

THEMATIC AND AESTHETIC ASPECTS

OF MODERN PALESTINIAN DRAMA

by

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ABSTRACT

This work is concerned with Palestinian drama from the second half of the nineteenth century until the present time. Its main aim is to show that, owing to political and historical circumstances, Palestinian drama has developed distinctive characteristics of its own in both content and form.

The thesis is in four parts. Part One is a historical introduction, beginning with a study of the socio-economic, political and cultural structure of modern Palestine, and the leading role of the middle class in determining this structure, followed by an outline of the dramatic and theatrical movement. Its successes and failures are evaluated.

Part Two deals with thematic aspects of Palestinian drama. It discusses the way that drama has drawn on myth, religion, history, and social life, and argues that whatever the material drawn on in a particular play, the main aim has been to express strong national sentiments.

Part Three focuses on the artistic and aesthetic aspects of Palestinian drama. It examines theatrical elements, conflict, dialogue, character and the mode of their construction. Attention is paid to the methods of presentation of the plays, to the sources of inspiration for such methods and the way they have contributed to the themes.

Part Four considers the function of the drama from political, cultural, critical and aesthetic points of view. It is shown throughout that Palestinian drama must be seen as a committed drama, and that it cannot be understood outside its historical context.

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SCHEME OF TRANSLITERATION

ء	,	ض	ḍ
ب	b	ط	ṭ
ت	t	ظ	ẓ
ث	th	ع	ʿ
ج	j	غ	gh
ح	h	ف	f
خ	kh	ق	q
د	d	ك	k
ذ	dh	ل	l
ر	r	م	m
ز	z	ن	n
س	s	ه	h

PLEASE NOTE that the word " فلسطين " (Palestine) has three different forms of pronunciation in the Arab world, which can be transcribed Filasṭīn, Falasṭīn and Filisṭīn. The last form has been used in this thesis.

Notes

- (1) ء is not transcribed in initial position.
- (2) The short vowels are transcribed a , i , and u ;
the long vowels ā , ī , and ū ;
and the diphthongs ay , aw .
- (3) لا at the ends of words is transcribed h ,
e.g. لاجئة Lāji'ah.
- (4) The definite article is transcribed
al- before both lunar and solar letters,
e.g. الشمس al-Shams, القمر al-qamar.

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INTRODUCTION

This study of Palestinian drama has two principal motives. The first is academic. There are numerous studies of Palestinian affairs, but no comprehensive study in the field of drama and theatre. During many years of involvement in this field, I have found a considerable amount of material which warrants academic study. I hope that this present study and future studies will fill this gap.

The second motive is cultural. Since the beginning of this century, Palestinian national identity has been subject to enormous pressures and continuous threats of annihilation. I hope that this study of an important element in Palestinian culture will help in efforts to preserve it.

The subject of this thesis, the thematic and aesthetic aspects of Palestinian drama, has been chosen because of the importance of theoretical formulas for the understanding and development of drama, dramatic concepts and indeed of the culture of the society which they represent. The shortage of theoretical studies in the field of Arab drama has encouraged me to define the theoretical aspects of Palestinian drama, discuss them and examine their authenticity.

This study puts the theory of Palestinian drama in its historical context. Part One gives a historical outline of the modern Palestinian social structure, the ideological

arguments and the aspirations of various groups as well as the development of dramatic and theatrical movements. I find this approach vital for two reasons. Firstly, Palestinian cultural output, including drama and theatre, is a reflection and embodiment of Palestinian society in its mobility, specific concerns and general aspirations. Secondly, such a historical approach is essential, I believe, to the analysis, evaluation and development of this art.

The study proceeds to consider the nature of Palestinian drama. Research in the nature of literature, as Ditch points out (1), aims at the consideration of two questions, the distinctive thematic and aesthetic characteristics of literature, and how it can be differentiated from other cultural activities. To establish whether Palestinian drama has its own special characteristics as an artistic phenomenon, I focus in Part Two on the nature of its themes and its relations to myth, history, religion and society and the extent to which the themes express the political, social and cultural problems and aspirations of the Palestinians.

In Part Three, consideration is given to the artistic and aesthetic construction of the drama. This is fulfilled by the study of theatrical elements, conflict, character and dialogue, and the role they play in the revelation of the life of the Palestinians and their ways of communication.

The theory of art which determines a distinctive nature for drama establishes at the same time a special role for it.

This is the theme of Part Four. Throughout history, drama has had a specific function according to the objective conditions of the time in which it exists. The discussion shows the ways in which Palestinian drama is committed to express Palestinian issues, the nature of this commitment and the extent of correspondence between Palestinian reality and the role exhibited in the drama.

The problems which faced this study were various. The first was to define what is meant by Palestinian drama. The dispersal of the Palestinian people after the Arab-Israeli war in 1948 has created political and cultural confusion. This has resulted in an argument whether Palestinian culture should be regarded as a unified culture or should be divided into segments which identify with the various societies in which various of the Palestinians live. A delicate dilemma has arisen especially in the case of Jordan. The annexation of the West Bank of the Jordan (Eastern Palestine) after Western Palestine fell under Israeli control has changed the political status of the Palestinians by losing, at least on paper, their political identity and acquiring the Jordanian passport. Aspects of their cultural activities, including theatre, were also shared by their Jordanian hosts.

Some researchers (2) found it convenient from a political or cultural point of view to split the cultural activity. Thus the Palestinian theatrical activity in Jordan is regarded by some as Jordanian, and some writers are stripped of their Palestinian identity. Burhān al-Dīn 'Abbūshī, for ex-

ample, is regarded as Iraqi, Hārūn Rashīd as Egyptian, Muḥyī al-Dīn al-Ṣafadī as Lebanese, Asmā Tūbī as Syrian, Ibrāhīm Abū Nāb and Muḥīn Bssaisū as Jordanian, and so on.

This approach by Arab historians is hard to justify. The acquisition of Jordanian identity cards by some Palestinians or the participation of a very few native Jordanians in the theatre should not determine such theatre as Jordanian. Nor can the writer's place of residence or publication of his plays change his identity to anything other than Palestinian.

The Palestinian cultural experience in the homeland or in exile is an integrated culture. There are, of course, some particular characteristics in the experiences of the Palestinians who live under occupation in the homeland and those who live in exile. Nevertheless, Palestinian cultural activities branch out from one trunk, that is, Palestinian existence. The shocking experiences which have befallen the Palestinian people and the alienation which characterizes the relationship between the Palestinian individual and the regime under which he lives have created many common characteristics in the drama and theatre and indeed in all aspects of Palestinian cultural life. Authentic research must not be guided by artificial political considerations; this study has regarded Palestinian drama and theatre as the plays written or staged by Palestinians regardless of their place of birth or residence, be it the homeland or exile.

The second major problem has to do with the collection

of material. Like its people, items of Palestinian culture including drama, are scattered in different places. The researcher has to travel from one Arab capital to another searching in libraries and bookshops for Palestinian plays. The attempt was not always successful. To get hold of a play meant in some cases crossing innumerable apparently insurmountable barriers of bureaucracy, security, finance, and Israel's policies of discrimination. In the end, the effort resulted in a collection of plays sufficiently large to give a comprehensive idea of this aspect of Palestinian culture.

The third problem is related to the choice of material for the research. The large number of plays obtained made it inconceivable to include all of them in the discussion; a careful choice of representative plays was inevitable. The choice had to take into consideration the Palestinian scene in its historical and demographical dimensions. This meant that the representative material had to include plays from British Mandatory Palestine, Israeli-occupied Palestine and the diaspora. One cannot deny a personal factor in selection, but close relevance to the themes under discussion, irrespective of the artistic value of the plays, has been the main criterion and determined the final list of plays. However, the choice was not as free as may appear. The loss or non-availability of plays, especially in pre-1948 Palestine, made the choice indeed limited.

The discussion in some parts of this study contains many and sometimes lengthy quotations from dramatic texts. As

most Palestinian plays are either out of print or not available in Arab or non-Arab libraries or bookshops, these quotations are vital to the reader who wishes to investigate or explore the arguments of this thesis. An attempt has been made to translate quotations into English with sensitivity so as to convey to the non-Arab reader, wherever possible, the artistic aspect as well as the literal meaning of the text.

Footnotes

- (1) Ditch: "Maṇāhiḥ al-Naqd al-Adabī Bayn al-Naẓariyyah wa al-Taṭbīq", p16.
- (2) See for example Yāghī: "Al-Juhūd al-Masraḥiyyah al-Ighrīqiyyah, al-Awrubbiyyah wa al-‘Arabiyyah"; al-Rā‘ī: "Al-Masraḥ fī al-Waṭan al-‘Arabī"; Dāghir: "Mu‘jam al-Masraḥiyyāt al-‘Arabiyyah wa al-Mu‘arrabah"; and Shammā: "Al-Masraḥ al-Urdunī min ayn wa ilā ayn".

PART ONE

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF PALESTINIAN DRAMA

Chapter I

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Outline

Artistic activities and aesthetic concepts are not merely self-explanatory, not merely products of individuals' awareness. They also reflect the realities of concrete social existence. Their resources, development, essence and function are, to a large extent, shaped, influenced and directed by the cultural and social systems they arise in.

A comprehensive knowledge of the philosophical background of modern Palestinian society and culture is therefore vital for a discussion of thematic and aesthetic aspects of modern Palestinian drama.

Modern Palestinian history began with the birth of the middle class in the second half of the nineteenth century. As a result, Palestinian society began to change from one based on traditionalism to one of modernization, from a society based on rigid religious, semi-feudal relationships to one based on secular values and relationships. It is not the concern of this introduction, however, to discuss in detail the national structure and historical circumstances which accompanied the rise of the middle class, but rather to survey the main elements of that structure.

Palestine was ruled by Turkey up to the First World War. Historians who have studied that period agree that ignorance, repression and poverty were the main contributions offered to the colonized Arab people. Yet, around the turn of the century, the seeds of a revival movement started to strike root in Palestine. Private schools (Arab and foreign),(1) libraries and printing houses were established.(2) Newspapers and magazines were published.(3) A great number of major literary and non-literary publications (Arabic or translated into Arabic) came into being.(4) Political movements sprang up against the Turks.(5) Western archeology societies were formed and many archeologists were sent into Palestine on excavation missions. Their findings were published and displayed in Palestine and Europe.(6)

The Palestinian middle class who led the revival movement grew up in an agricultural environment. This helped to hide the contradiction with the semi-feudal class. The vast majority of landlords were themselves capitalists who invested some of their money in trade or industrial enterprises. The development of Palestinian society, as a result, took a bourgeois direction, preserving at the same time many feudal characteristics.

After the First World War, confrontation with colonialism and alien powers (British imperialism and the Zionist movement) marked the second phase of the Palestinian national awakening.(7) The Palestinian elite within the middle class

were deeply involved in an argument as to how to build up their society and how to stand up to their foes. Some insisted on the revival of the national heritage as the crucial element in the search for national identity. Others saw western values and achievements as the ideal model for successful confrontation and for their progress and survival. A third, smaller, party saw in socialism the way to progress. All these points of view have been adopted in different aspects of Palestinian culture up till the present day. New channels were opened between Palestinian and non-Arab cultures and scores of intellectuals studied either in the West or the Socialist Countries or translated important works from those cultures, and a considerable effort was made to adopt new forms of literature and art. These included the art of dramatic writing and theatre. On the other hand, much effort was devoted to investigating and reviving the deep-rooted ancient culture of the Palestinians' forefathers, which can be traced back to the Arab-Islamic era and to the age of the Canaanites who inhabited Palestine before the ancient Hebrews invaded and settled their land.(8) At the same time, a great deal of attention was paid to independence, democracy, parliamentary systems,(9) the liberty of the individual, the formation of political parties, trade union organizations, (10) social and cultural clubs,(11) women's societies(12) and so on. On the economic side, banks, agricultural, commercial and industrial projects were set up, and also a Palestinian national fund.(13)

The Zionist enterprise in Palestine made it impossible

for the Palestinian middle-class to develop and achieve its social, cultural and economic ambitions. The three Zionist slogans: "Jewish land", "Jewish product" and "Jewish labour", which were put into action in the Thirties and Forties had radically changed the economical and social systems of the country. Arab infrastructure and forces of production suffered a serious setback. Many peasants became landless, many workers lost their jobs, and the less strongly established Arab industry had, in large part, to close down.(14)

The inevitable result of these developments was the emergence of a new phase of conflict in the country. The Palestinian middle class led a bitter national resistance against both the Zionists and the British. The most dramatic popular uprisings took place in 1920, 1929, 1933, 1936-39, and 1947-48,(15) but the burden was heavy; the adversaries were too sophisticated to be defeated. The Palestinians suffered much loss and their national movement broke down. The state of Israel was proclaimed in 1948 and the Palestinian people, in large part, were dispersed into exile.

Having been physically uprooted from their homeland, the Palestinians lost not only a lump of earth. Their dignity, national identity and the continuity of their culture have suffered. As one Palestinian intellectual puts it: "That which has been taken from us was not only our homeland, that which has been given to us is not only destitution. From us was taken a part of our essence as human beings, and in return we received the desperation of a void, a

negation."(16)

However, the success of the Zionist enterprise and the dispersal of the Palestinian people did not lead, as many indeed predicted, to the disappearance or assimilation of the exiles into their new environment. On the contrary, the Palestinians resisted many resettlement plans. They were resolute in maintaining their independent identity. Whether their refusal to be assimilated in the places where they found themselves was due to their strong determination to return or because of the hostility of the new environment, what is in any case certain is that the denial of an independent Palestinian culture by many scholars and politicians was at best misinformed, at worst blatant propaganda.

The Palestinians have risen again, a new phase of revival has begun,(17) and the national resistance has begun to be pursued under the leadership of a more progressive section of the middle class. Strong emphasis has been put on education. Tens of thousands of the new generation have graduated from various universities. Scores of writers (playwrights, novelists, poets, etc.) and painters have emerged. Many social, political and cultural organizations and establishments have been created in exile or under occupation.

The fierce enmity between them and their foes and the loss of their homeland have resulted in a submergence of class conflict among the Palestinians. The situation that had divided the Palestinians in Palestine has, to a large

extent, been transcended. This does not mean however that the Palestinians enjoy complete unity or harmony. Different ideologies and practices can easily be recognised within their groupings and their cultural output, but owing to the fact that their national identity, especially in the last fifty years, has been under constant threat of elimination, their national struggle against the Zionists remains their predominant conflict. The whole structure of their society, their way of life and their outlook are preoccupied with it.

Political, military and economic campaigns launched by the Palestinians in the last hundred years have aimed at establishing Palestinian identity as a nation. So too is the aim of their cultural output. A close look at the vast number of Palestinian books, especially poetry collections, short stories, novels or books on history and education, reveals a strong commitment to the discussion and development of different aspects of this identity.(19)

Among the new forms of literature and art which were introduced to the Palestinian environment in the early stages of the Arab awakening are the drama and theatre, to which we now turn for a detailed discussion.

The Development of Palestinian Drama and Theatre

Historians of Arab drama and theatre(20) agree that Arab playwriting and stagecraft in their present forms are not

originally Arab. They were introduced to the Arab world from the West around the middle of the nineteenth century. The first pioneer in this field was Mārūn al-Naqqāsh who, in 1847, staged البخیل (*The Miser*)(21) in Beirut. Al-Naqqāsh unambiguously declared the influence on him of Western theatre in the speech he gave at the opening performance: "I present to you...literary theatre, European gold in Arab mould... When I was in Europe, I found, among the beneficial ways to purge the human passions, theatres in which strange plays and unfamiliar stories are performed and told."(22) Another pioneer from Egypt, Ya'qūb Sannū', also admitted Western influence on his theatre. Addressing a meeting in Paris in 1903, he said that he was inspired by plays performed on European stages in Cairo. He also stated that he paid serious attention to European drama and theatre in their original languages and settings.(23)

Western influence had its strongest manifestation later, when scores of plays were translated, Arabized or staged all over the Arab world. European clubs and missionaries also contributed their efforts to bring theatrical and dramatic activities into the area.(24)

It must be noted, however, that European forms of drama and theatre were not brought in without modification. Efforts have been constantly made to try to Arabize them. Traditional forms of theatre, such as the shadow theatre, araguz, the magic box, the story teller, the popular poet, and religious rituals and festivals(25) have played an important part in preparing the ground for new forms.(26) The traditional the-

atre has also provided source material for Arab playwrights and theatrical groups to explore and develop. The experiences of Kākī and Kātib Yāsīn in Algeria, al-Ṭayyib Ṣiddīqī in Morocco, 'Iz al-Dīn al-Madanī in Tunisia, Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm and Yūsuf Idrīs in Egypt, Sa'dallah Wannūs in Syria, Roger 'Assāf in Lebanon, Emīl Ḥabībī and al-Ḥakawātī Theatrical Group in Palestine, to mention only some of them, have made a significant effort to create an authentic Arab theatre.(27)

Although part of Arab literary and artistic culture, Palestinian drama and theatre have developed special characteristics in their own special circumstances. The study and documentation of the Palestinian dramatic and theatrical movement is not an easy task. The absence of any comprehensive study of this movement, and more importantly the loss of many plays written or produced before the Arab-Israeli War of 1948, make any study of this kind incomplete. The very few researchers who have attempted to shed light on the origins and development of this movement have stated this.(28) Historical as well as political, technical and organizational factors were behind the disruption in the life of Palestinian drama and theatre. This disruption confuses research, but one can, nonetheless, piece together the scattered fragments of information and thus draw a general picture of Palestinian drama and theatre.

The Dramatic Movement

The year 1886 marks the birth of the first Palestinian play called يوسف المديق (Yusuf The Righteous) by Ibrāhīm al-Haddād. This was late in comparison with plays produced or published in other Arab nations, about forty years after the first Lebanese play (1847),(29) twenty years after the first Syrian play (1865),(30) sixteen years after the first Egyptian play (1870),(31) and six years after the first Iraqi play (1880).(32) In 1887 and 1889, two other plays, الإبن الضال (The Misguided Son), and مأساة أيوب المديق (The Tragedy of Job the Righteous) were written by Ilyās Luṭfallah. Another play أفكار في الجحيم في الزمان القديم (Thoughts from the Hell of Ancient Times), by Dāwūd al-Shuwayrī was published in 1897.

The dramatic movement gathered momentum with the appearance of وفود النعمان على كسرى أنوشروان (The al-Nu'mān Missions to Chosroes Anū Shīrwān) 1912 by Muḥammad Darwazah, العشرة الرديئة (Bad Company), 1914, by Yuwākīm Qirdāḥī al-Mukhalliṣī, and شمم العرب (Arab Pride), 1914 by Najīb Nassār.

However, it was not until 1919 that a professional playwright, Jamāl al-Baḥrī, emerged in Haifa. In a period of about eight years (1919-1927), he wrote twenty long plays, a few of which were Arabized. They include: قاتل أخيه (The Killer of His Brother), وفاء العرب (The Loyalty of the Arabs), حصار طبريا (The Siege of Tiberias), الوطن المحبوب (The Beloved Nation), الخائن (The Traitor), سقوط بغداد (The Fall of Baghdad), في السجن (In Prison), and وفاء الوطن (The Loyalty of the Nation).

The Thirties and Forties witnessed the appearance of more plays. Among the active writers who published plays in this period are: Asmā Ṭūbī, ‘Azīz Ḍawmaṭ, Naṣrī al-Jawzī, Wadī‘ Tarazī, Mu‘ayyad Ibrāhīm, Anwar ‘Arafāt, Jamīl al-Jawzī, Darwīsh Miqdādī, Muḥammad ‘Alā’ al-Dīn, Burhān al-Dīn al-‘Abbūshī, Muḥyī al-Dīn al-Ṣafadī, Shukrī Sa‘īd, Sa‘īd Shuqayr, and ‘Adnān al-Dhahabī.

The fall of most of Palestine under Zionist control in 1948 and the dispersal of the Palestinians, caused a considerable shock in all walks of Palestinian life, not least playwriting. However, that shock was absorbed and writers emerged again in what is now called Israel and in exile. In Israel, a new generation of writers published many plays. Among the writers are: Najwā Qi‘wār, Jamāl Qi‘wār, Salīm al-Khūrī, Tawfīq Fayyāḍ, Samīḥ al-Qāsim, Darwīsh Zakī, Mu‘īn Ḥāṭūm, Hāshim Khalīl, Nabīl ‘ūdāh, Muḥammad Naffā‘, Suhayl Abū-Nuwwārah, Maḥmūd ‘Abbāsī, Ṣubḥī Khamīs, Admūn Shihādah, Rāḍī Shihādah, Shkrī Dhabbāḥ, Rātīb ‘Awawdah and Imīl Ḥabībī.

In the Palestinian diaspora, many plays by old writers were published, such as al-‘Abbūshī, al-Ṣafadī, al-Jawzī, and by a new generation of writers who include: Imīl Baydas, Muḥammad Jāmūs, Ibrāhīm Abu-Nāb, Michael al-Ḥaj, Hadiyyah ‘Abd al-Hādī, Ghassān Kanafānī, Fārūq al-Nābulṣī, Mu‘īn Bsaisū, Naṣr al-Dīn Shammā, Fatā al-Thawrah, Muḥammad Abū-Gharbiyyah, Muḥammad Jabr, Ḥakam Bal‘āwī, Muḥsin

al-Khayyāt, Walīd Rabāḥ, Nawwāf Abū-al-Hayjā, Jamāl Bannūrah, ‘Abd al-Laṭīf ‘Aql and others.

