The Interface of Religious and Political Conflict in Egyptian Theatre

Dissertation

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By

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Abstract

Using religion to achieve political power is a thematic subject used by a number of Egyptian playwrights. This dissertation documents and analyzes eleven plays by five prominent Egyptian playwrights: Tawfiq Al-Hakim (1898-1987), Ali Ahmed Bakathir (1910-1969), Samir Sarhan (1938-2006), Mohamed Abul Ela Al-Salamouni (1941-), and Mohamed Salmawi (1945-). Through their plays they call attention to the dangers of blind obedience.

The primary methodological approach will be a close literary analysis grounded in historical considerations underscored by a chronology of Egyptian leadership. Thus the interface of religious conflict and politics is linked to the four heads of government under which the playwrights wrote their works: the eras of King Farouk I (1920-1965), President Gamal Abdel Nasser (1918-1970), President Anwar Sadat (1918-1981), and President Hosni Mubarak (1928-). While this study ends with Mubarak’s regime, it briefly considers the way in which such conflict ended in the recent reunion between religion and politics with the election of Mohamed Morsi, a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, as president following the Egyptian Revolution of 2011.

This research also investigates how these scripts were written—particularly in terms of their adaptation from existing canonical work or historical events and the use of metaphor—and how they were staged. The staging of these works highlights the problems faced by Egyptian directors interested in this inherently political work as they...
faced censorship issues.

Only a few of the scripts have English translations, the rest are only available in Arabic. When a published English translation is unavailable, I have provided English translations of key selections from the texts with the original Arabic in the appendix.
Dedication

Dedicated to all the lovely and inspiring people in my life:

The memory of my lovely Dad,

My Lovely & Super husband,

My Blossom Flowers,

Youssef, Omar, Mariam, and Malak

Finally to My kind Mother
Acknowledgments

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rare theatrical reviews and other pieces of evidence about the performances he directed that I consider in my research. Finally I cannot thank Mr. Mohamed Abul Ela Al-Salamouni enough for generously giving me his scripts that I consider in my dissertation. When it comes to my family, I really cannot thank my husband Assem Nagaty enough for making me the happiest person on earth, supporting my crazy thoughts, standing always by my side, and giving me the four most valuable things in my life: Youssef, Omar, Mariam, and Malak. Thanks Mom and Dad for teaching me how not to give up. Finally, I want to thank the Egyptian government for fully funding me.
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Fields of Study

Major Field: Theatre
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Chapter 1: Introduction

There is a burgeoning interest in Arabic theatre in the English-speaking world. Additionally, Egypt has been in a new spotlight since January 25, 2011, the date of the Egyptian Revolution, which was part of the Arab Spring. A central goal of the numerous factions who took part in the revolt was the overthrow of the regime of President Hosni Mubarak. Moreover, Islam has been more strongly associated with terrorism since the September 11, 2001 attack by Osama ben Laden. Islam is a religion of peace and forgiveness. Despite this belief by the majority of Muslims world-wide, there are those who exploit religion to achieve political goals that produce a negative impression of Islam, abusing Islam in the name of political gain. This constellation of events warrants a closer analysis of how art has interceded and continues to be a social space for critical thinking and political action.

Before the separation between religion and politics, when the ruler and the religious man were a single person, the religious leader was called the Imam, caliph, or wali. But after the separation between religion and politics, which was paved by the French occupation (1798-1801) and finally established by the British (1882-1956), a conflict between the two different figures evolved. Both tried to control the political situation in Egypt and dominate political power. Some Islamists claim that it is forbidden by God to disobey the ruler. They justify this by stating that the ruler is governing by using Shari’a (God’s Law), and any disagreement with it is against God. Shari’a is a
highly developed system. It derived from three different sources. Two of them are considered primary sources. The first one is the Quran by God and the second is the *Sunnah* by the prophet Mohamed. The third source was established by religious scholars who are known as *A’immah* (the plural form of *Imam*). That source was derived from human interpretation and it can be reinterpreted without any conflict with the God’s law. Thus, it is acceptable to debate issues that are not literally mentioned in the holy Quran or by the prophet.

My dissertation – *The Interface of Religious and Political Conflict in Egyptian Theatre* – examines a range and variety of concerns expressed in theatre productions over the last sixty years, which have taken place in the public and private sectors of Egyptian theatre. Egyptian theatre consists of three main sectors: the public, the *Al-Thakafa Al-Gamaheria* (mass culture theatre), and the private. Both the public and mass culture theatres are sponsored by the government. The public sector contains many types of theatres. For grand productions, there are three different venues: *Al-Kowmi* (National) theatre for classical performances, *Al-Hadeath* (Modern) theatre for contemporary plays, and *Al-Komidi* (the comedy) theatre for comic plays. For young professional artists, there are other venues; *El-Tali’a* (avant-garde) theatre, *Al-Shabab* (Youth) theatre, and *Al-Tefl* (the Child’s) theatre. Finally there is *Al-‘Ara’eas* (Puppetry) theatre. The public sector’s aim is to serve society through presenting art with low price tickets. The second kind is made for amateurs with free tickets. On the other hand, the private (commercial) sector’s main aim is make a profit. That influences the kind of performances produced by these theatres because their aim is to attract Gulf tourists and their money. In spite of that fact there are some serious private sectors such as Studio 80 sponsored by Mohamed Sobhy,
Masreh Al-Fan (The Art Theatre) by Galal Al-Shrqawi, and Al-Fananeen Al-Motahideen (The United Artists) by Samir Khfagi.

The continuous political and religious conflicts have triggered ongoing attention from Egyptian playwrights, many who are critical of the manipulation of religion to gain political power. The playwrights tried to educate people about that conflict, warning them of the consequences of blind obedience to religious leaders with hidden political agendas. These artists encourage people to think critically of those in positions of authority. Some Egyptian playwrights are critical of using religion to gain people's trust, achieve political aims, and control society. Others choose to expose the reasons behind misusing Islam and attacking others in order to get the power.

Examining the relationship between the Egyptian rulers and religious groups provides context for how and why theatre as a mirror of society reflects and portrays real situations in new forms. It is necessary to search for the conditions that persuaded Egyptian playwrights to write about that relationship and encouraged the stage directors to add new interpretations to their performances in order to highlight that conflict to the Egyptian audience. My focus is concerned with the strong relationship between real life and theatre.

**Research Limitations**

In writing my dissertation, I am dealing with certain limitations, which pertain to the state of literary criticism in Egypt, particularly in regard to theatre. Therefore, I will provide a description of these limitations and the reasons behind them and acknowledge the sensitive relationship between religion and politics. First, religion as a topic of formal criticism is considered a taboo subject in Egyptian culture, and it is not easy to criticize
politics and its conflicts with religion.

Second, there is a paucity of commentary on the selected plays I consider, whether in the scripts’ introductions, or the limited performance reviews and criticism. There are few reviews and evidence about specific scripts and performances. Therefore, some of the chosen scripts and their performances have neither introductions nor reviews. In some cases since only scripts exist, I have no secondary sources to use. To understand the selected scripts, I will draw specific connections between the selected plays and the political/religious contexts in which they were performed. I believe that my own analysis of these themes adds a new dimension of interpretation.

Third, in the Arabic world there is the lack of rigor in the peer review process for theatrical journals, which is the norm in the English-speaking world. There are few trusted and qualified critics in Egypt. In other words, the peer review process in Egypt is far from the academic way of thinking.

A final significant reason for such limitations is that performances of these plays faced censorship. Scripts that combined religious issues and politics often implicated the ruling elite during their eras and posed a threat to some religious leaders. Thus many of the playwrights wrote their works using metaphor or historical stories that would serve as a cover for current political events. Censorship of scripts adds to the paucity of reviews and commentary of the plays produced.

Only a few of the selected scripts I consider here have English translations such as Oedipus the King, Al-Sultan El-Ha'er (The Sultan's Dilemma,) The Tragedy of Oedipus, Sitt Al-Mulk (The Lady On The Throne). The rest are only available in Arabic. When a published English translation is unavailable, I translate some selections into
English that will support my argument. The original Arabic is located in the Appendix of this dissertation.

**Methodology**

The primary methodological approach will be a close literary analysis of a large number of theatrical scripts that deal with the relationship between religion and politics. By analyzing these scripts within their historical contexts, I will reveal the complex relationship between the political and religious contexts in Egypt and how they were depicted in the selected plays. I am not only interested in analyzing the selected scripts, but I am also compelled to analyze their performances within the context of religion and politics. In other words, I will explore how such beliefs encouraged stage directors to add new interpretations to these scripts in order to make them relevant to Egyptian audiences.

In addition to that, I will examine the conditions of censorship (laws, criminal prosecutions, religious denouncement) that compelled the Egyptian playwrights to write new works and/or adapt canonical work. I am also fleshing out the difficulties facing some stage directors to put these sensitive subjects on stage and how these performances were received. For example, I will highlight the reasons that compelled some directors to eliminate some parts of the selected scripts when staged for contemporary audiences.

Again, this literary analysis will take a historical approach by examining the relationship between the Egyptian rulers and the religious groups, providing background to how and why theatre has the potential to mirror society and portrays real situations in new forms. Like Shakespeare, these playwrights draw on stories from different eras using them to illustrate what they thought were the hidden causes of actual events.
I also use the limited number of articles, reviews and essays about that conflict written by prominent Egyptian authors. One important work I have used is Nehad Selaiha’s book, *The Egyptian Theatre: Plays and Playwrights* which offers various critical essays about plays and playwrights. There are three particularly useful pieces in her book that consider plays I am using in this research. One considers the explosion, as a sign of terrorist attacks, in Salmawy’s *Al Zahrah Wal Ganzeer (The Flower and the Chain)* (1945- ). The second essay I use questions the legitimacy in Al-Hakim’s script, *The Sultan’s Dilemma*. The third is about the transformation of men into cows in *The Chronicle of Cows*. This book is significant as it is written by a recognized and accomplished theatre scholar. 

*Asdaa' Al-Ganzeer (The Chain's Echos)* is another important work for my research. It is a collection of all the reviews that were written on the performance of *The Chain* by well-known figures such as Ahmed Abdel Mo'ti Higazi, Refiq Al Saban, Nehad Selaiha, and others. That book offers a clear picture of this script and its performance. It also stresses how audience and critics received a performance with the theme of terrorism and violence under the name of religion.

The introductions to several published scripts, such as *The Lady On The Throne, Oedipus the King*, and *The Tragedy of Oedipus*, shed light on certain aspects of the conflict between religion and politics in Egyptian theatre. Most of the introductions are written by someone other than the playwright and provide additional sources from multiple points of view. One such scholar is Mohamed Enani, who is a full professor in Cairo University, faculty of literature, English Department. He had a close relationship with Samir Sarhan (1938-2006) and wrote the introduction to the script in the published
edition of *Sitt El-Mulk*. In addition, he published many essays and articles about the playwright’s life and work such as "Samir Sarhan Kateban Masrahien (Samir Sarhan as a Playwright)." Enani is considered one of the most trustworthy critics in Egypt. His reputation includes his important translations of Shakespearian plays into Arabic verse.

In conclusion, there are limitations in the theatrical resources that deal with the relationship between religion and politics in Egyptian theatre. This significant gap in that scholarship encourages me to explore this topic and write about it.

**The Continuity of the Leadership Dilemma**

The relationship between religion and politics in Egyptian theatre has a historical legacy as well as contemporary relevance. The tie between the two can be seen in the current Egyptian situation. After being forbidden from practicing politics, some Muslim Egyptian groups now have their own political parties; they have a majority of representatives in the Parliament and now the Muslim Brothers are ruling the country under the leadership of President Morsi, a Muslim Brotherhood member. The continuity and currency of my dissertation subject persuades me to explore and examine these complex relationships and their ramifications in Egyptian culture.

A conflict between religion and politics appears in different eras and takes different shapes in Egyptian history. It also was inspired by true events that necessitated a bit of massaging the facts by religious men. That can be seen during the reign of King Farouk I (1920-1965), who was supported by Sheikh El-Azhar (the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Mosque) to take the throne at an early age. Sheikh El-Azhar used the Islamic calendar that consists of 354 days, an uncommon practice at the time that is shorter than
the ordinary calendar to prove that King Farouk I had reached the age of eighteen, the legal age to rule. This change of date demonstrates the power that religion had to procure the throne for King Farouk I.

The conflict between Gamal Abdel Nasser (1918-1970) as a political ruler and the Muslim Brotherhood as a religious group took different shapes. The Muslim Brothers supported Nasser twice. The first time took place during The Cairo Fire in January 26, 1952 when Nasser was the leader of the Free Officers. Two members of the Muslim Brotherhood’s executive office (guidance office)—Saleh Abo Rakik and Hassan Ashmawi—hid the free officers’ weapons that were unofficially used in fighting the British Occupation. The second time happened when the Muslin Brothers provided security by guarding the vital sites necessary to the success of the 1952 revolution. Once Nasser took over the government he rejected their interference in his leadership style. As a result, they unsuccessfully attempted to assassinate him twice: once in Alexandria 1954 and then 11 years later in 1965.

Anwar Sadat (1918-1981) supported Islamic groups during his period of leadership in contrast to Nasser. Indeed Sadat purged the government of Nasserites, which he considered pro-Soviet and left wing. As a result of Sadat’s Open-Door economic policy, the Muslim Brothers tried to seize economic power to attain political supremacy. They established many Islamic investment companies that never refunded their clients’ money. They also established many small mosques called Zawaia that helped them to attract poor people into their Islamic groups. Ultimately after failing in their various efforts to achieve political dominance, Al-Jihad, an Islamic group that was derived from the Muslim Brothers, finally managed to assassinate Sadat in 1981. The
Muslim Brotherhood was the first established Islamic group from which derived almost all the other Islamic groups, as Peter Hessler explained in his article “Big Brothers: Where Is the Muslim Brotherhood Leading Egypt?” He states:

The assassination of Anwar Sadat, in 1981, was planned and carried out by the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, a radical group that included ex-Brothers, and former members were among the leaders of Al Qaeda who planned the September 11th attacks. One Brotherhood offshoot became Hamas, whose founding charter calls for elimination of Israel. ¹

Hosni Mubarak (1928 - ), who as Sadat’s vice-president was injured along with many other international dignitaries at the assassination, succeeded to the presidency.

When it comes to Mubarak’s early regime, his relationship with Islamic groups was peacefully uncomplicated. The Islamists tried to rebuild themselves, as Mubarak was busy gaining the society’s trust and building the country after Sadat’s assassination. But when it came to the terroristic attacks and their attempt to kill President Mubarak himself in Addis Ababa in 1995, Mubarak sent Islamist leaders back to prison. Ironically, Mubarak and the Muslim Brothers changed their positions. After Mubarak was forced out of the presidency as a result of the Egyptian Revolution in 2011, the Muslim Brothers, who used to spend time in prison, won the Egyptian parliament election and the Muslim Brother Mohamed Morsi became president of Egypt in June of 2012. Thus the Islamists now have power, and Mubarak is in prison, under a life-sentence.

Chapter Outline

My dissertation consists of six chapters. The first addresses my research focus and issues I have faced during my research, as I have discussed above. Chapter Two, entitled “Religious Leaders Between History and Heritage,” provides historical background by examining two scripts that focus on strangers who use religious leaders for achieving power. The first is Al-Salamouni’s *Diwan Al-Baqar (The Chronicle of Cows)* in which the charlatan stranger Hamoud tries to replace the current corrupted King with his follower, Mawlood. Hamoud chooses Mawlood because of his blind obedience. Mawlood never uses his mind the same as cows, and similar to most of the people he will rule. By employing religion, Hamoud gains people’s trust. He overthrows the current king and crowns Mawlood. The script highlights the power religion exerts on people and how misusing it destroys the country instead of building it.

The second is *Sitt-El-Mulk (The Lady on The Throne)* by Samir Sarhan, who uses the same characters with their real names from history in retelling the story. In his script, Sarhan was inspired by a real character from history, Al-Haakem bi-Amr Allah (985-1021). He was known as a severe ruler whose erratic behavior was notorious. Al-Haakem tortured people under the name of religion. One example is his servant Ghin, a black servant who was responsible for making sure people obeyed Al-Haakem’s long list of prohibitions. At first, Al-Haakem trusted him and was generous towards him. But for no apparent reason, Al-Haakem’s ordered Ghin’s hand to be amputated. He gave further orders for amputating other parts of Ghin’s body until Ghin died a horrible death.²

² Mohamed Abdollah A’nan. *Al-Haakem Bi-Amr Allah Wa Asrar Al-Da’wa Al Fatimia (Al-Haakem Bi-Amr Allah and the Secrets of Fatimid Da’wa)*. 3rd ed. (Cairo: Maktabat
Sarhan depicts Al-Haakem as a man not as a ruler, who can be found in any time or any place. He highlights others’ capacities to lead him the wrong way. In Sarhan’s script, Ibn-Al-Durzy, a stranger, uses religion to earn Al-Haakem’s trust and to convince Al-Haakem that he is a god, capable of sending people to heaven or hell. Al-Durzy knows that it is not acceptable for a religious country to tolerate an atheist ruler. Al-Durzy’s impulse is not only to gain power but also to put an end to the Fatmid’s rule. By blackmailing people to reveal their secrets to Al-Haakem, Al-Durzy succeeds in achieving his aim. He uses religion, money, drugs, and promises to reach his goal. Sarhan shows that no ruler whoever he is, even with good intentions, can succeed in ruling as a god.

Chapter Three, the religious and political conflicts in Egyptian theatre during King Farouk I and President Nasser, consists of two parts. The first part discusses two of different Arabic versions of Oedipus as they portray King Farouk I’s reign. In this section, the relationship between King Farouk I and Islamic groups is highlighted as they are mirrored in the two theatrical scripts. The first play is Oedipus the King (1949) by Tawfiq Al-Hakim (1898-1987). The second one is The Tragedy of Oedipus (1949) by Ali Ahmed Bakathir (1910-1969). In these two examples the impact of a religious charlatan is explored and critiqued. A comparison between these two versions and the original script by Sophocles demonstrates the role of culture in reproducing a Western script for an Eastern audience. In Al-Hakim’s play, Oedipus was meant to be King Farouk, who was exiled and died in his exile. Al-Hakim depicts Tiresias, the seer, as an unethical, and dishonest man. He cloaks his political goals under a religious veil. Tiresias was behind all

that happened to Oedipus and his family. He tries to use religion to overthrow King Laius and supplant him with someone of his choosing who can be easily controlled by him. Thus the script shows the role of religion in supporting or overthrowing a king. By using religion, Tiresias convinces Laius to kill his son, Oedipus. Tiresias’s aim is to interfere in power. He also uses religion to support Oedipus and crown him.

Bakathir depicts Oedipus through the lens of Islam and the political perspective of the 1948 defeat, when the Arabic Army lost its war against Israel. In Bakathir’s script, the High Priest of the Temple at Delphi, Lucasius, is a charlatan priest, who was also behind all that happened to Oedipus and his family. Lucasius tries to control the situation, pushing Oedipus to kill his father and marry his mother in order to get financial benefits under the guise of religion. In order to guarantee Oedipus’s obedience, Lucasius blackmails Oedipus by threatening that he will reveal the hidden truth about killing his father and marrying his mother.

The second section of this chapter explores *The Sultan’s Dilemma* (1960) by Tawfiq Al-Hakim portraying President Nasser's reign. In this section the relationship between Nasser and the Muslim Brotherhood is highlighted. The Sultan stands in for President Nasser, who was conflicted between using the power of the sword or the law. Unlike the previous examples, Al-Hakim’s script shows how politicians can manipulate religious practice. The script and one of its performances on the Egyptian stage are dissected and analyzed.

Chapter Four, “The Religious and Political Conflict in Egyptian Theatre During President Sadat’s Regime,” consists of two sections. Section one stresses the relationship between President Sadat and the Muslim Brotherhood as it appears in Abo El-Ela Al-
Salamouni’s plays *Al Milliemme Barba'a (One Dime Earns Four)* and *Amir El-Hasasheen (Prince of the Assassins)*. Two main points are discussed in this chapter, including the Open-Door Policy and the Islamic Investment companies. *Al Milliemme Barba'a (One Dime Earns Four)* and its performance stresses the idea of using Islam to con people, mirroring the Islamic investment companies. The 1990 performance received mixed criticism and reviews, culminating in the director receiving a death threat.

In *Amir El-Hasasheen (Prince of the Assassins)*, Al-Salamouni stresses the idea of mixing politics with religion. He shows the impact of drugs in negating people’s minds. It was inspired by a real group that has the same name under the leadership of Hassan Al-Sabah (1037-1124). Using the religious veil is not enough to reach power. It has to be combined with hashish to completely negate the mind. After rehearsing for a long time, the performance, directed by Sa’ad Ardash, was never seen by an audience. According to Al-Salamouni, the Modern Theatre’s manager, Fami Al-Kholi, claimed that he received a bomb threat, thus he decided to cancel the fully rehearsed performance. He worried about the theatre’s safety, yet the real reason of cancellation was never fully revealed.

Chapter Five, “President Mubarak and the Muslim Brotherhood: Terrorism on a Global Scale”, highlights terrorist attacks during Mubarak’s reign. An example of national terrorism can be seen in Mohamed Salmawi’s *Al-Zahrah Wal-Ganzeer (The Flower and Chain)*, while the international one can be found in Al-Salamouni’s *Al-Haditha Allati Garat Fi Shahr September (The Accident that Happened in The Month of September)*. Salmawi blames the country for not caring about the current generation: half of them lost by addiction to drugs and the other half brainwashed by Islamic groups. Its
performance is discussed, including how it was received by audiences and by critics. The prize-winning script, the large number of audience responses and reviews, and a performance in Paris testify to its success. Al-Salamouni’s *Al-Haditha Allati Garat Fi Shahr September* (The Accident that Happened in The Month of September) shows the impact of terrorism on both Arabs and Americans in relation to attacks of 9/11. It proposes that the Islamic groups attack their supporters after failing to reach power.

Lastly, Chapter Six, the conclusion, will summarize the significant key points from previous chapters. In addition, this chapter will answer the research questions, illustrate my discoveries, and point to the next set of questions that these interpretations open up to future academic exploration. I also include an appendix in which I provide the Arabic original text for those plays that are not translated into English.
Chapter 2: Religious Leaders Between History and Heritage

This chapter considers plays portraying two severe religious rulers; both of them are inspired by historical reality. The reason I consider them is they demonstrate the unification of religion and politics in a single person. The first character is called the King in Al-Salamouni’s *Diwan Al-Baqr (The Chronicle of Cows)*. This play reflects a conflict between a religious ruler and a stranger politician, who uses religion to launch into power. In this play the cows are a metaphor for negating minds. The second play is based on Al Hakim Bi-Amr Allah, who was a religious ruler (*Imam*) whose tenure inspired works such as Ali Ahmed Bakathir’s *Sirr Al-Haakim Bi-Amr Allah Aw Lughz Al-Tarikh (Al-Haakem Bi-Amr Allah's Secret or The Puzzle of The History, 1947)*. In this play, the playwright shows a conflict that reflects the impact on the people of a mad ruler’s misuse of religion. Bakathir depicts Al-Haakem as a mad ruler, who takes severe actions in the name of Islam. He kills and tortures people, claiming that he is applying God’s orders. He claims to seek authority and morality through God, while he can only find true justice in embracing the flawed nature of our shared humanity.

Samir Sarhan (1941- 2006) published *Sitt-el-Mulk (The Lady on the Throne)* in 1989. Sarhan depicts controlling the king by a stranger through convincing him that he is a god, enabling the king to send people to hell by burning the whole country to create a better one. In addition to that, it is forbidden by religion to disagree with God's orders or even to discuss these orders. Thus obeying that ruler, who considered himself a god, is a...
must. This idea closely resembles the concept of guardianship of the jurist in Shia Islam but is not applied in Sunni. Shia Muslims comprised the followers of Ali, Prophet Mohamed’s cousin and son-in-law. This faction believes that Ali had to succeed Mohamed in the Caliphate. On the other hand, Sunni Muslims are the majority and they follow Mohamed directly through applying his sayings, Hadith. This group of Muslims appreciates Ali as a good man, who has a close relationship with the prophet, but they do not dispute that Abu-Baker was his successor in the Caliphate. Thus the difference seems to be political again. In both of the plays, Sitt-El-Mulk decides to get rid of her brother in order to put an end to his misguided deeds. She makes that decision because she worries about Fatimid’s power. She is afraid that people might reject his rule and rebel against him.

Ignorance, quackery, and blind obedience to religion: attacking political power in Al-Salamouni’s Diwan Al-Baqa (The Chronicle of Cows)

As mentioned in the play’s introduction, Diwan Al-Baqa was inspired by an anecdote from the ninth century. According to Nehad Selaiha:

He [Al-Salamouni] states that the play was inspired by an anecdote related by Abul-Farag El-asfahani in his book, Al-Aghani [The Lyrics], which dates to the 9th century. The anecdote tells of a man who, when censured for eating in public, proceeds to prove that the public in question are no better than cows.3

Additionally, the scholar Abdel Rahamn Bin Zidan states that Al-Salamouni uses a story from the past to highlight the audiences’ present preoccupation with any issue that seems

to be religious.\textsuperscript{4} This play asserts the power of religion in achieving political aims. In her book \textit{The Egyptian Theatre: Plays and Playwrights}, Nehad Selaiha declares “The protagonist here is a vicious conman who trades in religion and uses it as a means to power, exploiting the people's ignorance and their fear of hell.”\textsuperscript{5} Hamoud, the protagonist, wants to replace the current king with Mawlood, his follower, who can be easily controlled by him through the power of religion. Al-Salamouni depicts Hamoud as a stranger, a threat from outside the country. Hamoud wears Bedouin clothes, Al-Salamouni repeatedly asserts that these kinds of clothes are related to the Arabic gulf area’s culture, where he purports they have no relations with Islam. Hamoud chooses a fictional country (while he meant Egypt) after evaluating its people. Noticing their behavior, he concludes they are pliable. In the stage directions, Al-Salamouni describes these citizens: they are moving as though their will and thoughts have been taken away, or as if they are puppets that are controlled by unseen strings. Hamoud answers Mawlood’s question about his reason for choosing this specific country. Hamoud replies:

HAMOUD. Idiot. If you looked at people in the local market, you would know the answer to these silly questions.

MAWLOOD. What is the relationship between people and their behavior in the local market?

HAMOUD. You are the stupidest person I have ever befriended. This country’s citizens are a herd of cattle.

MAWLOOD. Cattle? Are they metamorphosed then?

HAMOUD. They are not metamorphosed… But I claim that they are

\textsuperscript{4} Abdel Rahamn Bin Zidan 105.

\textsuperscript{5} Nehad Selaiha 350.
cows.⁶

Thus Salmawi uses a herd of cattle as a metaphor to describe the people as mindless and apathetic in achieving their political wills. By likening humans to animals who live for food and necessities, Al-Salamouni uses the local market as a setting to reinforce the theme of basic animal necessity, food and other material that fill these basic needs.

The same rationale for choosing that country and its easily manipulated people, encourages Hamoud to keep Mawlood as his follower; Hamoud pushes him to political power, governing from behind his pliable shield. Mawlood asks:

MAWLOOD. Do you mean they [the people in the local market] look like cows?

HAMOUD. No they are cows like you.

MAWLOOD. Like me? Is that the reason that I will be their king and prince [Amir]?⁷

A king is the political ruler while an Amir is the religious leader before the separation between religion and politics. Thus during the Fatimid era the political ruler was also the religious leader. Hamoud’s selections depend on choosing people with limited ability to use their minds, allowing him to control them easily. Mawlood wonders:

MAWLOOD. Oh my God! I will rule cows!

HAMOUD. This is the easiest rule, Mawlood.⁸


⁷ Al-Salamouni 246.

⁸ Al-Salmouni 248.
In order to prove that these people are just cows, Hamoud claims that whoever is able to touch the tip of his nose with his tongue, would not go to hell, an arbitrary move. To gain people’s trust, Hamoud uses religion in his speech to buttress this ridiculous claim. He introduces himself to the country’s citizens as a religious man, Hamoud says:

I am Hamoud Ibn El-Maudood. My ancestry extends to Adam, the Human’s grandfather, with no limits… Yes… This is my blessed origin.

Ironically, Hamoud uses his relationship with Adam, referred to as the father of humans by Muslims as a prophet; every single human has the same relationship with Adam. To the audience, Hamoud is clearly a charlatan. Hamoud adds:

Why does the blessed Hamoud Ibn Al-Mawlood come to your country and specifically to your city? What guarantee does he carry from the ancestors to their offspring? Oh my brothers I carry a vision that will definitely save you from the fire of hell and the torment of the grave. Do you want to hear it?9

Hamoud takes it further when people apply his advice to avoid hell by trying to touch the tip of their noses with their tongues. He whispers to Mawlood:

But I will give you another proof. Look and notice, Mawlood. (Screeches at people who are busy sticking out their tongues) Oh people, I will fill out my vision and good news by adding that it has been said by more than one that whoever can touch his ear lobe with his tongue would not be sent to the fire or tortured in his grave.10

When Hamoud asserts, “It has been said,” he relates it to anonymous people by using the passive form. He also adds “by more than one” as a means of offering shallow support for his fallaciously constructing an unnamed authority. In spite of these facts, people try to apply his wisdom without thinking because he uses the language of a religious man and

9 Al-Salmouni 247.

10 Al-Salamouni 247.
frightens the people with talk of hell and the grave’s torment. He also uses the third person while he is talking about himself to make them think that he is one of them. Asking questions on their behalf and answering these questions in a way to help him fully control their minds. The fact that they are all sticking out their tongues to achieve the holy goal of touching their noses only increases their similarity to cows that occasionally lick their noses. The difference between the smooth-talking religious man and the bovine stupid mass of people trying to touch their noses with their tongues elevates the status of the religious man by demeaning the status of the people around him.

Hamound does not use religion only; he also employs art to gain people’s trust. By using his money, Hamoud convinces Ne’na’a, the belly dancer, to stop dancing. He chooses her because he is aware of the role of art and artists have in affecting people’s minds and beliefs. He attracts her by distributing large amounts of money to people in front of her. Hamoud advises Mawlood:

HAMOUD. Leave her and she will come without calling. Distribute a bag of money on the top of people’s heads and under their feet.¹¹

Hamoud is aware that Ne’na’a is poor, so the easiest way to attract her attention is showing how wealthy and generous he is through distributing money among people in front of her. To convince Ne’na’a to repent, Hamoud claims that God forbids art. He informs her:

Your dancing and singing are major sins, Ne’na’a, and the treatment is repentance.¹²

He bribes her with the power of money. This episode foreshadows what happened in the

¹¹ Al-Salamouni 248.

¹² Al-Salmouni 249.
2011-12 parliament elections when the Muslim Brothers distributed some goods, such as oil and sugar, to the poor people in order to gain their votes in the election. Hamoud wants Ne’na’a to be an example to others, such as other artists. He says:

HAMOUD. I will explain to you. When you repent people will ask about the reason behind that repentance. With what will you answer?

NE’NA’A. Will I mention the money I was given?

He replies:

HAMOUD. Will people say that the belly dancer repents just for a bribe! When Ne’na’a repents, she will only do that for the sake of God. Does Ne’na’a understand the meaning of repentance when it is for God’s sake?\textsuperscript{13}

Hamoud uses “God’s sake” to achieve his plan, in the same way he uses other powers, such as art and money. Dance is only forbidden for poor people, while it is permissible for the rich. As Ne’na’a says: “I have no sin because dance is forbidden in local markets and for the poor, but it is permissible for sirs and princes.”\textsuperscript{14} This claim, that a thing is forbidden only for poor people, is unusual and far from Islam’s support of equality.

The use of religion to mislead also appears in the political realm in the play. Just as Hamoud fools the poor with his idea of nose licking, the King of the country manipulates people’s minds through fighting education, following his ancestors’ policies. After having claimed that all kinds of sciences—such as philosophy, medicine, and chemistry—are the sciences of infidelity and heresy, many scientists and all kinds of science books were burned and many were deported to Rome. Thus ignorance is the

\textsuperscript{13} Al-Salamouni 252-253.

\textsuperscript{14} Al-Salamouni 275.
supreme consequence of misusing religion by the king and his ancestors. In the end of the
play, Norhan says about scientists, who either were burned or who fled to Rome:

They are the owners of real faith. But we fought, burned, and judged them
as infidels to the Day of Judgment. Thus they took their brains and books
to Rome leaving us helpless. Until ignorance prevailed, and darkness and
fables reigned, killing in us the love of freedom and understanding. Then
we lost all the universal sciences under the name of religion while religion
is innocent… really innocent.\footnote{Al-Salamouni 279.}

As a result, the Vizier sends his daughter Norhan to learn in Rome. After her return, she
asks the king to educate people. She exhorts:

I wish you would make an order, your Majesty, to give them back [these
sciences] from Rome in order to let your people, who are thirsty for
knowledge, learn. By then, you will take them [the people] out of the era
of darkness into the age of the light.\footnote{Al-Salamouni 259.}

On the other hand, the King sees the situation from another point of view. He argues:

It is the opposite Norhan. This extreme ignorance of our parishioners’
minds is a grace. It will isolate, block, and cover people’s minds.
Oh my lady, ignorant people are much easier ruled than intellectual ones.\footnote{Al-Salamouni 259.}

Thus the conflict here is between knowledge and ignorance. Norhan and her father,
Vizier, on the side of knowledge, face the King and Hamoud, on the side of ignorance.
To facilitate their mission, Hamoud and the King use religion to mislead people and
control their minds. The King adds:

No my Vizier. You should know that our bovine policy was and will
remain our fathers’ and grandfathers’ policies. You also should know that
if I could make them [people] donkeys, I would do so. Yet my ancestors
and I could not make them more than a herd of cattle. But it is not a
problem. One of my grandchildren may succeed in doing that later.\textsuperscript{18}

The King also adds:

Does the pretty Norhan understand what it means to educate our parish about the world’s science? It means that everyone will be able to differentiate between the letter *Alif* and a corn on the cob, then differentiate between right and wrong, then differentiate between justice and injustice, and finally we will be the victim of that understanding and that knowledge.\textsuperscript{19}

“Differentiate between *Alif* and a corn on the cob” is an Egyptian expression that critiques extreme ignorance, because the letter *Alif* is the first Arabic letter that gives the same sound of the A letter in English, and it has the same shape as number 1 in English, and as the corn on the cob. Thus the inability to differentiate between *Alif* and the corn on the cob expresses absolute ignorance in the extreme. Unlike the King, President Hosni Mubarak, who brought the Internet to Egyptians, is a good example of being a victim of the knowledge he brought. Through Facebook people gathered and arranged to overthrow him.

Repeatedly, Al-Salamouni was inspired by Shahrazad from *One Thousand and One Arabian Nights* in portraying Norhan. To limit her ambition, the King decides to marry Norhan and replace one of his four wives with her. Eventually, she will join his other women (*harem*). The reason she accepts that marriage is that she wishes to change him like Shahrazad did with Shahrayar. The King wants to taste a knowledgeable woman, a sexual experience he had never tried before. She sacrifices herself to save the country. Like Shahrazad, Norhan asks for a book to read to the king before sleeping, but

\textsuperscript{18} Al-Salamouni 259-60.

\textsuperscript{19} Al-Salamouni 260.
there are not any books in the king’s room. His room’s purpose is to have sex with one of his harem. She wants to educate him through reading. Thus like Shahrayar, the king only has a sexual relationship with each woman for one night to give other women the chance to have him. The King says:

THE KING. O Norhan, this is your wedding night, but tomorrow I cannot guarantee who will replace you. There are slave servant girls that I have not yet touched because of the large number I own. Use your chance, as an alternative my bride Norhan would lose her first and last night.

NORHAN. It sounds like I am one of the King Shahrayar’s victims, your majesty.

THE KING. But I do not kill whomever I marry. I only spend a night with her and reap her virginity. That is enough for her to join my harem and concubine’s cage. 20

Like animals, the King doesn’t see anything in the woman except her sexuality.

He wants to apply Hamoud’s idea of licking in his relationship with Norhan. He suggests:

The idea of licking the nose by Hamoud Ibn Al-Moudood is the greatest human idea ever. Not only to fear hell and the torment of the Fire, but also for a greater and more important reason: to enter paradise from its widest doors for fun and love. What do you think Norhan? 21

Norhan debates:

O your Majesty... What I have been taught says that licking fits and relates to animal characteristics. And licking disables the human talking machine. As it is known that humans are talking animals 22

Norhan is not the only woman that married for a night. After falling in love with Hamoud, Ne’na’a insists on marrying him. To silence her voice, Hamoud marries her for

20 Al-Salamouni 263-64.

21 Al-Salamouni 264.

22 Al-Salamouni 265.
a few hours. He says, “I can marry you for few hours then I will marry you to Mawlood.”

He adds:

If you do not like him [Mawlood], I will divorce you from him. Choose a man, regardless of whom he is, and I will marry you to him. If you do not like him, I will remarry you to another, to a third, and to a fourth man. All people in our country wish to marry you for a day or two. Do not be scared Ne’na’a. When we reach the throne, I will own all men through marriage and divorce under the Sharia (Islamic) law. If you would like to marry all men in your community, I will ensure it with divorce and marriage under the Sharia law.23

Ironically, Hamoud asks Ne’na’a to repent from dancing while he encourages her to commit a sin under the veil of religion. Marrying for a few days— for pleasure and sexual joy— is forbidden in Islam. It is another kind of prostitution covered with the veil of religion.

As licking brings humans closer to animals that never use their minds, Hamoud does more manipulating of people’s minds. He offers drugs to people, but he introduces that opiate/drug as a blessing plant. He screeches:

Now I will give you the key to paradise that will separate you from people in hell. I have in my bag a unique plant. Whoever will eat it will enter from paradise’s door without an evidence [a proof for deserving to be sent to paradise]. I am granting it to you. O Amir Mawlood, distribute the herbs of generosity among your parish and people.24

Karl Marx’s saying “religion is the opiate of the people” is an ironic reference, here, to the use of opium and religion together.

In order to further create people as herd animals like cattle, Al-Salamouni describes why some Islamists wear similar clothes. Hamoud asks Mawlood, “What shall

23 Al-Salmouni 274-75.

24 Al-Salmouni 269.
we do to inspire that ruling is ours and dominance and power is with us?” He explains, “Wearing a costume will show that the local market and the majority are between our hands,” adding, “Although we do not own any power, the same costume terrifies and shows the overriding and dominant.”

Wearing the same clothes transforms people into a herd to convince others that they are a powerful group, and it includes the majority of people. Thus he invites women to wear the same costume, like Ne’na’a (niqab), and calls men to wear the same clothes as Hamoud and Mawlood (white galabya and long beard). In his scripts, Al-Salamouni repeatedly asserts that these kinds of clothes have no relationship with Islam as a religion. Another reason of wearing that costume is to easily differentiate between their supporters and their opponents. Mawlood orders his followers:

Today we will start our campaign against the infested and infidel community. Toward this society, murder is permissible by God. Theft and robbery are also permitted. Every woman without veil or niqab should be killed or robbed. But if you want to be merciful to them, take them captives for joy and amusement. Regarding all men in that sinner society, they should be dragged, be crucified, and their hands and legs should be amputated, especially those who do not grow black beards nor wear the white galabya, nor show hairy legs. Go people! Let us face the society of infidels and infidelity.

Hamoud deals with men through the selected uniform, short white Galabya to show their leg hair and long beards to display their masculinity. Additionally, issuing a fatwa to an ignorant society is a dangerous weapon. Nowadays it seems that it is the age of issuing fatwas for political agendas.

According to Al-Salamouni, Hamoud does not only use men to achieve his plan,

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25 AL-Salamouni 273.

