

Such, in brief, are the theoretical frameworks by means of which I hope to contribute to a more thorough analysis of Ibn Dāniyāl's plays and some aspects of the genre of shadow theatre. It has to be emphasized, however, that these frameworks are deeply intertwined and cannot be adopted through mutual exclusiveness. Their respective relevance has been introduced in

---

[61]These criteria, which have to be further elaborated in the course of the analysis, are derived from Goodlad , *Sociology*, and Van Erven, *Radical People's Theatre.*

separate terms, but their combination is what can contribute towards a panoramic elucidation of Ibn Dāniyāl's plays and their context.

Chapter Two

KHAYĀL AL-ZILL : FROM A THEATRICAL TO AN ALLEGORICAL FRAME

> Let us consider this wheel of
> heaven in which we move
> As if it were a shadow play:
> The sun is the candle, the
> world is the lantern,
> And we, like the images
> revolving on its walls.
>
> (ᶜUmar Khayyām)[1]

In the section on Direct Vision of his book on optics, *Kitāb al-manāzir,* Ibn al-Haytham (d.430/1039) observes the following:

> And so [does] the eye, when it perceives the
> play (*khayāl*) that appears from behind the
> screen and that [consists of] figures which
> the presenter (*mukhayyil*) moves in a way
> that their shadows appear on both the wall
> behind the screen and the screen itself. The
> eye perceives these shadows from the
> other side of the screen. It will think that
> they are bodies and animals in motion, if
> the intellect of the viewer does not
> determine that they are mere shadows, i.e.
> if it does not notice the figures moved by

---

[1] *Rubāᶜī* No. 101 in *Ömer Hayyam,* ed. A. H. Çelebi (Istanbul: Varlik Yayinlari, 1954).

the presenter in such a way that the cast
shadows are theirs.[2]

Ibn al-Haytham's observation is clearly the observation of a
shadow play, and his reference is, to the best of our knowledge,
historically the first which explicitly demonstrates the
awareness of this performance art in mediaeval Islam. While
describing the technique of the shadow play and the way it
relates to the eyesight, Ibn al-Haytham indirectly highlights its
mimetic process and argues that it is the shadows of the figures
which the perceiver is supposed to register and understand. The
failure to do this shows a degeneration in the eyesight and error
in cognition *(wa idhā adraka al-başar al-azlāl wa zannahā
ḥayawānāt wa ashkhāṣan, fa huwa ghāliṭ fī [māhiyyāt] tilka al-
ḥayawānāt wa tilka al-ashkhāṣ, wa al-ghalaṭ fī [māhiyyat] al-
mubṣir huwa ghalaṭ fī al-maᶜrifa).* [3]

Ascribing this cognitive function to vision is a step beyond
the mere mechanics of vision. The physical process of grasping an
image is intertwined with the metaphysical, and even though Ibn
al-Haytham does not overtly comment on this, his choice of the
shadow play as an example of the dynamics between two steps in

---

[2] Ibn al-Haytham, *Kitāb al-manāẓir,* ed. A. I. Ṣabra (Kuwait: The National Council
for Culture, Arts and Letters, 1983), 3: 6, 408.

[3] In the critical edition, the reading of *māhiyyat* is *mā'iyāt,* which does not
seem plausible to me. If read as *māhiyyat,* the statement implies that the error
in perception of the shadows by mistaking them for animals and persons would
lead to the misunderstanding of the nature, or quiddity, of these animals and
persons. Unfortunately, I have not had access to the manuscript itself so I
cannot advance my argument beyond this speculation.

the perception of reality corresponds greatly to the subsequent employment of an allegorical frame through which this duality is identified.

Chronologically speaking, the first instances of such a tropical usage, after Ibn al-Haytham, occur in the early fifth/eleventh century, stretching through several centuries and permeating different genres of creative writing. It would be inaccurate to say that the shadow play was a ubiquitous metaphor in mediaeval Muslim writings, but the significance of its even sporadic employment bears on two issues: one, it affirms a relative popularity of this performance art in the period somewhat prior to, or current with, the period in which such a metaphor was coined. Two, it shows that some of the most prominent thinkers found in it, not merely ornamentally but conceptually, a powerful way to explore certain sets of relations that they discussed in their writings.

If we set off from the postulate that Islam, like all other major religions, is grounded in a network of root metaphors which relate to various aspects of the human situation,[4] then a question arises with regard to the introduction of new metaphors within that network: how and why do they come into being? The metaphor in this case -- the shadow play -- evidently rose from the theatre genre, but only after being stripped of its theatricity.

---

[4] See D. Tracy's essay on "Metaphor and Religion," in *On Metaphor*, ed. S. Sacks (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 89-104.

It lost its content, but retained its form. It became a vehicle whose function was to disclose a formal similarity between two phenomena: shadow play and phantom-like existence of this world. Its chronotope, even if not fully forgotten, lost its particularity, and the metaphor acquired a dimension of generality which could be applied to a different set of human circumstances. Viewed in more theoretical terms,

> there is almost unbroken continuity between a single or micro-metaphor, a sustained series of metaphors (the *métaphore filée*), a metaphor theme, and finally the model or paradigm (a property of each and every fictional and indeed doxological -- e.g. scientific -- text).... If both metaphorical and narrative text entail [Possible Worlds], then the main differences between a single metaphor and a fictional text would have to be correlative to the latter's quite different articulation.[5]

Though this explains the common points between different forms of metaphoric expressions, it still leaves us with the question of innovativeness and originality brought about with the metaphor of the shadow play. Since we are here dealing with the same action -- i.e. producing a shadowplay, -- understanding the difference between doing so for the purposes of a stage performance on the one hand and a rhetorical demonstration of resemblance between two phenomena on the other, calls for looking for additional clues. In that respect, it appears useful to

---

[5]Suvin, "The Chronotope, PW, and Narrativity," 34.

consider the features of the shadow play which may have rendered it transposable from the level of performance art to the level of metaphor. The major one that will be examined here is the semantic scope of the term *khayāl al-ẓill*, for that can disclose certain subtleties which both differentiate and link the two modalities of the shadow play.

1. Khāla, khayāl, etc.

Kh--y--l is a root that occupied plenty of space in the writings of mediaeval lexicographers. Its different forms were used as a part of technical terminology for a number of disciplines. It is primarily in literary and philosophical writings, however, that this root acquires well defined semantic frames. In *Lisān al-ᶜarab*, the verb *khāla* stands for "to imagine, or to fancy something," like *ẓanna*, sometimes even *ᶜalima* :

> A person acts with regard to something fancied *(mukhayyal)* , that is, you make someone imagine things you liken for him *(khayyalta)*, which is fancy not certainty. ... Sometimes *khiltu* stands for *ᶜalimtu....* A cloud may be called *khāl. ... Al-saḥāb al-mukhayyil* is that which makes you believe it will bring rain. When you want to say that the sky is cloudy, you say *akhālat. ... Akhyalna* and *akhyalat, khayyalat, takhayyalat* are used to mean "it was going to rain, there was thunder and lightning," but after it rains the implication of "make believe" is no longer there. ... *Al-khayāl* is everything one sees as a shadow. Likewise, the reflection of a person in the mirror, or one's apparition in sleep, is the image of one's figure *(ṣūrat timthālih)*, or when something passes by

> you resembling a shadow, all that is
> *khayāl*, as they say, "an apparition
> manifested itself to me."[6]

In another major mediaeval lexicon, *Tāj al-ᶜarūs, khayāl* is
further explained in philosophical terms as

> a faculty that preserves that which the
> *sensus communis (al-ḥiss al-mushtarak)*
> perceives from the forms of objects of
> senses after the material aspect has been
> absent, in such a manner that this common
> sense views these images whenever it
> turns towards the sense; it is the treasury
> for the *sensus communis,* located in the
> foremost portion of the brain.[7]

Curiously enough, when discussing the derivative *khayāl,*
neither of the two lexicographers includes the meaning of a
performance art. Nonetheless, as Moreh points out, a number of
early sources indicate that the term *khayāl* had been in usage to
denote live performance. Until the fifth/eleventh century, Moreh
argues, *khayāl* was interchangeably used with *ḥikāya* and *laᶜba.*[8]

---

[6]See Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al- ᶜarab* (Beirut: Dār al-ṭibāᶜ wa al-nashr, 1375/1956), 11:226-233.

[7]See Al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-ᶜarūs* (Kuwait: Maṭbaᶜat ḥukūmat al-Kuwait, 1385/1965), 7: 313-316. This is a compressed definition of this faculty that Ibn Sīnā discusses in detail in his *Kitāb al-shifā'.* Another interesting feature that Ibn Sīnā attributes to *khayāl (phantasia)* is its ability to preserve an image only as the image is, because it has no power of alternating images in the way that intellect does. See F. Rahman (ed.), *Avicenna's De Anima* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), 190. Ibn Sīnā's elaboration on *khayāl* and its associative terms *takhayyul* and *mutakhayyila* in relation to the process of symbolization and prophetic intellect will not be discussed here.

[8]See Chapter 7 of his book *Live Theatre,* as well as the article "Live Theatre in Medieval Islam."

Indeed, many writings indicate that there was a common understanding of such a usage until the time *khayāl* was paired with *ẓill* and subsequently accepted to mean the shadow play. For example, in *Kitāb al-diyārāt* by al-Shabushtī (d.388/998), a passage relates the following anecdote concerning the ᶜAbbāsid poet Diᶜbil:

> One time Diᶜbil said to the effeminate ᶜAbbāda : "By God, I'll ridicule you in satire!" He responded: "By God, if you do so, I'll expose your mother in *khayāl* ! (*wallāhi, la in faᶜalta, la ukhrijanna ummak fī al-khayāl*)."[9]

In the footnote to this passage, the critical editor of the text, K. ᶜAwwād, citing al-Baghdādī's (d.322/934) book *al-Ajwaba al-muskita,* gives a variant to this expression, which is attributed to the Umayyad poet Jarīr. It goes:

> Jarīr recited some poetry. An effeminate man *(al-mukhannath)* exclaimed: "Woe unto me, oh daddy!" [People] said to him: "Shut up, woe unto you! This is Jarīr!" He asked: "What could he do to me? If he mocks me in satire, I'll expose his mother in a *ḥikāya* !"[10]

As for *khayāl,* ᶜAwwād erroneously remarks that by it al-Shabushtī meant "*ṭayf al-khayāl* , or what is known as *khayāl al-ẓill,* a genre of theatrical performances put up by a *mukhāyil*

---

[9]Abū Ḥasan al-Shabushtī, *Kitāb al-diyārāt,* ed. K. ᶜAwwād (Baghdad: Maṭbaᶜat al-Maᶜārif, 1951), 119.

[10]*Ibid,* note 4.

behind a curtain."[11] As Moreh aptly points out, quoting an identical anecdote where *la*c*ba* replaces *khayāl* and *ḥikāya*, the three terms appear as synonyms, all bearing the meaning of a mimetic performance.[12] *Ḥikāya* seems to be the oldest term among the three since it appears in the earliest available sources, although as of the eleventh century it mainly stood for a written genre[13]. This term was also used by Mattā b. Yūnus (d.328/940) in his translation of Aristotle's *Poetics*, for it most closely came to his understanding of mimesis. Ibn Sīnā too uses the term *muḥākāt* in the meaning of mimetic representation, while the term *takhyīl* stands for "the mental process by which the poet can cause his mimetic representations to be imaginative, effective, and creative."[14] Al-Jāḥiẓ (d.255/868) had already explained the meaning of *ḥakā* in *Al-bayān wa al-tabyīn*, as the process of facial and gestural imitations.[15]

That *ḥikāya* could be used as an alternative to *khayāl* is also suggested in the following passage of al-Maqrīzī's (d.845/1442) *Khiṭaṭ* where the author describes the carnivalesque celebration of the pilgrimage to the Prison of Yūsuf in 415 A.H.:

---

[11] *Ibid*, note 5.

[12] Moreh, "Live Theatre," 568.

[13] Moreh, *Live Theatre*, 124.

[14]V. Cantarino, *Arabic Poetics in the Golden Age* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975), 82.

[15]Al-Jāḥiẓ, *Al-bayān wa al-tabyīn* (Cairo: Dār al-ma*c*rifa, 1288/1968), 69-70.

The Commander of the Faithful spent
there two days and two nights until
performers went back to the prison with
tamāthīl, ḥikāyāt, and samājāt. He laughed
at them and found them witty. He returned
to his palace on Wednesday the 13th. The
people of the street stayed for two more
weeks, roaming around the streets with
khayāl, samājāt, and tamāthīl, and going up
to Cairo so that the Commander of the
Faithful could see them. Then they went
back with a written record which allowed
each of them to come and go. On Saturday,
fourteen days before the end of Jumādā al-
Ūlā, they entered the Prison of Yūsuf,
passed through the streets with *ḥikāyāt,
samājāt, and tamāthīl*. On that day people
did not attend their jobs and businesses.[16]

G. Wiet, the editor of the text, remarks in the footnote that
the *khayāl* in question are the shadow plays, and so does
Quatremère in his translation of the same text.[17] In their view, as
in the view of almost all other scholars of the shadow play
preceding Moreh, *khayāl*, when appearing alone, was taken to be a
shortened version of *khayāl al-ẓill*, and so, little attention went
to the examination of other etymological possibilities. Another
example of such an understanding is von Grunebaum's translation
of Ibn Khallikān's (d.681/1282) description of the first *mawlid*

---

[16]Al-Maqrīzī. *Al-Mawāᶜiẓ wa al-iᶜtibār fī dhikr al-khiṭaṭ wa al-āthār*, ed. G.
Wiet (Cairo: n.p., 1923), 4: 9-10. Emphasis mine.

[17]E. Quatremère (tr.), *Histoire des Sultans Mamlouks de l'Egypte* (Paris:
Duprat, 1837), 1: 152-53., where he translates them as "the Chinese shadows"
(*les ombres chinoises*). A. Mez too, when commenting on this passage in his *Die
Renaissance des Islâms* (Heidelberg: Carl Winters Universitätsbuchhandlung,
1922) translates *khayāl* as shadow play *(Schattenspiele)*, 399.

celebration organized by Muẓaffar al-Dīn Kokburu, Saladin's brother-in-law and the governor of Irbil (southeast of Mosul), in 586/1172:

> On the first day of the month of Ṣafar, these pavilions were decorated in a most splendid manner; a choir of singers, a band of musicians, and a troop of exhibitors were established in each; not a story being left without a company of these artists. During the whole period all business remained suspended, and the sole occupation of the people was to amuse themselves and walk from one band to another. These pavilions were erected on a line from the gate of the citadel to the entrance of the (Ṣūfī) convent near the hippodrome, and every day, after the *caṣr* prayer, Muẓaffar al-Dīn went forth and stopped at each pavilion successively, listening to the music, and amusing himself with looking at the Chinese shadows [*arbāb al-khayāl*] or whatever else might be going on.[18]

Moreh rightly underlines the technical problems in interpreting both al-Maqrīzī's and Ibn Khallikān's *khayāl* s as shadow plays: that is, if we recall Lane's remark that the technique of *khayāl al-ẓill* allows only for performances at night,[19] then it is only safe to assume that the *khayāl* in their

----

[18]G. E. von Grunebaum, *Muhammadan Festivals* (London: Curzon Press, 1976), 74.

[19]W. E. Lane, *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (London: East -West Publications, 1978), 385-86. He says: "The Puppet show of "Kara Gyooz" has been introduced into Egypt by Turks, in whose language the puppets are made to speak. Their performances, which are in general extremely indecent, occasionally amuse the Turks residing in Cairo; but, of course, are

texts refer to another form of live performance.[20] To Lane's remark I would add an indoors/outdoors criterion because, technically speaking, it is sufficient to have · darkened room for a successful staging of a shadow play. However, both examples cited above clearly indicate that the performances were held outdoors.

That *khayāl* is not always an abbreviated version of *khayāl al-ẓill* is also alluded to in a passage found in Ibn Ḥijja al-Ḥamawī's (d.838/1434) *Thamarāt al-awrāq* in which the author relates an anecdote about the shadow play performance at the Ayyubid court:

> This resembles what *al-Qāḍī* al-Fāḍil said when the sultan al-Mālik al-Nāṣir Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn brought to his castle <u>a performer of khayāl, I mean, khayāl al-ẓill,</u> for the *Qāḍī* to be entertained. But al-Fāḍil stood up to leave when the performer began. Al-Nāṣir said to him: "If it was forbidden, we would not attend it." Since he had been in al-Nāṣir's service even before the latter took over the Sultanate, the *Qāḍī* did not want to create trouble so he sat until the end. Al-Mālik al-Nāṣir asked him what he thought of the performance and the *Qāḍī* answered: "I thought it was a great lesson. I saw dynasties come and go. And when the curtain went up there was but one mover. " And so, with the help of his eloquence, he

---

not very attractive to those who do not understand the Turkish language. They are conducted in the manner of the 'Chinese shadows,' and therefore only exhibited at night."

[20]Moreh, *Live Theatre*, 127.

produced   something   serious   out   of
something so petty.[21]

The synecdochical qualification "al-khayāl, aᶜnī, khayāl al-ẓill," would somehow appear superfluous, if khayāl stands, or may have earlier stood, for different kinds of live performances.[22]

Such examples demonstrate the need for a lexical segregation of the two terms, khayāl and khayāl al-ẓill, at least in certain periods in the history of performance arts, and for a call for a more rigorous analysis of the early sources. Indeed, Teodor Menzel has written that the word khayāl caused him great confusion, leading him to believe that more thorough studies of it should be pursued.[23] Most of the time, however, the semantic ambiguity related to the term khayāl is not properly elaborated, and discussions of it are based on circumstantial evidence deriving from individual examples.

I find Moreh's arguments quite coherent and insightful regarding this issue, though I believe that more space should be given for the creation of a more subtle semantic link among the

---

[21] Ibn Ḥijja al-Ḥamawī. Thamarāt al-awrāq (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-ᶜIlmiyya,1983), I:47. Emphasis mine.

[22] Moreh gives a series of other examples of the kind, but I believe that this suffices to show that the discussion on the semantic scope of khayāl in the history of performance arts is far from being over

[23] T. Menzel, Meddâḥ, Schattentheater, und Orta Ojunu (Prag: Orientalisches Institut, 1941), 14.

existing variances of *khāla*. Although agreeing in general with Moreh's reinterpretation of the textual occurrences of *khayāl*, I think that his method has alienated the meanings of the two terms, rather than bringing them closer. As a result, his discussion implies that *khayāl*, with its meaning of live performance, was accidentally paired with *al-ẓill*, as any of its synonyms could have been. However, the fact that the term for the shadow play is *khayāl al-ẓill*, rather than *laʿbat al-ẓill*, for example, appears to be more than accidental. In many respects, the two words semantically lean towards each other, as the lexicographers quoted above show: they both readily associate *khayāl* with *ẓill*, (*al-khayāl li kull shay' tarāhu ka al-ẓill*; also, *wa rubbamā marra bika al-shay' shibha al-ẓill fa huwa khayāl*),[24] though, admittedly, they mention no fixed terminology which places the two words in a specific correlation.

In light of this, it may be useful to examine some early sources so as to distinguish the reasons behind the semantic association of *khayāl* with *al-ẓill*, in addition to the typological one elaborated by Moreh. Doing so can in turn help us determine more easily the grounds for the coinage of the metaphor "life is a shadow play."

To begin with, in the cases of both lexicographers quoted above, it is implied that *khāla* and its derivatives relate to deceptive images conjured up in one's mind. But, as Cantarino

---

[24]*Lisān*, 244.

observes, it is important to understand that these illusions are not a product of falsely applied premises, nor do they refer to groundless expectations. They are rather expectations based on the signs which are manifested in the external world and which confront the observer in the manner that plausibly and logically evokes such expectations.[25] This may be one of the principal reasons why the metaphor of shadow play proved to be so attractive to the philosophical and mystical writers. For, unlike oneiric images or images invoked by certain psychic experiences, the illusions created by *khayāl* do not result from the transgression of known physical processes even though their main characteristic is illusion. They imply that our perception of the world is illusive because we are phantasmagorially deceived by an image that confronts us, which leads us to conjure up a defective, and thereby inaccurate, perception of the world.

In classical Arabic poetry, the leitmotif of *khayāl* recurs in an unbroken continuity, as the apparition of the poet's beloved which manifests itself to him during the night rests of his desert journeys. Though there seem to have evolved some conceptual transformations of this motif at different stages of the poetic tradition,[26] its basic feature, that of a "vision" or an "apparition"

---

[25]Cantarino, *Arabic Poetics* , 81.

[26]A good study of this subject matter is R. Jacobi's article "The *Khayāl* Motif in Early Arabic Literature," *Oriens,* 32 (1990), 50-64. Contrary to most of the scholars who view *khayāl* as a static entity, she argues that the advent of Islam and the subsequent changes in the socio-political structure of the community led to the usage of this motif as "a sort of a mould, into which different conceptual and emotional contents are cast, in accordance with

which affects the conceptual frame and consequently the
psychological makeup of the poet to whom it is manifested, is
never lost. In many respects, *khayāl* functions as a mirage,
though not in scientific but poetic terms: it illusively brings the
image of the poet's beloved, whom he has left before embarking
on his journey through the desert, closer to him. Says the poet Ibn
cAbd BanÏ Ḥashās:

> *alamma khayālun   cishā'an wa ṭāfā*
> > *wa lam yakun idh ṭāfa illā khtiṭāfā.*

A *khayāl* visited me at night and moved about,
but when it moved about, it was only in a flash.

Similarly, al-Buḥtūrī writes:

> *fa lastu bi nāzilin illā alammat*
> *bi raḥlī aw khayālatuhā l-kadhūbu.*

And whenever I halt , she visits my lodge
or her false apparition.

and so does another poet,

> *akhun, lā akhan lī ghayruhu, ghayra annanī*
> *ka rācī l-khayāli yastaṭīfu bilā fikrī.*

Brother, I have no brother but him, yet I am
like the observer of an apparition made to wonder with no
thought.

Likewise, Ibn cAbd al-Ḥārith expresses his experience of the
nightly visits of his beloved one:

Individual or collective needs of expression," 62. The meaning of *khayāl* thus
changes from "apparition" in the pre-Islamic times, to "a pleasant dream" in
the Umayyad times. Also, see W. Heinrichs, "Die antike Verknüpfung von
phantasia und Dichtung bei den Arabern" *ZMDG ,* 128 (1978), 252-298.

fa nahaḍtu anẓuru mā l-khayālu fa rā ᶜanī
> *wa l-ᶜaynu ghayru ḥadīthatin bi ghirārī*
fa ra'ā lahā shabahan wa laysa bi ᶜārifin
> *jiddan wa laysa bi mumᶜini l-inkārī.*

I rose, in order to see what the *khayāl* was, and it frightened me,
while my eyes were still heavy from sleep.
Then he saw a likeness to her, but he was not sure,
nor could he for certain deny it.[27]

Later, in philosophical writings, we observe a wide and diverse spectrum of *khāla* derivatives being used. They all had a common element due to the recurrence of the same understanding of delusion that *khāla* denotes. However, it must be emphasized that such derivatives were employed primarily in the discussions on "the poetic process, more than in aesthetic or rhetorical evaluation of poetic compositions."[28] These discussions were carried out by those mediaeval Muslim philosophers who attempted to write a commentary on Aristotle's *Poetics* and who established consequently a fixed terminology in which the root *kh-y-l* played a prominent role.[29] Thus, from al-Fārābī (d.339/950) to Ibn Sīnā (d.428/1037) and Ibn Rushd (d.595/1198), the tendency was to attribute to the poetic discourse the purpose of creating an emotional, as opposed to a rational, effect

---

[27]The first and the fourth examples are taken from Jacobi, "The *Khayāl* Motif," 56-7; the second and the third from *Lisān*, 234-5. They are also quoted in *Tāj*, 314-5.

[28]Cantarino, *Arabic Poetics*, 81.

[29]I must underline here that my discussion will avoid the delicate and challenging subject of theories of intellect in which *takhayyul* and *mutakhayyila* play important roles.

(Aristotle's empathy). The instrument for that was *takhyīl* --
mimesis, -- thanks to which the poetic discourse was to avoid
the tyranny of lie *vs.* truth trials and gain flexibility for an
interplay of different levels of reality. Lie and truth are then
rhetorical categories which have no place in the poetic discourse,
for mimesis appeals to will, and not to intellect. Says Ibn Sīnā:

> The imaginative discourse *(al-qawl al-
> mukhayyil)* is the one which can influence
> the soul to the point that it will rejoice or
> be anguished by something never before
> seen, thought of, or chosen. In short, the
> soul will be affected psychically, not
> intellectually, whether or not what is said
> corresponds to reality.[30]

Similarly, the great literary critic al-Jurjānī (d.471/1078)
underlines the impossibility of a logical verification of
imaginative concepts:

> The imaginative category *(al-qism al-
> takhyīlī)* is that of which it cannot be said
> that it is true and that what it affirms is
> firm and what it negates is negated.[31]

It seems that the different forms of *khāla* that have been
elaborated on in different disciplines have never detached
themselves from the semantic cluster in which "fancy,
imagination and phantasy," carry the greatest weight.

---

[30]A. R. Badawī, *Aristutālis: Fann al-shiᶜr maᶜ al-tarjama al-qadīma wa shurūḥ
al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā wa Ibn Rushd* (Cairo: Dār al-fikr, 1953), 161. Cited in
Cantarino, *Arabic Poetics,* 85.

[31]ᶜAbd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī, *Asrār al-balāgha,* ed. H. Ritter (Istanbul:
Government Press, 1954), 245.

Notwithstanding the imminent nuances and alternations of the meaning due to different ideological and historical contexts, a lexical consistency can be discerned. Heinrichs aptly points out this consistency when attempting an early semantic definition of the term *khayāl*. His argument is that the original understanding of an immaterial and deceptive image found in poetry was never abandoned in the later philosophical discussions, just somewhat modified.[32]

2. *Zill* : The Interplay of Darkness and Light

It would be too ambitious to present the complexity of the metaphor of light in Islam in such a limited space, but reviewing some aspects of it may help the interpretation of the concept of shadow for the purposes of the present discussion. From numerous Qur'ānic verses among which *sūrat al-nūr* (no. 24) is perhaps the richest one, to Suhrawardī's (d.587/1191) *ḥikmat al-ishrāq,* the metaphors of darkness and light cut through the very core of Islamic intellectual history. That "God is the Light of the Heavens and the Earth" (24: 35) becomes the guidance towards the spiritual and philosophical understanding of cosmic realities. Says Suhrawardī:

> The Essence of the First Absolute Light,
> God, gives constant illumination, whereby
> it is manifested and it brings all things
> into existence, giving life to them by its

---

[32] Heinrichs, "Die antike Verknüpfung," 264-65.

rays. Everything in the world is derived
from the Light of His essence and all
beauty and perfection are the gift of his
bounty, and to attain fully to this
illumination is salvation.[33]

Of course, theosophy of light is not unique to Islam: the Magi
and Zoroastrian traditions that greatly inspired Suhrawardī, for
example, indicate that there indeed existed a historical
continuity of this concept which Islam has incorporated in the
network of its own premises.[34] The ubiquity of this metaphor,
however, does not suggest its uniformity, primarily because of
the implied polarity with the metaphor of darkness. Actually,
these two concepts are often two sides of the same coin, and
despite the fact that the concept of light was intrinsically
elaborated in Islamic cosmology, the polarization remained: light
(nūr) as clarity, knowledge and faith versus darkness (zulma) as
obscurity, ignorance and blasphemy.[35] Therefore, one cannot speak
of alternative interpretations of the metaphor of light --in the
sense that light has always stood for a positive force-- but cf its
exclusion or inclusion of the suggestive tension with its
inexorable opposite, darkness. In Suhrawardī's statement above,
for example, the interplay of darkness and light determines the
ontological status of a being: its level of purity and

---

[33] In S. H. Nasr, Three Muslim Sages (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), 69.

[34] For this subject, a useful study is Chapter 7 in H. Corbin, Histoire de la philosophie islamique (Paris: Édition Gallimard, 1964).

[35] Al-Jurjānī, Asrār al-balāgha, 61.

enlightenment in comparison with the Absolute Light. Darkness there stands for the lack of illumination, not necessarily for a negative force, but it does present a moving force towards its own annihilation for the sake of the pursuit of the primordial light.