The Theatrical Movement

The dramatic movement was accompanied, at most stages, by theatrical activity. Social, literary and theatrical clubs and societies were established and put many plays on stage. The Society of Literature in Jerusalem and the Society of Literary Performance in Haifa were the first groups to be involved in the theatre from the beginning of this century. The Orthodox Brotherhood Club which was established in Jerusalem in 1914 produced some plays, among them were *ملاح الدين* (Saladin) and *لصوص الغابة* (The Thieves of the Forest).⁽³³⁾ However, it was not until after the First World War that fairly regular theatrical activity began to spread through the major towns in Palestine. "When *قاتل أخيه* was published after the First World War," writes Yāghī, "it was met with enthusiasm by lovers of theatre throughout the country ... and was staged on the theatres of Syria, Palestine and other Arab countries."⁽³⁴⁾

Amateur theatrical groups emerged in most Palestinian cities and towns at this time. To give an idea of the energetic theatrical movement in the late twenties, we can refer to a contemporary newspaper.⁽³⁵⁾ In a period of two weeks in 1929, the paper reported that the Acting Committee of the Youth Organization in Bethlehem produced plays to the public such as *عواطف الزوج* (The Passionate Husband). In Gaza

the Acting Committee of the Orthodox Club produced a play called فتاة الأندلس (The Andalusian Girl). In Jerusalem the Society for Acting and the Arts produced عنترة (Antarah). Another youth group staged مجدولين (Magdalen) in the Sahyūn Film Theatre in Jerusalem. It was the first time a Palestinian woman appeared on stage. In Jaifa the Great Muslim Youth Organization had its own theatrical group. It staged دموع اليائسة (The Broken-Hearted Woman) at the Abū Shākūsh Cate Theatre. In Haifa, there was more than one society involved in the theatre. The Fifth Boy Scout Organization staged الأسود والنعمان (al-Nu'mān and the Negro). The Islamic Society staged فهد الطرابلسي (Fahd al-Ṭarābulṣī). The Sālīsī Club staged two plays, انتقام الكاهن (The Chosroes and the Arabs) and كسرى والعرب (The Priest's Revenge). Some members of the Islamic Sports Club staged مطامع النساء (The Demanding Women). The Arab Club participated by producing مجدولين (Magdalen). Thus in a matter of three months, February, March and April 1929, Haifa groups produced more than eight plays. (36)

Palestinian theatrical activity also included Trans-Jordan, where some groups, such as the Youth Organization of Bethelhem, performed some plays. (37)

It is worth noting that the Palestinian stage was not confined to Palestinian groups. Arab theatre companies were reported to have toured Palestine in the early years of the century. In 1913 the George Abyaḍ Company performed in Haifa. al-Karmīl newspaper wrote on that occasion: "Yesterday Haifa experienced the most wonderful night when George Affandī

Abyaḍ performed غانية الأندلس (The Beautiful Woman of Andalusia). Needless to mention the kind of effect it had on the soul. People woke up in the morning only to talk about the play, its themes and meanings...The group will play لويس الحادي عشر (Louis XI) on Saturday evening. George Abyaḍ, master of acting in the area, plays the hero. We do not have to emphasize that nobody must allow himself to miss these magnificent scenes." (38)

The most celebrated Egyptian theatre group, Ramsīs, also toured Palestine in 1929 (39). So did a Syrian theatre group. The Russian magazine "Art and Theatre" reported in 1915 that a group from Damascus played in Jaffa before an enthusiastic audience. (40)

It may be relevant to mention here a Palestinian, 'Azīz Ḍawmat, who produced some of his own plays on the German stage. The newspaper "al-Nafīr" wrote in 1929 praising his experiments as a great success: "There is a young oriental man who is almost unknown in his own country yet praised for his talent in Berlin literary and theatrical circles. He is striving to publicize Arab literature in all parts of Germany. He is 'Azīz Ḍawmat... The latest play he has produced is والي عكا (The Governor of Acre), staged for the first time at Stralsund Municipal Theatre to high acclaim... Ḍawmat is regarded as a first class writer by German poets." (41) Other works produced on the German stage include راقمة الفيوم (Dancer of al-Fayyūm), produced after the First World War, and ابن سينا (Ibn Sīnā) produced after the Second World War. (42)

The Thirties and Forties witnessed a greater momentum in the theatrical movement. The number of people involved in theatre increased remarkably. "In 1944," writes Jamīl al-Jawzī, "there were more than twenty theatrical groups in Jerusalem alone." (43) The Arab Trade Union for Actors was formed in 1942. Before that, a professional theatrical group was set up to perform on a national level, called the al-Karmil Theatre Company. In an article published in "al-Adīb" magazine, Ibrāhīm 'Abd al-Sattār talked about the importance of this group and its activities: "For the first time in Palestine," he says, "a theatrical group has been born and has produced 'Hamlet', an important social play by Shakespeare... In the past, some youth clubs or private schools staged many plays all over the country, but they did not reach the level achieved by ^{فرقة الكرميل التمثيلية} (al-Karmil Theatre Company)... Now one can say that al-Karmil is the Arab group which has successfully performed the difficult roles in this play... Among the cast were actresses such as Asmā Khourī and Thurayyā Ayyūb, who performed their roles with success... All in all, the production of "Hamlet" was an extraordinary introduction to national Arab acting in Palestine." (44)

In addition to the activities of these clubs and societies, acting committees on the radio and in schools contributed considerably, not only to the theatrical movement, but also to the creation of an audience who value this kind of entertainment. (45)

The events of 1948 were the greatest setback for the clubs and groups involved in theatre. It was not until the Sixties that Palestinian groups in Israel, Jordan and in exile tried to revive the national theatre.

In Israel, Palestinian actors, mostly amateur, emerged in Nazareth, Haifa and Um al-Faḥm. In an article about Palestinian theatre, Marie Ilias suggests that in the late Sixties and the Seventies five amateur theatrical groups performed on the Israeli Arab stage, namely المسرح الشعبي (The Popular Theatre), المسرح الجديد (The New Theatre), المسرح الناهض (The Rising Theatre), المسرح الحر (The Free Theatre), and المسرح الأهلي (The Local Theatre). Their contribution was mostly classical Arab plays such as الموت والنوم (Death and Sleep) by F.Raḍwān, حلاوة زمان (Wonderful Time) by R.Rushdī, حصص الحبوب (The Lovely Hashas) by T.al-Ḥakīm, عسكر وحرامية (Soldiers and Thieves) by A.Faraj, and وبعدين؟! (Enough is Enough) by W.Madfa'ī. (46)

Under Jordanian rule theatrical activity was for years limited to schools. However, in 1966, al-ʿĀbidī points out, the Jordanian Theatre Society was formed under the sponsorship of the Ministry of Culture and Information. In a period of two years, 1966-67, the Society produced thirteen plays, none of which was Arab. They include بيت الدمية (A Doll's House), and الأشباح (Ghosts), by Ibsen, رجل الأقدار (Man of Destiny), by G.B.Shaw, البيت السعيد (A Happy Family), by Somerset Maugham, الفخ (Trap), by Robert Thomas, البرجوازي النبيل (Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme), by Molière, أفول القمر (The Moon is

Down), by John Steinbeck, and موتى بلا قبور (Dead Without Graves), by Orwen Shaw. (47)

After 1971, Hātim al-Sayyid says, a new group of trained actors and a director came together to produce a series of plays which were mostly Arab, such as عفاريت القرن العشرين (Twentieth Century Devils) by 'A. Sālim, الغرباء لا يشربون القهوة (Aliens Don't Drink Coffee) and اضبطوا الساعات (Set Your Watches) by M. Dhiyāb, قرقاش (Qaraqāsh) by S. al-Qāsim, and الزير سالم (al-Zīr Sālim) by Faraj. It is worth noting that this last play represented Jordan at the Shīrāz Theatrical Festival in Iran in 1974. (48)

Theatre groups in Amman University produced plays regularly on the University's stage in the late Sixties. Their productions include ثمن الحرية (The Price of Freedom), and الحقيقة ماتت (The Truth is Dead), by the Spanish playwright Robillos, and العادلون (Les Justes), by Camus. (49)

Another form of Palestinian theatre came into being shortly after the emergence of the Palestinian Resistance Movement in 1965. جمعية المسرح العربي الفلسطيني (the Palestinian Arab Theatre Society), was established in Damascus in 1966 under the sponsorship of the Palestine Liberation Organization. In a paper presented by 'Adnān Abū 'Amshah on Palestinian theatre to the Arab Organization for Education, Culture and Sciences in 1973, we learn that the Society's main aim was the raising of the people's awareness of the Palestinian issue, the presentation of revolutionary experience and the preservation

and revival of Palestinian culture.(50) The Society's theatrical group, whose name was changed in 1970 to المسرح الوطني الفلسطيني (The Palestinian National Theatre), produced works on various Arab stages. Among these plays were شعب لن يموت (A People Who Will Not Die), الطريق (The Way), الكرسي (The Chair), حفلة سمر من أجل (ه) حزيران (A Celebration for the Fifth of June), الرجل الذي لم يحارب (The Man Who Did Not Fight), and المؤسسة الوطنية للجنون (The National Establishment for Madness). It participated as well in the Arab Theatrical Festivals which took place in Morocco, Tunisia and other Arab countries in the Seventies.(51)

Theatrical groups connected with other revolutionary movements also produced plays in Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria.

In the Israeli-occupied West Bank, various theatre groups have been active during the last fourteen years. بالالين , (Balloons) was the first such group to be set up in 1970. Thanks to its efforts, a relatively advanced theatre has been created. In a period of about four years, from 1971 to 1975, the group produced eight plays: قطعة حياة (A Slice of Life), نشرة أحوال الجو (Weather Forecast), الكنز (The Treasure), العتمة (Darkness), ثوب الإمبراطور (The Emperor's New Clothes), تع تخرفك يا صاحبي (I'll Tell You a Story, Mate), ترباتك عمّتي (Here's Your Clever Boy!) and عنتورة ولطوف (Antūrahwa Latṭūf).

The group's activity reached its peak when it organized a month-long festival in August, 1973, at the Municipal

Theatre in Ramallah. This festival, which was called (Palestinian Month for Theatre and Folklore) شهر المسرح والفولكلور الفلسطيني, presented six of the above-mentioned plays as well as folk-dancing and singing. Not only was there extensive Palestinian and Arab media coverage, (52) but the festival was also reported in the international press. Amnon Kepeliouk of the Parisian newspaper "Le Monde" wrote on the occasion, emphasizing the importance of such a national event for the local people: "A festival of Palestinian theatre and folklore, an event of a kind unique since the Six Days War, was held last month at Ramallah in the occupied West Bank. In front of thousands of spectators coming from villages on the West Bank of the Jordan, the Balloons Theatre Company presented social and political plays which touched on the burning problems of the people living in the occupied territories." (53)

Three more groups came into existence in 1973. They were (Pins) دبائيس (Hard-liners) بلا - لين (54) and فرقة المسرح الفلسطيني (Palestinian Theatre Group). The first group produced الطرشان (The Deaf), (1973), الحق على الحق (No-one to Blame), (1974), عمارة من ورق (A Paper Building), (1976), and الحشرة (Trapped in a Bottle), (1977). The second group produced مصارعة حرة (Wrestling), (1975), العبرة (The Lesson), (1975), and القاعدة والاستثناء (Rule and Exception), (1976). The third group produced many plays, including الرقامين (The Dancers), (1974), طريق الجحيم (The Road To Hell), (1975), and مجمع القضايات (Gathering of Bullyboys).

In 1976, فرقة الزيتون (The Olive Theatre Group) was formed in Nablus and produced only one play, بيع الصبر (Prickly-Pear Seller), (1976), before their theatre was attacked and set on fire by a group of Moslem fanatics. In the same year, صندوق العجب (Magic Box) was formed. It staged two plays, لما انجنينا (When We Got Mad), (1976), and تغريبة سعيد بن فضل الله (The Expatriation of Sa'īd Ibn Faḍl-Allāh), (1979).

In 1979 فرقة الحكواتي (The Story-teller Group) emerged as a result of earlier experiments with بالونين (Balloons) and the companies which succeeded it. Although the word "الحكواتي" is familiar in the traditional Arab theatre, this group, as it pointed out in a pamphlet, "has rejected the straightforward use of traditional forms of folk-culture as inappropriate in their attempt to formulate a contemporary idiom." (55) With no written texts to draw on, they developed a unique visual style. They produced باسم الأب والأم والابن (In the Name of Father, Mother and Son), (1979), محبوب محبوب (Maḥjūb Maḥjūb), (1979), ألف ليلة وليلة في سوق اللحامين (1001 Nights in the Butchers' Market), (1982), جليلي يا علي (Alī, the Galilean), (1983), and ألف ليلة وليلة لرامي الحجارة (1001 Nights of a Stone-Thrower), (1984).

Most of these plays were also put on international stages. محبوب محبوب (Maḥjūb Maḥjūb), for example, was performed in most European countries and was received with interest by art critics in major newspapers and magazines. Rosalind Carne wrote in "The Financial Times", "In spite of the call for national liberation the play derives its power elsewhere, in careful social detail and in the moral contra-

dictions faced by the ordinary Arab worker in Israel and the occupied Arab territories." (56) Ned Chaillet wrote in "The Times" that the play "is an articulate, intelligent organization of images and ideas that argue for small acts of heroism as the measure of a Palestinian." (57)

The play attracted, also, the attention of the Israeli press. Edward Grossman of "The Jerusalem Post" magazine talked about the subtlety of the play's political theme and its aesthetic construction. He suggested that "almost everything in the play is covertly political (and) almost nothing is overtly so." As for the dramatic structure, he said "dramatically it is satisfying, even exhilarating." (58) Special appreciation for the presentation of the play is also to be found in the Arab press. (59)

Al-Ḥakawātī reached its highest standard, so far, by producing ألف ليلة وليلة في سوق اللحامين (1001 Nights in the Butchers' Market), a dynamic and imaginative play which gained both local and international appreciation. The Israeli newspaper "Ha-Aritz" wrote about the play and the group: "Al-Ḥakawātī appears to have reached a high standard, which is not achieved by the Jewish theatre... The theme which those Palestinians brought in might be closer to the Palestinians than to the Israelis but the Israelis can learn an important lesson from the theatrical means of expression presented by this group." (60) "Yadiot Ahronot", another Israeli newspaper, wrote in most appreciative language: "There is a national theatre for the Palestinians. It is

al-Hakawātī, a group of high standard which produces magnificent shows and can be compared with first class theatre companies in Paris, London and New York, a professional group with no equivalent on the Israeli stage."(61)

Indeed, the big challenge which was created by the Israeli occupation has developed a radical theatre both in form and content. Some of the above-mentioned groups started in a completely unconventional manner. As noted by M. Anīs and F. Abū Sālim, the theatrical movement in the West Bank has adopted a distinctive path, divergent from the classical trend in modern Arab theatre. The conventional image of the theatrical process has disappeared. All members of the group participate in the creation of all aspects of theatrical process from beginning to end. The responsibility of writing, directing, acting, production, etc., is collective. The Brechtian method (alienation effect, story-telling, etc.) has been adopted in many works of these groups. Theatre, now, "is committed to the cause of the masses", to use Anīs' words. The stage and the audience are not separated by a curtain. The curtain is dispensed with, and the audience is given the opportunity to participate during and after the performances.(62)

In addition to these independent theatre groups, there are theatre committees in almost all institutions of higher education, such as the Universities of Bir Zeit, al-Najāh, Bethlehem and Hebron and the Vocational Centre in Ramallah. Trade unions in some towns also have their own theatre

committees. Their activities are not confined to the platforms or audiences of the institutions for whom they were primarily produced. Performances in most cases are open to the public, and some groups perform their work on the stages of other institutions.

Obstacles

However, despite the success achieved over the years by some theatrical groups, the theatre has never been given a real chance to flourish in Palestinian cultural life and indeed it has never had a secure existence, for various reasons. Firstly there has been inadequate financial support. Most of the groups mentioned earlier have been financially self-supporting and their members have had to do other jobs to earn a living. Secondly, real theatrical experience has been lacking, as has specialized technical equipment. Only a few of those involved in the theatre have attended academic or training courses. Thirdly, there has been no national organization. No unified national body to organize, encourage and prompt theatrical activities has appeared on the Palestinian scene. Fourthly, ideological and personal differences have affected some groups, such as Balālīn, whose differences have split the group more than once. Bilā-līn, Şundūq al-‘Ajab and al-Ḥakawātī were all breakaway groups from the mother-group Balālīn. Fifthly, as mentioned earlier, unstable conditions in Palestine, where political, cultural and social disruption have been the norm since the beginning

of this century, have not only precluded a healthy atmosphere for the theatre but have also led to the dispersal of artistically qualified or experienced people. Sixthly, since traditions of theatre, especially Western forms, have no strong roots in Arab or Palestinian culture, only a small audience of educated or middle-class background really appreciate this kind of theatre, and there has so far been little success in attempting to involve large audiences, which are necessary for the survival of theatre companies. The last and probably the most important factor is the strict censorship exercised by the occupying powers. The difficulty of setting up a theatrical group or obtaining permission to stage a play has always been a considerable obstacle. The Turks, who occupied Palestine up to the First World War, were not in favour of Palestinian cultural activities. Literary circles of the time complained about this official attitude and some intellectuals reminded the Turks of the European example where theatre enjoyed great popularity and received encouragement from governments. Under the heading "Administrative Council of Syria does not allow the formation of a branch of an acting society," the Palestinian newspaper "al-Karmil" wrote: "Is the Administrative Council of Syria afraid of the perils of acting, at a time when theatre is the greatest driving-force for moral elevation in all nations? In Europe, the governments grant medals to men of the theatre, but the Administrative Council of Syria lays obstacles before acting. Shakespeare's works, which are entirely moral, poetic and uplifting plays, second only to the Bible, are performed daily on stages all over the world."(63)

However, the British were no more tolerant than the Turks, especially of plays with political implications. In an article on the famous Arab playwright Farah Anton and the harassment which his plays met in Egypt and Palestine under the British administration, Niqūlā Ḥaddād wrote: "Restrictions on freedom of expression extended to theatre... He (Anton) never presented a play without obstacles being placed in his way by the Board of Censorship. When he produced السلطان صلاح الدين (Sultan Saladin), the local authority took extreme exception to it and ordered its publication to be stopped. After a long argument the authorities agreed to grant permission to perform the play only if it underwent drastic change, which the writer was obliged to make, although the play was weakened, particularly where it was meant to awaken the audience to the basic rights of nations. Notwithstanding these changes the authorities eyed the performances with the greatest suspicion and eventually attempted to stop them. The play also met similar harassment in Palestine." (64) Naṣrī al-Jawzī, one of the leading theatre men in Palestine in the Forties, recalls how he was interrogated on many occasions by the British authorities, accused of producing plays with anti-imperialist themes. (65)

Since 1948, Israeli measures to curtail committed Palestinian cultural activities, including theatre, are indeed severe, whether inside Israel itself or in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. (66) Palestinian theatre has in no way been given the opportunity to act freely. In Israel, Arab

plays with political or nationalistic themes were not allowed to be staged. *السلام المفقود* (The Lost Peace) by Rāḍī Shihādah was banned in 1977 by the Israeli censorship without explanation. Members of the group due to perform it were called before a court.(67) *رجال في الشمس* (Men In the Sun), a dramatization of a novel by Kanafānī, was produced in 1978 by al-Masrah al-Sha'bi, but banned after two performances. The story of *مشاهد* (Eye Witness), by Rātib 'Awāwdah, shows the extent of Israeli intolerance of drama with political messages. This play was banned in late 1980 after three performances in some Arab villages. The reason given at the time by the Israeli Ministry of the Interior was that it had no permit. 'Awāwdah, who also acted in the play, then sent the text to the Israeli film and play censors, who totally rejected it five months later. The head of the Censorship Board claimed that the play dealt with the subject of land expropriation in an extremist fashion, with clear criticism of the State of Israel, and also that the play calls on Arabs to demonstrate and not to resign themselves to the loss of their land. The writer himself failed to persuade the Censor to pass the play and so he applied to the High Court. The Court, however, refused to decide on the case and returned it to the Censor, recommending him to work out a compromise. On 7th February, 1984, the Israeli Censor approved the play after cutting out parts of a dialogue in which a Palestinian farmer refuses to accept a compensation payment for his land.(68)

This intolerance is not directed only against groups

clearly hostile to Israeli policies. Even those who take a moderate line and favour cooperation with Israeli institutions find matters difficult. The case of al-Masrah al-Nāhiḍ of Haifa speaks for itself. Rāḍī 'Azzām and Adīb Jahshān, leading members of this group, declared its urgent need for financial support. They said that they had very little assistance from the government, namely a grant of 60,000 Israeli lira, which is a very modest figure by any standard. (69) Moreover the government tried to exploit them politically on the grounds that "we pay the money so we must have a say in the kind of play you produce." This is what they were told by the Israeli Advisor to the Minister of Education for Arab Affairs. It is on this basis, 'Azzām adds, that the authorities prevented the staging of Sartre's play موتى بلا قبور (Dead Without Graves). (70)

In the West Bank, theatres receive much harsher treatment. Dabābīs, for example, had to wait one year before they were informed of the military authorities' refusal to allow قرقاش (Qaraqāsh), on stage. A similar thing happened when the group applied for a permit to stage خوازيق (On the Rack). It was rejected by the censor and the group was obliged to make changes to the content and the title of the play. It was retitled عمارة من ورق (A Paper Building); it still took many months before permission was finally obtained. The firm restrictions imposed on theatrical groups to hinder their free movement within the Arab community is another major obstacle. Al-Ḥakawātī, for instance, was banned from performing Maḥjūb Maḥjūb in the West Bank and in

Nazareth, despite the fact that permission was given for the group to play in Jerusalem. It was only as a result of pressure from a small group of Israeli journalists, lawyers and intellectuals that the performance of the play was allowed to continue.(71) However, the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza were prohibited areas for their activities. There has also been detention of actors or theatrical staff by military authorities. Muṣṭafā al-Kurd of Ṣundūq al-‘Ajab was detained during the performance of ^{لما} _{انجنينا} (When We Got Mad) in 1976. The performance had to stop until he was replaced by someone else. Mājid al-Mānī was also questioned about his activities in the Balālīn group and was detained without trial or charge for four months.(72) The majority of Dabābī's members were imprisoned in 1978 accused of illegal activities and breach of security regulations. Members of al-Ḥakawātī theatre group underwent an unpleasant interrogation by Israeli security men about the activities of the group and its financial resources. One member, Rāḍī Shihādah had to be hospitalized for injuries resulting from a beating he received in the course of this interrogation.(73)

Themes

A comprehensive reading of the dramatic and theatrical material at our disposal shows that manifestation of the Palestinians as a nation is its most distinctive feature. The first form of this national manifestation as expressed in plays staged or published in the first four decades of

this century was the call for the people to work for national unity, to show a sincere love of their nation, to preserve their land and culture, and to be dependent on nobody but themselves in order to achieve their national goals.