26 AL-Salamouni 282.
he also uses women, who can easily be convinced to wear a \textit{niqab}. It is easy using women in an ignorant society for many reasons. As Vizier explains:

Women do not understand more than that matter [wearing \textit{niqab}] is related to religion while the hidden reason is that they become a tool in the hand of the person who tries to reach power. Especially women are the weakest part of the illiterate and ignorant society. Or women Your Majesty, including the educated ones, are captives of men’s rule, besieged everywhere: in the house, in the street, in the workplace, and in the local market. All treat woman as a female, not as a human.

He adds, “We see women from an animal perspective not a human one.”\textsuperscript{27}

In the meantime as many other Middle Easterners, the King thinks that women are created only for sexual pleasure. Thus these men cannot see anything in a woman except her body. The King boasts: “Every woman for me is nothing but a couple of lips, a couple of breasts, a couple of thighs and buttocks.”\textsuperscript{28}

The reason that the King does not stop this religious group is that he loves having his people distracted. The King says:

\begin{quote}
THE KING. We will benefit from them [people] being Dervishes. That will confuse them, occupying them with religious issues. This obsession is useful.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
VIZIER. This would be applied if their original intent is to care about religious matters, but power and world issues are their only concern, Your Majesty!\textsuperscript{29}
\end{quote}

Again, Al-Salamouni sends his direct speech—his sentiments—to the audience through Norhan’s monologue addressed to the country’s citizens. She laments:

The universe jumps into the horizon while you will still be beasts licking

\textsuperscript{27} Al-Salamouni 276.

\textsuperscript{28} Nehad Selaiha 276.

\textsuperscript{29} Al-Salamouni 275-76.
the earth’s worms. The world is singing happily with what God gives humans, including grace and goodness, while you are concerned with issues such as genitals and grave torment. The globe lives as the age with no limits, while you live, as your end would be tomorrow. They believe in the human’s soul and his ability to construct the universe, while you seek torturing oneself, infanticide of the soul, and murdering and destroying the self.  

This comparison shows that misusing religion can distract people from using their minds, instead of thinking about their future and building their countries. Thus, Norhan, a woman, has an idea for how to build a country through intellect.

When Norhan addresses people’s minds, Hamoud feels threatened and accelerates his plan to reach power before the people wake up. As usual, their second plan is using force under the guise of religion. He declares, “Distribute your weapons, Mawlood and let your followers carry the responsibility of undermining the infidel society.”

To convince people and provoke them against Norhan and against using their minds, Hamoud claims:

People with imported thoughts from Rome want you to be evil and want to drag you into hell. Their method in achieving that, as their priests claim, is enlightening minds, but who says that the brain is a tool of understanding and recognizing. The brain is Satan and his family’s tool to destroy humans. The brain is the faith’s enemy. I swear to God, how any mind can understand the miracle of a tongue that is relishing to the horizon represented in the tip of the nose.

Hamoud distorts the impact of enlightenment in people’s minds and relates it to Satan in order to forbid them from using their minds and stay safe.

After Hamoud and his group dominate the country, the King decides to save

\[30\] Al-Salamouni 279.

\[31\] Al-Salamouni 281.
himself and follow their will. He relents:

I am with you from your beginning. I am your servant, tamed by your will. I am a strong sword in your hands. I hate who hates you, I reject who rejects you. I raise your flag and die in sacrificing your principles and fatwas. I am from you, to you, and, with you. (He took off the king’s clothes to show his under clothes [that are similar to the required Galabya]) See, Do you believe now that I am with you?  

Like a chameleon, the King changes his color into white to fit the new circumstance instead of fighting against Hamoud as Vizier advises him. To save himself, the King scapegoats Vizier and Norhan by saying that they are the only opponents of Hamoud and his group. Thus both Norhan and her father are accused with the famous and ready crimes that wait any opponent. The King recites the list of crimes as the following: “Subvert the principles of our country and work to overthrow the government… Call for the use of force to change the constitution… Strife between our communities to rupture our national unity… And contact with Rome and possession of publications and manuscripts… And what is worse is the secularity.” This list sounds familiar, mirroring today’s list of crimes to get rid of all kinds of opponents.

Because Norhan and her father are the only educated people left, the King who becomes the judge (Kadi) under Mawlood’s rule decides to burn them, as all other books were burned before. To save them, Ne’na’a threatens Hamoud that she will disclose the reason of her repentance to the people if he does not release them. But instead Hamoud distorts her reputation by claiming that she is a prostitute, even though making such a false claim against the innocent Ne’na’a is against the religion he claims to uphold. False

32 Al-Salamouni 285.

33 Al-Salamouni 286-87.
claim is mentioned in the Holy Quran many times. One example is:

> And those who accuse chaste women and then do not produce four witnesses - lash them with eighty lashes and do not accept from them testimony ever after. And those are the defiantly disobedient.\(^{34}\)

And:

> Indeed, those who [falsely] accuse chaste, unaware and believing women are cursed in this world and the Hereafter; and they will have a great punishment.\(^{35}\)

Thus Ne’na’a joins Norhan and Vizier in their sentence of death by fire.

Al-Salamouni shows that only art can save people and awaken their minds, alerting them against these kinds of groups. When Hamoud challenges Norhan that her brain cannot save her from his punishment, she asks him to let Ne’na’a dance in front of people to prove that she cannot only save herself but also save the whole country from his fist. In the end, people engage with Ne’na’a in her dance, ridding themselves of their huge licking tongues, while Hamoud and Mawlood flee from the scene, searching for a place that has no art and that eliminates people’s minds.

**Diwan Al-Baqar (The Chronicle of Cows) on Egyptian stage**

The Chronicle of Cows was produced only once on the Egyptian stage in 1995 at the Al-Hanager Art Center and directed by the prominent stage director and professor at the Academy of Arts, Karam Metaweh. It represented Egyptian Theatre at the Carthage theatrical festival in Tunisia. It was the last play Metaweh would direct before his death.


\(^{35}\) An-Noor p352. Verse 23.
in 1996. Although it won a prize as the best original play, Nehad Selaiha asserts that there are some weak points in the script itself. The first of them is the use of belly dancing to represent art in general, as belly dancing is neither respected nor appreciated enough in Egypt and other Arabic countries. A better choice would have been any of the many sophisticated kinds of art (painting, theatre, etc.) that represent art to the Egyptian people. Secondly, using cows as a metaphor to represent people is somewhat offensive. Selaiha asserts, “If we Egyptians are no better than a herd of cows, then we deserve what’s coming to us. Why bother?”

However, Al-Salamouni selects cows to express the state of neglecting the mind and succumbing to religiously blind obedience. Cows just acquiesce to orders and move in groups. It is uncommon for any of them to depart from the herd. Salaiha adds also that making the threat come from outside, rather than from within, reducing the impact of the interior fanatical threat that exists among people. She also wonders how an ignorant society would have an enlightened person like the Vizier, and questions why he obeyed a tyrant king all those years. But in reality, one is not allowed to oppose a king, not even Vizier, who has political power.

According to Selaiha, Metaweh worked on the script, modified some points and deleted others. For example, he omitted some sexual sentences and phrases to avoid potential problems with censorship. The costumes were another modification. Al-Salamouni portrayed Hamoud and Mawlood in Bedouian clothes, while Mahmoud Mabrook, the set and costume designer in Metaweh’s performance, was inspired by One Thousand and One Arabian Nights in creating them.

The set design reflected elements of expressionism. It consisted of four huge

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36 Nehad Selaiha 351.
blocks on wheels that could be moved to change the set. Thus they could represent the
borders of the King’s palace, or the holocaust of burning Vizier, Norhan, and Ne’na’a. These blocks were transparent and glassy, made from fiberglass. The stage was almost empty. There were minimal props such as the King’s chair, which was made from the same material as the set. There were also four semi-cylindrical units that were covered with silver paper to work as mirrors, and which were only used in the palace scenes. Regarding the outdoor scenes or the local market scenes, the stage was empty and light was used to indicate a change in time or location.

Al-Hanager Art center is a stage in-between two seating areas for the audience. The audience from house A was facing spectators in house B, and in between them were the actors on the stage. Thus audiences on both sides were not only watching the actors but were also watching each other, a significant part of the performance. Metaweh was the second director after Mohsen Helmy to use the two seating areas. According to Assem Nagaty, who played the Vizier, one night an audience member in house B complained loudly that he could not see well from his spot and asked the actors to face him.

The Bedouin clothes were replaced by the Tartars’ costume to show that these groups have the same effect on people as the Tartars’ invasion during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, when they burned Baghdad’s library with all its valuable books and threw other books in the Euphrates for their horses to cross over the river. Additionally, Metaweh changed the end of the script by highlighting the role of art in resisting this kind of invasion, the invasion of minds, while Al-Salamouni stressed the role of intellectuals in fighting it. To stress his point of view, Metaweh eliminated some of the Vizier’s
dialogue at the end of the play. Overall, both Al-Salamouni and Metaweh were brave to introduce such a sensitive piece to their audience.

**Sitt-El-Mulk (The Lady on The Throne) by Samir Sarhan**

In Islamic society during the age when the religious man and the politician were one person, the leader usually was called *Imam, Caliph, or Wali*. Therefore, the conflict was not between the religious man and the politician. It was between both of them as one person from one side and strangers with evil plans to invade the country and get the throne from the other side.

Al-Haakem bi-Amr Allah (985-1021) was the only surviving son to Al-Aziz (955-996), The Fatimid Caliph. He also had a daughter, Sitt el-Mulk, from either a Christian wife or from his slave: history is unclear about the maternal status of Al-Aziz’s daughter. Some claim that Al-Aziz’s two children were full siblings, belonging to the same father and mother, but the majority asserts that they were half-siblings, born from different mothers, one Christian and one Muslim. In his book *Al-Haakem bi-Amr Allah wa Asrar Al-Da’wa Al Fatimia (Al-Haakem bi-Amr Allah and the Secrets of Fatimid Da’wa)*, Anan supports the latter opinion. He proves it by showing the aggressive way Al-Haakem dealt with Christians as compared to the lenient and supportive way Sitt El-Mulk dealt with them. Additionally, Sitt El-Mulk was sixteen years older than Al-Haakem.37

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In Egyptian theatre, there are two scripts about Al-Haakem bi-Amr Allah. The first one is *Sitt El-Mulk (The Lady on The Throne)* by Samir Sarhan (1989). The second one is *Sirr Al-Haakim Bi-Amr Allah Aw Lughz Al-Tarikh (Al-Haakem Bi-Amr Allah's Secret or The Puzzle of The History)* by Ali Ahmed Bakathir (1947). Both scripts were inspired by history. They deal with real historical characters and reinterpret real events. Like Shakespeare, some Egyptian playwrights use stories from history as examples to clarify their points of view. As Shakespeare highlights in *Hamlet*, the role of theatre is to declare the real reasons behind the historical disasters to people, citizens, and audiences. For example Hamlet begs Horatio—the only survivor of this domestic holocaust—to tell his story. Also, Horatio asks Fortinbras to let him put the bodies high on a stage, buttressing the idea that theatre has the ability to re-tell historical events from a new point of view, revealing hidden insights, wisdom, and information. Similarly, according to the prominent Egyptian playwright and critic Mohamed Enani, Sarhan thought that life is a huge stage and real people would be perfect characters for his smaller stage. Enani asserts that Sarhan uses his sense of humor and imagination in order to turn the real characters and events into theatrical ones in current dramatic scripts.  

However in *Sitt-El-Mulk*, Sarhan claims in his introduction that he does not care about retelling a story from history. His aim is to write about a ruler as a man in general, regardless of the time or place he belongs to. His ability to think and ask questions pushes

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that ruler to search for the impossible that can only be found in death.\textsuperscript{39}

In introducing the translated version of \textit{Sitt-el-Mulk}, Enani explains that Samir Sarhan wrote \textit{Sitt-El-Mulk} in Jiddah while he was teaching in Saudi Arabia. Before having its current title, \textit{Sitt-El-Mulk}, its title was \textit{Al-Haakem bi-Amr Allah}, which literally means “The Ruler by the Command of God.”\textsuperscript{40} Both titles state their connections with real, well-known figures from Egyptian history. By using real names from history, Sarhan’s audience starts creating a relationship with the original character from history. In other words, people start comparing art with the original character and the real historical event. But how much closer or farther from the original historical truth is not the way to judge how good or bad the adaptation is. Here something called “repetition with variation” appears, although this form of adaptation is risky because it can conflict with an audience’s previous expectations.\textsuperscript{41}

There are many reasons that persuaded Sarhan to choose Al-Haakem bi-Amr Allah as a character. The first of them is that during that period of history, the Caliph was the ruler, who issued judgment using the holy Quran. Therefore, no one could disobey his orders because they are God’s orders. Second, he was well known as a mad ruler in history. For no particular reason, Al-Haakem forbade people from eating some kinds of


food such as *Mouloukhia*, a certain kind of popular green soup. He also commanded people to work during the night and to sleep during the day. Finally, he died a mysterious death. He went to the *Mukattam* hill one night and disappeared forever. That mysterious disappearance led some people to imagine that he would return one day to assume his leadership of the country.

Sarhan depicted Al-Haakem as a man who is full of good intentions and innocent passion. Al-Haakem tries to change the world. His dream is to replace the real world with a perfect one. He wonders, “Total certainty… that is the problem… how can I achieve total certainty that I may apply total justice… (In torment) Where can I find certainty…so that I can rule with justice?”[42] Al-Haakem wants to cross the borders of being a human who has the best qualities and also has the flaws as do all other humans. He wants to be like God, aware of everything and capable of achieving the complete justice that cannot be reached by a human.

Additionally, Enani described Al-Haakem as:

A dreamer of perfection, impelled by the natural impulse of man’s ability to conquer every hindrance to happiness, is faced by a word of real men — men who are, though not necessarily bad, capable of evil as well as good. His contemplation of the central character’s dilemma produces a ‘master’ tragic hero and a dramatic masterpiece.[43]

Like Hamlet, Al-Haakem wonders and is confused, consistently hesitating in making decisions. That can be seen when he seeks his sister’s and his military leader’s


opinions about his decision to execute the judge. He says:

AL-HAAKEM. (At a loss) Sitt El-Mulk… save me!

SITT EL-MULK. The decision is yours…

AL-HAAKEM. Ibn Goher… help me!

AL-HUSAYN. You are alone at the helm.

AL-HAAKEM. Woe to him who is alone at the top! ⁴⁴

That comparison with Hamlet appears in Al-Haakem’s dialogue with Al-Husayn. He says:

AL-HAAKEM. O Chief of the army… every night I go about the alleys alone with Sandal… One night I found… Do you know what I found?

AL-HUSAYN. What did you find?

AL-HAAKEM. I found an orphan…! with no mother or father… A child thrown into the street, the fruit of a moment’s sinful pleasure… The child opened his eyes to the world to see his uncle robbing his father… and his father stealing from the treasury… and his mother in the arms of his uncle… He rejected them all… and he set up a great fire… a fire that consumed the whole world.

AL-HUSAYN. Who is this child?

AL-HAAKEM. I am that child… and every child that will be born in the streets of Cairo. ⁴⁵

Thus the idea of infidelity—through the mother with the uncle, which can be found in Hamlet—attracts Sarhan. But he makes it more general and applies it to every child who suffers. This explains the reason behind Al-Haakem’s desire to burn the whole country.

The corruption of robbing, even a brother, and the idea of stealing from the country

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⁴⁴ Samir Sarhan 31.

⁴⁵ Samir Sarhan 82.
reflect the corruption that is widespread everywhere, starting from one’s home and inside
the family, like the dysfunctional family dynamics that torment Hamlet. That corruption
cannot be cured. It can only be destroyed by fire. Sarhan chooses fire because it is God’s
way of punishment, reflecting Al-Haakem’s desire to be a god.

Al-Durzy, the stranger who wants to gain power, benefits from the corruption that
can be found everywhere. To use people, he threatens to reveal their secrets to Al-
Haakem.

AL-DURZY. I have your interests at heart… If the Imam discovers what
has been going on in this alley, you will not last long. You will be
banished, if not hanged.

RAMADAN. Do you mean to say he will ruin us?

AL-DURZY. The Imam will not be satisfied when he knows how silk is
being stolen from the warehouses and stores, Sheikh Ramadan.
(Ramadan is clearly scared, as if caught red handed) (To ‘Afifi) He
will not accept that orphaned children should be deprived of their
rightful homes.

‘AFIFI. (Scared) God Lord, God Lord!

AL-DURZY. (To Amin) He will not be satisfied with your forgery. I
mean… you appoint someone to a job, and cause him to die, and cash
his salaries as well as his funeral grants.46

Thus Al-Durzy studies people before meeting them. He searches for their weak points to
control them and to guarantee their loyalty. Al-Durzy promises them in return money,
luxury, and power through Burguan, Sitt-El-Mulk’s ex-lover and Al-Haakem’s brother-
in-law. He does not promise them anything himself.

In Sarhan’s script, Al-Haakem hates being a ruler. He hates the idea of killing. He

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46 Samir Sarhan 64.
wonders again and again:

Why should I, a mere human being, bear the burden of setting the world to rights? Why should my destiny not be like others’, not to have to kill those I love or live with those I hate so that justice may reign supreme among the people?47

Al-Haakem’s way of thinking annoys Sitt-El-Mulk. She worries more about maintaining power than about her brother, the man in power. Sitt-El-Mulk describes Al-Haakem:

The Imam is tormented by questions… many questions… such as what does justice mean, and what is certainty? Questions that have nothing to do with power and sovereignty… The minute a ruler begins to question himself, he is no longer a ruler, for he becomes a human being… and then everything collapses. Now we [she and Al-Husayn] must preserve the structure we have built by any means, whether through justice or injustice, certainty or doubt …it does not matter.48

Thus Sitt-El-Mulk knows how to rule and how the ruler has to be. Her only aim is to protect and maintain her ancestors’ power. Thus she indirectly welcomes the idea of hanging the Judge, who was accused of stealing the funds intended to support the orphans. She wants to threaten people by scapegoating the judge, who was executed without even being put on trial. She informs people:

Let it be known to all: From now on there will be no mercy for him who disobeys the will of God or for him who rules by the command of god. Today we show you the proof. The Imam has ordered the hanging of his closest follower—the Judge Ibn Al Nu’maan.49

Sitt Al-Mulk announces that Al-Haakem’s orders are God’s orders, which indirectly states that Al-Haakem has the same authority as God. In other words, she claims that Al-

47 Samir Sarhan 41.

48 Samir Sarhan 37.

49 Samir Sarhan 25.
Haakem rules under the name of God. She proves it by sacrificing the Judge’s life, the most powerful man in the country. Thus Sa’adat, a female citizen, says:

(Clapping a hand to her chest) [It is a gesture of vulgarity of surprise, and shock used by the lower class of Egyptian women] God have mercy! If they plan to hang the Chief Judge himself, what will they do to the likes of us?

Eventually after discovering that the judge was innocent, Sitt-El-Mulk does not even show any regret. She advises Al-Haakem:

SITT-EL-MULK. Our duty is to preserve the dynasty they [their ancestors] founded, even at the cost of a hundred innocent lives!

AL-HAAKEM. Does it not matter, then, if an innocent man dies? Who can live with the blood of an innocent man on his hands?

SITT-EL-MULK. He who is in power must not worry about who lives and who dies… who the innocent is or who the guilty?

The play, *Sitt-el-Mulk*, shows the impact of others on rulers. It exposes how some kinds of evil people with bad intentions and in search of personal benefits can affect a noble ruler and guide him in the wrong direction. Instead of guiding the country, some rulers are guided by wickedness, as exemplified by characters such as Ismail Ibn Al-Durzy as depicted in Sarhan’s script. Enani describes him as, “an anarchist who claims that ‘desire’ is the greatest canon of life, that man’s twin passions (for money and sex) are really manifestations of his deep-rooted passion for power— the survival law of existence.”

50 Samir Sarhan 23.

51 Samir Sarhan 42-43.

52 Mohamed Enani 9.
Al-Durzy’s plan is to destroy Al-Haakem without killing him. By convincing him that he is a God and spreading that belief between people, Al-Durzy will get rid of Al-Haakem and put an end to the rule of the Fatimids. Al-Durzy chooses Burguan to achieve his evil plan for many reasons. The first of them is that Al-Durzy knows that Burguan loves Sitt-El-Mulk. They had a secret sexual relationship. Amnah, Al-Haakem’s wife and Burguan’s sister, accuses Sitt-El-Mulk and informs Al-Haakem:

AMNAH. The time has come to reveal everything. (Addressing Al-Haakem) Sitt-El-Mulk was Burguan’s lover.

AL-HAAKEM. What?

AMNAH. When he left her, she gave orders to have him castrated, so that he might never know any other woman.

AL-HAAKEM. Burguan… an eunuch! How did that happen while I was the ruler of this country?!53

Amnah reveals this to save her brother’s life, after Sitt-El-Mulk asks Al-Haakem to execute Burguan and Al-Durzy because she sensed their evil plot to reach power. Sitt-Al-Mulk was a brave woman. She admits her relationship with Burguan, but she also reveals the truth behind their separation. She says:

That’s not true… One of those nights (ironically) with the first light of dawn I got rid of him because he wanted me to become the queen of Egypt with him as king!54

Sitt-El-Mulk is a woman with some male characteristics. She had ruled for many years when Al-Haakem was young. Her only aim is to keep power in her family and save it until she transfers it to her brother. She sacrifices her life as a woman and her chance to

53 Samir Sarhan 74.

54 Samir Sarhan 75.
be a mother because she does not want to marry someone who might try to get the power from her younger brother. Additionally, in the end of the play after getting rid of Al-Haakem, Sitt-El-Mulk has another chance to seize power, but she crowns Al-Haakem’s son Abdullah. Thus she sacrifices everything including her brother’s life and her personal life just to maintain power in her family.

Al-Durzy promises to seat Burguan on the throne and give him Sitt-El-Mulk with the throne, if he supports his plan. Thus Al-Durzy knows how greedy Burguan is to reach power and money. Al-Durzy threatens Burguan that he will reveal the truth to Al-Haakem that he robbed the orphans’ of their money. Al-Durzy gives him a choice to either help him overthrown Al-Haakem or to inform Al-Haakem who is the real thief. Al-Durzy says:

AL-DURZY. Daughter of Al-Aziz and grand-daughter of Al-Mu’izz Le-Din Allah…supporting and protecting your reign… The Sicilian eunuch will rule side by side with the descendant of the Fatimids. Thus no one will dare to open his mouth throughout the country.

BURGUAN. I, as the ruler and Imam…

AL-DURZY. Power and glory… Instead of the funds of the orphans coming from the alley of Quanadil, all Egypt’s resources will be at your fingertips, Burguan…

BURGUAN. (Waking up) You must be mad.

AL-DURZY. I am giving you a choice… glory, greatness, luxury… or prison, destitution, and death…

It is not hard for a man like Burguan, who lost everything—his lover (Sitt-El-Mulk, who has a new lover, Raydan the judge’s son, his power (that was given to Al-Husayn), and

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55 Samir Sarhan 33.
his masculinity (for becoming an eunuch)—to accept an offer like that.

Al-Durzy uses religion to achieve his plan and mask his blackmailing. He introduces himself to Al-Haakem as religious man. Burguan says:

BURGUAN. Today you will meet Al-Haakem… But… how shall I present you? As what?

AL-DURZY. As a Moroccan dervish who has crossed the desert and barren lands… who has seen a vision which he wants to bring to the ears of the Imam.\textsuperscript{56}

Repeatedly carrying a vision to people by a religious or a blessed man is a way of always being trusted and appreciated. Al-Durzy also introduces himself to people as the following:

AL-DURZY. Tell him [Amin], Burguan, who I am.

BURGUAN. Ismail Ibn Al-Durzy.

AL-DURZY. (Interrupting him) I am a well-versed theologian… Call your brothers.\textsuperscript{57}

Al-Durzy introduces himself as a qualified religious man because he knows how much trust and appreciation people give to religious men. Thus he interrupts Burguan to correct the way he is introduced. Amin is one of the “faking” converts that Burguan brought to support Al-Durzy’s plan and pretend that they believe that Al-Haakem is a god. Al-Dorzy used the term ‘brothers’ to emphasize religious terms in his conversation, because all Muslims are brothers and sisters in Islam.

In order to facilitate his mission, Al-Durzy also uses drugs many times. Firstly, he

\textsuperscript{56} Samir Sarhan 34.

\textsuperscript{57} Samir Sarhan 62.
uses drugs with Raydan, the judge’s son, who will try to kill Al-Haakem to avenge his father. Al-Durzy wants to make a good impression on Al-Haakem. Al-Durzy informs Burguan:

AL-DURZY. I managed to secrete in his [Raydan’s] cup a certain drug that will paralyze his hand the minute he raises it to exert some effort. This drug was especially made in the land of Khorassan!

BURGUAN. I don’t understand what you mean.

AL-DURZY. I mean, the minute he raises his hand against the Imam, his hand will be paralyzed. Then I will handle the rest.58

Additionally, Al-Durzy uses another kind of drug to convince Al-Haakem that he is a god. Al-Durzy asks Burguan:

AL-DURZY. Did you rub his body with the ointment?

BURGUAN. Yes while he was asleep by day… (Sighs) I never know what you will do next. What will all this come to?

AL-DURZY. Excellent. The ointment will make his body shine by night… The converts will prostrate themselves before him.59

Al-Haakem wants to believe Al-Durzy’s claim that he is a god. He says, “You are mad… or else I am… something in me tells me to believe you.”60 Al-Durzy explains to Burguan, “Deep down inside he believes me, for he wants to believe me. And who can resist the temptation? Show me a man who does not want a power to give life and death.”61 After Al-Haakem discovers Al-Durzy’s evil plan, Al-Durzy disguises himself as a woman to

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58 Samir Sarhan 48.
59 Samir Sarhan 62.
60 Samir Sarhan 53.
61 Samir Sarhan 55.
run away, but he is caught by people who beat him to death and throw his body to hungry dogs. That violent death shows the audience the deserved punishment for anyone who manipulates religion to reach his aims. It also shows the reaction of a religious people when they discover that they are manipulated by a charlatan. Al-Haakem burns Cairo after being in the tavern and discovering all people’s sins. Even after being sure that he is not a god, he punishes them by fire as god. Al-Haakem says:

I saw the oppressed, gone mad with frustration... I saw the free become slaves and human beings reduced to wild beasts. I saw the slaves with the Imam raping woman and destroying that which is most sacred in life. I saw theft, fraud, and deceit... I saw debauchery... I saw all the dark sides of man. When I entered the tavern they were sitting drinking and waiting for Al-Durzy, the Devil. When they saw me, they fell to their knees. At that moment I realized that I was the god of all evil. That is why I burnt it.  

Al-Husayn blames him. He says:

AL-HUSAYN. (Screaming at him) Another one of your mad dreams. For the second time, you have appointed yourself as a god. Who are you to rule the universe...to decide that it should be destroyed? Who are you to set fire to everything... to everyone, the oppressed and the oppressors... the murderers and the murdered... the thieves and the robbed ones? Who are you? You have committed a double murder.  

He adds:

If you had ruled as a human being you would not have had all this destroyed. If you had the power of god, you would have accepted the weakness of man and you would have forgiven. You would have known the meaning of mercy before justice. The meaning of forgiveness... If you had been a human being, you would have understood the suffering of man... his weakness...his hand stretched out in hope. Your tragedy, Imam, is that when you ruled you were not a god. You were not even a human being.  

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62 Samir Sarhan 112.

63 Samir Sarhan 113.

64 Samir Sarhan 113-14.
Sarhan portrays Al-Haakem as a tragic hero who loses everything, including his life in the end of the play. But he is a hero. He asked Al-Husayn to inform people about his death. He says, “He went to meet death of his own will, to atone for his sins.”

Sitt-El-Mulk was performed only once in 1978, directed by Abdel Ghafar Oada, in the National Theatre, and it was also presented on the radio. The play starred Samiha Ayoub as Sill-El-Mulk and Nour Al-Sharief as Al-Haakem.

This chapter explored the notion of leadership in which religion and politics are merged in a single man, a person who leads and controls a nation or a people by preventing them from having any voice of their own. In the next three chapters I scrutinize the ways in which playwrights consider political leadership that is split between two opposing forces—that of the political leader and that of a religious figure and the consequences of such a conflict.

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65 Samir Sarhan 119.
Chapter 3: The Religious and Political Conflict in Egyptian Theatre: King Farouk I and President Nasser

Section 1: The Story of Oedipus Portraying King Farouk I’s Reign

The tension between religion and politics in Egyptian theatre is inspired by actual events that have necessitated massaging of the facts by religious men. By looking through the lens of Egyptian history, this conflict between religion and politics appears in different eras, taking a myriad of shapes. This strife was especially pronounced during the reign of King Farouk I (1920-1965), the last Egyptian king, and finds dramatic expression in Tawfiq Al-Hakim’s *Oedipus The King* (1949). It can be also observed in *The Tragedy of Oedipus* by Ali Ahmed Bakathir (1949). Both plays exemplify the practice of concealing political aims under the veil of religion.

Throughout history and around the world, the story of Oedipus has inspired many playwrights. For example, during the period of 1614 – 1939 in France alone, there were at least twenty-nine different versions of *Oedipus* by different playwrights: Corneille, Voltaire, Cocteau, André Gide, and many others.66 Additionally, in *The Poetics* Aristotle considered the story of Oedipus a perfect example for tragedy.67 Similarly, Sigmund Freud was inspired to denominate a son’s desire for the mother the Oedipus complex. It

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is a story robust enough to capture the artist as well as the scientist.

**Oedipus by Sophocles**

Like many other playwrights all over the world, Egyptian playwrights, such as Tawfiq Al-Hakim and Ali Ahmed Bakathir were inspired by Sophocles’s *Oedipus Rex*. In his script, Sophocles portrays Oedipus as a bold and arrogant king, trying to discover and punish Laius's murder in order to stop the plague and save Thebes. The actual play opens as the plague rages. Although the tragic prophecy predates the events dramatized in the play by many years, Oedipus was abandoned in infancy to circumvent the prophecy that he will kill his father and marry his mother. But, ironically, the prophecy is fulfilled anyway, and Oedipus kills his father after running away to avoid killing the man he thought was his father. So Sophocles’s conflict is between man and his fate, as many other Greek plays are. In the end, the play warns audiences against fighting with their own fates. They have to accept fate. Therefore, the theatre's aim in general at this time was religiously based: it focused on the Greek’s belief in fate, and in their celebration of their gods.

An essential element of Greek tragedy was the chorus, whose role was to comment on the action and to help describe the violent scenes that were prohibited from being performed on stage. Thus, in Act Five the messenger describes what is happening off-stage and the chorus gives their reaction about this with their commentary.

The oracle does not speak the whole truth, only a partial one. The oracle refuses to answer Oedipus's question about his true parents. Instead, it inform Oedipus that he will kill his father and marry his mother, pushing him to run away from his assumed
parents, in order to avoid committing that awful sin. Ironically, that helps the prophecy to be achieved. Moreover, the need for consulting the oracle increases when issues of life and death are at stake. Laius goes to the oracle to find out why he does not have children from his wife Jocasta. The need for the oracles intensifies with the plague: all the citizens in Thebes carry branches covered with wool to ask God for help. In order to warn people about committing sins, Sophocles’s play ends with putting an end to the plague, Jocasta committed suicide and Oedipus blinded and exiled himself. Thus, Oedipus’s family is punished for fighting their fate.

While it investigates religion, Sophocles's play also stresses political issues. That can be seen in Oedipus when Oedipus accuses Tiresias and Creon of fabricating the whole story in order to overthrow him and crown Creon. It also gives a good example about the relationship between the ruler and his people during that era.

Reading Oedipus: An Arabic Lens

Like Western playwrights, prominent Arabic playwrights find something useful in Sophocles's Oedipus. There are five different versions of Oedipus in the Arabic theatre. One of them is The Comedy of Oedipus: You Who Killed the Beast (1970), in which Ali Salem depicts contemporary Egyptian conditions and sets the action in Egyptian Thebes, instead of Greece. Here Oedipus might be President Nasser, who gained his

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69 Ali Salem or Ali Salim. Names can be spelled in different ways in translations, even though it is the same person.
heroic stature in the eyes of the society in 1956, when he faced Israel, France, and England alone. But after the 1967 military defeat, people discovered that the beast, the danger that threatens the country, had not yet been destroyed. In turn, citizens tried to be a part of political decision making. Salem faced problems with censorship and struggled repeatedly to get his plays performed uncut on stage. He tried to avoid that in The Comedy of Oedipus by explicitly stating that the time of the play is unknown, somewhere in the past, while clearly he meant the current period. Salem radically changed certain aspects of the original play. Oedipus does not blind himself. Jocasta does not commit suicide. Salem focuses on the political problems, erasing the personal drama and forcing his audience to confront the political. He highlights the corruption of priests, academics, and politicians, who surround the ruler and threaten the country—the beast. The play starts with Tiresias talking directly to the audience, telling them the story, and ends as he provides the moral and declares that depending on heroes to solve political problems is fruitless and leads to nothing.70

The Return Of The Absent by Fawzi Fahmi (written in 1968 and published in 1977) despite its title is also inspired by the story of Oedipus. Both Ali Salem and Fawzi Fahmi’s plays were a response to the 1967 defeat as Nehad Selaiha explains in her article “Manifold Oedipus”:

Fahmi's and Salem's plays were reactions to the 1967 war, in which they tried to make sense of or exorcise the nightmare of the June defeat. In both, Oedipus was a thin disguise for Nasser who, in Salem's case, was blamed for shutting himself off from his people, leaving them an easy prey.

to his demonic clique, while in Fawzi's, his fatal mistake was hiding the truth from his people.\textsuperscript{71}

Therefore, both plays were political rather than religious or personal. The two playwrights critique their current situations and highlight contemporary problems.

\textit{Oedipus} (1978) is another Arabic version written by the Syrian playwright Walid Ikhlasi. It is completely different from the other Arabic versions. It is set in a contemporary computer laboratory. Ikhlasi changed the protagonists' names—Dr. Suffian, the geography professor, instead of Oedipus and Dr. al-Bahi, his friend, and the head of the computer science department, instead of Tiresias. Instead of killing his father and marrying his mother, Suffian murders his son, Yazin, and has an affair with his daughter, Sulaf, a stand in for Jocasta. Like Oedipus, Sulaf has another father, who reveals the truth at the end. Ikhlasi uses the Chorus at the beginning and near the end of scenes, which adds poetic resonance. The moral of the story is that, even as an individual thinks that he owns the technology to control the universe, he is controlled by powers he cannot defeat.\textsuperscript{72}

The Arabic playwrights adapted the story of Oedipus, revising the original script to fit their culture. All Arabic versions avoid Sophocles’s central tension between man and god. Instead, they present their current political or social problems, as shown in \textit{Oedipus the King} by Tawfiq Al-Hakim (1949) and \textit{The Tragedy of Oedipus} by Ali Ahmed Bakathir (1949), the focus of this chapter. Both plays highlight the impact of


\textsuperscript{72} Marvin Carlson 12-13.
corrupted religious men on politicians, and are considered cogent examples of exploiting religion to achieve political aims.

**Oedipus The King by Tawfiq Al–Hakim (1949)**

Many were the reasons that impelled Tawfiq Al-Hakim to adapt the story of Oedipus for the Muslim and Arabic community. Firstly, Oedipus searches incessantly to discover his familial truth, much like Al-Hakim’s search for truth as a prosecutor, whose job was to investigate the truth.\(^\text{73}\) Secondly, after getting his bachelor’s degree in law, Al-Hakim was sent to France by his father to get his Ph.D. Instead of studying law, Al-Hakim was seduced by art, especially theatre. Before travelling to France, Al-Hakim saw several productions of *Oedipus* on the Egyptian stage. They were performed by both Egyptian and foreign actors. For example, in 1899, Oedipus was played by the Italian actor, Ermete Novelli (1851-1919), in Alexandria. Additionally, in 1912, the well-known Egyptian actor, George Abyad (1880-1959) presented *Oedipus* at the Cairo Opera House for the first time.\(^\text{74}\)

Al-Hakim discerned that translation was not sufficient to introduce Western theatre to Eastern and Islamic society. He asserts that before representing a foreign script to the Arabic and Islamic audience, playwrights must adapt and adjust that script, with attention to cultural specificity, to promote understanding and acceptance by the new

\(^{73}\) Ahmed Etman 45.

\(^{74}\) Ahmed Etman 45.
In France, Al-Hakim witnessed multiple versions of *Oedipus* by different playwrights, each presenting something new. These different versions fascinated him and inspired him to adapt *Oedipus* for the Muslim and Arabic community. For example, in his 1932 version of *Oedipus*, André Gide (1869-1951) let Oedipus win his battle against every seen and unseen force, reflecting most Western people’s belief that they are the ultimate force on earth. Gide’s version was a critique of French colonial power.

Lastly, in Sophocles’s script, the conflict between man and God mirrors the idea of fate in Islam. Muslims are dominated by their fate: they cannot wrestle against it. They have the freedom to behave, but they are dominated by God’s will, obliged to accept it. Moreover, Oedipus is half God, extraordinarily powerful and capable of helping others, both during his life and after his death. In Arabic society, that power can be found in a small numbers of people, who are called *Awliya’ Allah* (*Wali* is the singular form of it). Typically, these religious people were adored during their lives and almost worshiped after their deaths, similar to saints in Catholic Christianity. Some people, especially illiterate people, believe that *Awliya’ Allah* are direct conduits to God. They think that they have the power to bless common people and their followers keep asking them, regardless if they are alive or dead, to help them carry their wishes to God. Usually, the *Awliya Allah*’s birth celebrations become a festival. Some people travel long distances and camp near to *Awliya’ Allah*’s graves to celebrate their birth and publically

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75 Ahmed Etman 36.
76 Ahmed Etman 37.
77 Marvin Carlson 2.
78 Ahmed Etman 46.
demonstrate their devotion to them. Al-Hakim, in depicting Oedipus, was influenced by these holy people.

**Al-Hakim and Adapting Oedipus to the Arabic and Islamic Audiences**

To foster acceptance by the Muslim and Arabic audience, Tawfiq Al-Hakim retooled Sophocles's script. He adapted key points making them more suitable to the new culture, era, and audience. The conflict in Sophocles's script hinges on the tension between fate and man. Oedipus's pride leads him to resist Apollo's will; however these attempts bring him closer to his fate. His pride helps in achieving God's will and leads him to kill King Laius, oblivious of his kinship. Because it is forbidden in the Islamic society to fight against God, the strife in Al-Hakim's play pivots on the fact that Oedipus loves Jocasta, a love poisoned by the truth of their complicated relationship, both as a wife and husband on one hand and as a mother and son on the other hand. Although the sexual relationship between mother and son is forbidden in Islam and all other religions, in Al-Hakim's script Oedipus tries to convince Jocasta to ignore the truth that she is his mother and continue their life together as a husband and a wife.79 This can be seen in the dialogue between Oedipus and Jocasta after the truth of their incestuous relationship is revealed to them. Oedipus says:

> ...We are capable of recovering. Rise with me... Let's put our fingers in our ears and live actuality... with the life, which throbs in our hearts overflowing with love and compassion.80

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79 Hassen Mohsin. *Al Moa’therat Al-Gharbiyah Fi Al-Masrah Al-Masri (Western influence in the Egyptian Theatre)* (Cairo: Dar Al-Nahda Al ‘Arabiyah, 1979) 188.

For as much as the conflict in Al-Hakim's script hinges on the tension between fact and truth, Oedipus keeps searching for his truth and refuses to give up searching for it. Additionally, he ignores Jocasta and Tiresias's warnings to stop searching. This represents a key concept in Islam that Muslims must accept their situations rather than fight them because everything happens according to God’s will:

> Who, when disaster strikes them, say, "Indeed we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we will return." Those are the ones upon whom are blessings from their Lord and mercy. And it is those who are the [rightly] guided.  