Within this duality of darkness and light, the world of shadows appears as a twilight zone, as something that carries an undifferentiated aspect which renders it volatile. Thus, Ibn Manẓūr quotes examples where ẓill appears in several, relatively inconsistent, meanings:

> They also say "the shadow of Paradise" (ẓill al-janna), not "the shade of Paradise" (fay' al-janna) because the sun there does not alternate its shadow so that there could be shade, though the shadow (ẓill) is always there. ... Where there is no light there is darkness, not shadow. ... There are also His words:"Wa lā ẓ-ẓillu wa lā l-ḥarūru," [Q.35:21] the interpretation of which is that ẓill here means Paradise (al-janna). ... Ẓill can also be synonymous with layl itself. ... It is also His sublime speech: "Wa li-llāhi yasjudu man fī s-samāwāti wa l-arḍi ṭawᶜan wa karhan, wa ẓilāluhum bi l-ghuduwwi wa l-āṣāli," [Q.13:15] the interpretation of which is that an unbeliever worships a deity other than God, but his shadow worships God, and it is also said that ẓilāluhum (their shadows) means askhāṣuhum (their personalities), but these are variances in tafsīr. ... One can also say: "He passed by us as if he was the shadow of

a wolf," meaning that he passed by us so
quickly as if he was a swift wolf.[36]

In the first instance, shadow is attributed to Paradise, as
one of its conditions. It is contrasted with shade, which implies
the alternation of the sun's position with regard to Paradise, and
therefore a passage of time. Shadow then appears as a "safer"
alternative: it is void of intrinsic consequentiality and can
therefore be identified with neutrality. In the second instance (Q.
35:21) it is synonymous with Paradise itself, and later with
night, that is, darkness. In the third example, the interpretation
of the Qur'ānic verse (13:15) is very interesting. It distinguishes
man from his shadow as the symbol of his "unconscious
personality": while the unbeliever consciously venerates a god
other than God, his shadow appears as his hidden personality
which clashes with his ego and in spite of the latter bows to God.
One cannot but think here of Jungian analytical psychology where
the concept of shadow plays a vital role primarily because of this
continuous tension between the mind of the individual and the
latent, usually conflicting, aspect of his personality:

> The shadow cast by the conscious mind of
> the individual contains the hidden,
> repressed and unfavorable (or nefarious)
> aspects of the personality. But the
> darkness is not just the simple converse of
> the conscious ego. Just as the ego contains
> unfavorable and destructive attitudes, so
> the shadow has good qualities --normal
> instincts and creative impulses. Ego and

---

[36]*Lisān al-ᶜarab*, 11: 415-420.

shadow, indeed, although separate, are
inextricably linked together in much the
same way that thought and feeling are
related to each other. ... In some respects,
the shadow can also consist of collective
factors that stem from a source outside
the individual's personal life.[37]

And finally, in the fourth instance, the shadow's intangible
and deceptive aspect is expressed as swiftness of motion. Such is
the example quoted earlier in which *khayāl* is similarly
understood as "something that passes by you like a shadow." In al-
Jurjānī's *Asrār* one finds a similar, somewhat more philosophical
metaphor, which also communicates the idea of swiftness
referring to the changeability of this world: *Al-dunyā ẓill zā'il*
(the world is a vanishing shadow).[38] Precisely because it is
essentially so light and evanescent (hence the expression *khafīf*
al-ẓill -- with a light shadow -- for someone likeable, and *thaqīl*
al-ẓill -- with a heavy shadow -- for someone repugnant),
shadow seems to be a very fluid and adaptable concept that can
easily be qualified with opposing attributes. It is a frequent and
diversely employed metaphor, and when used in combination with
khayāl, it reinforces those conspicuously common points in the
meaning of both. Indeed, the term *khayāl al-ẓill* sounds almost
tautological, or even like a pun which merges and differentiates
several possible lexical applications.

---

[37]C. G. Jung, *Man and His Symbols* (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1964), 111 and 174.

[38]Al-Jurjānī, *Asrār al-balāgha*, 107.

In the light of these semantic qualifications of the two terms, *khayāl* and *ẓill*, I would like to return to Moreh's re-examination of the etymology of the term used to denote the shadow play, *khayāl al-ẓill*. He concludes the following:

> [On the basis of the evidence presented above] it has become clear that the term *khayāl* means "live theatrical performance" and that *khayāl al-ẓill* means "shadow play," and that the Arabs during the medieval period had theatrical drama, which developed from *ḥikāya* (mimesis) into *khayāl* and *laᶜba*. ... Ibrāhīm Ḥamāde, in his book *Khayāl al-Ẓill wa-Tamthīliyyāt Ibn Dāniyāl* failed to understand the term *khayāl* as play, live-acting, or theatre, and suggested that the term *khayāl al-ẓill* should be understood as *ẓill al-khayāl* (the shadow of figures). ... J. M. Landau, in his article "Khayāl al-ẓill" in the new edition of *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, fell into the same error of Ibrāhīm Ḥamāda and translated the term *khayāl al-ẓill* into "shadow of fantasy."[39]

I agree that the scholars whom Moreh mentions have not properly understood the dramaturgic terminology within which the term *khayāl* has been consolidated. However, I also believe that Moreh himself has narrowed down the semantics of the term *khayāl* to the point that he loses sight of its richness which renders Landau's translation "shadow of fantasy" semantically

---

[39]Moreh, "Live Theatre," 610 and 574.

applicable.[40] On the one hand, in a comparative perspective, Moreh's argument is quite logical: in most of other languages, despite local metonymic variances, there exists a generic name of "a play, or theatre, of shadows" denoting this performance art: Indonesian *wayang kulit,* Turkish *gölge oyunu,* Chinese *ying h-si,* French *théâtre d'ombres,* etc. One can only expect the same in Arabic, and Moreh's argument safely confirms it. On the other hand, however, it seems that it is exactly the semantic richness of the Arabic terms *khayāl* and *zill,* individually and in combination, that calls for emphasis, not disregard. The marker that sets the order of the denotative and connotative meanings loses its fixed hierarchy, and the mere utterance of *khayāl al-zill* entails question marks as to its referentiality. These lexical variations that are so successfully combined in the *khayāl al-zill* construct, are drawn together by their accent on an elusive feature of our perception. With it we express something intangible, something that may or may not be true. Let us now see how this semantic construct, when used as a trope, inspires a particular line of communication.

3. "Life is a shadow play"

The distinction between a metaphor proper, a simile, and a parable will be made here only on the formal level, because, as

_____

[40]Moreh himself translated "Bābat Tayf al-khayāl" as "The Play of the Phantom of the Shadow," in "Live Theatre," 599.

has earlier been stated, I argue in favour of the acceptance of the
continuity between micro-metaphor and narrative texts on the
grounds that they both entail the creation a possible world.[41] This
will help me bring closer the characteristics of these three types
of trope -- metaphor *(istiārᶜa)*, simile *(tashbīh)* and analogy
(tamthīl) -- that al-Jurjānī has so masterfully elaborated in his
Asrār al-balāgha, and which represent the ways the image of the
shadow play is used in mediaeval Islamic literature. Considering
al-Jurjānī's work is of great significance due to his successful
balancing of emotional, rational and aesthetic processes, which
all prove essential in the study of the tropical shadow play.[42]

In his work al-Jurjānī defines metaphor as a word which
has a basic meaning in a language but is temporarily borrowed by
an object other than its original one (hence its name in Arabic:
"borrowing" *(istiᶜāra)*).[43] He furthermore says:

> The method of a metaphor is the method of
> ellipsis *(al-kalām al-maḥdhūf),* so when
> you go back to its basis you will realize
> that the one who expresses it asserts

---

[41] Suvin, "The Chronotope, PW, and Narrativity;" also P. Ricoeur, "The Metaphorical Process as Cognition, Imagination, and Feeling," in *On Metaphor*, 141-58.

[42] Ricoeur aptly points out at this necessity, and argues in his "The Metaphorical Process," that there exists "a *structural analogy* between the cognitive, imaginative, and the emotional components of the complete metaphorical act and that the metaphorical process draws its concreteness and its completeness from this structural analogy and this complementary functioning," 157.

[43] Al-Jurjānī, *Asrār al-balāgha,* 29 and 253. Ricoeur too argues that metaphor as a process of predication, rather than denomination. "The Metaphorical Process," 146.

> something sensible, correct and originating
> in reason. ...[the one who uses it] aims to
> establish such a similarity that its
> meaning concords with that which is being
> predicated.[44]

However, metaphor for al-Jurjānī remains outside the realm of creative discourse, even though he goes in much detail to explain its subdivisions and different modes. Metaphor is a rational act aimed at a logical equation of two members, and as such, does not involve imaginative processes but pure depiction from among obvious possibilities. In his discussion of simile and analogy, however, al-Jurjānī adds a psychological dimension to the rational one, and thus carries his arguments to the level of tripartite effect (rational, aesthetic, and emotional). Simile is a simpler version of comparison, as it entails no additional analysis: something round is likened to a ring, a rose to a cheek, etc.[45]

Analogy, on the other hand, and particularly its subcategory parable, requires a more thorough perception and understanding -- or, as one would in present-day terminology say, de-semantization and re-semantization. This process, al-Jurjānī argues, bears powerfully on the aesthetic, cognitive and psychological makeup of the person confronted with such a figure of speech. He sees the human mind as accepting with more

---

[44] *Ibid.*, 253.

[45] *Ibid.*, 80-1. Al-Jurjānī fails to see that these too are cultural categories, and not matters of fact.

confidence things it is about to learn if there is some familiar comparison presented to it. Knowledge enters the human mind first through the senses and natural disposition (al-ḥawāss wa al-ṭibāʿ), and only later through speculation and reflection. Therefore, the knowledge gained by means of the senses is more closely associated with the mind and is thus more reliable than the knowledge attained through mere speculation.[46] As for the aesthetic effect, we need to reach the understanding of things compared, because the human soul is attracted to things which appear in an unexpected correlation. Through reflection the harmony between seemingly different things will be created, which will lead to both an aesthetic and an emotional satisfaction.[47] And finally, it is important to mention another kind of expression which al-Jurjānī discusses in the section on metaphor and simile: the one in which the hearer is expected to forget that there exists a metaphor, that is, accept the metaphor in its literal sense. This, as will be seen later, was also the intention of certain writers who employed the metaphor of the shadow play.

Bearing in mind al-Jurjānī's basic theoretical premises related to metaphor and its sisters, let us now examine the examples of the shadow play as a figure of speech on both individual and more general levels. The different modes through

---

[46] *Ibid.,* 108-9.

[47] *Ibid.,* 114-6.

which the shadow play is presented are to be found in mystical, philosophical, and literary writings, and almost all of them focus on the vision of the world that fits the Islamic *ethos* . In that sense, the differences in the genres of writing are just on the formal level, while differences in the modes of expression are best noticeable in the effects they intend to create in their reader.

Thus, in his *Kitāb al-akhlāq*, Ibn Ḥazm (d.456/1064) writes the following:

> What I have seen of this world I liken to a
> shadow play, in which images are placed on
> a wooden wheel which revolves with great
> speed. One group of images thus disappears
> while another appears, as generations
> follow one another in the world.[48]

The analogy that Ibn Ḥazm draws between the shadow play and the temporality of this world is expressed in a very straightforward manner. The analogy is suggested in the opening words "I liken...," stripping the subsequent statement of any conceptual enigma. He conveys his message through explanatory remarks that lead him to establish the link between the esoteric and exoteric The subsequent examples cited here will be certainly more different in their exposition, but the significance of this one is its exploration of a philosophical dimension in the shadow play. One major component missing in the example of Ibn Ḥazm's

---

[48]Ibn Ḥazm, *Kitāb al-akhlāq wa al-siyar* (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-ᶜIlmiyya, 1985), 30.

shadow play, however, is the puppeteer. It is unclear whether Ibn Ḥazm was familiar only with the type of shadow play which excluded a puppeteer, or he did not mention him out of his own choice. In either case, the main point is that Ibn Ḥazm did not develop his analogy along the principle of the Mover, which greatly affects the goal of the metaphor. As it is, the analogy is confined to the most basic perceptions of the nature of our existence: the birth-life-death cycle revolving rapidly. Thus, this philosophical statement of Ibn Ḥazm does not move to the level of any particular discourse, as it is merely an observation that places emphasis on the temporality of our presence in this world. The metaphorical *khayāl al-ẓill* of Ibn Ḥazm can indeed be linked closely to the basic semantic meanings of evanescence. Similar is the imagery of the following verses in which, too, it is time spent in this world that is commented on through an analogy with a shadow play:

> *Fad-dahru laysa bi dā'imin fī ḥālihi,*
> *idh shabbahūhu khayāla ẓillin khuyyilā.*

Time does not always flow in the same way,
for they compare it to the shadow play on stage.[49]

Al-Jurjānī himself cites a similar *tamthīl* -- which evidently enjoyed popularity -- and draws attention to the difference in the aesthetic and psychological impact of the phrases: "The world does not last or stay forever" (*al-dunyā lā*

---

[49]Ibn Sūdūn al-Bashbaghāwī, *Nuzhat al-nufūs wa muḍhik al-ʿabūs* (Cairo: n.p., 1863), 61. Cited in Moreh, "The Shadow PLay," 52.

tadūm wa la tabqā) and: "[The world] is a vanishing shadow" *(hiya ẓill zā'il).*

Another example of such a linear metaphorical message is al-Mināwī's verse cited in al-Nawājī's *Ḥalbat al-kumayt* which says:

*Aratnā khayāla ẓ-ẓilli wa s-sitru dūnahā
        fa abdat khayāla sh-shamsi khalfa ghamāmī
talāᶜabu bi l-ashkhāṣi min khalfi sitrihā
        kamā laᶜibat afᶜāluhā bi anāmī.*

She showed us a shadow play with the curtain concealing her,
she presented the image of the sun behind the clouds.
She played with the figures behind her curtain,
as her doings played with men.[50]

In this instance, however, the suggested analogy is more profane and is directly contextualized. Earlier in the poem, the slave girl who is presenting the shadow play is said to be beautiful *(bi ḥusnin ka zahri r-rawḍ)*, and liked for her entertainment *(maᶜshūqatu l-lahwi).* The association moves through a number of assumptions that cannot be taken out of their context. They do not relate to the transitory life but to something more profane that derives from a sexually suggestive situation. However, the parallel between this example and the previous two is precisely on the level of immediacy as *ad hoc* analogies that carry a strong visual component but grant no ideological stance .

---

[50]Shams al-DTn al-Nawājī, *Ḥalbat al-kumayt* (Cairo: n.p., 1938), 204; quoted by Moreh, "The Shadow Play," 52.

Another type of metaphorical usage that is more persuasive
in character, transgresses the boundaries of mere statement and
enters the sphere of discourse. Crucial to this transgression is
the introduction of the puppeteer into the scheme of metaphorical
presentation. The intrinsic relations change and the shadow play
acquires a defined resemblance to the cosmological order as
developed by Islamic philosophers around Aristotle's concept of
Prime Mover. This change of horizons implies a more elaborate
network of associations, as will be seen through several
examples. Let us consider first al-Ghazāli's (d.505/1111) passage
in which the Prime Mover is implicilty introduced:

> And you are like a boy who goes at night to
> see a stringer's play *(laᶜb al-mushaᶜbidh)*
> who, from behind a curtain *(ḥijāb)* presents
> figures that dance, yell, stand up and sit
> down. They are made of rags and do not
> move by themselves but with the help of
> fine strings of hair which do not show in
> the darkness and whose ends are in the
> puppeteer's (stringer's) hands. He himself
> is hidden from the sight of the boys who
> enjoy and marvel at [this play], thinking
> that these rags can dance and play and
> stand up and sit. But the learned ones know
> that these movements are not self-
> propelled. Yet they do not know how exactly
> these movements are determined even if
> they know some of it. Only the puppeteer
> knows that because the matter is up to him
> as the string is in his hands.[51]

---

[51]Al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā' ᶜulūm al-dīn* (Būlāq, 1279/1862) 4:122. Cited by Jacob,
Geschichte, 48; also, Moreh, "The Shadow Play," 48.

Al-Ghazālī's gradual introduction of a cosmological scheme reaches culmination in the famous passage of Ibn ᶜArabī's (d.638/1240) *Al-futūḥāt al-makkiyya* , which deserves to be quoted in full:

> He who would like to know the reality at which I have hinted in this matter should consider the 'curtain play' *(khayāl al-sitāra),* its images and the one who speaks through these images from the perspective of the children who are at a distance from the screening curtain that is fixed between them and the presenter of the characters who speaks through them. The same applies to images in this world. Most people are like the children that we posit; how should they know from where the voice comes? The children in this gathering are happy and delighted; the heedless take it as amusement and entertainment, while the learned regard it as a lesson and know that God has presented it only as a parable. Thus a character that appears first on the stage is called *al-Waṣṣāf* (describer). He delivers a speech in which he exalts and glorifies God, and then he speaks about all kinds of images that will perform after him behind the curtain. Then he tells the audience that God has produced this as a parable for His servants to consider, so that they may know that the relationship of this world to God is like that of these images to their mover *(muḥarrik)*. In fact, the curtain *(sitāra)* is the screen *(ḥijāb)* that veils the secret of the foreordained future among His creatures. In spite of all this, however, the heedless consider it an amusement and entertainment, in accordance with God's words: "Those who consider their religion as amusement and entertainment." [Q.6:70] Then the *Waṣṣāf*

> disappears. He corresponds to the first
> human being, Adam, peace be upon him.
> When he disappears, he is hidden with his
> Lord behind the curtain of His divine
> secret. God speaks the truth and gives
> guidance to the right path.[52]

Notwithstanding the importance of this passage for the historical investigation of conventions in the genre of shadow play, much can be said about the way the imagery is used for the purposes of Ibn ᶜArabī's pantheistic discourse. The analogy between a shadow play and his vision of reality is carried through the negation of the borders between the actual and the hypothetical. The possible world of the shadow play is identified with the actual world, and Ibn ᶜArabī reminds us not to follow the heedless who would look for an aesthetic component in the play: the play is only a parable which unfolds through the network of its elements, each of which carries a function that refers to the actual circumstance. The entire stage becomes the cosmological order in such a manner that Ibn ᶜArabī removes the original ludic frame and replaces it with an allegorical one, inadvertently creating a possible world of its own. Thus, unlike Ibn Ḥazm's analogy which conjures up one-directional, horizontal movement of the world, the space of the possible world here develops both vertically and horizontally. In the vertical scheme there is a cosmological hierarchy where God is the Prime Mover --al-muḥarrik, -- the Presenter -- waṣṣāf, -- the first human

---

[52]Ibn ᶜArabī, *Al-futūḥāt al-makkiyya* (Bulāq, 1329, republished Cairo: Dār al-fikr, n.d.), 68 (end of Chapter 317).

being, the screen --*sitāra* -- divine foreordination that is inaccessible to humankind,[53] and finally the figures --*ashkhāṣ*, -- which represent humankind and thus come on the bottom of this hierarchy. The vertical order is almost static, that is, the action that is carried out within its spheres is not crossreferential. It is the horizontal order which is susceptible to movement and therefore change, as the images alternate according to the Presenter's movements. The macrocosm in Ibn cArabī's passage becomes a metaphor for God's omnipresence, and so does the microcosm of the play itself. All phenomena flow into the same ideological standpoint. A strikingly similar line of communication is achieved through the verses:

> ra'aytu khayāla ẓ-ẓilli acẓama cibratan
> > li man kāna fī cilmi l-ḥaqā'iqi rāqī
> shukhūṣan wa aṣwātan yukhālifu bacḍuhā
> > li bacḍin wa ashkālan bi ghayri wifāqī
> tajī'u wa tamḍī bābatan bacda bābatin
> > wa tafnā jamīcan wa l-muḥarriku bāqī.

> I saw a shadow play as the greatest lesson
> > to those who excel in the knowledge of Truths
> [I saw] figures and voices that oppose each other
> > and shapes that follow no unity
> They come and go, play after play,
> > and they all vanish, while the Mover stays.[54]

---

[53]Khayyām's verse "Nobody is allowed behind the Curtain of Fate" conveys the same vision of God's will. No. 314 in Çelebi, *Ömer Hayyam*.

[54]Ibn Shākir ak-KutubT, *Fawāt al-wafayāt* (Būlāq, 1283/1866), 1:248. The difference in this metaphor is the absence of the Presenter *(waṣṣāf)*.

However, in all these schemes of metaphorical presentation where God stands as the sole certainty and this world as nothing but an epiphany, plenty of attention is concentrated on the position of humankind. The *muḥarrik* remains, as the poet says, and the elements that are deducted from or added to the metaphorical vision of the shadow play depend on the technique employed in the theatrical performance. Curiously, there is a solid link between the two, in which the performance art and its technical variances stand as a prototype for new metaphorical coinages. Thus, Khayyām (d. 524/1131) says:

> We are the puppets and the firmament is the puppet-master,
> In actual fact and not as a metaphor;
> For a time we acted on this stage,
> We went back one by one into the box of oblivion.[55]

Khayyām too asks us to transcend the realm of art to the realm of "truth." He too denounces art in the name of something more real, asking us not to look for a metaphor in the play we watch. However, though he does not mention a Mover, he introduces the metaphor of "the box of oblivion." Its point of departure is the box in which the figures are kept. In Ibn Dāniyāl's text we are told that they are kept in baskets, not boxes. Hence their name *ashkhāṣ al-safaṭ* .[56] Like Khayyām some decades before him, Farīd al-Dīn ᶜAṭṭār too speaks of "the box," calling it "the box of unity." In his poetry, the puppet master is accused of

---

[55]No.50 in *The Ruba'iyat of Omar Khayyam,* trans. P. Avery & J. H. Stubbs (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd, 1979)

[56]Opening lines of the first play, *Ṭayf al-khayāl,* Istanbul MS., fol. 1a.

destroying his beautiful puppets, to which he responds that he
does so in order to free them from their temporary outward forms
and return them to that box of unity in which no differentiation
can be made.[57] The sixth/thirteenth century poet al-Bayrūtī
speaks of two boxes. Apparently, in one the figures are arranged
to be taken out and displayed by the puppet master, and in the
other they are laid down as they complete their roles. In that
double act al-Bayrūtī too sees the birth-life-death cycle, and he
reinforces his analogy by ascribing a metaphorical function to
each of the boxes:

Arā hādhā l-wujūda khayāla ẓillin
                    muḥarrikuhu huwa r-rabbu l-ghafūrū
fa ṣundūqu l-yamīni buṭūnu Ḥawwā,
                    wa ṣundūqu sh-shamāli huwa l-qubūrū

I see this world as a shadow play,
                    its Mover is the forgiving God,
its right box is Eve's womb,
                    while its left box is the grave.[58]

Even when the mover is not mentioned, the metaphor of
"box" in a way carries out a metonymic function, for the existence
of a box makes sense only if there is a presenter, or mover, who
will take figures from it or put them back. It is the puppet master
who can give life to matter, or take it away from it, that is, the

---

[57]See Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 277-8.

[58]Cited by Ḥamāda, *Khayāl al-Ẓill*, 45.

tripartite cycle commences and ends according to his movements. However, there is an interesting variance to this imagery of Prime Mover, and though it is still in line with God's omnipresence, it seriously challenges Islamic eschatology and its denial of the resurrection of the body after death. These are the verses of the poet al-Mu^{c}allim, quoted by Ibn Sa^{c}īd al-Maghribī in his *Al-mughrib fī ḥulā al-Maghrib* :

Wāfā khayāliyyun ka'anna izārahu
            jadathun uqīma l-ḥashru min amwātihī
fa ka'annahu ^{c}īsā yuqīmu shukhūṣahā
            wa yuḥillu fīhā r-rūḥa min kalimātihī.

A shadow player appeared as if his screen was a grave,
            resurrecting its dead,
as if he was Jesus, resurrecting its people
            and breathing soul into them out of his words.[59]

What we encounter here is a total change of frames, in which the screen is no longer the veil of inaccessible divine will but the grave which testifies to human mortality. The figures that are displayed behind it are static and frozen in time and space, until the puppet master injects life into them through his movements and words. This is clearly a Christian religious metaphor, deriving from the resurrection of Lazarus from the dead (John 11: 1-44), that represents one of the most important miracles performed by Jesus. The parable is reproduced at the level of immediate visual experience, and thus discloses its very persuasive theological purpose.

---

[59] Al-Maghribī, *Al-mughrib fī ḥulā al-Maghrib* (Cairo: Wizārat al-thaqāfa, 1970), 4:121.

Finally, the most complex and comprehensive employment of the tropical shadow play is to be found in Ibn al-Fāriḍ's (d. 632/1235) *Poem of the Way* (*Naẓm al-sulūk*, also known as *Al-tā'iyya al-kubrā*). It is written as an allegory which creates a network of associations among different elements of the play, revealing the manifold meanings of the world:[60]

> And be thou not all heedless of the play:
> The sport of playthings is the earnestness
> Of a right earnest soul. Beware: turn not
> Thy back on every tinselled form or state
> Illogical: for in illusion's sleep
> The shadow-phantom's spectre brings to thee
> That the translucent curtains do reveal.
> Thou seest forms of things in every garb
> Displayed before thee from behind the veil
> Of ambiguity: the opposites
> In them united for a purpose wise:
> Their shapes appear in each and every guise:
> Silent, they utter speech: though still, they move:
> Themselves unluminous, they scatter light.
> Thou laughest gleefully, as the most gay
> Of men rejoices; weep'st like a bereaved
> And sorrowing mother, in profoundest grief;
> Mournest, if they do moan, upon the loss
> Of some great happiness; art jubilant,
> If they do sing, for such sweet melody.
> Thou seest how the birds among the boughs
> Delight thee with their cooing, when they chant
> Their mournful notes to win thy sympathy,
> And marvellest at their voices and their words
> Expressing uninterpretable speech.
> Then on land the tawny camels race
> Benighted through the wilderness; at sea

---

[60]I have used the antiquated translation by Arberry from his *The Poem of the Way* (London: Emery Walker Ltd., Chester Beatty Monographs no.5, 1952), 68-70.

The tossed ships run amid the billowy deep.
Thou gazest on twain armies -- now on land,
Anon at sea -- in huge battalions
Clad all in mail of steel for valour's sake
And fenced about with points of swords and spears.
The troops of the land-army -- some are knights
Upon their chargers, some stout infantry;
The heroes of the sea-force -- some bestride
The decks of ships, some swarm the lance-like masts.
Some violently smite with gleaming swords,
Some thrust with spears strong, tawny, quivering;
Some 'neath the arrows' volley drown in fire,
Some burn in water of the flaming flares.
This troop thou seest offering their lives
In reckless onslaught, that with broken ranks
Fleeing humiliated in the rout.
And thou beholdest the great catapult
Set up and fired, to smash the fortresses
And stubborn strongholds. Likewise thou mayst gaze
On phantom shapes with disembodied souls
Cowering darkly in their dim domain
Apparell~ in strange forms that disaccord
Most wildly with the homely guise of men;
For none would call the Jinnis homely folk.
And fishermen cast in the stream their nets
With busy hands, and swiftly bring forth fish;
And cunning fowlers spread their gins, that birds
A-hunger may be trapped there by a grain.
Ravening monsters of the ocean wreck
The fragile ships; the jungle-lions seize
Their slinking prey; birds swoop on other birds
Out of heavens; in a wilderness
Beasts hunt for other beasts. And thou mayst glimpse
Still other shapes that I have overpassed
To mention, not relying save upon
The best exemplars. Take a single time
For thy consideration -- no long while --
And thou shalt find all that appears to thee
And whatsoever thou dost contemplate
The act of one alone, but in the veils
Of occultation wrapt: when he removes
The curtain, thou beholdest none but him,
And in the shapes confusion no more reigns.

And thou dost realize when he reveals
That in thy darkness thou wast guided by
His light to view His actions. Even so
I too was letting down the curtain of
The spirit's obscuration in the light
Of shadow as between myself and me,
That in my work creative now and now
Again I might appear by slow degrees
To my sensation, to accustom it;
Conjoining to my task the play thereof
That to thy understanding I might so
Bring nigh targets of my far-off aims.
A mutual resemblance links us twain
In our two theatres, although in truth
The showman's case resembles not my own.
His figures are the media (with the screen)
Whereby his action is made manifest:
When he appears, they vanish and are naught.
So in its acts my soul resembles him;
My sense is like the figures; and ː ˌj screen
The body's vesture. So, when I removed
The curtain from myself, as he raised his,
So that my soul appeared to me unveiled.

The great importance of this poem for the historical study
of the art of shadow play will be discussed in the following
chapter, with the emphasis on the rich thematic spectrum that
Ibn al-Fāriḍ chooses to display. Much can be said about this poem
otherwise, but the goal here is to underline its employment of the
shadow play as an instrument of the poet's allegorical portrayal
of the world. Indeed, among the examples I have cited, Ibn al-
Fāriḍ most creatively makes his reader appreciate the metaphor:
in a powerful aesthetic yet coercive manner he raises the
philosophical and mystical questions of the nature of the
Universe and at the same time explores the aesthetic depth of the
performance art. He clearly sees the importance of 'the change of

frames' for the understanding of two metaphorical processes ("the showman's case resembles not my own. His figures are the media whereby his action is made manifest"). More subtly than Ibn ᶜArabī yet equally pervasively, Ibn al-Fāriḍ surmises almost all these different aspects of the shadow play through which this reality is perceived.

Moreover, Ibn al-Fāriḍ manages to maintain a balance between his projection of art and his projection of the world, without sacrificing "truth." In both projections he captures the richness of creation: of a piece of art and then of the world. He understands, even encourages, indulgence in a series of possible worlds with full empathy, yet he is confident that the viewer will ultimately understand that all that has been but a metaphor for "His guidance through darkness." Opening oneself to the artistic creation is then opening oneself to God's Light. With an attitude like this, Ibn al-Fāriḍ appears to be more generous with truth than Ibn ᶜArabī or al-Ghazālī: he does not consider it as a privilege of "the learned ones" alone, but as intrinsic knowledge for every human being. And, most importantly, Ibn al-Fāriḍ does not weaken or destroy art, but enriches it. He does not urge his reader to abandon the enjoyment of the plays for the sake of understanding the parable behind it. On the contrary: he asks his reader to fuse both, so as to grasp better the perfection of God's creation. Thus, he eliminates the tension between divine and human creation which allows him to deliver his metaphorical poem as intensely as he sees the shadow play.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that the coinage of the metaphor of the shadow play follows two, partly overlapping routes. One is a more immediate route, linked with the establishment of the word *khayāl* as a term for live theatrical performance, which Moreh traces back to the third/ninth century.[61] The other one is related to the early meaning of *khayāl* as "incorporeal image, fancy," which is most clearly represented in the early Arabic poetry. However, as the former evolved from the latter, it greatly acquired a function of a metaphor, according to Jurjānī's sense of "being temporarily borrowed by something other than its original object."[62] When it was paired with *zill* to denote the shadow play, the new term assumed the character of a pun, in which *khayāl* primarily meant "play" but also "fancy, image." *Zill* meant both "shadow" in the literal sense, and also, adaptable as the concept to which it refers is, "evanescence" in all its associative meanings.

Seen from both perspectives, the term *khayāl al-zill* inspired suprising analogies that could fit very well into several contexts. In the history of Arabic drama, *khayāl al-zill* retained its technical usage, which is parallel to equivalent terms in other languages. In a wider context, however, it paved the way for various frames of inference which drew attention to the hypothetical nature of our perception. Whether profane, like the

---

[61]Moreh, "Live Theatre," 60.