وفود النعمان على كسرى ... (The al-Nu'mān Missions to Chosroes Anū Shirwān), for example, derives its theme from ancient Arab history contrasted with the decadent Arab situation today, and calls for Arab youth to draw lessons from their past history. The writer reveals this aim in his introduction to the play: "I read the theme of this play", he says, "in various works of literature. It occurred to me that I could expand the theme to include some of my ideas and the ideas of any Arab who grieves for his people's failures, disunity and lack of progress." (74)

شم العرب (Arab Pride), 1914, deals with the conflict between two ancient Arab tribes. Modern political implications are obvious in many parts of the play. The conflict between these two tribes, which in the play ends in reconciliation, reflects the writer's wish to see a united, prosperous Arab nation. One of the characters says at the end of the play:

ما أحلى الزمان الذي يطمئن فيه العرب ويستريحون
في أوطانهم ويتفرغون لأشغالهم . بل ما أحلى الزمان
الذي يتحد فيه العرب على حماية أوطانهم .

Won't it be wonderful when the time comes for Arabs to

live and work peacefully in their nations... to unite to protect their nations and their interests.(75)

السلطان صلاح الدين ومملكة أورشليم (Sultan Saladin and the Kingdom of Jerusalem), 1914, takes the conflict between the Arabs and the West as its main theme. It revolves around the life of Saladin while preparing for the final battle against the Crusaders. It also covers his victories and the liberation of Jerusalem and most cities in Syria and Palestine.(76)

في سبيلك يا وطن (For the Sake of the Nation), 1933, attempts to discuss, as the writers put it, "true nationalism, the terrible fate of land-brokers and false Europeanization".(77) The play celebrates those who do their best to ensure that Palestinian land is kept in Arab hands and those loyal to Arab values; on the other hand, it condemns those who champion European values, ridicule Arab traditions and sell land to Jews.

الملاك والسمسار (The Landlord and the Landbroker), 1934, describes the methods used by Zionists to entice Arab land-owners to sell their land to Jewish organizations. The writers' aim becomes very clear when he describes elaborately the way in which villagers decide to create a fund for saving land threatened by the Zionists.(78)

أشباح الأحرار (The Ghosts of Free Men), 193-?, condemns land brokers whose business facilitated the transfer of Arab land to Jews. It revolves around a patriot who kills his father for his involvement with land-sale. The images of

Moslem Arab heroes, Khālīd Ibn al-Walīd, Saladin and Tāriq Ibn Ziyād appear to him to explain how they fought the enemies of Arabs and Moslems and defeated them and thus were able to guard their Arab land and nation.(79)

The second form of national manifestation has been the call for revolution to liberate the Palestinian nation and protect Arab land. This theme has been dominant in many plays staged or published from the forties up to the present day.(80) Two trends can be traced. Both call for martyrdom, sacrifice and challenge. Both portray and celebrate the fedā'ī and the martyr, and both express passionate love of the Palestinian nation. The difference between the two trends lies in their artistic and intellectual approach.

The first trend appeared in the early forties and shortly after the 1948 disaster. The call for revolution now becomes a religious duty and at the same time a promise of revenge. The religious background of Palestinian society, the religious aspect of the Zionist enterprise, and the immense hardships suffered by the Palestinians before and after the defeat were, undoubtedly, the mainspring of that religious revival in both society and the drama of that period. The image of the nation has a distinctively romantic aspect, vividly enhanced by the sudden and devastating expulsion of the Palestinians from their homeland. The defeated Palestinians left behind not only their loved ones, homes and land, but also their harvest. Many stories were told about people killed while trying to cross the newly

erected borders to go back to what was supposed to be their land to gather in the harvest. One can understand the romantic national feeling which can be detected in some plays of this period. The image of the Jew, Zionist or Israeli, becomes stereotyped in the Arab mind, closer at that time to caricature than to reality. A Jew is shown as a mean, cowardly, cunning enemy with a jealous loathing of Islam. Reading some of these plays, one can also detect an excessive confidence in Arab strength and an underestimation of Zionist capacities.

بين جاهليتين (Between Two Dark Ages), 194-?, (81), for example, tells of the life of the Prophet Muḥammad just before his prophethood, but it implies a call for Arab youth to equip themselves with Islamic values, to follow the example of the Prophet Muḥammad in order to protect themselves and their nations. It also implies a condemnation of the Zionists who are portrayed as hostile to the Arabs.

تراث الآباء (The Heritage of Our Forefathers), 1946, tells the story of a hard-working man whose house was destroyed and whose land was taken over by the Minister during the Abbasid period. By means of this historic theme, the play discusses matters which took place in Palestine in the forties. Without mentioning Palestinian names, the play advocates the preservation of land, shows its unlimited value and reminds us of the danger that results from selling it to aliens. Father tells his son who suggests that they sell their land for a high price:

ليس المال كل شيء في الحياة . لن أبيع
أرضي ما بقي ... فنيها عاشن مدي وأبي . وفيها ولدت
أنا وترعت ... فأرضي هي جزء مني .

Money is not everything. I will not sell my land, son.
My grandfather and father lived on it. I was born and
brought up on it. My land is part of me! (§٣)

امروء القيس بن حجر (Imru' al-Qays Ibn Ḥujr), 1946, deals with the life and death of this ancient Arab poet. In his attempt to restore his lost throne, Imru' al-Qays allies himself with a foreign power, Rome, and subsequently meets his tragic death at their hands. By dedicating the play to the late King Fayṣal of Syria, the writer intends to draw a symbolic parallel between the past and the present. Like Imru' al-Qays, Fayṣal depended on foreign powers, the British and the French, to gain independence for the Arabs from Turkey, and a similar fate befell him when he was dethroned and exiled to Iraq.

وطن الشهيد (Nation of Martyrs), 1947, is about the oppression of Palestinian Arabs by the Turks and the conspiracy against their nation between the Zionists and the British. It praises the resistance movement and condemns land sellers.

شبح الأندلس (The Ghost of Andalusia), 1949, sheds light on the 1948 tragedy which fell upon the Palestinians, the heroic resistance of the people especially in the battle of Jenin in 1948. The writer chose this title for his play to draw a comparison between what happened to the Arabs in Andalusia and what is going to happen to them at the present time. "As in Andalusia," the writer says in his introduction, "our disagreement and conflict are too immense to spare

Palestine or the Arab nations." On the other hand he chose the battle of Jenin to be his theme because of its significance. "There is a lesson for the Arabs to learn from this battle. They could gain victory over overwhelming forces if they fought with sufficient determination." (83)

مسألة لاجئة (The Tragedy of a Woman Refugee), 1951, portrays the tragic situation of the Palestinian refugees and their rebellion against the Zionists. It is a celebration of Palestinian courage and martyrdom, and a condemnation of the Zionists who took over their "most wonderful homeland". Revenge is another important theme in the play. The term "الثأر" is cited more than ten times in this play. It reminds one of the similar concept that marked the tribal conflict in ancient Arab society. Undoubtedly, the semi-feudal, semi-tribal elements in the Palestinian mentality of the time can be seen here. However, it should be noted that there is a difference between the old and the new concepts of the word "tha'r". In this play, the modern use of the term is usually associated not with the word "tribe" as in the case of old Arab society but with "الوطن" (nation). "Our beloved nation calls on us for revenge", (84) says one of the characters.

The second trend took shape in the sixties and seventies. Oppression against the playwrights increased in this period. The majority were then and are now Leftist and active in the national revolutionary movement. Ghassān Kanafānī was the spokesman for a revolutionary group, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. He was killed by Israeli

intelligence agents in a booby-trapped car in Beirut in 1972. Mu'īn Bsaisū was a member of the Palestinian Communist Party. He was among those who led a popular movement in Gaza against the Nasir plan to settle the Palestinian refugees in the Sinai desert in 1955. He was jailed in Egypt for many years. Tawfīq Fayyād, an Israeli Arab, was sentenced in Israel to ten years imprisonment and was expelled by Israeli authorities after spending five years in jail. Samīḥ al-Qāsim, also an Israeli Arab, was jailed and put under house-arrest many times before and after the 1967 war, accused of breaching security regulations. Hārūn Rashīd, Ḥakam Bal'āwī, Ṣudqī al-Dajānī, Naṣr al-Dīn Shammā, Imīl Ḥabībī, Sāliḥ Mashlāwī, Muḥammad Abū Gharbiyyah and many others are all involved in some way or another in the Palestinian resistance movement.

Benefitting from their unique experience in the resistance movement and their wide knowledge of international dramatic literature, some of these playwrights gave a strong added momentum to the dramatic movement, in both technique and theme. Historical as well as mythical materials were favoured by some writers. The exploitation of mythical symbols by dramatists or other artists, whether Arab or not, is debatable, but we shall see that the adaptation of myth by some Palestinian playwrights has enriched the technique and content of their work.

As far as themes are concerned, radical changes have occurred. The religious dimension which marked the drama of the previous stage has almost disappeared from the work of

the new generation of dramatists. There is no mention of God (Allah) as the great saviour, no mention of the fedā'ī or revolutionary sacrificing himself for the sake of God, no sign of tha'r (revenge) as the way of salvation. The dramatists have become more universal, generally speaking, and more sophisticated. The revolutionary himself becomes the great saviour. Democratic revolution becomes the road to salvation. The yearning for the homeland, though deep and strong, serves a less romantic goal. The treatment of the Arab-Israeli conflict becomes more rational than before. The Zionist and not the Jew is now regarded as the enemy. The stereotype Jew has changed in most plays. The Israeli is now not a monkey or a coward but an arrogant, insecure and guilty giant. The nationalistic theme, due to the internationalization of the Palestinian conflict and the emergence of a revolutionary mood among the Palestinians and in the world, has taken a much deeper, wider and more democratic aspect. Revolutionary movements and symbols, Arab and otherwise, past and present, are associated with Palestinian themes in many plays at this time.

ميسلون الخالدة (The Great Battle of Maysalūn), 1955, for example, pays attention to the Syrian Arab struggle against French colonialism. It specifically glorifies the battle of Maysalun where the Arabs showed heroic resistance and were able to beat a more superior French occupying force.

الباب (The Door), 1964, attempts to give a revolutionary answer to the Palestinian cultural and national dilemma. It

aspires to create a man who challenges God, that is to say religious culture, without fear, and who is determined to go back to his homeland regardless of any sacrifice he has to make.

بيت الجنون (House of Madness), 1965, puts into focus the case of the Palestinian Arabs living inside the Israeli Zionist state. National persecution suffered by the Palestinians at the hands of their enemies, and their struggle for national survival echo strongly throughout the play, side-by-side with the Zionist determination to impose their repressive rule on the Palestinian by every violent and deceitful means.

قرقاش (Qaraqāsh), 1969, is about the actions of a ruler whose tyrannical behaviour identifies him with the Israeli military machine and its repressive measures against the people it rules, both Arab and Jew.

مأساة جيفارا (The Tragedy of Guevara), 1969, takes as its main theme the death of Guevara, the South American revolutionary hero. The clear message in the play is that the revolutionaries will remain powerful symbols for peoples fighting to gain their freedom.

ثورة الزنج (The Zanj Revolution), 1970, is inspired by the Zanj rebellion in the third century Hira against the Abbasid Arab aristocracy, clearly to associate that movement and the suffering of the Zanj with the oppressed Palestinians, Red

Indians and Black Africans and their struggles against their oppressors.

ملحمة الحرية (The Epic of Liberty), 1970, discusses the prospects of the liberation movements in Black Africa to throw off White domination, exploitation and oppression.

شمشون ودليلا (Samson and Delilah), 1971, shows the continuity of the conflict between the Palestinians and the Israelis, the determined national struggle of the Palestinians against the Israeli occupation and the insecurity of the Israelis despite their military superiority.

العتمة (Darkness), 1972, portrays in unambiguous symbolism the suffering which fell upon the nation and the efforts of certain people to rid the nation of this suffering. The approach is a radical one: hard work and fundamental change of mind and attitude are among the many elements needed for real national salvation.

أبو إكباري (Abū Ikbārī), 1977?, picks on a theme from popular memory, which tells of a Palestinian guerilla leader nicknamed Abū Ikbārī, whose exploits against the British and the Zionists during the Mandate are highly acclaimed in the play. (85)

ألحشرة (Trapped in a Bottle), 1977, is also concerned with the national suffering. The play shows a group of people trapped in a bottle. They struggle to get out of it,

and their attempt reveals a great deal of frustration, despair and clash of interests.

محجوب محجوب (Maḥjūb Maḥjūb), 1981, tells the story of an ordinary Palestinian bitter in defeat. His life and his efforts to improve his conditions are portrayed in the play as a complete failure, but nevertheless he refuses resignation and struggles to survive.

The Palestinian search for identity in theatre is not confined to plays written by Palestinian or Arabs. Some translated plays with themes relevant to the Palestinian situation find their way on to the Palestinian stage. أفول القمر , for example, a translation of John Steinbeck's "The Moon Is Down", staged in Amman in 1968, shows a small village in Norway heroically resisting the Nazi invasion in the Second World War.(86)

موتى بلا قبور , an Arabized version of Sartre's play, "Dead Without Graves", also staged in Amman, in 1969, revolves around a similar theme. It shows the conflict between the Nazi occupying force in France and the French resistance. The appalling human loss which is left on stage surely fill the audience with revulsion against the Nazis.(87)

This introduction has attempted to set Palestinian drama and theatre in the context of recent Palestinian history of foreign rule, internal change, struggle, and has briefly outlined an argument that the main themes of the plays have

centred around one dominant concern: the search for and assertion of a Palestinian national identity. The main body of the thesis will develop this argument in more detail, beginning with an examination of the nature of the drama.

Footnotes

- (1) The nature of schools and the system of schooling in Palestine are described in Yāghī: "Ḥayāt al-Adab al-Filistīnī al-Ḥadīth", pp62-77; al-Ḥusarī: "Al-Bilād al-ʿArabiyyah wa al-Dawlah al-ʿUthmāniyyah", pp71-4; and Abū Ghazāleh: "Arab Cultural Nationalism in Palestine, 1919-1948", p122ff.
- (2) The names and history of printing and publishing establishments in the second half of the 19th century and early 20th century can be found in Ṣābāt: "Tārīkh al-Ṭibāʿah fī al-Sharq al-ʿArabī", pp299-303; and Yāghī: op. cit., pp77-80.
- (3) In his book "Tārīkh al-Ṣaḥāfah al-ʿArabiyyah fī Filistīn", vol 1 (pp83ff), al-ʿAqqād lists scores of newspapers and magazines, many of which were published before the First World War.
- (4) Isḥāq al-Ḥusaynī points out that in the period between 1892-1909 two hundred and eighty one books were published in Jerusalem by one publisher only. (See "Al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī al-Filistīnī", the introduction, p4.). Also al-Asad: "Al-Ittijāhāt al-Adabiyyah al-Ḥadīthah fī Filistīn wa al-Urdun", pp54 ff, 93-5.
- (5) National agitation against Turkey was carried on two planes: open clubs and associations, and secret organisations. For more details see Abū Ghazāleh, op. cit., ppl5-6; and ʿAbd al-Karīm: "Al-ʿArab wa al-ʿUthmāniyyūn 1516-1917", pp510 ff.
- (6) For more details about the names and activities of Western societies concerned with the history and archeology of Palestine, see Yāghī op.cit., pp90-94.
- (7) It must be noted in this connection that the Palestinian Arabs' awareness of the Zionist threat to their nation

goes as far back as 1891 when Palestinian notables called upon the Ottoman sultan to order the cessation of Jewish immigration into Palestine and the prohibition of the transfer of Arab land to Jews (Sāyigh: "Palestine and Arab Nationalism", p24). Political opposition to Zionism was clearly manifested in the writings of some leading intellectuals of the time. Najīb 'Āzūrī, for example, warned in 1905 against the Zionist enterprise in Palestine and challenged the Zionist claim that Palestine should be a Jewish state. ("Yaqẓat al-Ummah al-'Arabiyyah", pp41 ff). The leading newspapers, al-Karmil and Filistīn had repeatedly warned against the Zionist threat to Palestine and called on the Arabs to defend the Palestinian nation. See Qāsmiyyah: "Najīb Nassār fī Jaridatih al-Karmil", pp101ff; A. 'Awad: "Al-Shakhshiyyah al-Filistīniyyah wa al-Istīṭān al-Suhyūnī 1870-1914", pp73ff.

- (8) Such leading figures of Palestinian cultural life in the period between the two world wars were concerned to explore Palestinian connections with the Arabs and the Canaanites as 'Ārif al-'Ārif, Khalīl Baydas, Aḥmad al-Khalidī, Iḥsān al-Nimr, Rafīq al-Tamīmī, Niqūlā Ziyādeh, Muṣṭafā al-Dabbāgh, Najīb Nassār, Maḥmūd al-'Ābidī, Qadrī Tūqān, Muḥammad 'Izzat Darwazah and others. (see Yāghī: op. cit., p81-2, 93-5; and Abū Ghazāleh: op. cit., p28 ff).
- (9) Tūmā: "Sitūn 'Āman 'alā al-Ḥarakah al-Qawmiyyah al-'Arabiyyah al-Filistīniyyah", pp29-31; Hadāwī: "Palestine in Focus", p31.
- (10) Tūmā: op. cit., pp49,59,101-7; Gabbay: "A Political Study of the Arab-Jewish Conflict", pp21-2.
- (11) Yāghī: op. cit., pp94,100; Badrān: "Al-Ta'ālīm wa al-Taḥdīth fī al-Mujtama' al-'Arabī al-Filistīnī", vol 1, pp292-313; 'Abd al-Qādir: "Mustaqbal al-Tarbiyah fī al-'Ālam al-'Arabī fī Daw' al-Tajrubah al-Filistīniyyah", pp290ff.
- (12) The first recorded Palestinian women's organization was the Palestinian Women's Union founded in Jerusalem in 1921. Many branches were established in major Palestinian towns in the following years which were active until 1948, the year of the expulsion of Palestinians and consequent disruption of all types of organisation. The development and activities of Palestinian women's organizations during the period of the British Mandate are discussed in Abū 'Alī: "Muqaddimāt Hawl Wāqī' al-Mar'ah wa Tajribatihā fī al-Thawrah al-Filistīniyyah", pp44ff; and G. al-Khalīlī: "Al-Mar'ah al-Filistīniyyah wa al-Thawrah", pp77ff.
- (13) See al-Sifri: "Filistīn Bayn al-Intidāb wa al-Suhyūniyyah", pp203-4; Himādeh: "Al-Nizām al-Iqtisādī fī Filistīn", pp273ff,644ff.

- (14) The economic hardship suffered by peasants and workers during this period is described in Khillāh: "Filistīn wa al-Intidāb al-Barīṭānī, 1922-1939", pp287, 386 ff; Badrān: op.cit., pp205 ff, 248-9; and also Weinstock: "The Impact of Zionist Colonisation on Palestine Arab Society Before 1948", pp58ff.
- (15) See Tūmā: op.cit., pp116-21, 126-31; and al-Kayyālī: "Palestine: A Modern History", pp237-44; Kanafānī: "Thawrat 36-39 fi Filistīn"; and 'Allūsh: "Al-Muqāwamah al-'Arabiyyah fi Filistīn, 1917-1948", pp37ff.
- (16) Turkī: "The Disinherited", p149.
- (17) The Palestinian resistance movement started in 1965.
- (18) Badrān: op.cit., vol 2, pp47 ff; and al-Ḥallāj: "Mission of Palestinian Higher Education", p60.
- (19) Most of the studies made on Palestinian literature have emphasized this fact. Among these studies one can mention al-Asad: "al-Shi'ṛ al-Ḥadīth fi Filistīn wa al-Urdunn"; Yāghī: op.cit.; al-Sawāfirī: "Al-Ittijāhāt al-Faniyyah fi al-Shi'ṛ al-Filistīnī al Mu'āṣir"; 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Kayyālī: "Al-Shi'ṛ al-Filistīnī fi Nakbat Filistīn"; Muṣṭafā: "Al-Shi'ṛ al-Filistīnī al-Ḥadīth"; K.A.S. Muḥammad: "The Influence of the Political Situation in Palestine on Arabic Poetry from 1917-1973", pp40-85, 354-379; Abū Maṭar: "Al-Riwāyah fī al-Adab al-Filistīnī, 1950-1975"; Abū al-Shabāb: "Ṣūrat al-Filistīnī fī al-Qissah al-Filistīniyyah al-Mu'āṣirah"; 'Āshūr: "Al-Ṭarīq ila al-Khaymah al-Ukhrā"; Wādī: "Thalāth 'Ālāmāt fī al-Riwāyah al-Filistīniyyah".
- (20) See, for example, Zaydān: "Tārīkh Ādāb al-Lughah al-'Arabiyyah", vol.4, p129; Najm: "Al-Masraḥiyyah fī al Adab al-'Arabī al-Ḥadīth", p17; Yāghī: "Fī al-Juhūd al-Masraḥiyyah al-Ighrīqiyyah, al-Awrūbbiyyah wa al-'Arabiyyah", pp85-7; al-Rā'ī: "Al-Masraḥ fī al-Waṭan al-'Arabī", p53; .
- (21) An Arabized Version of "L'Avare" by Moliere.
- (22) Najm: op.cit., p33.
- (23) Ibid., p80.
- (24) Ibid., pp17ff. See also Landau: "Studies in the Arab Theatre and Cinema", pp52-5
- (25) There have been several studies of traditional Arab theatre. Among them are Abū Shanab: "Masraḥ 'Arabī Qadīm, Arāgūz"; Qaṭṭāyah: "Al-Masraḥ al-'Arabī min ayn wa ilā ayn?", pp49-73; 'Irsān: "Al-Zawāhir al-Masraḥiyyah 'ind al-'Arab"; Botitsiva: "Alf 'Ām wa 'Ām 'alā

al-Masrah al-‘Arabi”, pp42-105; Landau: "Shadow Plays in the Near East".