Oedipus also encourages Jocasta to ignore what people would say about their forbidden relationship and continue their happy life together. ‘Putting fingers in one’s ears’ as Oedipus said is a common expression that demonstrates a willful ignorance on his part.

Sophocles portrayed Oedipus as a flawed hero. In contrast, Al-Hakim’s Oedipus keeps searching for his truth while he knows that his heroic story is built on lies, creating a weak point in Al-Hakim's script compared with the original version. But because this lie is created by the society under Tiresias’s inspiration and guidance, Oedipus can be considered a victim, not a villain. The society member does not want to be the decision maker; instead, the citizen wants to choose a hero or god to make his decisions. So the lie and its motivation hide political reasons behind them controlled by Tiresias. That can be seen in Al-Hakim’s script in the dialogue between Oedipus and Tiresias. Oedipus decries:

> ... You know the people find no pleasure in having a will. The day they

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Martin E. Segal Theatre Center Publications, 2005) 100.

have it in hand, they hasten to give it to a hero their legends have contrived or to a god enveloped in the clouds of their dreams. It seems to be too much for them to bear. They are not strong enough to preserve it and wish to be free of it to cast aside its burden.\textsuperscript{82}

That also can be seen in the conversation where Oedipus is warning Tiresias that he can reveal the truth to people at anytime:

\begin{quote}
Listen, Citizens of Thebes! … I am not a hero…It is your naive imagination which liked this picture and made popular this image...Tiresias, this brilliant blind man, inspired you – for his own purposes, not for God’s sake – to appoint that hero your king. Yes! He’s the one who desired that and planned it.\textsuperscript{83}
\end{quote}

Sophocles depicted Oedipus as a hero. His heroism comes from his mind, not from his unbeaten, strong body. He became a hero and beats the Sphinx by solving its riddle, not by using his physical power, unlike other characters in Sophocles’s scripts such as Hercules.\textsuperscript{84} On the other hand, Al-Hakim depicts Oedipus as a strong man who beats a lion, yet solves no riddle; therefore, his “heroic” story is built on a lie made by Tiresias, in spite of putting an end to the lion that threatens, attacks and kills many people in Al-Hakim’s version. Although Oedipus is not a hero in Al-Hakim's script, he is depicted as a victim of society.\textsuperscript{85} Tiresias convinces Oedipus to exaggerate the truth of the Sphinx in order to become the king, instead of Creon. The Sphinx that he defeated is an ordinary lion instead of a real monster. But because no one survives after meeting it, people in Athens are easily convinced by Tiresias that it was a huge beast. Al-Hakim

\textsuperscript{82} Tawfiq Al-Hakim 56.

\textsuperscript{83} Tawfiq Al-Hakim 53.

\textsuperscript{84} Ahmed Etman 46.

\textsuperscript{85} Nehad Selaiha n.p.
wrote an article, published in Ghali Shoukri’s book, in which he asserts that rumors play a main role in the way that Egyptians think or judge others. He believes that the majority of Egyptians build their knowledge and decisions according to things they hear from others, without searching or reading to be sure if they are accurate or not. He supports this claim with his own example, which he faced after writing “Al-Ahadeeth Al-Arba’ a” (The Four Conversations), conversations with God. After publishing them as a weekly column in Al-Ahram (a popular daily newspaper) starting from March 1, 1983 under the title of “Ma’a Wa Ela Allah” (With and To God), some religious men accused him of being an atheist for making a conversation with God. People believed this accusation without thinking about or even reading these conversations carefully to examine their claim. However, Al-Hakim was not the first to make conversations with God. In the past, well-known Sufi figures such as Al-Ghazaly, Ibn ‘Arabi, and Ibn Elfared wrote love poems and prose dedicated to God. The same situation happens in Al-Hakim’s script when Tiresias lies about the beast and people just believe it without thinking. These examples also assert the power of religious men to shape the thinking of citizens in Egypt. Al-Hakim’s script highlights this resemblance to aspects of Egyptian culture.

In Arabic and Islamic communities, people constantly evaluate each other, particularly prominent characters. They usually exaggerate their judgment. Oedipus does

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87 Ghali Shoukri 249 -257.

88 Ghali Shoukri 258.
the same, arguing:

What a destiny! I am a hero because I killed a beast they claimed had wings. I am a criminal because I killed a man they showed to be my true father... I am neither a hero nor a criminal... I am just another individual upon whom the people have cast their fictions and heaven its decrees. 89

A good example of the exaggeration in evaluating people can be seen in Arabic and Islamic communities. This is clear in contemporary politics with the situation of ex-president Hosni Mubarak, who was considered a hero after participating in the Sixth October War against Israel in 1973. As leader of the air force, he led the first attack against Israel, which brought victory. But now people claim that he is a dictator and a criminal. After being forced to step down, Mubarak was arrested as a criminal. They claimed that he gave orders to kill the demonstrators. How quickly and dramatically opinions shift about prominent political figures.

As in many other Greek tragedies, the Chorus functions in Sophocles's script is to summarize for the audience important information and it also represents the voice of the community. 90 Al-Hakim's script consists of three acts, reflecting the structure of Arabic plays during the time he wrote. He minimally used the Chorus as citizens to comment on the action. Al-Hakim also starts his script with Oedipus and his family.

Oedipus's family repeatedly asks him to tell them his story of the Sphinx and his achievement, which expresses Arabic society’s appreciation of one's history, heroism, and victory. Repeatedly telling the same story was common in Arabic culture in the past.

89 Tawfiq Al-Hakim101.

In fact, oriental instrument players (*Al-Rababa’s* players) would typically play *Rababa* and sing epics about Arabic heroes, in public coffee shops to gain money. They used to repeat the same stories and the audience would choose which epic they wanted to listen to. Most of the time, the audiences selected a story they already knew.

In Sophocles’s play, the oracles do not disclose the whole truth; they only give hints. Ironically, in trying to avoid his fate, Oedipus runs right into it. On the other hand, in Al-Hakim’s script, when Creon goes to the temple to ask about the reason behind the plague, he returns with the whole story in all of its details. The source of the story was not from heaven. The religious men knew it from the herdsman responsible for killing Laius’s infant; however, the herdsman did not kill the child, but instead gave the child to another man to take care of him. Oedipus cries to the herdsman:

… The temple priests no doubt learned it from you (the herdsman)! For no secret is buried in the chest for seventeen years without an aroma spreading from it into the air. You are the origin of the Delphi oracle!  

Al-Hakim’s shift in the heart of the script’s conflict between fact and truth—compared to the original one between God and man—reflects the tenet in Islam that God gives Muslims the choice to behave freely and control their life. In Islam, it is only after death that God starts asking people about their behavior, so they can be sent to heaven or hell; there is no punishment during life. Al Hakim also accommodates the original vis-à-vis an Islamic lens by rendering Oedipus as a human being, not as a God, reconciling the script with the Islamic tenet that there is only one God and that the Islamic prophet is also a human being, selected by God to carry a message to the people.

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91 Tawfiq Al-Hakim 95.
In Al-Hakim’s play Oedipus blinds himself because he wants to weep for Jocasta with blood instead of tears, a sorrow that anyone in Arabic culture feels after losing his or her beloved. In other words, the expression of weeping with blood describes the magnitude of grief and regret Oedipus feels because of his loss. The servant observes, “He tore off its gold brooches and plunged them violently into his own eyes saying: I will weep for you only with tears of blood!”

Additionally, Al-Hakim highlights the strong relationship between Oedipus and his own family, especially his daughter Antigone. She believes in her father and sees the world through his eyes. After blinding himself, Oedipus is supported by Antigone. She offers to be his eyes, so he can see the world through her. That offer from Antigone to be Oedipus’s eyes emphasizes the symbolic relationship between father and daughter in the Arabic and Islamic community. The depth of this relationship is evident in the script when Antigone is talking with her father. She proclaims:

The only place for me is next to you, Father. I will see for you. Don't you remember that I aspire one day to see things with your eyes... to see them as you see them. I will try to observe things the way you would. I will not let you feel for a day that you have lost your sight.

By the end of the play, Al-Hakim highlights the result of the challenge between Oedipus as human being and God. God's will dominates, and Oedipus accepts man’s freedom to behave, acknowledging this freedom is controlled by God and cannot resist fate. Oedipus accuses Tiresias:

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92 Tawfiq Al-Hakim 114.

93 Tawfiq Al-Hakim 118.

94 Ahmed Etman 37.
… You wished to challenge heaven. You banished young Oedipus from the kingship and placed on the throne a man of your making. But this man you put up is the very same Oedipus you banished.\footnote{Tawfiq Al-Hakim 109.}

Therefore, no one can challenge or change fate. It will happen regardless how much effort one exerts to avoid it.

**The Parallels Between Al-Hakim’s Script and Egyptian Politics**

*Oedipus The King* by Al-Hakim critically reflects the political conditions in Egypt during the late forties. When Egypt was a kingdom, there were only two kinds of power, as Al-Hakim described them: the King’s power and British power. Al-Hakim’s Oedipus is a proxy for the Egyptian king during this period of time, controlled by his ministers and oblivious to the truth of his own manipulation. Additionally, Tiresias, who wants to change the facts and situation to suit his own will and beat every other force, mirrors Farouk’s court.\footnote{Ahmed Etman 79.}

Religious men did not try to gain political power or interfere in any decisions until the appearance of Hassan Al Banna (1906-1949), the Muslim brotherhood’s founding leader who mixed politics with religion.\footnote{Ghali Shoukri 249.} He founded his group in 1928 in Ismailia. To attract more educated people, Al Banna moved his activities to Cairo in 1934. His aim was overtly political. He manipulated religion to achieve his goal. He wanted to create an

\footnote{Tawfiq Al-Hakim 109.}
\footnote{Ahmed Etman 79.}
\footnote{Ghali Shoukri 249.}
Islamic state, its laws derived from the Holy Quran.\textsuperscript{98} 

In his book 	extit{The Egyptian Theatre after World War II} (1979), Sami Munir Hussein Amer asserts that Al-Hakim was inspired by an historical event. Amer argues that the relationship between Tiresias and Oedipus in Al-Hakim’s script parallels the relationship between King Farouk and the British government that interfered in Farouk’s political decisions. After Husain Seri’s government left power, the British government forced King Farouk to assign another government headed by El-Nahhas Pasha and his Party, El Wafd. Initially King Farouk refused, but British tanks surrounded Abdin Palace on February 4\textsuperscript{th}, 1942 and the British ambassador, Lord Kiran, warned King Farouk against neglecting their order. Capitulating to this act of British aggression, King Farouk agreed to appoint the Wafdist Government.\textsuperscript{99} 

Although both Al-Hakim’s Oedipus and King Farouk were the legal heirs, both of them ascended to power based on the lies of illegitimate forces. Directly after Farouk’s birth, King Fouad did not proclaim his son as the heir to the throne; instead he sent a telegram to the British King, King George V. King Fouad waited for the British King’s reply to decide his son’s situation. Thus, King Farouk was announced the heir to the throne by the British King. That was the first and last time in Egyptian history that a foreign power proclaimed the heir to the Egyptian throne.\textsuperscript{100} Additionally, Sheikh Al-

\textsuperscript{98} Peter Mansfield, 	extit{A History of the Middle East} (New York: Viking, 1991) 194.

\textsuperscript{99} Samy Mounir Hussein Amer. 	extit{Egyptian Theater After World War II Between Art And Criticism, Political, And Social} (Cairo: Dar Matbe’ Mohammadi, 1976).

Azher, the Grand Imam of El-Azhar Mosque, supported King Farouk in his rise to power. This is mirrored in the play when Oedipus is manipulated by Tiresias. As a result, both men, King Farouk and Oedipus, lost their power.

Similarities between Farouk I of Egypt (1920-1965) and King Oedipus encouraged Al-Hakim to adapt Sophocles’ *Oedipus*. Both of them are the kings’ sons, and both of them became kings after their father’s death. When Farouk I became king his mother, Nazli, was the queen; she supported him on his way the throne in his adolescence (around the age of seventeen). She used the power of religion to procure the throne for him, asking Sheikh El-Azhar, to help Farouk by announcing that he had reached the age of eighteen, using the Islamic calendar that is shorter than the ordinary calendar. The uncommon use of the Islamic calendar in this event demonstrates how a religious leader used an unconventional religious system to procure the throne for King Farouk I. Again, this is mirrored in Al-Hakim’s script when Oedipus is accused of murdering the previous king, Laius. Jocasta entreats:

JOCASTA. Oedipus! … Oedipus! Don’t exaggerate this way accusing yourself. You didn’t intend to kill him [Laius]… You didn’t know the identity of the man you killed.

OEDIPUS. Don’t defend me, Jocasta, for you are part of me. It's not right for us to undertake a defense of ourselves for the sins we have committed.

JOCASTA. If you refuse me and yourself this right, here is Tiresias to speak on your behalf.\footnote{Tawfiq Al-Hakim 85.}

Jocasta offers her help to save him and she offers Tiresias’s support as a religious man who can affect people’s decisions. Although she ignores the truth of their relationships
as mother and son, she defends him as a mother. Both mothers, historical and theatrical, go to extraordinary lengths to advocate for their sons.

Another similarity between Al-Hakim’s Oedipus and King Farouk is that both of them were exiled and died outside of their native countries. King Farouk I was exiled from Egypt and died in Italy at the age of forty-five. Suspicion cloaks his early death. According to his will, he asked his family to be buried in Egypt in a specific Mosque, but Nasser, the president of Egypt at that time initially refused. After the offer from King Faisal of Saudi Arabia to bury King Farouk I there, Nasser partially acceded to Farouk's will, but he was buried in a different Mosque under the cover of night. Some postulate that Nasser’s choice stemmed from the fear that Farouk I was so popular that he would be celebrated upon his death.

The relationship between Nasser and Farouk I differs from the relationship that Al-Hakim depicts in his script between Oedipus, the previously exiled king, and Creon, the king that followed him in governing Thebes. Creon tries to prevent Oedipus from exiling himself, as shown in the dialogue between Oedipus and Creon:

OEDIPUS. Allow me to go far away from Thebes. Expel me from your land like a curse.

CREON. Don’t ask that of me, Oedipus.... Do you have a last request Oedipus.102

Creon tries to comply with all of Oedipus’s wishes, but Nasser barely acquiesced to King Farouk’s desires.

102 Tawfiq Al-Hakim 116-117.
The Conflict Between Religion and Politics in Al-Hakim’s Script

In order to stress the relationship between religious men and politicians, Al-Hakim depicts that dynamic twice, through Oedipus and Tiresias as well as through Creon and the priest. Oedipus thought that the priest might behave with the newly-crowned Creon the same way Tiresias behaved with him. This underscores the importance of the relationship between religious men and politicians, asserting its continuity from one age to the other, during the days of King Farouk I and President Nasser, just as in the days of King Oedipus and Creon. Oedipus muses:

And you, Priest …Who knows? Perhaps you were, unconsciously, for Creon what Tiresias was for me …

In Al-Hakim’s script, the relationship between Tiresias, as a religious man, and Oedipus, as a king, differs from that relationship in Sophocles’s version. Al-Hakim depicts Tiresias as a shyster, a dishonest man. He hides his political goals under a religious veil. Conversely, in Sophocles's script Tiresias is a prophet, who can see the future and carry messages from God. He is considered as a bridge between the heavens and earth. Although Oedipus accused him of being an unethical person in Sophocles’ play, it is clear he is not one.

In both renditions, Tiresias is flawed. In Sophocles’s script, he knows the reason behind the plague but he refuses to tell it. He only reveals the reason behind the plague after Oedipus accuses him of being part of Creon's plot. However in Al Hakim’s play, Tiresias made up the oracle and was responsible for convincing Laius that his infant son was a threat, resulting in Laius ordering the murder of his son, Oedipus. Tiresias wants to

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103 Tawfiq Al-Hakim 109.
destroy Oedipus’s family and preys on the king, who can be easily controlled. This is revealed in the dialogue between Oedipus and Tiresias. The former says:

But you are a man blinded by delusion. You don’t truly strive for public glory. You want, however, to be the fountainhead of events, the source of upheavals, the motive force changing and replacing human destinies and natural elements. I see in you this cloaked presumption. I read in your soul this hidden conceit!\(^\text{104}\)

In his script, Al-Hakim repeatedly stresses the role of religious men in supporting or supplanting the king many times. First, Tiresias helps Oedipus to reach the throne. Oedipus incriminates Tiresias:

He is the one who in former times inspired Laius to kill his son in the cradle by leading his father to believe that it was heaven, which revealed to him that the child would kill his father if he grew up. For Tiresias, this dangerous blind man, resolved with a will of iron to deprive the throne of Thebes of its legitimate heir. He wished the throne to go to a foreigner. What he wished for has come to pass… He did that in order to put on the throne with his mortal hand a person who was the offspring of his head and the product of his thought.\(^\text{105}\)

Al-Hakim explores this motif again in the dialogue between Tiresias and Oedipus, Tiresias chides:

…It is the danger rising round you … The priests don’t like your way of thinking. They are disturbed by your mentality. They are comfortable with a person like Creon. The situation in Thebes today is one, which could alarm a king. It is propitious for a revolt. For every trial, which shakes the masses shakes at the every same time the props of the throne.\(^\text{106}\)

Once again this can be seen in the dialogue between Oedipus and Tiresias. Tiresias proclaims:

\(^{104}\) Tawfiq Al-Hakim 56.

\(^{105}\) Tawfiq Al-Hakim 54.

\(^{106}\) Tawfiq Al-Hakim 51-52.
... I see no God in Existence save our volition. I willed and to that extent was divine… I truly compelled Thebes to accept the king I wished for it. I got what I wished for.¹⁰⁷

That highlights the power of religious men in replacing or supporting a king according their own will.

The theatre's aim in Sophocles’s era was both political and religious. Therefore, in Sophocles’s script, the oracles, the messengers between Gods and people, are very respected. But Al-Hakim continuously depicts Oedipus in doubt. Oedipus keeps investigating and asking for evidence to prove the accuracy of the oracles. Therefore, the religious men in Al-Hakim’s play prefer a person like Creon, who respects and believes in them without asking about or investigating what they said. This is clear in the dialogue between Oedipus and the Priest. The latter ruminates on Creon:

He [Creon], as we all know, is a man who does not debate reality nor dispute actuality. He will not say to the priests in the temple at Delphi: Furnish me tangible evidence that this oracle truly came down to you from God and did not originate in your minds.¹⁰⁸

To highlight the relationship between religion and politics, Al-Hakim portrayed two opposite and severe characters, as examples of extremes to illustrate their respective dangers on society. The first one is Creon, who has blind obedience to the Temple and his trust in them is endless. The second character is Oedipus, who lost his faith in the Temple after Tiresias lied about the ordinary lion that Oedipus killed and convinces people that it was a monster, which led Oedipus to struggle with his belief.

Ahmed Etman, the Egyptian critic, asserts that Al-Hakim in King Oedipus

¹⁰⁷ Tawfiq Al-Hakim 55.
¹⁰⁸ Tawfiq Al-Hakim 50.
succeeds as an Arabic writer in using the Greek myth to depict Egyptian political conditions during late forties and early fifties. He achieves a successful advance in adapting Greek theatre in forms relevant to the Arabic reader.\textsuperscript{109}

\textit{The Tragedy of Oedipus} by Ali Ahmed Bakathir (1949)

The exploitation of religion to achieve political aims is also clearly dramatized in \textit{The Tragedy of Oedipus} (1949) by Ali Ahmed Bakathir. Bakathir wrote his script directly after the 1948 defeat in Palestine when Israel defeated the Arabic Army. Inspired by these actual events, Bakathir depicted Oedipus as a prototype of the Arabic Army, filled with shame, without a future, and disgraced.\textsuperscript{110} That disgrace not only affects Oedipus and Jocasta, it influences their offspring. Oedipus muses about his children:

So why should my shame follow them all their lives, so that they can’t hold up their heads in front of people?\textsuperscript{111}

In his script, Bakathir depicts Oedipus through the lens of Islam and the political perspective of 1948. Oedipus is a victim of an evil plan from the first day of his existence and throughout the rest of his life. That evil plan was put in motion by the charlatan priest, Lucasius, who used his power as the High Priest of the Temple at Delphi to control the situation pushing Oedipus to kill his father and marry his mother in order to get some financial benefits under the guise of religion. Lucasius profits from the conflict between

\textsuperscript{109} Ahmed Etman 80.

\textsuperscript{110} Marvin Carlson 7.

Polybus, King of Corinth, and Laius, Oedipus's father and Thebes' king, to achieve his evil plans. Bakathir depicts Lucasius as a dishonest religious man who is aware that Oedipus murdered King Laius; he does not reveal that truth as long as he benefits from it.

The conflict in Bakathir's script is between the corrupt priest, Lucasius, and the benevolent priest, Tiresias. In order to emphasize the power of religion and its effect on people, Bakathir creates these two religious but opposite characters. Bakathir creates the character of Lucasius as a kind of mirror, or double, of Al-Hakim’s evil-doing Tiresias.

In Bakathir’s play, Tiresias is an honest religious man who was exiled from the Temple of Delphi for disagreeing with the immoral plan created by Lucasius. Tiresias’s weakness lays in waiting seventeen years before revealing the truth to Oedipus. He tried to prevent Lucasius from achieving his evil plans: he warned Laius, but he did not warn Oedipus after being in Thebes, before marrying his mother Jocasta. That did happen because Tiresias was exiled and forbidden from being in Thebes. Jocasta warned Oedipus about letting Tiresias in the Palace. She says:

Do not let him in. If the High Priest knew you allowed him into your palace, he would stir up the people against you. I wonder how this cursed man dared to enter Thebes, and why the people didn’t stone him to death.\(^\text{112}\)

Jocasta’s words express people’s trust in religious men, how they blindly follow their order in Islamic society, especially when they claim that a Muslim becomes an atheist or does not believe in God. In this case, people usually take severe actions toward that accused atheist. These actions are not related to Islam because God gives people the freedom to believe or not believe in him. Additionally, it is only God’s role to judge

\(^{112}\) Ali Ahmed Bakathir 137-38.
people. Therefore, it is forbidden in Islam to play God’s role and judge others’ behaviors. That can be seen in the Holy Quran:

To Allah belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth. Whether you show what is within yourselves or conceal it, Allah will bring you to account for it. Then He will forgive whom He wills and punish whom He wills, and Allah is over all things competent.  

Bakathir adds more details to highlight the impact of exploiting religion for further personal gain. To stress these ideas, Bakathir repeats the same story adding new characters like Lucasius. Bakathir asserts that the conflict between Polybus and Lauis is made by Lucasius, and his men benefit financially from this. There are some similarities and differences between Sophocles’s script and Bakathir's version. Bakathir highlights the impact of corrupt religious men in affecting the political situation. As it appears in the script, Tiresias asks Polybus:

TIRESIAS. So would you tell them who were disrupting the peace between you and Laius?

POLYBUS. The high Priest and his men.  

Additionally, Bakathir portrays Lucasius as a traitor, who would do anything for his personal gain. Lucasius advises Polybus to benefit from the current Theban situation by invading it. Polybus announces:

He [Lucasius] wrote to me inciting me to attack your city, occupy it with my soldiers, and adding it to my own kingdom, arguing that since Thebes was distracted by famine and plague, attacking it would be easy and occupying it would be effortless.


115 Ali Ahmed Bakathir 268.
Moreover, Bakathir replaced the conflict between man and the gods, as it appears in Sophocles's script, with the strife between the corrupt priest, Lucasius, and the benevolent one, Tiresias. Bakathir’s shift reflects the belief that it is forbidden in Islam to stand against God's will. In order to save the main story, Bakathir keeps some actions, such as being raised by King Polybus and Queen Merope in Corinth, who adopted Oedipus, beating the beast, marrying his mother, and discovering the truth by the end of the play. On the other hand, Bakathir changes key aspects and adds new characters to highlight his new perspectives.

The power of religion and its effect on people appears in many scenes in the play. For example, Creon repeatedly asks Jocasta to convince Oedipus not to resist the Temple. Creon implores:

But a word from the High Priest could turn the people against him. I do not know how Oedipus could ignore such an obvious thing... the people would not accept on the throne a leader who does not believe in the Temple.\footnote{Ali Ahmed Bakathir 128-29.}

Jocasta warns Oedipus, “…But still they will not hesitate to follow the orders of the Temple and its oracle.”\footnote{Ali Ahmed Bakathir 132.} Jocasta’s warning underscores the power of religious men on people in the play paralleling the Arabic and Islamic community. Exploiting that power can be also seen in the dialogue between Tiresias and Lucasius, Tiresias argues:

You told each of them that he was fulfilling an oracle from heaven, abusing their belief in God and in the Temple to execute your plan and act in your farce.\footnote{Ali Ahmed Bakathir 246.}
In comparing Al-Hakim’s and Bakathir’s versions of *Oedipus* a central question emerges. If the plague is the result of the forbidden relationship between Oedipus and his mother, why did it take seventeen years for it to happen? Nothing changes when Oedipus marries his mother and has four children with her. Al-Hakim does not answer that question in his play. On the other hand, Bakathir responds to the absence of social justice between the Temple and poor people, constructing this as the reason for that plague.

Oedipus explains to the people of Thebes:

> It is because I let the money of the nation accumulate in the hands of those priests, who kept it from you while you were dying of hunger. This is the reason for your suffering, and today I decided to confiscate the Temple's money and distribute it equally among you.\(^{119}\)

Marvin Carlson argues that in writing another version of *Oedipus* Bakathir was influenced by Said Qutb’s *Social Justice in Islam*. Carlson asserts: “Sayed Qutb’s book *Social Justice in Islam (Al-Adala al-iqtima’iyya fil-Islam)* was highly influential on Bakathir and his generation and might almost serve as a guide to the politics of Bakathir’s *Oedipus.*”\(^{120}\) As a result of the plague, Oedipus tries to help his poor people by appropriating the properties and money of the Temple in order to distribute them to the suffering people. Consequently, the High Priest stands against him and tries to benefit from the secrets he has hidden in order to prevent Oedipus from appropriating the Temple’s properties. In the meantime, Tiresias tries to help Oedipus reach the truth. He supports him in his decision against the Temple, leading to his exile and prohibition from

\(^{119}\) Ali Ahmed Bakathir 223.

\(^{120}\) Marvin Carlson 8.
being there or even in the whole country.

Lucasius claims that Tiresias is an atheist to discredit him, so the people will not trust him or even listen to him. But because Oedipus does not trust the Temple, he listens to Tiresias and discovers his own real relationship with Jocasta. Lucasius also tries to push Oedipus, claiming that Laius’s murderer is Tiresias for two reasons: to put an end to the only person who stood against him and to force Oedipus not to take the Temple’s properties. Lucasius declares to Athenians:

**LUCASIUS.** Your king Oedipus knows this person better than I do. And the God asked me to let Oedipus tell you who he is. [He indicates Tiresias]

**OEDIPUS.** People of Thebes, witness that your Priest is pressing me to claim that this person is Tiresias, but I will never do that. 

When Oedipus refuses to sacrifice Tiresias to save himself, Lucasias hatches another evil plan to save the Temple’s properties. He declares that Oedipus is an atheist who wants to attack God’s money. Lucasius uses the guaranteed weapon: the religious one. Lucasius asserts:

People of Thebes, the Temple’s money is the Gods’ money, and Oedipus does not believe in the Gods you believe in. He wants to confiscate it so that more suffering will come upon you.

Another difference from Sophocles’s script is that Jocasta knows from the start that Oedipus murdered her first husband. Laius’s servant tells her, but she asks him not to reveal that truth. She married Laius when she was almost a child, while he was old. She never loved him. Instead, she dreamed about the day she could set herself free and marry

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121 Ali Ahmed Bakathir 221.

122 Ali Ahmed Bakathir 223.
someone her age. When she saw Oedipus for the first time, she thought that her wish had come true, refusing to think about his guilt in killing her first husband. Jocasta explains her real relationship with her first husband, King Lauis, “I want you to know, Oedipus, that Laius married me before I reached puberty.” Marrying at an early age was common in Arabic culture in the past, and it was also common in some villages. Usually the father gives his daughter to the groom’s family until she reaches puberty. Then her husband can marry her. In 2012, the Moroccan Islamist Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdul Rahman Al-Maghraoui, an extremist religious leader who uses the Quran and Sunnah (the practice and teaching by prophet Mohamed) to proselytize, issued a fatwa that gives fathers the right to marry their nine-year-old daughters to whomever they wish, The title of the fatwa is "Age of the legitimate marriage." This fatwa is far from the teachings of Islam: many do not think that Islamic society will accept it. Marriage in Islam has rules that this fatwa contradicts. First among them is that the bride has to accept the groom’s proposal and nine year old girls are not mature enough to accept or refuse a critical decision like that. That can be seen when the Prophet Shuaib, as a father of two daughters, asked Prophet Moses to propose to one of them:

He said, "Indeed, I wish to wed you one of these, my two daughters, on [the condition] that you serve me for eight years; but if you complete ten, it will be [as a favor] from you. And I do not wish to put you in difficulty. You will find me, if Allah wills, from among the righteous."

This verse summarizes the conditions of marriage in Islam. It shows that the Wali, a

123 Ali Ahmed Bakathir 132.


bride’s male guardian, has to represent her. The consent has to be gained from both groom and bride. The Mahr (dowry) is mandatory and it can be paid before or during marriage. To ask for an excessive amount of Mahr is not recommended.

Although Jocasta has a strong relationship with the Temple, she does this to avoid upsetting the High Priest. She bribes the Temple with her offerings and sacrifices not because of her beliefs, but to lower the Priest’s voice and ensure that the Priest does not reveal the truth that Oedipus is Lauis’s killer. Fear leads Jocasta to donate the treasury’s money to the Temple until the priest has almost all of the money under his control. She informs Oedipus, “Do you think I would have presented the Temple with those offerings and sacrifices if I didn’t fear that the High Priest could reveal our secret?” Similarly, in the dialogue between Jocasta and Tiresias, she says, “You priests are all liars. Your only interest is hunting people, ruining their lives, and demolishing their happiness with the lies that you make up.”

Bakathir depicts Oedipus as an atheist, who does not believe in God at all. He only believes in himself. Oedipus warns Creon:

(Angrily) Beware Creon! What is consulting the Temple but merely words from some powerless person to a God even more powerless than he is. Do you call this action and call what I plan to do words?

Another example of atheism can be found in the dialogue between Oedipus and Jocasta.

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128 Ali Ahmed Bakathir 130.
Oedipus says, “Damn the Temple, its oracle, its gods and its priests.” In his conversation with Tiresias, Oedipus says, “God! Do you believe in this lie that the priests created to take people’s money?”

In Bakathir’s play, Oedipus is told that he is the son of Laius and tries to avoid details about his real father, Laius, as in Sophocles’s script. Oedipus ignores the High Priest's advice and goes to meet his father in order to convince him to forgive him. He promises to be obedient and not kill him as the oracle foretold. But because the oracle was false, and the High Priest, who invented it, warns Laius about Oedipus's arrival, Laius tries to kill Oedipus before Oedipus tries to kill him, as Lucasius claims. Although Oedipus has been told that Jocasta is his real mother, he marries her, believing that a very young woman like her could not be his mother.

In his script, Bakathir confirms the idea of being responsible for one’s deeds as long as Muslims have the freedom to behave. That can be seen in the dialogue between Oedipus and Tiresias. Oedipus blames God for not preventing bad deeds that destroy others’ lives. On the other hand, Bakathir, as it appears through Tiresias’s point of view, only blames people because they have will and mind. Tiresias blames Oedipus, not God, “God does not inflict injustice on anyone; people do that to themselves.”

Tiresias continuous:

You could have, actually should have told the people the truth about yourself. You could have said that the high Priest claimed such and such,
but you didn’t know much about your lineage. You could have said “So what do you say, people of Thebes? You agreed that I become your king, and gave me the right to marry the widowed queen. There is nothing to stop me from accepting the throne, but I cannot marry the queen until I know for sure that I am not Laius’ child who was given away to be murdered.”

Bakathir blames Oedipus for not investigating the truth. In Islam if there is doubt about any issue, a Muslim has to search to be sure it is Halal (permitted by God) and not Haram (forbidden by God). It is preferable to leave any action if there is a doubt about it as prophet Mohamed advised in his Hadith:

> On the authority of Aboo `Abdillaah an-Nu’maan the son of Basheer (radiAllaahu ‘anhumaa), who said: I heard the Messenger of Allaah (sallAllaahu alayhi wa sallam) say: That which is lawful is clear and that which is unlawful is clear, and between the two of them are doubtful matters about which many people do not know. Thus he who avoids doubtful matters clears himself in regard to his religion and his honour, but he who falls into doubtful matters [eventually] falls into that which is unlawful, like the shepherd who pastures around a sanctuary, all but grazing therein. Truly every king has a sanctuary, and truly Allaah’s sanctuary is His prohibitions. Truly in the body there is a morsel of flesh, which, if it be whole, all the body is whole, and which, if it is diseased, all of [the body] is diseased. Truly, it is the heart. [Related by al-Bukhaari and Muslim.]”

Like Al-Hakim’s Oedipus, Bakathir’s Oedipus neither solved the riddle nor killed the monster. The monster was fake. It was a toy made by the Priest to achieve his plan and put Oedipus on Thebes’s throne. As Tiresias in Al-Hakim’s script invent the story of the sphinx, Lucasius creates that false figure to reach his goal and destroy Oedipus’s family. However, in Bakathir’s play, Oedipus is not aware of that fact. He only knows


that he killed Thebes’s King and married his wife. Tiresias says:

This monster doesn’t exist at all, Oedipus. It was a creation of the priests, hiding one of them inside it to move it and speak the riddle. The High Priest ordered him to die when he met you, and he obeyed so that you would get the prize and earn the throne and marry…

Oedipus searches for his real father and mother to prove that the oracles and the priests are just lies and liars. The High Priest claims that Oedipus is the man who killed Lauis and married his mother, Jocasta, but Oedipus does not believe him. Oedipus wishes to know his real father and mother in order to prove the Priest’s lie. Oedipus says:

Ah… I wish I knew who my parents are! Then I could prove to people the lies of the priests by undeniable proof. If my lineage were known, the priests wouldn’t have dared make up such lies.

Instead of blinding himself at the end of the play, Bakathir’s Oedipus enters a dark area at night, which represents going into the unknown supported by his daughter Antigone. After declaring the truth in front of his people and revealing Lucasius’s treachery, Oedipus is forgiven by his society and supported by Polybus, who offers money to help in the disaster. Polybus also gives Oedipus the right to be the king of Corinth after Polybus's death. But Oedipus cannot tolerate life after what has happened, especially Jocasta's dramatic death. Thus he decides to leave at night, warning that no one should follow him. The Egyptian critic Selaiha wrote:

Bakatheer's Oedipus leaves Thebes (and the stage), he has become a devout Muslim (like his author) who believes that only through Islam can

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136 Bakatheer or Bakathir.
his nation triumph and find justice and prosperity.\textsuperscript{137}

By adding new characters to his script, Bakathir adds more details and highlights the power of elders in his society to reflect their role in the Arabic society. Additionally, the trial scene shows how the Arabic people solved their problems at that time by gathering in a place together accompanied by the ruler and some of the elders.

In his script, Bakathir sends a clear message to the Arabic and Islamic community. He encourages people to use their minds to evaluate whatever has been told to them, regardless of who said it (a politician or a religious man). He condemns exploiting power in general, especially religious power in achieving personal benefits.

Tiresias declares:

\begin{quote}
People of Thebes, God created you and gave you the mind to evaluate right and wrong and discriminate between good and evil and know what is helpful to you and what is harmful. Do not stop using your minds because of whatever a priest or King says.\textsuperscript{138}
\end{quote}

Again, Tiresias addresses his speech to the Thebans:

\begin{quote}
I will reveal to you the secret so that no one after you will be deceived by a charlatan like him who abuses the sacred and trades on the faith of believers and uses God’s love, which is one of the noblest feelings, as a tool to manipulate people to commit the worst of crimes and the most horrible sins.\textsuperscript{139}
\end{quote}

Additionally, Bakathir depicts Creon as a full but credulous believer. He obeys the Temple blindly. He never doubts or argues their orders. Bakathir asserts that these kinds of people help the corrupted religious men in achieving their evil goals. The Priest

\textsuperscript{137} Nehad Selaiha n.p.

\textsuperscript{138} Ali Ahmed Bakathir 223-24.

\textsuperscript{139} Ali Ahmed Bakathir 246.
likes Creon for his blind obedience. Therefore, he intends to announce him as a King instead of Oedipus, if Oedipus insists on distributing the treasury’s money to the people.

Tiresias informs Creon:

> It was right that they erased your vision. Go away from me, you foolish, corrupt man. By the heavens, if it weren’t for the likes of you, this charlatan priest wouldn’t have been able to claim that he spoke for heaven and to do with the people as he please, while they believed in him and praised him.\(^{140}\)

As it appears in his script, Bakathir declares that religious men are just human beings. They might be true; they might be false. People have to use their minds before obeying them because they are not gods.

Finally, there are many versions of Oedipus in the Arabic theatre. Most of them have a political aspect, which replaced the forbidden conflict with God in Islamic society. Instead of locating conflict between man and unseen forces or God, the conflict is usually between human forces hiding under the power of religion. In addition, most of the Arabic playwrights adjusted the original script to become more relevant to the Arabic and Islamic reader or audience. They added current issues and made their versions more relevant to the audience’s culture. Thus, the prominent Egyptian critic Nehad Selaiha asserts: “A Muslim Oedipus can only grapple with earthly issues and fight sordid politicians and mean-spirited foes.”\(^{141}\) The political aspect is emphasized to avoid the forbidden conflict with God in Islamic society. Selaiha also declares, “Oedipus invariably appears as a good, benevolent king, misled, corrupted, or led astray by priests and

\(^{140}\) Ali Ahmed Bakathir 209.

\(^{141}\) Nehad Selaiha n.p.
courtiers, while Tiresias (or Luskias\textsuperscript{142} in Bakatheer's case) and Creon always play the villain.\textsuperscript{143} However, in Bakathir’s play, Creon was very honest. He knew nothing about Lucasius’s evil plans and refused replacing Oedipus. Creon replies to Lucasius’s offer to be the King instead of Oedipus, he says:

\begin{quote}
Curse you! What are you saying? This is a betrayal of King Oedipus. I can’t accept this betrayal by you or by myself. People of Thebes, I should have hidden out of shame because of what happened in my family, not to appear in front of you or utter a word.\textsuperscript{144}
\end{quote}

Creon also replies to Oedipus’s offer to follow him in ruling Thebes; he says:

\begin{quote}
No, Oedipus. Thebes will not accept another ruler, and no one can lead it but you. Whatever happened, happened. You purified yourself with penance and the great sacrifice that only you could bear. As for me, I swear by God that I would rather be dead than sit in your place. I will always be your servant and ally.\textsuperscript{145}
\end{quote}

Therefore Creon was not interested in replacing Oedipus. He is not a part of the evil plans to destroy him.

\textbf{Section 2: The Sultan’s Dilemma by Al-Hakim Portraying President Nasser’s Reign}

\textbf{The Relationship Between Nasser and the Muslim Brotherhood}

In this section, the conflict between religion and politics during Nasser’s reign will be highlighted. Like in \textit{Oedipus}, that tension is also exposed in Al-Hakim’s \textit{The Sultan’s Dilemma}. To fully understand the strife between religious men and politicians,

\textsuperscript{142} Luskias or Lucasius.

\textsuperscript{143} Nehad Selaiha n.p.

\textsuperscript{144} Ali Ahmed Bakathir 233.