[62]Al-Jurjānī, *Asrār al-balāgha*, 29.

likening of the shadow play to the singer's playfulness with men, or deeply mystical, like Ibn al-Fāriḍ's veils of occultation through which God moves the world, these frames never ceased to depend on the meaning of a theatre genre, and in turn, of "image, fancy." This interdependence can be expressed in concentric circles, each of which has well-defined boundaries, but all of which have a center in common, that of the original meaning of *khayāl*. Thus, if the technique of the shadow play changed, so did the content of metaphorical expressions: the wheel in Ibn Ḥazm, stringed marionettes in al-Ghazalī, the mover and the presenter in Ibn ᶜArabī, the boxes in Khayyām or al-Bayrūtī, etc. Nevertheless, when stripped of these diffusive variances and ideological contexts, they could all be reduced to the basic message that Khayy͞   s verse so compactly delivered:

> The world's phenomena and life's essence
> Are all a dream, a fancy, and a moment's deception.[63]

---

[63]No.108 in Avery & Stubbs, *The Ruba'iyat.*

Chapter Three

IBN DĀNIYĀL AND THE SHADOW PLAY: TOWARDS A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

In the scarcity of written texts of mediaeval shadow plays, the examples cited in the previous chapter reveal at least two paramount evidences for the historical study of this art: one, shadow plays are by no means confined to an invariable thematic scope, and two, on the formal level, this genre was not introduced to Islamic lands as a fully defined static technique, but developed variances within different geographical and temporal settings. Therefore, for a more holistic understanding of Ibn Dāniyāl's plays, it appears instrumental to consider some aspects of the historical continuity of the genre and examine its peculiarities.

1.State of the Art

What, in fact, is shadow theatre? Historically, the most recognizable feature of this genre from which the name itself derives is the casting of shadows of flat, leather figures onto a light-coloured screen by means of a lamp or other source of light that is placed behind these figures. The settings used for this purpose are usually of two kinds: portable or permanent. The former is described by Aḥmad Taymūr as a draped wooden box that has an opening on one of its sides onto which the screen

made of white cloth is tightly attached. At nighttime (or in a darkened setting at daytime), the players enter this box and start the show by lighting a lamp which they place above or in front of themselves. With two thin beechwood handle-sticks they move the leather figures, casting their shadows onto the screen.[1] The permanent setting, on the other hand, is the one where the stage marker is a large screen that divides the audience and the puppeteer. Though it works on the basis of the same principles, this setting involves several other props, such as a wooden bar which carries the figures for the presentation and is placed by the screen on the puppeteer's side, boxes for the figures, and, in some instances, a percussion orchestra.[2] In the traditional Indonesian shadow play, the male audience used to sit on the same side as the puppeteer, observing thus both the figures as well as their shadows rising on the screen. This was forbidden to women and young children who were confined to watching the shadows from the other side only. However, we possess no evidence as to whether this was the practice in the mediaeval Arabic shadow theatre as well.

---

[1] A. Taymūr probably speaks of the plays he himself attended. He mentions that five players are usually involved in the production, two of which are slave boys: one assumes female roles, whereas the other one sings. In his *Khayāl al-ẓill* (Cairo: Dār al-kitāb al-ᶜarabī, 1957),19. However, it seems that women too used to stage shadow performances, as we are told by the poet al-Nawājī. See Chapter Two, 61.

[2] Ḥamāda describes both types in *Khayāl al-ẓill wa tamthīlīyāt*, 19-20.

A curious deviation from the method of casting shadows which saliently involves a puppeteer is the technique described by Ibn Ḥazm in which the usage of a rapidly revolving wheel is mentioned.[3] From his short passage one can infer that the figures are fastened all around this wheel in the order of appearance in a play. With the spinning of the wheel which is interposed between the source of light and the screen, these figures consecutively cast their shadows and thus carry out the performance. Ibn Ḥazm does not mention the presence of a puppeteer. Although the human factor cannot be excluded in the realization of the action, it is plausible that such a show was silent and the role of the puppeteer confined to a mere executive function. The presentation of historical themes, like those witnessed by Ibn Ḥazm, would then be perhaps most suitable for such performances, as the stage-audience interaction would focus primarily on visual associations. The most crucial role in the realization of this interaction would then be the cultural encyclopaedia, or the frame of background knowledge, through which associations could be achieved, even if at a rudimentary level. Unfortunately, Ibn Ḥazm does not elaborate on this technique, informing us of hardly anything beyond the mere recognition of its existence in his times.

In the terminology of mediaeval Arabic drama, *khayāl al-ẓill*, as has been indicated by the sources, came to be the most

---

[3]See Chapter Two.

widely spread term for shadow theatre. Ibn ᶜArabī called it *khayāl al-sitāra,* which derives from a term used for the screen onto which the shadows are cast. Similarly, *khayāl* was occasionally paired with one of the following terms: *sitāra, sitr, izāra,* and less commonly, *ḥijāb* or *khayma.* In all these cases the most approximate translation would be "the curtain play." For the play as the performance text, the term *bāba* was most frequently employed. But, as Moreh points out, this term was used for both shadow theatre and live theatre. Al-Khafājī (d.977/1569) indicates this dual usage in the Glossary of his *Shifā' al-ghalīl* :

> *Bāba* means 'type' (*nawᶜ*), and accordingly they call the shadow play (*khayāl al-ẓill*) *bāba....* . *Bāba* is also a month in the Coptic calendar during which the Nile overflows. The *Bāba* under definition is a scene in a play -- either Jaᶜfar the Dancer's live performance (*khayāl*) or a play of the curtain (i.e., shadow play), and Jaᶜfar is the name of the inventor of the live play performed by dancing.[4]

The leather figures are most often called *ashkhāṣ* (sing. *shakhṣ*), sometimes *ṣuwar,* or, in more modern terminology, *tamāthīl. Fānūs* (lantern) or *shamᶜ* (candle) are used to illuminate these figures. And finally, the puppeteer himself is *muqaddim, khayālī,* or *mukhāyil,* and, collectively, *aṣḥāb* or *ṣunnāᶜ khayāl al-ẓill.* In more metaphysical terms, as has been seen in several instances, he is referred to as *muḥarrik.*

---

[4]Quoted in Moreh, "Live Theatre," 584-5.

In terms of its technique, the shadow play exhibits both
ample richness and certain crawbacks not found in drama proper,
that is, in performances where human beings act as dramaturgic
agents. As has been seen in the previous chapter, the multi-
layered set of relations in shadow presentations (the puppeteer
vs. the figures, the figures *vs.* the screen, the screen *vs.* the
audience, the figures *vs.* the audience, and the audience *vs.* the
puppeteer) have been seen as the basis for a number of
metaphorical interpretations, mainly intended as a poetic
exploration of the relation of humankind towards the supernatural
order. However, from the dramaturgic point of view, all the
subrelations in the stage structure fuse and what remains basic
is the interaction between the stage and the audience. Seen from
this light, the shadow play suffers from certain limitations
which can affect its thematic and presentational flexibility. At
the same time, however, it offers useful insights for the more
general study of stage signs.

To begin with, the theatrical frame of shadow performances
is saliently defined. Even in the case of the portable type which
can be put up at a non-theatrical location -- i.e., where the stage
would 'attend' the audience as opposed to the audience coming to
the theatre to attend the play,-- this frame clearly defines its
inclusive space and time. Other explicit and implicit markers,
such as the lighting of the lamp, the formulaic speech, or the
music which signals the beginning of a play, further confirm that
'the frame of an activity' is established: "Given their
understanding of what it is that is going on, individuals fit their

actions to this understanding and ordinarily find that the ongoing world supports this fitting."[5]

The puppeteer in a shadow performance assumes a much more comprehensive function than what actors in live theatre do. The ostended signs are shadows of figures whose performance is evidently carried out by proxy. But, as Elam suggests, if theatre depends on similitude, both visual and acoustic sign systems bear equal value for the performance at large.[6] A successful shadow play would then imply the ability of the puppeteer to carry out an extremely variable representational role that can create similitude between the signs which his figures are supposed to portray. For, unlike drama proper, the shadow play can never exploit what Elam terms "iconic *identity* : the sign-vehicle denoting a rich silk costume may well be a rich silk costume, rather than the illusion thereof created by pigment on canvas, an image conserved on celluloid or a description."[7] For a puppeteer who is required to master the art of reproducing various voices and sounds, the success of the performance depends on the degree of his synchronization of the visual and audial representations, which will enable the spectator to interact with the stage signs

---

[5]Goffman, *Frame Analysis,* 247. However, in certain extraordinary mental experiences even this conspicuous framing may not be sufficient. Goffman thus mentions an instance of a drunken spectator who shot a puppet portraying the devil, 363.

[6]Elam, *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama,* 23.

[7]*Ibid.,* 22.

in a more rounded manner. In the case of mediaeval Arabic shadow play, as Ḥamāda points out, the puppeteer "has to have a skill for narration, must know the basic principles of composing verse and singing, must feel a special affection towards popular story-telling, riddles and *zajals*, and must know what the audience enjoys and loves."[8]

Bearing in mind such a manifold function of the puppeteer, it is not difficult to understand why the portrayed characters usually suffer from a lack of multidimensionality, or 'roundness.' In addition to such strains on the puppeteer, this lack of multidimensionality is a consequence of a limited mobility of the figures and the absence of a verisimilitude of the stage signs vis-à-vis the objects they connote. As a result, all these factors gear the formation of characters towards easily recognizable lines of socio-cultural demarcations. In the majority of shadow plays we thus speak of 'types', not 'characters', which means that, even if carrying a wide connotative value, the roles are mostly non-individualistic. Therefore, every figure will depict through its shape specific physical features of the object it represents, assuming thus that these features will prompt the viewer to make the necessary associations. Eco sees this process as a transposition of stage signs from the rhetorical to the

---

[8]Ḥamāda, *Khayāl al-ẓill wa tamthīlyāt*, 18.

ideological level, which is one of the basic principles of theatrical interaction.[9]

However, all this is not to say that the themes encountered in the shadow plays are not variable. In the case of the mediaeval Arabic theatre, no generalizations can be made regarding its thematic orientation. Certain generalizations about it have been projected through the conclusions derived from pre-modern Qaraqūz types of shadow plays which were quite popular in Ottoman Egypt. These conclusions argue that Arabic shadow plays are purely a popular entertainment of a low quality and obscene disposition.[10] Yet, given the qualitative changes through which the shadow play went in Ottoman times, it is unjustifiable to attribute any but typological similarity between the mediaeval Arabic shadow play and its Ottoman counterpart, Karagöz, which came to be liked in almost all Ottoman provinces.[11]

---

[9]Eco, "Semiotics of Theatrical Performance," 116.

[10]For example, R. S. Hattox writes: "Puppet shows of various types also figured among the dramatic entertainment. Russell, who was clearly not very impressed with the coffeehouse nor with its clientele, tells of 'an obscene, low kind of puppet-shows' that was featured especially during the time of Ramadan. The shows were apparently quite popular, but not particularly pleasing to European tastes, as shown in Niebuhr's description of such a performance in Cairo," in *Coffee and Coffeehouses: The Origins of a Social Beverage in the Medieval Near East* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985), 105-6. For similar opinions, see E. W. Lane, *The Manners and Customs*, 385-6; Niebuhr, *Travels*, 1:144 and McPherson, *The Moulids of Egypt* (Cairo: N. M. Press, 1941), 81-3, (admittedly, this last author is much more benevolent towards the nature of these shadow plays.)

[11]For a discussion on Karagöz in the Ottoman provinces, see M. And, *Dünyada ve bizde gölge oyunu* (Ankara: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1977), 221-396. It has to be noted that Egypt also continued a tradition of its own, independent from Karagöz, but the travellers quoted here speak of the latter type.

Being the only extant texts of mediaeval shadow plays, the works of Ibn Dāniyāl cannot be taken as a criterion for the genaralizations on the thematic orientation either. While he explores very popular themes related to the Mamlūk society in a very lascivious and straightforward manner, the plays spoken of by Ibn Ḥazm, Ibn al-Fāriḍ, and Ibn Ḥijja al-Ḥamawī, for example, dramatize episodes most probably taken from pre-Islamic and Islamic history.[12] Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poem which has been quoted in the previous chapter testifies to the dramatization of various stories taken from both history and everyday life. Ibn al-Fāriḍ speaks of anecdotes depicting everyday practices, of fierce battles at sea and land (assumed to be the stories of the Crusades), of fishermen casting their nets, of supernatural beings, of beasts in the wilderness, of ships caught up in a storm, etc. It seems, however, that none of these themes is based on Islamic symbolism, that is, on Islamic values and teachings. They conjure up images almost exclusively within limited spatio-temporal boundaries. Even if they reflect more general cultural parametres, these do not seem to be deeply rooted within the Islamic tradition, but within the prevailing socio-aesthetic values. Furthermore, they do not engage in the commentary on, or interpretation of, the Islamic ethos. This is to be contrasted with some other shadow theatre traditions, such as Indonesian *wayang kulit*. In *wayang kulit*, as Geertz points out, "it is not the external

---

[12]See Chapter 2.

world of principalities and powers which provides the main setting for human action, but the internal one of sentiments and desires. Reality is looked for not outside the self, but within it; consequently what the *wayang* dramatizes is not a philosophical politics but a metaphysical psychology."[13]

With regard to the historical development of this genre, it appears quite difficult to ascertain the thread which chronologically and intrinsically connects different shadow play traditions. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize that even a typological link demonstrates the flexibility of this genre and its ability to adjust to the specificity of its different socio-historical contexts. Two main theories arose as to the introduction of this genre to Islamic lands: the first one, supported by scholars such as A. Taymūr, V. Mair, and J. Landau, argues for Indian origins. Taymūr plainly states that "*khayāl al-ẓill* is an ancient Indian play,"[14] while Mair arrives at a similar conclusion by examining the genesis of Chinese picture recitation. He believes that from India the shadow play spread first to China, and then independently to Central Asia and the Near East.[15]

---

[13]C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 134.

[14]Taymūr, *Khayāl al-ẓill*, 22; similarly, Landau states that "*Khayāl al-ẓill* is a popular name for the shadow play, possibly brought over from South East Asia or India and performed in Muslim lands from the 12th century A.D. [*sic*.] to the 20th one," in "Khayāl al-ẓill," *EI* (New Edition), 3:742.

[15]Mair, *Painting and Performance*, 39-54.

Contrary to this, the second theory sees China as the homeland of the shadow theatre that arrived in Islamic lands either via India[16] or via Central Asia.[17] This latter theory is based on the European designation of the shadow play as "Chinese shadows", which was for long popular in this part of the world. It also seems to be historically supported by an evidence found in the Persian historian Rashīd al-Dīn's (d. 1318) *Jāmi^c al-tawārīkh*, which speaks of a shadow performance presented to Jenghiz Khan's son Oghotai at the Chinese court in the mid-13th century.[18] Howorth records this anecdote in the following way:

> One day some Chinese showmen were
> performing before him and exhibiting their
> celebrated shadow figures, one of these, a
> figure of an old man with a white beard
> dragged by the neck at the tail of a horse,
> was somewhat exultingly pointed out by
> the conceited Chinese as showing how the
> Mussulmans were treated by the Mongol
> horsemen. Ogotai stopped him, and having
> produced the richest articles in his
> treasury of Chinese and of Persian make, he
> showed them how inferior the former were;
> he said that many of his rich Mussulman
> subjects had many Chinese slaves. You
> know that by the laws of Jingis a
> Mussulman's life is valued at forty *balishs,*
> while a Chinaman's is valued the same as a

---

[16]Jacob, *Geschichte,* 15-30.

[17]Menzel, *Meddāḥ, Schattentheater, und Orta Ojunu,* 8-16; Landau, "Shadow-Plays in the Near East," XXV (or 174). Also, Yūnus, *Mu^cjam,* 117 (under the *khayāl al-ẓill* entry).

[18]See Chapter One.

donkey; how dare you then insult the
Mussulmans.[19]

Although it offers evidence of the Mongol encounter with
the shadow theatre at the time of their deep penetration into *Dār
al-Islām,* this anecdote does not chronologically correspond to
the early process of dissemination of the shadow play through
these regions. By the mid-13th century when the event in this
anecdote took place, clear proofs exist as to the already
established popularity of the shadow play in Persia and the Arab
lands. The case of Ibn al-Haytham (d.430/1039) in Fāṭimid Egypt
and Ibn Ḥazm (d.456/1064) in al-Andalus, indicate that by the
11th century a firm knowledge of this theatre genre already
existed in two far-apart areas of the Arab world. Nonetheless,
the importance of this anecdote for the historical study of the
shadow play should not be underestimated, if we take into
consideration the hypothesis that there may have been more than
one channel of penetration of this tradition, leading to the
recorded variances in the genre's features.

With regard to the research on the shadow play in the
mediaeval Arab world, perhaps the most resourceful area is
Egypt. That the Fāṭimids already knew this theatre is
inadvertently documented by Ibn al-Haytham.[20] Ḥamāda is inclined
to believe that in the Fāṭimid times this theatre penetrated into

---

[19]Howorth, *History of the Mongols,* 1: 159-60.

[20]See Chapter Two.

both popular and courtly milieux because it explored themes respectively appealing to both levels of society, though in both instances the transmission was oral. On the theoretical level, this indeed is very plausible. As Stuart Hall remarks, "Popular forms become enhanced in cultural value, go up the cultural escalator -- and find themselves on the opposite side. Other things cease to have high cultural value, and are appropriated into the popular, becoming transformed in the process."[21] Though the dynamics of this process in the case of the mediaeval shadow play are relatively obscure, it seems important to dismiss the labeling of this theatre as either 'popular' or 'courtly' in general terms. Instead, it should be viewed from the perspective of its socio-cultural scene. On a more practical level, however, we still need to discover more historical material which could support Hamāda's argument for the Fāṭimid epoch.

In Ayyūbid Egypt, the knowledge of the shadow theatre is attested to by the anecdote about Saladin and *al-Qāḍī* al-Fāḍil that took place in 567/1171.[22] Several issues arise from reading this account: one, the *Qāḍī*'s dilemma as to whether to attend such a play puts in doubt the proposition that the shadow play was a well consolidated form of high class entertainment. Two,

---

[21]S. Hall, "Notes on Deconstructing 'the Popular'," in R. Samuel (ed.), *People's History and Socialist Theory* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), 234.

[22]Hamāda erroneously considers it as the oldest evidence for the historical study on the Arabic shadow play. For the quote regarding Saladin's attendance of a play, see Chapter 2.

this dilemma opens the door for a possibility that there existed two parallel shadow play traditions that Ḥamāda argues for, one of which had a reputation of being 'low and vulgar.' The *Qāḍī's* hesitation may have well been the result of an association of theatre with bad taste and immorality, as was expressed by Ibn Taghrībirdī some centuries later.[23] Three, the *Qāḍī*'s response is cautious and somewhat speculative, and as such reveals not an aesthetic enjoyment but merely a reaction towards the unexpected treatment of historical themes in the play's story-line.

In Egypt under the Mamlūks, the local historiographers show willingness to treat the shadow play as one of the common forms of entertainment. Ibn al-Dawādārī (d. ca.736/1336) speaks of Ibn Dāniyāl as one of his friends from literary circles,[24] while Ibn Taghrībirdī speaks of the staging of various shadow plays.[25] In his chronicle *Badā'iᶜ al-zuhūr*, Ibn Iyās writes that in the year 779/1375 the Sultan Shaᶜbān took a shadow play performer as entertainer during his pilgrimage to Mecca.[26] Though scorned by

[23]See Moreh, *Live Theatre*, 139.

[24]Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Durar al-tījān*, ed. & trans. G. Graf (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1990), 129:57-58. The same is also mentioned in his *Kanz al-durar*, ed. S. ᶜAshūr (Cairo: n.p., 1972), 7:217. I am grateful to Dr. Urlich Haarmann for these references.

[25]Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Hawādith al-zamān*, as quoted by Moreh, *Live Theatre*, 139.

[26]Ibn Iyās, *Badā'iᶜ al-zuhūr*, ed. M. Muṣṭafā. (Cairo: Al-hay'a al-miṣriyya al-ᶜāmma li al-kitāb, 1982), 1: 174: "On his way to Ḥijāz, [the Sultan] brought along a group of entertainers and performers of shadow plays... ."

his fellow pilgrims of high social positions, al-Sha^{c}bān's act demonstrates the ruler's remarkable sense of comfort with this type of entertainment despite the influential judicial and theological intelligentsia of Mamlūk Egypt. As we learn from the composition of the pilgrimage caravans, various functionaries used to accompany the Mamlūk Sultans on their way to Mecca. Among them were qāḏīs, but also entertainers (ṭubūlkhāna) and professional poets.[27] It is then only logical to assume that nothing in the themes of these shadow performances was offensive to the Sultan and the religious élite.

The disposition towards the shadow play in this epoch was not always so benevolent. In the year 855/1451, the Sultan Jaqmaq had all shadow play figures collected and burned. Then he wrote to all performers demanding their signature that would guarantee no further staging of live and shadow performances.[28] Though the extent of the damage to the props and possibly written texts is almost impossible to estimate, it is evident from later accounts that the shadow play outlived Jaqmaq's assaults. As we are informed by Ibn Iyās, its popularity continued even on the courtly level: in the year 904/1489, the Sultan al-Malik al-Nāṣir "sent someone to fetch Abū al-Khayr with his props for a shadow

---

[27]A. ^{c}Ankawī, "The Pilgrimage to Mecca in Mamlūk Times," *Arabian Studies* 1 (1974), 163-66.

[28]Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i^c al-zuhūr*, 2:33.

play, the group of Arab singers, and the chief buffoon, Burraywa."[29]

At the close of the Mamlūk era, the shadow play was still a popular form of entertainment. The political turmoil created by the Ottoman occupation of Egypt in 923/1517 did not prevent its staging. Here is what Ibn Iyās mentions with regard to the events in this year when Egypt fell under the Ottoman rule:

> ...on several evenings [the Sultan Selim]
> attended the shadow performances. When
> he sat for the entertainment he was told
> that the performer was going to produce
> for him the figure of Bāb Zuwayla and the
> figure of Tūmān Bāy as he was hanged and
> as the rope was cut twice in this process.
> This delighted Ibn ᶜUthmān. That evening he
> rewarded the performer with 200 *dīnārs*,
> presented him with a velvet robe
> embroidered in gold, and said to him:
> "Travel with us to Istanbul and stay with
> us to entertain my son with this."[30]

All this evidence attests to the popularity of this genre in Mamlūk Egypt and shows that, even though it is only Ibn Dāniyāl's plays that have survived until our times, they were not isolated examples of a genre unknown to this epoch. Ibn Dāniyāl himself confirms this in the opening paragraph of his first play, *Tayf al-khayāl* :

---

[29] *Ibid.,* 3:401.

[30] *Ibid.,* 5:192.

You wrote to me, ingenious master, wanton buffoon, may your position still be lofty and your veil inaccessible, mentioning that *khayāl al-ẓill* lost its popularity as its quality diminished due to repetitions. You therefore asked me to produce something in this genre with fine and original characters. Modesty overcame me because of the subject of your request -- which you would later introduce as mine -- but then I realized that my refusal would lead you to assume that I was not interested enough, or that I lacked ideas and talent, regardless of my ample inspiration and natural gift. So I indulged in the domain of their untamed rule and decided to answer your request. I thus composed witty *bābāt* of high, not low, literary quality. When you draw the characters, sort out their parts, put them together and then project them alone before the audience through a candle-lit screen, you will see that they are an innovative example, surpassing other such plays in truth. So begin with a song, singing the following verses in *rāst* :

This shadow play of ours is for people of position,
virtue, generosity and fine literary taste.
It is the art of seriousness and of levity,
composed in the best verse bringing marvel.
Pay attention, you with perceptive minds,
for herein lies the closest link with knowledge.[31]

This passage undoubtedly confirms a historical continuity of this genre to which Ibn Dāniyāl relates himself while giving it

---

[31] Istanbul MS.: 1a-2a; El Escorial MS.: 2-3; Cairo MS.: 3.

a qualitative thrust upward after a period of decadence that had resulted in the loss of the genre's popularity. Of course, several questions arise from such a conclusion: why have no other plays survived since there had been a tradition before Ibn Dāniyāl? Was the tradition primarily oral? If it was, how could it accommodate Ibn Dāniyāl's plays which manifestly fall into certain conventions of written compositions? For, regardless of any amount of modifications that Ibn Dāniyāl claims to introduce, this text still belongs to a process that unfolds through the dynamics of previous creativity. One very conspicuous characteristic of this text, as Badawi points out, is that it "reads very much like a producer's edition with all the detailed stage directions given, but because the directions form part of the text, often part of the presenter's speech, the work on the page looks more like narrative broken up into long speeches, than drama proper."[32] Indeed, much of Ibn Dāniyāl's *saj^c* that establishes the physical principles of the action is meticulously elaborated. Its flow and its linguistic subtleties within carefully arranged compositions require sophisticated readers in the first place. This, then, is where a need to understand better the relationship between the written and the performance texts arises, assuming, as Elam puts it, that this intertextuality is "problematic rather than automatic

---

[32]Badawi, *Early Arabic Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 23.

and symmetrical... It is a relationship that cannot be accounted for in terms of facile determinism."[33]

2.Shams al-DTn b. DāniyāI b. Yūsuf al-Khuzā°ī al-MawsilT.

Ibn DāniyāI was born in Mosul in 646/1238 where he spent his childhood and early youth. At the age of 19 he moved to Cairo, which probably had to do with the Mongol occupation of his hometown in 660/1252. In Cairo he completed his studies of *adab* and medicine, upon which he practiced as an oculist in his clinic at the Bāb al-Futūḥ region. He died in Cairo in 710/1310 at the age of 64.

Biographical references to Ibn DāniyāI are scarce. He did not seem to have enjoyed the extensive popularity of a renowned man of letters, as can be inferred from both the exclusion of his name in many prominent biographical dictionaries as well as the scarcity of the manuscripts of his plays. Some compilers have not even shown benevolence towards his work: in the acclaimed compilation *Kashf al-ẓunūn* °an asāmī al-kutub wa al-funūn, for example, the names of Ibn DāniyāI and his work *Ṭayf al-khayāl* are placed in the section on °ilm al-ṭīra -- the science of evil omens.[34]

---

[33]Elam, *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*, 209.

[34]°Abd Allāh JalabT, *Kashf al-ẓunūn* (n.p.: MaṭbaCat al-CāIam, 1310 A.H.), 2:103-104.

Fortunately, not all compilers of bibliographical data held such a negative and equivocal attitude towards Ibn Dāniyāl's creative writing. Ibn Aybak al-Ṣafadī (d.765/1363), his contemporary Abū Shākir al-Kutubī (d.764/1363), and a century younger Ibn Ḥajar al-ᶜAsqalānī (d.853/1449), all shared the opinion that Ibn Dāniyāl's wit was to be compared with some well-known names of literary history. Says al-Ṣafadī:

> Muḥammad b. Dāniyāl b. Yūsuf al-Khuzāᶜī al-Mawṣilī, the distinguished physician and writer Shams al-Dīn, the author of fine verse and pleasant prose, [the man of] introvert nature, strange puns and a variety of odd things, Ibn Ḥajjāj of his times, Ibn Sukkara of his Egypt, wrote Kitāb Ṭayf al-khayāl and thus established a new genre. He used witty language in it, and added song and dance to its form. He also wrote one urjūza entitled "Principles of Governship among the Rulers of Egypt" (ᶜuqūd al-niẓām fī man waliya Miṣra min al-ḥukkām).[35]

The anecdotes related to Ibn Dāniyāl's life in Cairo reveal a well-established social, though not economic, status which connected him to both the intellectual and political circles of the time. The famous Mamlūk historian, ibn al-Dawādārī (d.ca.736/1336), mentions Ibn Dāniyāl as part of his closely-knitted circle of friends, most of whom were prominent literary

---

[35]Ṣallāḥ al-Dīn Khalīl b. Aybak al-Ṣafadī, Al-wāfī bi al-wafayāt., Ed. S. Dedering (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag GMBH, 1981), 3:51. Both persons with whom Ibn Dāniyāl is compared here are tenth century Baghdad poets whose reputation is based on the sarcasm and eroticism of their verse.

figures of the time. On several occasions they all accompanied Ibn al-Dawādārī to Bilsbay, a place east of the Nile delta which was under the supervision of Ibn al-Dawādārī's father, where they indulged in discussions on literature and other subjects.[36]

Ibn Dāniyāl is said to be a friend of another distinguished person among *awlād al-nās*, Ibn Jankalī (d.741/1340), who grew up in al-Malik al-Nāṣir's court, but dedicated his life mainly to intellectual endeavors as opposed to political ambitions. Though a zealous Hanbalite, he seems to have enjoyed the company of Ibn Dāniyāl, despite the fact that the latter's fame and literary wit were associated primarily with his lascivious *bābāt*.[37]

In terms of his financial state of affairs, Ibn Dāniyāl was apparently never well-off and had to manage with a modest income that he received from the state for his ophthalmologist practice. Yet, Ibn Dāniyāl also enjoyed benevolence from the ruling family by which he was viewed as somewhat eccentric but quick-minded. Al-Ṣafadī records the following incidents between the ruling *amīr* and Ibn Dāniyāl:

> [Ibn Dāniyāl] was receiving a salary from
> the Sultan's Office in the form of meat,
> forage, and the like, but an order came once
> and his salary in meat supplies was cut off.
> Upon this, he paid a visit to the lame *amīr*
> Sayf al-Dīn Sallār. The *amīr* asked: ""So

---

[36]Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Durar al-tījān*, 129:57-58.

[37]Haarmann, "Arabic in Speech, Turkish in Lineage," 109-10.

Doctor, how are things with you?" "My meat has been cut off." The *amīr* laughed and ordered that the salary be recovered.