The story-teller, aragūz and shadow play were reported still to be in frequent use in popular entertainment in Palestine in the nineteen-forties. See Landau: op.cit., p138; Najm: op.cit., p444; A. al-Khalīlī:

"Al-Baṭal al-Filistīnī fī al-Hikāyah al-Sha‘biyyah", pp92-3, 151; and Graham-Brown: "Palestinians and Their Society, 1880-1946", p131.

- (26) Landau: "Studies in the Arab Theatre...", p49; Daghmān: "Al-Usūl al-Tārīkhiyyah li-Nash‘at al-Drāmā fī al-Adab al-‘Arabi”, p114; Botitsiva: op. cit., pp105, 112-3.
- (27) Some of the theatrical experiments inspired by traditional forms of theatre are discussed in ‘Iṣmat: "Buq‘at Daw’", pp249ff, 263ff; and Botitsiva: op. cit., 237ff. On the other hand, new concepts based on traditional theatre have been developed in the last three decades. Some of these concepts can be found in al-Hakīm: "Qālibunā al-Masrahī"; Idrīs: "Naḥw Masrah ‘Arabi”, the epilogue; al-Madanī: "Dīwān al-Zanj", the introduction.
- (28) Yāghī: "Ḥayāt al-Adab al-Filistīnī...", pp6, 10; and al-Sa‘āfīn: "Usūl al-Drāmā wa Nash‘atuhā fī Filistīn", p183.
- (29) Najm: op.cit., p35.
- (30) Ibid., p61.
- (31) Kamāl al-Dīn: "Ruwwād al-Masrah al-Miṣrī", p11.
- (32) Al-Zubaydī: "Al-Masraḥiyyah al-‘Arabiyyah fī al-‘Irāq", p45.
- (33) J. Al-Jawzī: "Al-Zawjah al-Kharsā’ wa Tamthīliyyāt Ukhrā”, the Introduction, p9.
- (34) Yāghī: op.cit., p103
- (35) Al-Nafīr Newspaper.
- (36) Yāghī: op.cit., pp105-6.
- (37) Ibid., p105.
- (38) Cited in al-Sa‘āfīn: op.cit., p186.
- (39) Yāghī: op.cit., p105.
- (40) Botitsiva: op.cit., p234.
- (41) Yāghī: op.cit., pp104-5.

- (42) Dāghir: "Mu'jam al-Masrahiyyāt al-'Arabiyyah wa al-Mu'arrabah, 1848-1975", pp131, 203, 295.
- (43) J.al-Jawzī: op.cit., pp15-6. See also N.al-Jawzī: "Al-Masrah al-Filistīnī, 1918-1948", pp125-7.
- (44) Cited in Yāghī: op.cit., pp106-7.
- (45) N.al-Jawzī points out that in the period between 1936-1948, the "al-Jawzī Theatre Company" produced more than two hundred plays, each half an hour in length, for the Palestinian radio. (See his interview in al-Talī'ah, 19th November 1981).
- (46) Elias: "Le Theatre Palestinien", p180.
- (47) See al-Rā'ī: op.cit., pp320-25.
- (48) See interviews with al-Sayyid in al-Siyāsah (26th November 1977) and in al-Waṭan (3rd December 1977).
- (49) Yāghī: "Al-Juhūd al-Masrahiyyah...", pp237-8.
- (50) See al-Rā'ī: op.cit., p255.
- (51) Elias: op.cit., p182.
- (52) See, for example, al-Fajr and al-Quds newspapers (different issues of August 1973). See also al-Ḥawāḍess, nos. 878-9 (September 1973), and 888 (November 1973).
- (53) Cited in al-Ḥawāḍess, issue no. 888 (November 1973).
- (54) The "Hardliners" and the "Pins" came into existence owing to political differences with the "Balloons". The first group was an off-shoot of the "Balloons", while the second group was established to "burst" the "Balloons". Both groups, however, had radical approach to political issues.
- (55) See a pamphlet distributed by al-Ḥakawātī when Mahjūb Mahjūb was performed in London 1981.
- (56) Financial Times, 24th September 1981.
- (57) The Times, 23th September 1981.
- (58) The Jerusalem Post Magazine, 27th February 1981.
- (59) See, for example, al-Ḥawāḍess, issue no. 1300 (October, 1981); al-Mustaqbal (19th December 1981); al-Fajr (14th February 1981); al-Fajr al- Adabī (20th December 1982); al-Sharq al-Awsat (28th September 1981); al-Ittiḥād (4th February 1983).

- (60) Ha-Aritz, 5th July 1983.
- (61) Yediot Ahronot, 15th July 1983.
- (62) Anīs: "Al-Ḥarakah alMasraḥiyyah fī al-Manāṭiq al-Muḥtallāh", the introduction. See also the interview with Abū Sālim in al-Fajr, 21st October 1972; and Mikhā'il-ʿAshrāwī: "Contemporary Palestinian Literature Under Occupation", p57
- (63) Cited in al-Saʿāfīn: op.cit., p195.
- (64) Quoted in Najm: op.cit., pp334-5.
- (65) See his interview in al-Ṭalīʿah, 12th November 1981.
- (66) More about the Israeli repressive measures against Palestinian cultural activities can be found in:
Zayyād: "ʿAn al-Adab wa al-Adab al-Shaʿbī", pp159ff;
Jiryis: "The Arabs in Israel", pp146ff.; A.al-Khalīlī: "The Palestinian Cultural Movement Under Occupation", pp4ff; Marʿī: "Education, Culture and Identity Among Palestinians in Israel", pp4ff, 12ff; Mikhā'il-ʿAshrāwī: op.cit., pp4-6.
- (67) Al-Ittiḥād newspaper, 2nd February 1979.
- (68) Al-Fajr Weekly, 29th February 1984.
- (69) Interview in the Jerusalem Post newspaper, 30th January 1970. To show how modest this sum is, R.ʿAzzām made a comparison between the grants given to Israeli theatre groups and that given to their group. He pointed out that in a previous year, the Municipal Theatre Company of Haifa was granted 6 million Israeli lira while the Hapima Company obtained 15 million.
- (70) See interview in al-Ghad, September 1975.
- (71) See al-Ḥakawātī: op.cit..
- (72) Interview in al-Raʿy, 3rd December 1977.
- (73) Reported in al-Fajr Weekly, 3rd August 1984.
- (74) The play, introduction.
- (75) Quoted in al-Saʿāfīn: op.cit., p187.
- (76) The theme of the play is discussed in Najm: op.cit., pp327-31. The play was written by Farah Anton, an Egyptian writer of Lebanese origin; but, as mentioned above, it was staged in Palestine by both Egyptian and Palestinian theatre groups.
- (77) The play, the introduction.

- (78) A summary of the play is found in Abū Ghazāleh:
op.cit., pp85-6.
- (79) In an interview in al-Ṭalī‘ah (op.cit.), the writer says
that the play was written and staged in the early
thirties, but does not specify the exact date.
- (80) Traits of the first form of national manifestation
are to be found, as we shall see in the discussion,
in some plays of this period.
- (81) This play was published in 1967; but, as mentioned
in the introduction, it was written during the Second
World War.
- (82) The play, p49.
- (83) The play, the introduction, pp10-1.
- (84) The play, p44.
- (85) No date is mentioned on the book; but the year 1976
or 1977 is the likely date of publication.
- (86) See Yāghī: op.cit., p256.
- (87) Ibid., p260.

PART TWO

THE NATURE OF PALESTINIAN DRAMA:

THEMATIC ASPECTS

Philosophical research in drama was born more than two thousand years ago. Yet the question as to what constitutes its essence, what is its nature, what are its characteristics, how it can be differentiated from other artistic activities remains to be answered again in every different time and place, because dramatic art reflects a changing reality.

How does Palestinian drama answer these questions? Has it developed special traditions that give it specific characteristics? Does it deal with clear Palestinian issues? Does it build aesthetic and artistic principles of a particular quality that one can recognize as reflecting the special character of the Palestinians, their way of life and their conflict?

The questions related to the intellectual nature of drama will be studied in this Part, and those which have to do with its artistic and aesthetic aspects will be dealt with in Part Three.

Thematic Aspects

Palestinian playwrights aspire to a special understanding of the Palestinians and their causes. They understand drama as a portrayal of the essence of Palestinian reality. Myth, religion, history and society are the main sources from which their plays draw inspiration for their themes. The following three chapters will examine the ways in which the plays use these sources to express the concerns of the Palestinian people.

Chapter II

MYTH

Myth as a cultural phenomenon came into being when man, the primate, began to be a human, homo sapiens, when in order to meet his needs he started to transform nature by work, to be distinguished from it and to struggle against it. His random social contacts developed into a complete social structure, primitive society, which was established on a collective basis. This collectivity knew no separation between the individual and the community, between the quick and the dead or between man and natural elements. Man's limited experience and the simple tools he possessed were not sufficient to solve his problems. He reached beyond his material inadequacy with a unique imaginative tool, myth.(1) It enabled him to create a new world. It was not an illusion, but an ambition to form a much more perfect existence. It was a plan for the future and a motive to maintain that perfectability. In other words, it was an explanation of the world and an attempt to control chaos.(2) It was, as Larue points out, an effort to attain harmonious relationship and peace within the totality of man's environment.(3)

In our modern age the role of science and technology has soared high. Capitalism has led to tremendous advances in the means of production. Man's relationship with the natural world has drastically changed. Human life has been trans-

formed, the long-inherited timeless universe of symbols seems to be collapsing, or as Campbell puts it: "The spell of the past, the bandage of tradition was shattered with sure and mighty strokes. The dream web of myth fell away and the mind opened to a fully waking consciousness."(4)

However, this scientific progress, manifested in modern technology and cybernetics, has, in contemporary capitalist society, led to a decay of human character. Man has become alienated from his surroundings. The dogma of respect for individuality and the deifying of reason have been confused, and when man loses his spiritual and moral connection with his people, his ideals, as well lose connection with the earth. People seek refuge for themselves in the unknown, and art, as suggested by some critics,(5) leans towards nihilism, absurdity and myth. Most of those who favour using myth, some of these critics (6) add, do not bother themselves to present reality in its various aspects. What they do is empty reality of reality, separate man from society, and reshape him as an isolated, lonely and powerless creature.

Other critics, however, suggest that the resources of naturalism, aestheticism and symbolism have come to seem insufficient for modern literary and theatrical creativity, and it is this which has led to the new world of myth.(7) Other theoreticians, such as Freud, Jung, Schelling, Frye, Malinowsky, Eliot and others have demonstrated convincingly that the logic, the heroes and the deeds of myth have survived into modern times. They say that despite all man's

claims of maturity, secularism and sanity, myth still expresses the spirit of modern man and has its influence on his psyche and his spiritual life.(8)

The questions which arise from this introduction are: Why does Palestinian drama adopt myth? How is it handled? To answer these two questions, three plays which draw on myth will be discussed in some detail: الباب (The Door), شمشون ودليلة (Samson and Delilah), and وكان لابد أن ينزل المطر (Rain Had To Fall).

Philosophical and National Approach

الباب (The Door) attempts to give an unfamiliar solution to an unfamiliar dilemma. National as well as cultural aspects of Palestinian existence are examined. Defeat and challenge is the twofold theme of this play. One can trace two related dramatic lines. The first is the existence of God, which is challenged by man; the second is the relentless struggle by man to return to his homeland.

The presentation of such a sensitive issue was not easy for the writer, Kanafānī, who lived in a culture in which God is the main point of reference for human actions. He chose an Arab myth from pre-Islamic times as a skeleton for his play. According to this myth,(9) the tribe of 'Ād had three deities, Habā, Ṣadā and Ṣumūd. The prophet Hūd was sent by God to the 'Ād tribe but they challenged his prophecy and

were punished by God. Rain was withheld for three years and famine spread over all parts of the land. A delegation headed by Qayl was sent to Mecca to ask for God's mercy, and to call upon God to give them rain. Three clouds appeared in the sky, red, black, and yellow. A voice was heard: "O Qayl, choose from these clouds. Choose for yourself and your people". Qayl chose the black one, assuming that it had the rain which they desperately wanted. The voice came again: "A heap of ashes you have chosen. Nothing of 'Ād will survive, not a father nor a child". 'Ād himself perished and Shaddād inherited the throne. Shaddād commanded a great city to be built on earth, similar to Paradise in Heaven. He ordered tax-collectors to gather all gold, silver, pearl and saffron for the building of the city and of thousands of castles. Prophet Hūd called on Shaddād to recognize the Lordship of God. He refused, rejected the prophet's advice, and marched with his supporters towards the city of Iram. As they approached it a tremendous shout came down from the sky. All the people, including Shaddād, collapsed and died, while Iram sank deep into the ground.

The play is faithful to the main framework of the myth, but the discussion, and some episodes and characters, are created by the writer. Mother and Marthād, the two characters who do their best to stop Shaddād marching to Iram, all the events in Acts Four and Five where Shaddād meets the two Dead Men with God Habā in the Kingdom of the Dead, are additions to the myth.

Death through challenge and challenge through death is what the writer offers as an answer to the philosophical and national dilemma which the play discusses.

Death is shown as:

a. an alternative to loss of human dignity. 'Ād refuses to ask God Habā for water, the means of life, if it involves humiliation and obedience, and threatens those who advise him otherwise:

عاد : (صائحا في وجه الغيم) وها أنت ذا تعود إلي يا
هبا من جديد ... سأنازلك ولست أريد ماءك ولا خيرك ...
قيل : (صائحا بعاد) الماء ، الماء الذي سيسقي مراعيك
ويخصب أرضك ...

عاد : مقابل ماذا ؟ (يصيح) الذل ! الطاعة ! الخوف !

لا ، لا . لا أريد الماء بهذا الثمن .

لقمان : إن شعبك يموت .

عاد : الموت أفضل من ذلك .. يا قيل .. اختر السحابة السوداء ...

قيل : (خائفا) الماء .. هل تدرك ذلك يا عاد ؟

عاد : (مقاطعا) اختر السحابة السوداء . (يستل سيفه) ...

(دخان أسود يجتاح المسرح ... جلبة وضوضاء ، يسقط عاد) .

'Ād: (shouting at the clouds) You are coming to me again, O Habā... I will fight you. I reject your water and your beneficence.

Qayl: (shouting at 'Ād) Water! Your pasture is irrigated by water. Water brings fertility to your land.

'Ād: In return for what? In return for what? (shouting) Humility. Obedience. Fear. No. No. That is too high a price.

Luqmān: Your people are dying.

'Ād: Death is better than the shame that Habā offers. O Qayl, choose the black cloud...

Qayl: (frightened) Water.. Do you know what you are saying, 'Ād?

'Ād: (interrupting) Choose the black one! (Draws his sword... The stage is hidden by black smoke. Noise.. Uproar.. 'Ād falls dead)(10)

b. It is the right way to redeem oneself from the despair and futility of life. Mother tries, at one stage, to

persuade Shaddād not to confront Habā, the almighty God. His answer comes very clear:

أنت تعيشين بدافع العادة فقط ... وأنا لا أريد أن
أعيش بحكم العادة . لا أريد أن أنجب أطفالا ، فذلك
ليس أمرا ضخما . إن الفأرة تفعل ذلك بتواضع .

You are living life as it is... I do not want to live this habitual life. I do not want to give life to children. It is no great achievement to have children. A mere mouse can do it.(11)

Marthad, his son, intervenes emphasizing the importance of life, but his father replies with conviction:

يا بني العزيز ... لقد سئمت ! هذا كل ما في الأمر .
غدا حين تكبر ، ستعرف ماذا تعني كلمة السأم هذه .

My dear son. I've had enough of life, that's all. When you get old, you will realize what emptiness means.(12)

When Marthad replies that it is mere pessimism to have these feelings, his father answers firmly:

الحياة قميئة وسيئة .

Life is insignificant and horrible.(13)

c. It is an alternative to the denial of freedom and to the chains that bind man:

شَدَاد : كلنا أتينا إلى هذه الحياة رغم أنوفنا ... ثم قلنا
إن مبرر حياتنا هو أن لدينا فرصة الاختيار .. كذب !
كذب ! قل لي يا مرشد ، ماذا تستطيع أن تختار ؟
عشاءك ؟ المرأة التي تريد مضاجعتها ؟ ولكن هل
تستطيع اختيار الوقت ؟ ... ماذا بقي لنا لنختار ؟

مرشد : (بهدوء) الحياة ، إذا كان لابد لنا أن نضعها مقابل الموت
شَدَاد : كلا الموت . إنه الاختيار الحقيقي الباقي لنا جميعا . أنت
لا تستطيع أن تختار الحياة لأنها معطاة لك أصلا . والمعطى لا
اختيار فيه . اختيار الموت هو الاختيار الحقيقي . أن تختاره
في الوقت المناسب قبل أن يفرض عليك في الوقت غير المناسب .

Shaddād: We come into this world against our will. Then we justify our lives by claiming that we have choice. It is a lie, a lie. Tell me, Marthad, what can you choose? Your supper? The woman you make love to? Can you choose time?... What is left to us to choose?

Marthad:(calmly) Life, rather than death.

Shaddād: No.. Death. Death is the real choice open to us. You cannot choose life, because it is given to you already. So you have no choice in what is given. Death is the real option. To choose it in your own time, before it is imposed on you.(14)

d. Death is also the appropriate means to the restoration of the homeland. Shaddād builds the city of Iram and is forbidden by Habā to go to it. Despite his knowledge of the disastrous consequences of defying Habā, Shaddād is determined to go there and no-one is able to stop him from doing so.(15)

e. It is the right way to achieve human cultural identity and gain significance for man's existence. Shaddād shows the way to achieve this by rejection of religious mystification and the search for real human knowledge:

ولا الكاهن عاد يبعث فيّ التصديق . ولذلك أريد أن
أعرف الأمور بنفسني .

I want to find meanings for myself, because I no longer trust the priest.(16)

However, what gives death in the play a remarkable human dimension is: firstly a deep awareness of challenge shown by the characters, 'Ād, as well as Shaddād, decides to go to his death after much thinking:

لقد نمت الفكرة داخلي كما تنمو شجرة الزيتون ...
غصنا ضخما في الهواء مقابل شرش ضخم في الأرض ،

The idea of death grew inside me like an olive tree... a great branch in the air from a strong root in the earth,(17)

says Shaddād. Secondly, there is a dialectical understanding of self-sacrifice. The death of Shaddād, his people and his nation, Iram, is not the end of the world, but a resurrection:

إنني أعرف أنّ البذرة التي زرعتها هناك في إرم ،
لا بدّ أن تنمو يوما ، لا بدّ أن تشرق من بين الحطام .

I know that the seeds which I planted in Iram will grow one day, will emerge from within the ruins,(18)

Shaddād tells the First Man in the Kingdom of God. This idea of resurrection, it should be noted, has no religious meaning. On the contrary, it has a democratic image of human revival. Before his death Shaddād tells his mother:

لقد علمتموني طاعة هبا منذ نعومة أظفاري ،وكنتم تقولون لي
إنني لو أطعته لأدخلني الجنة . الجنة كانت كل شيء في هبا .
ولذلك وضعت في ذهني أن أبني جنتي فأتخلص من هبا ،وأجعل من
نفسي هبا لا يريد أن يطاع ولا يريد أن يطيع .

You taught me the obedience of Habā since my earliest youth. You said that I should go to Paradise if I obeyed him. Paradise was wrapped up in Habā. So I was determined to build my own paradise, to get rid of Habā and to create Habā of myself, neither to obey nor to be obeyed.(19)

In writing this play, Kanafānī drew on his knowledge of international and indigenous drama, philosophy and mythology as well as on this Arab myth. Aeschylus' Prometheus is a rebel against God and a friend of man, as is Shaddād. Sisyphus in the Greek myth(20) and in Camus are both, because

of their rebellious attitude, condemned to an everlasting labour, pushing a heavy rock uphill only to start again when it rolls to the bottom. Shaddād, too, is given a rubber ball by Habā to hurl against the ceiling without rest. Heroes of many works of Absurd literature(21) are overwhelmed by despair and pessimism. Shaddād, too, expresses such feelings. The path of mythical heroes, as pointed out by Campbell,(22) has three stages: departure, initiation and return. Shaddād fulfils the first two stages and is left struggling to fulfil the final stage.

In Palestine, death has always been associated with the very existence of life. In ancient times, the idea of resurrection was born through death and through conflict between life and death. This concept is manifested in the myth of Ba'al.(23) Ba'al, the god of life and fertility, fought with Mot, the god of death and famine. This concept was also embodied in Christ who is believed to have been crucified and to have risen from the dead. Islam also emphasizes belief in resurrection. In modern Palestine, death continues to be the way to salvation and meaningful life. "Death", as Darwīsh, called the Poet of Palestinian Resistance, puts it, "is the sole free option through which the Palestinian can achieve a comprehensive balance with his land and claim that he merits it. It is the sacrifice which saves him from "death in life" and gives him "life in death."(24)

Kanafānī succeeded, to a large extent, in building a

human revolutionary logic of his own. His play does not end with the reconciliation of Shaddād with Habā, as is the case with Prometheus and Zeus.(25) Shaddād does not accept the rule of Habā as is the case with Sisyphus. Neither is his decision to challenge Habā and face death a mere desperate individual step, as is the case in many Absurd plays. Kanafānī's hero struggles resolutely to achieve his aims. Shaddād rejects, too, the fate of his counterpart in the old Arab myth who expresses his regret and repentance.(26) Shaddād refuses to bend the knee to a universe full of injustice. He is determined to enter Iram, to fight Habā to the finish and to destroy the door, the symbol of Habā's dominance and superiority.

It is true that Shaddād's endeavours do not yield clear-cut positive results. He meets his death in confrontation with Habā and is unable to convince his fellows in the Kingdom of the Dead of his mission. Nor does he destroy the door which separates the world of God from the human one. Nevertheless, Shaddād's implacable resolution till his last moment on earth and in the other world, give the impression that the door will ultimately be opened and human action prove the alternative to the domination of God in the world of man.