\textsuperscript{145} Ali Ahmed Bakathir 269.
the relationship between Nasser and the Muslim Brotherhood has to be investigated.

President Abdel Nasser ruled Egypt from 1954 until his death in 1970. There were several unsuccessful attempts to assassinate him by Muslim groups, trying to seize power in a coup d’état. One of these attempts occurred in Alexandria in 1954 and was repeated unsuccessfully again 11 years later in 1965, using cutting edge technology: advanced remote bombs. Before these assassination attempts, the relationship between Nasser and the Muslim Brotherhood was amiable.

There was a close relationship between Nasser and the Muslim Brotherhood before and during the 1952 revolution. Nasser led the Free Officers movement, consisting of military officers who wanted to put an end to the chaos under King Farouk and British occupation. That movement was born out of the July 23rd 1952 revolution. Al-Demerdash Al-Okali, an important member of the Muslim Brotherhood’s secret organization, claims that Nasser was responsible for the military sector of the Muslim Brotherhood’s secret organization. On the other hand in his book *Asrar Al-Thawra Al-Misria (Secrets of Egyptian Revolution)*, President Sadat asserts that the Free Officers Movement under Nasser’s leadership had no relationship with any organizations outside the military. According to Abdel-Azeem Ramadan, the Muslim Brotherhood supported Nasser twice. The first instance was during the Cairo Fire on January 26, 1952. The riots sparked the fire, a reaction to the killing of 50 police officers in Ismailia by the British

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occupation. 750 vital venues in Cairo were burned including the Cairo Opera House. During that time, Saleh Abo Rakik and Hassan Ashmawi, members of the Muslim Brotherhood’s executive office (guidance office), were asked by Nasser and the other Free Officers to hide weapons. As Peter Mansfield mentions in his book *A History of the Middle East*, “The Free Officers… had a clear concept of what they wanted to do – rid the country of foreign (mainly British) influences, eliminate the power of the landlords and the monarchy, and end the corruption of political life.” He asserts that a small number of Free Officers were Marxists, and a limited number of them were loyal to the Muslim Brotherhood, and the rest could be considered nationalist. When these Free Officers were informed that their offices would be inspected, they asked the Muslim Brotherhood’s guidance office to hide their weapons. Later, these weapons were used as evidence in Nasser’s assassination case against the Muslim Brotherhood. The second situation occurred when the Muslim Brotherhood guarded the places of worship and other facilities during the 1952 revolution. Thus the Muslim Brotherhood was aware of the revolution’s plan. These two situations demonstrate the close relationship between Nasser as the Free Officers’ leader, and the Muslim Brotherhood.

According to Ramadan, the reason behind the Muslim Brotherhood’s support of the Free Officers and Nasser was that the Muslim Brotherhood wanted to share political

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149 Peter Mansfield 244.

150 Abdel Azeem Ramadan 109.
power while hiding behind Nasser and his group. The Muslim Brotherhood group was afraid to be responsible for making decisions during the unstable beginnings of the revolution. Moreover, they tried to interfere in Nasser’s decisions. The Muslim Brotherhood’s general leader Hassan Al-Hodabi suggested that in establishing the Agrarian Reform Law, the mandated maximum amount of the land that could be owned by anyone be increased from the 200 acres decreed by Nasser to 500 acres. The rest would be distributed among poor people. When Nasser refused his suggestion, Al-Hodabi responded by making a condition to support the July revolution. Al-Hodabi informed Nasser that before he made any decisions, they would have to be approved by him. But Nasser refused, which upset the Muslim Brothers.\textsuperscript{151}

The second clash between the Muslim Brotherhood and Nasser occurred when the Muslim Brotherhood refused to participate with two seats in the new government. The Muslim Brotherhood thought that they would be a minority and that the revolution would benefit from their limited presence, which would gain the support of all the Muslim Brotherhood’s supporters.\textsuperscript{152} Therefore, their aim was to reach the total, not partial, power.

Nasser repeatedly exhorted the Muslim Brotherhood to dissolve their secret organization, but they resisted. They pretended that they dissolved their secret organization, but they only changed leaders. Nasser believed that an organization like the Muslim Brotherhood, especially with its army officers and policemen, would threaten his

\textsuperscript{151} Abedl-Azeem Ramadan 111.

\textsuperscript{152} Abedl-Azeem Ramadan 118.
political power. Thus, Nasser feared the presence of a secret army inside the Egyptian Army. Additionally, after the second communication between the British Commissioner and the Muslim Brotherhood, Nasser decided to destroy the growing power of the Muslim Brotherhood by enforcing a preexisting law that allowed him to eradicate all dissenting political parties. Nasser’s use of law and his betrayal of his former allies find dramatic expression in Al-Hakim’s script, *The Sultan’s Dilemma*.

*The Sultan’s Dilemma* by Tawfiq Al-Hakim (1960)

Unlike *Oedipus the King* rooted in Western theatre and myth, Al-Hakim derived many of his other plays from the Egyptian history and folklore. Rejecting Western hegemony, Al-Hakim started creating Eastern stories and plays. Although Tawfiq Al-Hakim continued to write adaptations of plays from the Western canon such as *Pygmalion* (1942) and *King Oedipus* (1949), he also looked to his country’s own histories and myths. For example, a story from the holy Qur’an inspired Al-Hakim in writing *People of The Cave* (1933). The Egyptian myth of Isis and Osiris inspired his play *Isis*. From Arabic folklore, ‘the one thousand and one Arabian nights,’ Al-Hakim wrote *Shahrazad* (1934).

Although *The Sultan’s Dilemma* is rooted in Egyptian history, the Egyptian critic Ahmed Etman claims that Al-Hakim was inspired by Hercules in drawing the Al-Sultan’s character in his play. According to Al-Hakim himself, he was inspired by the fact that

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153 Abedl-Azeem Ramadan 144.

154 Ahmed Etman 215.
Nasser ignored all laws. Nasser behaved as he wished and desired. Similarly, Al-Hakim’s play suggests to Nasser, as Cadi does with the Sultan in his play, to apply the laws instead of breaking them. Cadi says, “It is certainly a characteristic of glory that a sultan should submit to the law as do the rest of people.”^155 Thus, Al-Hakim portrayed Al-Sultan as vacillating between using the power of the sword or applying the rule of the law, mirroring Nasser and critiquing his rejection of “glory.”^156 According to Hutchins, Al-Hakim said that he wrote *The Sultan’s Dilemma* to deliver a message to Nasser, which Nasser received by reading Al-Hakim’s script. In it rests all the feelings of being shattered and the anxiety that filled Egyptians after they were defeated in three continuous wars, two of which happened under Nasser’s reign.^157

Al-Hakim portrayed Al-Sultan as very popular and beloved by his people, just as Nasser was at the time. When Nasser stepped down after the 1967 defeat by Israel, people wept and demonstrated, begging him not to leave them. In the play, the Lady comments about Al-Sultan’s relinquishment of the throne saying:

I do not believe you would really do that… Even if you wanted to do it not a single person in the country would accept it, or would permit you to embark upon such an action.^158

Therefore, the Lady, as Al-Hakim thought and portrayed, was suspicious about Nasser’s

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156 Ghali Shokri 235.


158 Tawfiq Al-Hakim 159.
decision to step down. She claims that it is just a camouflage to comfort people as Nasser later did in the 1967 defeat. It seems that Al-Hakim foreshadowed this in his 1960 script.

In order to avoid direct confrontation with Nasser, Al-Hakim set his play in a different time, the Mamluks’ era in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. During that time, white slaves, or Mamluks, were sent to Egypt to be trained by the military to stand against the Christian Crusades. In 1260, the Mamluks succeeded in reaching the Egyptian throne under Baibars’s lead. In order to become a legal Sultan, the selected slave had to be set free before reaching the throne. In Al-Hakim’s narrative the previous Sultan dies suddenly before setting the current Sultan free, rendering the Sultan illegitimate. Additionally, Al-Hakim poses a general question that fits every ruler at any time. He questions if the current political problems could be solved using the law or the sword. Although Al-Hakim addressed his question to whomever might be in power, it is a thinly veiled challenge to Nasser.

Instead of portraying the Lady as Shahrazad, Al-Hakim portrayed Al-Sultan as Shahrazad, who has to spend the whole night telling stories waiting for the dawn to decide his fate and his life. On the other hand, he depicted the Lady as Shahrayar, who controls the future of the Sultan. Even though the dawn usually is symbolic of a new start, Al-Hakim’s script reverses this symbol. *Al-Fajr* (dawn) plays a main role in this play. The religious man, the Muezzin (who loudly calls for the five Islamic prayers), was

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160 William M. Hutchins 70.
waiting to make the call for the Fajr (dawn) prayer. The executioner’s orders are to execute the condemned person after the Fajr’s call to prayer. That person will be executed for daring to claim that the Sultan does not have the right to rule the country because the Sultan is a slave. Thus, the condemned man’s life “hangs on to the Muezzin’s vocal chords” as he mentions in the play. The Executioner retorts, “At dawn. I’ve told you this more than ten times. At dawn I’ll carry out the sentence on you. Now do you understand?” The Executioner continues:

It’s the Muezzin who knows. When he goes up to the minaret of this mosque and gives the call to the dawn prayer, I’ll raise my sword and swipe off your head—those are the orders.

On the other hand, the Lady, who bought the Sultan at the auction, put one condition to sign the manumission deed. That condition is to keep the Sultan at her house until the dawn. Thus, al-Fajr stands simultaneously as an end, executing the condemned person, and as a new start, manumitting the Sultan. The Lady says:

And when the Muezzin gives the call to dawn prayer from his minaret here, I shall sign the deed of manumission and Your Majesty will be free.

The role of the religious men in Al-Hakim’s script is minimal. It reflects their situation during Nasser’s reign. In the script, there is a tavern in the same street that has the mosque. That tavern is full of people; there are few people in the mosque praying.

162 Tawfiq Al-Hakim 96.
163 Tawfiq Al-Hakim 96.
164 Tawfiq Al-Hakim 149.
Muezzin says about the mosque:

There are only two men there. One of them is a stranger to this city and has taken up his abode in the mosque, whilst the other is a beggar who has sought shelter in it from the night cold. All are now deep in sleep and seldom pay attention to the call to dawn prayers. Only those get up whom I wake with a kick so that they may perform their religious duties.\(^\text{165}\)

A few people are going to the mosque for reasons rather than praying, and there is no excuse: people are already freely enjoying their time in the tavern, thus indicating the reduced role and power of religion during Nasser’s regime.

Being a slave to the previous Sultan, who died before manumitting him, makes the new Sultan a property of the national treasury.\(^\text{166}\) It is a conflict of legitimacy.

Because Sultan’s legitimacy was under attack, religion was manipulated to save the Sultan’s power. Essentially both of Al-Hakim’s plays, *Oedipus the King* and *The Sultan’s Dilemma*, show people undercutting the principles of their legitimacy to increase their personal gain. In order to save the Sultan’s power, the Vizier commanded the execution of the condemned man before spreading the news of his status to the people.

Thus they exploit religion to save the Sultan’s legality.

To illustrate how it is the sword and not the law that saves the Sultan’s power, Al-Hakim borrows an example from the Fatimid era (909-1171). When the exploitation of religion to reach the throne failed Al-Mu’izz Li-Din Allah Al-Fatimi (953-975), a real character from history, he succeeded by using the power of the sword. That example declares that being aggressive is the second stage after failing to exploit religion in order

\(^\text{165}\) Tawfiq Al-Hakim 109.

to reach any political goals. Vizier says:

It is not necessary for the person ruling to be carrying around documents and proofs. We have the strongest and most striking example of this in the Fatimid dynasty. Every one of us remembers what Al-Mu‘izz Li-Din Allah Al-Fatimi did. One day he came along claiming he was descended from the prophet (the prayers of God be upon him), and when the people did not believe him, he went at them with drawn sword and opened up his coffers of gold, saying ‘These are my forbears, these my ancestors’. The people kept silent and he reigned and his children reigned after him quietly and peaceably for centuries long.167

Al-Hakim condemns all excuses for human beings to be violent. Even animals only become aggressive when they are hungry or scared. But (some) people attack others to gain political or religious power.168

The argument between the Cadi, as a religious man who is responsible for applying the law, and the Sultan summarizes the real situation between Nasser and Said Quteb. Quteb’s situation ends with his execution by Nasser. In The Sultan’s Dilemma, the Vizier warns the Sultan against executing the Cadi. He says:

He will become the living symbol of the spirit of truth and principles – and many a glorious martyr has more effect and influence on the conscience of peoples than a tyrannical king.169

Al-Sultan El-Ha'er (The Sultan's Dilemma) shows political leaders detrimentally influencing religious leaders. The religious man, the Muezzin, was forced to make the call for the Fajr (dawn) prayer at midnight instead of waiting for the sunrise. Cadi and Vizier want to accelerate the time to set the Sultan free, to put an end to the rumors about

167 Tawfiq Al-Hakim 118.
168 Ghali Shoukri 259.
169 Tawfiq Al-Hakim 123.
him being in the Lady’s (read the prostitute’s) house.

CADI. It must be made to come now – at once!

VIZIER. Who? What?

CADI. The dawn!170

Muezzin (whispering to himself), “I’m at loss about this dawn – sometimes I’m asked to put it back and sometimes I’m asked to bring it forward.”171 This comic aside shows that prayer becomes a game of back and forth. The dawn was accelerated twice, to achieve two opposite gains, life and death. In both cases the purpose was saving the Sultan’s power. Through his script, Al-Hakim criticizes the myriad ways that politicians manipulate religion to reach their political aims. Moreover, no one cared or noticed when the Muezzin did not call for the Fajr prayer the first time, to execute the condemned man. When Cadi and Vizier discovered that the Muezzin had not made the call, they did not punish him. Instead they benefited from it, forcing him to call for the Fajr prayer at midnight to set the Sultan free. In the previous two Arabic versions of Oedipus, religious men manipulated politicians but in The Sultan’s Dilemma politicians manipulated religious practice. Thus the relationship between religious men and politicians seems to be a two-way relationship of mutual manipulation.

The Sultan’s Dilemma on Egyptian Stage

In 1961, Fattouh Nashati directed The Sultan’s Dilemma at the National Theatre in Cairo. A famous actress, Samiha Ayoub (known as the lady of the Arabic theatre) and

170 Tawfiq Al-Hakim 165.

171 Tawfiq Al-Hakim 166.
Mohamed El-Dafrawi played the leading roles. In her book *The Egyptian Theatre: Plays and Playwrights*, Nehad Selaiha asserts that the script’s political theme is still relevant today, and can be easily applied to the current situation, just as it was in the time of Nasser. Selaiha explains, “Nevertheless, what keeps the play fresh and makes it dramatically vibrant is El-Hakim’s vivid and lively characterization.”\(^{172}\)

This aspect of the work encouraged contemporary directors to stage it with new perceptions without changing a word of the original script. For example Mahmoud El-Lozy presented it in the American University in Cairo (AUC) with contemporary costumes. Selaiha asserts:

El-Lozy manages to contradict the play’s optimistic assumption that autocratic regimes could be persuaded to seek legitimacy by submitting to the law and the will of the people. Opting for modern dress for all the characters, except the heroine and her women, he projected the sultan and his entourage as a typical Third World junta, masquerading in civilian clothes and playing at obeying the law while ruthlessly eliminating anyone who interferes with their game or threatens to expose it.\(^{173}\)

Such costume design erases the historical aspect from the play and puts it in the current Egyptian situation. To assert his new perspective, El-Lozy let the Lady be dragged away to certain death at the very end of the play, after the Sultan leaves the stage.\(^{174}\)

In 2009, Assem Nagaty directed another version of *The Sultan’s Dilemma*. Nagaty framed the play with storytelling from the Arabian Nights. In his version, Nagaty kept the historical flavor by depicting the Sultan as Shahrayar and the Lady as Shahrazad.

\(^{172}\) Nehad Selaiha 35.

\(^{173}\) Nehad Selaiha 35.

\(^{174}\) Nehad Selaiha 36.
who begins by telling the Sultan’s story that becomes Al-Hakim’s script. The director also added songs to the performance to assert the connection between the play (that derived from Sharazad’s stories as presented by Nagaty) and the current political situation. In Nagaty’s production, the illegitimate Sultan (the current Egyptian ruler) needs to prove his legitimacy by fixing people’s problems. Shahrazad avoids finishing her stories leaving Shahrayar waiting for the next night in order to guarantee her life for another night. Yet the dramatic function of the open end was different in Nagaty’s play. The play finishes before the Lady liberates the Sultan to let the audiences leave the theatre contemplating the Sultan’s situation and future.

To sum up, the relationship between religious men and politicians is clear during King Farouk I, who supported the Muslim Brotherhood because he believed they would provide balance, standing against El Wafed Party. King Farouk also was helped by Shiekh Al-Azhar to reach the throne as a young man. The relationship between religion and politics comes in view in Al-Hakim’s Oedipus the King and Ali Ahmed Bakathir’s The Tragedy of Oedipus. The two scripts highlight the manipulation of politics by religious men as they attempt to reach power.

The relationship between religion and politics during Nasser’s regime was more complicated. The Muslim Brothers helped Nasser at the beginning. They were waiting for the chance to seize him and control political power through him. But after gaining the society’s trust, Nasser dominated and refused their interference in his decisions. After they failed assassinating him many times, Nasser controlled the Muslim Brotherhood. During Nasser’s era, politicians manipulated the religion as he strictly controlled these Islamic groups. That domination appears in Al-Hakim’s script The Sultan’s Dilemma.
Finally Egyptian playwrights were attracted to that strife and they tried to educate people about it through their theatrical scripts. Sometimes they hid the tension between politicians and religious men behind historical myths such as Oedipus, as in the case of the two Oedipus versions by Al-Hakim and Bakathir. Other times they borrowed stories from history to veil their critique, as in the case of The Sultan’s Dilemma. Egyptian authors did that to avoid problems with censorship, to get their scripts on stage. They also did that to avoid upsetting hierarchical power, whether political or religious, that they evaluated.
Chapter 4: The Religious and Political Conflict in Egyptian Theatre
During President Sadat’s Regime

The Relationship Between President Sadat and the Muslim Brotherhood
As It Appears in Abo El-Ela Al-Salamouni’s Plays

This chapter highlights permutations in the relationship between religion and politics during Sadat's regime. One of the ways that Islamic groups like the Muslim Brotherhood and Fundamentalists attempted to dominate socially and politically is through the seizure of economic power as can be seen in Al- Salamouni's script Al Milliemme Barba'a (One Dime Earns Four). It was inspired by historical events that happened in the eighties and nineties from last century when Muslim groups tried to seize the economy by establishing the Islamic Investment Companies, which were a reaction to Sadat’s Open-Door Economic policy.

Al-Salamouni also wrote Amir El-Hasheen (Prince of the Assassins), considered a dramatic example of feigning religiosity in a grab for political power. The play depicts how these groups tried to reach the throne illegally, inspired by The Assassins under the leadership of Hassan El Sabah (1037-1124), an 11th century Persian Naziri missionary, who created a group known as the The Assassins to achieve conversions to Islam under his leadership. This play also highlights the impact of hashish on people's minds. In other words, it depicts how to control a group by negating their minds through drugs. The main character, Borham, with the support of his mindless group, tries to seize power using religion.
President Sadat and the Muslim Brotherhood

When Anwar Sadat followed Nasser as President, he faced many problems in gaining the people’s trust. However, Sadat eventually gained their confidence after winning the war against Israel in October 1973. He made some economic changes, which altered the society’s structure, such as the Open-Door Economic Policy. Al-Salmouni stated that fraud was an effect of the Open-Door policy, that it distorted the economy and let many people start scamming others.\(^{175}\)

In order to fight the communists, Sadat tried to attract the Muslim Brotherhood. He considered them the weapon that would allow him to beat his opponents, the leftists and communists. According to Assem Nagaty, in order to satisfy the Islamists, Sadat called Egypt the country of science and faith. During Sadat’s reign new Islamic groups emerged, and the Fundamentalists without any governmental permission built many small mosques called Zawia. These Zawaia (the plural form of Zawia) attracted a lot of people who belonged to the middle class but had lost their jobs because of the Open-Door Policy, which had ruined their lives. Nagaty says:

In these small mosques [Al-Zawaia], Fundamentalists presented their new religious discourses. They also portrayed their ideas about the new Islamic country, how to fight the infidel government that controlled their lives, how to pursue to the paradise, and how to escape from the hell. Additionally, women were asked to wear veils as a sign of establishing the Islamic country that Fundamentalists, the Muslim Brotherhood, and other Islamists dreamed of. But after these religious groups refused the Camp David agreement in 1979 between Egypt and Israel and after the Sectarian Strife in 1981, Sadat stopped supporting the Islamic groups. He arrested all religious figures, Christians and Muslims, who opposed him. When Sadat announced that there is no religion in politics and no politics in

\(^{175}\) Abo Al-Ela Al-Salmouni, "Hawel Al-Milliemme Barba'a (Around One Dime Earns Four)," *Ad-Dastour* [Cairo] 13 Aug. 1990: 41.
religion, he was assassinated.\textsuperscript{176}

Ironically, Sadat was shot to death in October 1981 by the very Islamic groups he originally supported.\textsuperscript{177}

**Exploiting Islam to Establish the Islamic Investment Companies**

During the nineteen eighties and nineties, the relationship between religion and politics took a different shape. The Muslim groups tried to interfere in politics as well as take charge of the economy. Many Islamic investment companies appeared as a result of the Open-Door Economic Policy. The main idea of these companies was to collect people’s savings in order to invest them. These firms easily gained the people’s trust by pretending to be religious. They extracted as much money as they could by announcing that the bank’s interest is forbidden by God. Moreover, they promised their clients more interest, as a percentage of their profit, than the average bank was giving.\textsuperscript{178}

Ironically, the Muslim Brotherhood, who previously claimed that God forbids a bank collecting interest [this is called usury], reversed their decree after reaching the political power under the new Prime Minister Hisham Kandil. Under Kandil the

\textsuperscript{176} Assem Nagaty, "The Impact Of Absurd On Samir Al-Asfouri's Theatre (Ather Taiar Masrah AL-Abath Fi A'mal Al-Mokhreg Samir Al-Asouri)," Diss., The Academy of Arts, 2011, 121.


government tried to get a loan worth 4.80 billion dollars from the International Monetary Fund. They claimed that they would not be paying interest on the loan, but simply paying fees, that it in no way was usury.

Today many Islamists support this point of view. Others justify it by claiming that “necessity permits the forbidden deeds” and that there was a need for that loan. However, that need also existed under Al-Ganzoury’s leadership, the Egyptian ex-prime minister (01/04/1996-10/05/1999 and 11/25/2011-07/24/2012). He stated that there was a need for borrowing 3.2 billion dollars, but the majority of parliament (who were Muslim Brotherhood) refused, claiming that bank interest is forbidden. The Muslim Brothers also claimed that the Egyptian situation during Mubarak’s regime was bad because of the existing banks that give and accept forbidden interest, or usury. For example Dr. Hussein Shehata, a professor at Al-Azhar University and economic theorist of the Muslim Brotherhood, opposed the governmental loans during Mubarak’s regime, but changed his position during President Morsi’s reign, asserting that the World Bank loan is permissible by God without mentioning a reason for changing his claim.

Islamic jurisprudence books mention nothing about the Islamic investment companies. In order to add the word Islamic to their titles, these kinds of companies tried to apply the rules of Islamic law (Shari’a) in some issues such as the amount of profit and how it will be distributed. Moreover, these companies make no guarantee. They are


private companies with no securities. People submit their money to a person, the owner of the company. Therefore, trusting the companies’ owners is the only guarantee. People only receive receipts stating the amount of money that they deposit. These receipts cannot be sold or given to another person. Most of these companies never refunded the money to their clients, and some owners spent long period of times in jail after failing to refund their client’s money. Other company owners fled the country before they were arrested.

Misusing Islam to Deceive People:
Al- Salamouni’s Script Al Milliemme Barba’a (One Dime Earns Four)

Al-Salamouni sets his play during Mouled, a street festival celebrating one of the Awliya Allah’s births. Awliya Allah are religious people in Islam similar to saints in Catholic Christianity. Their birth celebration (Mouled) usually attracts illiterate people, who can be easily defrauded. The choice of Mouled asserts the script’s main idea of exploiting religion to gain money. Thus, in the Mouled there are those who benefit from people’s ignorance and their religious fervor the same as Islamic investment companies did. Additionally, according to Soad Lotfi the Mouled parallels the way that our society is structured. Everything relates to deceiving people in order to gain money. People dream about the easy gain using all the allowed and forbidden tricks by law and religion. They use multiple covers to reach their financial benefits and one of them is religion.¹⁸¹

In the Mouled, there are many tricks to con people and take their money, such as the three cards, circus, wizard, and other magical and deceiving tricks. “One dime earns

four” is a trick or a game one can play in the Mouled. That game is usually played with a fake die, thus the player never wins the game.

No one can beat these tricks except the main character of the play, Ali, who was one of the people who ran the games and was familiar with their tricks. Ali fled from the Mouled because of the harsh life and the way that Shaldom dealt with him. Shaldom adopted Ali when he was ten, after his family’s death. That can be seen in the script when Satwota accuses her husband, Shaldom. Satwota says, “Oh fabricator! You break his [Ali’s] heart on his money and take his income as soon as he gained it. You are the reason he flees.”

When Ali returns to the Mouled many years later, no one recognizes him. The reason is that he looks older. He also disguises himself in fancy clothes, which no one in the Mouled would expect him to wear. To win the game, Ali broke the fake die and gave Butta, the game owner, another die that can be controlled by him. Ali uses their own tricks to defeat them.

Ali returns to the Mouled with the money he collected from currency trading while he was away. Al-Salamouni was inspired by some of the Islamic investment companies’ owners such as Al-Rayan, who was a currency trader. Because it is against the law to work in the black market, Ali managed his trading activities behind a cigarette kiosk. Therefore, Ali gained all his money by illegal ways.

People called him Ali Bompeh. Bompeh is a kind of fire work. It is a tiny ball.
filled with sand, rocks, and gunpowder. When someone throws it harshly, it explodes loudly with no harm. It has more sound than effect. Therefore, ‘giving one bompeh’ in Egyptian culture means deceiving him or tricking him. In other words, pretending to give him a lot but in fact giving him nothing at all.

It is clear from his name that Ali will trick people. Moreover, his company has his name on it, Ali Bompeh’s Investment Company. In spite of that clear fact, none of his clients suspect him. Ali chooses all the company’s employers from the Mouled. “Ali: The Mouled has rare experiences and skills.” 183 All his employees are swindlers. The company’s treasurer is a thief. He also hired a wizard that uses hypnosis in order to deceive people and take their money. A belly dancer runs the public relations department. Others are only employed in tricking people.

Ali received his inspiration from the Mouled’s game ‘one dime earns four.’ Ali explains to Butta:

This is the right game Butta. Everyone dreams to win four dimes. But when these dimes become one thousand, one million, people will not only dream, they will become crazy, very fond, and lose their minds. 184

Ali exploits people’s lust for money. He claims that one pound in his company earns twenty five percent. Then after four years that pound will be two and it will keep doubling until it becomes a million or more. Therefore, people welcomed Ali’s idea as soon as they gained a fixed amount of money each month without working or even exerting any effort. Using religion facilitated Ali’s mission to gain people’s trust and deceive them. Additionally, the large amount of money Ali set as a profit attracted them.

183 Al-Salmouni 130.

184 Al-Salamouni 132.
At’oot is a secret agent working for the police in the *Mouled*, but everyone in the *Mouled* knows what he is. People of the *Mouled* usually bribe him to avoid problems. The character of At’oot highlights the governmental corruption: that there will be no police action as long as there is a financial benefit. That can be seen in the dialogue between Ashour (the thief), and At’oot (the police secret agent). Ashour was begging At’oot not to arrest him. He says:

ASHOUR. I am poor. (Ashour gets a pound out of his pocket) This is the only pound I gained.

AT’OOT. No harm. (At’oot takes the pound). 185

The governmental people in the script are exploiting their positions to achieve financial benefits. At’oot says, “Where he [Ali] is. I will cut him into four hundred pieces. I will also accuse him with any crime.”186

Butta, the owner of the “one-penny earns four” game, is portrayed as Egypt. She has a sexual relationship with the government. As a man of the government At’oot deceives her. He already has four wives. Because it is against law and forbidden by God for Muslims to marry more than four women, At’oot claims that he divorced one of his wives. He marries Butta secretly with a hand-written false paper and then misleads her and takes that paper from her. Therefore, there is no evidence of their marriage and she is pregnant. Thus, that marriage between the government and Egypt is illegal, forbidden, and built on lies. In other words, the government deceives Egypt, who trusts it. Moreover, At’oot tries to sell Butta to Ali for more money.

185 Al-Salmouni 120.

186 Al-Salmouni 120.
When At’oot learns that Ali leaves all his money to Butta before divorcing her, he tries to benefit from her again. He kidnapped his own son from her, who was adopted by Ali to force her to marry him again in order to have a legal access to Ali’s money. Therefore At’oot uses everything he can, even his own son, to gain money. Ali also uses Butta. Before declaring insolvency, Ali leaves everything he owns to his wife. The reason is that after divorce, there is no law to take the ex-wife’s money because her legal relationship with her husband is ended. Ali does that to manipulate the law and to avoid refunding people their money.

There are many other factors that helped Ali to gain people’s trust. After establishing his company, Ali and all his employers change their look. Every one in his company wears the Islamic white *galabeya* (a long Islamic dress for men) with a long beard. They do that to gain their clients’ trust and encourage them to invest their money in the very trusted and honest company. Another reason is that some well-known religious figures issued a fatwa stating that the bank’s interest is forbidden by God. Ali says:

> This is a religious scholar who understands everything about everything. The Great Islamic preacher issued a fatwa, only for me, stating that the Governmental banks are forbidden, the banks’ interest is forbidden, investment certificates are forbidden. He pushes everyone to withdraw their money from banks and deposit it in my company because our profit is definitely Halal [permissible by God].

Al-Sheikh tries to use religion to convince the Mayor to help Ali. He says:

> It does not confuse the mind Mr. Mayor. He said it is a blessing payroll. Blessing is related to God, which means it is Halal, definitely Halal. Isn’t

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187 Al-Salmouni 203.
it better than the banks’ forbidden usury? 188

Although all of the employees in Ali’s company wear Islamic clothes with long beards, they are flirting with Nagafa, the belly dancer from the Mouled, who is now the general public manger in Ali’s company. She came from the Mouled in which people of the Mouled not only deceive others but also con each other. Nagafa tricks all of Ali’s employees. She pretends that she accepts their proposals. She asks each of them for one quarter million Egyptian pounds as her dowry and one kilogram of gold. She collected one million from four of them, but she marries none of them. They give her the clients’ money by taking loans from Ali’s company.

Ali uses religion from the beginning. His speech to attract people’s money was covered with religious words and expressions. Ali says:

Now brothers and sisters let me simply explain how one dime in our company earns four million. I am not a swindler to sell you fish in the sea. No brothers, our company’s capital is reputation, honesty, religion, and ethics… But before starting our conversation let’s send Salah upon prophet Mohamed. 189

The words brothers and sisters are usually used in Islamic speeches; the Muslim brotherhood got their name because all Muslims are considered brothers and sisters in Islam. Ali also uses the name of prophet Mohamed to add blessings to his speech, to deceive people with pretended religion.

Another reason that attracted people’s confidence to Ali’s company is giving loans to well-known people just to use their names to gain people’s trust. In fact he bribes

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188 Al-Salmouni 150.

189 Al-Salamouni 147.
everyone he can benefit from. However, he does not call it a bribe, which is obviously bad, but a loan, a good loan because there will be no interest collected. Ali gives good loans to the governor, the Mayor, the Mosque’s Imam, and many other people in power. Ali tried to convince the mayor and the Imam of the mosque to accept his bribe (the “good loan” as Ali called it). Ali says:

You are the most powerful people in the country. In order to encourage people to trust and take a part of my project, people have to see the mayor [as a governmental person] and Moulana [as a religious man] the first shareholders.\(^{190}\)

And:

ALI. Our company as you know applied only Halal things. Halal balance, Halal profit, Halal speculation, even our bribe is Halal. Our bribe is definitely Halal.

THE PROSECUTOR. Bribery is bribery Mr. Ali.

ALI. No…we do not offer bribes. It is “good loans”. Any amount of money you need we will offer it to you. And from its profit you can pay the loan back as long as it will take. The Mayor and all the Egyptian nobles borrowed our loans, as you know.

THE PROSECUTOR. You said the Mayor and all the Egyptian Nobles!

ALI. The governor, the General Secretary, and the whole local council. You do not believe me. Rateb, show him the blessing payroll to ensure him.\(^{191}\)

In a comical way, Ali repeatedly stresses the word Halal, making it more religious because Halal means permissible by God. In the blessing payroll there are different kinds of people that can help Ali gain the people’s trust. There is a well-known national

\(^{190}\) Al-Salmouni 148.  

\(^{191}\) Al-Salmouni 202.
newspaper editor, a famous media leader that helps Ali in facilitating his company’s commercials in television. Additionally, the payroll includes celebrities.

In Al-Salamouni’s script, Ali blames the government for different reasons. First, he claims that the government is responsible instituting for the law that Ali benefits from. In order to defend his claim, Ali says:

I am following the law that was made by the government. And my evidence is that for four years the government has agreed with everything my company has done. You [the policeman who arrests him but he means the government] want to judge me for what! For a law you made. Sheikhs and religious scholars have blessed it. Press and media [television] cheer it. Judge yourselves before judging me. You have to be aware that the law you make will set me free and if it does not state that I am innocent, you could not take the money back. Think about how will you refund my clients their money? Also do not forget that I have the blessing payroll and I hold the government from its nose.192

“Holding someone from his nose” is an Arabic expression describing how the government’s life is between his fingers. If he tightly holds its nose, that might lead to its end. Ali is used to solving the governmental problems with his clients’ money. That can be seen in the phone call between Ali and the Minster of Economy and International Trade. Nagafa answers the phone:

NAGAFA. …. The Minister of Economy and International Trade is on the phone Ali Beeh.

ALI. Oh no not again Nagafa. Again!! Every time he says save me Mr. Haj. There is no kilogram of meat in the country. Help me Haj there is no cement sack…. (To Nagafa) Give me the phone and I submit my situation to God. 193

Submitting a situation to God means that Ali has no other choice than achieving the

192 Al-Salamouni 212.

193 Al-Salamouni 182.
Minister’s orders to avoid being in trouble with the government. The relationship between Ali and the government is similar to the relationship between At’oot and people of the Mouled, who give At’oot money so he won’t cause them problems.

Ali applies the Mouled’s deceitful ways in his company. He did not deposit the clients’ money in banks to avoid paying taxes. He lives in a tent, but in a fancy one with air conditioning and luxury furniture. His company is a tent too. That way it is easy to collect everything he owns and flee quickly whenever there is a need to disappear. Ali says:

Our balance [money] is out of the country and all we own are tents and things that can be moved in twenty-four hours. It is a good thing that I have been inspired by our heritage and I am able to move from one Mouled to another. Within an hour, we can fold our tents putting them on our backs and flee to another country.\textsuperscript{194}

After placing his company under receivership, and after the government has arrested him, Ali warns the government against keeping him in prison. He claims that the only way for people to get their money back is for him to remain free and working. Al-Salamouni was inspired by one of the real Islamic investment companies’ owners, Al-Rayan, who suggested he be set free in order to be able to reimburse his clients’ money. Al-Salamouni explains how Ali can repay the money. He states that Ali intends to collect money from new clients to reimburse the old ones, and so on.

Again after being bailed out, Ali misuses religion to achieve financial gains. He remains deceptive, but alters his manner of deceiving people. This time Ali disguises himself as a foreign sheikh, who comes from Istanbul with blessings and miracles asking

\textsuperscript{194} Al-Salamouni 184-185.
people to be his followers and collect donations for him. Because he is a foreign sheikh, the donations have to be in dollars. Everyone gives their money to Ali, including the Mayor, the governor, and other people in power, who were also deceived by Ali, giving him the Zakat money (the donations for poor people stated by God). Mohamed El-Ezabi asserts that the play predicts a new way of deceiving people through the misuse of religion, one that is apparently capable of conning millions of people.\footnote{Mohamed El-Ezabi, "Eyoun...Eyoun: Liela Fi El-Mouled (Eyes...Eyes: Liela In The Mouled)," rev. 26 July 1990.}

The play ends with people carrying a human size doll believing that it will achieve their hopes and goals. They did not notice that Ali fled with their money and was replaced by that doll. Meanwhile, people ignore Butta. She tries to warn them but no one listens to her. Unfortunately, people have a propensity for self-deception and will blindly follow any religious charlatan if he promises to make their dreams come true. People consider that anything conflicting with religious men’s thoughts, or even thinking about them, is conflicting with God or the religion itself.

Drama critic Abla Al-Rewani believes that the warning screams that Butta issues while trying to alert people are not reasonable because they come from one of the Mouled, who spends her life tricking others. Al-Rewani says:

\begin{quote}
A sudden flip that does not fit dramatically appears at the end of the performance when Ali’s wife, Butta, screeched asking people not to believe him. She protested against the fraud while she is one of its symbols!\footnote{Abla Al-Rewani, "Tharthatat Ma Ba'd Wokoe'a Al-Garima (After Crime's Chatter)," rev. of Roz Al-Youssef, 16 July 1990.}
\end{quote}

The scream makes sense only if Butta is considered to represent Egypt, who lost in...
between At’oot, who tricked her, and Ali, who married her in order to profit from her too. Butta thought that there are no other solutions other than awaking people to take group action. That same warning scream is issued by Al-Salamouni himself throughout his script in an effort to educate his audience against misusing Islam. 197

One Dime Earns Four on the Egyptian Stage

One Dime Earns Four was performed at the Art Theatre in 1990. It was directed and produced by the well-known director and theatrical producer Galal Al-Sharkawi, who is also a professor in the Academy of Arts. He is one of the most important names in the private as well as the governmental theatre sectors. His name is linked to political theatre. Al-Sharkawi was attracted by Al-Salamouni’s script because it highlights the relationship between people and their government. In an interview that appears in Al-Fan Wal Camera (The Art and Camera) magazine, Al-Sharkawi talked about his production, stressing the corruption of the system by emphasizing the economic corruption.

The well-known critic Ahmed Abdel-Hamid thought that the script has some weak points because it has a lot of narration, more like a documentary. On the other hand, he thought that there are three strong scenes. The first one is the first scene in Act One. He likes the bond between currencies trading and the investment companies. The other two scenes are in Act Two. The first of them highlights the hidden side of the relationship between the governmental man At’oot and the investment company’s owner Ali. The

second takes place in the tent, in which the real face of bad people who misuse religion is made clear.198

Galal Al-Sharkawi chooses the musical theatre form to introduce Al-Salamouni’s script on stage. The songs and dance bring the performance closer to the audience’s heart. They support the main idea of the script and according to Soad Lotfi they connect the scenes smoothly. She says:

The dance introduces the present and the audience’s current situation. Also the lyrics help the dance in giving the spectator the honest words covered with political, social, economical meanings. The lyrics were clean and classy. They reflect reality ironically in a bitter way. Using dance and songs were a necessity as they are considered two of the most important tools used in theatre.199

Additionally, Lotfi thought that music creates the right atmosphere expressing well the performance’s rhythm, which was present in the songs and blockings. On the other hand, she asserts that the set only succeeded in creating the suitable environment in the setting of the Mouled, but in all other scenes it did not. Finally, Dr. Ahmed Ibrahim Al-Faquih declares that the performance produces people’s daily problems in a brave way.200

Before the performance even begins, there is a folk music band playing in front of the theatre conjuring the atmosphere of the Mouled—a street festival celebrating a religious figure called Wali—for the audience. The band continued to play as the


199 Soad Lotfi.

audience walked down the aisles toward the stage. The folk music band left when the curtain rose and another band played the first song while a dance commenced. The drama critic Fow’d Dawara thought that it would be a better idea to let the folk music band be a part of the performance, playing the first song on stage instead of leaving the stage directly after the curtain rises to a completely different kind of music.201

Soad Lotfi thinks that theatre’s role should be more than just putting direct problems rhetorically on stage. It is a good thing to highlight a current issue on stage, but it has to be done creatively to satisfy the audience, who have already suffered from or supported these issues. She adds:

The vast majority of our audiences build their judgments of these artistic pieces on their emotions and how it reflects their real situation, mental state, and mood. Most of the time, performances like these face hostility and acceptance at the same time. People’s opinions conflict around them. These kinds of performances create a lot of argument and discussions.202

*One Dime Earns Four* received conflicting reactions. Hassen Saad claims that Al-Sharkawi concentrates on At’oot (the power) and Ali (the thief) but ignores the people (the victims) in his show.203 Whereas the well-known actor Nour El-Sherif, who plays Ali in Al-Sharkawi’s piece, thought that greed is the impulse that encourages people to trust Ali, who benefits from their hopes to become rich easily and quickly. El-Sherif says:

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202 Soad Lotfi.