They also say that the noble Prince, before taking over the Sultanate, gave a horse to Ibn Dāniyāl saying: "Here, ride this horse when you climb up to the Palace or when you travel with me," because he was in the Prince's service. Ibn Dāniyāl took the horse but after some time the Prince saw him riding a crippled donkey, so he asked: "Well Doctor, didn't I give you a horse to ride?" "Sure! I sold it, made money on it and bought this donkey." The Prince laughed. Such were the alleged eccentricities that the people of Egypt reported about Ibn Dāniyāl.[38]

Ibn Dāniyāl's sharp language extended also to anyone who attempted to outsmart him verbally:

The doctor Shams al-Dīn b. Dāniyāl had an eye clinic in Bāb al-Futūḥ. I was passing one time by him with a group of friends. As we saw a crowd waiting to be treated, one of us said: "Come, let's mock the doctor (*nukhāyil ᶜalā al-ḥakīm*)!" I told them: "Don't try to outsmart him, he will embarrass you," but they didn't listen and said: "Hey doctor, do you need sticks?" They meant that those whom the doctor treated would go blind and would need a stick. But the doctor quickly answered back: "No, unless there are some of you who could

---

[38]Al-Ṣafadī, *Al-wāfī bi al-wafayāt*, 3:52. This anecdote contradicts Ayalon's statement that only the Mamlūks were allowed to ride horses. See his "The Muslim City and the Mamluk Military Aristocracy," *Studies on the Mamlūks of Egypt* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1977), 323.

show the way in the name of God."
Embarrassed, they went away.[39]

The reputation of a perceptive, witty, but wry Ibn Dāniyāl
may have prompted ᶜAlī b. Mawlāhum al-Khayālī, probably a friend
but known only from Ibn Dāniyāl's address as "ingenious master
and wanton buffoon (al-ustādh al-badīᶜ wa al-mājin al-khalīᶜ),"[40]
to commission Ibn Dāniyāl to write several unique and innovative
shadow plays.

The tendency to view the three plays as a rich material for
the examination of Mamlūk social history has existed for a long
time. For example, Ibn Iyās (d.930/1523), the prominent Mamlūk
historian, demonstrates much confidence in treating Ibn Dāniyāl's
plays as a credible historical document. From the first play *Tayf*
al-khayāl he took over a paragraph on the situation in Cairo under
al-Ẓāhir Baybars and several verses related to the punishment by
crucifixion of some Ibn al-Kāzarūnī who had violated the Sultan's
prohibition of alcohol in 665/1266. Writes Ibn Iyās:

---

[39]Al-Kutubī, *Fawāt al-wafayāt.*, ed. M. ᶜAbd al-Ḥamīd (Cairo: n.p.,1951), 2:384.
Also, al-Ṣafadī, *Al-wāfī bi al-wafayāt*, 3:52. This anecdote has been taken by
Moreh as evidence that the verb *khāyala* means "improvised interplay of sharp
retorts making fun of somebody," supporting his argument that *khayāl* is to be
understood as live-acting. See his "Live Theatre in Medieval Islam," 575. Note
also that the copyist of the Cairo MS. introduced Ibn Dāniyāl in the opening
paragraph as a *kahhāl*, confirming his profession.

[40]Badawī makes several interesting linguistic remarks regarding the words
mājin and *khalīᶜ*. The modern pejorative denotation of immorality and
dissoluteness in reference to these two words seems to have been absent from
the 13th century Arabic language. Otherwise, it would be unlikely that Ibn
Dāniyāl would have addressed anyone in such a straightforwardly crude manner.
"Medieval Arabic Drama," 91.

During this period the head of the police
arrested a man called Ibn al-Kāzarūnī who
was the most famous drunkard of Cairo.
They hung the pitcher and cup over his neck
and then put him onto the cross at Bāb al-
Naṣr. When the debauchers saw what
happened to Ibn al-Kāzarūnī, they yielded
obediently, and on this issue Ibn Dāniyāl
said:

Before his crucifixion drinking was an easy
punishment
for legally it was just a beating,
but as he was put on the cross I said to my
friend:
"Repent, for the punishment has gone too
far."

In addition to this, the *shaykh* Shams al-
Dīn b. Dāniyāl wrote a pleasant *maqāma*.
about these events [41]

Some modern historians have advocated reading these plays
in terms of a historical portrayal of the Mamlūk epoch,
elaborating on Ibn Dāniyāl's detailed descriptions of certain
popular practices.[42] Some authors, however, have gone a step
further, attributing to the plays, particularly the first play *Ṭayf*
al-khayāl, autobiographical claims.[43] Their treatment of the text

---

[41] Ibn Iyās, *Badā'iᶜ al-zuhūr*, 1:326-7. By *maqāma* Ibn Iyās means the shadow
plays.

[42] For example, ᶜAbd al-Rāziq, *La femme au temps des Mamlouks en Egypte* ;
Bosworth, *Medieval Islamic Underworld* ; etc.

[43] Such is the case with Ḥamāda, in *Khayāl al-ẓill wa tamthīlīyāt*, 92-103, and
S. al-Devicī. The latter author has based his short study of the life of Ibn
Dāniyāl primarily on the basis of this play. See his "Ibn Dāniyāl al-Mawṣilī,"

as a construction of implicit autobiographical references seems to derive from the fact that the spatio-temporal setting of the play *Ṭayf al-khayāl* corresponds to the period of Ibn Dāniyāl's arrival in Cairo at the time of al-Ẓāhir Baybars (ruled 1260-77). Indeed, Ibn Dāniyāl often interpolates actual historical events as part of his story line, which may have led these scholars to look for additional clues that might refer to Ibn Dāniyāl's life.

Though plausible inferences about the real historical state of affairs can be drawn from Ibn Dāniyāl's plays, it is necessary to create certain markers that would set off the limits between the actual and the imagined. The continuous debate as to how much truth -- if any -- a work of fiction construes, does not seem to be able to accommodate factual answers. Sparshott aptly argues that "what the author does, and invites us to do, is not to imagine a world *de novo,* but to suppose that the actual world that we know is modified in certain specified respects."[44] The verisimilitude in Ibn Dāniyāl's plays is certainly striking: though they are not written as historical plays, their historical framework is much too familiar and accurate. Looking at just one of the plays, we acquire numerous references to the actual geographical places: the city of Cairo at the time of al-Ẓāhir Baybars, the area around Bāb al-Lūq where numerous nights were

---

Al-Kātib 10 (June, 1951), 611-7. Also, Yūnus, *Muᶜjam,* under 'Ibn Dāniyāl ', 11-2.

[44]F. E. Sparshott, "Truth in Fiction," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 26 (1967), 4.

spent in drinking and adultery,[45] Old Cairo with al-Sunbāb, the fields of Khashshāb, Rubᶜ al-Khawr, etc. In the temporal concordance, one of the main characters, Ṭayf al-Khayāl, arrives in Cairo from Mosul only to find a strict application of a new law imposed by al-Ẓāhir Baybars, just as Ibn Dāniyāl himself actually arrived from Mosul at that time, encountering the same.

By offering these historical clues Ibn Dāniyāl creates an atmosphere of direct participation in the possible world of his plays, the purpose of which, however, is both a cultural and a physical proximity. If that proximity is achieved, the knowledge of this clearly defined spatio-temporal frame can channel the viewer's (and in our case, the reader's) mind towards a smoother accommodation of fictional entities that Ibn Dāniyāl places within his text. Therefore, it appears distracting and probably incorrect to view specific characters and story-lines as actually reflecting the author's life. Though Ibn Dāniyāl's writing is based on his empirical knowledge of the socio-cultural circumstance -- "an author does not imagine a world *ex nihilo*,"[46]-- reflecting self-assertions and personal dilemmas, a line has to be drawn

---

[45]G. Wiet wrote: "There were certainly some places that were more suitable than others for public celebrations attended by all elements of the population. We are told that the dregs of the population, the debauched, the prostitutes went for their entertainment to the Bāb al-Lūq, the gathering place of magicians; thimble riggers, men who trained camels, donkeys, and monkeys to dance; traveling wrestlers; fortunetellers sitting behind their box of sand; and shadow-theatre actors 'who operated marionettes behind a cloth.'"*Cairo: City of Art and Commerce* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964), 114-5.

[46]Sparshott, "Truth in Fiction," 4.

between what one is asked to know when coming to see the play and what one is asked to understand from the imaginary set of relations placed within a familiar setting. In other words, it is a "dual landscape" -- one of action and one of consciousness[47] -- that is at stake in this process, the successful balancing of which is a clue for a better understanding of the plays.

3. Egypt under the Mamlūks: A Brief Survey[48]

Between 1250-1517, Egypt and Syria were ruled by the Mamlūks. Though often portrayed as invigorators of Sunnī Islam and restorers of the Muslim unity,[49] more detailed studies show that the Mamlūks gained much of this reputation through their need to define their political prestige against the cultural bias of indigenous Muslim populace. In examining the expressive intent of the Mamlūk architecture, Humphreys concludes that

> ...the Mamlūks communicated to their subjects that in accepting Islam, they had become its masters; that its institutions were in fact subject to their own values and needs; that, in the end, the splendid efflorescence of Sunnī Islam in the

---

[47]Bruner, *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds*, 14.

[48]The concern here is mainly the period of Baḥrī Mamlūks (1250-1382) under whose rule Ibn Dāniyāl lived and wrote.

[49]See, for example, Ibn Khaldūn's description in *Kitāb al-ᶜibar*. (Cairo: Dār al-Ṭibāᶜa al-Amīriyya, 1867-68), 5:369-72, quoted by D. Ayalon, "Mamlūkiyyāt," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 2 (1980), 340; also, D. Little, "Religion under the Mamlūks," *Muslim World* 73 (1983), 165.

fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was but
a manifestation of their own glory.[50]

Similarly, Little argues that the Mamlūks' political and economic
interests were pragmatically and consistently guarded. One of the
most adept ways of self-assertion as well as the consolidation of
economic and political stability within the existing environment
was the sponsorship of powerful religious institutions. Thus,
religion was in many respects exploited for political benefits, as
can be inferred from specific policies towards both the subjects
of different confessions and the dominant religious élite.[51] The
goal at which the Sultan Baybars aimed by installing, for the first
time in Egyptian history, four chief judges of all four Sunnī legal
schools was to bridge the gap between the authority of the
dominant Shāfiᶜī and the other three schools, and thus insure a
religious and political equilibrium within such a cosmopolitan
city like Cairo.[52] Along similar lines of an overt protection of
Islamic values and a roundabout concern for their own cause were
the Mamlūk policies towards the Dhimmīs which seem to have

---

[50]R. S. Humphreys, "The Intent of the Mamlūk Architecture of Cairo," *Studia Islamica* 35 (1972), 119.

[51]See Little, "Religion under the Mamlūks," and "Coptic Conversion to Islam under the Baḥrī Mamlūks, 692-755/1293-1354," *BSOAS* 39 (1976), 552-69. Also, J. H. Escovitz, "The Establishment of Four Chief Judgeships in the Mamlūk Empire," *Journal of American Oriental Society* 102 (1982), 529-31.

[52]Escovitz, "The Establishment of Four Chief Judgeships," 530. To be noted is that "In the 14th century Cairo was the most populous city of Europe and the Mediterranean basin, with almost 500,000 inhabitants," J. Abu-Lughoud, "Varietes of Urban Experience: Contrast, Coexistence and Coalescence in Cairo," in *Middle Eastern Cities*, ed. I. Lapidus (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969), 159.

been greatly shaped by the feelings and activities of the Muslim populace: "In other words, the Mamlūks left the Dhimmīs to their own devices except when they realized that to do so would constitute a threat to public order and stability, which would in turn jeopardize the Mamlūks' own well-being."[53]

All this does not, of course, cast a shadow on the Mamlūk sincerity in following the Islamic values. What it does highlight, however, is the fact that being born non-Muslim, yet ruling a Muslim country as converts to Islam, created a kind of identity crisis which needed to be cushioned through seemingly fulfilling methods. For example, the Mamlūks' attitude towards the Mongols in issues of religion was one of superiority: the Mongols, as recent converts, were dismissed as being uneducated about Islam, even though the Mamlūks themselves were converts.[54] The first Sultans embarked on a number of campaigns against 'infidels' -- Ismaᶜīlīs, Nuṣayrīs and Nubians were all targets of these campaigns that were meant to demonstrate the Mamlūk adherence to the cause of Islam.[55] Many other severe measures were imposed to eliminate non-Muslim practices from the society. Ibn Iyās, quoting the passage from Ibn Dāniyāl's *Ṭayf al-Khayāl*, records the following about the internal policies of Baybars:

---

[53]Little, "Coptic Conversion to Islam," 557.

[54]Little, "Religion under the Mamlūks," 175-6.

[55]See A. A. Khowaiter, *Baibars the First: His Endeavours and Achievements* (London: The Green Mountain Press, 1978).

> ...the traces [of entertainment sites were]
> erased and the places of enjoyment left
> with no joy, debauchers and buffoons were
> in grief, as the Sultan ordered the army of
> Satan to flee. The inns were confiscated by
> the governor of Cairo, the wine was
> spilled, the *ḥashīsh* burned, and beer
> wasted. The sinners and homosexuals were
> called on to repent, and prostitutes and
> adulterers detained....[56]

Baybars, whose achievements in the promotion of Sunnī Islam and the assurance of the safety of his Sultanate were remarkable, exercised "his full power to secure the unquestioning obedience and respect of his subordinates."[57] In this light, Humphreys views the Mosque of Baybars in Cairo, "by virtue of its site, its appearance, and the source of its materials, ... [as] intended to represent Sunnī Islam militant and triumphant."[58] Paradoxically, however, the Mamlūks were often accused by the Muslim community in Egypt of protecting non-Muslims and employing them in unduly high numbers.[59]

The question that arises from these historical data and in many passages of Ibn Dāniyāl's plays relates exactly to this issue of interreligious and intercultural feelings and stereotypes. Unlike Crone and Cook who have concluded that one cannot speak

---

[56]Ibn Iyās, *Badā'iᶜ al-zuhūr*, 1:326.

[57]Khowaiter, *Baibars the First*, 38.

[58]Humphreys, "The Intent of the Mamlūk Architecture of Cairo," 90.

[59]Little, "Coptic Conversion to Islam," 553-4, 557.

of the Egyptian national identity in mediaeval times, Haarmann suggests quite the opposite: the sense of belonging was quite discernible, as can be seen both on the level of politics and on the level of cultural activities.[60] What is intended here is not to support or refute these views because that would entail probing different ways through which various elements of this society defined themselves, individually and collectively, against each other, against history, and against the outside world. Rather, the emphasis will be on examining the causes and the nature of intercultural tensions which any society of such a diverse composition entails. In that respect, the role of popular culture is crucial, given that its counterpart, 'high or courtly' culture, tends to ostracize any centrifugal dimensions which could potentially threaten its homogeneity. It has to be mentioned that the rich historiographical material of the Mamlūk period has yet to be sufficiently examined so as to cover all expressions of this diverse society.

My intention here is to highlight several important points related to the basic sets of relations in the Mamlūk society which can create a frame of understanding of cross-cultural nuances and tacit implications that permeate Ibn Dāniyāl's plays. Though it will be marginalized in the course of textual analysis of the plays, this historical frame, based primarily on the findings of

---

[60]P. Crone & M. Cook, *Hagarism: the Making of the Islamic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 112-5. U. Haarmann, "Regional Sentiments in Medieval Egypt,"*BSOAS* 43 (1980), 55-60.

modern scholarship on the subject, will be necessary so as to single out the multiple cultural voices which are so masterfully portrayed in Ibn Dāniyāl's plays.

The Mamlūks were slaves of Turkic origin who were either captured in the battlefields or purchased at markets of Central Asia. The training which they had to enter after their acquisition consisted of Islamic teachings on the one hand, and military skills on the other. Al-Jāhiz speaks of the *faḍā'il* of Trukic slaves of his times as being warfare, horsemanship, and physical attractiveness,[61] while Ibn Khaldūn comments that the Mamlūks' adherence to Islam parallels that of true believers.[62] Deliberately segregated from the rest of the society in which they lived, the Mamlūks' sole allegiance was paid to the officers of the barracks where they were trained and to their fellow soldiers.[63] Thus, even after 1250 when the Mamlūks came to power, military affairs defined through the protection of Islamic religious and political dominance remained one of the essential concerns of their rule. This concern for stability, after all, was dictated by external circumstances too: the wars with the Crusaders were still raging, and the Mongols, who in 1258 overthrew the cAbbāsid caliphate, began to advance towards Syria. In 1260, the Mamlūks

---

[61]Quoted in Haarmann, "Arabic in Speech, Turkish in Lineage," 82.

[62]Quoted in Little, "Religion under the Mamlūks," 168.

[63]Lapidus, *Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 44.

defeated the Mongols at ᶜAyn Jālūt, consolidating through this victory their supremacy. By the first decade of the 14th century, the danger from both external enemies was minimized in a series of military campaigns, after which the Mamlūk state entered a period of efflorescence.[64]

The Mamlūk *amīrs* formed an oligarchy that was reserved only for first-generation slave soldiery. Their offspring, *awlād al-nās*, did not have access to the same political status. Unlike their fathers, the *awlād al-nās* were born free, which carried both political and socio-cultural implications. The rule was defined through the origins, and in spite of a certain amount of assimilation that came primarily through the conversion to Islam, it was formed along the lines of distinct 'ethnic' demarcations. Therefore, the importation of new corps was essential for the maintenance of high political bodies, as it was primarily the first generation that counted as the military aristocracy.

The Mamlūks organized their state primarily on the premise of a strong military force that supported its maintenance through the imposition of high levies. Sultan al-Ẓāhir Baybars, for example, was ill-reputed for his high taxes. High taxation on both rural and urban trade and production was a way to sustain the state and its expenses in both military and bureaucratic affairs. The need for legitimization in the eyes of all social groups

---

[64] *Ibid.*, 9.

prompted the Mamlūks to penetrate deep into the socio-economic and cultural life of the country, which resulted in the absence of separate bodies responsible for these affairs. As Lapidus points out, the concern for the well-being of the state was a result of the concern for self-legitimization:

> Regime and society did not confront each other, reacting only on the interface between them; rather they permeated each other, the stronger pressing its way through the structure of the latter, and the subject society resisting, bending, accommodating, assimilating, taking cognizance of Mamlūk powers and actions in ways which created an over-all political and social pattern... The regime did not govern from without, but merged political control with economic and social roles.[65]

In such a scheme of power distribution, the *awlād al-nās* played an important role in bridging the cultural gap between the Mamlūks and the rest of society.[66] The case of Ibn al-Dawādārī, the famous historian who managed to penetrate these strict intellectual circles, is certainly not underplayed.[67] Though brought up in their fathers' households, and that in an urban setting, the *awlād al-nās* were educated in a manner that systematically excluded them from the principal military bodies

---

[65]*Ibid.*, 78.

[66]Flemming, "Literary Activities in Mamlūk Halls and Barracks," 249.

[67]Haarmann, "Turkish Legends in the Popular Historiography of Medieval Egypt," 100.

and integrated them instead as notables in the society at large. Even if there was inclusion in the military service, this was done on the level of auxiliary corps, *ḥalqa*, which was "created expressly for the purpose of finding a socially and financially suitable employment for the sons of former officers."[68]

The Mamlūks themselves were looked down upon by the local *ʿulamā'*. They were seen as soldiers with no skill in matters of culture, and the *ʿulamā'* often blamed them for the decline of Arabic literature and arts.[69] Though they were given education in Arabic as adolescents, that is, after their importation, the Mamlūks used Turkish in oral communication and often required it from all office-seekers.[70] In the early period of their rule in particular, the standpoint of the local religious élite was one of a bias against the pagan origins of the Mamlūks, which almost automatically dismissed them as unsuitable for the traditional Arabo-Islamic cultural circles. "*ʿUlamā'* continued to write about *ʿulamā'* and for *ʿulamā'*, paying little or no attention in their works to all those who stood outside their own circles."[71] Despite this attitude of cultural stereotyping, the ties of the religious

---

[68]Lapidus, *Muslim Cities*, 116.

[69]Haarmann, "Arabic in Speech, Turkish in Lineage," 82.

[70]Flemming, "Literary Activities," 250, 259.

[71]Haarmann, "Arabic in Speech, Turkish in Lineage," 84. This attitude was not shared by the masses who saw the Mamlūks as their protectors. U. Haarmann, "Ideology and History, Identity and Alterity: The Arab Image of the Turk from the ʿAbbasids to Modern Egypt," *International Journal of Middle East Studies (IJMES)* 20 (1080), 183-4.

and cultural élite with the Mamlūk aristocracy were eminent. Because of the fact that the culamā' did not pertain to one class or group only but permeated the entire economic and social structure of the Mamlūk state, collaboration was unavoidable. As a result, a partial integration of the culamā' into the political apparatus was carried through the appointment of the chief qāḍī, army judges, market inspectors, official preachers, administrators of schools and hospitals, etc.[72] However, in the domain of culture, the readiness of the Mamlūks to contribute to the overall prosperity, regardless of what the actual motivations may have been, was perceived as being enhanced by prospects of political gain.[73]

This tenuous bond that was formed between the alien Mamlūk aristocracy and the Arabo-Islamic notables was not the only source of intercultural tension. Other religious and cultural minorities suffered from precarious intercultural relations, and it is generally recognized that under the Mamlūks the Coptic population greatly diminished in number.[74] While on the one hand

---

[72]Lapidus, Muslim Cities, 130-41.

[73]Ibid., 191; Haarmann, "Arabic in Speech, Turkish in Lineage," 83. This prejudice, however, seems to have been a two-way street. Ibn Dawādārī, for example, who cultivated both Turkish and Islamic sentiments, contemptuously speaks how supesrstitious the Arabs were. See Haarmann, "Turkish Legends," 105. Also, the Mamlūks were often criticized for not caring about the names of the Prophet and his Companions, and maintaining their Turkish names as first names. In Ayalon, "The Muslim City and the Mamluk Military Arsitocracy," 322.

[74]Bosworth, "Christian and Jewish Religious Dignitaries in Mamlūk Egypt and Syria," IJMES 3:1 (1972), 59-74 and 3:2 (1972), 199-216; Little, "Coptic Conversion to Islam," 552-3.

the Mamlūks established important political and economic relations with a number of non-Muslim countries extending from the Kingdoms of Aragon and Castile in the west to South India in the east, in the name of internal stability they carefully monitored potential ties between their own non-Muslim communities and external ones.[75] However, both Jews and Christians frequently occupied important positions in the Mamlūk bureaucratic apparatus, mainly as scribes and tax collectors. In spite of that practice, the Dhimmīs were obliged to observe certain rules of conduct which were clearly defining them as second-class citizens. Thus, they had to bow their heads when passing Muslims, were not allowed to crowd Muslims in public places, were allowed to use their temples for quiet religious services only, had to display the *shiᶜār al-dhimma* on their turbans in a clear manner, and had to preserve the colour of their garments by regular dyeing.[76]

Despite these measures, however, public uproars periodically broke out: during the reign of al-Ashraf al-Khalīl, for example, the Muslim dissatisfaction with the Coptic influence on public affairs resulted in a series of assaults on Coptic houses and churches. When the Sultan eventually yielded to the public demand and ordered the hanging of a number of Christian scribes,

---

[75]Bosworth, "Christian and Jewish Religious Dignitaries ," 1:64.

[76]*Ibid.*, 2:215.

he was cautioned by an *amīr* that these scribes were indispensable as they ran all financial affairs.[77]

The two main streams of cultural sentiments, the Arabic and the Turkish one, were caught up in an interplay of political, economic, and religious aspirations which often matched but also differed in irreconcilable self-interests. This cosmopolitan society functioned on relatively smooth premises despite these gaps that often had to be cushioned by policies created *ad hoc*. However, the preservation of Sunnī Islamic values in a stable economic and political environment was the goal of both streams of culture, and it is with this historical frame of mind that the textual examination of Ibn Dāniyāl's plays can be initiated.

---

[77]Little, "Conversion to Islam," 554.

Chapter Four

THREE NARRATIVES, ONE CHRONOTOPE: *KITĀB ṬAYF AL-KHAYĀL* BY IBN DĀNIYĀL

Kitāb Ṭayf al-khayāl is composed of three plays reconstructing the exuberant popular culture of Mamlūk Cairo. In all available manuscripts of the trilogy, the plays appear in the following order: 1) *Ṭayf al-khayāl* ; 2) *ᶜAjīb wa Gharīb* ; and 3) *Al-Mutayyam wa al-ḍā'iᶜ al-Yutayyim*. Though structured in different ways, the three plays share a number of common features: one, the same chronotope, which also intersects Ibn Dāniyāl's actual spacetime (thus, the dramatic chronotope transforms the historical here-and-now into the fictional here-and-now); two, similar thematic concerns expressed through a familiar locus of action emphasizing collective aspects of human relationships; three, a similar treatment of dramaturgic agents as non-individualistic entities; and four, several deictic pointers that may indicate a joint staging of all three plays (e.g., the prologue mentions that Ibn Dāniyāl was commissioned by the same person to write these plays, the same presenter (*rayyis*) ᶜAlī appears in all of them, etc.). In that respect, it seems critically correct to analyze the three plays together as a whole, as they prove to complement each other, primarily in issues of agential

relationships, dramatic communication, and Ibn Dāniyāl's aesthetic and ideological focus. However, before embarking on different features of Ibn Dāniyāl's dramaturgy, it seems necessary to present the fabulas (basic story-lines) of all three plays.

1.Tayf al-khayāl

Of the three plays, *Tayf al-khayāl* appears to be the most mature and elaborate one, both in view of the plot and the formation of characters. It is a play which exploits best those aspects of the genre which bring to surface its mimetic richness, and thus manages to maintain its dynamism from the beginning to the end.

The play is introduced through a brief prologue by the Presenter *(al-rayyis)*, followed by a melody performed in *rāst* modality[1] which foregrounds the target audience of the play and its underlying mimetic intent:

> This shadow play of ours is for people of position,
> virtue, generosity and fine literary taste.
> It is the art of seriousness and of levity,
> composed in the best verse bringing marvel.
> Pay attention, you with perceptive minds,

---

1 *Rāst* (Pers.): a modal entity in the musical system, For details, see O. Wright, *The Modal System of Arab and Persian Music, A.D. 1250-1300* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 36-38, 68-71, 141-144, 283-286.

> for herein lies the closest link with
> knowledge.
> In it there is only one speaker
> visible for all characters, but hidden.
> The manners of virtue are very much his,
> so gentlemen, throw some gold to him.
> I named [the play after] Ṭayf al-Khayāl --
> a man hunched like a rising moon.[2]

The Presenter then invites the first character, Ṭayf al-Khayāl the hunchback, to appear on the stage. Having exchanged greetings, the Presenter offers a eulogy to Ṭayf al-Khayāl's hunch and a variety of crooked objects. Using a stereotypical military imagery, he calls him "the most glorious amīr of all hunchbacks" who is to be compared with "a sword-blade that boasts of a crooked handle," "a polo-stick in use," "lance," and "a sailing ship."[3] Ṭayf al-Khayāl sarcastically thanks him with a double appeal -- "May God bless your mouth and protect you from police swords," -- juxtaposing rhetoric, personal dissatisfaction, and the constraining public order. He then turns to the audience and delivers zajal verses in praise of God, the Prophet, and the Sultan, following them by a speech in rhymed prose that stresses the play's deliberation to break through the socio-aesthetic norm:

> Greetings gentlemen, and may you continue
> to live in prosperity and happiness. You
> ought to know that every persona (shakhṣ)
> has a model to it (mithāl), and as a

---

[2]MS[1] (Istanbul): 2a-3; MS[2](Escorial):1-1a; MS[3](Cairo):2-3 (here the last two verses are inverted). The translation is mine.

[3]MS[1]:3a-4a; MS[2]: 2; MS[3]: 4-5.

> proverb goes, what you don't find in fine
> baskets, you may find in junk. Every play
> (*khayāl*) bears reality, and every genre a
> method.
> Humour is a remedy for the burden of
> seriousness, misfortune brings about
> fortune. Beauty can become tiring and
> ugliness pleasant. ... What is it to you if
> something is said to be ugly, because
> everything is beautiful in its own way.[4]

Three dramaturgic foci are foregrounded in this paragraph: *mimesis*, humour, and ideological (in this case, social, and aesthetic) polarisms. Even though it is organically linked to the first play only, this three-focal foregrounding will be applicable to all three plays, which further accentuates their interconnectedness.

Ṭayf al-Khayāl's speech also establishes the spatio-temporal boundaries of the play: "Having repented of such activities and having abandoned my buddy Wiṣāl, I returned from Mosul to Egypt at the time of al-Ẓāhir Baybars, may God bless his reign and bestow on him the waters of Paradise."[5] Reconstruing the contemporary circumstance becomes critical for the cognitive and aesthetic value of the play, as the overarching problem of endangerment of the folk microcosm through a series of political measures manifestly enters the play's possible world: we are told that "the market of enjoyment" is subjected to severe

---

4MS[1]:6a-7a; MS[2]:3; MS[3]:6-7.

5MS[1]:8a; MS[2]:3a; MS[3]:7.

punishment by the Sultan ("the Sultan's commands have sent the army of Satan into exile!"[6]), we hear a *qaṣīda* that laments the death of Satan (*māta, ya qawm, shaykhunā Iblīs!*) and eulogizes his *nāmūs*,[7] and we read a passage that Ibn Iyās later uses in his Chronicle to describe the events of the year 665/1266.[8] Thus, there is no doubt that Ibn Dāniyāl's intention was to construe immediate epistemic links between the possible world of the play and the actual world in which he participated as a careful observer.