It is relevant, before leaving discussion of this play, to note that unlike almost all Kanafānī's works where Palestinian issues, places, names and events are identified, this play has no direct Palestinian reference, but the

parallels between Shaddād and the rebellious Palestinian, between Iram and Palestine, make one feel that Shaddād and Iram are but modern Palestinian symbols in old, mythical guise. A similar view is expressed by Jabrā Jabrā(27) when he suggests that Palestinian sentiment, though symbolic and sometimes abstract, can be clearly recognized in Kanafānī's plays.

Political Interpretation

Unlike الباب (The Door), in which treatment of the national dilemma is symbolic, شمشون ودليلة (Samson and Delilah) deals directly with the Palestinian Arab-Israeli conflict. The Palestinian is in a face-to-face confrontation with his Israeli occupier and his Arab oppressor. The play is based on two myths which appear in the Old Testament: the story of Samson and Delilah and the tale of Jonah. Samson was a "divine" Israeli person who lived in ancient Palestine. The circumstances of his birth have a strong resemblance to the birth stories of other Israeli heroes whose mothers conceived through supernatural intervention. Before his conception Samson was dedicated to God as a Nazarite and he is described as a charismatic figure, periodically seized by the spirit of the Lord. Samson's strength was superhuman and his body was gigantic. Possessing extraordinary physical strength, he uprooted two great mountains and rubbed them against each other as though they were pebbles. Whenever the holy spirit rested on him, he emitted a bell-like sound which could be

heard from afar. While the spirit remained with him, he could cover the distance between Zorah and Eshtool in one stride. Once he was about to be attacked by a lion, but he slew it with his bare hand. When Samson was born the angel announced that the child was destined to liberate Israel from the hands of the Philistines, thousands of whom were slain at his hands. Nevertheless Samson ultimate downfall was at the hands of his foes. Delilah, his Philistine lover, conspired against him with the Philistine lords for a bribe. She beguiled him into revealing the secret of his strength, his long hair. As he slept, Delilah had his hair cut so that he was easily captured, blinded and enslaved by the Philistine lords. In the end, however, he was granted his revenge. With the return of his old strength he demolished the great Philistine temple at Gaza, destroying his captors and himself.(28)

The second myth, the tale of Jonah, revolves around the Prophet Jonah who was called by God to go to Nineveh and prophesy its downfall, the consequence of its excessive wickedness. He refused to fulfil the mission and tried to escape. He took passage in a ship to carry him to the other end of the world. A violent storm struck the ship and the sailors believed that his presence on board was the reason for it, so he was thrown overboard. God sent a great fish to swallow him up. After three days and nights of praying to God, Jonah was spewed out on a barren shore, given shade by a gourd tree and suckled by a gazelle. He was ordered a second time to bring his message to Nineveh as a result of Nineveh's

repentance. God renounced the punishment that he planned to bring upon the city. Greatly ~~deploring~~ God's mercy, Jonah quitted the city and God became angry, reproaching him for not having sympathy with Nineveh's people.(29)

The play does not follow the course of events of these two myths. It has its own structure. Some aspects of these two myths are interpreted in a way that makes the play itself sound like a new myth. There are two dramatic themes in the play: the theme of defeat and that of resistance. Each theme has more than one dialectical rhythm, more than one thesis and anti-thesis. There is the Palestinian defeat in Palestine and the first Zionist victory, the Palestinian set-back in exile in the face of oppression by the Arab regimes, the Arab collapse before the second Israeli onslaught and, finally, the Palestinian uprising against Israeli aggression and Arab oppression. The end of the play leaves the door open for a predictable synthesis.

In the first stage, the Palestinian defeat, the downfall of the nation occurs despite the resistance put up by the Palestinians. The defeat is not only the collapse of their nation before the Zionists but also the severe and cynical siege imposed by the Arab regimes. Once the Palestinians, due to their national and human wound, might become a centre for potential revolution, the Arab regimes freeze into rigid and inert formality, afraid that such a revolutionary plague, if not encircled and controlled, might contaminate the whole region and undermine their authority over their own peoples.

Consequently the Palestinians are effectively in a state of total siege. Māzin tells his mother:

أنا لا أعرف إلا هذا الحائط ..
 لا أعرف شيئا في هذا العالم ..
 غير الأسلاك الشائكة وغير الضوء الأحمر ..
 لا أعرف من كل الكلمات ..
 إلا كلمة قف .

I know nothing but this wall,
 I know nothing of this world
 But barbed wire and red lights.
 I know no words but 'stop'.(30)

Nevertheless, in the depths of that defeat and siege, seeds of rejection strike root. The Father condemns himself because he has not defended the nation to the bitter end, and he pledged not to forget. The Mother urges her sons to revolt as the only way to return to the homeland. And Rīm calls for her son Yūnus. Here the features of her son, the Palestinian, are those of Jonah, the prophet, both in the stage of rebirth and revival:

يونس يا ولدي ..
 أي الحيتان ابتلعك ؟
 واعتقلك في صدره ؟ ..
 معتقل يا ولدي أنت بطن الحوت ..
 معتقل منذ ولدت .

Yūnus, my son,
 Which whale has swallowed you
 And detained you in its stomach?
 Oh, my son, you have been detained since your birth.(31)

But there is a difference between the two. The ancient Jonah is a prophet who flees from Palestine in order to escape the divine will. The modern Yūnus is a Palestinian thrown out by man's aggression. The swallowing and throwing

out of Yūnus is not an act of faith between man and God, as is the case of the ancient one,(32) but an act of faith between man and nation. Rīm tells Samson:

فتشت عليه لكي أعطيه اسم أبيه ..
 إسم مدينته .. كي أعطيه إسمي ..
 وأقول له إسم عدوّه ..
 قاتل وطنه .

I looked for him to give him the name of his father,
 His city's name, my name,
 And to tell him the name of his enemy,
 The killer of his nation.(33)

Rīm, not God, will look after him. In one soliloquy she speaks to her unseen son:

لو يلقىك على الشاطئ يا ولدي حوت ..
 أصنع من جلدي ورقة توت ..
 وأغطي عريك .

If you were thrown, my son, on the shore by a whale.
 I'd make a fig-leaf out of my skin
 To cover your nakedness.(34)

She warns him to be aware of patrons, the Arab regimes. Their declared aim is to cover his naked body, but by covering him with money and putting him under a spotlight they in fact intend to fill his mouth with dynamite in order to annihilate him.

As the play advances, revolutionary actions start. War breaks out between the Israelis and the Arabs. The voice of Samson roars. At this point, sharp dramatic incidents take place. Actions and reactions conflict very strongly. The two myths, the myth of the blind giant, Samson the Israeli,

and the myth of revival, that of Yūnus the Palestinian interweave. Samson, with all the superiority and arrogance of the victorious, proclaims Arab defeat and tells the people to sign their surrender. Once again, as in الباب (The Door), the whole Palestinian myth of survival emerges to prove the dynamic thesis of historical dialectics. People gather to resist and say "No" to surrender. Defeat befalls the Palestinians, yet it is inevitable that the Palestinians rise again. Defeat creates the seeds of resistance. Rīm tells Samson:

صار لنا دفتر يوميات آخر ..
يا شمشون ...
صرنا نوقع فوق الأربطة البيضاء على الجرح.
الأربطة البيضاء تغطي الأرض ...
أصبح دفتر يوميات الأرض المحتلة ..
هذي الأربطة البيضاء ..

وعلينا نحن نوقع .
We have another diary, Samson.
We sign ourselves upon our bandaged wounds.
The white bandages spread wide across our land.
The diary of the occupied land has become nothing but
white bandages,
Signed with all our names.(35)

Samson in the play is deprived of the supernatural powers which were given to the first Samson, and is given instead, great military power. Samson, the descendant, claims the capacity to do a bit more with his modern military machine than his divine predecessor could do. He tells the people of the occupied land:

هذي هي كفي ..
بين الإصبع والإصبع ..
يجري نهر النيل ونهر الأردن ويجري دجلة.
تحت الظفر وفي راحة كفي أنتم .

The Nile, Tigris and Jordan Rivers
Flow between my fingers,
And you are under my thumb
And in the palm of my hand.(36)

Despite Samson's might, the ghost of Delilah, now embodied in Rīm, becomes a nightmare weighing heavily on the memory of Samson and Rachel. It reminds them of the disaster that fell upon the first Samson when one day he slept peacefully in Delilah's lap. Samson addresses the people of the occupied lands:

ماذا تنتظرون ؟
هل تنتظرون دليلة ؟
تكشف سرّي ..
وتجز ضفائر شعري ...
تفقا عيني وتربطني كالشور أجر الطاحون !
(يقبض بشدة على ماسورة المدفع ويديرها ويدور معها ...)
عبثا تنتظرون دليلة .

What are you waiting for?
Are you waiting for Delilah
To reveal my secret and to cut my locks,
To gouge out my eyes and to tie me up
Like a yoked ox to draw a water-wheel?

(Seizes the gun barrel and revolves around the base)

In vain are you waiting for Delilah!(37)

In a late stage in the play, Delilah's image is changed from a ghost that haunts Samson and Rachel to a live embodiment in the person of Rīm, the Palestinian woman who is involved in the resistance against them. This is demonstrated through the interrogation of Rīm in captivity. Rachel, the interrogator, sees nothing in Rīm but the face of the ancient Delilah:

راحيل : ما اسمك ؟
 ريم : ريم ..
 راحيل : ريم ؟ اسم سرّي ؟
 ريم : بل إسمي العلني .
 راحيل : أنا أعرف من أنت ..
 ريم : حقا !
 راحيل : أنت دليلة ...
 أمّا ريم .
 فهو الإسم السرّي ...
 اعترفي أنك أنت دليلة .

Rachel: What is your name? اعترفي .. اعترفي.
 Rīm: Rīm.
 Rachel: Rīm? An assumed name?
 Rīm: No, my real name.
 Rachel: I know who you are!
 Rīm: Really?
 Rachel: You are Delilah.
 Rīm is a made-up name!...
 Confess you are Delilah!
 Confess! Confess!(38)

Because of this oppressive nightmare, Samson and Rachel, the modern Israelis, struggle till the end of the play to throw off the memory of that ghost.

Rīm, however, is not the same as the ancient Palestinian Delilah; she is a revised version. Rīm is not Samson's lover who betrays him through a conspiracy and cuts his hair; she is his opponent from the outset. She is not a go-between character who leads to his captivity; she is the action itself. She is not driven to stand up to Samson on account of a bribe paid to her by Philistine lords, but because of her passionate love for her nation and people. These new revolutionary characteristics of Rīm might explain the change of Delilah's name in the play.

Significantly, the struggle carried on by Rīm and her

comrades does not reach any clear outcome as in the original myth, and Rīm is captured, not Samson. Nonetheless, Delilah's address to Samson at the end of the play shows that it is Samson and not she who is in real captivity:

در حول المدفع ..
 هذا هو طاحونك يا شمشون ..
 ستظل تدور إلى أن تسقط ..
 ستظل تدور إلى أن تسقط ..
 هذا هو قدرك .

Revolve around the cannon.
 Such is your mill-stone, Samson!
 Round and round you'll go
 Until you fall.
 Such is your fate!(39)

Bsaisū, the writer, has succeeded, I think, in writing a mature play. With profound understanding of the mythical and historical reality of Palestine, he has been able to express the tragedy of Palestine in its two aspects, the Palestinian as well as the Israeli. The two sides strive as in ancient times. The defeated side, the Palestinian, rises to give fulfilment to its people: Palestinian resistance returns from oblivion to uproot the tents of exile. The victorious Israeli side is faithful to cannon and helmet more than to anything else. This ancient-and-modern myth delineates the deadly dialectic of the conflict, its tidal surge. In the myth, in the play, in reality, military strength and aggression are not decisive.

Revival of Canaanite Myth

The third play, ... كان لا يـ ... (Rain Had to Fall), is inspired by an ancient Canaanite mythical epic called "Aqhāt Ibn Daniel", which tells the story of a king, Daniel, who greatly desired a son. He repaired to the temple of God Ba'al and his devotion was rewarded by the birth of a child, who was named Aqhāt. One day, while sitting in judgement at the city gate, Daniel chanced to meet Koshar wa-Hasis, the divine smith and artificer, and invited him into his palace. Koshar presented a bow and arrows to Daniel, who in turn passed them over to his son.

Aqhāt went hunting and was confronted by the virgin goddess 'Anat, who demanded the bow from him, promising him wealth and immortality, but Aqhāt refused. Warning him that persistence in his arrogance would bring dire consequences, 'Anat rushed to her father El and indulged in a wild tirade against Aqhāt. Swayed by his daughter's anger, El endorsed her plans. 'Anat then proceeded to enlist the services of her henchman Yatpan. Aqhāt would be invited to a banquet. The sight and savour of the food would attract the attention of eagles. Concealing Yatpan in a sack, 'Anat herself would fly above Aqhāt's head like an eagle and she would release her henchman to attack him. The plan was fulfilled and Aqhāt was put to death, a crime polluting the earth and rendering it infertile.

Meanwhile, Daniel was again sitting at the city gate

when his daughter Paghat came running towards him, pointing to a flight of eagles that was wheeling overhead, and observing also that a mysterious drought had set in. Daniel pronounced a curse upon the polluted soil and immediately set out on a tour of inspection around the fields. He knew from a messenger that his son Aqhāt had been slain. Wishing to restore fertility to the soil, Daniel made efforts to retrieve Aqhāt's remains from the gizzards of the eagles, and for seven years while professional mourners performed ritual dirges and funeral dances, Daniel offered sacrifices.

Paghat obtained her father's consent to take revenge for her brother. She bedecked herself in the garb of a knight and set out towards Yatpan, who received her cordially. Under the influence of liquor, his tongue was loosed. "The hand that slew Aqhāt," he said, "can slay foes by the thousand." Paghat was quick to seize her opportunity. Plying him with more and more drink, she sought to bemuse him so that she might slay him.(40) At this dramatic point the text breaks off.

If a comparison is made between the myth(41) and the play one finds a great resemblance or even a correspondence between their episodes and symbols. With the exception of the difference of the structure and a very few scenes added or omitted, the Canaanite myth is re-created as a short epic drama.

Jabr, the writer, adds three situations to his play,

none of which conflicts with the general atmosphere of the ancient myth. The first addition is set on a threshing floor. Present are Daniel, his court-janitor, an old lady and an orphan child. The scene reminds one of the court sittings which were held by Arab emirs, caliphs and kings in ancient times and has links with folk-tales about old women and poor orphans. In the play the old woman gets her wishes and the orphan is given a room in the royal palace and attends Prince Aghāt.(42)

The second addition is the scene of the celebrations of Aghāt's birth, which are attended by a chorus of women wearing Palestinian folk-costume, performing folk-dances to the bagpipe, and singing a song by the author himself.(43)

The third addition is the closing scene,(44) which starts where the myth breaks off. Plying Yatpan with drink, Paghat draws her sword to stab him, but one of Yatpan's knights seizes her and she is held in prison. Paghat is offered freedom subject to conditions which she rejects out of hand. She is determined to revenge the assassination of her brother and to make the land fertile again. There in captivity, she is able to bite through the iron bars and free herself. She creeps to where Yatpan and his knights are drinking and stabs him with all her arrows. One of Yatpan's knights stabs her, but before she falls dead, Paghat manages to say a few words claiming the success of her mission:

ستعود مياه السماء تروي المحاصيل وتنبت الزرع ...
وسيسعد أبناء قومي ... وتبطل بالطل العناقيد .

Rain will fall again, irrigating the seeds
 Plants will grow... My people will be happy...
 And sweet showers will softly moisten the branches.(45)

The play's ending is not unlike that which some scholars have postulated as a likely end of the original myth. These scholars believe that heroes in similar ancient Mediterranean myths, such as Tammuz, Osiris and Adonis are usually ressurected or revenged.(46)

Two episodes in the myth are omitted from the play. The first is the reception arranged for Koshar wa-Hasis by Daniel. The second is the scene of the magical rites performed by Daniel to procure a son.

The choice of this particular Canaanite myth was motivated, I believe, by two factors. The first is the writer's wish to contribute to Palestinian cultural efforts in the search for national identity. This can be read in the preface of the play where the writer states that his aim is to revive the "traditions and beliefs of a people, the Canaanites, who built a great civilization".(47)

The second factor is a subconscious one, the implication of modern political issues. Jabr is dominated by a profound and elaborated concept of Palestine as a national identity. He was born to a family which, like many others, took refuge after the 1948 war in one of the refugee camps, the hot-bed of Palestinian nationalism. The general mood of the last few decades is an extreme intensification of the concept of

Palestinian nationalism, first as an outcome of Palestinian activity, secondly as a reaction against the Israeli occupation of the whole of Palestine and the Israeli settlement policy, and thirdly as a response to Israeli denials of the historical origins of the Palestinians in Palestine and their right to nationhood in their homeland.

The play came into being as a reaction to such false arguments. It claims that the Canaanites, forefathers of the Palestinians, lived there long before the ancient Israelites invaded and settled on their land, and also that the Palestinians established their own ancient kingdoms long before the first Jewish kingdom was established there.

Readers of the play cannot fail to see a connection between the old mythical themes it draws on and the modern political concerns of the Palestinians. One can look, for example, at the murder of Aqhāt and his family's endeavours to overcome defeat. Aqhāt is portrayed in the play as a Palestinian hero, a symbol of virtue. He is murdered by Yatpan, a symbol of aggression and wickedness. Daniel is determined to slough off the defeat:

أواه يا فلسطين على مصابك الجلل .. ولكن لن أرى ،
لن أقبل الهزيمة . سأسحق ساحق إبني .

O Palestine! What a calamity has befallen you! Yet I'll not accept it. I'll not admit defeat. I'll crush the killer of my son.(48)

Paghat, Aqhāt's faithful sister, also loses no time to revenge her brother. This reminds one of the aggression

which has befallen the Palestinians since the beginning of this century and, on the other hand, it recalls the uprising of the Palestinians in response.

Daniel's condemnation of himself and of neighbouring countries is another example of the link between mythical themes and present-day politics. When he learns that his son Aqhāt has been murdered, Daniel curses the people of his kingdom, himself, and his neighbours for their responsibility for the killing of his son:

الويل لي ، الويل لكل المدن المجاورة ، الويل لكل القرى
المجاورة والتي تقع عليها جريمة قتل ولدي أقيات .
عليها اللعنة ، لتكن دائما طريدة هائمة وإلى الأبد ...
الويل لك أيتها المدن والقرى المجاورة . لتكن جذورك
في الأرض غير يافعة ، ليعميك بعل سيد الآفات ... إن لم
تطلبني دم الفارس أقيات الفلسطيني لأنه قتل في أرضك .

Woe to me, woe to all neighbouring cities and villages
which bear the responsibility for this crime against
Aqhāt, my son. Curses be upon them. Let them be
banished and dispersed for ever... Woe to you, O
neighbouring cities and villages. May your roots
wither, may Ba'al, master of blights, blind you... if you
do not revenge the blood of Aqhāt, the noble
Palestinian, slain in your land.(49)

Identical condemnation of the self and of Arab countries is not an unfamiliar Palestinian attitude. The loss of their loved ones and of their nationhood has created in the Palestinians bitter feelings against themselves and against the Arab governments who have betrayed them on so many occasions.

A third example is Aqhāt's determination to keep his bow and arrows. Daniel gives his son Aqhāt a bow and arrows and asks him to keep and preserve them at all costs. Aqhāt fulfils his father's request and rejects out of hand the goddess 'Anat's tempting offers of wealth, immortality and godly status, promising him life with the god Ba'al. Aqhāt says to 'Anat:

لا تخلطي عليّ الأمر يا بتول • أليس وعيدك
بعيد التصديق ؟ ماذا ينال الإنسان في
نهايته ؟ ما هو نصيبه النهائي ؟ سوى
كفن وكلس حارق على الهامة •

Don't drive me into confusion, Virgin! Is your promise credible? What does man gain at the end of the day? What is his final fate except a shroud and calcium burning on the top of his head?(50)

This, I believe, is a call to the Palestinians never to relinquish their arms, which are indispensable for preserving their very existence.

Daniel's court of justice is another theme which can be associated with modern Palestinian popular aspirations. Daniel is portrayed in the play as a just king who helps the weak, stands up for the oppressed and devotes his time to his people's welfare. Democracy, security and justice stand in Palestinian contemporary history as issues of major concern. It is certainly these aspirations that made the writer create a new scene in his play that extols just and caring rule.

This discussion of plays which draw on myth shows that there are many reasons for using myth in Palestinian drama.

The first is associated with the alienation which is experienced by Palestinian writers; in such a situation, the Palestinian playwright finds that myth expresses his desire for an alternative existence. The second springs from the fact that Palestinian reality in the twentieth century has its mythical aspects side-by-side with factual ones. This explains the preservation of some mythical symbols in these plays despite the fact that the writers favour realism. The third has to do with the adaptability of myth, Our writers found in its dynamic structure a rich framework for their contemporary ideas. The fourth has its cultural and political dimensions. The Zionist threat to the Palestinian homeland has created a circumstance that has led some writers such as Bsaisū and Jabr to employ Canaanite myths as a powerful reminder of their people's deep-rooted cultural and historical existence and their struggle for survival.

The use of myth in Arab literature has provoked controversy in Arab cultural circles. Some critics started the argument by suggesting that the emergence of myth-inspired Arab poetry has to do basically with a trend in modern Western culture which appreciates the use of myth in literature and art. They specifically refer to "The Waste Land" of T.S.Eliot as the main source of inspiration.(51) Other critics have tried to prove the authenticity of this trend in modern Arab culture by tracing it back to ancient Arab culture,(52) or by setting the Arab experiment in a context which regards myth as an aspect of the collective unconscious of the human kind.(53)

The mythical experience, however, has been regarded by other researchers as an obstacle to Arab progress, or rather a factor which initiates social oppression.(54)

With regard to the use of myth in Arab drama the argument has been more specific. Some critics have called for strict adherence to the episodes and symbols of myths adopted in drama. Others have upheld the right of the playwright to modify, alter or interpret the myth upon which his work depends.(55) The Palestinian contribution to the argument, as we have seen, is in favour of free treatment of myth.