“It is hard to challenge a swindler in a society that is full of greedy people.”

Therefore Al-Sharkawi not only blames the government for covering, supporting, and introducing fraud to people, but he also blames the members of society for giving their confidence to any one claiming that he is capable of achieving their aims without working hard to attain them. Mohamed El-Ezabi echoes El-Sherif’s words. He says:

People made mistakes when they believed. They made errors when they thought that one-dime earns four and followed the air sellers [Egyptian expression for buying nothing and conning others]. Beards became longer. Clothes became shorter. The modern commercials were mixed with the eternal God’s words. Sheikhs play the melody of Halal [permissible] and Forbidden. There were a lot of Fatwas. But the propaganda is built on the exaggerated ratio of profits that blow people’s minds. If the banks paid more, people would forget about Halal and Haram [forbidden]. The government kept silent. Its men were reaching for the blessing and joining the investment companies. All of us are responsible and we are in the same Mouled.

Not everyone was happy with the play. Mohamed Ismaiel wrote an article in Gridat Al-Hakika (The Truth Newspaper) that was very far from critiquing merely the performance. He declares that Al-Sharkawi made fun of Muslims by letting his actors wear Islamic clothes with long beards. As an example, Ismaiel cites the cartoonist who invented the character of Al-Sheikh Matlouf in the fifties and made fun of him as a Sheikh. He explains how God punished that cartoonist through a disease that ended with the amputation of the cartoonist’s both legs. Firstly, Al-Sheikh Matlouf is the Arabic

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205 Mohamed El-Ezabi n.p.

translation of *Tartuffe* by Molière. The name inspired some cartoonists to use that character in their comics. They were making fun of corrupted religious men not of religion itself. Additionally, a religious man is just a human being with weak points and he has a greater responsibly to set a good example about his religion.

The role of art is to educate people by declaring the hidden side of truth. Ismaiel claims that because of their participation in this performance, the director and actors are not believers. He also blames Al-Sherif and the other actors for dancing like Satan while wearing Islamic clothes, benefiting from the bad situation of the Islamic investment companies. He says about the production team of the actors, writer, and director:

> These people benefit from the experiment of investment companies to show their audience what the religious men want for the economy is just a fraud and con but I tell them this experiment was new and no one knows the truth. God’s enemies distorted the facts and they turned the white black and the black white.

Ismaiel’s review concentrated on one aspect of the performance, the costumes. He discussed nothing else and did not mention the set, music, or any other theatrical tools. He also ignored the actors who do not wear Islamic clothes.

Abou Baker Abel-Samieah, who asserts that the performance belittles religion and religious scholars, proves his claim using selected lyrics from the show written by the very talented poet Abdel-Rahman Al-Abnoudy:

> Oh God, who erases our sins
Bless our pockets.

And from another song:

> If the earth tends, hold on our beards.

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207 Mohamed Ismaiel.
Abdel-Samieah is also opposed to the mockery of religion that can be found (according to him) in the costumes, songs, and make-up that gives one actor the same look as a well-known religious scholar. Finally he critiques the character of Nagafa, the belly dancer, who manipulates four bearded men. She married them all with unofficial papers to get their money, as her dowry. He highlights how it is forbidden in Islam for women to marry more than one husband. But in the case of the script, Nagafa does not marry any of them. She only defrauds all of them, taking their money. Fraud is fraud, whether deceiving people or tricking them. She does no more than deceive them. Conning others is an immoral act and no one should expect a swindler to be ethical or to do the right thing.

On the other hand the director Al-Sharkawi received a death threat and a warning that his theatre would be blown up if he did not cancel his production of One Dime Earns Four. This came as a call from an anonymous person, warning him against misusing and distorting Islam through his performance. After inspecting Al-Sharkawi’s Art Theatre, nothing was found by police. It seems that it was just an attempt to coerce him into canceling his performances forever. After receiving that death threat made to all the performers as well, the theatre was surrounded by policemen every performance. No audience members were allowed to leave the theatre venue before the end of the show.

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210 Nabil Farag, "Hewar: Al-Mukhrig Al-Masrhy Galal Al-Shaqawy Li "Ad-Dastour": Mo'zam Nukad Al-Masrah Nukad Nusoses Adabia La Nukad Oroad Masrahia (Conversation: The Stage Director Galal Al-Sharkawi to The "Dustowr": Most Theatre
Mixing Politics with Religion as It Appears in Al-Salamouni’s
Amir El-Hashasheen (Prince of the Assassins)

Al-Salamouni was attracted by real historical events in writing his scripts as can
be seen from the previous discussion. It is his custom to represent and highlight real
incidents. The audiences or readers are usually familiar with his stories and he introduces
these events directly and rhetorically. By using that direct form, Al-Salamouni has tried
to educate people against these corrupt trends. Amir El-Hashasheen (Prince of the
Assassins) takes place in the Fatimid era [AD 909-1171]. It has characters and events
based on actual people. Additionally, its name refers to a real group, the Assassins, under
the leadership of Hassan El Sabah. In his introduction, Al-Salamouni asserts that he
mirrors the current situation through his script. He says:

This [the political murder under the religious flag] … is exactly what is
happening right now in the Arabic and Islamic countries, where the
terroristic and religiously obsessed groups state the relationship between
religion and politics. Europe and the developed countries put an end to
that relationship centuries ago, but we are still afraid of discussing it to
avoid being accused with infidelity and apostasy and that mix between
religion and politics has led to distort the Islamic and Muslims’ picture in
others’ minds.²¹¹

Al-Sheikh Ma’roof is considered as Al-Salamouni’s voice. He is one of the play’s

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²¹¹ Mohamed Abul Ela Al-Salamouni, introduction, Introduction. Men Mo’alafat Abuel
‘Ela El-Salamoni Al Masrahia (From the Theatrical Works Of Abul Ela El-Salamouni),
Ser. 4. (Cairo: Al-Hay’ah Al-Miṣriyah Al-‘Ammah Lil-Kitab (General Egyptian Book
central characters and tries to alert people against changing their identities for the sake of anything, including politics and religion. Al-Sheikh Ma’roof is a teacher in the Kottab (as the school was named during that era and that name is still used in some villages in Egypt.) In those schools, students are taught how to read and write. They also study the holy Quran. Therefore, Sheikh Ma’roof is the religious and the academic man at the same time. Part of his job is to fight ignorance. Thus, he is trying to alert people against losing their identities for any reason by using his Kharazana. Kharazana is a lenient stick that is used in Al-Kottab to punish lazy students who do not do their homework. Bashandi, an Egyptian worker, describes Sheikh Ma’roof, “He is hitting people by the Kottab’s lenient stick (Kharazana).”

And:

SAWAN. Are we children to teach us in your Kottab using your Kharazana!

MA’ROOF. Yes Sawan. The whole alley needs to learn in the Kottab. I will teach them and educate them because they are not educated enough. I will awake them to stop taking their clothes off for the rulers. I will do all of that using my Kharazana.

Thus through using his Kharazana, Sheikh Ma’roof tries to change his society. He stands against all kinds of power that try to alter his society’s identity.

Al-Salamouni uses color as a symbolic icon to refer to the different kind of rulers. For example green refers to the Fatimid caliphate. Ma’roof blames Sawan (an Egyptian contractor):


213 Al-Salmouni 307.
Why did you change your clothes Sawan? Why did you change your skin? Why are you wearing all green? Tell me! Why the country changed its color! Explain... As usual, when the ruler’s color change, we change our clothes quickly. Our disaster as Egyptians is wearing according to our rulers regardless what they are or which color, even if that ruler is crazy.\footnote{Al-Salmouni 306.}

Al-Sheikh Ma’roof states that the new ruler has to change according to the people’s will instead of the people changing for him. After being ruled by Fatimid Caliphs everyone is forced to wear green or they would be in trouble for not applying the Fatimid’s color to their clothes. Sawan explains:

> We can tolerate his [Ma’roof’s] harsh hit instead of getting arrested by the police putting us in jail and will not be sure how we will be released from it... Everyone has to wear green and say ‘no God but Allah, Fatimids are the lovers of Allah’.\footnote{Al-Salmouni 309.}

To assert the role of color as a symbolic icon in his play, Al-Salamouni let the required color change when the Assassins group dominates. They changed from green to black and white: including Islamic clothes, long beards, short white \textit{Galabya} (men’s short dresses) and \textit{Niqab} (long black dress for women, covering their entire bodies including, except for their eyes, their faces). Borham (a close friend to Amir Tamim, who tried to exploit religion for his own benefits) explains the reason behind eliminating all the colors and choosing the black and white, Sawan asked:

> SAWAN. Why are you wearing white and black instead of wearing green Borham?

> BORHAM. To make our day white for us and black tar for our enemies.\footnote{Al-Salamouni 335.}
That extreme between the two colors expresses how fanatical they are. They see the world only in two colors, white and black. They also ignore all the other colors that add happiness to life. Additionally, everyone that disagrees with them is barred from the white area, deserving only black. Borham convinced people that this costume is required for Muslims.

MA’ROOF. Why are you wearing white and black beards, Egyptians?

A MAN. This is the legitimate religious costume.

MA’ROOF. O people, There is no relationship between costumes and religion. Costume is a custom. Each country wears a different size. For example, people in middle Africa are naked because of the hot weather and in North Africa men wear veils because of the sand hurricanes. Some wear skirts others wear pants…

A MAN. O Sheikh Ma’roof, Borham said this is the legitimate religious costume.217

People believe Borham for pretending to be religious and quote Borham’s name to assert the information about the required Islamic clothes. Thus it is easy to gain people’s trust simply by showing them how religious you are.

Al-Salamouni highlights the passivity of people and police. Sawan asked:

SAWAN. Where is the police… where is the government? The country has no government!

BASHANDI. Everyone is filled with fear and enters the burrow. Whoever thinks to go out has to show his beard or wear one, if he is a man, or wears a tent from top to bottom if she is a woman. By sunset everyone has to sleep. No wedding ceremonies, no decorations, no poet with Rababa and Nye [Egyptian Orientale instruments] no writers or dancing monkey trainers, no singers, and no music are allowed.218

217 Al-Salamouni 367.

218 Al-Salmouni 366.
Al-Salamouni blames the police, the government, and the citizens for not resisting against this list of prohibitions. Today, sleeping early is a new sign that appears under the rule of the Muslim Brotherhood. The Egyptian government decided to close the venues and shops early. Cairo is a sleepless city. The government claims that they made this decision to solve the power outage problem that has appeared recently, but in reality this will increase crime and economic problems by cutting the hours that some people work; it will make the city dark and empty, which will make it less safe during the night.219

There is a clear difference between Egyptian social classes. Mixing them is not supported in Egyptian culture. In this play there is a love story between Tamim, the assumed prince, who belongs to the ruling family and therefor the upper class, and Bardies, the singer in public festivals who belongs to the lower class. Because of this misalliance, Tamim will lose his chance to inherit political power. He has to choose between gaining political power and marrying a woman from a lower class. Marrying her disqualifies him from succeeding his father as ruler of the country.

We see a similar situation in August Strindberg's Miss Julie (1888). In Strindberg’s play, Miss Julie was a daughter to a count, a member of the aristocracy. On the other hand, her mother belonged to the laboring class and believed in the equality of all people. Because of her parentage—an upper class father and a lower class mother—Julie has ambivalent feelings about class relations, which can be seen in how she wants to

dance with her servants and celebrate Midsummer’s Eve with them regardless of the big
difference between her and them in class. Similarly, in Al-Salamouni’s script, Tamim is a
son of the Fatimid Caliph, Al-Mo’ez, from a mother who belongs to the poor. Like with
Julie, this unequal parental union drags him down toward the commoners attracting him
to Bardies; it also encourages his stepmother to stand in the way of his reaching political
power. Tamim denies the Fatimid’s relationship with prophet Mohamed’s family. He
says, “It is not an honorable family Borham. It is a trick we use as usual to guarantee
people’s obedience and loyalty.”

Strindberg himself was a son to an aristocratic father
and a poor mother. Because of this marriage his father’s family became angry and
withheld their son’s inheritance. Therefore, Strindberg grew up poor and confused about
the two disparate classes that his father and mother belonged to. His plays critique
aristocrats. Similarly, in Al-Salamouni’s play, Tamim shares the people’s antipathy
toward his family. Tamim also takes the people’s side after being arrested. His
stepmother informs his father:

THE WIFE. Did you know that he insists on going to jail in solidarity with
people who jeer against us? He also refused to leave his cell until you
order the release of them all.

The relationship between Tamim and his stepmother shows how complicated that
relationship is in the Arabic culture regardless which social class one belongs to.
Stepmothers usually go hard on their stepchildren, taking vengeance against the mothers
of these children. Stepmothers feel jealous and hate their husbands’ new or old wives,

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220 Al-Salamouni 307.

221 Al Salmouni 318.
and they vent that hatred on the stepchildren. They want to guarantee that their own offspring receive the entire inheritance and other women’s sons or daughters receive nothing. That explains why Tamim’s stepmother tries her best to block his way to reach political power. She informs his father, “Unfortunately your son [Tamim] intends to belong to the public and the poor; the roots that his mother comes from.”

Exploiting religion to gain people’s trust and support appears in Al-Salamouni’s script many times. First, when Ma’roof accuses the Fatimid of using the easier and common way. He claims:

> In order to guarantee to keep his power safe and to gain people’s loyalty, the ruler, regardless who he is, makes up a relationship with the prophet Mohamed’s family, either by blood or by law. As it is with the Fatimid right now.  

As Ma’roof claims, it is not new to exploit religion to gain political benefits. Tamim himself denies that relationship with the prophet’s family. He admits:

> We neither belong to prophet Mohamed’s family nor have Fatimid’s roots. The story seems to be the ruling powers clever game covered over with holy ideas, but the truth is that it is the ruling power’s greediness.

Bardies asserts that too. She says:

> There is a rumor that the first Fatimid ancestor is called Abdel Allah Al-Mahdi. People claim that man is not to be trusted. He succeeded in tricking people, pretending that he is one of the Prophet’s families. Then he established a country in Morocco and ascribed it to Fatima [Prophet Mohamed’s daughter].

222 Al-Salmouni 319.

223 Al-Salmouni 310.

224 Al-Salmouni 320.

When Tamim chooses Bardies and sacrifices his power, his younger brother Al-Aziz replaces him as the heir to the throne. His father Al-Moez tries to stop the rumors around their relationship with Mohamed’s family using two guaranteed weapons, money and sword. Al-Moez declares, “The pedigree is Al Moez’s sword and the gold is the ancestry. This is the moral, the philosophy of sword and gold.”

Another way of exploiting religion appears when Borham tries to retrieve the power from Al-Aziz to give it to Tamim by using force. Borham’s impulse is not to support his friend Tamim but to try and gain power himself. Thus, Borham misuses religion to launch into political power himself. He is waiting to be the minister under Tamim’s authority. He informs Tamim, “Leave the power to your minister and friend and never feel worry as long as I am at your side supporting you.”

Borham is sure that Tamim, as a poet, cannot rule the country. Therefore, Borham’s plan was to be the real leader hiding behind Tamim. His plan is clear. First, instead of calling Tamim “prince,” Borham calls him the commander or the leader of the Faithful to make it more religious. The reason for this is that the term was used during the era of Omar Ibn Al-Khatab, the second Caliph after Prophet Mohamed, and that name will bring him closer in relationship with the prophet. Then, Borham announces that he will start the game of terrorism by claiming that the government is non-believing. That

226 Al-Salamouni 325-26.

227 Al-Salmouni 361.
was the case for many years in Egypt after the Islamic groups claimed that they were fighting the infidel government using violence. Borham explains to Tamim and Bardies:

BORHAM. My plan is clear and direct. It is built on scaring and intimidating our opponents and the method is so simple. (He shows a dagger through his clothes).\footnote{Al-Salamouni 360.}

He adds:

BORHAM. I have a hundred men and all of them are offering their lives in order to accomplish the orders. If everyone murdered only one powerful figure in Egypt, it would fall in our hands without battles or war.

BARDIES. It is a bloody and scary game.

BORHAM. Oh Princess, a little blood is reforming and a good thing. Actually a tiny amount of blood would prevent more blood. If we murdered two or three, that would be better than getting involved in wars and battles in which thousands would be killed.\footnote{Al-Salamouni 361.}

In order to gain Bardies’s support, Borham calls her princess to seduce her. He thinks that the attraction of power would convince her, but it would not attract an artist, especially someone like Bardies. She is a singer and she critiques the ruler through her songs. Tamim defends Bardies:

TAMIM. It does not make sense to arrest the super famous artist in Egypt. You do not know Bardies!

THE POLICEMAN. I definitely know her. We are not unaware of her and her songs performed in the Egyptian Mouleds and Markets.

BARDIES. What is wrong with Bardies’s songs Policeman? ... You sure do not like them and they do not fit your taste, because they say what no one else dares to say because of their extreme fear.\footnote{Al-Salamouni 315.}
Bardies is considered the voice of her society. Through her songs, she expresses what people are afraid to say; and that summarizes the role of art. Borham is totally aware of art’s role in stressing and expressing problems. Thus he announces that God forbids art. He claims that dance and songs are sins and people have to give up them. He asks Henna, the dancer, and Bardies, the singer, to announce their repentance in order to confuse people about art and encourage them to ignore it. Borham says:

It is impossible to raise the religious flag while our women are dancing and singing. God forbids…. The truth is that all Egyptian society is very religious and this is the way to enter his heart or his mind. Therefore, we decided to enter Egypt carrying the religious flag under your shadow as a leader of righteous faith. By using your blessing, dancers and artists will repent. It is a miracle and a blessing that has not happened for years. By then everyone will say Amen O Imam holy and repentant.231

Claiming that God forbids art parallels real events, including financially supporting female artists who give up their art and put on a veil. It also mirrors what happened after achieving power. The Muslim Brotherhood’s party lawyer Ismaiel Al-Wishahi tried to close an Art center for amateurs called Sakiet Al-Sawy by force of law. He claimed that this center included weird deeds and he suspected that people in there are devil worshipers, wearing black clothes with Satan’s logo and dancing oddly. He took his concerns to the police, but nothing happened because it was way far from the truth.232 It seems that there is a new trend to seize art in Egypt today.

231 Al-Salmouni 362.

We see another example of this from present day Egypt when Al-Sheikh Abdel Allah Bader insults the well-known actress Ilham Shahin through the media, claiming that she is a whore who has no right to critique President Morsi. He tried to shut down each voice opposing the new President, including artists, and even attacking and belittling actresses.233

When Bardies refuses to announce her repentance, and Tamim supports her decision by refusing to renounce writing poetry; Borham decides to put an end to their lives. He announces:

The Prince Borham, the leader of the pious and righteous received a holy message informing him that our commander Tamim was spoiled by the singer Bardies, who sings in Mouleds and taverns. She dragged him to sin and depravity. Thus O kind Cairo’s citizens, we take the Imamate [announcing himself as Imam] and judge them as infidels with clear debauchery. Both of them are permitted to be murdered and that’s the right penalty for unbelievers and rogues.234

Giving permission to kill someone is a dangerous weapon that was used for long periods of time in Egypt. Whenever there is someone who is educated enough and capable of discussing or explaining to others religious issues that conflict with some Islamists, they decide to put an end to his or her life by claiming that they are infidels. Therefore, covert assent is given to get rid of them. Followers will race to kill him or her to win a place in Paradise, as they have been promised. Some Islamists distribute Paradise’s promises by placing conditions and asking for sacrifices, including the sacrifice of life. The question is why these Islamists have not made these kinds of


234 Al-Salmouni 364.
sacrifices and gone to Paradise themselves. Why have they accepted others’ sacrifices? The answer is simple. They are not thinking about Paradise at all. Their aim is to seize power, grasp it by any means necessary, including the misuse and abuse of religion and the manipulation of people.

In order to crown Tamim instead of Al-Aziz, Borham uses religion. He left the country only to get prepared before coming back stronger, exactly as the Muslim Brotherhood did after President Sadat’s murder and during the early days of Mubarak’s reign. They took some time to rebuild their group and gain the society’s trust (as will be explained in Chapter Five). Borham put conditions on his group. He asserts that attracting people to religion is not enough. He informs his group:

> Our mission is the right one against the infidel society. But persuading others is not enough. Thus we will face them using force, violence, horror, fear, dagger, and sword.\(^\text{235}\)

Borham asked his group to blindly obey him. He says:

> To succeed in beating the infidel society, every hand that carries a sword has to be aware that the obedience is its start and end to achieve its goal. O brothers, obedience means the absolute obedience. I mean the obedience is blind, mute, and deaf.\(^\text{236}\)

It is not easy to guarantee that blind obedience. Thus Borham decides to use hashish to erase his group’s minds. He says:

> In this castle, there is a necessity to implant a grass that is full of blessing and goodness. Whoever eats, chews, licks, or inhales it, will become more enthusiastic in his obedience, in its superior absolute meaning.\(^\text{237}\)

\(^{235}\) Al-Salamouni 329-30.

\(^{236}\) Al-Salamouni 330.

\(^{237}\) Al-Salmouni 330-31.
Thus, by negating people’s minds, Borham fully controls his group’s members and gets all the possible and impossible sacrifices. He has only one aim: to achieve power regardless of how many people will be killed using these illegal and unethical ways. Actually announcing that God forbids art is as bad as using hashish. Both will lead to the incapacity of the minds of his society.

The relationship between the ruler and his society was far from democracy. When Tamim encourages Ma’roof to speak freely about his father’s regime in front of him, Al-Moez blames Tamim for doing just that. He says:

   AL-MOEZ. Are you crazy Tamim? You want the public and riffraff to say their opinion about us!

   TAMIM. Why do you refuse my father? They are your citizens and you have to listen to them and know their opinion. Or how will you get them on your side and guarantee their loyalty to you.

   BORHAM. No prince. Loyalty and obedience cannot exist without a holy doctrine.  

Therefore, the relationship between the ruler and his citizens in Al-Salamouni’s script is built on horror instead of love. That is why Tamim does not inform Bardies that he is a prince. He says, “I was afraid if you knew my truth, you would hate me as you all have hated your country’s rulers for many years.” It was forbidden to express an opposing opinion in public. Sawan warns Bardies from expressing her opinion loudly, He says, “Please be careful. We are surrounded by walls with ears.” When Borham returns

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238 Al-Salamouni 320-21.

239 Al-Salamouni 322.

240 Al-Salamouni 311.
wearing white *galabya* with a long beard, accompanied by his group in the same set of clothes, he not only used religion in his appearance, but he also used it in his speech. He used the term brothers in religion and faith to address people, who were attracted by both his look and his speech. People believed him and cheered him without thinking, merely for appearing religious. Borham explains to sheikh Ma’roof how religion will help him to crown Tamim.

BORHAM. If you want to gain people’s good opinion or mobilize people on your side, raise the religious flag in front of them and they will come to you kneeling, prostrating, and saying Amen.

MA’ROOF. Your opponent also can raise the religious flag.

BORHAM. We will claim that they are disbelievers and issue a fatwa to kick them out of our religion.

MA’ROOF. Your rival can issue a fatwa stating that you are a disbeliever and claim that you are one of the apostates.

BORHAM. We will mobilize on our side jurists, scholars, and clerics.

MA’ROOF. Your competitor can mobilize as many as you can or even much more.

SAWAN. What is going on guys, “lay in one land”. Is it an auction?

MA’ROOF. You just said it Sawan. It is an auction. When you raise an aya [verse] your opponent will raise two. When you issue a fatwa, he will issue two. When you raise the holy Quran, he will print millions. Or did you forget what happened in the great strife when Umayyad raised the holy books to Alawites [Ali ibn Abi Talib’s followers] and all outbid in the name of religion. All fight under religion’s name. All rule using religion’s name. All are opposed under religion’s name and the result is the whole world is developed while we fight each other and eat each other under religion’s name.  

“Lay on one land” is an Arabic expression meaning to reach an agreement or to have one

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241 Al-Salmouni 340.
decision that fits everyone. Moreover, it is not simply using religion to reach power. It is a very complicated process, especially if there is another power that tries to use religion to dominate as well. As usual, Al-Salamouni gives an example from history about the strife between Umayyad’s supports and Ali’s (Prophet Mohamed’s cousin’s) followers using religion.

Al-Salamouni suggested some solutions to stop manipulating religion. First as Ma’roof says, “I mean we have to stop mixing state affairs with religious matters. Mixing them together is a dangerous game that distorts both of them.” Second, the best means of eradicating the manipulation of religion is education. Ma’roof says:

All people need education. The first thing I will teach them is to beware of you [Borham] and your games. It is the mixing paper game that has started since the great strife until now.

Third, art can change people. It can encourage them to express their opinions. Tamim says:

TAMIM. The important thing is to encourage people to express their opinions. Their voice and opinions have to be louder until they reach the stars. These voices and opinions are more important than weapons and militaries.

BARDIES. [That can be done] Through a poem, a great song, a free opinion, a free idea.

Therefore, the only ones who can make a change in the society are its citizens because they are the majority and they have to be the decision makers, instead of just being blindly obedient. When the citizens rebel at the end of the play, they beat Borham and his

242 Al-Salamouni 341.
243 Al-Salmouni 356.
244 Al-Salmouni 377-78.
group and start a new era that is full of believing, not only in religion, but also in both human beings and in civilization.

Al-Salamouni continued his thematic focus on the uneasy and retrograde relationship between religion and political power in the next period of Egyptian leadership as we shall see in the next chapter on the Mubarak era.
Chapter 5: President Mubarak and the Muslim Brotherhood: Terrorism on a Global Scale

During Mubarak's regime Islamic groups used terrorist attacks to protest their exclusion from politics. Mohamed Salmawi’s 1992 piece *Al-Zahrah Wal-Ganzeer (The Flower and Chain)* is considered a good example that depicts Sadat’s role in supporting these religious groups, who would later be involved in many terrorist attacks during Mubarak’s reign. It depicts the reasons behind terrorism and the ways these kinds of fanatical groups established their own law, including laws conflicting with the government and women’s rights. They started attacking the government claiming that it was an infidel government, much like the plan that Borham follows in Al-Salamouni’s *Amir El-Hashasheen (Prince of the Assassins)*. Repeatedly in *Al-Zahrah Wal-Ganzeer (The Flower and Chain)*, Mohamed holds Zahrah’s family hostage under the same claim. These groups’ members denounced the government for not applying the Sharia law or Islamic Law; therefore, they believe it is permissible by God to kill members of the government. Under the religious veil, these groups tried to control the world and jump into power through their attacks. They used religion for political reasons. Salmawi’s play won the prize for best play in the book fair in 1995, and it was produced in the governmental theatrical sector in 1996.²⁴⁵ *Al-Haditha Allati Garat Fi Shahr September (The Accident that Happened in*  

²⁴⁵ Ahmed Sakhsookh, “Al-Ganzeer”, *Asdaa Al-Ganzeer (The Chain's Echoes)*. Ahmed Abdel-Moati Higazi, Salah Montasir, Ahmed Kamal Abul-Magd, Dr., Gaber Asfour, Dr. Mamdouh El-Beltagi, Alfred Farag, Dr. Nehad Selaiha, Dr. Esmat Abdel-Megid, Sami Khashabah, Ahmed Bahget, Ragaa Al-Nakash, Fouaad Al-Mohandes, Dr. Fathi
The Month of September) by Al-Salamouni gives a new example of using religion to reach political power. In that script, Al-Salamouni touched on another real story. He depicted the impact of 9/11 on both Arabs and Americans. He portrayed another kind of terrorism, when it turned from national to international attacks.

The Relationship Between President Mubarak and the Muslim Brotherhood

When President Mubarak followed Sadat in leading Egypt, he tried to avoid all Sadat’s mistakes. At the beginning, Mubarak avoided attacking the Islamic groups because he did not want to get involved so early in his reign in a conflict with them. According to Hisham Al-Awadi, Mubarak allowed the Muslim Brothers to practice politics during the first years of his regime. He permitted them to participate in the 1984 and 1987 parliament elections. Al-Awadi called that stage of tolerant attitude “the period of accommodation and tolerance.” However, they did not attack him because they hoped later to regain their power again after being oppressed by Nasser and Sadat. According to Al-Awadi, the second phase was called “the period of confrontation and repression.” It was not until the 1990s, when Mubarak discovered that they had gained society’s trust through offering several kinds of services (while he was losing the power to achieve people’s needs and expectations) that he started controlling the Islamic groups' activities.

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Soror, Abdel-Fatah Al-Baroudi, Hos Shah, Amin Hewadi, Dr. Salah Fadel, Hamdi Kandil, Dr. Rafiq Al-Saban, Dr. Ahmed Sakhsoukh. 2nd ed. (Cairo: Dar Alef Lel-Nashr (Alef Publishing House), 1996) 162.

activities.\textsuperscript{247} Thus, they countered him using terrorism. They attacked tourists in Luxor in 1997, and they repeated attacks in many other places. Previously, they tried to assassinate President Mubarak himself in Addis Ababa in June 1995. The Muslim Brotherhood took responsibility and declared that they would put an end to these deeds if the president freed a large number of their group members from prison, established an Islamic theocracy, and cancelled the emergency law. Ironically, that relationship between Mubarak and the Muslim Brotherhood ended by replacing him as ruler of Egypt. After Mubarak stepped down, the Muslim Brother’s Mohamed Morsi won the election and became president of Egypt in June 2012. After spending time in prison during Mubarak’s regime, the Muslim Brothers changed positions with Mubarak; they reached power and Mubarak went to prison.

\textbf{Fastening Flowers by a Chain in Salmawi’s \textit{Al-Zahrah Wal-Ganzeer (The Flower and Chain)}}

The title summarizes the story by announcing two severe opponents: the flower and the chain. According to Dr. Gaber Asfour, one of the most respected Egyptian critics, the flower represents innocence and freedom while the chain refers to prison and violence.\textsuperscript{248} In his script, Salmawi shows the impact of terrorism on an Egyptian family

\begin{footnotesize}

\textsuperscript{248} Gaber Asfour, “Mofarakat Al-Zahrah Wal Ganzeer (The Paradoxes of The Flower and The Chain),” \textit{Asdaa Al-Ganzeer (The Chain's Echoes)}. Ahmed Abdel-Moati Higazi, Salah Montasir, Ahmed Kamal Abul-Magd, Dr., Gaber Asfour, Dr. Mamdouh El-Beltagi, Alfred Farag, Dr. Nehad Selaiha, Dr. Esmat Abdel-Megid, Sami Khashabah, Ahmed Bahget, Ragaa Al-Nakash, Fouaad Al-Mohandes, Dr. Fathi Soror, Abdel-Fatah Al-Baroudi, Hosn Shah, Amin Hewadi, Dr. Salah Fadel, Hamdi Kandil, Dr. Rafiq Al-Saban,
\end{footnotesize}
consisting of different generations and reflecting the whole society.

The grandfather, Amin, is in his eighties. Amin is an Arabic name that means honest; thus he is an allegorical character, belonging to the old generation. He is ill for seven years and becomes paralytic. He loses the ability to see, and he barely hears. His diminishing health mirrors his minimal role in society. His daughter, Zahrah, denies his existence. She informs the woman dressed in *niqab* that her house is empty and brings her from the street convinced that this woman is an old friend of her daughter Nargis. But in reality, the woman is a male terrorist called Mohamed hiding behind a *niqab*.

Mohamed blames Zahrah after discovering that her father is in the house. He says:

MOHAMED. Liar! You’re such a lying woman! You said no one is in the house. Then I discovered that there is a man inside? There is no one left in this society that can be trusted by a human being. Unbelievers, all of you are unbelievers. Why did you lie to me? (Zahrah neither listens nor responds) Speak! Why did you lie to me?

ZAHRAH. My father... If you see him, you will know why I did not mention him. (Tears in her eyes appear and her voice starts trembling) My father is an old man. He is eighty years old. He is blind, he barely hears, and he became a paralytic. He started losing his mind too. In order to move him from his place, I have to put him in a wheelchair.249

Amin’s generation is more obedient to their families. They have been taught how to respect others, especially their parents. On the other hand, that respect disappears from one generation to the other. Amin says:

God forbids! What’s going on in this country? There are no values and

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principles. I could not dare to raise my eye in my father’s face. One day my classmates and I went to *Biet Al-Omma* [Sa’ad Zaghlol’s house] to meet Sa’ad Pasha [equivalent to lord in British] with other high school students. I went home only half an hour late for the lunch hour. My father hit me and I could not speak in his face. Nowadays children attack their parents and they are trying to kill them? What’s happening in the world? Peasants speak back to the landowners. Housekeepers fight back with their masters. No one knows his position any more.²⁵⁰

Therefore society’s structure now is different from Amin’s generation affecting the relationship between people. Amin belongs to Sa’ad Zaghlol’s era and attended the 1919 revolution when every child in school had only one aim. There was a national collective goal to oust the British from Egypt. This generation had more loyalty to the country than the current generation.

Amin’s daughter, Zahra, is in her fifties. She belongs to the middle generation, the generation of the 1952 revolution. She lived through Nasser’s era. Zahra has three children: two girls and a boy. Nargis is 26, Ahmed is 25, and Yasmin is 23. They represent the current generation. Zahra literally means flower. Her daughters have flower’s names too. Nargis is the Arabic name for narcissus. Additionally Yasmin is the Arabic version of jasmine. Nargis has two daughters, Sawsan and Dalia. In English, Sawsan means iris and Dalia means dahlia. Salmawi gives the female characters colorful flowers’ names. He also filled the house with flowers. But these flowers wither when Mohamed fastens the family (flowers) using his chain. Yasmin says:

**YASMIN.** Oh! Look mom, the lotus completely shriveled.

**ZAHRANN.** Lotus cannot live in a vase my sweetheart. It has to live in mud next to water and fresh air. When you imprison it in a vase, it will

²⁵⁰ Muhammad Salmawi 33.
necessarily wither.\textsuperscript{251}

The lotus was alienated when it was taken from its soil and put in a vase, just as everyone else in the play is alienated. For example, Nargis is an expatriate, travelling to the desert in Saudi Arabia, searching for a better life. Ahmed uses drugs to take him away from his life. Mohamed, the terrorist, alienates himself by isolating himself from the infidel society. Amin is still living in the past, and both Zahrah and Yasmin are far away from their hopes and dreams. Everyone fails to communicate with others in the same generation or with other generations.\textsuperscript{252} Zahrah tries to solve this problem in her conversation with Mohamed. She advises him:

\begin{quote}
Son, is not there any other way to merge this group rather than this violence and terrorism? Let the flowers bloom and life will be more beautiful. If they fasten the flowers with chains, the flowers will die and disappear from life.\textsuperscript{253}
\end{quote}

Salmawi uses the lotus to represent Egypt and its civilization. In the performance’s program, Salmawi explains that the Egyptian civilization was built on beauty and belief. It was the only old civilization that had no human sacrifices. Therefore, it rejects blood and violence.\textsuperscript{254} In the dialogue between Ahmed and his sister Yasmin,

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{251} Muḥammad Salmawi 71.
\textsuperscript{252} Nehad Selaiha. “Konbila Fi Lefafah Men Harir(A Bomb in a Roll of Silk),” \textit{Asdaa Al-Ganzeer (The Chain's Echoes)}. Ahmed Abdel-Moati Higazi, Salah Montasir, Ahmed Kamal Abul-Magd, Dr., Gaber Asfour, Dr. Mamdouh El-Beltagi, Alfred Farag, Dr. Nehad Selaiha, Dr. Esmat Abdel-Megid, Sami Khashabah, Ahmed Bahget, Ragaа Al-Nakash, Fouaa Al-Mohandes, Dr. Fathi Soror, Abdel-Fatah Al-Baroudi, Hosn Shah, Amin Hewadi, Dr. Salah Fadel, Hamdi Kandil, Dr. Rafiq Al-Saban, Dr. Ahmed Sakhsoukh. 2nd ed. (Cairo: Dar Alef LeL-Nashr (Alef Publishing House), 1996) 111.
\textsuperscript{253} Muḥammad Salmawi 57.
\textsuperscript{254} Muḥammad Salmawi, introduction, \textit{Asdaa Al-Ganzeer (The Chain's Echoes)}, Ahmed 136.
\end{flushleft}
Ahmed asked:

AHMED. What is this? Is it a flower?

YASMIN. This is the lotus flower, dummy. Do you know the lotus? It is a symbol for the Egyptian civilization and it has become rare right now.\(^{255}\)

Salmawi explains:

In spite of the fact that the lotus became rare [he means the Egyptian civilization], it did not die or become endangered for thousands of years. The reason is that it was watered by belief, love, goodness, and beauty. All of these are much stronger than violence, terrorism, iron, and fire.\(^{256}\)

In Salmawi’s script Yasmin adds:

In the past, Egyptians claimed that it was the beginning of creation. First, the whole world was all water. Then, a small piece of land appeared in which the lotus grew.\(^{257}\)

In his script, Salmawi shows the difference between Egypt and Arab countries during Nasser and Sadat’s eras. Zahrah states that in the past, during Nasser’s reign, Egypt was a leader in helping Arab countries, but under Sadat’s regime it became more financially dependent on Arab countries. She says, “In the past, Egypt was helping these (Arab) countries. But now, if they did not help us, I do not know what the situation would

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\(^{255}\) Muhammad Salmawi 42.

\(^{256}\) Al-Bit Al-Fani Lil-Masrah. *Al-Ganzeer (The Chain)*. (Cairo: Wzarat Al-Thkafa (The Ministry of Culture), 1996).

\(^{257}\) Muhammad Salmawi 43.
Salmawi and many others believed in Nasser as a leader not only for Egypt but also for the entire Arabic world. His leadership affected the country he ruled and put it in the lead of all other neighboring countries.

During Sadat’s reign Nargis becomes a good example of how girls adapted themselves to fit their new circumstances. Zahrah informs Mohamed:

> When her husband [Nargis’s] started moving into Saudi Arabia, many of her friends asked her what would you do there? There is neither social life, nor any kind of cultural activity, and women cannot go out alone. She said it is my husband’s work place and I have to be with him.\(^\text{259}\)

Nargis lives in a place that is completely different from her country, with a different culture. Travelling outside the country during Sadat’s reign was a new trend, a reaction to the Open Door Economic Policy. In his article in *Al-Ahrar* newspaper, journalist Ibrahim Fahmi asserts the same idea by saying Salmawi relates the new generation’s problems as being the loss a national collective goal, which has been replaced by atomized personal goals. The result was new trends such as terrorism, alienation, and addiction.\(^\text{260}\) For example, some people left the country searching for a better life. By supporting the Islamists, the theatre was neglected as most of the creators left the country searching for a more encouraging and supportive atmosphere in which to create their art. Under the name

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258 Muhammad Salmawi 11.