As he completes his sorrowful recitation, Ṭayf al-Khayāl expresses his wish to be reunited with his friend Amīr Wiṣāl. Summoned to the stage, Amīr Wiṣāl appears and, introducing himself in rhymed prose through a set of puns with suggestive connotations, he continues with a nostalgic and picturesque recollection of the happy days filled with sensual pleasures that were "God's gift to lovers". His nostalgia too is permeated with the fear for Satan's well-being, and he recalls this fear as a premonition that manifested itself in transcendental moments of intoxication. Another *qaṣīda* follows, urging Abū Murra (Satan) to depart from Egypt so as to avoid the wrath of the Sultan's punishment.

6MS[1]:9; MS[2]:3a; MS[3]:6.

7MS[1]:10-12a; MS[2]:4-5; MS[3]:8-10.

8MS[1]:9; MS[2]:4; MS[3]:7-8.

A wish for repentance as a sensible solution rather than a genuine spiritual necessity follows: "So the best thing for the reasonable folk is to shut this door and repent before it is too late, to ask for forgiveness before life is over, and seek protection from these evil acts. Because this State is powerful and its accomplishments are apparent."[9] Amīr Wiṣāl then asks for the summoning of his secretary, al-Tāj Bābūj. A Coptic bureaucrat appears, complaining of the difficult times afflicting people of his vocation and religion.

When asked to present Amīr Wiṣāl's financial state of affairs, al-Tāj Bābūj does so by mocking every item in Wiṣāl's possession. He also recites a poem by the court poet Ṣurra Baᶜr who accompanies him (an allusion to the name of the classical Arab poet Ṣarra Durra), carrying sarcasm even further. Amīr Wiṣāl angrily calls for the poet, who, in an attempt to divert Amīr Wiṣāl from the impulse to revenge for this poetic insult, assumes the parodic role of Shaharzade. Fearing both for his life and his poetic status, he relates a series of unconnected stories, each of which strategically ends with a confusing reference to a different story, prompting Amīr Wiṣāl to ask: "And what is that story?" ("wa mā kāna min qiṣṣat al-madhkūr ?"). This narrative play, construed like a chain which links the ending lines of each

---

9A very successful pun: *Inna hādhihi al-dawla qāhira wa āthāruhā ẓāhira* : the reference is made to the political strength of the state and the place itself(*qāhira* and Cairo) on the one hand, and the outward political effects and the ruler on the other (*ẓāhira* and Ẓāhir Baybars). MS [1]:20; MS [2]:7a; MS [3]:17.

story with the beginning of the succeeding story, leads Amīr Wiṣāl to forget the reasons behind his initial anger. He releases Ṣurra Baᶜr with words of praise for his unequivocal eloquence.

The next scene opens with Amīr Wiṣāl's intention to repent:

> O Ṭayf al-Khayāl, I have decided to abandon
> the wanton lifestyle, sincerely repent to
> God and accept the practices of the Sunna
> and the community, for the time for
> departure has drawn near and little is
> left. I ask God's forgiveness for
> despondency and homosexual practices. I
> am resolved to get married, have children,
> and settle down, so bring me the marriage-
> broker Umm Rashīd![10]

Indeed, Umm Rashīd promptly appears, bewildered by the realization that a request for her services should come from Amīr Wiṣāl, the man of philandric fame. e announces that she has a right person for him, a divorced woman of innumerable charms but unfortunate life due to the harassments inflicted on her by her violent ex-husband. Umm Rashīd masterfully combines praise of the bride-to-be and self-praise, particularly in the matters of unsuccessful sexual experiences with men, and successful ones with women. Amīr Wiṣāl accepts the suggestion and invites the matrimony official to draw a contract. A conventional speech follows, specifying the amount of money Amīr Wiṣāl is supposed to pay as *mahr* for Ḍabba Bint Miftāḥ, the bride.

---

10 MS[1]:35a-36; MS[2]:13; MS[3]:13.

At this point, Amīr Wiṣāl informs the parties involved in the case that his wealth has been reduced to a tiny, bug-infected abode, that his horse has died, and that all valuable items that were in his possession have been lost in dissoluteness. In stressing the misery of his personal circumstance, he produces *qaṣīdas* which unscrupulously mock some traditional Arabo-Islamic values. He then makes a hyperbolic appeal to the audience and his friend Ṭayf al-Khayāl for sympathy, reminding them that it is solely for the sake of repentance that he intends to get married. [11]

Umm Rashīd suddenly appears, announcing that the ceremony is about to begin. Amīr Wiṣāl leaves, returning shortly as the head of a flamboyant procession accompanied by drum-beats and candle-lights. Standing next to his decorated horse, he obediently waits for the bride who is soon to enter, hidden behind a gold-embroidered veil and accompanied by a young boy -- her grandson, as we are to find out -- and several female companions. Observing the ceremonial customs, Amīr Wiṣāl lifts the veil, only to find the ugliest creature looking at him. Petrified, he faints. His shock traumatizes the bride and her boy, as well as all other members of the procession. The boy, having smelled Amīr Wiṣāl's genitals, falls into an epileptic fit and starts reciting an obscene *zajal* that evidently brings Amīr Wiṣāl back to consciousness. Still

---

[11]Badawi aptly points out that this must have been a hint to the audience to reward the performers with money. In "Medieval Arabic Drama: Ibn Dāniyāl," 97.

furious, Wiṣāl attacks everyone with his mace, driving them away.

Upon the return of Ṭayf al-Khayāl to the stage, Amīr Wiṣāl requests the summoning of Umm Rashīd as well as her husband ᶜAflaq in order to punish them both for Umm Rashīd's malice. An aged man with dyed hair enters, singing and farting, and oblivious to the course of events. He nostalgically remembers his good old past filled with erotic adventures. Amīr Wiṣāl's anger is now even deeper, as he perceives ᶜAflaq as the focus of collective guilt of women cheating on their husbands. However, Ṭayf al-Khayāl intervenes and diverts Amīr Wiṣāl from his intended assault by degrading ᶜAflaq's virility through humourous verses on the man's impotence and senility. ᶜAflaq himself adds to this his own verses on his debilitating old age that could not have been improved due to the incompetence of Yaqṭinūs, the local Galen, at whose hands even Umm Rashīd has passed away.

The unexpected mention of Umm Rashīd's death prompts Wiṣāl to verify the news, and Yaqṭinūs is summoned to the stage. Grudgingly, he comes and explains the circumstances of Umm Rashīd's death, and her passing on the mantle (of her vocation) to a young disciple, Umm Ṭūghān, which marks the continuation of the trade. As for Umm Rashīd, she is to be buried with honors "in the drain of the bath, behind the exit and close to the entrance."

Umm Rashīd's death brings about repentance, marking the end of the play. Ṭayf al-Khayāl decides to put an end to his

debauchery once and for all, while Amīr Wiṣāl announces his pilgrimage to Mecca.

2.ᶜAjīb wa Gharīb

Not much can be said about the organization of the story line in this play. The play has no evident plot but is structured as a fair comprising an episodic succession of *personae* representing various trades and professions in Mamlūk Egypt. Within such a scheme of representation, the audience acts as a crowd gathered to observe the skillful demonstrations of different exhibitors. The title of the play derives from the names of two personae -- Gharīb and ᶜAjīb -- who stand for two disparate societal groups in the play and thus define the boundaries of its ideological framework.

The play opens with a brief introduction by the author who characterizes it as "giving an account of the ways of quaint (*al-ghurabā'*) and fraudulent (*al-muḥtālīn*) people... who use the language of Banū Sāsān."[12] A persona appears onto the stage, identifying himself as Gharīb. His name is a pun, foregrounding thus not only his belonging to the underground classes, but also the stereotypical vision of his kinsfolk. In many respects, Gharīb is the mainstay of the actual structure of the play, so any

---

[12]MS[1]:86a; MS[2]:30; MS[3]:67.

analysis of it has to maintain the link with the centrality of his role.

GharTb's speech is a nostalgic reflection on his lifestyle which includes a brief description of the manners of Banū Sāsān, the groups of outcasts who wondered around and lived by begging and trickery:

> When there was nobody left whose generosity could be desired, and no one whose gain would be hoped for, we started to trick you having no need for you, we gave ourselves up to leisure and idleness, became unique in manipulation and dispersed in many bands. No danger and no institution could divert us.... We gathered in Egypt, Iraq and Syria.... I simulated suggestive flimflams, referring at times to knowledge of chemistry, at times to witchcraft, and at times to the power of amulets and the psyche. Sometimes I wrote on the potsherds to dry up the water in the well, and claimed power over demonic spirits, summoning Miṭaṭūr al-Shayṣabān. I groped about like a madman, emitting foam from my mouth with the help of soap. At times I pretended to be a blind man, gluing my eye lashes with oleum, or made my limbs swell with dried clover and made myself cry.[13]

GharTb then delivers a *qaṣīda* vivifying many other tricks and impersonations he has amateurishly undertaken in the past. Somewhat later in the play, the types that will promenade

---

13MS[1]:90a-91a; MS[2]:31-31a; MS[3]:70-71.

through the stage exhibiting their skills in a seemingly random succession will all take a stand towards GharÌb, portraying themselves as nearly institutionalized carriers of the alternative modes of living with which Banū Sāsān have challenged the authorities. Even though their episodic appearance on the stage breaks away the diegetic development of the play, it is important not to detach them from the central function as exemplars of Banū Sāsān's schemes of behaviour.

GharÌb's withdrawal from the stage is followed by the appearance of his partner, preacher ᶜAjÌb al-DÌn. Opening his sermon with the *basmala*, he manages to complement the show with a religious justification by praising God for creating joy and humour, and choosing the Prophet "who knew how to joke yet spoke only the truth."[14] Though ᶜAjÌb stands as the ideological antipode of GharÌb, his function in the play is certainly not conflicting with the play's intent. On the contrary: within the dual perception of the world, Ibn Dāniyāl manages to reconcile the religious consensus with communal aspirations:

> Know that the first thing that is placed on
> the Scale (of divine Justice) is fine
> disposition, because the world is a home
> of grief, of creating and destroying, of
> health and sickness, of pleasure and pain."

(Then he recited):
> Don't carry on with your sorrow
> for the judgment of the Scripture cannot

---

[14]MS¹:95; MS²:32a; MS³:74.

be ripped.
Because sorrow is burdensome and illness
springs from it.[15]

Curious is the suggestion offered by G. Jacob that relates
cAjīb's statement, "the health of the eye is in the man, and the
health of the man is in the eye," to "Your eye is the lamp of your
body" in St. Luke XI:34, pointing perhaps to Ibn Dāniyāl's Christian
origin.[16] Aside from this very plausible suggestion, however, it is
interesting to note the underlying parabolic significance of the
sound-mind-in-the-sound-body metaphor.[17] It specifies physical
health as a prerequisite for spiritual health. (Perhaps this
correlation is also the way to reconcile Ibn Dāniyāl the
ophthalmologist and Ibn Dāniyāl the playwright?)

However, in the scheme of the play's intent, this predication
"healthy body 'is' healthy mind" is challenged by the role of
common people in the formation of their own models of existence.
In the course of the play, many figures will demonstrate
professions that undermine the authority of 'scientific' methods

---

[15]MS[1]:95a; MS[2]:32a-33; MS[3]:74.

[16]*Ibid.* See Jacob, "cAgīb ed-dīn al-wā'iẓ bei Ibn Dāniyāl," *Der Islam* 4 (1913), 70.

[17]Healing, in one form or another, is the vocation of several personae who pass before the audience in the course of the play, and the treatment of eyes is referred to more than once. For example, Gharīb nostalgically remembers in his *qaṣīda* : "And I have treated eyes; how many eyelids treated with my kohl cannot sleep for nights on end?" Similarly, surgeon Miqdām al-Mawāsī admits his shrewdness when committing mistakes: "When I make a healthy eye blind, I say, 'It was the iron that blinded you!'"

and offer alternatives in healing through homeopathy. They center around everything that is alternative, accentuating both the superstitious ignorance of common people as well as the rejection of absolute values through which the sound-mind-in-the-sound-body acquires a religious justification.

As mentioned, the parade of figures is actually a parade of different professions. The name of each *persona* is a salient pun on her/his trade, referring thus to a whole system of values culturally associated with a particular profession. From the dramaturgic perspective, we are dealing not with 'characters', but 'types', drawn along the lines of professional demarcation within this socio-cultural context. It is noteworthy to mention Ibn Dāniyāl's familiarity with the fairs of his times, which enables him to stage in a naturalistic way all the subtle features of such a carnivalesque atmosphere. Furthermore, a conspicuous feature of this fair is the inclusion of performance arts and medical/pharmaceutical skills, which brings Ibn Dāniyāl close to what Bakhtin describes as "an ancient connection between the forms of medicine and folk art which explains the combination in one person of actor and druggist, [whereby] medicine and theater are displayed side by side in the marketplace."[18]

In the order of appearance, the exhibitors in *cAjīb wa Gharīb*

---

[18]Bakhtin, *Rabelais*, 159.

are as follows: first, Ḥunaysh al-Ḥuwā[19] the snake charmer (lit. Snake Charmers' Little Snake), who describes different kinds of poisonous snakes as well as various remedies to treat their bites. He claims: "the Great God has taught me that there are 366 kinds of snakes, among which I know 444 by name," and proceeds to enumerate some of them, perhaps more elaborately than one can find in any mediaeval manual on animals.

The second to appear is ᶜUsayla al-Maᶜājīnī the druggist (lit. Cosmetician's Honey Drop), who, showing the audience one of his jars, explains his skill in treating different diseases and conditions. He proudly invites people who suffer from stomach acidity, retinal obstructions, constipation, sexual impotence, etc. (the grotesque bodily imagery is striking) to come and try his therapies, expecting a minimal reward -- a date or a cucumber -- in return.

Nabāta al-ᶜAshshāb the herbalist (lit. The Herbalist Sprig) introduces himself as "the vicar of Dioscorias and the grandson of Ibn Bayṭār," and demonstrates ample knowledge of various herbs and their homeopathic qualities. His lists includes herbs both native to Egypt and those growing in more remote areas which he learned about and collected in the course of his travels. In an attempt to justify the validity of his skill on religious grounds, Nabāta applies a theological framework to his trade: in

---

[19]Also read as Ḥuwaysh (MS[2]:33a; MS[3]:76) or Ḥuraysh (MS[1]:98) al-Ḥawwā. However, considering the semantic intent, such readings do not seem plausible.

accordance with "God's guidance in the knowledge of certainty, " he concludes "... no herb in the soil grows unless it possesses a sound effect on the human body."[20]

Miqdām al-Mawāsī the surgeon (lit. Daring Razor Man) presents the glory of his trade by enumerating all the mysterious tools which he uses to operate on people: razors, scalpels, saws, syringes, etc. Their fearsomeness is even more magnified after he discloses what a dubious expert he is, exclaiming: "And when I make a healthy eye blind, I say, 'It was the iron that blinded you!'"[21]

Hassūn al-Mawzūn the artist (lit. Well-balanced Goldfinch) appears and "leans and flips over, walking like a scorpion." Under the supervision of his trainer (muᶜallim) he performs balancing skills like walking on the tight trope, standing on his hands, or walking over sword blades.

Shamᶜūn al-Mushaᶜbidh the magician performs with his apprentice a variety of magic tricks such as expanding a short object into a long one, turning dead wood alive, growing gardens at the spot, making a sparrow play the drum, turning plain soil into wheat and a lemon into a duck, pulling out different objects from his mouth, etc.

---

[20]MS[1]:103; MS[2]:35a; MS[3]:79-80.

[21]MS[1]:106a; MS[2]:36a; MS[3]:82. In the MSS. he is called Āsī, which is semantically less correct than Mawāsī.

Hilāl al-Munajjim the astrologer (lit. Astrologer Crescent) appears with his book, the sand-case, his chair and his astrolabe, praising the one who "decorated the sky with stars and ordained their movement from East to West, and bestowed on them the guidance to know the situation of His creations, and made the stars' bringing fortune or misfortune distinguished by degrees and minutes...."[22] Hilāl then proceeds to give an account of different houses and their meanings, summoning two persons from the audience to tell them their fortune. As Jacob points out, Hilāl's exposition of his skill is often permeated with references to the work of the famous Baghdādī astrologer Abū Maᶜshar al-Balkhī (d.272/886).[23]

Along similar lines of trade, ᶜAwwādh al-Sharmāṭ[24] the fortuneteller (lit. Magic Talisman-Writer) gives an elaborate presentation of his wondrous practice, reading into the mirror and contemplating the magic mirror-like surface (mandal). He too offers an elaborate and witty eulogy to God and the Prophet, aiming, just like other types of the Fair, at a religious justification of his trade. He then demonstrates his skills on an epileptic boy whom he frees from demons and evil spirits, addressing them in a speech filled with interesting, somewhat cryptic formulaic expressions:

---

[22]MS¹:110; MS²:38-38a; MS³:85.

[23]Bosworth, *Medieval Islamic Underworld*, 125.

[24]Dimyāṭī in MS ¹:112a; Qarāmiṭī in MS³:87.

I force you to make an oath, all disobedient
demons, fiends and devils from the armies
of Abū Murra [i.e. Satan], the abominable
master. If you are Jewish, an oath on
*Adonai Tzvaot Al Shaddai Ehya' Asher
Ehya'*; if you are Christian, on *'Errāsīn o
logos karahyā'*; if you are Magi, on fire,
light , darkness and heat; and if you are
Muslim, on the rightness of the Holy Book
and the grace of blessings of Ṭāhā and
Yāsin. Respond to my powers and submit
yourselves to my amulets. There is no sky
that will protect you and no land that will
diminish you....[25]

The withdrawal of ᶜAwwādh al-Sharmāṭ is followed by
several short acts involving performers with animals: Shibl al-
Sabbāᶜ (or al-Sibāᶜ) (lit. Beastly Lion Cub) who appears with a
chained lion whom he parades before the audience and makes
perform different acts; Mubārak al-Fayyāl (lit. Blessed Elephant-
Trainer) who addresses his elephant in Hindi and delivers verses
in praise of the animal's virtues; Abū al-ᶜAjab (lit. Master of
Marvels) who shows off his goat that performs various tricks;
Abū al-Qiṭaṭ (lit. Cat Master) who demonstrates the skill in
training his tomcat not to attack the mouse in the basket; Zaghbar

[25]The first formulaic phrase seems to be taken from the Gospel according to St. John:*"En arhi in o Logos kai o Logos in pros ton Theon kai Theos in o Logos. Ovtos in en arhi pros to Theon "* (In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God). The second one,*"Adonai Tzvaot Al Shaddai,"* found only in MS1:118a, refers to different names of God. It is a formulaic expression that God uses to describe Himself to His creations -- 'I will be what I will be.' MS[1]:118-119; MS[2]:40; MS[3]:90. I am grateful to Irvin C. Schick for deciphring these phrases.

al-KalbT (lit. Dog Trainer[26]) who parades a group of dogs, making them dance to the music of a tambourine and a flute; Abū al-Waḥsh (lit. Wild Beast Master) who enters with a bear, a stick and a sack, ringing with hand-bells for the bear to dance; and Maymūn al-Qarrād (lit. Monkey the Ape Trainer) who brings along a *nasnās* and a long-tailed monkey that dances to the music of drums and a horn.

Intersecting the sequence of animal performers are two very interesting types: al-Ṣāniᶜa and Nātū. Kahle has dedicated a short study of the first type, explaining her trade mainly by references to contemporary studies of Gypsy customs.[27] Since the woman in this play appears with lancets and glasses that are traditionally associated with tattooing and circumcision of girls -- contrary to Jacob's opinion that she is a cupping woman[28] -- and is herself tattooed ("dark colored-lips" and "a white tattooed leg"), Kahle assumes her Gypsy background from Upper Egypt.

Nātū, on the other hand, is a Sudanese boy[29] who appears "with a drum, a conical cap and a long lock of hair, jolting javelins. As he approaches, he stages a mock flight. As he

[26]The word *zaghbar* has not been semantically clear. See Bosworth, *The Medieval Islamic Underworld*, 126.

[27]P. Kahle, "A Gypsy Woman in Egypt in the Thirteen Century A.D.," *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* 29 (1949), 11-15.

[28]See Bosworth, *The Medieval Islamic Underworld*, 127.

[29]See Jacob, "Der Nātū und sein Leid bei Ibn Dāniyāl," *Der Islam* 1 (1910) 178-82.

retreats, he opens widely his eyes, stretches the corners of his mouth with his fingers, lingers like a mule, and then dances and sings to the beat of the drum."[30]

Further in the play there appear other kinds of gymnasts and artists, like Shadhqam al-Ballāᶜ (lit. Gulper), who carries a sword, a platform scale, a lance, and a spearhead, all of which he attempts to fit into his mouth before the audience. Waththāb al-Bakhtiyārī (lit. Swinger) who is probably of Kurdish origin[31] walks and leaps over ropes, taking the breath of the audience at the prospects of his falling down.

Jarrāḥ al-Mutabbal (lit. Love-Stricken Surgeon) is dismayed due to unrequited love, inflicting damage to his body on that account: he pierces his nose, cuts his shoulder with a razor, and makes his body bleed.

Jammār Mashāᶜīlī (lit. Coal-Bearer of Torches) decorates his torch (mashᶜal) with fragrant flowers, boasting of his prestige in this trade and proudly stressing his adherence to Banū Sāsān. He explains his function as a watchman for both men of high positions and common people, and it seems from his account as well as from the fact that he is incorporated in the play's parade of familiar types that his trade was quite popular at the time. Lapidus makes several references to the scope of activities

---

[30]MS[1]:126; MS[2]:42a; MS[3]:96.

[31]See Bosworth, *The Medieval Islamic Underworld*, 127.

this profession implied, indicating a feeling of degradation due to the numerous needs in the maintenance of the city.[32] In his speech too, Jammãr al-Mashã^{c}TiT mentions many other minor jobs he and his colleagues have had to undertake, exhibiting high wit in dealing with different members of society. His speech deserves to be cited in full, as it portrays a powerful imagery of inter-religious relations and professional cross-referentiality:

> How many a governor boasts of us when he has obtained his post.
> People respect him when we stand at his house door,
> protecting him against enemies so that he has nothing to fear.
> How many wanderers we have led in the dark of a dangerous night,
> with gleaming light shining in the darkness... .
> We address the Muslim, humbly begging:
> Highly honoured Sir, oh candle of the market,
> oh light of the pupil of the eyeball,
> grant me that which you have accustomed me, by the most honoured master ^{c}AlĩĩT... .
> When a Christian comes of high standing,
> We say: Oh priest of all churches and places of worship, by Mary the Virgin, the Mother of the crowned Son,
> by Peter, the first head of the Church of God
> And by Mark, who occupied the throne before the (Christian) dynasties,
> I mean by that the Alexandrian Patriarch, when we received his office,
> By John, by Luke, and the noble Matthew

32Lapidus, *Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages* , 83, 270.

By Andrew, who came as successor to the Apostles,
by Bartholomew or by Thaddeus the Apostle
By the respect for Simon and Thomas, to whom the greatest honour is due,
by Paul with the disciples, who carried on the mission,
by the stringing of pearls, found in his book of the Epistles,
by the martyrs, slaughtered in glorious martyrdom
Bestow a favour on me, be generous to me...
And when there comes a Jew, distinguished, skilled in debate, then we say: You who are a jewel among Jews. Oh light of the Sabbath of the Synagogue, by the Primeval, by the Eternal,
By the scion of Moses, who was addressed by God, the Lord of Religions,
by the Ten Commandments, revealed to him on the mountain,
by the text of the Thora Bereshit for the intercession,
and by the Haphṭaras, whose meaning is not unknown,
By the family of Jacob and Israel and the intercession,
Bestow on me a favour with a red-copper penny....[33]

Finally, the last figure to appear is ᶜAssāf al-Ḥādī (lit. Tyrannical Caravan-Leader). As a religious touch to the ending to the play and as a proxy to ᶜAjīb al-Dīn, he collects the money "in this year of pilgrimage to the Kaᶜba and the Prophet's grave." Upon

---

[33]Translation by Kahle, in "The Arabic Shadow Play in Egypt," 29-31. MS [1]:130-135a; MS[2]:44a-47; MS[3]:100-108.

his withdrawal Gharīb comes back and addresses *Rayyis* ᶜAlī in

an epilogue to the play, ending it in verses in *mutaqārib* :

> God, You are all-hearing and all-
> responsive, and you are close to anyone
> who calls you out.
> I ask by the Prophet for forgiveness
> because I am Your grateful servant
> I am passionate, diligent, and artistic,
> Gharīb is strange and ᶜAjīb is odd.[34]

3. Al-Mutayyam wa al-ḍā'iᶜ al-Yutayyim

Unlike the second play, the last play in the *Ṭayf al-khayāl*

trilogy offers a diegetic organization of its story-line. The play

is a burlesque portrayal of amorous conventions in the Arabic

literary discourse, yet with overwhelming sociological value

related to the plebeian practices in Mamlūk Egypt. Just like the

previous two plays, this one too is introduced by Ibn Dāniyāl's

words as to the thematic concerns of the piece: "This is a play

entitled 'The Enthralled One and the Enthralling Wretch,' speaking

partly of the condition of lovers, partly of dalliance that is a

certain kind of bewitchment, partly of playing games, and partly

of wondrous and odd buffoonery that is not disgraceful."[35]

The text of the play begins with the appearance of "a person

---

[34]MS[1]:138; MS[3]:109. Here, the word *gharīb* is repeated 4 times, while in
MS[2]:47a, the first two are *gharīb* and the last two, ᶜajīb.

[35]MS[1]:138a; MS[2]:48; MS[3]:110.

visibly distressed by ardent love," whose name -- Mutayyam -- foregrounds his emotional co; .lition. Similar to the names of many other agents in Ibn Dāniyāl's plays, the name Mutayyam is associated with a whole set of values related to the socio-cultural context. Within that scheme, Mutayyam's role assumes the presence of a person causally linked to his name. Indeed, Yutayyim, as his name implies, carries out this link of causality between the two agents, channeling the flow of the narrative.

Mutayyam opens his speech with a poem lamenting the stressful condition of *ahl al-gharām* -- love-stricken people, -- humourously echoing the amatory themes in classical Arabic poetry. He then turns to the audience and, having introduced himself, reveals the sorrowful story of his unrequited love towards a beautiful young man -- Yutayyim -- whom he had seen in a public bath in all his seductive nakedness. The comic effect created by the fact that the object of his love is a person of the same sex is reinforced by the exposure to his beloved's nudity which Mutayyam perceives as an unprecedented aesthetic experience:

> Yutayyim has captivated hearts and shut
> off the door to beautiful wo/men, he is the
> one with the most slender body, the most
> dazzling waist, the deepest, most
> expressive eyes under thick brows, the
> most beautifully shaped rear, the most
> serene forehead, with front teeth slightly
> apart, with cheeks like a rose and fluff
> like a violet, the ones who perfects in all

descriptions but, alas, does not respond.[36]

He then composes a *muwashshah* with which he further exalts the young man's beautiful features that supersede any woman and causes all men to fall in love with him. As he completes his eulogy, a deformed person comes in, introducing himself as Mutayyam's former lover. He is devastated that Mutayyam has jilted him and started loving a younger and taller man, having thus "replaced with jasmine the thorns of tragacanth." A traditional method of argumentation takes place in a comic version: Mutayyam's lover defending smallness, and Mutayyam refuting his argument in favour of things fully grown. Thus, the former lover of Mutayyam sighs,

> How can the meat of a ram be compared with that of a lamb? Can't life be sustained even with small sips of chicken bouillon? Isn't a nut eaten without its shell, which is there just to envelop its smallness? Isn't smoked anchovy swallowed in one bite precisely because it is not a big fish?
> Then he sings (in *basīt*):
>> They said, you fell in love with a small man.
>> Right, said I, a small thing too has weight on the scale.
>> A small thing is like a wild flower, that you smell fresh, and long for every now and then.
>> It is like silk, soft to touch, it is the fragrance under the armpits,

---

36MS[1]:141-141a; MS[2]:48a-49; MS[3]:112.

the fragrance of aromatic herbs.
It is the sweetness of small sips,
a pleasant flirtation, and someone
with the mustache,
a simple affection in beauty and
tenderness.[37]

Mutayyam's counter-argument, purely inspired by the
intensity of his emotional interest, rationalizes the aesthetic
refutation of things small: "How can you compare a crescent with
the full moon, ripe pomegranate with its blossom, fresh dates
with fully grown ones, unripe grapes with wine?" He then
narrates to his old lover the incident in the public bath when he
slipped and fell upon the sight of beautiful Yutayyim. As Yutayyim
rushed to help him stand up, Mutayyam stole a kiss from him.
Subsequently, he confesses, his entire energy has gone into
finding Yutayyim or, at least, Yutayyim's *ghulām* Bayram who
seems to exercise a great control over his master's actions and
through whose influence Mutayyam hopes to approach Yutayyim.

Indeed, Bayram appears, explaining that he has taken action
on Mutayyam's behalf. He has convinced his master that
Mutayyam's love knows no limits -- *innahu yuḥibbuk ᶜadad al-
raml wa al-ḥaṣā wa al-turāb*. Bayram proves to be extremely
diplomatic, developing his strategy as Mutayyam's advocate and
Yutayyim's faithful servant along the lines of eloquent rhetoric
and awareness of the limits of his control over his master's

37MS[1]:143-145; MS[2]:49a-50; MS[3]:114-115.

thoughts. Bayram's powerful role of an intermediary is similar to that of Umm Rashīd in the first play *Ṭayf al-khayāl*, as it brings to the forefront the underplayed prominence of the 'little people'. In this play, the servant is the prime carrier of the action.

Succumbing to Bayram's clever persuasions, Yutayyim accepts the challenge of confronting his animals in a fighting contest with the animals of Mutayyam. Mutayyam sings and dances with joy. Yutayyim appears, and the two engage in a splendid lovers' dialogue expressed through amatory verses in *dū-bayt* form, building towards the real mating dance that will culminate in the animal fights. The dialogue is conducted on two levels: one reflecting the personal experience of love-stricken Mutayyam and his ways of coping with the intensity of emotions that have afflicted him, and the other building on the familiar trends in the aesthetic experience of love and its vicissitudes, creating a potpourri of familiar trends set up by pre-Islamic and Islamic amatory verse. The dialogue gradually evolves into a more playful personal interaction leading to the reason for the encounter: the animal fight.