In my own view the playwright must be given a free hand in dealing with myth. He is free to understand and change the mythical implications and episodes according to his philosophy and understanding of modern man, society and life. Writers go back to ancient history not for the sake of literal revival of mythical events, symbols or beliefs, for that is the historian's or anthropologist's job. Writers consult myth to reinterpret the product of the imagination of ancient people or to draw conclusions out of it. This suggestion is based on three assumptions:

1. Denial to the writer of freedom of choice and interpretation of his material does not enrich his creative energies, rather it enfeebles him.

2. Mythical logic is a product of ancient people who had

different experience. Modern man has new experience and new causes which must be understood dynamically. It is my belief that playwriting and art in general cannot view life in the same way as the ancient people did, if it is to be original. The dialectical movement of history does not favour a static approach to mythical phenomena or, indeed, to any ancient material.

3. Throughout history, playwrights who have produced work of high quality inspired by mythology have freed themselves from slavish adherence to the exact framework, symbols or episodes of the original myth. They reflect in their plays the values, ideas and relationships of their own age and environment.

Footnotes

- (1) The association between mythical rituals and the economic situation in primitive societies is discussed in Childe: "What Happened in History", pp47ff; and Hauser: "The Social History of Art", vol.1, pp25-6.
- (2) Spencer: "Introduction to Mythology", ppl1-2.
- (3) Larue: "Ancient Myth and Modern Man", p24.
- (4) Campbell: "The Hero with a Thousand Faces", p387.
- (5) See Blechanov: "Al-Adab Bayn al-Māddiyyah wa al-Mithāliyyah", pp66ff; Wilson: "The Outsider", ppl1ff, 22ff, 107ff, 147ff; Fischer: "The Necessity of Art", pp80-9, 95-6; 'Ayyād: "Al-Baṭal fī al-Adab wa al-Asāṭīr", ppl63-6; and Tulaymah: "Muqaddimah fī Naẓariyyat al-Adab", pp49ff.

- (6) Blechanov, Fischer, 'Ayyad and Tulamah.
- (7) Bidney: "Myth, Symbolism and Truth", p67.
- (8) See Jung: "The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious", pp5, 59; Matthiessen: "The Achievement of T.S. Eliot", p40.; Malinowski: "Sex, Culture and Myth", pp291-2.
- (9) The myth of Shaddād is mentioned in al-Ḥamawī: "Mu'jam al-Buldān", vol.1. pp212-5; and al-Ṭabarī: "Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk", vol. 1, pp216-26.
- (10) Kanafānī: "Al-Bāb", pp50-1.
- (11) Ibid., p65,67.
- (12) Ibid., p69.
- (13) Ibid.
- (14) Ibid., pp70-1.
- (15) Ibid., pp60-3.
- (16) Ibid., p62.
- (17) Ibid., p63.
- (18) Ibid., pp117-8.
- (19) Ibid., p60.
- (20) The myth of Sisyphus is described in Graves: "The Greek Myths", vol.1, pp216-20.
- (21) There are many studies which discuss nihilism in Absurd literature. Characters of Existential Theatre have been given special attention in Brustein: "The Theatre of Revolt", pp26ff, 383ff; Wellworth: "The Theatre of Protest and Paradox", pp37ff, 51ff; and Esslin: "The Theatre of the Absurd", pp22-5, 234ff.
- (22) Campbell: op.cit., p30
- (23) Material found in the excavation of Ugarit, assumed to be representative of Canaanite thought and illustrative of Canaanite myth, shows a polarity between life and death, the conflict between existence and nonexistence. Life and life-giving powers were personified in Ba'al, the fertility god, who expressed himself in refreshing and renewing rain; while death was symbolized by Mot, the god of life-robbing power and lord of the underworld. For details see Larue: "Ancient Myth and Modern Man", pp164-6; Frayḥah: "Malāḥim wa Asāṭir min Ugārīt", pp43-9, 52-3. See also the epic of "Ba'al and 'Anat" in Gordon: "Ugaritic Literature", pp9-57.

- (24) Darwīsh: "Waraqah fī Darajat al-Ghalayān", p38.
- (25) Gassner: "Masters of the Drama", p33.
- (26) It is told that after his death, Shaddād's body was brought back by his son Murthid and laid in a tomb in a cave. At his father's head he set a tablet of gold engraven with these verses:

اعتبر يا أيها المغرور بالعمر المديد أنا شداد بن عاد صاحب الحصن المشيد
وأخو القوة والبأس ثم الملك الحشيد ودان أهل الأرض طرا لي من خوف وعيدي
فأتى هود وكنا في ضلال قبل هود فدعانا لو أجيناه إلى الأمر الرشيد
فعصيناه ونادانا ما لكم هل من محيد فأتتنا صيحة تهوي من الأفق البعيد

Take warning O proud and, in length, O Life, vain,
I am Shaddād, son of 'Ād, the fort's castellain,
Lord of pillars and power, Lord of tried might and
main
Whom all earth's sons obeyed for my mischief and
bane.

Hūd preached me salvation, whom God did assain
But we crossed him and asked "Can no refuge be
ta'en?

When a cry on us cried from the horizon plain.

(See al-Hamawī: "Mu'jam al-Buldān", vol. 1, p215;
translation here from Burton: "The Book of a Thousand
Nights and a Night", vol.iv, p316.)

- (27) Jabrā: "Introduction" in Kanafānī: "Al-A'māl al-Kāmilah, al-Masrahiyyāt", vol.3. Other critics who have studied the play have failed, however, to recognize the political implications of the theme of the play. They have noted only the philosophical aspects of the theme. (See al-Mansūr: "Ghassān Kanafānī fī Kutubih al-Aḥad 'Ashar", p213; 'Āshūr: "Al-Ṭarīq ilā al-Khaymah al-Ukhrā", pp152-4; and al-Rā'ī: "Al-Masrah fī al-Waṭan al-'Arabī", p192).
- (28) The story of Samson and Delilah is found in the Bible: Judges, XIII-XVII. See also "Samson" in Encyclopaedia Judaica.
- (29) The tale of Jonah is told in the Bible (Book of Jonah). It is also told in the Qur'an: Sura X is called after Jonah; and he is mentioned also in Sura VI:86, XXI:87-8, XXXVII:139-48, IV:161, and LXVIII:48-9. See also "Yūnus" in Encyclopaedia of Islam.
- (30) Bsaisū: "Shamshūn wa Dalīlah", p215.
- (31) Ibid., p255.

- (32) Encyclopaedia Judaica: op. cit.
- (33) Bsaisū: op. cit., p310.
- (34) Ibid., p255.
- (35) Ibid., p299.
- (36) Ibid., p297.
- (37) Ibid., p297-8.
- (38) Ibid., p322-4.
- (39) Ibid., p325.
- (40) A summary of the myth of Aqhāt can be found in Gaster: "Ritual Myth and Drama in the Ancient near East", pp 257-60.
- (41) The text of this myth is included in Gordon: "Ugaritic Literature", pp84-103.
- (42) Jabr: "Wakān Lābud an Yunzil al-Maṭar", pp62-75.
- (43) Ibid., pp61-2.
- (44) Ibid., pp81-5.
- (45) Ibid., p85.
- (46) See Gaster: op. cit., p260; Frayḥah: "Malāhim wa Asāṭir min Ughārīt", p336.
- (47) Jabr: op. cit., Introduction.
- (48) Ibid., p76.
- (49) Ibid., pp77-8.
- (50) Ibid., p68.
- (51) Razzūq: "Al-Uṣṭūrah fī al-Shi'r al-Mu'āṣir", ppl0ff.
- (52) Al-Jūzū: "Min al-Asāṭir al-'Arabiyyah wa al-Khurāfāt", pp49ff.
- (53) R. 'Awaḍ: "Uṣṭūrat al-Mawt wa al-Inbi'āth fī al-Shi'r al-'Arabī al-Ḥadīth", pp6ff.
- (54) Khalīl: "Maḍmūn al-Uṣṭūrah fī al-Fikr al-'Arabī", pp83ff.
- (55) In this connection one can refer to four well-known Arab critics who have discussed the use of myth in Tawfīq al-Hakīm's plays. In his book "Fī al-Adab al-Miṣrī al-Mu'āṣir", p96, al-Qiṭ discusses "al-Malik

Udīb" and challenges al-Ḥakīm's right to change the symbols and course of the original Greek myth of Oedipus. Yet 'I. Ismā'īl appreciates the alterations that al-Ḥakīm made to the original story ("Qaḍāyā al-Insān fī al-Adab al-Masraḥī al-Mu'āṣir", pl06). While, in discussion of "Isis", L. 'Awaḍ accuses al-Ḥakīm of a lack of understanding, indeed a distortion of the symbols of the original myth ("Dirāsāt fī Adabīnā al-Ḥadīth", p83); the same play is admired by Mandūr who thinks that the reinterpretation of the myth succeeds in bringing it from the metaphysical and the abstract to the matter-of-fact world (Masraḥ al-Ḥakīm, pl44)

Chapter III

RELIGION

Religion is one of the most ancient elements in human culture and art. Some theoreticians argue that primitive art was a magical instrument created by man to help him in his struggle for survival.(1) This suggests that art and religion were closely connected, since magic itself is a form of ancient religious ritual.

The art of theatre, as pointed out by drama historians, arose out of religious rites. Ancient Indian, Egyptian and Greek drama arose in connection with the temple.(2) However, drama flourished when it dissociated itself from the purely religious purposes and made its way out of the temple and became involved with the problems of man in society.

Religion has strongly influenced the modern Arab awakening. Modern Arab playwriting and theatrical thought have not escaped this religious influence. Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm, who is regarded as one of the most influential figures in Arab drama, has expressed this both in his plays and in his theoretical writings. He defines good drama as "an imitation or reflection of God's Creation. It is a revival of the spiritual feelings planted by God in human character."(3) Elsewhere he points out that the essence of tragedy is "the conflict, seen or unseen, between Man and God who dominates the universe."(4) He goes so far as to suggest that

"whatever form, framework, style or effect the play has, it will not be a tragedy if it lacks religious sentiment."(5)
 On the source of drama, he suggests that "religion and art spring from the same tongue of the divine flame."(6)

Palestinian playwriting has been strongly influenced by this important religious current in Arab drama and indeed in Arab thought in general. One can trace three trends. Some of the dramatists have responded literally to the call for an Islamic revival by producing works to do with Islamic values and personalities. Others have adopted a religious approach in the discussion of political or social issues. Others again have been concerned with the discussion of the religious aspects of human nature.

Religion as a Moral or Ideological Theme

Religious stories, events or figures have been among the themes of Palestinian drama at all times. One example is *بين جاهليتين* (Between Two Dark Ages), a play written during the second world war at the height of the Palestinian struggle for identity. This play is a religious epic five hundred and thirty-six pages in length. All its episodes take place shortly before the emergence of Islam, and all its characters are supposedly historical. It is clear from the play's footnotes that the writer consulted many Arabic references, both religious and historical, concerning the life of Muḥammad and the pre-Islamic period into which he was born.

The play revolves around a twofold theme: the awaited prophethood of Muḥammad and his extraordinary and "divine" personality on the one hand, and the expected defeat of the forces of evil, enemies of Islam and idolators on the other.

These purely religious themes have influenced the actions and events of the play, which take miraculous or fantastic shape. The Jinn (genies) take part in the play as full characters. Āminah, Muḥammad's mother, tells how the Jinn discussed with her the forthcoming birth of Muḥammad, anticipating his great influence on the universe, and how they warned each other to flee from her:

يا معشر الجن ، لا تقربوا هذه المرأة ، فإن النور
الذي في أحشائها يحرقكم ،

O people of the Jinn, keep away from this woman, for you will be burnt by the light which emanates from within her belly, (7)

a Jinni says to his fellows. The Jinn also mourn Āminah after her death, with sad, moving hymns. (8)

Angels also play a role in the play. Ḥalīmah, Muḥammad's wet-nurse, tells of angels repeating songs she sings for Muḥammad and fluttering their white wings to the tunes. (9) Muḥammad himself tells the story of three angels who came to purify him. One of them opened Muḥammad's belly, took out his bowels, placed them in a golden basin, washed them with ice and put them back again. Another opened his chest, took out his heart, opened it and removed black

substances, then sealed the heart with a seal of light.(10)

Trees, clouds, idols and animals appear as responsible and rational creatures; they speak and behave like humans. 'Abd al-Muttalib tells some Quraysh people that he has heard a voice from inside the walls of al-Ka'bah telling him about the birth of the "Chosen Prophet," and that he has seen the idols of al-Ka'bah prostrate themselves.(11) His stories, however, do not hold any surprise for them. They, too, have witnessed similar events. A donkey, also, has a "say" in this matter, challenging some of Banī Sa'd's women and warning them not to ridicule his owner, Ḥalimah, who looks after the orphan Muḥammad. A voice is heard from within the donkey:

ويحكّن يا نساء بني سعد ، إنكن لفي غفلة • هل تدرين
من على ظهري ؟ على ظهري خير النبيين ، وسيد المرسلين ...
وحبيب رب العالمين •

May God have mercy on you in your ignorance! It is the Greatest of all Prophets who mounts me, the Master of all Messengers, and the Beloved of God.(12)

The prophecies of priests, soothsayers and the observations of Muḥammad's relatives are related in the play as real facts. Most of the famous figures in Mecca at the time of Muḥammad have their say on the prophethood of Muḥammad. A Jewish priest in Ṣan'a' market tells a group of Quraysh about his knowledge of the new prophet:

يا معشر قريش ! اسمعوا وعوا ! إنا نجد في كتبنا أنّ
نبيا قد أطل زمانه ، يخرج في مكة من هذا الحي من
قريش ! وسيلد يتيما •

O people of Quraysh! Listen and comprehend. We find in our books that now is the time that a prophet will emerge in Mecca from the tribe of Quraysh, born as an orphan.(13)

Another Jewish rabbi, Yūsuf, pronounces that a child has been born, and he will be the prophet of the Arab nation. He gives particulars of the physical marks that distinguish the child: a mole on his shoulder with hair flowing like a horse's mane.(14) The soothsayer of Banī Sa'd, the Bishop of Najrān and other priests, Muḥammad's mother, his wet-nurse Ḥalīmah, his grandfather 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib are among the many characters who take part in the play to affirm the emergence of a new prophet and a new religion.

Part of the evidence for Muḥammad's divine character comes from beyond the Arabian Peninsular, namely the Chosroes of Persia and Caesar of Rome. The Chosroes dreams that he woke up one morning to find that fourteen battlements of his palace had been shaken down and that the divine fire of Persia had suddenly died out. He was also informed by the Governor of Yemen that the Lake of Sawah had dried up suddenly just after it was full to overflowing. The same had happened to the Lake of Tiberias and the Samawah Wadi. He tells this dream to 'Abd al-Masīḥ, the famous Christian Arab priest, and Satīḥ, the celebrated Arab soothsayer of the time interprets it, suggesting that Persia will be conquered by Arabs under their prophet. The Mobid of Persia is also reported to have seen in a dream an Arabian caravan of an endless line of camels.(15)

The Roman Caesar conspires to forestall Muḥammad's expected attack on his empire. He sends men to the home town of Muḥammad to get rid of him, but the hand of God intervenes and the conspirators are rebuffed by a gigantic and dreadful bull.(16)

We note that the play expresses in some episodes, in addition to the purely religious content, views of a political nature. The play calls, by implication, for Arab youth to provide themselves with moral and spiritual strength, to learn to love their nation, to defend it with their very lives, to help spread divine justice on earth and to help other nations in their struggle against oppression and injustice. Arab youth must be brought up to believe that Muḥammad is the hero of the Arab nation, and that his biography should remain the work of guidance for Arabs at all times.(17) The writer is concerned to restore the historical heroism of the Arabs because "that period of man's history is the most full of glory."(18)

The writer does not mention the hostility between Arabs and Jews in modern Palestinian. The play deals only with a specific period of far earlier history. Yet there are indications that the Jewish-Arab conflict in modern Palestinian echoes strongly through the play. The Jewish attitude towards the anticipated Arab prophethood of Muḥammad is portrayed in this play as hostile and resentful. In an episode which occurs after the birth of Muḥammad, Yūsuf, the Jewish rabbi, goes to al-Ka'bah in Mecca. There he meets a

group of Quraysh, the tribe of Muḥammad. He asks them whether a baby has been born the night before, assuring them that the baby will be the last prophet. After a short while, ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib emerges holding his grandson, Muḥammad. Seeing him, the rabbi cannot conceal his jealousy and hostility towards him and his people, and falls unconscious on the ground. When he recovers, pale-faced, he looks at Muḥammad and says:

ذهبت النبوة من بني إسرائيل ... ذهبت النبوة ...
 هلك يهود ... يا آل إسحق ! لا مقام لكم في
 هذه الأرض .

The prophecy has left the children of Israel... The prophecy has gone... The Jews have perished... O, children of Ishāq, you have no place in this land.(19)

The Christian response, on the other hand, is depicted as friendly and supportive towards the Arab Muslims. Their priests warn ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib and the Quraysh about the Jewish conspiracies and threats against Muḥammad, the Arabs and Islam. Priest Buḥayrā, for instance, urges Abū Ṭālib to take care of Muḥammad and beware of Jews:

إرجع بابن أخيك إلى بلده ...
 (ينظر إلى محمد خاشعا)
 لئن رأوه ، وعرفوا ما عرفت من شأنه ، لبيغته سرا !
 فإنه كائن لابن أخيك هذا شأن عظيم نجده في كتبنا
 وما روينا عن آبائنا ... وإنه والله لهو النبي المنتظر .

Go back with your nephew to your home...

(looking at Muḥammad with solemnity)

If they see him and know what I know about him, they'll do him mischief. Your nephew, as we read in our books and as we were informed by our fathers, will be of the highest eminence, for he is the awaited Prophet.(20)

A similar stand is taken by Iyās. He, too, warns 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, not only of the enmity of the Jews towards Muḥammad and the Arabs of his time, but also towards the Arabs and Muslims of the future:

إنهم (اليهود) أعداؤه وأعداء أمته
إلى يوم القيامة .

The Jews are his enemies and the enemies of his nation until the day of judgement.(21)

Another priest predicts that the conflict between Jews and Arabs will end in an Arab victory. He hopes to witness the day when Muḥammad becomes a prophet and he himself becomes a good believer and fights on Muḥammad's side:

لكن الله سيخذلهم ، ويسمهم بميسم الذل والمهانة ، ويلقي
الرعب في قلوبهم . إذا ذكروا محمدا أو رأوا محمدا ...
تقطعت قلوبهم . وسيظل اسم محمد ودين محمد وأتباع محمد
الأعلىين إلى يوم يبعثون .

The Jews will be defeated and humiliated by God... They'll be so frightened... Their hearts will cease to beat when they see Muḥammad and his followers... Muḥammad's name, religion and followers will continue to be the highest until the end of the world.(22)

The only episode in the play that shows Christian hostility for Islam has a foreign dimension. As mentioned above, Zareer, Darees and Tammām are sent by the Roman Caesar

to kill Muḥammad, who, as portrayed to them, is a threat to Christianity and the the Roman Empire. Their attempt fails through divine intervention. Moreover, these deceived people are finally convinced by Buḥayrā, the Arab Christian priest, that Muḥammad is mentioned in the Christian holy books as the last prophet. They regret their wrongdoing and express their belief in him and are converted to Islam.(23)

At first reading, the hostile stand of Jewish priests against Muḥammad may give the impression that the writer intends to show a religious conflict between the Arab and the Jew. But sound reading of the course of events and conflict in the play reveals more of political than religious implication. The play's approach to the Christian position demonstrates this, for if religious zeal had a stronger influence on the writer's mind than politics one would have found equal treatment for both the Jewish and Christian faiths. Knowledge of the political situation in Palestinian at the time the play was written gives a clear-cut answer to this question. It is a well-known fact that there was cooperation between Christians and Muslims within the Palestinian national movement during the British Mandate period. The Christians wholeheartedly supported the national movement against the Zionists and the British and played an important role in it.(24) This political situation is, I think, clearly reflected in the play, and one can conclude that the word "Jew" in the play is the equivalent of the word "Zionist" with its modern political implications.

Religion as an Approach to Political Issues

This trend can be traced in some plays written around the time of the Palestinian defeat in 1948. Among these plays are *مأساة لاجئة* (The Tragedy of a Woman Refugee), *فلسطين تموت* (Palestine Dies) and *مأساة عائلات الشهداء والمجاهدين في فلسطين* (The Tragedy of the Martyrs and the Mujahidīn's Families in Palestine). The main themes of these plays have nothing to do with religion. They discuss the psychological, political, social and historical implications for the Palestinian Arabs of the Palestinian conflict, but the way in which these themes are presented and discussed reveals an obvious religious approach.

The first play, for instance, discusses the tragedy of a group of refugees from the Arab-Israeli war of 1948 who are obliged to leave their homes in Jaffa and take refuge in a village near Ramallah. They live in miserable conditions and long to return to their homes and the friends they left behind. The Palestinian resistance resumes its campaign against the Israeli\$ and one of them falls a martyr in battle. His mother and other refugees mourn him with deep grief. Obsessed by hope of return to the homeland, the Mother dreams that her people celebrate victory in Palestine , and that she sees her dead son alive and well. Realizing that this dream is false, the Mother becomes insane and dies. Overwhelmed by this tragedy, some of the characters call for jihad (holy war) as the only way to the restoration of the homeland. Readers of this play can easily trace a religious

line of thought involving three concepts:

1. God is the reference point for human situation and action.

According to popular Arab religion, God is a supreme authority whom everybody must obey. The fate of man or nation is shaped by God. Defeat, catastrophe or victory are decided by God. They are ordained for man or nation according to their attitude towards God. The tragic events which befell the Palestinians are presented in the play as acts of God and submission to such misfortunes is not depicted as surrender but rather as a form of patience which would help overcome the tragic feelings of the distressed people. After her departure from her homeland, Thurayyā lives in extreme distress and despair. Fāṭimah, another refugee woman, emerges to remind her that what has happened to them is the will of God and that there is no point in tormenting oneself with regret:

يا جارة الحزن ماذا لو سكنت إلى
أمر الإله فذا ما خط في القدر
عودي لكهفك لا يجدي تلوعنــــا
واستجمعي العزم في الأرزاء واصطبري.