259 Muhammad Salmawi 11.

of religion, there was a return to the same situation before the women's liberation movement. For example, Amina El-Sawi, who was a well-known author during the 1960s, wore the veil after returning back from Saudi Arabia and wrote only about Islamic issues.\(^{261}\) Zahrah says:

>[To woman dressed in *niqab*] You remind me of Nargis. I do not know how. She is wearing a veil, an ordinary one not like yours. The first time I saw her was when she came during her vacation. I felt worried but each generation has its circumstances. The important thing is that the one has to understand others. I definitely appreciate... appreciate but... but I cannot understand... I cannot talk with her to let her explain. I am afraid to upset her. At the end, each one is free to handle their life.\(^{262}\)

Zahrah is an allegorical figure for Egypt. Her husband is meant to be President Nasser. She attributes all the bad circumstances to her husband’s absence. Zahrah tells Ahmed, “If your father were alive, many things would be changed in the country…” She adds:

Your father was a great man. The reason behind his success in his work was that he loved Egypt. He was not just a great engineer. He was a leader that believed in his country. He knew how to lead all the people working with him in his project.\(^{263}\)

Zahrah also considered Mohamed her son, as many Egyptians consider Egypt their mother. She says:

ZHRAH. The Mother can sacrifice her life to her son.

MOHAMED. I have no mother. Stay in your place.\(^{264}\)


\(^{262}\) Muhammad Salmawi 13.

\(^{263}\) Muhammad Salmawi 52.

\(^{264}\) Muhammad Salmawi 27.
Mohamed refuses Zahra’s offer to comfort him as a mother. His mother’s absence taught him to be harsh. It seems that it is too late to be held by a mother (Egypt).

The first time Mohamed appears on stage he is wearing a niqab, a woman’s clothes. Salmawi was not the first Egyptian playwright to portray men disguising as women in niqab. The reason for that disguise was to harm others. Mohamed benefited from being completely covered by a niqab to trick Zahrah. He convinced her to take him to her home to deliver gifts to her daughter Nargis in Saudi Arabia after claiming that she (as a woman in niqab) was Nargis’s close friend who would travel to work in Saudi Arabia too. In *Amir El-Hashasheen*, Al-Salouni also dramatizes a man hiding behind a niqab for nefarious reasons. People discovered that the woman in the niqab was a man. El-Hashasheen used the pretense of being a woman in order to convince other women to wear the niqab. In some cases, niqab would be a dangerous costume for two reasons. First, it relates to extreme religion. Thus people easily trust women wearing it. Second, it covers the whole body with the exception of eyes; therefore no one can recognize who wears it. Additionally, the niqab is not required in Islam. It is a more cultural than religious dress. In *Amir El-Hashasheen*, Al-Salouni’s highlights that idea in the words of Ma’roof. He informs the woman in the niqab:

> I want to tell you that the tent, pardon me, is a kind of clothes that is far away from our traditions. This tent is the wearing of Bedouin and desert inhabitants’ clothes.\(^{265}\)

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In Salmawi’s *The Flower and The Chain* when Zahrah is threatened by the gun after discovering that the woman in *niqab* is a man, she suggests that he take the television instead of harming her. She suggests giving him the only valuable thing in the house, the television. Salmawi intimates that the country owns nothing but the media right now. On the other hand, Mohamed refused her offer. He destroys the television by throwing the ashtray at it. He says, “Innovation! Every innovation is misguidance! And every misguidance is in hell!” Mohamed gets brainwashed by his group into believing that consuming the media is forbidden by God. His group believes the media has the potential to enlighten people’s minds. Therefore, they convince their group members not to listen or watch media claiming that media is forbidden by God.

By holding the family hostage, Mohamed uses the phone to communicate with his group. Within his group, Mohamed uses a lot of religious language. He starts each phone call with the Islamic greetings, including peace and God's mercy and blessings. In the mean time, he is carrying a gun and terrifying the family he captures. That can be seen in the script when Mohamed says:

(In the phone) Peace upon you brother Mostafa. Please inform Al-Amir [as the group’s leader is called] that everything is happening according to God’s will.

He adds, “I am waiting for the orders. Peace is upon you and God's mercy and blessings.” Mohamed is just a puppet in his group’s hand. He is following the orders he receives through the phone. He knows nothing about why he takes that family hostage.

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266 Muhammad Salmawi 15.

267 Muhammad Salmawi 16.

268 Muhammad Salmawi 17.
He has not even met Al-Amir yet. He is following orders to prove that he is qualified to be a member of that Islamic group and to gain the honor of meeting Al-Amir as he was promised. Ironically, Mohamed also uses God’s will to explain his reason for choosing Zahrah’s family. He explains why he selected Zahrah’s family as a hostage:

You are the same as others. All of you [he means the whole society] are unbelievers like each other. What was required is to hold a family hostage, any family. I could ride the car before or after yours. But God chose your family. The goodness is in God’s choice.269

Mohamed is convinced that by terrifying or even harming that family he is following God’s orders to become a better Muslim. But in fact, Islam is the religion of peace, and real peace is not only for greetings but also for dealing with others. Peace means keeping others’ safe. Even during wars it is preferable to stop fighting after the second party has asked for peace:

And if they incline to peace, then incline to it [also] and rely upon Allah. Indeed, it is He who is the Hearing, the Knowing.270

Mohamed’s misguided understanding of peace, of the religion he supposedly fervently follows, stems from early alienation from his family. Mohamed’s mother left him directly after birth. He had a lot of problems dealing with his father. In the play, Mohamed’s father is portrayed as the new president, Sadat. He has no brothers or sisters. He missed the affection of a family, which attracted him to find a group (as a sort of surrogate family) in order to be a member of that group. Mohamed would sacrifice his life for that group. Salmawi blames the country (as a mother) for not taking care of sons

269 Muḥammad Salmawi 32-33.

like Mohamed. That can be seen in the dialogue between Mohamed and Zahrah. Salmawi writes:

ZAHRAH. … You do not have a family?

MOHAMED. No I do not have a family.

ZAHRAH. Do not you have a mother? A father? Brothers and sisters to worry about?

MOHAMED. My father is an unbeliever like you, and I have never seen my mother.\textsuperscript{271}

Mohamed tells Yasmin about his mother:

The important thing is that she has never tried to find me. She has never tried to know what happened to her son that she left as an infant. From then on I knew the cruelty of life.\textsuperscript{272}

Salmawi stresses a solution to the phenomenon of terrorism. He declares that any terrorist needs a family--meaning society’s attention--considering him one of its members and listening to his problems. Mohamed found the family feeling in a small Mosque called Zawia where he got attracted first by doing social services in the neighborhood. But the social service gradually becomes more violent.

When Yasmin tried to help Mohamed by making a conversation with him, Salmawi highlighted the way that Mohamed was brainwashed. He asked Yasmin:

MOHAMED. Can anyone conflict with God’s word?

YASMIN. I did not mean that. But we can conflict on the way. Is it leniency or violence?\textsuperscript{273}

\textsuperscript{271} Muḥammad Salmawi 25.

\textsuperscript{272} Muḥammad Salmawi 64.

\textsuperscript{273} Muḥammad Salmawi 61.
Mohamed tried to attract Yasmin to his way.

MOHAMED. Sister Yasmin I... I want to take you with me.

YASMIN. Take me? Take me where?

MOHAMED. Take you to the truth and justice. Take you to Islam. Take you to paradise.

YASMIN. I am not convinced yet how the road to paradise passes through a gun and a chain.

MOHAMED. A gun is for nonbelievers. A nonbeliever’s life has no value the same as a dog’s. I want to talk with you about the unfulfilled duty, about the infidel state, about *Jahili* society, about…

YASMIN. We are not infidels Mohamed. We are believers exactly the same as you.\(^{274}\)

Mohamed was promised to go to paradise. The *Jahili* society is the society before Islam. In spite of living within Muslim society, Mohamed considered himself living with infidels just for disagreeing with his group’s thoughts. He was misled by being told that fighting or killing that infidel society is permissible by God.

Mohamed and Ahmed are different faces of one coin. Both of them belong to the same generation. They are in the same age carrying popular names to refer to many other members in the society. Mohamed got brainwashed by the Islamic group he belongs to and Ahmed’s brain is absent from the drugs to which he is addicted. Both of them obey orders without discussion. For example, Mohamed follows his group’s orders. He informs Zahrah:

MOHAMED. I am not doing whatever I desire. I cannot also behave according to your desire too. I have orders to accomplish.

\(^{274}\) Muḥammad Salmawi 66-67.
Zahrah asks:

ZAHRAH. At least tell me what do you want from me, and I will it to you. There is no need for things like this [she means the gun]. What do you want?

MOHAMED. I personally do not know yet.275

In the meantime, Ahmed obeys Mohamed’s orders.

MOHAMED. Open the door for your sister Ahmed. (Ahmed opens the door)276

And:

MOHAMED. (To Ahmed) Give me the phone Ahmed. (Ahmed carries the phone till Mohamed finishes his call then he returns it back to its place)277

Mohamed and Ahmed have sympathy toward each other. Ahmed claims that he is Mohamed’s brother. He answers the phone:

Hello? Yes he is here. I am Ahmed, his brother. He will talk to you. (Ahmed gives the phone to Mohamed).278

And Mohamed says about Ahmed:

Who says that I will judge him? He (Ahmed) has done nothing wrong. It is clear that he is your victim. The victim of this corrupted society. Will we punish the victim and leave the perpetrator?279

Zahrah asserts that both Mohamed and Ahmed are the same person.

275 Muhammad Salmawi 17.
276 Muhammad Salmawi 42.
277 Muhammad Salmawi 44.
278 Muhammad Salmawi 45.
279 Muhammad Salmawi 41.
ZHRAH. I swear to God my daughter that I do not know. The one who is searching is misled [she means Mohamed] and the one that is not searching is lost [she means Ahmed]. So at the end, everything is equal. What I mean is that Mohamed is exactly the same as Ahmed. I do not know what I did wrong? I gave you my life. And you are good thank God. Why is your brother not the same?

YASMIN. Mom, Ahmed needs a father exactly like Mohamed. God help them both.280

Again Salmawi blames the President, the father, for misleading the current generation.

According to the Egyptian critic Ahmed Abdel-Hamid “[the script] depicts the case of the lost new generation or at least the confused one who wants the reformation but his shortfall, disappointment, and political vacuum push him to violence or addiction. It is the case of both ‘Ahmed’ and ‘Mohamed’ at the same time.”281

The well-known Egyptian playwright Alfred Farag adds that the character of Mohamed has no depth of character compared to the other characters in Salmawi’s play.

In spite of that fact, Farag asserts that Salmawi does this intentionally. He says:

The other characters of the play are rich, clear, and present as they are drawn in multiple colors while the character of the terrorist appears as drawn monochromatically. It occupies an area but not a size. It is drawn in one color only, white. It also seems to any one’s eye different from the other characters of the play, as it appears as simple, flat, and pale. Not to reflect the conception of a terrorist’s character as it has been said, but to highlight the difference between its bland picture and the picture of the

280 Muḥammad Salmawi 69.

family members, who are distinguished by vitality, a spirit of sacrifice, and deep family love.\textsuperscript{282}

Salmawi summarizes the problem in Yasmin’s sentence. He claims that the president (the father of the society) is fully responsible for understanding and guiding these misled and absent-minded young men. Also, considering the respected critic Rafiq Al-Saban’s words, he says:

When religion is twisted to become a destructive and a killing tool, it does not differ a lot from drugs that negate the youths’ spirit, struggle, and hope for the future. Then the family and the whole society will pay the price. They will lick the wounds and try to wake the dead.\textsuperscript{283}

Al-Saban makes a comparison between drugs and misguided religion. In both cases society will pay the price. Like Zahrah, who tries to wake Mohamed and alert him against his group: the same as trying to wake the dead. It was too late. Additionally, Ahmed is considered Zahrah’s wound that cannot be cured. Licking it will not fix it.

At the end of the play, Mohamed (the terrorist) accidently harms Zahrah (Egypt). He shoots her unintentionally when she shakes him and screams in his face, asking him to

\textsuperscript{282} Alfred Farag. “Moalaget Al-Erhab Ala Al-Masrah (Curing Terrorism on the Stage),” \textit{Asdaa Al-Ganzeer (The Chain’s Echoes)}. Ahmed Abdel-Moati Higazi, Salah Montasir, Ahmed Kamal Abul-Magd, Dr., Gaber Asfour, Dr. Mamdouh El-Beltagi, Alfred Farag, Dr. Nehad Selaiha, Dr. Esmat Abdel-Megid, Sami Khashabah, Ahmed Bahget, Ragaa Al-Nakash, Fouaad Al-Mohandes, Dr. Fathi Soror, Abdel-Fatah Al-Baroudi, Hosn Shah, Amin Hewadi, Dr. Salah Fadel, Hamdi Kandil, Dr. Rafiq Al-Saban, Dr. Ahmed Sakhsoukh. 2nd ed. (Cairo: Dar Alef Lel-Nashr (Alef Publishing House), 1996) 21-24.

\textsuperscript{283} Rafiq Al-Saban. “Al-Ganzeer,” \textit{Asdaa Al-Ganzeer (The Chain’s Echoes)}. Ahmed Abdel-Moati Higazi, Salah Montasir, Ahmed Kamal Abul-Magd, Dr., Gaber Asfour, Dr. Mamdouh El-Beltagi, Alfred Farag, Dr. Nehad Selaiha, Dr. Esmat Abdel-Megid, Sami Khashabah, Ahmed Bahget, Ragaa Al-Nakash, Fouaad Al-Mohandes, Dr. Fathi Soror, Abdel-Fatah Al-Baroudi, Hosn Shah, Amin Hewadi, Dr. Salah Fadel, Hamdi Kandil, Dr. Rafiq Al-Saban, Dr. Ahmed Sakhsoukh. 2nd ed. (Cairo: Dar Alef Lel-Nashr (Alef Publishing House), 1996) 144.
set her free to save Ahmed’s life by buying him drugs. Salmawi shows that terrorism damages Egypt with or without intention. After Mohamed was shot by the police and Ahmed went into a coma from not taking drugs for many days, Zahrah screams ‘my son,’ trying to hold Ahmed by one hand and Mohamed by the injured hand. She tries to save a whole generation, half of which is misled by some Islamists and the other half, which has their minds’ negated by drugs. According to Mohamed Al-Hamassi, Zahrah’s scream is against every dark force, such as addiction, terrorism, and corruption, implicating the audience as a part of the society.  

Salmawi twists the story and surprises his audience by claiming that Mohamed was also the victim of a gang. They convinced him that it was an Islamic group, while it was really a front for embezzlement. They ask Mohamed to kidnap the family until the government releases their man. It seems that Salmawi censored himself by making that twist. He might be afraid of the Islamic groups’ reactions.

**Al-Ganzeer on the Egyptian Stage**

Galal Al-Sharqawi directed Salmawi’s script *Al-Zahrah Wal-Ganzeer*, which the Al-Salam Theatre produced at Modern Theatre in December of 1996. Although Al-Sharqawi owns a private theatre, the Art Theatre, he directed *Al-Ganzeer* in the

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governmental sector. Al-Sharqawi eliminated the flower from the title to highlight the chain. Thus, the performance appeared under the title of *Al-Ganzeer (The Chain)*. He selected superstars to play the five roles of the performance, which attracted a large audience. One hundred thousand viewers attended the performances including President Mubarak and Sultan Qaboos, the sultan of Oman. A full house for two years was not easy to be reached in the governmental sector. Many critics and politicians attended and wrote about the performance. Additionally, it was performed in France.

Galal Al-Sharqawi, the director of the performance, explains that the performance was a result of a two-month workshop. That workshop included the playwright, the actors, and the crew. Under the leadership of Al-Sharqawi, it thrived, becoming a performance that was somehow different from the original script. Al-Sharqawi believes that art is an effective weapon in fighting terrorism. He declares that his production of *Al-Ganzeer* has contributed in that battle against terrorism.

According to the Egyptian critic Ahmed Abdel-Hamid, Galal Al-Sharqawi smoothly broke the fourth wall through the set. By extending the walls of Zahrah’s house to the audience area, the audiences became a part of that family or the society that the family represents just by sitting in their chairs. In his article in *Al-Ahram* daily

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286 Muḥammad Salmawi, introduction 7-8.


288 Ahmed Abdel-Hamid 41.
newspaper, Mohamed Saleh asserts that the audience was also held hostage, controlled by the terrorist’s gun and chain. Ragaa Al-Nakash, the Egyptian critic, confirmed the same idea by saying that Al-Sharqawi let both audience and actors with different affiliations become imprisoned in the same house that embodies the country.

Nehad Selaiha asserts that the set suggested the family’s social and economic status and also gave a clear background about the emotional state of Zahrah’s family. Selaiha says:

There are the living room’s walls that have Pharaonic and Arab features at the same time. These features assert the characteristic of the place as a symbolic icon of Egypt. There are also the ornamental statues placed behind the glass of the bookcase’s wall. They seemed to symbolize creatures from the open space. They look frozen and lifeless after being imprisoned in their glassy houses the same as the lotus flower.

Selaiha adds that the unused piano under the photo of the dead father on one side and the quiet wall clock atop of the unlit fireplace in the other side reflect Zahrah’s life after her


291 Nehad Selaiha 115.
husband’s death: cold and lacking melody.

Al-Sharqawi uses the fireplace sufficiently in his performance. Mohamed was repeatedly close to it, which can be seen as a symbol representing Mohamed’s absent mother. That is why he chooses to tie Zahrah on the chair next to it, talk with the police near it, and collapse at the end by its side after receiving the orders to kill one of the family members.292

After spending four days with the kidnapped family and interacting with them, Al-Sharqawi, the director, lets Mohamed announce his refusal to kill them. Therefore the terrorist group sends some of its members to murder Mohamed. An impressive gunfight between the police and that group starts on stage and many people die on both sides. Zahrah screeched ‘my country’ instead of screaming ‘my son.’ Al-Sharqawi tried to highlight the bad and aggressive impact of terrorism on the society during that fight.

According to Dr. Gaber Asfour, the reason behind that change relates to the time gap between writing the script and directing it. The script was written in 1992 and produced on stage in 1996. According to Hosn Shah, in 1992 the governmental theatrical sector refused to produce Salmawi’s *The Flower And The Chain* claiming that the play’s subject matter is too sensitive and the censors had some concerns and worries about the reaction of fanatics.293 But the censorship board approved it in 1996.294 During these four years

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292 Nehad Selaiha 116.

293 Ghonam Abdo. “Al-Ganzeer Wal-Komedia Al-Sawda’a (The Chain and The Black Comedy),” *Asdaa Al-Ganzeer (The Chain’s Echoes)*. Ahmed Abdel-Moati Higazi, Salah Montasir, Ahmed Kamal Abul-Magd, Dr., Gaber Asfour, Dr. Mamdouh El-Beltagi, Alfred Farag, Dr. Nehad Selaiha, Dr. Esmat Abdel-Megid, Sami Khashabah, Ahmed Bahget, Ragaa Al-Nakash, Fouaad Al-Mohandes, Dr. Fathi Soror, Abdel-Fatah Al-Baroudi, Hosn Shah, Amin Hewadi, Dr. Salah Fadel, Hamdi Kandil, Dr. Rafiq Al-Saban, 151
the phenomenon of terrorism noticeably increased and these groups’ relationship with police and society became more hostile.\textsuperscript{295} Al-Sharqawi intended to use Zahrah’s scream to raise the spectators’ emotions against the phenomenon of terrorism.\textsuperscript{296} Additionally, in his review in \textit{Al-Akhbar} daily newspaper, Nabil Zaki says: “The last scene looks like an earthquake shaking us from inside. The director intended to make a sudden noise, a loud shock waking us up from hibernation and negligence and coma.”\textsuperscript{297} What Zaki meant is that Al-Sharqawi tried to alert the audience making them active in the battle against terrorism.

In his production, Al-Sharqawi highlighted the use of the phone. It was the bridge between Mohamed and Al-Amir as the leader of the terrorist group. Al-Amir is never seen on stage, and neither are Zahrah’s husband, nor her daughter Nargis. Like Zahrah’s

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\textsuperscript{294} Hosn Shah. “Ganzeer Al-Irhab (The Chain of Terrorism),” \textit{Asdaa Al-Ganzeer (The Chain's Echoes)}. Ahmed Abdel-Moati Higazi, Salah Montasir, Ahmed Kamal Abul-Magd, Dr., Gaber Asfour, Dr. Mamdouh El-Beltagi, Alfred Farag, Dr. Nehad Selaiha, Dr. Esmat Abdel-Megid, Sami Khashabah, Ahmed Bahget, Ragaa Al-Nakash, Fouaad Al-Mohandes, Dr. Fathi Soror, Abdel-Fatah Al-Baroudi, Hosn Shah, Amin Hewadi, Dr. Salah Fadel, Hamdi Kandil, Dr. Rafiq Al-Saban, Dr. Ahmed Saksoukh. 2nd ed. (Cairo: Dar Alef Lel-Nashr (Alef Publishing House), 1996) 81.

\textsuperscript{295} Gaber Asfour 30.

\textsuperscript{296} Gaber Asfour 35.

\textsuperscript{297} Nabil Zaki. “Zahret Al-Lotus Wal-Ganzeer (The Lotus Flower and The Chain),” \textit{Asdaa Al-Ganzeer (The Chain's Echoes)}. Ahmed Abdel-Moati Higazi, Salah Montasir, Ahmed Kamal Abul-Magd, Dr., Gaber Asfour, Dr. Mamdouh El-Beltagi, Alfred Farag, Dr. Nehad Selaiha, Dr. Esmat Abdel-Megid, Sami Khashabah, Ahmed Bahget, Ragaa Al-Nakash, Fouaad Al-Mohandes, Dr. Fathi Soror, Abdel-Fatah Al-Baroudi, Hosn Shah, Amin Hewadi, Dr. Salah Fadel, Hamdi Kandil, Dr. Rafiq Al-Saban, Dr. Ahmed Saksoukh. 2nd ed. (Cairo: Dar Alef Lel-Nashr (Alef Publishing House), 1996) 77.
husband, who was a leader, Al-Amir was another kind of leader. Yet he guides a group of terrorists. His group members believe in him, the same as Zahrah and her generation trusted her husband, their leader that led them to the good. Mohamed never met Al-Amir or even talked with him on the phone. It was another man who promised him to give Mohamed the honor of meeting Al-Amir after proving that he was qualified. Al-Sharqawi let Mohamed have a very special way of answering the phone. Mohamed considered that messenger to be the prophet Gabriel. Mohamed talked with him as if he was receiving a revelation that commanded his blind obedience and the negation of his mind.298

Another instance of talking on the phone was between Mohamed and the Minister of the Interior’s office. Mohamed just repeats the orders he received from his group. He informs the police his conditions to release that family. In that case it was a way of trading information or a strict way of negotiation between both sides. The phone is also used as the only way of communication between Zahrah and her daughter Nargis, who lives in Saudi Arabia. In the early nineties of the last century the Internet was not known yet in Egypt. Hosni Mubarak brought it to Egypt only later. Thus the phone was the only way to communicate with others in different places at that time.

The Egyptian author Nabil Badran asserts that there are many reasons behind the considerable success of Al-Ganzeer. First of them is that the subject matter is very important to people, and it is very current in its exploration of the terroristic way of

thought and action. Secondly, although the subject matter is so serious, the performance was so entertaining. The blackout between scenes incited the audience to think about what will come after. For example Scene One between Zahrah and Mohamed ends with a gun shot sound that lets the audience question whether Zharah was injured or killed by him. In Scene Two, Al-Sharqwi lets Zahrah warn her son Ahmed before entering the house. She asked him to flee directly before the end of that scene which increases the spectator’s curiosity about him during the blackout between this scene and the one after it. The audience was attached to the performance because they were expecting a sudden bullet from the gun that Mohamed holds during the whole play.299

In his review, Hamed Ezz El-Din mentions that the blocking played an important role in communicating Al-Sharqawi’s conception about the characters. He adds that Zharah’s lines were strong, fixed, and straight most of the time except when she talks about being lonely after her husband’s death, or her problems with her addicted son. He adds:

The lines of the terrorist’s movement were very weak in spite of his attempts to pretend that he is strong. His lines have a lot of curves that communicate the social injustice he suffered and forced him to enter this infernal circle.300


According to Ezz El-Din, Ahmed’s movement was close to a clown’s movement, with no clear aim because of his drugged mind. Al-Sharqawi knew how to benefit from the grandfather’s medical condition. Although he is paralyzed, Al-Sharqawi put the grandfather’s wheelchair in the downstage area. Whenever there was a need to highlight his dialogue, it moved to the upstage area. Finally, Al-Sharqwai let Yasmin’s lines transform from being soft at the beginning of the performance, to being stronger during her discussion with Mohamed.

The well-known critic Nehad Salieha watched the performance more than one time. She thought that she was impressed by it because she belongs to Zahrah’s generation. She says:

So again and again the artistic taste and subjective critical contemplation toward Al-Ganzeer in the case of the slave to God [it is a humble way to mention herself] turns into intimate existential synergy that changes the show, in turn, to an open text. I returned to it [the performance] time and time again. Each time I saw something new. Yet sometimes I carried it home with me, including its elements and characters to continue our conversation. What good company in winter’s nights!

Additionally, Al-Sharqawi highlighted the sprit of family in that last scene when he let all of the family members offer their lives in order to save the others. That sacrifice lets Mohamed discover the real meaning of the family and the falseness of his terrorist group. It also makes a smooth transition in his refusal to kill them. According to Selaiha,

Ahmed Abdel-Moati Higazi, Salah Montasir, Ahmed Kamal Abul-Magd, Dr., Gaber Asfour, Dr. Mamdouh El-Beltagi, Alfred Farag, Dr. Nehad Selaiha, Dr. Esmat Abdel-Megid, Sami Khashabah, Ahmed Bahget, Ragaa Al-Nakash, Fouaad Al-Mohandes, Dr. Fathi Soror, Abdel-Fatah Al-Baroudi, Hosn Shah, Amin Hewadi, Dr. Salah Fadel, Hamdi Kandil, Dr. Rafiq Al-Saban, Dr. Ahmed Sakhsoukh. 2nd ed. (Cairo: Dar Alef Lel-Nashr (Alef Publishing House), 1996) 103.

301 Nehad Selaiha 10.
Salmawi scored in his end. Mohamed was killed by the group he trusted the same as Sadat was murdered by them. Salmawi’s moral was that being a part of a terrorist group is a one-way direction. In other words, whenever there is someone who tries to get involved, he cannot return back safely.

Selaiha declares that Al-Sharqawi used the white and black in the first and last scenes of the performance. Mohamed wore the black niqab on the top of a white galabaya and at the end of the performance the fight was between the police in black and the terrorist group in white. The white and black are opposites and they exclude all other colors. By having to choose one or the other, it made clear who was with them and who was against them.

Al-Sharqawi was clear about the terrorist group. He changed that group from a gang using religion to mislead Mohamed to a real religious group seeking to help them by holding that family hostage in order to force the police to release its members from prison. That change extracted everything Salmawi wrote about the gang and led to the wonderful fight between the police and the group of terrorists. It also led to Mohamed being killed by them, not by the police as Salmawi first wrote.

In the last scene, the police and the terrorist group storm the house through its door in the upstage center. It seems that they came not only to attack the actors but also the audience. Al-Sharqawi asserted that idea by letting both groups shoot everywhere including the audience’s area. He also positioned his actors in the same direction as the audience. In other words, like the audience, the actors faced the door of the house during
Finally, Al-Ganzeer was staged for two days at Le Trianon Theatre in Paris, France. It was seen by four thousand audience members. It was performed with French subtitles on the top of the stage. It was covered by both Egyptian and French media, was well advertised, and was extremely successful.

302 Nehad Selaiha.


304 Holly Hill, Dina A. Amin, Nathalie Handal, and Heather Raffo. Salaam, Peace: An
Muslims. On the other hand, Egyptian playwright Al-Salamouni wrote about terrorism and its impact on both American and Arabs who live in America.

In Al-Salamouni’s script, the action starts after the 9/11 attack happened. The action happened in the past and plays as a flash back. This script has a documentary structure. What happened during 9/11 is screened by video on the stage before starting the first flash back and again at the end of the play. Professor Abul-Farag Al-Sharqawi, an Arabic literature professor in New York University, narrates the story to an Egyptian psychiatrist. Abul-Farag also clarifies and comments on the story he tells. He uses events from history to prove his claim. Additionally, Abul-Farag mentions books and discusses the books’ relationship with the attack of 9/11—such as Samuel P. Huntington’s *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*—in his argument with his father-in-law, Johnson. Moreover, Abul-Farag criticizes the untrusted books, as they are called, “yellow books,” explaining their roles in deceiving people’s minds. Although he narrates his story to the doctor as he is being psychoanalyzed, the target is to deliver it to the larger audience.

The script highlights some differences between American and Egyptian cultures. Yet the comparison was not fair because he compares a big city, New York, and a very small village in Upper Egypt. It seems that Al-Salamouni does that on purpose to stress that narrow-minded people can be easily found in some places of Upper Egypt.

The play starts in Egypt at a psychiatric clinic when a nurse informs the doctor that the new patient, U.B., is ready to meet him. Prof. Abul-Farag wrote his name as

Osama Ben Laden. Psychiatry is not a respected discipline in the Egyptian culture, but it is valid in the American one. Abul-Farag visits the doctor to help him kill his desire to destroy the United States as Bin Laden did. That extreme hostility stems from being imprisoned and kicked out of the United States as a reaction to 9/11, just for being a Muslim. Therefore 9/11 not only destroyed the two towers of the World Trade Center, it also ruined Abul-Farag and his family’s lives the same as it did many other Muslim-Americans’ lives. The doctor asks:

THE DOCTOR. When did that feeling start?

ABUL-FARAG. After I was kicked out of America.

THE DOCTOR. What did you do to get kicked out?

ABUL-FARAG. If I did do something, the hatred I have against America would not reach me. I lived all my life in the states without a problem. Suddenly and without any warning, I found my family and myself accused with no logical reason.305

After marrying Abul-Farag, his wife Liza converted into Islam. Although Liza is fully American, she belongs to a “hyphenated house,” as Dina Amin calls any people belonging to two different cultures such as Arabic-American people. Moreover, the Arab-American's culture is different from the Arab culture or the American culture.306 That marriage yields two Muslim-American children, both are college age, a son called Marwan and a daughter called Marwa. Thus, like many others “hyphenated” families;


306 Dina A. Amin.
Marwan and Marwa are neither fully American nor fully Egyptian. This is clear when they talk about their boyfriend and girlfriend, which is not common or accepted in the Egyptian society. That can also be found in the script when Marwa informs her father about being pregnant from her boyfriend. She says, “I want to abort the fetus from my womb.” Marwa wants to have an abortion because her boyfriend, who converted to Islam and changed his name to Arabic name just for her, changes his mind and converts back to his religion and culture after 9/11. Marwan also says about his girlfriend, “It is true, Daddy. Do you believe that today my girlfriend called me a terrorist?” Thus 9/11 causes Marwa and Marwan to be unwelcomed in the country of their birth.

The idea of having a boyfriend or a girlfriend is close to the idea Zawag Orfi (customary marriage) in the Egyptian culture. Zawag Orfi is a permissible unofficial marriage, but most of its cases are done secretly making it forbidden by God, as the most important thing about marriage in Islam is its proclamation. The doctor educates Abul-Farag about his comment about Zawag Orfi, explaining, “Did you know Dr. Abul-Farag that the Western boyfriend and girlfriend idea is exactly the same as the idea of the Eastern Zawag Orfi?” Al-Salamouni asserts that this idea started first in the West. Abul-Farag adds:

The strange thing is that the fanatical groups, who raise the religious slogans claiming the infidelity of the society, encouraged this Western phenomenon making it Eastern.

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307 Al-Salamouni 440.
308 Al-Salamouni 442.
309 Al-Salamouni 484.
310 Al-Salamouni 485.
Changing identities, including names and religion, is a repeated element in the script. Like Marwa’s boyfriend, who changes his name from William into Walid after converting to Islam, Lora, Marwan’s girlfriend, changes her name to Nora. On the other hand, after travelling to Egypt because of 9/11, Hamida and Rashida, Abul-Farag’s sisters-in-law, called Liza “Um Marwan”, which literally means Marwan’s mother because it is a shame in some villages to call a woman by her name. It is preferable to call her by her son’s names. But in the case of the script, it was forbidden as Marwan says, “Al-Amir says it is forbidden by God that someone calls a woman using her name.”

It is not forbidden in Islam to use a woman’s name. The evidence is that Aisha’s name was mentioned several times in the prophet Mohamed’s Hadith (sayings). Additionally in the holy Quran there are many women’s names such as Mariam, the Arabic version of Mary. The same idea can be found in the conversation between Liza and Abul-Farag’s sisters-in-law:

HAMIDA. Look lady Um Marwan...

LIZA. Please Hamida when you call me, use my name.

RASHIDA. Change it sister. You are a Muslim now.

LIZA. Why do I change it? Did Mecca’s infidels exchange their names after converting into Islam? Did the Coptic Maria change her name after marrying the Prophet? It seems that William and Lora had a virtual change, while Liza, Abul-Farag’s wife, had a really deep one. She kept her identity as she kept her name. She converted into Islam only

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311 Al-Salamouni 479.

312 Al-Salamouni 469.
because she was convinced. That explains why she supported her innocent husband and continued their life together instead of leaving him and converting back from Islam, as William and Lora did.

There are different levels of belief in the play. One of them can be found in the well-educated people, Abul-Farag and Liza. They build their belief on understanding, making it deeper rather than superficial. Abul-Farag does not care about what others say about his wife’s style or whether she is wearing niqab or hijab or not. That can be found in the dialogue between Abul-Farag and his sisters-in-law about Liza’s style.

RASHIDA. If she is Muslim and believes in one God, why is she walking with uncovered hair!

ABUL-FARAG. She is free my sister-in-law. As you are free to cover your hair, she is free to uncover it. It is a custom and traditions issue my dear lady. You took the Bedouin’s customs and she takes the urban ones. Everyone is free in his or her customs and traditions Mamma.313

Calling someone mamma or papa in Egyptian conversation belittles him or her. That literally means they do not understand well. Thus, Abul-Farag and Liza only care about what is in their hearts, instead of paying attention to the way of wearing clothes or other superficial issues. The opposite way of belief can be found with Abul-Farag’s family in Egypt. His brothers, as all other members in the terrorist group, use religion to achieve political goals. In other words, they seek power through religion. Additionally, Hamida and Rashida misunderstand religion. They only pay attention to the external issues. That can be seen in the argument between them and Liza.

LIZA. …. The real belief can be found inside your heart not outside.

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313 Al-Salamouni 468.
HAMIDA. …You come to teach us OUR religion!

LIZA. It is not YOUR religion Hamida. It is God’s religion.  

Hamida and Rashida are narrow-minded. First they are illiterate. They got married at the age of twelve. Second they are alienated from the society under their niqab. They learn everything they know by hearing about it, not by reading or searching. Thus they were trained to obey, and they have been taught their duties and know nothing about their rights. For example, when their husbands married other wives in different countries, they did not complain. The reason is that they only know that the man has the right to marry up to four wives, but they know nothing about their right to be asked for permission by their husbands before marrying again. Or they cannot use their right because they have been told that women are weak and have no right to complain. Liza knows her duties and rights. She uses her right when she marries her husband. That can be found in the dialogue between Liza, Hamida, and Rashida.

LIZA. Your husbands left you here and got married in Afghanistan and in other places.

RASHIDA. It is God’s law Habibti [literally means sweetheart, but it is a sarcastic way of talking]. The man has the right to marry four.

LIZA. If every one of you had upheld her legitimate right, your husband would not marry another wife. When I married Abul-Farag, I wrote a condition in the contract that he has no right to marry another wife.  

As Islam gives men the right to marry more than one wife, it gives women the right to divorce if she disagrees with it. Moreover, men have to get their wives’ permissions

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314 Al-Salamouni 469-470.

315 Al-Salamouni 470.
before marrying again. Sheikh Gamal Kotb (the former chairman of the Fatwa Committee in Al-Azhar) finds that:

Polygamy in Islamic law is permissible by God but it is not absolute, such as food and drink. It began as a solution to crises. No one can think that polygamy is an open door for anyone who wants. A husband might need another wife for a reason or multiple reasons related to his first wife [such as a fatal disease or being sterile] In the meantime Islam does not force the first wife to accept but allows her to either accept and allow another female to share her husband, or to decide to leave.\(^{316}\)

Al-Salamouni depicts his characters through an Egyptian point of view. Although Marwa and Marwan are college-aged, they are still living in their family house.

Additionally, Liza plays the Egyptian mother-in-law role with her son’s girlfriend. Liza says about Marwan’s girlfriend:

\begin{quote}
LIZA. She is an impolite girl and does not behave. I wonder what attracted you to her.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
MARWAN. I love her mommy. I adore her.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
LIZA. She called you a terrorist and you still love her. Do you have any dignity?\(^{317}\)
\end{quote}

Unlike Egyptians, Americans do not interfere as much in their children’s lives and choices once they are happy, especially at Marwa and Marwan’s age. That interference appears many times in the script. First, when William’s mother and father interfere in his decision to marry Marwa after 9/11. Marwa says:

\begin{quote}
Today after being hit in the university, William took me aside and said, “I am sorry Marwa. I cannot marry you.” I asked him why. He said,
\end{quote}


\(^{317}\) Al-Salamouni 442.
“Because daddy and mommy refused to let me marry a terrorist girl.” I said, “Am I a terrorist Walid?” He said, “I know you’re wronged but what can I do? Daddy and mommy insist on having back my first name, and that I abandon you. They do not want problems with the government.”

Not only Marwa and Marwan were discriminated against in the university after 9/11 for being Muslims, but also so were all the other Muslims from different nationalities, including Americans. That reflects the aggressive reaction that some Americans took against all Muslims after 9/11.

Another example of the interference in their children’s lives and decisions was shown by Johnson, Liza’s father. Johnson says, “Dr. Abul-Farag, please divorce my daughter.” Johnson does not ask Abul-Farag to divorce Liza on her own behalf; it is not her desire. He wants to save his reputation as a member in the Democratic Party. He and many others are convinced after 9/11 that ALL Muslims are terrorists. In writing English, there is a role of preventing people from using general terms such as “every” or “all.” Instead, it is preferable to use terms like “most” or “some.” But that was not the case after 9/11. Many Americans considered that all Muslims were terrorists, and Islam was the religion of terrorism.

On the other hand, that interference makes more sense in Egypt. After returning back from New York, Abul-Farag’s credit cards are frozen. Thus he returns to live in his father’s house in Upper Egypt, where his sisters-in-law are still living. In villages or small communities, people know each other and keep a close eye on others. In other words, the role of others in controlling people's lives and relationships is great. This sense

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318 Al-Salamouni 441.

319 Al-Salamouni 446.
of commentary knowledge and control also occurs in Garcia Lorca’s *Yerma* (1934). Firstly, after hearing rumors about his wife’s infidelity, Juan decides to bring his unmarried sisters home to guard his wife while he is working. The second occasion is when Victor’s father forces him to leave the village in order to avoid these rumors.\(^{320}\)

There are many similarities between Juan’s two sisters in Lorca’s play and Abul-Farag’s sisters-in-law. Juan’s sisters are religious and serious. They do not speak at all. All they do is clean and cook. They look like guards who are watching a prisoner who is Yerma. In Al-Salamouni’s play, Hamida and Rashida seem to be religious too. They are wearing *niqab*. Like guards, they are watching Liza, counting each step and commenting on it. Unlike Yerma’s husband, Juan, who brought his sisters to the house to watch and control Yerma, Abul-Farag brings his wife to his family’s house, is unhappy and disagrees with what Hamida and Rashida do. Instead of not speaking, they do not show their faces through their *niqab*, except in two spots of the play. Once in front of Liza after she convinces them that she is a woman, and it is not forbidden by God to see their faces. The other time occurs when Rashida uncovers her face for the first time in front of Abul-Farag. After the CIA murdered her husband, Rashida gets a fatwa from Al-Amir (the terrorist group leader) that proclaims her Abul-Farag’s wife, without him or Liza even knowing it.