Three matches follow, arbitrated by one and the same judge Zayhūn and attended by many. The build-up of tension carries strong comic and erotic effects: as the tension increases, so does the size of the animals for fight. The progression towards an erotic victory by Mutayyam is intertwined with his reconciliatory tendency to appease his lover. He fights until he loses, acutely aware that this is the only way to win the heart of a young man

for whom the losses of his beloved animals end as devastating personal dramas. Before the second fight between the rams begins, for example, Yutayyim's mother appears, relating a touching story of the animal's life in their household. She uses magic to protect the ram from the evil eye with nine grilled peppers: three from the East, three from the West, and three from Tiberias, so as to pepper the hearts of the envious ones. Thus, though inspired by a totally different set of motivations, Yutayyim too is determined to win, not realizing that his victory will actually mark his submission to Mutayyam. Yutayyim's naïveté and Mutayyam's exasperation result in three sensational animal fights: first roosters, then rams, and, finally, bulls.

Each match is preceded by a formulaic speech by Zayhūn starting with a pious eulogy and ending with an explanation of the importance of such noble sports.[38] Of course, each contestant seizes the opportunity to exalt the value of his animal, adding spice to the anxiety surrounding the matches. Yutayyim's rooster loses, and he calls on the match between the rams. His ram loses, and he begs Mutayyam to let their bulls fight. Finally, Yutayyim's bull wins, which temporarily throws Mutayyam into despair but gives him a chance to sacrifice the bull and throw a feast:

> Oh *Rayyis* ᶜAlī, this bull should not remain
> useless, and I have no expectations for his
> recovery. I will make a feast out of his

---

[38]Curious is his remark before their beginnings that the fights are carried "as the custom of the play requires" -- ᶜalā ᶜādat al-khayāl.

> meat for my brothers, and I invite to it all
> my close and faithful friends. Where is
> the one who is friendly with the butchers,
> and the slayers' apprentices, call for me
> Dung Beetle the Meatball (Abū Jiᶜrān al-
> Kabābī) and his cooks. Let them hurry up to
> slaughter it, skin it, cut it up and cook it."
> The table was spread and the wine cups
> filled up, and Mutayyam said: "Everyone is
> welcome to join us, especially to empty
> the glasses![39]

As the feast goes on, unknown people pour in, introducing themselves to the host Mutayyam through peculiar stories of their lives, satiating their need for food and drink, and eventually falling asleep. As pertinent to the possible world of the play, the sexual implications of such a feast is alluded to in the names of each of these guests: Narjis *al-mukhannath*, Abū Sahl, Abū al-Buḥaysh, Baddāl, Dā'ūd al-Qabbāḍ, ᶜUmayra al-Jallād, Nibhām al-Dabbāb, etc. As in the second play, the succession of people is the succession of particular trends, and in this case, these trends relate to clandestine erotic interests that stood in opposition to the conception of sexuality in religious discourse.

Towards the end of the play, amidst the pile of drunken and unconscious bodies, Mutayyam is visited by another *persona* who introduces himself as the Angel of Death. In a tragicomic confrontation with his departure from this world, Mutayyam rushes to repent, uttering all necessary formulaic expressions of

---

[39]MS[1]:167-168a; MS[2]:57a; Missing in MS[3].

piety and submission to God and the Prophet. Once again, the possible world of the play that oscillates towards a subversive frame of anti-collectivity is tamed by a happy ending brought about by reconciliation with religion.

Chapter Five

COLLECTIVITY AS DRAMATURGIC DISCOURSE IN IBN DĀNIYĀL'S *KITĀB ṬAYF AL-KHAYĀL*

In order to appreciate the multiplicity of issues raised in the three plays, it seems inevitable to look at their mimetic value from a panoramic perspective. Such an undertaking involves sorting out their eclectic components into a network of underlying concerns: the linguistic dilemma, the aesthetic and ethical norms, the political authority, etc. Identifying these separate concerns can shed some light on the depth of correlation between the microcosm of the plays and their macrocosmic point of departure. In order to do so, three channels of discussion will be pursued in reference to the plays: one, modes of dramatic communication; two, the binary organization of agential relations; and three, common thematic concerns.

1.Modes of Dramatic Communication.

Dramatic communication in Ibn Dāniyāl's plays can be approached from two perspectives: one focusing on their formal composition (e.g. prose or verse), and the other examining their semantic patterns. A need for such a categorization is not to draw a sharp distinction between form and content, but to respond to the socio-cultural role of Arabic language and its

ideological differentiation in 'standard' and 'popular' Arabic. More specifically, it is in order to relate to what P. Cachia sees as

> the coexistence in Arabic of a "high" literature, which for many centuries was conservative, formal and tied to a classical idiom magnificently developed by pre-Islamic poets and hallowed by Scriptures, and of more popular forms of self-expression couched in local dialects, less stable but also more varied and more immediately relevant to the concerns of the common people. These latter forms embrace what in the European tradition is known as folklore.... The dramatic presentations we have noted all belonged to the realm of popular art, and Ibn Dāniyāl's plays appear to have been an attempt to bring them into conformity with the élite.[1]

Agreeing with Cachia that Ibn Dāniyāl appears as a mediator between the two currents, I believe that the appropriate issue to be raised here is in what way Ibn Dāniyāl manages to reconcile them, to what extent, and for what purpose.

There is little doubt that Ibn Dāniyāl did, and could have further expressed his wit in another genre of creative writing.[2] However, given certain peculiarities of the shadow play frame, it seems that his choice of this theatre as a medium for presenting a hypothetical set of relations was a conscious move.

---

1 Cachia, "The Theatrical Movement of the Arabs," 11.

2 See, for example, his poetry in Ibn Aybak al-Ṣafadī's compilation published as *Al-mukhtār min shiᶜr Ibn Dāniyāl* (Mosul: Maktabat Baṣṣām, 1978).

As has been discussed in the previous chapter, the specificity of this genre of theatre necessitates a somewhat distinct discussion on the modes of dramatic communication. If we bear in mind the one-dimensionality of its bearers of action that limits their mobility and almost any form of gestural communication, it is not surprising to see the emphasis in their interaction being placed on speech. Related to this is also the issue of stage 'props', which in the shadow play assume a complementary function of approximate spatio-temporal markers. These markers tend to rely heavily on the immediacy of visual identifications, be it through recognizable contours of animate and inanimate objects or through culturally determined attributes in (grotesque) representations (e.g. costumes or physical stereotypes based on gender, ethnic, or other differentiations). Due to these 'confinements', the shadow play provides a familiar but conspicuously delimiting space-time that effectively foregrounds its ludic aspect. Furthermore, the employment of leather figures as bearers of action assumes the spectator's spontaneous acknowledgment of the theatrical frame and demands a gradual reception of intended messages via such a frame. However the dialogue between stage and audience is to be conducted, it assumes a full awareness of the frame's 'playful' nature in the process of decoding the messages.

By focusing the spectator's attention on the delimiting aspect of this frame, Ibn Dāniyāl could experiment with a set of epistemic models that derived from his alert observance of the

heterogeneity of the socio-historical context. At the level of
social and political relations that attracted most of Ibn Dāniyāl's
attention, the concurrent incongruity between two juxtaposed
'realities' -- Arab and Mamlūk -- was striking, for it was viewed
by the indigenous Arab élite in the antithetical 'us' *vs.* 'them'
('self' *vs.* 'other') construct. As Haarmann has pointed out, the
culamā' discourse revolved around "a painful conflict between, on
the one hand, the religious esteem they owed to the Mamlūks as
valiant *mujāhidūn* and, on the other, the rejection of the same
Mamlūks as haughty foreign usurpers."[3] Contrary to such an
ideological inflexibility that closed venues for a fruit-bearing
dialogue, the folk spirit remained more elastic and more
pragmatic: "The people in the street did not share this feeling of
suffocation and threat of selfishness and dishonesty. They
declared, "Rather the injustice (or tyranny) of the Turks than the
righteousness (or self-righteousness) of the Arabs (*ẓulm al-turk
wa lā cadl al-carab*)."[4]

Within this triangle of contending forces -- the Mamlūks,
the Arab religious élite, and the plebs -- Ibn Dāniyāl, an Arab but
not Egyptian born, adopts plebeian pragmatism, and above all,
eclecticism. More than reconciling himself to a docile co-
existence among the three currents, his goal seems to be testing
the ways for their interaction. In the possible worlds of his

---

[3]Haarmann, "Ideology and History, Identity and Alterity," 183.

[4]*Ibid.,* 184.

plays, the distinct ethos of these three socio-cultural groups virtually creates three sub-possible worlds. Though not rigidly defined, each of them is correlative to a metaphysical realm: Mamlūk to alterity, Arab to immutability, and the plebeian to their much needed dialogue. Ibn Dāniyāl tackles the actual propensity of the first two to stay apart through the processes which in carnivalesque festivities correspond to travesty, defined by Bristol as 'code switching' and 'grotesque exaggerations' whereby "identity is made questionable by mixing attributes."[5]

'Code switching' in Ibn Dāniyāl's plays is achieved by switching stereotypes or by comic juxtapositions and shufflings of ethical and aesthetic polarisms -- 'eternal' and 'changeable', 'glorious' and 'sordid', 'heavenly' and 'profane,' 'beautiful' and 'ugly', or 'moral' and 'immoral'. The non-linear correlation of these concepts is foregrounded as they are exposed as a product of culturally defined parameters. For example, in the first play, Amīr Wiṣāl delivers a speech which parodically projects the traditional Arabic knowledge of horses, while, at the same time, he historicizes it for his Mamlūkī system of meanings. He thus appears as the synthesizer of two seemingly 'irreconcilable' cultural constructs, proving them to be transferable. Likewise, in the third play, the amatory discourse brings to the forefront all exalted poetic achievements of pre-Islamic and early Islamic

[5]Bristol, *Theatre and Carnival*, 65.

poetry, reformulating them for the purposes of an erotic game between two men. In such image-sets, the aspects of culture that have been treasured throughout the centuries, creating an unaltered, almost holy set of values, become grotesquely demystified. The overall effect becomes inevitably humorous. Laughter plays a crucial role in this process as it assumes a socio-political purpose: it associates anachronistic elements of a culture with a specific historical context.

The variety of effects produced by alternation, aggregation, and juxtaposition of different sets of meanings is reinforced by Ibn Dāniyāl's parallel usage of several, usually regarded as incompatible literary forms, like *qaṣīda, zajal, sajc, muwashshaḥ, dū-bayt, mawwāl,* etc. The dialogues unpredictably assume versed *qaṣīda* or *zajal* forms, rhymed or regular prose, and in a very original manner alternate classical and colloquial Arabic, demonstrating their compatibility and effectiveness in complex semantic clusters. Ibn Dāniyāl does not even abstain from using Qur'ānic quotations when describing the most licentious practices,[6] when eulogizing Satan,[7] or when referring to miserable living conditions.[8] With such uninhibited dialogic

---

[6]Q.21:104 and Q.76:18 in relation to AmTr Wiṣāl's enjoyment of nightly copulations with Umm Khishāb, followed by his withdrawals into his room on the Nile. MS[1]:16a; MS[2]:6-6a; MS[3]:13.

[7]Q.76:10, in the *qaṣīda* lamenting the death of Abū Murra, MS[1]:10; MS[2]:4a; MS[3]:9.

[8]Q.79 and Q.100 in the eulogy to the vizier, MS[1]:48a; MS[2]:18; MS[3]:48.

medleys, Ibn Dāniyāl succeeds in portraying his characters as vital, articulate, and utterly communicative. They disclose their thoughts before enveloping them in linguistic niceties or ideological standpoints. Such extreme spontaneity synchronizes different forms of articulation, in verse or prose, vernacular or classical, onomatopoeia, euphemisms or dysphemisms, psittacism, Qur'ānic quotations, *hadīth*, proverbs, etc. This dynamic exchange that leaves nothing unsaid or incomplete renders the agents humorous and 'naturally' eloquent.

In much of the text, the language also abounds in curses, oaths, sexually suggestive puns, and insolent references. Hyperbolic form is ubiquitous and is mainly employed as a means of cynical demystification of political and ideological stiffness. Thus, in the first play, a mocking praise of Amīr Wiṣāl's qualities is expressed by his secretary Tāj Bābūj:

> The most opulent emir (*al-ajamm* instead of *al-ajall*), the goat of religion (*ᶜanz al-dīn* instead of *ᶜizz al-dīn*), the glory of idiots and fools, the distinguishing mark on the anus of the boy-servants of the Commander of the Faithful, the sword of the police, the liaison of lovers -- may God expand his neck, bless his testicles, and bestow on him abundance of slaps. [He is] the one who belongs among those who adorn gatherings with their presence and invoke joy among the gathered, the one who deserves that arms and hands stretch out towards him, and [is] the one who is like the sea whose shores are open to those who

> come and go. We endow him with the
> matters of gaiety and proclaim him the
> emir of ridicule.[9]

If brought to the level of connotative value, the succession of epithets aimed to glorify and humiliate Amīr Wiṣāl indirectly mock a whole set of political, social and religious values associated with Amīr Wiṣāl's world. Of course, when read in the original, the language reveals Ibn Dāniyāl's mastery to exploit the semantic richness so as to achieve such ambivalent images. The abusive epithets attributed to Amīr Wiṣāl actually create a good-natured and amiable personality out of him. Their connotative value leaves a positive comic effect, even if encompassing a whole scheme of potentially offensive political and religious critique. As a result, there is nothing 'degrading' in this succession of degrading attributes. Moreover, in spite of a syntactic incoherence due to the necessary rhyme, there is a consistent fusion of friendly humour with every element of abusive speech, rendering it not only socially inoffensive but aesthetically affable. Thus, Ibn Dāniyāl's words from the

---

[9]MS[1]:21a-22; MS[2]:8-8a; MS[3]:18-19. The exaggerateu attributes of praise and insult that culminate in the last phrase, labeling Wiṣāl the mocking prince, is strikingly paralleled by the carnivalesque imagery of mediaeval Europe. Peter Molan has already pointed this out in his analysis of the structure of this play, arguing that its overall organization recalls the *charivari* rituals. It therefore seems significant to stress a certain thread of continuity in the varied popular practicas of the Mediterranean regions, even though no conclusive causal connection should be advanced without more thorough research on the subject. See Molan, "*Charivari*," 5-7.

beginning of *Tayf al-khayāl* are hereby confirmed: "Everything is beautiful in its own way."[10]

Given that the communication among dramaturgic agents is mainly carried out through the combination of rhymed prose and verse, with or without music, the theatrical frame is never lost, even at moments when the immediacy of stage-audience communication becomes 'real' -- e.g., in the second play which is structured as a fair at which people gather as curious passers-by. In the performance text, a complete communication occurs with the help of adequate verbal and gestural references. These 'deictic pointers' enable the actualization of the play and usually assume the function of straightforward references as to how the action is to be carried out. In Ibn Dāniyāl's plays, however, the instructions regarding what kind of gestural and audial communication should accompany a given scene are also expressed in rhymed prose so that there is no interruption in the overall stylistic integrity of the written text: "A hunch appears, swooping down like a gray hawk, greets with a greeting of a newcomer, and stands silently with a bowed head;"[11] or "[The boy] went into convulsions and began to sing, then threw himself down and curled up, screaming *'yā dādatī, nanū, nanū, huwa nānatī.'* He then sniffed the genitals of Amīr Wiṣāl and started farting and

---

10 MS[1]:7a; MS[2]:3; MS[3]:6.

11 MS[1]:3; MS[2]:2; MS[3]:3.

coughing... ;"[12] or "An ugly creature came in, saying 'your former lad', snorting from his mouth as if whistling, and accompanying his whistling with braying...."[13]

Though the cohesiveness of the written/performance text in a complete theatrical communication is lost to us with the absence of staged plays, it is noteworthy that the written text itself maintains coherence between the direct speech and the signs ostended to the spectator. In Aristotelian terms, though mimetically intended, the author's instructions have a balanced diegetic function, as they contribute to the narrative flow of the written text.

2. Binary Correlations: Agential Names as Metaphoric Constructs

Of particular importance in the communicational scheme of Ibn Dāniyāl's plays is the attribution of metaphoric names to his dramaturgic agents. It has been pointed out that in the second play, ᶜAjīb wa Gharīb, almost all agential names appear as metaphoric constructs built directly around the types of represented trades: Ḥunaysh al-Ḥuwā (Snake Charmers' Little Snake), Maymūn al-Qarrād (lit. Monkey the Ape Trainer), Hilāl al-Munajjim (lit. Astrologer's Crescent), etc. Similarly, when

---

12MS[1]:64a; MS[2]:22a-23; MS[3]:50.

13MS[1]:143a; MS[2]:49a; MS[3]:114.

removed from the imaginative dramatic frame and placed back into the frame of the actual historic circumstance, most of the names of other Ibn Dāniyāl's *personae* reveal a number of allusions: In the first play, these are, for example, the names of Amīr Wiṣāl (lit. Prince of Sexual Union), Ṭayf al-Khayāl (the Spirit of Imagination -- the leitmotif of early Arabic poetry), Ḍabba bint Miftāḥ (lit. Latch Daughter of Key), Tāj Bābūj (lit. Crown of Slippers), Ṣurra Baᶜr (lit. Pile of Dung, also allusion to the poet Ṣarra Durra), etc. In the third play, the names of protagonists -- Mutayyam and al-Ḍāiᶜ Yutayyim -- polarly stand vis-à-vis each other. The other appearing *personae,* such as Abū Sahl (lit. Father of the Easy One), Baddāl (lit. Substitute), Da'ūd al-Qabbāḍ (lit. Da'ūd the Gripper), Jallād ᶜUmayra (lit. the one who skins his member, i.e. Masturbator), etc., are all associated with specific sexual practices and are therefore assumed to represent the men who undertake them.

Several groups of such non-individualistic entities can be discerned along different lines of demarcations: ethno-professional (e.g., Amīr Wiṣāl -- a Mamlūk *amīr,* Nātū -- a Sudanese slave boy; al-Tāj Bābūj -- a Coptic secretary, Ṣurra Baᶜr; -- an Arab court poet; Yaqṭinūs -- a Greek doctor; Ṣāniᶜa -- a Gypsy tattooing woman; Bayram -- a Turkish servant), vocational (e.g. trade exhibitors in the second play, ᶜAjīb the preacher, Umm Rashīd the go-between), societal (e.g. Gharīb, ᶜAjīb, different *personae* appearing as sybaritic guests at Mutayyam's party, ᶜAflaq), or gender (Umm Rashīd as a cunning

marriage broker, Ḍabba b. Miftāḥ as a typical victim of imbalance in sexual politics, ᶜAflaq as a bamboozled husband, Yutayyim as an accessible aesthetic ideal). These groupings are not rigidly separated and their occasional overlap reinforces the overall effect of such puns. Given that all three plays explicitly share the historical frame with Ibn Dāniyāl's own life, it appears worthwhile to reflect on Ibn Dāniyāl's articulation of that frame through such paronomastic appellation.

To begin with, all these types are built around the most conspicuous features that render them stereotypes in the mind of the audience. As such, they are defined through the frame of a collective social experience, and not through individualistic traits. Even when injected with a dose of individuality, this individuality is portrayed very grotesquely, and that not as a private, 'psychological' drama, but as a public affair (e.g. Amīr Wiṣāl's breaking away from the controlled eroticism of the underworld; Umm Rashīd's deception; Gharīb's trickeries; or Mutayyam's temporary independence from Yutayyim as his raison d'être). This is an interacting, as opposed to isolated, individuality. An individual never carries the action by her/himself and is not charged with privy knowledge inaccessible to either other agents or the audience. Nothing in Ibn Dāniyāl's plays is *bāṭin* and everything is *ẓāhir,* laid out in straightforward stage-stage and stage-audience dialogues. The ultimate goal of such a dramaturgic strategy is to achieve narrative immediacy whereby potential situational or individual

intricacies will be distilled through the collective consciousness. This leads to the collectivization of all experiences, not by means of a monolithic articulation that banalizes their intrinsic complexity, but rather via various modes of communication -- prose, verse, music, puns, jokes, etc., -- which highlight the modality of a particular situation or emotion.

The agential centrality in Ibn Dāniyāl's dramaturgy depends greatly on the intensity of stereotypical traits which these 'types' carry in actual life. The 'depth' of an agential image is thus not intrinsic but external. It does not come as a result of personal but socio-cultural processes, and Ibn Dāniyāl's emphasis on them within his dramaturgic world reflects his own participation in that collective self. He therefore does not stand as an outsider but as a living insider. The difference that he poses between himself as the articulator of the collective social experience and his audience is purely functional. Within that dynamic scheme of societal relations, the aesthetic and cognitive contribution of his plays is an attempt to turn the apparent discord between the currents of immutable tradition and those of change into reconciliatory relations. The focus of action thus moves from agents to concepts. In building a particular scheme of agential relations, Ibn Dāniyāl actually foregrounds them as main repositories of the collective ethos.

In the examination of the dynamics between Ibn Dāniyāl's agents and his dramaturgic discourse, it is noteworthy that Ibn Dāniyāl tends to structure his agents in binary correlations.[14] The main carriers of action in all three plays come in pairs, complementing each other in a dialectic interplay. Even though the function of other agents should by no means be underestimated, it seems that the skeletal function of the leading 'pair' supports much of the ideological axis. These pairs do not necessarily function in the protagonist/antagonist constructs, but they do tend to articulate their concerns through conceptually different frames. In the first play, the pair is Amīr Wiṣāl and Umm Rashīd; in the second, as the title itself foregrounds, Gharīb and ᶜAjīb; and in the third, again as the title suggests, Mutayyam and Yutayyim. Let us consider them all on their own premises.

Upon his appearance on the stage, Amīr Wiṣāl introduces himself with the following, *maqāma*- like speech:

> Greetings to those who are attending this
> gathering of mine and who are listening to
> my speech. Those who know me will enjoy
> my company, those who don't -- I shall
> introduce myself to them. I am the man of
> different traits (*abū al-khiṣāl*) known as
> Amīr Wiṣāl, the man with a club (*dabbūs*),

---

[14]This was also to be noted later in the Ottoman shadow play with Karagöz and Hacivat.

honor, and hammer.[15] I knock down walls, I
punch the devil. I bite better than a snake, I
carry more than a weigh bridge. I thrust
stronger than a ram, and stink worse than a
den. I steal better than sleep and am more
pederast than Abū Nuwās. I grew among
Dakūsh and Diqlāsh, and Qamūz and
Zamlakāsh. I enter and withdraw. I am a bag
of flaws and a bucket of sins. I am a torch
in the stoker's hand and a twinkle in the
pimp's eye. I am more twisted than a rope
and more piercing than an arrow. I am more
hungry than fire and more thirsty than
sand. I slash better than a knife and snort
better than a frog. I penetrate better than a
key and am coarser than an artichoke. I
shine better than a star and twist better
than a screw. I gulp more than a mouth and
kill better than poison. I've assaulted
demons and flayed dead bodies in their
graves. I've pushed through the crowds and
harassed everybody standing around. I untie
knots even if they are of palmstrands. I
entertain at night and gamble. I am a boxer
and a slanderer, a beater and a caviler, a
rebuker and a sneaker, a quarreler and a
menacer, a believer and a murderer. I've
been rubbed and stroked. I am a pimp and a
shoveler.[16] I dress well[17] and socialize, I
turn into a gentleman, I juggle, I dye my
hair, I limp, I dance, I report, and I tell
stories. So don't disregard my value, now
that I've disclosed my secrets to you.[18]

---

[15]Reading the last word as shākūsh, for sālūs or shālūs..

[16]Kārūk, probably from Turkish körek, shovel.

[17]Reading tahandamtu for Kahle's tahannadtu.

[18]MS[1]:12a-14; MS[2]:5-5a; MS[3]:10-11.

At the outset, he is a *jundī*, i.e. a man of the sword. He wears a *sharbūsh*, the head gear associated with Mamlūk soldiers. In his *Khiṭaṭ*, al-Maqrīzī informs us that a *sharbūsh* was ceremonially presented by the Sultan to an *amīr* promoted into the rank of horseman.[19] He carries a club (*dabbūs*)[20] and wears a bristling mustache. The physical stereotype, condensed in the most recognizable features of a soldier that can be portrayed on a leather figure, is thereupon complete. From then on, Amīr Wiṣāl stands as an 'ideological abstraction' associated with a socially defined image of a soldier within the concurrent historical frame. Even though it is kept in the background of the play's possible world, this frame is occasionally nurtured by other references: Wiṣāl mentions that he has grown up "among Dākūsh and Diqlāsh, and Qamūz and Zamlakāsh," manifestly people of non-Arab backgrounds.[21] His Coptic secretary, al-Tāj Bābūj, delivers a speech ridiculing Amīr Wiṣāl's courtly and financial affairs.[22] The court poet Ṣurra Baᶜr, in an unconcealed political ridicule, praises the Prince for turning "waste land into an earthly paradise governed by justice."[23] And, in accordance with al-Jāḥiẓ's specification of horsemanship as one of exalting Turkic

---

[19]Quoted in L. Mayer, *Al-malābis al-mamlūkiyya* , tr. by S. al-Shitī (Cairo: al-hay'a al-miṣriyya al-ᶜāmma li al-kitāb, 1951), 51.

[20]*Ibid.*, 84.

[21]MS[1]:13; MS[2]:5a; MS[3]:11.

[22]MS[1]:22-26; MS[2]:8-10; MS[3]:18-21.

[23]MS[1]:26; MS[2]:10a; MS[3]:24.

virtues,[24] Amīr Wiṣāl demonstrates an impressive knowledge of different breeds of horses.[25] All these references reinforce the popular image of a Mamlūk *amīr* and they cleverly permeate the entire play, complementing thus the genre's shortbacks in visual representations.

Certainly, a question can be asked as to the etymological unsuitability of Amīr Wiṣāl's name: Wiṣāl is a word in Arabic, and, as far as our knowledge goes, the great majority of the Mamlūks bore Turkish first names, even if they were not ethnically Turkish.[26] This can be explained by the fact that, except in the case of non-central agents -- e.g. the Greek doctor Yaqṭīnūs in the first play or the Sudanese boy Nātū in the second or Bayram in the third -- the names of Ibn Dāniyāl's agents are most frequently puns in Arabic, construed for an Arabic-speaking audience. In the name Amīr Wiṣāl, conspicuous is the fusion of political and erotic motifs within the frame of grotesque imagery. The theme of 'sexual union' is omnipresent in the play, depicting sex as free, unavoidable, and procreative. In line with such a dogma-free vision of hedonistic lifestyle, the name of Amīr Wiṣāl becomes an ambivalent, yet morally cohesive metaphor, intended to remove the aura of immaculate ethics from

---

[24]Quoted in Haarmann, "Arabic in Speech, Turkish in Lineage," 82.

[25]MS[1]:48a-51; MS[2]:18-21; MS[3]:38-41.

[26]Ayalon, "The Muslim City and the Mamlūk Military Aristocracy," *Studies on the Mamlūks of Egypt,* 322.

political authority. However, as the end of the play brings no defiance but compliance, it seems that the play's deliberation is not to undermine political authority by associating it with immorality, but to bring it down to the level of popular imagery in which sexuality occupies an organic role.

As a representative of the ruling regime, Amīr Wiṣāl attempts to assert his power in the domain of personal relationships. On the one hand, he acknowledges the reigning power and refrains from challenging it. Through repentance and a quick marriage settlement, he intends to avoid political repercussions and demonstrate his common-sense. Taking a short-cut to morality is the privilege of a fearsome *jundī*. His scandalous approach to gender-relations, his sordid temperament, his perpetual need to control, and his libertine approach to sexuality are grotesquely exaggerated, creating out of Amīr Wiṣāl an 'individual'. As the play progresses, however, it becomes increasingly apparent that this 'individual' and his ethos will be challenged.

Indeed, the contending ethos which highlights the heterogeneity of socio-historical context comes through the character of Umm Rashīd. Among all other agents in the play, she is the one who directly challenges Amīr Wiṣāl's need to balance out his power and idiosyncrasies. In certain respects, her role is a vague feminist manifesto directed not against immoral practices of authoritative men, but against their non-recognition of territorial control. Her territory is eroticism, whereas Amīr

Wiṣāl's is that of politics. The institution that she personifies --
that of go-betweens -- requires observance of tacitly established
codes of behavior. Eroticism, then, is not a part of individualistic
ethos as Amīr Wiṣāl assumes, but a socially elaborated network
of traits. In line with that, the scope of Umm Rashīd's activity of
a procuress is a source of pride, as she is the one who distinctly
preserves the order in the erotic underworld. But, it is precisely
his theoretical acknowledgment yet practical rejection of Umm
Rashīd's absolute control within that space that leads Amīr Wiṣāl
to punishment. She, after all, is 'the one who follows the right
way' --*umm rashīd* :

> "Summon Umm Rashīd, the marriage agent,
> even though she is one who goes out by
> night into the bush. But she knows every
> honourable woman and every adulteress and
> every beauty in Miṣr and al-Qāhira. For she
> lets them go out from the baths, disguised
> in servant's clothes, and guarantees the
> prostitutes for whom the police are looking
> in secret places, providing them with
> clothes and jewelry without fee.... She also
> knows how to deal in a friendly way with
> the hearts of lovers, and she sells the
> enjoyment of love only on the condition of
> trial. She does not break her promise, she
> does not haggle over a price. She does not
> visit a drinking bout in order to appropriate
> what drips down from the candles, nor does
> she ransack the clothes of the guests for
> money. And she does not take the fragrant
> flowers around the bottles, pretending it is
> to decorate the clothes of the sinning
> women. And she do   not filch the pieces
> of meat from the plates, nor does she pour
> together what has cleared from the dregs
> of the wine. She does not exchange old

slippers for new ones, and she does not criticize the clothes of customers, as a housewife would do. Mostly she goes round the houses of the women of rank and sells balls of material, raw and unbleached, and all kinds of spices and incense. She sells on credit and makes appointments for Thursdays and Mondays. And she does not haggle over price. And she keeps her appointments even if it is the Night of Fate (*laylat al-qadr*). So it is, and her pocket is never empty of chewing-gum and mirrors and rouge and powder and Maghribine nutmeg and powder for colouring the eyebrows and a lime preparation for the armpits and perfumed wool, and skin cream and "Beauty of Joseph" and pomade and Barmakide scent and hair-dyes and violet scent. The devil kisses the ground before her daily, and he alone wakes from her slumbers."[27]

Umm Rashīd's relationship with Amīr Wiṣāl proves to be complex. For a brief while, it turns not to be solely profit-based, but motivated by a friend-in-need situation. Namely, after hearing the name of Amīr Wiṣāl, Umm Rashīd gives the relationship a touch of nostalgic intimacy: she recollects the distant past when she observed little Wiṣāl as a stubborn and dirty boy, and bitterly adds that he managed to get seduced even by her own husband. However, the personalization of the relationship actually deepens the friction between the two, as

---

[27]Based on the translation by Kahle in "The Arabic Shadow Play in Egypt," 32 - 3. For an interesting study on the character of Umm Rashīd, see Maria Kotzamanidou, "The Spanish and Arabic Characterization of the Go-Between in the Light of Popular Performance," *Hispanic Review* 48.1 (1980), 91-109.