Oh, neighbour of sadness, accept the order of God!
Return to your cave, for our defeat is written in
Heaven. Our anguish is of no avail; so gather your
strength to endure calamity and be patient.(25)

2. Man's belief in God is the true way to comfort and a trouble-free mind.

If God is the main point of reference for human action, as is the popular belief, it follows that people must go back to the Lord in time of sorrow and great distress. This belief is manifested in some parts of the play to cheer characters up or calm them down. There are calls from characters to each other to be dependent on God and not to lose faith in His mercy and His promise. In one scene, where Khālīd is involved with the resistance movement against the Zionists, his depressed Mother worries over her son. Fāṭimah tries to console her, and asks her to dismiss her worries by resigning herself to the will and mercy of God:

د عي الأ مر للرحمن يا أم خالد.

Leave it to the compassionate, Um Khālīd.(26)

To give this concept more emphasis, some Quranic verses are recited in the background:

الذين آمنوا وتطمئن قلوبهم بذكر الله * ألا بذكر الله
تطمئن القلوب * الذين آمنوا وعملوا الصالحات طوبى
لهم وحسن مآب *

Those who believe and whose hearts are set at rest by the remembrance of Allah, now surely by Allah's remembrance are the hearts set at rest. Those who believe and do good, a good ending shall be theirs and a goodly reward.(27)

Following this Quranic reading Thūrayyā changes in mood and her spirits revive:

بذكرك ربي يطمئن فؤاديا !

O God, whenever you are mentioned, peace fills my heart.(28)

3.Jihad and martyrdom are noble.

Jihad, according to Islamic doctrine, is the greatest means of overcoming defeat and gaining God's approval and grace. The loss of life in jihad for the sake of God or nation qualifies people for martyrdom, which is regarded as the greatest sacrifice man can offer for God or nation. The play frequently acclaims jihad, calling for it and for martyrdom. Jihad and martyrdom, according to Khālīd's comrades, are simply part of God's order. It is a great honour for man to fight for God and a great joy to be martyred for Him. This concept of jihad and martyrdom is expressed not only by the characters but by background recitation of Quranic verses. When Khālīd is killed on the battlefield, his comrades are sad and a gloomy atmosphere prevails, but they are cheered by the idea that their comrade Khālīd fell a martyr. In an attempt to provide his characters with more spiritual comfort, the writer employs the voice of a sheikh reading from the Quran. The Quranic verses draw the attention of the holy warriors to the great promises of God for those believers who offer their souls in sacrifice for Him:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ اشْتَرَىٰ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَنفُسَهُمْ وَأَمْوَالَهُم بِأَنَّ لَهُمُ
الْجَنَّةَ يَفْتَاحُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَيُقْتَلُونَ وَيُقْتَلُونَ وَعْدًا عَلَيْهِ
حَقٌّ فِي التَّوْرَةِ وَالْإِنْجِيلِ وَالْقُرْآنِ * وَمَنْ أَوْفَىٰ بِعَهْدِهِ مِنَ
اللَّهِ فَاسْتَبْشِرُوا بَبَيْعِكُمُ الَّذِي بَايَعْتُمْ بِهِ وَذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ
الْعَظِيمُ .

Allah has bought of the believers their persons and their property for this, that they shall have the garden. They fight on Allah's behalf so they slay and are slain, and a promise is binding on Him in the Tawrat, the Injeel and the Quran, and who is more faithful to His covenant than Allah? Rejoice, therefore, in the pledge which you have made, and which is your greatest achievement.(29)

These Quranic verses create an atmosphere of optimism and high morale. One of Khālīd's comrades draws closer to the martyr's body congratulating him on what he has achieved by martyrdom:

هنيئاً نلت ما رمت
قرير العين قد بت
وداعي الحق لبّيت
وعهد الله قد صنت

Congratulations! You have your heart's desire. You have gone to blissful sleep. You have responded to the righteous call and fulfilled the word of God.(30)

Martyrs are nobler than those who die naturally or those who are still living. They are distinguished on earth as well as in Heaven. They are alive in the other world: their death is not the end for them but the beginning of the most wonderful life. This is expressed by the martyr Khālīd when he meets his mother in a dream. He is displeased when his mother expresses her astonishment at finding him alive. Martyrs, he tells her, are not dead in the Kingdom of God. Their souls move from earth to dwell in Heaven:

الأم : أأضعت ذهني ؟ أم ترى عقلي انسحر؟

من ذا أرى ؟

خالد : (يبتسم لها) أنا خالد

الأم : أو لم تمت ؟

(يبدو يبلسم نالدائه ما سرّ بهذه العبارة فيجيب بصوت ملؤه الحدة والإعتران)

خالد أو لم مات من خاض الوغى لما استعر ...

ما مات من باع الدماء لعرضه

وابتاع مرضاة الإله على الأثر

Mother: Am I out of my mind, or is it magic?

Whom do I see?

Khālid: (smiling at her) I am Khālid.

Mother: Are you not dead?

Khālid: (displeased but confident and proud)

He who rushed into death's awakening did not die.

He who preserved his honour, who bought God's grace by his blood

Did not die.(31)

In affirmation of this concept of martyrdom, Khālid reads some Quranic verses which are quoted by Arabs whenever a martyr falls in battle:

ولا تحسبن الذين قتلوا في سبيل الله أمواتا بل أحياء

عند ربهم يرزقون * فرحين بما آتاهم الله من فضله .

Think not of those who are slain in the service of Allah. Nay, they are living still. With their Lord they have provision. Jubilant are they because of the bounty which Allah has bestowed upon them.(32)

Death through martyrdom, therefore, is not an act of "giving up the ghost". It is the transfer of the soul from one place to another. Real death for man is cowardice, avoidance of battle in defence of the nation, and staying at home, Khālid tells his mother.(33)

The approach to religion in فلسطين تموت (Palestine Dies)

is different. Its main theme is a trial of the powers guilty of the tragedy of the Palestinians. The only situation with a religious bearing is the last episode of the play where a people's court is held to pass judgement against the accused Arab governments, British colonialism and the Zionist movement. The judgement implies that the punishment of the criminals has nothing to do with man. God will carry it out on the Day of Judgement. Members of the Jury say:

اللهم لا تزل القدم .. ألهمنا ما فيه العدل والحق والإنصاف ،
حتى لا يظلم بريء ويغضى عن مجرم . إِنَّ محكمة الشعب المنعقدة
بمشيئة الله ... تدين المتهمين وترفع بخشوع وتهيب أوراقهم
إلى الديان الأ كبر لينظر فيها يوم الحشر .

O Our God! Give us strength and courage. Guide us to justice and right, so that injustice may not fall on the innocent and so that criminals may not escape punishment. The people's court, which is held by God's will... condemns the accused, and with submission and awe, brings their files before the Greatest Judge to look into them on the Day of Judgement.(34)

It might be difficult, in fact, to assert categorically that this concept of justice is inspired by Islam, for Islamic doctrine strongly asserts that a man who commits a crime should be punished on earth as well as in the other world. It might be claimed that such an idealistic approach had more to do with Christianity, and indeed the writer himself is a Christian. Nevertheless, the popular religious idea of justice corresponds with the play's approach. God, in the popular understanding, is just. It is He who stands up for the oppressed against their oppressors. Those familiar

with folk sayings and curses(35) in Palestine would find this religious approach closer to the popular image of divine justice than to traditional Islamic ideology.

Religion as an Element of the Human Psyche

Religious aspects of human spiritual activity were never alien to Palestinian and indeed to the Arab environment. However, these aspects were never unchallenged. Intellectual people have always expressed their doubts about the thesis which regards religion as part of human nature. **نشيد الأنشاد** (The Song of Songs), sets out to present a point of view on this issue. In the introduction to the play, the writer points out that his intention is a "phenomenological analysis of the crisis in religious belief. My purpose is to establish that reason and emotion are deep-rooted elements in human nature and that emotion, especially its religious dimension, must eventually prevail."

The title of the play is identical with that of King Solomon's songs. With the exception of the title and the names of two characters, Solomon and Shulamite, the play has almost nothing to do with the ancient story of Biblical times. The writer's new interpretation of the relationship between Solomon and Shulamite produces a completely different theme, episodes and actions.

The religious theme of the play is not discussed in a

direct way. Reason and religious belief are symbolized in the persons of Solomon and Shulamite, a classical stereotype in which man represents reason and woman represents emotion.

The play begins with Shulamite expressing, in a soliloquy, her loneliness in this world and her deep anguish:

ها أنا وحدي ، ولا أنيس لي إلا الدموع ... فأين أنا يا رب أين أنا ؟
 هذه الطريق أمامي طويلة ، وهذه الآفاق من حولي واسعة واسعة ،
 ووحدي هنا ... ما أكثر إيلام هذه الحقائق في نفسي .

Here I am, lonely, with no companion in my lonely path but only my tears... O my God! Where am I? The way is so long, the horizons so wide, and I am alone. How my predicament pains my soul!(36)

This state of alienation must come to an end. As suggested in the same soliloquy, religious faith is the only way for Shulamite to gain strength and peace:

شقاواتي هذه كلها ستهون في الأمل الذي أسعى إليه .
 وسأصل ، سأجتمع به ، بحبيبي الذي أحسّه في عروقي
 في دمائي ، في أنفاسي .

My sufferings will count as nothing against the bliss I shall attain. I'll reach there and join Him, my Lover, Whom I feel inside my veins, my blood and my breath.(37)

Yet for the greater part of the play these words are not translated into action. Peace remains as far from Shulamite as ever. The events which follow reveal the nature of her religious feelings and the reasons behind her alienation and frustration. The insensitivity and indifference which she finds in people wound her deeply:

تعسا للناس تعسا . إنني قد عزفت عنهم وعن التفكير فيهم ،
لأنني لم يزدني تفكيري فيهم إلا تألما منهم وتمردا عليهم .

Woe and woe to people. I am sick of them. My concern about them brings me agony and this makes me rebel against them.(38)

Solomon assures her of the kindness of her fellow people if only she will seek it out, but she rejects this:

دعك منهم ، إثمهم حجارة ، إثمهم جماد ، فأنا نفسي ، في
شقاوتي وآلامي كم ألوك الزفرات ... حتى إذا ما لفظتها
لم أجد فيهم إلا كل لا مبالاة كأنما أصرخ في واد .

Don't mention them... They are without feelings... My anguish and pain are enormous... As soon as I see people I meet their indifference, not their sympathy.(39)

This sort of reaction which regards human beings as selfish, unbearable creatures and a source of insecurity makes it apparent that Shulamite is being portrayed as a mystic. She wants to run away from complex and difficult situations into a world of her own which forsakes earthly pleasure, appreciates solitude and nature:

إتي دائمة التأمل فيها ... أشعر أتي أنا هي وأنها هي
أنا : فأكون أمامها أنا غيومها الممزقة في الفضاء الرحب ،
وأكون أنا مياهها الجارية المضطربة . وأكون أنا أشجارها
وأطيورها وأنهارها .

I am in a state of continuous meditation in the midst of nature... I feel that I am nature and that it is me... I feel that I am its scattered clouds in the vast sky, its lively running waters, and its trees, birds and rivers.(40)

The intervention of the mind, too, spoils Shulamite's spiritual comfort. The enquiries of Solomon, symbol of the mind, about Shulamite's lover and intentions make her more

confused and uncertain of the spiritual path that she wants to go along:

سليمان : حتى متى هذا الضلال يا شلميث ؟
 شلميث : حتى أصل .
 سليمان : وإلى أين تصلين ؟
 شلميث : إلى .. إلى .. إلى لا شيء ...
 سليمان : شقي يا شلميث اني في خدمتك حتى تصلي إليه ...
 شلميث : (ساكتة)
 سليمان : ولكن قبل أن تضعي غاية الوصول إليه ، ألم تفكري في أن تتيقني من وجوده ؟
 شلميث : لقد فكرت في هذا كثيرا وفكرت ...
 سليمان : أبدا يا شلميث ، أنا أخاف عليك أن تكوني تسيرين على غير هدى .
 شلميث : (منفعلة) ماذا ؟! ماذا ؟!
 سليمان : فمثلا قللي لي ، هل هذا الذي تسعى إليه موجود ؟
 شلميث : (بكل تأكيد) نعم نعم ، إنه موجود ... إنه في عروقي ودمائي .
 سليمان : ولكن إذا كان موجودا في عروقي ، فلماذا أنت تسعى إليه ؟
 شلميث : هو موجود بذاته هنالك أيضا .
 سليمان : وأين تظنين أنه موجود بذاته هنالك ؟
 شلميث : (في نفسها) حقا يا نفسي ، أين هو موجود ؟ ...
 سليمان : على كل حال ، لنهب أن هذا الذي تحببته أعرفه وأعرف مكانه فماذا تريد من منه ؟ ... بل لنهب أن حبيبك موجود ... فماذا تصنعين ؟
 شلميث : ماذا أهب ، وماذا لا أهب ؟ (تستعد للهروب)
 سليمان : مهلا يا شلميث مهلا .
 شلميث : إلى متى أتمهل ؟ فهل أنت تظن أننا بهذه الإفتراضات سنصل إلى شيء ؟!

Solomon: Oh, Shulamite, when will this confusion come to an end?

Shulamite: When I reach...

Solomon: Where?...

Shulamite: To... to... to nowhere...

Solomon: Be sure, Shulamite, that I'll help you reach Him.
 Shulamite: (Silent)
 Solomon: But before you set out to Him, shouldn't you make sure He is there?
 Shulamite: I have thought deeply about that...
 Solomon: No, Shulamite, I am afraid you are going the wrong way.
 Shulamite: (upset) What? What?
 Solomon: Tell me, really, does your Lover really exist?
 Shulamite: Of course He does... He is in my veins, in my blood.
 Solomon: But if he does exist in your veins, why then are you going to Him?
 Shulamite: He is there as well.
 Solomon: And where do you think He is?
 Shulamite: (Aside) Oh dear! Indeed, where is He?
 (The more Solomon questions Shulamite the more bewildered she becomes)
 Solomon: Anyhow, suppose we knew Him and His whereabouts, what do you want from Him?... And suppose your Lover doesn't exist... what will you do?
 Shulamite: What should I suppose? What shouldn't I suppose?
 (She is ready to run away)
 Solomon: Oh, Shulamite, be tranquil!
 Shulamite: How can I? Do you think that such suppositions will lead us anywhere?(41)

The way in which this confrontation between Shulamite and Solomon is conducted shows the simplicity or even naivety of Shulamite's faith, and that religious belief must not undergo any intellectual enquiry or exploration, for this will in no way lead to certainty or peace for the soul. The dialogue that takes place between Shulamite and her mother, Rayḥānah, after Shulamite's "departure" to meet Him, reveals the confusion and depression from which Shulamite suffers:

ريحانه : يا عين أمك يا شلميث ... قولي لي ما الذي يزعجك ؟ ومم
 أنت تتألمين ؟
 شلميث : إتي في ضيق ... إتي في ضيق متواصل .
 ريحانه : فذلك أمك يا حبيبتي ،
 شلميث : آه ، آه ، أنا بين نارين : واقع مؤلم لا يمكن قبوله ،
 وغيب محبوب لا يمكن الوصول إليه . فأين أذهب ؟ أم ماذا
 أفعل ؟ أم كيف الخروج من هذا الوجود يا رب ؟

- Rayḥānah: Oh, Shulamite... Tell me... Why are you disturbed? What ails you?
- Shulamite: I am sick at heart and in continual distress.
- Rayḥānah: I am so sorry, my love.
- Shulamite: Oh... Oh... I am between two fires, a painful reality I cannot accept and an invisible lover whom I cannot reach. Where should I go? What should I do? Where is the way away from this universe, O my God?(42)

However, despite Shulamite's uncertainty and confusion about her spiritual path, the writer distorts her role at the end of the play. He forces her to pursue her way to God with strong determination. In order to justify this unconvincing dramatic move, he portrays Shulamite as a character with great belief in determinism. According to Shulamite, human will and action are created and directed by God, the eternal divine power. At one point, Shulamite is asked by her mother to explain why she has left her home and her people. Human beings are not different from other natural elements, Shulamite suggests. They move because they are directed to do so by a compelling power:

شلميث : آه يا أم آه .. وهل تسأل الشمس لماذا هي تخرج
كل صباح من حبرها تطوي الأفاق طيًّا .. أم هل
تسأل السواقي لماذا هي تسير وتسير بين الوهاد
والتلال؟
ريحانة : ومالك ولها يا بنيّتي؟
شلميث : فأنا مثلها يا أمّاه، أسير لأنني مجبرة على
أن أسير.

- Shulamite: Ah, Mother! Has the sun been asked why it leaves its rest to cross the horizons?... Or have the brooks been asked why they run and run forever through the valleys?..
- Rayḥānah: You are not the same as them, My Daughter.
- Shulamite: There is no difference, Mother. I follow my path because it is commanded to me.(43)

The search for a spiritual path is not pursued only by Shulamite; Solomon himself is keen to follow it. Through most of the play he is portrayed as a man who is obsessed by Shulamite. He follows her from beginning to end, sparing no effort to persuade her to stay with him, in other words to submit to him. Solomon's attempt to control Shulamite is meant, I think, to show that emotions are vital to reason. But the failure of Solomon's attempt certainly bears out the writer's thesis, which implies that reason must not intervene in the emotional process, especially its religious aspect, and that it must eventually give in to emotion.

The examination of religious themes in drama presents a dilemma to which Palestinian and Arab feelings are sensitive. As an important aspect of human culture, religion ought to be a main source for drama, but whether this religious source enriches human experience or paralyses it depends particularly on the writer's vision and on the way he approaches this source. Drama inspired by religious themes is incapable of enriching culture if it asserts man's subordination to God as in Shulamite's case in *نشيد الإِشَاد* (Song of Songs), the superiority of a people of one particular religion to other peoples of different faiths as in some parts of *بين جاهليتين* (Between Two Dark Ages), or man's dependence on God to punish those responsible for his tragedy or defeat as in *فلسطين تموت* (Palestine Dies). The effect of religious themes in these plays is not always beneficial. The use of such a theme can intensify the sense of the Palestinian's dependence on metaphysical illusion and imply a justification for inactivity.

Such themes may also add to the enmity between peoples of different religions.

Religious themes can be of great use for drama if they are concerned with furthering human progress, promoting human action or enriching spiritual aspects of human life. The urge for sacrifice in holy war for the nation in مأساة لا جئة
(The Tragedy of a Woman Refugee) or the call for shouldering responsibility towards the nation or helping other peoples in their struggle for freedom in some parts of بين جاهليتين
(Between Two Dark Ages) are some of the religious ideas which merit encouragement and approval in Palestinian religious drama at this particular time.

Footnotes

- (1) See Hauser: "The Social History of Art", vol. 1, pp28-9. Also Fisher: "The Necessity of Art", ppl5ff; and Harrison "Ancient Art and Ritual", pplff.
- (2) Symonds: "Studies of the Greek Poets", pp289-91; Cheney: "The Theatre, Three Thousand Years of Drama, Acting and Stage-craft", ppvii-ix,1; Ould: "The Art of the Play", pp9,12,17; and Berthold: "A History of World Theatre", ppl2ff,20ff,36ff,94ff.
- (3) Al-Ḥakīm: "Fan al-Adab", p12.
- (4) Al-Ḥakīm: "Al-Malik Udīb", the introduction, p34.
- (5) Ibid.
- (6) Al-Ḥakīm: "Fan al-Adab", p74.

- (7) Al-Miqdādī: "Bayn Jāhiliyyatayn", p141.
- (8) Ibid., pp310-1.
- (9) Ibid., pp230-1.
- (10) Ibid., pp237-8.
- (11) Ibid., p162.
- (12) Ibid., p227.
- (13) Ibid., p79.
- (14) Ibid., p172.
- (15) Ibid., pp191-4.
- (16) Ibid., pp376-80.
- (17) Ibid., pp35-6, 406-10, 452-5.
- (18) Ibid., Introduction, p6.
- (19) Ibid., p175.
- (20) Ibid., p374.
- (21) Ibid., p178.
- (22) Ibid., p303.
- (23) Ibid., pp381-5.
- (24) The solidarity between Moslem and Christian communities in modern Palestine is a well known fact. The close cooperation between these two communities was embodied in the locally-organized Moslem-Christian associations called "al-Jam'īyyāt al-Islāmiyyah al-Masīḥiyyah", the first of which was established in Jerusalem in 1918. During the Twenties, these associations, consisting of a basic framework of leaders and activists, were very influential on Palestinians of both religions, and, as Porath pointed out, formed a the main backbone of the opposition against Zionism. See Porath: "The Emergence of the Palestinian Arab National Movement, 1918-1929", 274-84; Peters: "The Role of Islam in the Palestinian National Movement During the Mandatory Period", p186; and Lesch: "Arab Politics in Palestine, 1917-1939", pp84,201-2.
- (25) Jāmūs: "Ma'sāt Lāji'ah", p17.
- (26) Ibid., p30.
- (27) Ibid.

- (28) Ibid., p31.
- (29) Ibid., p26.
- (30) Ibid., p27.
- (31) Ibid., pp58-9.
- (32) Ibid., p59.
- (33) Ibid.
- (34) Baydas: "Filistīn Tamūt", pl21.
- (35) There are many sayings which illustrate the popular Palestinian belief in God's control over human action. Among them are:
المكتوب على الجبين بتشوفه العين (What is ordained for us is bound to happen);
هيك أله بدّه (God wants it to be so);
هيك أله قدير (This is the way God has ordered it). This belief can lead to the feeling that it will not be people who take control in the face of injustice, but only God: see for example
الله بيجازيهم العدوِين (May God punish our enemies);
الله بيجازيهم (God will punish them).
- (36) Al-Dhahabī: "Nashīd al-Inshād", pl1.
- (37) Ibid., pl2.
- (38) Ibid., pl6.
- (39) Ibid., pl7.
- (40) Ibid., p80.
- (41) Ibid., pp38-43.
- (42) Ibid., pp69-70.
- (43) Ibid., pp71-2.