After failing to convince Abul-Farag to force Liza to wear *hijab*, Hamida and Rashida try to perform female genital mutilation on Liza and her daughter. Until recently in Egypt, people thought that procedure would reduce women’s needs and prevent them

from committing sins. It is not a religious belief; it is a cultural belief. They failed to convince Liza, but they got Marwa, who got an infection and almost bled to death after the procedure. Her life was narrowly saved. This brutal act is another form of terrorism.

There are many other forms of terrorism in this play. The first was done by Osama Bin Laden, when he ordered members of his group to destroy the two towers. Perhaps it is more an act of revenge than terrorism. Liza says:

LIZA. But who is riding an airplane and hit his head into a tower, would not be a terrorist. Impossible. Terrorists usually have demands during their mission. Isn’t that what usually happen as we watch it on television?

ABUL-FARAG. I swear you are right Liza. We never saw a terrorist killing himself without forceful requests. Honestly no one would do that except someone who disdains America even till death.\footnote{Al-Salmouni 433–434.}

Hitting a head on the wall or any other solid item is an Egyptian expression that indicates the madness of a person who has no solution to solve his problem. According to Al-Salamouni, Abul-Farag’s elder brothers, Abul--Fotouh and Abul-Hasan, were part of this terrorist group. That was the reason behind arresting Abul-Farag after 9/11. The CIA asked Abul-Farag to go back to Egypt to investigate the real reasons behind that attack. The CIA could easily arrest Abul-Farag’s brothers, but they wanted to know these real reasons that cannot be discovered from anyone expect an approachable person like their brother Abul-Farag.

During his meeting with his brothers in Egypt, some hidden pieces of information are released. Firstly, the CIA in the past used these Islamic groups as a weapon against the Soviet Union by arming and supporting them, including Bin Laden, after claiming
that the Soviet Union is the country of non-believers and atheism. America created the
monster that attacks it. Abul-Hasan says:

ABUL-HASAN. Bin Laden, who they are fighting now, got his
weapons of mass destruction, and stinger missiles that are only used by
the American army and NATO, from the CIA. America made him the
leader of Jihad, trained him in drawing offensive plans, encouraged
him to create al-Qaeda, and equipped caves in the mountains of
Afghanistan with the latest types of technology.

ABUL-FOTOUH. … Do not be astonished; they helped us in growing
drugs in the mountains of Afghanistan and plant Qat [a kind of drug]
in the mountains of Yemen in order to be able to finance war and Jihad
[fighting under the flag of religion].

Abul-Hasan also mentions the conference that was organized by America under the
leadership of Bin Laden as evidence of American support to their group. Abu-Al-Hasan
says:

ABUL-HASAN. They established terrorism and they consider it now
their enemy. If you remember the conference that took place on the
border of Pakistan and Afghanistan under the flag of jihad, America
organized it under the leadership of Osama Bin Laden. It involved the
entire fundamentalist organizations, the secret groups, and big business
in Paris, London, Stockholm, and New York, and offices of relief from
everywhere.

ABUL-FOTOUH. Then, terrorism, I mean Jihad, spread from
Afghanistan to Bosnia, Chechnya, France, the Philippines,
Madagascar, Algeria, Somalia, Yemen, South Africa, Sudan, Brazil,
the Balkans…

Thus Abul-Fotouh blames America not only for the attack that happened in the month of
September but also for all other incidents in other countries all over the world.
Al-Salamoni also explains the reasons behind the attack in his script from the Islamists’

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322 Al-Salamouni 491.

323 Al-Salamouni 491.
point of view. Abul-Fotouh and Abul-Hasan blame America for not fulfilling its promise
to put them (the Islamists) in power over all Islamic countries after becoming the only
superpower and destroying the Soviet Union without fighting it, by using the Islamists.

Therefore, the Islamists did everything just to gain control. Abul-Fotouh says:

Why did we fight? In order to let others rule while we stay out of power!
We have sacrificed all these years in order to let others ride and overhang
their legs! 324

‘Ride and overhang one’s legs’ is an Arabic idiom which means to sit comfortably, not
caring what is running around you while you are controlling whatever you are riding.

Abul-Hasen mentions the desire to rule directly. He says:

Do you think that a man like Bin Laden, who spent billions of his money
and exerted as much effort as he could in Afghanistan’s war for the sake
of America, does not have first claim to rule his country Saudi Arabia?
And Doctor Al-Zawahiri does not have first dibs to govern Egypt?
Measure that on all other group leaders in the Arabic and Islamic
countries. Is not it their right once they helped America after they
participated in war and jihad for ten years? 325

Another aspect of terrorism found in Egypt is the terrorism of minds. Abul-Farag
explains that kind of terrorism can be found in the untrusted books or yellow books, as he
called them. These books were used to mislead and deceive people’s minds. Abul-Farag
asks the psychiatrist:

ABUL-FARAG. O doctor, did not you read about the snake that is
called the brave bald?

THE DOCTOR. Do you mean the books of death’s torment that are
exhibited on platforms? 326

324 Al-Salamouni 492.
325 Al-Salamouni 492.
326 Al-Salamouni 473.
Abul-Farag adds:

That bald snake is an example of real terrorism. The terrorism that paralyzes you and your thinking, that destroys your mind and sentiment, that disrupts all your creative and psychological gifts, and that will transform you into an awestruck object sentenced to death.\(^{327}\)

Thus these kinds of books distort people’s minds about what would happen on their tombs after they are buried, if people did not follow exactly what they want them to do. One horrible example is the bald snake, or, as it is called, the bald brave. In this kind of book, that snake would hold the dead body, squeezing it until the bones were cracked to their opposite sides. There is nothing in the holy Quran about that snake. Abul-Farag explains the impact of these books on people. He says:

Believe me doctor, if you searched behind all the people who converted, quit [their jobs and life], became dervishes or extremists, depressed, or committed suicide, you would find that kind of yellow books behind their cases.\(^{328}\)

Therefore instead of pushing people to improve their behaviors, these kinds of books tortured people and misled their minds. They serve as a kind of ongoing, cultural terrorism.

Like these books, Al-Amir (the terrorist group leader) misused religion many times by issuing fatwas. Ironically, Al-Amir gave Marwan one of his wives to marry. Al-Amir has four wives; in order to marry another one he has to divorce one of the four. Thus he gave her to Marwan to marry her after brainwashing him to become one of his group members. He gave Marwan one of his old wives, claiming that she was taught by

\(^{327}\) Al-Salmouni 474.

\(^{328}\) Al-Salmouni 475.
*Al-Amir* so she can teach him. She has children from Al-Amir, which would make some sort of relationship between Marwan and Al-Amir; both of them will be fathers to her children. This is an example of how clever they are in brainwashing, especially someone like Marwan with his education and background.

The second fatwa that was issued by Al-Amir to Marwan is that Marwan can marry Al-Amir’s ex-wife on the same day of divorce. That is forbidden in Islam.

> Divorced women remain in waiting for three periods, and it is not lawful for them to conceal what Allah has created in their wombs if they believe in Allah and the Last Day. And their husbands have more right to take them back in this [period] if they want reconciliation. And due to the wives is similar to what is expected of them, according to what is reasonable. But the men have a degree over them [in responsibility and authority]. And Allah is exalted in Might and Wise.\(^{329}\)

Women have to wait three months after divorcing to marry another man. The reason is that she might be pregnant and it would be difficult to determine the father of the child in the case of marrying at the same time of divorce. Rashida carries Al-Amir’s fatwa to Marwan. She informs him:

> Good news brother. Al-Amir informs you that he checked your bride’s blood for pregnancy in the Islamic association’s lab, and the result is negative. So you do have the right to start your sexual life with her tonight.\(^{330}\)

Al-Amir never appears on stage, and his physical absence gives him more power because the audience has freedom to imagine him according to the information about him from the beginning till the end of the play. That also gives an impression about the power that


\(^{330}\) Al-Salamouni 480.
destroys people’s mind as an unseen power, so it cannot be beaten easily. Additionally, working from a distance and sending orders to people means one of two things. First, it is adding a holy cover to that person, or second is making his work illegal. Both cases would work for Al-Amir.

According to Al-Salamouni, the only way to fight terrorism is through culture and art. In other words, being sophisticated would save people from getting trapped in terrorism and would save them from getting brainwashed by terrorist groups. That is the reason that prevented Abul-Farag’s brothers from attracting him to their group. Abul-Fotouh explains to Abul-Farag:

People like you are not fit to work with us. We tried gently many times, but we could not attract you. We found you a man of culture, thought, art, and literature. You believe in the revolution, Nasser, nationalism, socialism, democracy, and other things that we deny which takes you away from us.\footnote{Al-Salamouni 486.}

Additionally, Abul-Farag explains why the yellow books did not affect him and his wife. He says:

\begin{quote}
ABUL-FARAG. Honestly, I do not know exactly. But it might be the person's culture and mental composition.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
THE DOCTOR. But your daughter is cultured.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
ABUL-FARAG. My daughter is not cultured. Education is one thing and mental culture is a different thing.\footnote{Al-Salamouni 475.}
\end{quote}

The play ends in the present, back at the psychiatric clinic, when Marwa and Marwan join their father and mother at the clinic. As he promised Abul-Farag, Abul-
Fotouh convinces Marwan to return back to his father to save his sister and rejoin his family again. The end is a twist, searching for a happy ending, but it is not realistic. By the end Abul-Farag asks the audience to take an action against terrorism that was initially sponsored by America who supported Bin Laden and his group. The action was addressed directly to the audience to legally sue the CIA and Pentagon chiefs for supporting these fanatics groups.

A short documentary about 9/11 was screened during the film festival at the Middle East Studies Association’s annual meeting in 2012. One character called Osama claims that he is an Egyptian-American who has the same first name like Osama bin Laden. But he was harmed twice. Once was by Osama Bin Laden when he attacked his country, America. The other was done by other Americans for accusing him of being a Muslim and therefore a terrorist.

The same as Osama, Abu-Al-Farag and his family were harmed many times. Once was by Osama Bin Laden, second was by Americans who attacked them, burned their house, arrested Abu-Al-Farag, and sent them back to Egypt for no real crime. The last harm happened in Egypt. Marwa and Marwan got lost in the new culture and were brainwashed, while Liza and Abul-Farag started visiting a psychiatrist in order to find themselves again. Thus not only Arab Muslims like Abu-AL-Farag and hyphenated people (Arab-American) like Marwa and Marwan suffered from the fallout of 9/11, but also full Americans like Liza were harmed by it. To sum up, terrorism is blind and destroys humans and their lives.


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years after the real events of 9/11 happened. The script faced problems in being
performed on stage. Not all problems were caused by censorship; some were caused by
the manager of the National Theatre and Al-Tali’a theatre’s manager. They were
concerned about the play’s subject matter. Many directors were considered to direct the
performance before Maher Selim was chosen to put it on stage. In the National Theatre,
Assem Nagaty was chosen to direct it, but after casting the superstar Ezzat Al-‘Alily to
play Abul-Farag, the project was stopped by the theatre manager. Then in Al-Tali’a
Theatre, Ahmed Abdel-Halim was chosen to direct it, but the project was cancelled again
by the theatre manager for the same reason. It seems that some theatre managers were
not brave enough to produce such bold ideas on stage. Finally, the censors had some
concerns about some songs in the production because they were anti-American.
Chapter 6: Conclusion

After investigating the relationship between religion and politics in Egyptian theatre as it mirrors Egyptian history, I want to summarize the key elements. Clearly, many Egyptian playwrights highlight the misuse of religion to achieve political aims. The playwrights attempt to educate people about the misuse of power filtered through various disguises of pious religious pretense. In Egyptian history before the separation between a religious man and politician, or as it is known in the West, the separation between church and state, the conflict centered around a religious leader and a stranger who came from outside to invade the country and instigate a take-over of power. That appears in Sitt-El-Mulk (The Lady on The Throne) by Samir Sarhan and in Al-Salamouni’s Diwan Al-Baqr (The Chronicle of Cows). Thus, in these examples the threat was from the outsider. However after the separation between religion and politics, the threat came from within the country. This conflict coalesced around religious men’s and politicians’ lust for power.

The Relationship Between Religious Leaders and Politicians

Islamic groups have tried for many years to achieve political power. They took on a particular role, or status: to be a weapon in politicians’ hands. For example, King Farouk I supported the Muslim Brotherhood to fight the Wafd Party, a nationalist liberal party, after realizing its popularity would buttress the people’s trust. Thus Farouk
supported the Muslim Brothers to stand against the Wafdist. Secondly, the Muslim Brothers used Nasser as a shield to their own machinations in the July 1952 revolution. They wanted to be involved in the revolution, but they were not sure about the revolution’s outcome. After its success, they tried to interfere in Nasser’s decisions. When he refused, it led to their repeatedly unsuccessful attempts to assassinate him. During Sadat’s era, Islamic groups that had been supported by Sadat stood against the communists. He called Egypt ‘the country of science and faith.’ Yet eventually they killed him. During Mubarak’s era, there was an implicit peaceful agreement between Islamic groups and Mubarak. He let them participate in political life; they put an end to their terrorist attacks and even their attempts to assassinate Mubarak himself (as in Addis Ababa in June 1995). This pattern can be seen repeatedly beyond Egypt, such as in the relationship between Al-Qaeda, as a religious group, and the United States, as a powerful country. Under the leadership of Bin Laden, Al-Qaeda was merely a weapon supported by the United States that wanted to fight against Russians as a surrogate, without being involved in a fight. After failing to reach the promised power, Al-Qaeda attacked the United States on 9/11/2001. Thus Islamic groups accepted being a weapon, then attacked whomever created or supported them when they sensed that they could not achieve the supremacy.

**Religious / Political Conflict in Egyptian Theatre**

The relationship between religion and politics in Egyptian theatre continuously attracted many Egyptian playwrights and became a popular theme to pursue. For example, Abul--Ela-Al-Salamouni adapted the idea of exploiting religion to achieve
power in many of his scripts. In one of his early plays, *The Witches* (1975), Al-Salamouni started criticizing the misuse of religion. This play was inspired by *The Crucible* by Arthur Miller. *The Witches* was just a beginning for the playwright as it was followed by four other plays that are considered clear examples, highlighting the misuse of religion to achieve political aims.

In his scripts, Al-Salamouni covered the Muslim Brotherhood’s three different sectors: economic, military, and philosophical. The economical sector was discussed in Al-Salamouni’s *Al Milliemme Barba'a (One Dime Earns Four)*. Al-Salamouni chooses *Al-Mould* as the setting because it is known that *Al-Mould* is a celebration for someone that people claim has miracles and blessings. No one can prove that, but people’s emotions are used under religion’s name to collect people’s money as happened with Islamic investment companies during the eighties and nineties from the last century.

The military sector was highlighted in *Amir El-Hashasheen (Prince of the Assassins)*. In that script the violence under the religious flag was stressed. The philosophical sector can be seen in *Diwan Al-Baqar (The Chronicle of Cows)* that reflects the impact of brain washing that was done by religious groups and was silently agreed to by politicians through their silence in the face of religious leaders who pursue gullible and easily influenced people. In his play, Al-Salamouni portrays the King content with the status of his people. He states that ruling an ignorant society is much easier than ruling a sophisticated one. Yet he does not realize that Islamic fundamentalists have their own agenda; their only aim is to achieve control and authority. In *Al-Haditha Allati Garat Fi Shahr September (The Accident that Happened in The Month of September)*, Al-Salamouni, the first Egyptian playwright address the events of September 11, 2001,
shows the impact of terrorism on both Muslims and Americans. That accident destroys Abu-Al-Farag’s life and future, just for being a Muslim because these supposedly religious groups abused Islam.

Tewfik Al-Hakim discusses the relationship between religion and politics twice in his scripts. In his version of Oedipus, Oedipus The King (1949), he transforms Sophocles’ classic work into a demonstration of the practice of concealing political aims under the veil of religion. On the other hand his play The Sultan’s Dilemma (1960) shows how politicians can manipulate religious practice, highlighting the two-way conflict.

Ali Ahmed Bakathir has two scripts that explore this conflict. The first is The Tragedy of Oedipus (1949) and the second one is Sirr Al-Haakim Bi-Amr Allah Aw Lughz Al-Tarikh (Al-Haakem Bi-Amr Allah's Secret or The Puzzle of The History, 1947). Other Egyptian playwrights mention that strife once in their scripts such as Samir Sarhan who published Sitt-el-Mulk (The Lady on the Throne) in 1989 and Mohamed Salmawi’s 1992 piece The Flower and Chain (Al-Zahrah Wal-Ganzeer). Thus, the relationship between religion and politics continuously attracted the attention of Egyptian playwrights.

**Staging the Conflict: Egyptian Directors**

The misuse of religion to achieve political aims attracted a handful of Egyptian directors. For example, the well-known director Galal Al-Sharqawi is one of the bravest directors to choose to direct some of the plays I discuss in my research. He directed Al-Salmouni’s Al Milliemme Barba'a (One Dime Earns Four). As a result, Al-Sharqawi received a death threat for putting it on stage. He also directed Salmawi’s Al-Zahrah Wal-Ganzeer (The Flower and Chain). He called it Al-Ganzeer (The Chain) to highlight the
play’s subject matter, terrorism. During its production, police surrounded the theatre every day for the actors’, director’s, and audiences’ safety.

In 1995 Karam Metaweh directed *Diwan Al-Baqar (The Chronicle of Cows)* on Egyptian stage and participated at the Carthage theatrical festival in Tunisia. In order to be able to stage the play, Metaweh made some changes in the costume and eliminated some parts of the dialogue due to censorship.

On the other hand, Sa’ad Ardash’s performance *Amir El-Hasasheen (Prince of the Assassins)* has never been performed on stage because Fahmi Al-Kholi, the Modern Theatre’s manager, claimed that he received a bomb threat during rehearsals of the play. Thus he decided to cancel the performances. When Assem Nagaty directed *The Sultan’s Dilemma* in 2009 he was forced by censors to omit some songs in order to get permission to put his performance on stage. Finally, *Al-Haditha Allati Garat Fi Shahr September (The Accident that Happened in The Month of September)* was canceled many times by many different stage managers who had initially agreed to produce the work. Finally, despite many changes in directors for this play, Maher Selim directed it in 2010. It seems that some theatre managers were not brave enough to produce such bold ideas that examine the September 11, 2001 attack on stage.

In criticizing religious extremism, like many authors Egyptian playwrights rely on metaphors. A significant example is the way that drugs are used to stand in for religious fundamentalism by showing the ways in which using drugs to negates or cancel out the mind. Thus drugs as a central act of terrorism has many uses. First, this process is twofold: brain washing by religious men and emptying the brain through drugs.

Salmawi’s 1992 piece *Al-Zahrah Wal-Ganzeer (The Flower and Chain)* sufficiently gives
two clear examples of this. Mohamed, the terrorist, gets brainwashed by the Islamic group he belongs to, while Ahmed’s brain is absent from the drugs to which he is addicted.

This example of Ahmed’s addiction also occurs in Al-Salamouni’s *Diwan Al-Baqar (The Chronicle of Cows)* in which drugs are used as literal opiates to control humans. Hamoud claims that the opiate/drug he offers people is a blessing plant in order to facilitate his mission and fully control people’s minds. In *Amir El-Hashasheen (Prince of the Assassins)*, Al-Salamouni shows the impact of hashish on people's minds. The main character, Borham, uses both religion and drugs (hashish) to control his mindless group in order to seize power. Al-Salamouni blames America for supporting Al-Qaeda, mentioning drugs as a part of terrorism. The character in his script Abul-Fotouh explains to his brother Abul-Farag:

> Even drugs, do not be astonished, they helped us in growing drugs in the mountains of Afghanistan and plant Qat [some kind of drug] in the mountains of Yemen in order to be able to finance war and Jihad [fighting under the flag of religion].

Thus drugs as a central component of terrorism are used to finance terror. In order to succeed in convincing people to kill or terrify others including killing oneself, some of these groups’ leaders use drugs to control their member's minds and encourage them to obey savage, violent orders. These members usually think that they are working for God’s side through committing these horrible deeds. But in the Holy Quran, God forbids

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killing, harming, or even terrifying others:

And those who do not invoke with Allah another deity or kill the soul, which Allah has forbidden [to be killed], except by right, and do not commit unlawful sexual intercourse. And whoever should do that will meet a penalty. Multiplied for him is the punishment on the Day of Resurrection, and he will abide therein humiliated.335

And as the Prophet said:

Reported by Ibn Omar and recorded in Sunan Abu Dawud: "It is not permissible for a Muslim to frighten another Muslim." Al-Albaani declared it authentic in Saheeh Al-Targheeb, Meshkaat Al-Masabeeh, Saheeh Abu Dawud, Saheeh Al-Jaami, and ghaayat Al-Maraam.336

Thus killing either Muslims or non-Muslims is forbidden in Islam. Both drugs and brain washing lead to the blind obedience that appears in many of the selected plays in this study.

Another method of controlling people’s minds is by attacking the media. Religious extremists claim that media is forbidden and warn their members against consuming it. These self-appointed religious leaders are totally aware of the media’s important role. The media—television, film, radio, and social media—have the potential to enlighten people’s minds, through education and exposing people to a variety of information. Al-Salamouni highlights the role of media in fighting terrorism. In Diwan Al-Baqar (The Chronicle of Cows), Homoud claims that dance is a sin in order to confuse


people about performance and encourage them to ignore it. Norhan asks Ne’na’a to dance to awaken people’s minds, which forces Hamoud and Mawlood to leave a country that encourages dancing, searching for another suitable environment that will more easily accept their tactics. In *Al-Zahrah Wal-Ganzeer* (*The Flower and Chain*), Mohamed destroys the television by throwing the ashtray at it. In *Amir El-Hashasheen* (*Prince of the Assassins*), Borham claims that God forbids art, which mirrors real events. Such as the trend of financially supporting women artists to stop their art-making, claiming that Sakiet Al-Sawy, an art center for amateurs, is full of devil worshipers, and to seize Art in Egypt today through arresting artists and closing media outlets.

**Myths and History: Playwrights and Directors Facing the Same Problems**

These scripts faced many problems both in order to be published and to be staged. Many Egyptian playwrights found ways to tell their stories indirectly under the guise of historical or mythical stories. Changing the setting or time period is one trick to avert the censor’s manipulation. Some Egyptian playwrights use myths in their plays that parallel in some ways the contemporary events that interest the playwright. For example in order to mirror the political conditions in Egypt during the late forties, Al-Hakim critically uses *Oedipus* to portray King Farouk I in writing *Oedipus The King*. In *The Tragedy of Oedipus*, Ali Ahmed Bakathir uses the character of *Oedipus* to express the sham of Arabic army after the 1948 defeat in Palestine when Israel defeated the Arabic Army.

Other playwrights use history to tell their story. To highlight the idea of being a

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337 A recent example of this can be seen when Muslim Brotherhood failed in using media to attract people to support President Morsi. Thus the Muslim Brotherhood’s supporters besieged the Media Production City to shut down all voices against Morsi.
God that rules others, Samir Sarhan in *Sitt-El-Mulk (The Lady on The Throne)*, chooses a real character from history—Al-Haakem Bi-Amr Allah—a Fatimid Caliph. Al-Hakim’s *The Sultan’s Dilemma* is rooted in Egyptian history, the Mamluks’ era in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, in order to criticize Nasser. In writing *Amir El-Hashasheen (Prince of the Assassins)* Al-Salamouni was inspired by Hassan El Sabah, an 11th century Persian Naziri missionary, who created a group known as the The Assassins to achieve conversions to Islam under his leadership.

Although Al-Salamouni’s *Al Milliemme Barba’a (One Dime Earns Four)* is set in its correct time, it has another setting, Al-Mouled, a street festival for celebrating a blessing man’s birth. In writing *Al-Zahrah Wal-Ganzeer (The Flower and Chain)*, Salmawi is inspired by the terroristic attack that happened during Mubarak’s era, but he portrays it in Sadat’s regime, blaming Sadat for misleading the whole generation and for adoring Nasser. He neither makes a connection with Mubarak, nor blames him for these kinds of attacks. Additionally, Salmawi censored himself by surprising the audience with the twist that Mohamed, the terrorist, is a victim to a gang that misuses religion to convince Mohamed to kidnap a family to set one of their members free from prison. On the other hand, the director Galal Al-Sharqawi flips that twist and makes it a real religious group that uses religion to set some terrorists free from prison. He also adds a terrific fight on stage between police and terrorists to show their violence toward society.

In *Al-Haditha Allati Garat Fi Shahr September (The Accident that Happened in The Month of September)*, Al-Salamouni boldly critiques terrorists. His fictional character Abu-Al-Farag’s brothers, the terrorists, come from a neglected and very small village in Upper Egypt in his play. He perfectly chooses that village because Egyptians never heard
about a terrorist that comes from a big city. The reason is urban areas have extensive media outlets and facilities that are more readily available to the general public.

In order to avoid censorship Egyptian directors often change aspects of a play they wish to stage. For example, *Diwan Al-Baqlar* was inspired by an anecdote from the ninth century. In staging the play, the director Karam Metawe replaced the Bedouin clothes with the Tartar’s costume from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. An opposite example appears when Assem Nagaty changed the costume as part of his new conception for Ionesco’s *Rhinoceros*, which he staged in order to comment on the mindless uniformity of people who decide to follow a supposed leader without thinking through the consequences. In her book *The Egyptian Theatre Plays and Playwrights*, As Nehad Selaiha argues, that Nagaty “presented us with a stunningly audacious version of Ionesco’s *Rhinoceros* with mini-skirted veiled women in typical uniform of Islamic extremists.” These examples show how a director can add commentary and meaning to the written script without adding or eliminating a word, only by using the theatrical tools that are not found in the written script.

**Common Staging Practices Used by Playwrights**

There are many staging practices that the playwrights in this study use to tell their story and make their themes clear. First of them is the Islamic groups’ costumes. Repeatedly in his scripts, Al-Salamouni shows that the claimed Islamic clothes have no relationship with Islam. For example in *Diwan Al-Baqlar (The Chronicle of Cows)*, Al-

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Salamouni shows the impact of wearing the same clothes in transferring people into a herd. Finding people wearing the same clothes everywhere convinces others that this group is powerful, popular, and dominant everywhere. He also mentioned that Hamoud and Mawlood wear Bedouin clothes, claiming that it is required by religion. Thus Al-Salamouni asserts that these kinds of clothes belong to the Gulf area’s culture.

The second practice is the use of color for meaning. In *Amir El-Hashasheen (Prince of the Assassins)* Al-Salamouni uses the color of clothes to reflect the impact of ruler on his people and shows how easily they can change their color according to changing their ruler. He critiques the idea of not having their own color and forcing the new ruler to follow it. Al-Salamouni blames people for their continuous change to fit the new ruler. Thus he gives an example of green clothes during the Fatimid’s era and the white short *galabeya* with the long black beard for men, and *niqab* for women. Al-Salamouni explains the reason behind this is to demonstrate visually that there are only two severe and opposing colors— black and white— that reflect the fanatical way of thinking and judging. The character Borham mentions this in the play when he explains the rationale for black and white. He says, “To make our day white for us and black tar for our enemies.”

Thus there are only two colors; white for them and for their followers and black for everyone who disagrees and conflicts with their policies.

The third example relates to issues of women’s bodies. Al-Salamouni highlights the way that Islamic groups see women, dealing with them as second-class citizens. He

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critiques the way that the fundamentalist characters only seen women as their bodies. The King claims that women are created for sexual pleasure in *Diwan Al-Baqr (Chronicle of Cows)*. Thus the costume for women covers their entire bodies except their eyes. In *Amir El-Hashashin (Prince of the Assassins)* Al-Salamouni sarcastically mentions that women can be easily ignored by being hidden under a tent (*niqab*), and the required costume is a short white *Galabyia* showing the men’s leg hair and long beards displaying the men’s masculinity.

The multiple uses of the *niqab* appear in many scripts. In Salmawi’s 1992 piece *Al-Zahrah Wal-Ganzeer (The Flower and Chain)*, Mohamed, the terrorist, wears it as a disguise to impersonate a woman in order to facilitate his mission. Mohamed is aware that such a dress expresses extreme religiosity, so he easily gains people’s trust through wearing it. Additionally, it easily covers the whole body and deliberately hides the shape of the body, thus no one can recognize him as a male terrorist. In *Amir El-Hashasheen*, Al-Salamouni also dramatizes a man hiding behind a *niqab* for evil reasons. The man tries to provoke women against the ruler, attracting them to the presumed religious group, and convincing them to be a part of that herd of followers by wearing that anonymous costume that erases the human body. In *Al-Haditha Allati Garat Fi Shahr September (The Accident that Happened in The Month of September)*, Abul-Farag and his sisters-in-law Rashida and Hamida wear a *niqab* during the whole play, except two times. Both of them superficially understand religion. They care about the required costume more than about applying more important Islamic rules, such as the prohibition against marrying directly after divorce without waiting for the required three complete periods, or marrying someone without accepting that marriage. Their faith is shown to be shallow, and they
feel just and superior to others in all cases, merely because they have fatwas from their Amir.

Misusing religion to warp Islamic rules, such as marriage, can be seen repeatedly in many plays. Although marrying for a few days—only for pleasure and sexual joy—is forbidden in Islam, the King in Al-Salamouni’s *Diwan Al-Baqr (Chronicle of Cows)* uses his power to mess with women. He has four wives and large numbers of slave girls as servants. As a man, he does not need a fatwa to marry and divorce daily. On the other hand, Hamoud, the self-avowed religious person, marries Ne’na’a for a mere few hours. He informs her that it is easy for him, pretending to be religious, to marry her to whomever and whenever she wants. He will issue a new fatwa each time she wants to marry or divorce. He tries to break the Islamic rules by remarrying her to another man before the commencement of her waiting period. It is forbidden in Islam for divorced women to marry again before passing three whole periods to be sure that she is not pregnant in order to know who is the father of the baby, and to give the divorced couple a better chance to rethink about their decision. But Hamoud has no problem breaking that rule.

In Al-Salamouni’s *Al-Haditha Allati Garat Fi Shahr September (The Accident that Happened in The Month of September)*, Al-Amir issues a fatwa that Marawan can marry Al-Amir’s ex-wife without waiting. He testifies to it by testing her blood for pregnancy and it is found negative. He also issues another fatwa that makes Abul-Farag and Rashida, his brother’s widow, a husband and wife without even asking or informing Abul-Farag. Al-Amir breaks the Islamic rules again by marrying someone without permission.
In *The Tragedy of Oedipus* by Ali Ahmed Bakathir (1949), the High Priest of the Temple at Delphi pushes Oedipus to kill his father and marry his mother in order to get financial benefits under the guise of religion. The assumed religious man perverts Islamic law in pushing a son, who is unaware of his real relationship with the woman he married, and breaks all religious rules by marrying a mother.

Another way of playing with the Islamic laws appears in in Al-Hakim’s *The Sultan’s Dilemma*. In this time, the *Fajr*, the dawn’s prayer announcement, was out of its time twice. Firstly, when the Muezzin, as a religious man who is responsible for announcing the five prayers, did not call for the *Fajr* prayer and that action that resulted in not executing a condemned man. Politicians benefited from that and forced the Muezzin to break the rules again by calling for the *Fajr* prayer at midnight in order to set the Sultan free.

Another common issue stressed by Egyptian playwrights is the different kinds of terrorism. They portray the common kind of terrorism as it appears nationally in Salmawi’s *Al-Zahrah Wal-Ganzeer (The Flower and Chain)* and internationally in Al-Salamouni’s *Al-Haditha Allati Garat Fi Shahr September (The Accident that Happened in The Month of September)*. This terrorism includes killing others or directly terrifying them. But Al-Salamouni stresses another kind of terrorism, indirect terrorism. One example can be seen in his *Al-Haditha Allati Garat Fi Shahr September (The Accident that Happened in The Month of September)*. The “yellow books,” as Al-Salamouni refers to them, are religious books sold on almost all platforms, which greatly mislead people. These kinds of booklets exaggerate the tortuous fires of hell and the torment of the grave to control people through their fear. These books can be considered terrifying and
contribute to brainwashing. Additionally, female genital mutilation that was done to
Marwa in Al-Salamouni’s play can be counted as another kind of terrorism. She
dangerously bled and got an infection. That procedure terrifies her parents and threatens
her life, the same impact as terrorism.

To sum up, Islamic groups spent a large number of years using religion trying to
achieve authority and political control. Now the Muslim Brother Mohamed Morsi rules in
Egypt. After decades of working to gain power, they have succeeded. The question
remains however: will they succeed in sustaining this power? Will people who are not a
part of their religious group accept and support them? Will they rule as gods, judging
people’s faith and differentiating between them as believers and nonbelievers to send
them to their heaven or hell? Will art, particularly theatre, be allowed to represent these
kinds of problems and conflicts again? These questions will be answered in the future.
Appendix: Original Arabic Text

For all translations from Arabic play texts and other sources I provide the original Arabic in the following. The numbers indicate the footnote where the reader can locate the bibliographic information. I list the chapters and follow with the footnote number and the original text. The scripts in Chapter Three are available in English so I used the existing translated texts and no Arabic originals for this chapter.

Chapter 2: Religious Leaders Between History and Heritage

6
حمود: أحمق.. إن كنت نظرت إلى الناس وهم في السوق لكنت عرفت إجابة تلك الأسئلة السماحة.
مولود: ما شأن الناس وهم في السوق.
حمود: أي يا أخي نظرت إلى عائلتي.. هذي البلدة أهلها قطعان من أبقار.
مولود: أبقار..؟ هم مسخوطن إن ..؟
حمود: ليسوا مسخوطن.. لكي أزعم أنهم أبقار ..

7
مولود: تعني مثل الأبقار ..؟
حمود: بل أبقار مثلك.
مولود: مثلي .. أنذا سأكون عليهم ملكا وأميرا ..؟

8
مولود: لا حول الله .. أحكم أبياً.
حمود: هذا أسس حكم يا مولود.

9
حمود: أنا حمود بن المودود ونبي يلمد إلى أدام جد البشرية دون حدود .. هذا هو نسبي المبروك ..
.. قرني إذا جاء حمود المودود بن المودود لبلدهم ومدنتهم بالذات ..؟ ماذا يحمل من بشري الأجداد إلى الأحفاد ..
انا يا أخواني أحم رؤيا تنفاذ من نار جهنم وعذاب القبر .. هل تستمعون ..؟

10
حمود: بل أمنحك مزيدا من برها .. انظر وتمعن يا مولود ..؟ (صانحاً في الناس المشغولي بإخراج ألسنتهم) يا قوم ..
استكل روياي وشروي لكم وأزيد .. روي كذلك عن أكثر من واحد .. من بلغ لسانه حملة أذنها .. لم يدخل نارا أو
بتزعم بعذاب القبر ..

11
حمود: دعها وستحترس دون إستدعاء .. وزع كيسا فوق رؤوس الناس وتحت الأقدام ..

12
حمود: رقصك وغناوك ذنبان كبيران يا نعامة .. وعلاجهما النوبة ..
نوعهم: نحن نوثقها، فهذا من الثواب والنزول. 
نوعهم: ماذا سوف تجبر؟ 

نوعهم: أقول الناس بأن الغزارة تأتي عن منهج لمراد رشوة... نوعهم: فهذا من النزول والفقه. 
نوعهم: معنى الثواب، فهذا لن يكون لوجه الله. 

نوعهم: كن ماذبي والنقرس حرامي في الأسواق، للفقراء.. خلال عن السادة والأمراء. 

نوعهم: أصحاب الأوان الحق.. من حاربناهم وحرقناهم.. ونحن كما على بالكفر إلى يوم الدين.. فذهبا بالعقل ومكتب العلم إلى أرض الروم وتركونا من غير معين.. حتى ساد الجهل ووعي ظلمات وخرافات قتلنا حب الحرية والفهم وخشتنا كل علوم الدنيا باسم علوم الدين.. والدين برد جرد. 

نورهم: نبتت بأوارها هذا الجهل المطبق في عقل رعيتنا نعمة.. سيكون الصلوات والأعمال والحباب لعقول الناس.. شعب جاهل.. أسس حكما من شعب متعلم. 

المملك: يا يا وصري.. فتعلم أن سياستنا الراقية كانت ولسوف تظل سياستنا أبدا عن جد.. ولتعلم أيضا.. لاملك أن أجعلهم كحمر كنات فعلت.. ولكن لم أملك أنا وجدي إلا أن نجعلهم قطاعا من أبقار.. ولكن لا يأتي من أحفادي من يملك أن يفعل ذلك فيما بعد. 

المملك: أو تفهم نورهم الحولة مما يعني تعليم رعيتنا علوم الدنيا.. أن فهم كل منهم الفارق بين الألف وكوز الذرة.. ثم الفارق بين العدل وبين الغزارة.. وأخيراً نسبي حديث هذا الفهم وهذا العلم. 

المملك: يا نورهان هذي ليلة عرسك وحدث.. لكن في الغد.. لا أضمن من سجل ملكك.. فهناك جوار لم يمسين لكثرة ما عذبه منهن.. فالتيزي الغزارة حتى لا تفقد نورهم عروسي لبيتها الأولى.. والأخيرة. 

نورهان: للكاتبي إهدي ضحايا الملك شهيريا يا مولاي. 
المملك: لا يقل من أنزوجها.. بل أفضلي ليلة عرسي أطفي عرنتها فحسب.. هذا يكفينا كي تنضم إلي من سبقوها في قفص حريمي والمحظيات. 

المملك: فكرة حمود بن المولد، بلغت الأذن هو أعظم أفكار الإنسان.. ليس لكي يقينه ونها للفكر فحسب.. بل ما هو أعظم وأجل.. أن يدخل من أرواح الأرشنة الممتعة وحبي.. ما رأيك يا نورهان؟ 

نورهان: يا مولاي.. ما كنت تعلم من العلم يقول إن اللوق يلبق وينسب لصفات الحيوان.. واللوق يعتل الله نطق الإنسان.. الإنسان كما هو معروف حيوان ناطق..
23
حمود: لا يأس .. أنزوجك لعدة ساعات .. ثم أزوجك لمولد .. 
وإذا لم يعجبك .. طلبت منه .. اخترى رجلاً أياً كان وسوف أزوجك إياه .. وإذا لم يعجبك أزوجك لرجل آخر .. 
ورأجج ثالث أو رابع .. كل رجال مدينكم يتمنى أن تزوج منك ليومن أو يومين .. لا تخشي يا نعمنة .. حين يتم لنا 
حكم مدينكم .. فأنملك كل الفتيان زواج أوطلاق .. وحكم الشرع .. وإذا كنت تريدين زواج جميع رجال مدينكم 
فاسكن ك .. بطلاق وزواج أيضًا وفق الشرع ..

24
حمود: الآن سأمنحكم مفتاحًا للجنة يبعدكم عن أهل النار .. عندي في الخروج نيات ليس له مثل ومثيل .. من يتعاطه 
سديخ من باب الجنة من غير دليل .. هيا .. هي .. أني أنحكي إياه .. يا أمير مولد .. وزع لعيتك وشبعك أشباح 
البركة والجود ..