Umm Rashīd's flashbacks of memory actually portray Amīr Wiṣāl as a perpetual intruder into her affairs. Since she is now given the upper hand, the ground for her assertion of superiority over Amīr Wiṣāl is finally prepared and the conflict of interests focuses on the present dependence of Amīr Wiṣāl on her profession and good will.

Expectedly, a trap for Amīr Wiṣāl is set and he irremediably falls into it. His outrage -- "Fetch [Umm Rashīd] and also find her husband *shaykh* ᶜAflaq! I shall surely beat them both even if they hang me for it!"[28] -- is overshadowed by his inability to take matters into his own hands, which proves to be the culprit for change. Umm Rashīd's abrupt death that follows this trickery proves to be her triumph, because it results in the final repentance of Amīr Wiṣāl. She, therefore, is not to be perceived in isolated terms as an individual condemned by death for her malice, because that would equate the ethos of the underworld with defeat. On the contrary: her role develops through the tripartite cycle of death-birth-death whose continuum is maintained after she passes over the Mantle to her disciple Umm Ṭūghān and thus confirms the supremacy of collective over individual eroticism. Everything falls into a closed circle as the roles of Amīr Wiṣāl and Umm Rashīd achieve the common goal of reconciliation of two collective bodies: the one being that of the erotic underworld which Umm Rashīd jealously guards, and the

---

28MS[1]:66; MS[2]:23a; MS[3]:51.

other that of political authority which abortively tries to endanger it.

A similar binary structure of agential relations is also found in the second play. As the title itself suggests, two disparate layers of collective consciousness are represented through the punning names of Gharīb and ᶜAjīb al-Dīn *al-wāᶜiz*, the former of which personifies the underworld and the latter the religious discourse. The common people's allegiances stay in between, revolving around both layers, much in the same way as the common people congregate around the stalls of exhibitors throughout the play. Though linear, the arrangement of the play is such that its beginning and end eventually join, enclosing the folk spirit in a reconciliatory fusion of a ludic frame.

Gharīb's name foregrounds social alienation. Literally meaning "strange, quaint, foreign, etc.," this name draws attention to the undefined social status of its bearer and his kinsfolk. Gharīb is one of Banū Sāsān -- Sons of Sāsān, -- a collective reference to the various groups of people who made up the mediaeval Islamic underworld:

> The underworld classes of which we have
> information include the fully criminal
> ones, like skillful thieves and burglars,
> footpads and brigands, and also those in the
> no-man's land between criminality and
> conventional behaviour, like entertainers
> and mountebanks of diverse types, beggars
> of differing degrees of ingenuity, quack

doctors, dentists and herbalists, and so forth.[29]

Gharīb's alienation is a result of his ideological standpoint, rooted in somewhat accommodating yet hostile political milieux which created out of Banū Sāsān perpetual wanderers: "The whole world is ours, and whatever is in it, the lands of Islam and unbelief alike."[30] Gharīb reveals the secrets of sly and unconventional practices that make up his existence during his endless journeys through Egypt, Syria, and Iraq. He familiarizes us with what it means to be one of Banū Sāsān: sleeping outdoors by the fire with his head laid on the *kashkūl* (bowl) instead of a pillow; visiting prostitutes, indulging in various sexual practices, making a living by faking knowledge of religion, philosophy, chemistry, medicine, and herbalism, training animals for fights, and undertaking many other cryptic practices "during numerous travels around the revolving heavens so as to find a homeland and fulfill wishes."[31] Ideologically, as Gharīb himself confesses, his attitude has been prompted by the loss of faith in people:

> When there was nobody left whose generosity could be desired and no one whose gain would be hoped for, we started to trick you having no need for you, we surrendered ourselves to leisure and idleness, became unique in manipulation

---

[29] Bosworth, *The Mediaeval Islamic Underworld*, ix.

[30] Abū Dulaf, as quoted in *ibid.*

[31] MS[1]:90; MS[2]:31; MS[3]:69-70.

and dispersed in many bands. No danger and
no institution could divert us...[32]

GharTb thus openly declares war on institutionalized modes
of existence and seeks refuge in trickery, yet depending in effect
on the existence of these institutions. Without their imposition
of pallid but overriding rules there would be no epistemic
incongruence. Banū Sāsān, exploiting the gaps that such detached
institutions create in the plebeian consciousness, oscillate
between outward rejections and existential needs. The
articulation of this standpoint comes not with GharTb but as a
roundabout communiqué in the speech of his partner, cAjTb al-DTn
the preacher, and is then exemplified through episodic models.
GharTb thus posits himself as both the vehicle and the tenor of
the narrative.

In contrast to GharTb, preacher cAjTb al-DTn -- the wonder
of religion -- is a representative of institutionalized religion.
Though a popular preacher and thus somewhat closer to the
populace than to the high levels of religious authority, cAjTb al-
DTn is a socio-political antipode to GharTb. Yet, his speech greatly
cushions their institutionalized disparities and reveals a common
strife for a deeper ideological understanding. As a bearer of the
official religious ideology he opens venues for the accommodation
of Banū Sāsān's microcosm without endangering the equanimity of
the authoritative macrocosm that he stands for. A theological

---

32MS[1]:90a-91; MS[2]:31-31a; MS[3]:71.

justification of Banū Sāsān's practices follows, and so does the need to bring closer together the 'plebeian' and the 'courtly' systems of values:

> May God have mercy on the one who seeks to heal his sorrows with the beauty of his character that embellishes him, and transforms his grief with something that amuses him. Wherever there is amusement melancholy is driven away... . Gaiety is beautiful if it is not excessive, so give yourselves to hope and be engaged in this matter. You are the troops of strangers and others among Banū Sāsān. Be kind in asking and beg for abundance. Take advantage of union because separation will happen, and get united with humankind before what must happen happens.... Travel through the countryside and put up tricks for people, for strangers evoke pity, and man moves about while his livelihood is determined for him. You should know, may God be with you, that small coins (*fils*) attract gold coins.... Pretend to be blind while seeing, and deaf while hearing. Pretend to be lame because a lame person wins priority. Wear your worn out leather-gowns and drink some fig juice so that your faces may turn yellow and your stomachs inflate. Find your rows in the mosques and harass the dumb by begging in the streets. Let rags be your most precious garment and the collection of goods your greatest worry. Go around with both of them and feel safe from bankruptcy and debt. The health of the eye is in the human being, and the health of the human being is in the eye."[33]

---

[33]MS[1]:95a-97; MS[2]:32a-33a; MS[3]:74-76.

In many respects, the complementary functions of the two members of society are projected in their being "something different and extraordinary" -- *cajīb* and *gharīb* -- to the mind of the common people. In blending the metaphoric themes of societal outcasts and religious guardians, the happy ending is imminent, particularly when this blending evolves through a humorous frame of fictional compositions.

In the third set of binary relations, the thematic focus revolves around the concept of profane love. Al-Mutayyam -- the enthralled one -- and his counterpart Yutayyim -- the enthralling one, personify dialogic movements in the poetic amatory trends, each standing for a different current. Yet, the prologue of the play establishes a direct link with the here-and-now, historicizing the 'transcendental' poetic discourse: "This is a play entitled 'The Enthralled One and the Enthralling Wretch,' speaking partly of the condition of lovers, partly of dalliance that is a certain kind of bewitchment, partly of playing games, and partly of wondrous and odd buffoonery that is not disgraceful."[34]

Two kinds of erotic discourse need to be distinguished here: one pertaining to the poetic tradition, and the other to religious writings. This epistemological distinction seems relevant because the play progresses through two phases: it first revolves around poetic discourse and only later, after reaching its peak, it

---

[34]MS[1]:138a; MS[2]:48; MS[3]:110.

antithetically enters the sphere of religious discourse. Unlike the former kind of erotic discourse which dealt primarily with setting up amatory trends for poetic experiences, the latter, as Fatna Sabbah succinctly remarks,

> grew out of desire of the guardians of religious conduct, the theologians and legal experts, to answer the question that at some time or other the Muslim believer is led to ask: How should one make love when one is a Muslim? What are the rules that regulate what is permitted and what is forbidden in the act of copulation? The erotic discourse is religious because it is an attempt by the sheikhs, imams, and qadis -- the religious authorities vested with the responsibility for guiding and channeling the acts of the believer -- to clarify for him the conduct to adopt toward one of the most mysterious areas of creation: sexual desire.[35]

While it will be important to reflect on the latter kind of erotic discourse in the discussion on the theme of sexuality in all three plays, the agential Mutayyam/Yutayyim metaphoric construct springs primarily from the poetic amatory trends of pre-Islamic *ghazal* and *cudhrī* poetry. Let us briefly review their respective features.

In the pre-Islamic *qaṣīda* love is expressed both through sensual and emotional associations. The beloved's beauty is

---

[35]Fatna A. Sabbah [pseudo-name for Fatima Mernissi], *Woman in the Muslim Unconscious* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1984), 23.

praised and her spirit is highly esteemed. To love a woman in a complete union of body and soul means a true fulfillment of love. Their separation is inadmissible because it presupposes giving superiority to one aspect of the human being over the other. The poet who dedicates amatory verses to his beloved refers to her as an equal, with no intention of humiliating, disgracing, or exposing her in his description of their intimate life. According to one author, such an attribute is to a great extent caused by the position that woman enjoys in heathen Arab society "as mother, sister, daughter, wife, sweetheart, poetess, warrior, concubine, slave, and entertainer."[36] In short,

> we must not look, in pre-Islamic Gazal, for poetry of heavenly love, of mystical ecstasy, of conjugal love, or any other social sublimation. The love that this poetry sings and expresses is very simple -- and perhaps the most genuine -- it is purely and simply the feeling of poets when they are in love. Therefore, their Ghazal is not a poetry of meditation or transcendence but a poetry of great feeling, in which they express utter love, utter happiness, and utter grief, in a direct and uncomprising way; they allow of no half-measures. They are more keen on expressing themselves freely, fully and frankly than on pleasing their listeners and admirers.[37]

---

[36]H.S. Hussein, "The Koran and Courtly Love: A Study of the Koran and Its Influence on the Devlopment of Divine and Courtly Love," (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Southern California, 1971), 52.

[37]A. Kinany, *The Development of Gazal in Arabic Literature* (Damascus: Syrian University Press, 1950), 113.

A qualitatively different concept of love appears in *cudhrī* poetry. Here, love came to be a synonym for despair, loyalty, passion, and self-sacrifice. Deriving its name from the tribe of cUdhra, known for its numerous 'martyrs of love,' this trend flourished in the 7th century in Hijaz. One of the main features of *cudhrī* poetry is that it represents a reflection of individual experiences, although each poet is guided by the same amatory pattern. Nevertheless, this pattern should not be considered as an offspring of fixed literary categories and conventions, although some scholars view it as a "religious phenomenon, decreed by God."[38] The joy of love is achieved through the pain of a sickly hope that the union with the beloved will be achieved after death, free from any external obstacle. Death is thus seen as salvation, highlighted by the words ascribed to the Prophet: "He who loves, and controls himsel' and so dies, the same is a martyr."[39] Here we encounter the mystical dimension of this amatory concept, which consequently characterizes *cudhrī* poetry as an ambivalence between profane and sacred love. Kinany finds in it a poetic attempt to reconcile erotic and religious discourses, viewing it as "a compromise between [poets'] human instincts and their puritanical religion; they understood it as a

.

---

[38]Hussein, "The Koran and The Courtly Love," 94.

[39]Ibn Hazm, *The Ring of the Dove,* trans. A. J. Arberry (London: Luzac & Company, Ltd., 1953), 220.

love which could reach the divine without abandoning the human, and might become spiritual while remaining also carnal."[40]

Ibn Dāniyāl's heroes engage in an amatory dialogue which carefully intersects both these trends. Mutayyam, the enthralled party, introduces himself through a typical *cudhrī* imagery, occasionally permeating it with pre-Islamic *ghazal* style:

> Oh people of passion, gather, plead and implore.
> Knock at the door of response with prayers and listen,
> die and live in longing, burst open and be torn apart,
> take the story of the Enthralled One about the one who keeps him captive, or leave it.
> Lover is the one whose sky of tears does not dry up.
> Nothing is left of him but bones that clatter from sickness.
> There is a ravine on his eyelids from which his tears gush forth.
> Oh you who blame me, there is no place in my heart for blame.
> I have no consolation, and no expectation to unite with my love.
> The enthralled one is the one who, even if he appeases his thirst, will not sleep peacefully.[41]

The progression of the play, however, brings a change of horizons. As Mutayyam grows impatient with the constraints of

---

[40]Kinany, *Gazal*, 255.

[41]MS[1]:110-111; MS[2]:48; MS[3]:139-139a.

his 'poetic' self, he plots an earthbound breakaway from it. The emotional surrender to unrequited passion in which he metaphorically portrays himself as being 'slain with no knife', gradually gravitates towards a carefully choreographed sensual fulfillment of this passion. The movement from the realm of *agape* to the realm of *eros* is comically developed through the polarized agential structure.

Yutayyim, the object of Mutayyam's passion, stands at the opposite pole. His formidable physical beauty, exposed in all its distinctiveness during 'the bathroom scene', invokes an absolute emotional reaction, bringing Mutayyam to existence. In other words, Mutayyam is a consequence. If there were no Yutayyim, Mutayyam would not be. This causal relationship becomes significantly polarized as their meanings begin to expand. Mutayyam appears as metaphor for 'emotions.' His existence is ruled by his eager desire. Yutayyim, on the other hand, signifies 'reason.' His presence in the first part of the play is more tacit than palpable. We know of him inferentially, after Mutayyam's appearance on the stage. Gradually, the knowledge of him, though still second-hand (mainly via Mutayyam but also via Bayram), becomes significantly particularized: we learn about his physical beauty through Mutayyam's admirable elaborations, we learn of his servant's influence on him, we learn of his basic affability as he tries to help Mutayyam get up after 'the fall' (the underlying metaphor of this fall is noteworthy), and we learn of his fondness of games. As the knowledge of Yutayyim becomes more particular,

Mutayyam's passion grows more corporeal. It solicits recognition and reciprocation, breaking away from the impotent causal dependence on Yutayyim. This shift in the relation between the two men is masterfully achieved in a poetic dialogue which, on the one hand, questions the polarity between '(platonic) love' *vs.* 'lust', and on the other, 'reason' *vs.* 'emotions'. The dialogue, conducted in *dū-bayt,* runs as follows[42]:

Mutayyam: Oh Crescent of the night that encompasses
beauty and coquetry,
Because of you I turned into a ghost for the
eye.
Feel pity and let whatever needs to be said
be said,
And be kind: maybe the one stricken with
passion will reach salvation.

Yutayyim: I swear by the one who created my eyelids
as a [lover's] trap,
And bestowed them on me so uniquely:
Let the one who sailed in the sea of my
love drown,
No master is merciful to the slave who
sheds tears.

Mutayyam: You are called Enthralling (*yutayyim*) and
your aloofness is painful.
Nothing is as orderly as the pearls of your
teeth.
In your closeness and aloofness there are
heaven and hell,
Let me forever be enthralled by love for
you.

Yutayyim: Love has signs and lust distinctions,

42MS[1]:153-155; MS[2]:52a-53; MS[3]:122-123.

> Even if due to your suffering you see it as
> destruction.
> Be patient towards your lover who rejects
> you unfairly and without a limit,
> For were it not for separation no union
> would be pleasant.

Mutayyam: I became a ghost due to torment and have
no visitors,
I cry with sorrow and you pay no visits,
My instincts are hungry and my eyes all
wet,
All this, even though we are enclosed
together.

Yutayyim: Nobody like me would be cut off in this
matter.
If the lover is stubborn he may be deterred.
The greedy has no use of greed --
Nothing benefits in love except deprivation.

Mutayyam: I have nothing but my cock Abū al-ᶜArf
Ṣabbāḥ
who used to get among other cocks to peck
and crow,
He surrendered to them his neck and his
wing,
Take him, and you won't be blamed for it.

As the tension in the dialogue of the two lovers progresses
through the articulation of opposing conceptions of love, a turning
point is reached in the final stanza. Throughout the dialogue, the
two distinct perceptions of love remain incompatible: Mutayyam's
unquenchable emotions and Yutayyim's rationalization of
abstinence. In the latter's view, power and eroticism become
intertwined: surrender to emotions deserves punishment. In the
former's view, rationalization equals death sente ce. The final
stanza, however, brings a comic demystification of the dialogue.

The whole imagery is uncrowned through a literal and metaphoric banalization when Mutayyam, in an illustrative sexual reference, describes the pathetic condition of his rooster. In a 'grotesque turnover', reason bends before emotion: Yutayyim's attention is drawn to his own passion -- cock-fights. This turnover is carried out on two descending routes: one, from spiritual abstraction of love to its carnal fulfillment, and the other, from an ahistorical to a clearly historical perception of erotic discourse.

The 'contextualization' of the amatory dialogue continues in the second part of the play through a further earthbound plunge. Everything acquires a playful tone, and as the role of Yutayyim becomes marginalized in favor of Mutayyam's final ideological, if not athletic victory (his bull loses to Yutayyim's), the imagery becomes increasingly drawn towards the most carnal and lustful aspects of love. The burlesque reflection on poetic amatory trends is replaced by a challenge to the prolific and detailed sanctification of sexuality by the religious discourse.

3.Thematic Concerns

Ibn Dāniyāl's dramaturgy reflects a great awareness of socio-historical processes whose compulsions are vigorously filtered by the plebeian spirit. At the outward layer, his plays are built around petty plebeian concerns and their quotidian practices, whereas in fact, the true focus of Ibn Dāniyāl's

interest penetrates deep into the problem of inter-cultural relations within the immediate historical context. Ibn Dāniyāl writes about the common people but targets a much wider audience. He writes through familiar themes, but aims at the overarching problem of conflicting currents of immutability and alterity. The locus of action revolves around the immediate surroundings of mainly unprivileged segments of society, roughly defining the thematic focus.

As has been discussed, all plays share the same chronotope. Within that familiar topography and time reference, Ibn Dāniyāl manages to unfold a multiplicity of dynamic relations while maintaining his agential structures within simple constructs. That outward 'shallowness' which may have prevented him from developing three-dimensional characters is cushioned by his expanding of the inner radius of his possible worlds. In order to disclose different aspects of the shared socio-cultural experience, Ibn Dāniyāl fits an extraordinary number of *personae* in the imagined space of his possible worlds (e.g. in the second play alone there are 27 different sub-types of people) Within that myriad of different people, the sense of vertical development that would involve 'privatization' of space becomes redundant, even inappropriate.

Given this common ideological axis in all three plays, it is not surprising that thematic concerns are of limited scope. Though from the outset one does not get the impression of thematic narrowness, all three plays can be decomposed into

three closely related concerns: eroticism, morality, and authority. Though they intersect in each play to a varying degree, their emphasis depends on what blending of interests Ibn Dāniyāl chooses to present.

The three themes revolve around the religious and political repercussions of what has generally been deemed 'immoral practices.' On the one hand, 'immoral practices' are related to sexuality, and on the other, to political/social outcasts.

In terms of Ibn Dāniyāl's treatment of sexuality, conspicuous is his reductionism of love themes to *erotica* and *exotica*, hyperbolic references to sexual (im)potency, and frequent sexual puns. Even where 'higher' sentiments are involved -- e.g. Mutayyam's almost spiritual infatuation with Yutayyim, -- the ultimate goal of intimate relationships is bodily satisfaction. This exaggerated insistence on the physical aspects of love both through heterosexual and deviationist practices indirectly targets the religious discourse which denies the spontaneity of this dimension in human relations. The principles of sexual morality, derived primarily from the *ḥadīth* and *akhbār* literature and then elaborated by the religious and intellectual élite, oscillated between strong prudence and relative flexibility. Abū Ḥayyan al-Tāwḥīdī, for example, declared that "the pleasure of life is animal pleasure,"[43] al-Gahzālī stressed the importance

---

[43]Abū Ḥayyan al-Tawḥīdī, *Muqābasāt*, 62nd *muqābasa*, (Baghdad: n.p., 1970), 255; quoted in F. Rozenthal, "Fiction and Reality: Sources for the Role of Sex in

of marriage to control sexual practices,[44] while al-Jāḥiẓ argued in favor of sexual liberty and justified the usage of sexually charged phraseology.[45] On the other hand, different legal schools adopted different attitudes towards certain sexual practices. For example, the Mālikites forbade masturbation, while the Ḥanbalite and some Ḥanafīs permitted it as a way to ease desire.[46] Similarly, sodomy is condemned by the Qur'ān (27:54), but there is no clear specification of punishment for it.[47]

There seems to be no doubt that Ibn Dāniyāl is aware of the gaps in the official attitudes towards sexual mores. He seems to hold the opinion that no discourse can regulate sexuality, if for no reason than the simple problem of implementation. It is then not a matter of whether 'immoral' sexual practices are performed, but in what way they are exonerated in the light of official ideology. The repentance to which all Ibn Dāniyāl's heroes rush at critical moments in their lives thus appears as pure lip-service

---

Medieval Muslim Society," *Society and the Sexes in Medieval Islam* , ed. A. L. al-Sayyid Marsot (Malibu: Undena Publications, 1979), 9.

[44]Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' ᶜulūm al-dīn* (Cairo: n.p., 1933), 2:22; quoted in J. A. Bellamy, "Sex and Society in Islamic Popular Literature," *Society and the Sexes,* 33.

[45]See C. Pellat, *The Life and Works of Jāḥiẓ* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), 270-1.

[46]Bellamy, "Sex and Society," 35.

[47]As B. W. Dunne argues, the failure of the Qur'ān to specify a punishment for homosexuality left space for bargaining, to the point that some religious authorities allowed sexual intercourse with non-Muslim males, indirectly authorizing homosexuality with slaves. See his "Homosexuality in the Middle East: An Agenda for Historical Research," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 12: 3 (1990), 55-82.

to the institutionalized control over body, inspired mainly by fear. Moreover, this hasty repentance creates a deep ideological split between the religious élite and the plebs, as it burdens the former with eschatological and the latter with scatological matters. Before repenting so as to secure a place in Paradise, the plebs will collectively defend the perpetuation of libertine sexual practices because, in Bakhtin's words, "they bear the mark of non-official freedom ... and carry the images of the material bodily lower stratum; they debase, destroy, regenerate, and renew simultaneously. They are blessing and humiliating at the same time."[48]

This is not to say that Ibn Dāniyāl's heroes do not have a sense of piety. On the contrary: they all express their devotion to God through a variety of ways, they frequently employ religious imagery, and they strive for an unbroken continuity between their ethos and God's omnipotence. What they reject is viewing any human condition, including 'free love', as centralized or absolute.

Ibn Dāniyāl's characters articulate their libertine longings as an existential need denied by the political regime. The nostalgic recollection of the 'good old days' (ayna tilka al-ayyām...?) is repeated on several occasions with an obvious reference to the life prior to Baybars's 'prohibition' law.[49]

---

[48]Bakhtin, Rabelais, 150.

[49]Ibn Iyās, Badā'i' al-zuhūr, 1:326-7.

Excessive drinking, adultery, deviationist sexual practices like sodomy, masturbation, necrophilia, coprophilia, and bestiality are all part of the heroes' experiences. At one moment Amīr Wiṣāl admits that he has copulated with every living thing that walks on the face of the earth, save scorpions and wasps.[50] In the second play, Gharīb also admits to adultery and frequent visits to brothels,[51] while Mutayyam generously hosts to his party all extremes of sexual deviationism.[52]

Though the first part of the third play promises a different treatment of the love theme, this proves to be only deceptively so. Introduced through Platonic articulations of sentiments, Mutayyam's 'love' consistently gravitates towards a sensual experience. His libertine homosexual past is forecasted from the start as he reveals that the object of his passion is of the same sex, and is further stressed through the appearance of his former lover. However, in this first part of the play homosexuality is portrayed in a very benevolent way, without burlesque imagery that would render it morally culpable. Ibn Dāniyāl manipulates the psychological makeup of the common people and manages to create an empathic reaction in them by exposing the sincerity of

---

[50] "Niktu mā kāna fīhi aysaru rūhin dhā hayātin yedubbu fawqa t-turābi lam yafutnī minhu siwā caqrabin dabba wa zunbūri ghaydatin lassābi." MS [1]:59a; MS[2]:21a; MS[3]:46.

[51] MS[1]:88-89; MS[2]:31-32; MS[3]:68-70.

[52] MS[1]:171a ff.; MS[2]:57a ff.; MS[3]:134 ff.

Mutayyam's emotions. After all, vulnerability, anguish, and devotion inspire sympathy. (A similar collectivization of psychological processes is also found in the second play, when cAjīb urges Banū Sāsān to capitalize on the common people's compassion for the helpless). It is only after the grotesque turnover in the play (i.e. the animal fights) that homosexuality becomes strongly associated with immorality through a candid personification of deviationist practices in Mutayyam's guests. Once again, Ibn Dāniyāl humorously exposes the ambivalence of an ideological concept by creating two frames: the folk ethos and the religious discourse. In Koestler's terms, what is encountered here is an intersection of two self-consistent but habitually incompatible frames of reference which grant humour a cognitive dimension.[53]

When linked to the issue of authority, the morality theme explores the collective self mainly in the light of political power. Throughout the plays the fear of punishment is the propelling motive for *ahl al-khalācā* to conform to authority's demands. This is less prominent in the third play because Mutayyam's hasty repentance is not assumed by the dramatic past, but is abruptly instigated by a sudden appearance of the Angel of Death at the end of the play. In the other two plays, on the other hand, a split in the dramatic 'past' and its 'present' exposes the theme of morality through a stronger association with the political regime.

---

[53]See A. Koestler's *The Act of Creation* (London: Hutchinson, 1964), 70.

In the first play, for example, the dramatic 'past tense' relates morality to the theme of eroticism. The dramatic 'present tense', on the other hand, explores it in relation to authority. The former thus becomes the background of the entire narrative as the heroes admit to the 'immorality' of their lifestyle chronologically prior to the ostended here-and-now. Satan is hailed as a member of the community and its anthropomorphic deity: "In wine there is a relief from sorrows, if it were not for the lightness of the Scale, the sharpness of punishment, and being put together with the Christians and the Jews. There is obedience of Satan and disobedience of the Sultan."[54] However, now even Satan has to leave. The sexual practices that are part of every character's past are no longer acceptable. The theme of eroticism is thus developed retrospectively, as a nostalgic reference to the 'good old days' before Baybars's 'undemocratic' legislations. As the fear of punishment overshadows the libertine lifestyle, a practical need for ethical correctness becomes central: on the higher level, it raises the issue of the obedience of the State as a legislating force, and on the lower, Amīr Wiṣāl's uncanny attempt to breech the rules of the underworld, for which he is ultimately punished.

In the second play, morality and authority are also closely intertwined, but in an uninterrupted temporal continuum. Gharīb has been a social outcast, and intends to remain as such. His

___

54MS[1]:7a; MS[2]:3a; MS[3]:6.

reference to the background events is affirmative as he does not doubt their continuity. The dilemma that confronts him relates to his socially undefined status and his ethics in dealing with the common people (this is automatically projected on all Banū Sāsān). The question of morality thus inspires ambivalence, as there is no clear official attitude towards these groups of social outcasts: on the one hand, Gharīb informs us that no regulation can divert Banū Sāsān from their practices, and on the other, he cherishes the unconstrained freedom of movement.

The ethical dilemma which Gharīb communicates to the audience by pairing up with the preacher ᶜAjīb al-Dīn is inspired by his trickeries of the common folk. Is fraud morally reprehensible? While on the one hand Banū Sāsān openly act against the state's political interests, their conscience leads them to question their self-serving morality when tricking the common folk. ᶜAjīb's speech offers reassurances. As a representative of institutionalized religion, ᶜAjīb uses eloquence and his knowledge of *hadīth* so as to sanction the fraudulent practices of Banū Sāsān through religious tenets. He encourages Banū Sāsān to cheat, advises them on the most subtle methods of fraud, and teaches them how to capitalize on the folk's naïveté. This exaggerated accommodation of Banū Sāsān within the religious scheme on the one hand and ᶜAjīb's unconcealed self-interests (i.e. receiving money at the end of the *khuṭba*) on the other, fail to completely convince even Gharīb. Furthermore, Gharīb collectivizes his experience through 27 exhibitors who

prove that his lifestyle is not isolated but is fragmentarily present throughout the marketplace. Gharīb thus externalizes himself, foregrounding a dialectical relationship between folk beliefs and the popular, semi-official trades.

Though maintaining his subversive love of freedom, Gharīb further demonstrates Banū Sāsān's essential morality and goodness:

> By God, if it were not for the fear of
> boredom,
> I would say, do not interrupt this parlance.
> There are no unusual images in it.
> But my brothers are so full of virtues
> and they tried to expose the truth of this
> condition.
> They enjoined me regarding this matter
> and I responded to them with obedience,
> asking forgiveness from my sublime Lord.
> Martyrdom is thus attributed to me and to
> that *shaykh* Dāniyāl.[55]

---

[55]MS¹:137-137a; MS²:47a; MS³:109 (In the last two MSS., there is *khayāl* instead of *ḥāl* in the first *bayt* of the third verse, but that meaning seems less relevant).

CONCLUSION

Thanks to a number of recent studies on Ibn Dāniyāl, there has been a considerable increase in scholarly awareness of both this playwright and the mediaeval shadow theatre. The emphasis in these studies has revolved mainly around the philological examination of Ibn Dāniyāl's work with the intention of elucidating the linguistic obscurity of Mamlūk Cairo's argot. The result of such a scholarly orientation has been twofold: at a more general level, attention has been drawn to the existence of dramatic art in mediaeval Islam and fragmentary information on it in various mediaeval sources. In more particular terms, large portions of Ibn Dāniyāl's trilogy *Kitāb Ṭayf al-khayāl* have been edited, and some excerpts translated. However, it was only in 1992 that the first complete *édition critique* of this trilogy was presented to the wider audience. Earlier, even when there were attempts to understand Ibn Dāniyāl's craft, prudence had restrained scholars from including 'obscene' passages in their editions. Censorship had thus crippled one of Ibn Dāniyāl's powerful artistic effects, resulting in a deficient and one-sided perception of his work.

Notwithstanding the achievements of modern scholarship on the subject, there has been no sustained effort to come to terms with the shadow play and Ibn Dāniyāl's work through a more comprehensive methodological and conceptual framework. In a

way, the failure of mediaeval sources to articulate the specific nature of the shadow play tradition and the absence of other extant plays had for long reduced the evaluation of both this tradition and Ibn Dāniyāl to abortive attempts of mediaeval Muslim societies to incorporate dramatic art into their ethos. While it seems incorrect to make generalizations about the development of dramatic art in Islam without a more detailed consideration of the references to the shadow play, it appears equally misleading to treat Ibn Dāniyāl's plays as just another example unworthy of scholarly attention.

Aimed to counter the prevailing scholarly neglect of this subject-matter, this thesis has attempted to systematize the knowledge of the shadow play in the intellectual history of mediaeval Islam and analyze certain features of Ibn Dāniyāl's dramaturgy. The focus of discussion has thus been moved from the philological concerns and a rudimentary specification of the mediaeval shadow play to the treatment of the shadow play as a dynamic and cohesive cultural construct.

The analysis began with a distinction between two frames of perception of the shadow play in mediaeval writings: one as allegory and the other as theatre. Given the chronological priority of the theatrical over the allegorical frame, the purpose of drawing such a distinction has been to create a more dynamic link between the two frames and to view all scattered references to the shadow play as an indispensable guide through the topologies of this tradition. Since there is no epistemological disparity

between the two frames of perception -- inasmuch as they both are 'as if' constructs, -- it appeared important to highlight a significant change in articulation which involved the emancipation of the theatrical frame towards a broader exploration of its metaphoric potential.

The coinage of different allegorical models to account for the evanescence of this world and the nature of the Universe has proven to be a coercive element in literary, philosophical, and Sufi discourses, dating as early as the 10th century. It was explored by great names of mediaeval Islamic thought -- Ibn ᶜArabī, al-Ghazālī, Ibn Ḥazm, Ibn al-Fāriḍ, etc., -- thanks to whom a substantial, albeit fragmented, information on the shadow play tradition can be sorted out.

As a performance art, on the other hand, the shadow play is mentioned in various historiographical sources which indicate its staging in both courtly and popular circles. In Egypt, several prominent historiographers (al-Maqrīzī, Ibn Dawādārī, Ibn Iyās, etc.), though not discussing this performance art systematically, clearly confirm a dynamic continuity of the shadow play tradition and prove that Ibn Dāniyāl's pieces were not an isolated case of this mode of theatrical presentation. Ibn Dāniyāl himself asserts this by attributing "an unprecedented ingenuity" to his trilogy *Kitāb Ṭayf al-khayāl* , whose writing was commissioned by some ᶜAlī b. Mawlāhum al-Khayālī. Even though Ibn Dāniyāl's claim to fame had until then rested on poetic compositions, his acceptance

to write the pieces for the shadow theatre carried several important implications.

Thus, one of the main arguments advanced in this thesis is that there is a pivotal link between Ibn Dāniyāl's art and the shadow play as its vehicle. By using the possible world and frame theories which open venues for a more thorough understanding of stage signs in relation to the spectator, the thesis has sought to explore the tripartite link between the stage, the target audience, and the playwright. It has been argued that the playwright's astute projection of the familiar environment through his three satirical plays -- *Ṭayf al-khayāl, ᶜAjīb wa Gharīb,* and *Al-Mutayyam wa al-ḍā'iᶜ al-Yutayyim* -- has enabled him to experiment with several epistemic models that emphasize non-subjective modes of existence. In this process, the shadow play frame as fictional discourse has proven to be a successful strategy of Ibn Dāniyāl, aimed to foreground his aesthetic and ideological stance.

What could normally be perceived as the genre's lacunae seems to be Ibn Dāniyāl's modus operandi, as he exploits it for the purposes of a bracketed and compressed mode of representation. The flat figures, designed and cut so as to induce the most immediate associations, the casting of their shadows in a setting which saliently demarcates the fictional space-time, and the elaborate yet limiting function of the puppeteer focus the spectator's attention on the most recognizable features of represented objects without minimizing his/her awareness of the

artificiality of the frame. In such a way, Ibn Dāniyāl encourages his spectators to move freely through their 'cultural encyclopaedia' during the dialogue with the stage, drawing them closer together throughout the process of decoding the messages. Thus, the collectivization in the actual experience of the plays becomes as important as the collectivization in the plays' possible worlds.

The sociological and aesthetic implications of such a mode of representation are manifold. To begin with, Ibn Dāniyāl manages to draw a coercive link between himself, his agents, and the milieu. Though socially an outsider, he poses himself as an organic part of the plebeian ethos. He explores its myriad intrinsic relationships and envelopes them in the literary context of his work. Music, phrases in vernacular, names of herbs, animals, plants, games, trades, and pastimes, as well as many other popular images that would have otherwise found no place in literary writings appear vital for Ibn Dāniyāl's dramaturgy. He uses the folk ethos to both diversify the historical context and balance out its ideological currents. All actions are filtered through the plebeian spirit, no matter whether they are generated by political, religious, or intellectual circles. On the surface, the actions revolve around petty aspirations and interests, but on the deeper level of mutual relations, they disclose interdependence among different ideologies. In Ibn Dāniyāl's dramaturgy, no ideology remains 'uncontaminated' by others. As argued in the course of the analysis, this ideological cross-referentiality can

be inferred from the agential constructs, linguistic fusions, and thematic overlaps.

With this dramaturgic technique, Ibn Dāniyāl explores different sets of relations without alienating his target audience. Thus, though presented parabolically, Ibn Dāniyāl's agents carry a link of familiarity through their names, professions, and language. Through their paronomastic connotations, based not on unpredictable psychological make-ups but on external socio-cultural molds, they disclose popular attitudes towards different cultural constructs.

Furthermore, all three plays are set in the restricted and instantly recognizable space-time: Mamlūk Cairo. In this manner the plays' chronotope, which hosts familiar yet hypothetical sets of relations, allows the spectator to draw necessary parallels without reaching too far into his/her background knowledge. Whether exploring the theme of eroticism, power, or morality, Ibn Dāniyāl insures that his possible world is never too distant from the actual world. His dramaturgy thus operates as a *mundus inversus* satire that announces alternative epistemes by having "a naive fool enter a fictional world that is recognizably our own."[1] Humour plays a vital role here, as Ibn Dāniyāl uses it to expose the complexity of the shared social experience in a way which would deny the immutability of any given discourse. By

---

[1] E. Van Erven, *Radical People's Theatre*, 181.

exploring the venues for potential harmony in the heterogeneous Mamlūk society, Ibn Dāniyāl's drama, to borrow Goodlad's term, proves to be "the drama of reassurance."[2]

---

[2]J. S. Goodlad, *The Sociology of Popular Drama*, 167.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources:

Abū ᶜAlī b. Muḥammad b. Dāniyāl b. Yūsuf Shams al-Dīn al-Khuzāᶜī al-Mawṣilī. *Kitāb Ṭayf al-khayāl*. Istanbul Manuscript. Süleymaniye kütüphanesi. Ali Paşa Hekimoğlu collection, nº648.

-----. Madrid Manuscript. El Escorial. Derenbourg collection, nº469.

-----. Cairo Manuscript. Dār al-kutub. Aḥmad Taymūr collection, nº16.

-----. Cairo Manuscript. Dār al-kutub. Al-maktaba al-Azhariyya collection, nº60166.

-----. Cairo Manuscript. Dār al-kutub. Adab Ṭalᶜat collection, nº2774.

Ḥamāda, Ibrāhīm (ed.). *Khayāl al-ẓill wa tamthīliyāt Ibn Dāniyāl*. Cairo: Al-mu'assasa al-miṣriyya al-ᶜāmma, 1963.

Kahle, Paul (ed.). *Three Shadow Plays by Muḥammad Ibn Dāniyāl*. Cambridge: E. J. Gibb Memorial Series, 1992.

Dictionaries:

ᶜAbd al-ᶜĀl, ᶜAbd al-Munᶜim. *Mu ᶜjam al-alfāẓ al-ᶜāmmiyya al-miṣriyya*. Cairo: Maktabat al-nahḍa al-miṣriyya, 1971.

Abū Ḥayyān al-Andalusī. *Kitāb al-idrāk lī lisān al-atrāk*. Ed. A. Caferoğlu. Istanbul: Evkaf Matbaası, 1931.

Clauson, Sir Gerard. *An Etymological Dictionary of Pre-thirteenth Century Turkish.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972.

Hinds, Martin. *A Dictionary of Egyptian Arabic.* Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1986.

Ḥittī, Yūsuf. *Medical Dictionary, Arabic-English-Arabic.* Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1967.

Ibn ᶜAbd Allāh, ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzīz. *Mu ᶜjam al-riyāḍa wa al-lu ᶜab al-ᶜarabiyya al-qadīma.* Al-Ribāṭ: n.p., 1388/1969.

Ibn Manẓūr, Jamāl al-Dīn. *Lisān al-ᶜarab.* Beirut: Dār al-ṭibāᶜa wa al-nashr, 1375/1956.

Lane-Poole, Stanley. *An Arabic-English Lexicon.* London: Williams and Norgate, 1885.

Muᶜjam al-ḥayawān. Al-Ribāṭ: Jāmiᶜat al-duwal al-ᶜarabiyya, 1391/1971.

Muᶜjam al-nabāt. Al-Ribāṭ: Jāmiᶜat al-duwal al-ᶜarabiyya, 1391/1971.

Sulaymān, Aḥmad S. *Ta'ṣīl ma warada fī tārīkh al-Jabartī min al-dakhīl.* Cairo: Dār al-maᶜārif, 1119/1979.

Taymūr, Aḥmad. *Muᶜjam Taymūr al-kabīr fī al-alfāẓ al-ᶜāmmiyya.* Cairo: Al-hay'a al-ᶜāmma li al-ta'līf wa al-nashr, 1971.

Yūnus, ᶜAbd al-Ḥamīd. *Muᶜjam al-fūlklūr.* Beirut: Maktab Lubnān, 1983.

Al-Zabīdī, Murtaḍā. *Tāj al-ᶜarūs.* Kuwait: Maṭbaᶜat ḥukūmat al-Kuwait, 1385/1965.

Zenker, Julius T. *Dictionnaire turc-arabe-persan.* Hildesheim: Olms, 1967.

Works in Arabic:

Abū Zayd, Ibrāhīm. *Tamthīliyāt khayāl al-ẓill.* Cairo: Dār al-maᶜārif, 1982.

ᶜAnānī, Muḥammad Z. "Ḥawla *khayāl al-ẓill* fī Miṣr." *Al-Kātib* (Cairo) 18:203 (1978).

Aleksandrovna-Prizikova, Tamara. *Alf ᶜāmm wa ᶜāmm ᶜalā al-masraḥ al-ᶜarabī.* Tr. Tawfīq al-Ma'adhūn. Beirut: Dār al-Fārābī, 1981.

Badawī, ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān. *Arisṭuṭālīs: Fann al-shiᶜr maᶜ al-tarjama al-qadīma wa shurūḥ al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā wa Ibn Rushd.* Cairo: Dār al-fikr, 1953.

Al-Dāwīcī, Saᶜīd. "Ibn Dāniyāl al-Mawṣilī." *Al-Kātib* (Cairo) 10.

Al-Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid. *Iḥyā' ᶜulūm al-dīn.* Būlāq: n.p., 1279/1862. Vol 4.

Ibn ᶜArabī, Muḥyī al-Dīn. *Al-futūḥāt al-makiyya..* Ed. U. Yaḥyā. Cairo: Al-hay'a al-miṣriyya al-ᶜāmma li al-kitāb, 1985.

Ibn al-Dawādārī, Abū Bakr b. ᶜAbd Allāh. *Kanz al-durar wa jāmiᶜ al-ghurar.* Ed. H. R. Roemer. Cairo: Sāmī al-Khanjī, 1970.

-----. *Durar al-tījān.* Ed. G. Graf. Berlin: Klaus Schwartz Verlag, 1990.

Ibn al-Haytham, Abū ᶜAlī al-Ḥasan. *Kitāb al-manāẓir.* Ed. A. I. Ṣabra. Kuwait: The National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters, 1983.

Ibn Ḥazm, Abū Muḥammad ᶜAlī. *Kitāb al-akhlāq wa al-siyar.* Ed. N. Tomiche. Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-ᶜilmiyya, 1985.

Ibn Ḥijja al-Ḥamawī. *Thamarat al-awrāq.* Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-ᶜilmiyya, 1983.

Ibn Iyās, Abū al-Barakāt Muḥammad. *Badā'iᶜ al-zuhūr fī waqā'iᶜ al-duhūr.* Ed. M. Muṣṭafā. Cairo: Al-hay'a al-miṣriyya al-ᶜāmma li al-kitāb, 1982.

Ibn al-Jawzī, Abū al-Faraj. *Dhamm al-hawā.* Ed. M. Al-Wāḥid. Cairo: n.p., 1481/1962.

Ibn Sīnā, Abū ᶜAlī al-Ḥusayn. *Kitāb al-shifā' (Avicenna's De Anima).* Ed. F. Rahman. London: Oxford University Press, 1959.

Al-Jāḥiẓ, Abū ʿUthmān. *Al-bayān wa al-tabyīn.* Cairo: Dār al-maʿrifa, 1288/1968.

Jalabī, ʿAbd Allāh. *Kashf al-ẓunūn ʿan asāmī al-kutub wa al-funūn.* N.p.: Maṭbaʿat al-ʿālam, 1310.

Al-Kutubī, Ibn Shākir. *Fawāt al-wafayāt.* Ed. M. ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd. Cairo: n.p., 1951.

Al-Jurjānī, ʿAbd al-Qāhir. *Asrār al-balāgha.* Ed. H. Ritter. Istanbul: Government Press, 1954.

Al-Maghribī, Ibn Saʿīd. *Al-mughrib fī ḥulā al-Maghrib.* Ed. Ḥ. Naṣṣār. Cairo: Wizārat al-thaqāfa, 1970.

Al-Maqrīzī, Abū al-ʿAbbās. *Al-mawāʿiẓ wa al-iʿtibār fī dhikr al-khiṭaṭ wa al-āthār.* Ed. G. Wiet. Cairo: n.p., 1923.

Mayer, Leo A. *Al-malābis al-mamlūkiyya.* Trans. S. al-Shitī. Cairo: al-hayʾa al-miṣriyya al-ʿāmma li al-kitāb, 1951.

Rashīd al-Dīn. *Jāmiʿ al-tawārīkh.* Ed. Blochet. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1911.

Saʿd, Fārūq. *Khayāl al-ẓill al-ʿarabī.* Beirut: Dār al-āfāq al-jadīda, 1984.

-----"Khayāl al-ẓill al-ʿarabī." *Al-Nāshir* (February, 1984).

Al-Ṣafadī, Ibn Aybak. *Al-wāfī bi al-wafayāt.* Ed. S. Dedering. Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag GMBH, 1974.

Al-Shabushtī, Abū al-Ḥasan. *Kitāb al-Diyārāt.* Ed. K. ʿAwwād. Baghdad: Maṭbaʿat al-maʿārif, 1951.

Taymūr, Aḥmad. *Khayāl al-ẓill.* Cairo: Dār al-kitāb al-ʿarabī, 1957.

Yūnus, ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd. *Difāʿ ʿan al-fūlklūr.* Cairo: Al-hayʾa al-ʿāmma li al-kitāb, 1973.

Works in European Languages:

cAbd al-Rāziq, Aḥmad. *La femme au temps des Mamlouks en Égypte*. Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1973.

And, Metin. *Gölge Oyunu: Dunyada ve Bizde*. Ankara: İş Bankası Şirketi Matbaası, 1977.

-----. "Uniformity and Diversity in Islamic Theatrical Arts." *Islamic Art: Common Principles, Forms and Themes*. Damascus: Dār al-fikr, 1989.

-----. *A History of Theater and Popular Entertainment in Turkey*. Ankara: n.p., 1963-64.

-----. "Turkish Shadow Theatre: Karagöz." *East Asian Cultural Studies* 15: 1-4 (March, 1976).

cAnkawī, cAbdullāh. "The Pilgrimage to Mecca in Mamlūk Times." *Arabian Studies* 1 (1974).

Arberry, John A. (ed. and trans.). *The Poem of the Way*. London: Emery Walker Ltd., Chester Beatty Monographs no.5,1952.

Avery, Peter & Heath-Stubbs, John (tr.). *The Ruba'iyat of Omar Khayyam*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1979.

Ayalon, David. *L'esclavage du Mamelouk*. Jerusalem: Israel Oriental Society, 1951.

-----. *The Mamlūk Military Society*. London: Variorum Reprints, 1979.

-----. *Studies on the Mamlūks of Egypt*. London: Variorum Reprints, 1977.

-----. *The Muslim City and the Mamlūk Military Arsitocracy*. Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1967.

Badawi, Mustafa M. *Early Arabic Drama*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

-----. "Medieval Arabic Drama: Ibn Dāniyāl." *Journal of Arabic Literature* 13 (1982).

Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World.* Trans. H. Iswolsky. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984.

Bosworth, Clifford E. "Christian and Jewish Religious Dignitaries in Mamlūk Egypt and Syria." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 3:1 (1972) and 3:2 (1972).

-----. *The Mediaeval Islamic Underworld.* Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1976.

Bristol, Michael D. *Carnival and Theater: Plebeian Culture and the Structure of Authority in Renaissance England.* New York: Methuen, 1985.

Bruner, Jerome. *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds.* Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1986.

Cachia, Pierre. *Popular Narrative Ballads of Modern Egypt.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989.

-----. "The Theatrical Movement of the Arabs." *Middle East Studies Association Bulletin* 16i (1982).

Cantarino, Vicente. *Arabic Poetics in the Golden Age.* Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975.

Ceccato, Dorigo. "Il teatro d'Ombre a Damasco." *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 2 (1984).

Connelly, Bridget. *Arab Folk Epic and Identity.* Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986.

Corbin, Henri. *Histoire de la philosophie islamique.* Paris: Edition Gallimard, 1964.

Crone, Patricia & Michael Cook. *Hagarism: The Making of the Islamic World.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977.

Çelebi, Asaf H. (ed.) *Ömer Hayyam.* Istanbul: Varlık Yayınları, 1954.

Dunne, Bruce W. "Homosexuality in the Middle East: An Agenda for Historical Research." *Arab Studies Quarterly* 12:3-4 (1990).

Eco, Umberto. "Semiotics of Theatrical Performance." *The Drama Review* 21:1 (1977).

Eco, Umberto. *A Theory of Semiotics.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976.

Elam, Keir. *Semiotics of Theatre and Drama.* New York: Methuen, 1980.

Escovitz, Josef. "The Establishment of Four Chief Judgeships in the Mamlūk Empire." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 102 (1982).

Flemming, Barbara. "Literary Activities in Mamlūk Halls and Barracks." *Studies in Memory of Gaston Wiet.* Ed. M. Rosen-Ayalon. Jerusalem: Institute of Asian and African Studies, 1977.

Geertz, Clifford. *The Interpretation of Cultures.* New York: Basic Books, 1973.

Gibb, Hamilton A. R. *Arabic Literature, an Introduction.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963.

Goffman, Erving. *Frame Analysis.* New York: Harper & Row, 1974.

Goodlad, Sinclair J. *A Sociology of Popular Drama.* London: Heinemann, 1971.

Goodman, Nelson. *Languages of Art.* Indianopolis: Hackett, 1985.

Haarmann, Ulrich. "Alṭun Hān und Čingiz Hān bei den ägyptischen Mamluken." *Der Islam* 51.1 (April, 1974).

-----. "Arabic in Speech, Turkish in Lineage: Mamlūks and Their Sons in the Intellectual Life of Fourteenth-Century Egypt." *Journal of Semitic Studies* 33:1 (1988).

-----. "Ideology and History, Identity and Alterity: The Arab Image of the Turk from the ᶜAbbasid to Modern Egypt." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 20 (1980).

-----. "Regional Sentiments in Mediaeval Islamic Egypt." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 43:1 (1980).

-----. "Turkish Legends in the Popular Historiography of Medieval Egypt." *Proceedings of the 6th Congress of Arabic and Islamic Studies* (August, 1972).

Hall, Stuart. "Deconstructing 'the Popular.'" *People's History and Socialist Theory.* Ed. R. Samuel. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981.

Hattox, Ralph S. *Coffee and Coffeehouses: The Origins of a Social Beverage in the Near East.* Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985.

Heinrichs, Wolfhart. "Die antike Verknüpfung von phantasia und Dichtung bei den Arabern." *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 128 (1978).

Howorth, Henry H. *History of the Mongols.* London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1986.

Huizinga, Johan. *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture.* Trans. R. F. C. Hull. Boston: Beacon Press, 1955.

Humphreys, Stephen R. "The Expressive Intent of the Mamlūk Architecture of Cairo: A Preliminary Essay." *Studia Islamica* 35 (1972).

Hussein, Hassan A. "The Koran and Courtly Love: A Study of the Koran and Its Influence on the Development of Divine and Courtly Love." Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Southern California, 1971.

Ibn Ḥazm, Abū Muḥammad ᶜAlī. *The Ring of the Dove.* Trans. A. J. Arberry. London: Luzac & Company, Ltd., 1953.

Jacob, Georg. "ᶜAgīb ed-dīn al-wā'iẓ bei Ibn Dāniyāl." *Der Islam* 1 (1910).

-----. "Der Nātū und sein Lied bei Ibn Dāniyāl." *Der Islam* 4 (1913).

-----. "Drei Arabischen Schattenspiele aus dem 13. Jahrhundert." *Kelete Szemle* (Budapest) 2 (1901).

-----. *Geschichte des Schattentheaters im Morgen- und Abendland.* Osnabrück: Biblio Verlag, 1972.

-----. *Muḥammad b. Daniyal: Escorial Codex, textproben mit 2 Licht-drucktaflen.* Erlangen: Mencke, 1902.

Jacobi, Renate. "The *Khayāl* Motif in Early Arabic Poetry." *Oriens* 32 (1990).

Jung, Carl G. *Man and His Symbols*. New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1964.

Kahle, Paul. "The Arabic Shadow Play in Egypt." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 4 (1940).

-----. *Der Leuchtturm von Alexandria: Ein Arabisches Schattentheater aus dem Mittelalterichen Ägypten*. Stuttgart: Kommissionverlag Freinz Steiner, 1930.

-----. "A Gypsy Woman in Egypt in the Thirteenth Century A.D.." *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* 29 (1950).

-----. "The Mediaeval Shadow Play in Mediaeval Egypt (Old Texts and Old Figures)." *Journal of the Historical Society of Pakistan* (April, 1954).

-----. "Muḥammad Ibn Dāniyāl und sein zweites arabisches Schattenspiel." *Miscellanea Academica Berolinensis* (1950).

Kalfon-Stillman, Yedida. "Female Attire of Medieval Egypt." Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1972.

Khazandar, Françoise & Chérif. *Le Théâtre d'ombres*. Paris: Maison de la Culture de Rennes, n.d.

Khowaiter, Abdul-Aziz. *Baibars the First: His Endeavours and Ahcievements*. London: The Green Mountain Press, 1978.

Kīnanī, ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzīz. *The Development of Gazal in Arabic Literature*. Damascus: Syrian University Press, 1950.

Kotzmanidou, Maria. "The Spanish and Arabic Characterization of the Go-Between in the Light of Popular Performance." *Hispanic Review* 48 (1980).

Koestler, Arthur. *The Act of Creation*. London: Hutchison, 1964.

Landau, Jacob. "Ibn Dāniyāl." *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. New Edition. 3:742.

-----."Shadow-Plays in the Near East." *Edoth* 3:1-2 (1947-48).

Landau, Jacob. *Studies in the Arab Theater and Cinema.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1958.

Lane, Edward-William. *An Account of the Manners of Modern Egyptians.* London: East-West Publications, 1978.

Lapidus, Ira (ed.). *Middle Eastern Cities.* Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969.

—————. *Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Little, Donald P. *An Introduction to Mamlūk Historiography.* Wiesbaden: F. S. Verlag GMBH, 1970.

—————. "Coptic Conversion to Islam under the Baḥrī Mamlūks, 629–755/1293-1354." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 39 (1976).

—————."Religion under the Mamlūks." *Muslim World* 73 (1983).

Mair, Victor. *Painting and Performance: Chinese Picture Recitation, Its Indian Genesis and Analogues Elsewhere.* Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1988.

Matejka, Ladislav and Irwin Titunik. *Semiotics of Art: Prague School Contributions.* Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press, 1976.

McGrath, John. *A Good Night Out: Popular Theatre: Audience, Class, and Forum.* London: Eyre Methuen, 1981.

McPherson, John W. *The Moulids of Egypt.* Cairo: N. M. Press, 1941.

Menzel, Theodor. *Meddāḥ, Schattentheater, und Orta Ojunu.* Prag: Orientalisches Institut, 1941.

Mez, Adam. *Die Renaissance des Islams.* Heidelberg: Carl Winters Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1922.

Molan, Peter. "*Charivari* in a Medieval Egyptian Shadow Play." *Studia Arabo-Islamica Mediterranea (Al-Masāq).* 1 (1988).

Moreh, Shmuel. *Live Theatre and Dramatic Literature in the Medieval Arab World.* New York: New York University Press, 1992.

Moreh, Shmuel. "Live Theatre in Medieval Islam." *Studies in Islamic History and Civilization in Honour of David Ayalon.* Ed. M. Sharon. Jerusalem: Cana Ltd., 1986.

-----. "The Shadow Play (*Khayāl al-Ẓill*) in the Light of Arabic Literature." *Journal of Arabic Literature* 18 (1988).

Nasr, Seyyed H. *Three Muslim Sages.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963.

Nicholson, Reynold A. N. *Literary History of the Arabs.* London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1907.

Niebuhr, Carsten. *Travels through Arabia.* Trans. R. Heron. Beirut: Librairie du Liban, n.d.

Pavel, Thomas. *Fictional Worlds.* Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1986.

Pellat, Charles. *The Life and Works of Jāḥiẓ.* Trans. D. M. Hawke. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969.

Powell, Chris & George Paton (ed.). *Humour in Society: Resistance and Control.* Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1988.

Quatremère, Etienne M. (tr.). *Histoire des Sultans Mamlouks de l'Egypte.* Paris: Duprat, 1837. Vol. 1.

Redmond, James (ed.). *Themes in Drama: Drama, Dance and Music.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.

Sacks, Sheldon. (ed.). *On Metaphor.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979.

Al-Sayyid-Marsot, Afaf L. (ed.). *Society and the Sexes in Medieval Islam.* Giorgio Levi Della Vida Conferences. Malibu: Undena Publications, 1979.

Schimmel, Annemarie. *Mystical Dimensions of Islam.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975.

Shoshan, Boaz. "High Culture and Popular Culture in Medieval Islam." *Studia Islamica* 73 (1991). 67-107.

Sparshott, Francis E. "Truth in Fiction." *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 26 (1967).

Suvin, Darko. "Approach to Topoanalysis and to the Paradigmatics of Dramaturgic Space." *Poetics Today* 8:2 (1987).

-----. "Locus, Horizon, and Orientation: The Concept of Possible Worlds as a Key to Utopian Studies." *Utopian Studies* 1:2 (1990).

-----. "On Metaphoricity and Narrativity in Fiction: The Chronotope as the Differentia Generica." *SubStance* 48.

-----. "The Chronotope, Possible Worlds and Narrativity." *International Comparative Literature Association Bulletin* 8 (1985).

-----. "The Performance Text as Audience-Stage Dialog Inducing a Possible World." *Versus* 42 (1985).

-----. "The Subject as a Limit-Zone of Collective Bodies." *Discours Social/Social Discourse* 2: 1-2 (1989).

-----. "Two Holy Commodities: The Practices of Fictional Discourse and Erotic Discourse." *Sociocriticism* 2 (1985).

Van Erven, Eugene. *Radical People's Theatre*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988.

Von Grunebaum, Gustav E. *Muhammadan Festivals*. London: Curzon Press, 1976.

Wiet, Gaston. *Cairo: City of Art and Commerce*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964.

Wright, Owen. *The Modal System of Arabic and Persian Music, A.D. 1250-1300*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978.