25
حمود: لماذا نصنع كي نوجي أن الحكم لنا والغيلة والسلطة معنا ..؟ 
.. بل نلسن زياً يظهراً كي نوجي أن السوق لنا والغيلة في أيدينا .. 
.. مع أنا لا نملك أي قوة .. وكل الأمر مجرد زي واحد ..

26
مولد: اليوم سنبدأ حملتنا ضد المجتمع الموبى الكافر .. هذا المجتمع حلال فيه القتل .. وحلال فيه السرقة والسلب .. 
فلتقل ولتسلب كل إمرأة لا تنجب أو تنجب .. وإذا أخذكم فيهم الرحمة .. فخذوه من سبابها للملعنة والنهار .. أما عن كل 
رجال المجتمع الفاسق .. فإنسل ولتسلب وتتنفط منهم كل الأيدي والأرجل وخصوصًا من لم يطلق لحيته السوداء 
ويرتدى الجلباب الأبيض أو يكشف عن ساقين بزغ الشعر .. هيا إنطلقوا يا قوم لنقوض مجتمع الكفرة والكر ..

27
الوزير: النسوة لا يخفون سوي أن الأمر له صلة بالدين .. ولكن الهدف المخفي عليها .. أن يصبحن أداة في أيدي من 
يسنى للسلطة .. وخصوصًا أن النسوة أضعف حلفات المجتمع الأصلي الجاهل .. نستنا يا مولاي .. حتى من تعلم 
منهن أسيرة حكم الرجل يحاصرها في كل مكان .. في البيت وفي الشارع .. في العمل وفي السوق .. الكل يعامل فيها 
صفة الأثلي لا صفة الإنسان .. 
.. رعوتنا للمرأة رويا حيوان لا رؤية إنسان ..

28
الملك: أنا شخصياً نست أري في المرأة إلا شفتين ونحدين وفخدين وردفين ..

29
الملك: الدروشة ستتفعا .. تلهم الناس من تشغيلهم عن بأمور الدين .. هذا الهوس مفيد ..
الوزير: هذا إن كانت نتبين أصلًا أن نشغلو بأمور الدين .. لكن السلطة وأمور الدنيا هي شغلهم الشاغل يا مولاي ..

30
نورهان: العالم يفرق للأفلاط ونستنفف تلألأ طوق الأرض .. العالم يتغني بيتهج بما وهم الله وسخره 
للإنسان من النعمة والخير .. وأنتم مشغولون هناك بقضايا المورة .. والعناء والفى .. العالم يحيا وكان العمر بلا حد .. 
وأنتم تخجلن كان فيكمكم في العد .. هم يتلون بروح الإنسان الفرد وفقره في تعمير الكون .. ونستنفف إلى تعذيب 
الذات وواد الروح وقبل وتدمير النفس ..
Chapter 4: The Religious and Political Conflict in Egyptian Theatre During President Sadat’s Regime

In this chapter, the author discusses the religious and political conflict in Egyptian theatre during President Sadat’s regime. The text delves into the role of the state in shaping theatre and the intersection of religion and politics in this period. The conflict is explored through various theatrical performances and their impact on society and the political landscape of Egypt.

The text is rich with historical context and analysis, providing insights into the cultural and political dynamics of the time. The author highlights the interplay between religious and political forces, and how these influenced the artistic productions and the audience’s reception of them.

The chapter also touches on the role of theatre in social change and the challenges faced by the state in managing these conflicts. The text is a detailed exploration of the subject, offering a nuanced understanding of the complexities involved.

Overall, the chapter provides a comprehensive view of the religious and political conflict in Egyptian theatre, shedding light on the historical and cultural context that shaped these interactions.
185
عاشور: دنا غلبان (بخرج جنبياً) هو جنيه الليل طلعت بيه...
عطعوط: ما يبشر (ياخذ السجيه).

186
عطعوط: هو فين ده وأنا أقطعه وله ربم بتعمت حنته وألبسه تهيمه كمان..

187
علي: وده بقي العالم العلامة والفام الفهماء.. الداعية الإسلامي الكبير الليل طلع فتوى مخصص بأن بنوك الدولة حرام.. وقواد البنك حرام.. وشهادات الاستثمار حرام.. وخلا الناس كلها تسحب فلوسها من البنك وتحطها عننا في الشرقة عشان الأرباح بناعتنا خلال من ضهر خلال..

188
الشيخ: لا تدخل العقل ولا حاجة يا عمة.. بقولك كشوف بركة.. والبركة من عدد الله.. يعني خلال من ضهر خلال.. مش أحسن من الربا يتاع البنك والعياذ بالله..

189
علي: والان أيها الأخوة والأخوات اسحموا لي اشرح لكم ببساطة ازاي المليم في شركتنا يكسب أربعة مليون.. أنا مش نصاب عشان أبيع لكم سمك في بحر.. لا يا اخواني انا شركتنا رأس مالها الشرف والأمانة والدين والأخلاق تقولو ازاي.. أقول لكم ازي.. وأول ما ندبى الكلام صلوا علي زين الأنام..

190
علي: انا هوا كبار البلد.. وعشان الناس تشارك في المشروع بقلب جامد.. لازم لشف العمدة ومولانا أول المساهرين..

191
علي: شركتنا زي ما آتى عارف ماهية بالحلال.. رصيد حال.. ريح حال.. مضاربة حال.. حنن الرشوة بناعتنا.. رشوة خلال من ضهر حال..
الوكيل: الرشوة هي الرشوة يا علي بيه..
علي: لا يا سعادة البيه.. انا ما مبنديش رشوة.. ده قرض حسن.. أي مبلغ تعوزه انا تحت أمريك.. ومن أرباحه سند
القرض ويراحتلك. العدة وكل آعين البلد خدوا مننا القروض زي ما أنت عارف..

الوكيل: يتكلم العدة وأعين البلد

علي: والمحافظ . والسكرتير العام. والجلس المحلي وكله.. مش مصدقني.. طلع له كشف البركة يا رابه أندندي

عمر يطمن..

192

علي: أنا ماني بالقانون اللي وضعته الحكومة بنفسها.. والدليل علي كده أني بقالي أربع سنين والحكومة مواجهة

علي كل اللي عملته في الشركة. حابين تحاسبوني علي أيه علي قانون انتوا اللي عملتوه.. والمشايخ ورجال الدين

باركو، والصحافة والتلفزيون هللوه. حسبوا نفسكم قبل ما تحاسبوني يا حكومة.. وعلامكم، القانون بتاعكم

حابللني براء.. مش حاتطولوا مني حاجة.. وشوفوا بقي حاترجوا حقوق المودعين ازاي؟ وما تنسوا.. معايا

كشف البركة ومسك الحكومة من مناخرها..

193

نفطة: وزير الاقتصاد والتجارة الخارجية مع سعادتك ياعلي بيه..

علي: نفطة يا نفطة. نفطة. كل شويه بيقوللي الحقي يا حاج مافيش في البلد كيلو لحمة.. الحقي يا حاج مافيش

شكاكلة أسمنت.. هاتني السماعة وأماننا الله.

194

علي: رصيدنا بره ومشتنا كلها خيم ومنقولات سهل نقلها في أربع وعشرين ساعة.. وهي دي ميزا التراه نقل من

مولد لمولد.. في ساعة زمن نظري الخيم على ظهرنا ونكون بقينا في بلد غير البلد..

195

وفي افلالنة مفاجئة.. غير متسقة دراميا. تهتف زوجته "نورا" في نهاية المسرحية مطالبة الناس بعدم تصديقه.

محترأ علي هذا الإحتلال والتي هي واحدة من رموزة!!

199

لأن الاستعراض فيه يقدم الحاضر والواقع المعيشى إلي المتفرج.. وأيضاً كلمات الأغانى لازمته لمستعراض في

إعطاء المتفرج الكلمة الصادقة الحقة بمدلوسها الاجتماعي والسياسي. والإستعراض مع المحافظة علي الكلمة نظيفة

راقية ولكنها تعكس الواقع بمرارة وسخرية وتوكد طوزن استعمال الرقص والغناء في العرض ضرورة لازمة

باعتبارهما وسيلتين أساسيتين من وسائل التعبير المسرحي.
196

.. لأن غالبية جماهيرنا ترجع حكمها على مثل هذه الأعمال الفنية إلى عاطفتها .. ومدي تجارب هذه الأعمال مع واقعهم المعيشي .. وحالتهم النفسية .. والمزاجية متمارضين أن هذه العروض غالباً ما تجد معارضة .. وترحبباً في نفس الوقت .. وتختلف الآراء حولها وتثير كثيراً من الجدل .. والمناقشات ..

أخطأ الناس عندما صدقوها وأخطأوا عندما تصوروا أن المليم ألف وساروا خلف "بائعين الهواء".

انطلقت اللحي وقائرت الجلاليب واختلفت في الدعاية الموجود بكلمات الله الطاهرة ..

عزف المشايخ لحن الرضا والحرم والفاخور والفاطميات ..

غير أن أنبأ دعاية هي نسبة الأرباح المبالغ فيها والتي لم تدخل عقلاً .. ولو أن البنوك دفعت أكثر لنسي الناس الحلال والحمر.

لمزقت الحكومة الصمت بوقت وظهر وجالا ينالون البركة وينضموا إلى ركب توظيف الأموال.

كلنا مسئلون وكلنا في مولد واحد.

وإذا كان هؤلاء القوم قد استغلو تجربة شركات توظيف الأمول لشرحوا لناس أن ما يريده رجال الدين للاقتصاد ما هو إلا نصب وأحتفل فقولهم: أن هذه التجربة كانت ونيدة .. ولا أحد حتى الآن يعرف الحقائق .. فاعداً الدين أنصار الدنيا شوهد الحقائق وجعلوا الأبيض أسود والأسود أبيض.

ساعة يا ربه يا ماحي ذنورنا
بارك لنا قوينا في جويننا
وان مالت الدنيا بكم هكذا
فنش있는 بنا فينا.

هذا هو بالفعل ما يتم حالياً على مستوى العالم العربي والإسلامي حيث تقوم جماعات الإرهاب والإلحادات الدينية بتأكيد العلاقة بين الدين والسياسة .. تلك العلاقة التي حسمها أوروبا والعالم المتقدم منذ قرون بينما نحن مازينا نخشى مجرد مناقشتها حتى لا نتهم بالكفر أو البردة .. والتي أدت في النهاية إلى تشويه صورة الإسلام والديني لدى الآخرين ..
بشندية: طابح في الناس بالخرزازة بيعة الكتب ..

213
صوان: .. هو احنا عبال جالعنا بخرزازتك في الكتاب ..
معروف: أبوا ياسوان .. كل الحارة محتاجة تتعلم في الكتاب .. من أصغرهم ولأكبرهم. وحا اعلهم وحاربهم
 عشان ناقصين تربية وحاجاتهم يصحوا ويطلوا قبع هدوهم للحكام .. بالخرزازة ..

214
معروف: غيرت هدومك ليه يا صوان .. بتغير جلدك ليه يا صوان ..
.. لابس أخضر فأخضر ليه ما تقولي .. البلد اتغير ليه لونها .. ما تفهمتي ..
طبعا ما هو زي العادة يا بشندية .. لو تغير لون الحكام .. أكيدا نغير ف هدوهم قوام .. وهى دي مصيبتنا يا مصريين .. تلبس حسب الحكام أيا ما يكون وبابها لون .. حتى لو كان حاكم مجنون ..

215
صوان: نستحلك سوعتته أحسن ما تاجدننا الشرطة وبرمونا في سجن يا عالم نطلع منه ازاى ..
.. كلة بيلبس الأخضر ويقول لا إله إلا الله .. والقاطنين أحبب الله ..

216
صوان: .. لابس أبيض في أسود ليه .. موش أخضر ..
برهام: لاجل يكون يوم أبيض لنا .. وأسود قطران علي أعادينا ..

216
معروف: أمال لابسين أبيض ودقون سوده ليه يا مصريين ..
آخر: ما هو ده زي الدين الشرعي ..
معروف: أيش دخل الدين في الزي ياس .. اللباس ده عادة وكل بلد تلبس بمقاس .. مثلا الناس في أواست إفريقيا
عراءا من الحر .. وشمال إفريقيا الرجالة بتحجب من أاعصير الزل .. واللى بيلبسوا سراويل واللى بيلبسوا بناتيل ..
رجل: برهام يبقول ده الزي الشرعي يا شيخ معروف ..

218
صوان: .. أمال فين الشرطة .. فين الدولة .. الدولة ما فيش فيها حكومة ..
بشندية: .. الكل دخل جواه الرعب وخش الحجر .. واللى يفكر يخرج .. إذا كان راجل يظهر دفته أو يلبس دقن .. وإذا
كان حرمة تلبس خيمة من فوقها تحت .. وكم المغرب الكل ينام .. وما فيش أفراح .. وما فيش زينات .. وما فيش شاعر بربابة وناي .. ولا أدباني ولا أفرداني .. ولا فيش مطرب ولا طبل وزمـر ..

220

تميم: ولا أشرة شريفة ولا حاءة يا برام .. في حكاية يلعب بها زيا العادة .. نضمن بها الطاعة وولاء الناس ..

221

الزوجة: يا تري عرفت إنه صمم يدخل السجن متضامن مع اللي هتفوا ضدنا .. ورفض كمان يخرج إلا إذا أمرت بخروجهم كليهم ..

222

الزوجة: للأسف ابنك يقصد ينتمي للعامة والدهماء والأصول التي آمة طالعة من جذورها ..

223

معروف: .. الحاكم يا أبا كان عشان يضمن حكمه وولاء الناس .. ينسب حسبه وأصوله الأهل البيت .. ولدي لعبة إخوانا الفاطميين في الوقت ..

224

تميم: .. لا أحننا من أهل البيت ولا كانت أصولنا فاطمية .. الحكاية لعبة الحكم الذكي التي تغلبه أفكار الفنادسة وفي حقيقتها مطامع سلطوية ..

225

برديس: يبقولوا أصل الفاطميين دول واحد اسمه عبد الله المهدي .. الراجا ده ببقولوا عليه مشكوك في حقيقة وفي أمره .. وقد يضحك على بعض الناس علي إنه ولد من أهل البيت وعمل منهم دولة في أرض المغرب ونسبها للسيدة فاطمة ..

226

المعز: .. النسب سيف المعز .. والذهب هو الحسب .. هو ذ خلاصة الكلام .. حكمة السيف والذهب ..

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برهام: .. سبي اليوم الحكم لوزيرك وصاحبك .. وأوعي تقلق طول ما أنا جنبي بأسانك ..

198
برهام: خطتنا واضحة وصريحة. قائمة ع الترهيب وإراغ الخصوم. والوسيلة بسيطة جداً. (يبرز خنجر من بين طياته)

برهام: عندي ميت راجل مدرب كلهم بايعيين حياتهم لجل تنفيذ الأوامر. كل واحد لوقت مسنو كبر واحد في مصر. بعدها الدولة حانققتين بين إديثا بدون معارك أو حروب.

برهام: يا أمير إني بعض الدم إصلاح وخير. أن بعض الدم حق للدماء لوقتان اثنين ثلاثة. مش ده أحسن من دخول حرب ومعارك ينقل فيها الألاف.

تميم: هو ده معقول يا مقدم. تقبض علي أشهر فنانة في مصر المحروسة. ما انتش عارف برديس.

المقدم: إلا عارفها. هو احنا حانققتها وعن أغانيها إياها في موالد مصر وآوارها.

برديس: ما لها برديس يا مقدم. طبعاً مش عاجيبك عشان مش جابه على هواكم وتقول اللي ما حدش قاله من كتر الخوف.

برهام: مستحيل طبعاً تأثرر في رأية الدين. وحريمنا بيرقصوا وينغوا. أستغير الله العظيم.

برهام: الحقيقة شعب مصر ياكئله. شعب متدين. وهو ده الدخل لقبه أو علقه. ولذلك قلنا ندخل مصر رافعين رأية الدين تحت ظلال يا أمير المؤمنين الصالحين. وبكراكاتك يتبوب الفنانين والمطربيين معجزة وكرامة ما يحصش.

أبداً من سنيين. وساعتها الكل حايقولك أمين يا إمام الثانيين العائدين.

برهام: الأمير برهام إمام المؤمنين الصالحين الفائحين. جاهه الهاتف يقول. إن مولانا تميم. أفضسته الغانية برديس.

برهام: الأمر برهام إمام المؤمنين الصالحين الفائحين. مثالية الموالد والحانات أوقفته في الخطيئة والفساد. ولذلك يا أهالي القاهرة يا طبيين قد تولينا الإمامة وحكمنا عليهما بالكر والفسق المبين. وكلاهما قد صار مهدور الدماء. ولكن هذا جراء الكافرين المارقين.

برهام: دعوتنا دعوة حق ضد المجتمع الكافر والبطلان. لكن الدعوة لا تكفي، ولذلك سوف نواجههم بالقوة والعنف.
.. بالرهبة والخوف.. بالشدة والعصف. بالخنجر والسيف...

236
برهام: كي ننجح في إسقاط المجتمع الكافر لابد لكل يد فيكم تحمل سيفاً أن تدرك أن الطاعة دينها وبدايتها ونهالتها .. ليحقق غايتها. والطاعة يا إخوان. تغلي التسليم المطلق .. أعني الطاعة عمية .. خرساء وبكماء ..

237
برهام: هذا القلعة تستلزم منا أن نزرع فيها عشباً مملوءاً بالبركة والخير .. من يأكله أو يمضغه أو بلعه أو يستنشقه يزداد حماساً للتاعة في معناها العلوي المطلق ..

238
المعز: أنت مجفون يا تميم .. عازز تخلي العامة والدماء يقولوا رأيم فيها .. تميم: وانت ليه ترفض يا والدي .. دول رعايك ولازم تستمع ليهم وتعرف رأيهم .. والا يعني إزاي حاتسبهم وتضمن ليك ولاءهم ..
برهام: لا يا أمير .. الولاء والطاعة مش ممكن يكونوا بدون عقيدة مقدسة ..

239
تميم: كنت خايف لى عرفي حقيقي تكرهني .. زى ما انتوا يتكروهوا حكام بلدكم من سنين ..

240
صوان: إعليمي معروف حولينا حيطان ماليانه ودان ..

241
برهام: لو عاوز تكسب رأي الناس أو تحشد وياك الجماهير .. أرفع قدامهم راية الدين . تلاقين قدامك راكعين ساجدين .. ويقولوا أمين ..
معروف: ما هو خصملك برضه حايددر يرفع راية الدين ..
برهام: حايددره ونطلع فتوى تخرجهم عن أصل الدين ..
معروف: خصملك بيدل يتفكر ويخليك ممردين ..
برهام: تحشد له معانا الفقهاء والعلماء ورجال الدين ..
معروف: خصملك يجدك زيك وأكثر منك بكثير ..
صوان: جري أيه يا جدعان .. أرسوا علي بر .. هيه مزايدة ..
مهما: كذهب ! ست كابية ! قلت لي مايش جد في البيت وبعدين ينتفه أن فيه واحد راجل جوه ? مابش فيه أي حد في المجتمع د مكن الإنسان يقل فيه . كفره . كلكم كفرة . ليه كدبتي عليا؟ (زهرة لا تسموال لا ترد) انطلي . ليه كدبتي؟ 
زهرة: والتدى .. لو شفته تعرف ليا أنا مافتلتكش علي ان ( تنظير بعض الدموع في عينيها ويتهدج صوتها) والد
رجل كبير عنده ثمانين سنة .. فاد البصر .. سمعه تقل .. مشول .. عقله كمان ابدي بخف .. علشان يتحرك من مكانه لازم أنا اللي أقعد على الكرسي أبو حجل.

Chapter 5: President Mubarak and the Muslim Brotherhood: 
Terrorism on a Global Scale

fühlem: نقل فيها يا صوان .. هي زوايدة .. كل ما ترفع أيه خمسمك يرفع أيتين .. تطلع قتوى .. يفتحك باتنين ..
ترفع مصحف يطبع ملابس .. وإلا اننا نسيتنا اللي حصل في الفتنة الكبرى يا محترمين .. الأموريين رفعوا مصاحف
ياما للملودين .. والكل يزايذ باسم الدين .. والكل يحارب باسم الدين .. والكل يعرض باسم الدين .. والكل يعرض باسم الدين ..
الدين وادي أخرى .. العالم كله يبتعد .. واحنا بنحارب بعض ويناكال بعضننا بعض ونسام الدين ..

٢٤٢

مهما: أنا قصدي ما نخلطش أمور الدولة في أمور الدين .. خلط الأوراق بين الأمرين لعبة خطيرة .. بتشوه
صورة الانتنين ..

٢٤٣

مهما: الناس كلها محتاجة عالم .. أول معلومة حاولوها لهم .. راج أحذرين منك ومن اللعبة اللي أنت بتعلها يا
برهام .. لعبة خلط الأوراق .. اللي ابتدأت من عصر الفتنة الكبرى لحد الآن ..

٢٤٤

تميم .. المهم تخلى كل الناس تقول .. صوتها يعني ورأيتها يعني لوق فوق كل النجوم .. كلمة الناس ورأي الناس أهم
من السلاح ومن الجيوش ..
برديد: بالقصيدة بغرفة حلة .. برأي حر بفكرة حرة ..

٢٤٩

محمد: كشافة ! ست كابية ! قلت لي مايش حدد في البيت وبعدين ينتفه أن فيه واحد راجل جوه ؟ مابش فيه أي حد
في المجتمع د مكن الإنسان يقل فيه . كفره . كلكم كفرة . ليه كدبتي عليا؟ (زهرة لا تسموال ولا ترد) انطلي . ليه
كدبتي؟
زهرة: والتدى .. لو شفته تعرف ليا أنا مافتلتكش علي ان ( تنظير بعض الدموع في عينيها ويتهدج صوتها) والد
رجل كبير عنده ثمانين سنة .. فاد البصر .. سمعه تقل .. مشول .. عقله كمان ابدي بخف .. علشان يتحرك من
مكانه لازم أنا اللي أقعد على الكرسي أبو حجل.

٢٥٠

امين: أوعذ بابا ! البلد جري فيها ؟ ما معاش فيها فيه لا قيم ولا مبادئ .. ده أنا ماكنش .. أقدر أرفع عيني في وش أوبية
مرة روحنا أنا ومجموعة من زميلاني بيت الأمة نقابل سعد باشا مع طلبة المدارس الثانوية وانشرت عن مبادئ الغدا
نص ساعة في . أوبية بنت العقلة ولا قدرت أتكلم في وش . دلوقت الأواء بيسهموا علي واللههم وعازيون يقظتم ؟
أيه اللي حصل في الدنيا ؟ الفلاحين يفتحوا في الأعين ، والعالmins بيردو علي أصحاب البيوت ، وماحدش عاد
عرف مكانه خلاص ..
ياً! بماذا رأيت زهرة اللوتس؟

زهرة: اللوتس يحبني عنير ما تعش في فازه أبدا. لازم تعشي في الطينة جنب الميه والهواء الطلق. لذا حسيتها في الفازة ضروري تديل.

زهرة: ماشي وسيلة تانية يا بني انك تتضم للجماعة ذي غبر العنف والإرهاب ذه؟ سيوا الزهور تفتح والدنيا تبقى جميلة، اذا حاتوا الورد باللواضير حاميون، ويختفي من الحياة.

أحمد: ايه دي؟ وردة؟

ياً! زهرة اللوتس يا غبي. عارف اللوتس؟ رمز الحضارة المصرية ذا أصبحت نادرة دلوقتي.

أن اللوتس وان أصبحت الآن نادرة إلا أنها لم تمت ولم تتتش طوال آلاف السنين لأنها قد رواها الإيمان والحب والخير والجمال وهم أقوي بكثير من العنف والإرهاب والحدود والثائر.

ياً! المصريين زمان كانوا يبقووا إنها بدائية الخليفة. الأول كان القرن ده كله ميه وبعدين طلعت حطة أرض صغيرة وعليها طلعت زهرة اللوتس.

زهرة: زمان كانت مصر هي اللي تساعد الدول دي، الدول دي النهارده إذا هم ما ساعدوا مش عارفه اي اللي حايحصل.

لما جوزها الخط السافر البحريني كثير من أصحابها قالوا لها حاتعملني ايه هنالك دي ماشيق أي حياة اجتماعية ولا أي نشاط ثقافي من أي نوع والسنتان لا يمكن يخرجوا لوحدهم أبدا. قالت مادام ده مكان عمل جوزي لازم أكون معاه.

زهرة: بتكلكني بترجس مش عارفة ازاي. هي يرذك محجبه.. محجبة عادي يعني موس زيكن كده. أول مرة شفتها ما زلت في أول اجازة أناختد شوية لكن طبعت كل جبل ولل فيه نهم ان الواحد يتهم الليين انا طبعتا منقفة.. منقفة لكن. لكن مش عارفة اكلن جرس عشان أفه منها. با أحاف أزعلها. وفي النهاية انا وانا كل إنسان حر في حياته.

زهرة: لو كان أبوك عاش كان حاتجات كثير اتغيرت في البلد. أبوك كان راجل وطنى أصيل. كان سبب نجاحه في شغله كن كان يحب مصر مااكتش مجرد مهندس عظيم كان فاون مؤمن ببلده وبضيختها. عرف ازاي يحرك كل الناس اللي معاه في المشروع.

زهرة: اللهم ممكن تضحي بحياتها في سبيل إينها.

محمد: أنا ماليش أم. ارجعني مكانيك.
203

معروف: علشان أقول لك. أن الخيمة لا مواجهة دي ليس بعيد عن تقاليدنا. الخيمة دي لبس البدو وسكان الصحراء.

265

محمد: (وقف في غضب بطفاية سجائر كبيرة علي التليفزيون فتنكسر شاشته) بدعة! وكل بدعة ضلال وكل ضلالة في النار!

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محمد: (في التليفزيون) السلام عليكم .. الأخ مصطفى .. بلغ الأمير إن كل شيء حسب إرادة الله.

267

محمد: أنا في انتظار الأوامر .. وعليكم السلام ورحمة الله وبركاته.

268

محمد: أتمت زي غيرك. كلام كفرة زي بعض. كان مطلوب احتاج عزيمة وسلام. أي عزيمة. يعني كان ممكن أركب

العربية اللي قبل أو اللي بعدك. لكن رنب اخبار عيلتكم أنتم، والخبرة فيما اختاره الله.

269

زهرة: أنت أيه مالكش أهل؟
محمد: لأ ماليش أهل.

زهرة: مالكش أب؟ مالكش أخوات تخاف عليهم؟
محمد: أيوب أكفر زيمو وامي عمري ما شفتها.

270

محمد: المهم إن هي عمرها ما حاولت تلافيني. عمرها ما حاولت تشوف إنها اللي سابته في اللقة ده جري له أيه؟

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ومن وقتها عرفت فصول الحياة.

272

محمد: فيه حد يختلف على كلمة الله؟

ياسمين: لا ما أقصديه. لكن ممكن يختلف على الوسيلة. هل هي اللين ولا العنف.

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محمد: أخت ياسمين ياسمين، أنا عزيز أخدك معانيا.
ياسمين: تأخدني سيدي؟ تأخدني فين؟
محمد: أخدك للحق والعدل .. أخدك للإسلام .. أخدك للجنة.

ياسمين: وأنا لسه موس قادرة أفتحي الطريق للجنة يمر بالمسدس والجزير.
محمد: المسلم ده للكافر. حياة الكافر مالهاش أي قيمة. زية زي الكلب. عايز أكملك عن الفريضة الغائبة، عن

الدولة الكافرة، عن المجتمع الجاهل، عن ..
ياسمين: (قاطعه) أحسنا موش كفرة يا محمد. أحسنا مومنين زيك بالطيب.

274

محمد: أنا مبتصرس على هوايا. ولا اقدر أتصرف على هواك كماني. أنا عندي أوامر بنغذها.

زهرة: طرب على الاقل قل لي أيه اللي أتمن عايزيه ماني وأنا أفده لكم ماكفيش داعي للحاجات دي. آيه المطلوب؟
محمد: أنا نفسي لسه ما أعرفش.
محمد: روح إفتح لاحتك يا أحمد.

محمد: (أحمد) هات التليفون يا أحمد من عنك. (أحمد يتناول التليفون ويظل ممسكاً به وهو يطلب الرقم ... يعيد أحمد التليفون إلى مكانه).

أحمد: ألو؟ ... أيوه موجود ... أنا أحمد أخوه. حايكملك أه. (بعطي السماعة لمحمد).

محمد: ومنين قال لك كني حاضره؟ هو مايش علني أي حرح. واضح أنه ضحيتك. ضحية المجتمع الفاسد ده.

حمدقاب الضحية وسبب الجاني؟

زهرة: والله يا بنتي ما أنا عارفه. إذا كان اللي بيدور مضلل واللي ما بيدور ضائع. ببقي المسائل في النهاية بتنسابي. يعني مهدي ده زي أحمد أخوكي بالضبط. أنا موش عارفة أنا عطت في إيه بس؟ أنا كرست حياتي كنها لكم أياوكي نت أحمد الله أه. إبعمني أخوكي؟

يسامين: أحمد كان محتاج لأبا ماما. زي محمد بالضبط. رينا معاه همه الإثنيين.

هي قضية "الجلب الجديد" الضائع .. أو على الأقل "الحائر" الذي يريد الإصلاح ويدفعه العجز والإحباط والفراغ السياسي .. للعنف أو للإدمان. هي قضية "أحمد" و "محمد" على السواء.

شخصيات المسرحية الأخرى غنية واضحة حاضرة وكأنها مرسمة بالأنول بينما شخصية الإرهابية كانها مرسمة بالخطوط على الورق تشغل مساحة ولا تشغل حجماً، وهي بلوئ واحد .. أبيض .. وتبدو للعين مختلفة عن سائرشخصيات المسرحية مبسطة ومسطحة وباهتة .. لا إنها تعكس مجرد التصور الأمني لشخصية الإرهابي كما قبل، ولكن لإ🌟أبر الفرق بين صورتها وصورة أفراد الأسرة الذين يتميزون بالحيوية وبروح التضحية وبروح الحب الأسري.

الدين الذي خول عن طريقه .. ليصبح أنا دمار وقليل .. لا يختلف كثيراً عن المخدر الذي يغضب روح الشباب وتفاحه وأمله بالمستقبل. والأسرة وحدها بل المجتمع كله .. هو الذي يدفع الثمن .. وهو الذي يلغي الجراح .. ويحاول بث الميت.

الشهيد الأخير .. اشبه بزلزال يعذبنا من الأعمال .. فالمخرج يتعمد إحداث ضجع عالية مفاجئة وصدمة مدوية توظفنا من الثبات والعقلية والحيوية.

أما خطوط حركة الإرهابي فهي تبدو ضعيفة للغاية رغم محاولته التظاهر بالقوة .. وليها تتسامع بكثرة الاتهامات دليلاً على النظام الاجتماعي الذي تعرض له .. والذي أدخله رغماً عنه إلى هذه الدائرة الجهنمية. ...
الطبيب: جالك الإحساس ده من متي..؟
أبو الفرج: بعدما انطردتهم من أمريكا..
الطبيب: عملت إيه عشان.. يطردوكم..؟
أبو الفرج: لو كنت عملت حاجة ملكش جالك الإحساس الكراهية ضد أمريكا.. طول عمرك عاش في أمريكا كافي خيير شري.. يجهال ولا مقدامات قليلة مثلي أنا وأسرتي ومن غير أي سبب منطقي.. اتهمنا أخر بديلة.. وبعد ما كنت أتساءل وأتساءل جامعيا مرموق.. أصبحت ناس وجودي في من أمريكا اللي عشت فيها أكثر من ثلاثين سنة.

307
مروة: عاوزة أنزل الجنين اللي في بطنى.

308
مروان: فيلي يا بادي.. تصدقوا ان الجبريل فرين بتاعتي قالت لي النهارية يا إرهابي..

309
الطبيب: تعرف يا دكتور أبو الفرج أن فكرة اليو فرين والجبريل فرين بتاعة الغرب.. هي نسا طبق الأصل من فكرة الجواز العرفي عنانا في الشرق..؟

310
الطبيب: الغريب أن اللي شجع الظاهرة الإفنجيلية وخلاها ظاهرة شرقيا همه الجماعات المتطرفة اللي بترفع شعار الدين وتكفر المجتمع..

311
مروان: الأمير قال حرام حد ينادي الحرمة باسمها..

312
حميدة: شوفي يا ست أم مروان.. ليزا: من فضلك يا حميدة.. يا ريت ت الداخلين باسمي..
رشيدة: طب ما تخبرني يا كتمني ما دام أسلمتي..؟
ليزا: وأخيره ليه.. همه كفار مكة لما أسلموا غيروا أسامهم.. ماريا القطبية غييت إسمها لما اتجوزت النبي..

313
رشيدة: ولمها مسلمة وموحدة بانثر. مشاهي وشعرها مكشوف ليه؟
أبو الفرج: هي حرة يا مراه أخوي.. يلي ما أنت حرة تغطي شعرك هي حرة تكشف شعرها.. دي مسألة عادات وتقاليدي يا ست السنان.. أنتم واخدين عادات البدو وهي وإخدة عادات الحضر.. وكل واحد حري في عاداته وتقاليديه يا ماما.

314
ليزا: الإيمان الحقيقي جهة القلب مش برة..
حميدة: انت يا ختى جاية تعلمنا الدين بتاعنا..

315
ليزا: .. أجوازكوا سايينكوا هنا ومجوزين هناك في أفغانستان وفي كل مكان..
رشيدة: شرع بينا يا بيبتي.. الراجل من قطعة يجوز أربعة.
ليزا: لو كل واحدة فيكم انستكم بحشفة الشرعي.. ملكش جوزها يجوز عليها.. أنا لما أتجوزت أبو الفرج كنت في
العقد شرط أن ما يتجاوز على...

الشيخ جمال قطب (رئيس لجنة الفتوى بالأزهر الأسق) يرى أن تعدد الزوجات في الشريعة الإسلامية نوعًا من أنواع العقد شرط أنه ما يتجاوز على...

الحالة عادلة وله ليس مطلقاً كالمعطى والشراب بل شرع حال الأزمنة فلا يظن أحد أن تعدد الزوجات باب مفتوح لكل من يريد فقد يحتاج الزوج إلى أخر لسبب أو أكثر في الزوجة الأولى والإسلام لا يفرض على الأولي التسليم بالعقد والرضاعة ولكنه يتيح لها إما أن تقبل وتتفق لإثني أخرى مكانًا بجوارها، وإما أن ترحل.

ليزا: دي بنت قليلة الأدب موش متربحة.. أنا عارفة عابيك فيها أيه ..
مروان: بابها يا مامى .. باعدها ..
ليزا: تقول عليك إرهابي وتحبها .. أنت أيه.. مالكش كرامه ..

مرور: الهوادرة بعدم المنضرين في الجامعة .. ولیام خدتي علي جنب وقال لي أيام سوري مروة .. أنا موش حافدري انتجوز .. قلت له يا والله .. قال لي عيان دادي ومامي رفضوا انتجوز واحدة أرحبية .. قلت له أنا إرهابية يا وليد .. قال لي أنا عارف انت مظلمة .. لكن عمل أيه .. دادي ومامي أصررا ارجع لأسمي الأولاني وابد عنك عشان همه موش عاونين مشاكل مع الحكومة ..

جونسون: دكتور أبو الفرج من فضلك طلق بنتي ..

ليزا: .. لكن اللي راكب طيرة ودخل دماغه في البرج .. اراي يكون إرهابي .. أيومبول .. الإرهابي يكون له طلبات وهو يعلم العملية الإرهابية .. موش ده اللي يحصل ونشوفه في الأفلام ..؟
أبو الفرج: والله علمك حق يا ليزا .. عمرنا ما شفنا إرهابي بيومه نفسه من غير طلبات .. بصراحة ما قيم واحد يعمل كده غير هد بيكره أمريكا موت ..

أبو الحسن: بن لادن اللي بقماروه دلوتكي .. السمي أي أيه هيه اللي اديته كل أسألة الدمار الشامل .. وصواريخ ستنجر اللي مابيسخدمها إلا اللي جيشي الأمريكي وحلف الناتو .. أمريكا هي اللي صنعت منه زعيم الجهاد .. دربه على رسم الخطة الهوادرة والدهموه على إنشاء تنظيم القاعدة وتجهيز المقاتلات في جبال إسفاغستان بمحدد أنواع التكنولوجيا ..

أبو الفتح: حتي المخدرات .. وما تستعجل .. همة اللي ساعدتنا علي زراعة المخدرات في جبال إسفاغستان بمحدد أنواع التكنولوجيا ..

أبو الحسن: الإرهابي اللي بيعيروه عدوهم دلوتكي .. همه اللي انتشأ .. ولو تفكك المؤتمر اللي اتعم على حدود باكستن وأسفاغستان تحت راية الجهاد .. أمريكا اللي نظمته تحت قيادة أسامة بن لادن، وكان بيضم كل تنظيمات الأصولية والجماعات السرية والشركات التجارية الكبرى في باريس ولندن، واستكمل ونيويورك ومكاتب الإغاثة في كل مكان ..
أبو الفتح: بعدة انتشر الإرهاب .. قصدي الجهاد من إسفاغستان إلى البوسنة والتشيشن وفرنسا والفيلبين و مدغشقر والجزائر والصومال واليمن وجنوب إفريقيا والسودان والبرازيل والبلقان ..

أبو الفتح: .. أملنا كنا بنحارب ليه .. عسان غيرنا يحكم واحنا هبه برها السلطة .. نضحي السنيدي دي كلها وغيرنا ..

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يركب ويدل رجله ..

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أبو الحسن: .. تتذكر واحد زي بن لادن اللي صرف ميلارات من ماله وبنى اقصى مل عته في حرب إفغانستان لمصلحة أمريكا .. ؟ ودكتور الشهري موش كان أولى بحكم مصر .. قص على ذلك قيادات الجماعات في البلاد العربية والإسلامية .. موش ده حقهم اللي كان لازم يأخذه بمساعدة أمريكا بعد ما شاركوا في الحرب والجهاد عشر سنين ..؟

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أبو الحلق: .. قريتش عن الثعالب اللي اسمه الشجاع الأقرع يا دكتور ..؟

الطبيب: قصدك كتب عذاب الفير اللي معرضة على الرصيف ..؟

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أبو الفرج: .. الثعالب الأقرع ده مثال للإرهاب الحقيقي .. الإرهاب اللي يشلك ويشت تفكيرك ويدمر عفك ووجدانك .. ويعطل كل مكاتك الإبداعية والعقلية النفسية ويخليك مجرد كانر مركب محاكم عليه بالإعدام ..

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أبو الفرج: صدقت يا دكتور .. لوحثت ورا كل اللي قلبا أو اعتزلوا أو اتبرعوا أو كتبوا أو انجروا .. حا تلقي وراهم كتب صفر من النوعية دي ..

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رسيدة: خير يا خويا .. الأمير يقولك انه عمل تحليل لعروستك شفاكات في الجمعية الإسلامية والتحليل ما طلبع فيه حمل .. ومن حقك تدخل عليها الليلة ..

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أبو الفتوح: النوعية اللي زيك ما كننت تشتعل معانآ .. ياما حاولنا معاك بصنة لطافة لكن ما قدناش .. لقناك راجل بنات ثقافة وفكر وفن وأدب وبتؤمن بالثورة عبدالناصر والقومية والاشتراكية والديمقراطية واحتاجات احنا رافضينها ونتبعد عنآ ..

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الطبيب: ما هي بنتك متفقة ..

أبو الفرج: بنتي متعلمة موش متفقة .. التعليم حاجة والثقافة العقلية حاجة ثانية ..

Chapter 6: Conclusion

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أبو الفتوح: حتي المخدرات .. وما تستعجح .. همة اللي ساعدنا علي زراعة المخدرات في جبال إفغانستان بأحدث أنواع التكنولوجيا ..

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