Chapter IV

HISTORY

Recent philosophical attention to the nature of both drama and history has shown that parallels, similarities and mutual influences do exist between dramatic and historical thinking. Modern historians aim mainly at reconstructing an accurate record of human activities and at achieving a more profound understanding of them. History tends to provide an interpretation of human life as a whole. Collingwood says that history is the re-enactment and rediscovery of past experience.(1) This precludes history, Driver suggests, from being looked at merely as a "collection of facts" and hence guarantees the organic living character of what is called history. If one holds that the historian is always concerned both with the external event and its internal meaning, and broadens the idea of "re-enactment" to include not only imaginative thinking, but also the "re-doing" of the event, we are in the realm of drama.(2)

The connection between drama and history is further shown by the fact that time is a constituent element in dramatic structure. Action is the essence of the drama and time is the sine qua non of any action. Moreover, drama is performed in a moment of time, in a social situation. It, therefore, exists in a historical moment, as much as it reflects a historical view. It is related to time and historical occurrences, not only as the latter are subject

matter, but also as they are concrete factors in its very existence. This process of temporal enactment of events makes drama, as Driver puts it, "a miniature history in itself".(3)

Basically, then the connections between drama and history are twofold. On the one hand, both of them are concerned with events not only as objective phenomena, but also as part of human thought, feelings and choice. On the other hand, they are concerned to discover meanings and patterns in the course of events. It must be noted, however, that the influence of historical modes of thought upon the patterning of dramatic action is a matter of vital importance in the world of playwriting, for the drama represents the culture's understanding of the temporal world.

Taking this notion of the close and complex relationship between drama and history into consideration, I have two concerns in this chapter. The first is in connection with plays which use historical events as subject matter: what sort of historical material is chosen and how is it treated? The other is focussed on the sense of history in Palestinian drama in general: is it static or dynamic, and does it assert absolute concepts and values or does it reflect changing facts and notions in a changing world? In other words, does the Palestinian playwrights' sense of history seem to be chronological and temporal or unhistorical and spatial?

It is important to bear in mind the great significance of certain historical events and their impact on Palestinian Arab understanding of history. Remembrance of past events and revival of the old culture are a major element in modern Arab awakening. The Arabs, including the Palestinians, see that their national identity derives in part from modernization, in part from historical achievements. Thus two principles are at work in Arab life. One is a strong emphasis upon historical time, looked at as something absolute and perfect. This concept is well expressed in the Arab saying:

ليس في الإمكان أحسن مما كان . (Nothing can ever be better than the past).

The other is an awareness of the present moment as something real and moving. Each principle has its own supporters and advocates. In drama as in all aspects of cultural or social life, every group has its own standpoint.

Palestinian playwrights shared in the revival and treatment of old historical events in Arab playwriting. In this context, two trends can be distinctly recognized. The one treats historical events as its focus. The other sees them as a point of departure. The difference between these approaches is considerable, but that does not mean that representatives of the first trend are motivated only by reviving a mere historical event, nor that representatives of the second trend are concerned only with contemporary themes. In the end, the choice of historical material in itself must, directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously, be relevant to the writer's own time. However, there is a difference of approach, understanding and preoccupation.

Historical Events as a Central Theme

The retelling of well-known historical events through a dramatic device is a delicate issue for both the writer and critic who are concerned with the creative aspects of the themes of drama. In order to assess the value of this part of our dramatic writing, two representative plays are now discussed: مصرع كليب (The Slaying of Kulayb) and امرؤ القيس بن حجر (Imru' al-Qays Ibn Hujr).

The first deals with an interesting theme in ancient Arab history as well as in Arab popular memory, namely the al-Basūs War. It tells the story of a major, bloody tribal war that took place in the pre-Islamic period between two sub-divisions of the Wā'il tribe, the Bakr and the Taghlib. Kulayb, the leader of the Taghlib, won many victories over the Yemenites, and subsequently became the undisputed leader of all Ma'ad. It was reported that he claimed the protection of clouds, waters and animals. "The animals of such-and-such land," he used to say, "are under my protection. No-one may hunt them." Al-Basūs War, however, started, as story tellers report, following a conversation between Kulayb and his wife. "Do you know anybody on earth who has more authority and power than me?" Kulayb asked his wife. "Yes," she answered, "my two brothers, Jassās and Hammām." Kulayb felt deeply offended by that, but guarded his resentment in his heart. One day, Jassās' camels passed near Kulayb, together with the she-camel belonging to Jassās' aunt, al-Basūs. Kulayb ordered his servant to shoot al-Basūs' she-camel in the udder

with an arrow. Al-Basūs became very angry and Jassās promised her he would take revenge and that Kulayb himself would pay the price. Shortly afterwards, Kulayb was murdered and the Taghlib rose in fury. Jalīlah, Kulayb's widow, was obliged to return to her own tribe, the Bakr, in accordance with ancient Arab custom. Al-Muhalhil, Kulayb's brother, took the leadership of the Taghlib. A delegation from the Taghlib went to the Bakr, demanding the head of Jassās or Hammām or Murrah, their father, as the only alternative to war. The delegation was told that Jassās had disappeared and the tribe did not accept responsibility for him any more, Hammām could not be handed over because of his eminence, and Murrah was too old to suffer vengeance, but that they could have either a thousand she-camels or one of Murrah's younger sons. The delegation rejected this offer, war broke out and lasted forty years and many people lost their lives.

In the last stage of the war, two events took place: Jassās was killed by Kulayb's son Hijris, and al-Muhalhil was taken captive. Then there was a reconciliation between the leaders of the warring tribes, but al-Muhalhil did not attend the ceremony as he had gone to Yemen and he remained distrustful and had no real belief in the reconciliation. Later, he launched a raid on the Bakr and, again, was taken captive, Although he was treated well he betrayed his captor by trying to seduce his wife with amorous verses, for which he was punished by deprivation of water for three days, which caused his death. An alternative version suggests that he became old and sick and was murdered by two of his guards.(4)

A reading of the play suggests that it is no more than a dramatization of the old story. Unlike many dramas, Arab and non-Arab alike, which treat ancient historical material, this play has very little to do with any new interpretation. Its characters have hardly any new psychological, intellectual or social dimensions. All of them have the same characteristics as the people of ancient times they represent. The dramatic construction gives the impression that those persons are revived to re-enact what had happened before. As in the old story, Kulayb has a typical tribal mentality. His victories over his rivals and his undisputed leadership make him arrogant and tyrannical. His words in the play are as unsubtle and rhetorical as those of the original Kulayb:

فقد أصبحت أقوى الناس أعوانا وأنصارا ...
 فمن مثلي يقود الجيش في الفارات جرارا ؟
 ومن مثلي يطاع إذا عصى الأقوام جبارا ؟
 ويحمي الماء والمرعى ويجزي من عصا النارا ؟
 ملك لا يدانيه ملك يحمل الفارا .

I have the most powerful supporters
 And followers to be found amongst men...
 Who but me can lead
 So huge an army into battle?!
 Who but me is obeyed by rebel tribes,
 Governs water-supply and pasture,
 Hands out severe punishment
 For the unruly?
 I am king without equals
 Among the kings who wear the badge of victory.(5)

His actions, too, have the harshness and impulsiveness of the old tribal leader. "O Sa'd, with an arrow hit its udder"(6) Kulayb orders his servant when al-Basūs' she-camel is spotted among his cattle. The same can be said of the

other characters in the play, such as al-Mulhalhil and Jassās. Even those whom the writer invented, the soothsayer, the trackers, the maidens, have unmistakable pre-Islamic traits.

The play preserves a pre-Islamic atmosphere, too. Tracking, blood-feud, dispute between tribes about water and pasture, tribal solidarity, soothsaying, ancient weaponry and so forth can be easily identified in this play.

The events which were said to have taken place in ancient Arab times are transferred, unmodified, to a modern Palestinian Arab environment. They preserve their original flavour and interpretation. The main cause of the war in the play, as in the original story, appears to be the killing of al-Basūs' she-camel. In accepting the traditional explanation of the war, the writer emphasizes the result and not the underlying cause. It is obvious that water and pasture, the major economic factors in the bedouin system, were always the major cause of any tribal conflict. However, the writer does pay some attention to economic factors. Kulayb, in the play, wants to preserve his control over land, water and pasture by every means he can:

كيف يغدون وإيلي	غاديات رائحات
ولي الورد وحق الرعي	في كل الجهات
ما أرى أهلك إلا	أمعنوا في السيئات
سوف أجلوهم عن الماء	بحد المرهفات

How dare they wander around
 At a time when my cattle are there?
 I have the right to water and pasture
 In every corner of this land.
 Your tribe is encroaching grievously
 In despite of my rights.
 I'll drive them away from the water
 With keen-edged swords.(7)

In such words he answers his wife Jalīlah when she tries to moderate his anger against her tribe, the Bakr.

The people of the Bakr tribe, on the other hand, want to end the dominance of the Taghlib and to have their rightful share, as Jassās tells Kulayb just before stabbing him to death.(8) This theme, however, is not developed in the play, nor is it given the importance and emphasis it deserves. Moreover, the sequence of episodes in the play is almost the same as the order of historical events in the story. They are structured in a straightforward way, to the extent that many of the words and verses attributed to some of the original persons are quoted by the characters of the play.(9)

Not all the ancient happenings in the tribal war are included in the play, however. Some episodes have been dropped and new minor episodes and characters added. The episode which shows the violation of the peace treaty by al-Muhalhil, for instance, and his capture and death is not included in the play. The murder of Jassās is not carried out by Hijris as the original story suggests, but by Taghlib horsemen. A few minor characters are also created or named by the writer. Among them, one can mention the trackers, Qays, 'Awf and Amir; the servants, Sa'd and Sa'diyyah, a

soothsayer and the maidens Ra'd, Rabāb and Watfā'. As a result , some new scenes are added. One can mention the tracking which reveals the whereabouts of Kulayb's body after his murder, and the social gathering which includes Hammām, Muhalhil and the maidens.

Despite what is left out or brought into the play, the reader will recognize no new values, no major new episodes, no new principal characters and no new scenery. Nor will he miss any major character or event familiar from the original story. It is thus evident that the play could hardly succeed in achieving a dynamic treatment of past events. It is true that the theme of Kulayb is still alive in Arab popular memory, and therefore it can be told again and again without losing its interest, but the mere dramatization of an old historical theme cannot, by itself, create a valuable drama. Drama must not simply retail the events of history as they are told or as they are known to have occurred. A dramatist's view of the past cannot, I believe, be separated from the political and social environment in which he works and thinks. It is inconceivable that any writer can escape the preconceptions of his own world. Consciously or unconsciously, the spirit of the age is implicit in any work of art. Yet one cannot trace a direct or indirect re-thinking, or re-reading of past events in this play. As shown in the discussion, the play's social, political and cultural values, its atmosphere, the course of its conflict, the weapons, scenery, etc., are appropriate to the pre-Islamic period rather than to the modern Palestinian one. Nevertheless, one

may suggest that Arab disagreement, Palestinian in-fighting, and the conflict with the Zionists in Palestine which reached its peak in the late forties might have influenced our writer to choose this "conflict of Arab cousins" for the theme of his play. The writer, al-Ṣafadī, was politically involved, and like many educated people, he was extremely disturbed by the in-fighting in the Arab camp. His depiction of the tragic effect of the war between the Arabs and his call for peace might invite the audience to read between the lines, see the mistakes of the past, and get the message implicit in the play.

A similar analysis may be applied to *أمرؤ القيس* (Imru' al-Qays Ibn Ḥujr). The tale of this old Arab poet, the slaying of his father, the king, his "shameless" youth, his reform after his father's death, his voyage throughout Arabia and to the capital of the Roman Empire seeking all possible help to regain the throne, and his mysterious and tragic end attracted Arab writers including 'Alā' al-Dīn.

The play was written in 1946, and having in mind the Arab political situation in the forties one can assume that the play might have something to do with Arab disputes and their dependence on foreign powers to solve their problems. People at the time were drawing comparisons between the contemporary Arab situation and similar situations in Arab history. In the pre-Islamic period, Imru' al-Qays' opportunism and his dependence on a foreign power, the Romans, led to his final tragic downfall. In modern times

Arab indifference and reliance on foreign powers have led to a similar end in Palestine.

It is not clear that a contemporary political message does exist in the play, but one cannot dismiss the possibility that the political situation of the time influenced the choice of that topic to be the theme of the play. It must be borne in mind that the play is dedicated to the late King Fayṣal of Syria, whose biography shows that he played a major role in Arab-European contacts during and after the First World War and in Arab attempts to achieve independence and liberty, and who was deposed after the French occupation of Syria.

What is certain about the play, however, is that all its scenes are drawn from familiar historical material. In their totality, the descriptive passages in the work, the images, the characters, their manner and their actions, the way they talk, the society they live in and its setting, strongly convey the flavour of pre-Islamic times.

The suggestion that the almost literal recollection of the past is the crucial feature in these two plays invites the critic to examine the literary value of this kind of dramatic writing. Little acclaim can be offered to such historical dramas if a dynamic continuity between past and present is not central to them. As noted before, a good playwright must give the historical material which he uses a justification for its revival. One major impact on the

critic's consciousness as he experiences a good history play, as suggested by Lindenberger,(10) is the sense of historical continuity which the playwright gives to that segment of the past which he dramatizes. Historical drama, he argues, stands somewhere between the concrete details of specific historical situations and the larger processes, forces and meanings to which it can be related.(11)

It might be argued, however, that the retelling of events can be interesting to those who are strongly attached to their past. Like other peoples, Arabs do identify strongly with their history, and therefore it could be a misjudgement, one can argue, to dismiss this sort of play as worthless. This argument, I believe, would be true if historical drama is meant only to repeat or retell previous tales or episodes, but in fact great historical plays do not limit themselves to recounting the events of history; they, rather, give interpretations which force us to a new understanding of the past and of the present.(12) From this point of view, plays like these two make no great contribution.

Although the cultural relativism implicit in historicism would seem to be at odds with the moral colouring of apocalyptic thinking, good historical dramas usually manage to have it both ways. Brecht, for example, calling upon all the sophisticated historical machinery of Marxism, is able in "Galileo", as Lindenberger points out,(13) not only to dramatize the transition from an aristocratic and narrow Renaissance world to the wider world of bourgeois

individualism, but by implication to suggest the end of the latter world through the dropping of the first atomic bomb, which by further implication, would be followed by a still wider world based on Marxist doctrine.

Historical Events as a Point of Departure

To turn from a trend of playwriting which treats history as its focus to another which looks at history as its point of departure, is to turn to a considerably different dramatic construction. ثورة الزنج (The Zanj Revolution), مأساة جيفارا (The Tragedy of Guevara), آمناه (Āminah) and الذبيحة (The Victim) represent this trend of historical playwriting.

ثورة الزنج (The Zanj Revolution) will be discussed in some detail to establish how an important historical event gave inspiration and how it was linked with the situation in present-day Palestine. The writer goes back to Arab-Islamic history, where many disturbances and rebellions against the state took place. The al-Zanj revolution was the most determined popular movement against the Abbasid establishment around the middle of the third century, 249 Hira, 862 A.D.. Its main aims were the overthrow of the repressive regime which was run by the Turkish military establishment and its puppet caliphs, the ending of the system of slavery, of the corruption and exploitation practiced by the ruling aristocracy and the improvement of the conditions of the poor who formed the majority of the population at that time.

The Zanj movement won many battles in the fight against the state. The rebels established autonomy in their own state with a capital, many towns and villages in Southern Iraq, the Gulf and Western Persia. In this state which lasted about fifteen years, revolutionary principles were put into action. There was justice, equality and collective production and distribution. The slaves also gained their liberty in that area.

However, the determination and success of the revolution was a threat to the very existence of the Abbasid state. In order to keep their heads on their shoulders and to defend their class interests, the ruling aristocracy headed by the caliph al-Mu'tamid and his brother al-Wāthiq found it essential to fight and defeat the movement. Indeed, all the state resources were devoted to building a strong army. A successful military campaign was launched against the new state. Its capital was besieged for a long time and eventually the revolution was overthrown. The leader 'Abdullāh Ibn Muḥammad was captured, beheaded, and his corpse was sent to Baghdad where celebrations took place.

Former Arab historians saw the al-Zanj movement as "hypocritical" and "mob rule". Al-Ṭabarī,(14) for example, calls the revolutionaries "profligates" and their leader "malicious". But contemporary progressive Arab writers(15) regard it as a truly progressive revolution, carried out against the ruling aristocracy by the oppressed and the poor.

ثورة الزنج (The Zanj Revolution) is one of the works inspired by this revolutionary movement. The writer does not go back to history to repeat, describe or revive historical events. He looks at the "before" on purpose to understand the "now" and the "after".

Unlike مصرع كليب (The Slaying of Kulayb) and امرؤ القيس... (Imru' al-Qays...), this play shows no interest in the specific chronology of past events. The up-to-date design of some scenes suggests contemporary settings. The scenes in the first, second and third tableaux of the first part of the play show the Washing Machine Man, the Surgeon, the Ticker Man*, a tape-recorder, a ticker, a camera, and an operating theatre. In the second tableau of the second part, there is a man with a hat and swimming costume, a barricade with a machine-gun and microphone on its top. There is a crucified Red Indian and a man wearing trousers in the colours of the Palestinian flag. On his naked chest, the words "Gaza", "Jerusalem", and "Jaffa" are written in big letters.

The creation of new characters supports this thesis as well. With the exception of Ibn Muḥammad, the characters are created by the writer. The Washing-Machine Man, the Surgeon, the Ticker Man, the Magic Box Man and other minor characters have no special connection with the Zanj movement. The first three characters who play leading roles in the play represent mainly the falsifiers of history- intellectuals, writers and the rulers' agents. All the same, the characters' attitudes are appropriate to that historical time, and the atmosphere

* سجل التكرز

of the time is preserved in some parts of the play. Ibn Muḥammad, an actual historical character, Waṭfā', the Executioner, al-Baḥrānī, the Slave-Trader and the Perfumer all convey the flavour of that century, as does the design of some scenes. In the second tableau of the second part, for instance, we witness an antique scene on the stage, with spears fixed to the wings and black and red turbans, symbols of the Zanj, hanging on them. The dialogue takes place in old Basra with ancient events as the main theme.

More specifically, the actions, characters and episodes in their totality move from past to present, from present to past, and from both past and present to future. This interlinking of different times, characters and actions makes the continuity of history a dominant element in the play.

The first part starts with the Ticker Man and the Washing Machine Man (the falsifiers of history, propagandists and agents of the ruling class) a very modern scene. Ibn Muḥammad is recalled from the past to challenge these men and to reveal their true nature. The Ticker Man is Ibn 'Atīq, the Slave Trader. The Washing Machine Man is the Sultan's pander and the Perfumer in the Basra market turns out to be a Palestinian sympathizer. The third tableau portrays the sufferings of the Zanj at the hands of the Sultan's men.

In the second part we witness the crisis into which the Ticker Man and the Washing Machine Man have fallen. They plot to defeat the revolution in various ways. One way is to

create ever more revolutionary groups, so that the people will be confused and give up their loyalty to the revolution:

حين يصير هنالك أكثر من وجه،
أكثر من سيف ولعبد الله بن محمد،
فعبيد البصرة لن تعرف من تتبع .

When there is more than one face,
more than one sword for 'Abdullāh Ibn Muḥammad,
al-Basra slaves won't know which to follow, (16)

the Ticker Man suggests to the Washing Machine Man in a clear reference to the attempts by contemporary Arab governments to support or form different organizations within the Palestinian movement. Another way is to launch a propaganda campaign against the revolutionaries to discredit them and to advocate the conservative anti-revolutionary policy. "Down with 'Abdullāh Ibn Muḥammad" (17) and "Drink, drink Coca Cola" (18) are the main slogans which the pupils are taught by the Washing Machine Man disguised as a schoolteacher. However, Waṭfā' and Ibn Muḥammad take part in this scene, announcing from the other side of the stage their total opposition to the repression, explaining the necessity of revolution, and talking about Waṭfā's expected baby. A third ploy of the counter-revolutionaries is physical and mental destruction of the revolution, so in the third tableau there is a modern operating theatre, where the Surgeon and the Washing Machine Man seek to get rid of Waṭfā's unborn child, the symbol of the continuity of revolution. The Washing Machine Man urges surgery (physical elimination) but the Surgeon favours

ألحرق الإ علامي (propaganda: political elimination). (19)

In the fourth tableau dialogue between Waṭfā' and the Jallād reveals the third and twentieth centuries interwoven. We are informed that the Jallād has been revived from ancient times to kill the foetus. Waṭfā' says that she, too, comes from the third century. It is not difficult to see a Jordanian soldier in the Jallad and a member of the Palestinian resistance in Waṭfā'. The Jallad pretends to take the revolutionary side. Waṭfā' tells us he comes from the masses, and that once he was rescued by the Zanj; all the same he carries out the orders of the tyrannical authorities. In the end, however, he is persuaded to abandon his anti-revolutionary mission, and so Waṭfā' and her baby survive.

In the final tableau, both old and new times are together on stage. Waṭfā' talks with the crucified Zanj and with other victims and then turns to the audience, telling them their action is essential to make an end of the oppression they are suffering.

By freeing itself from the limitations imposed by a familiar historical setting, Lindenberger points out, (20) a play can focus on the thematic content of history without bondage to day-by-day events which are the customary material of political plays. In his attempt to make close connections between disparate series of events and to educe comprehensive conclusions, our writer has realized that this could be achieved by free movement through time and space. This technique gives the play's historical theme a philosophical

dimension. Just as the third century Hijra had its executioners, its oppression and suffering, so too does our own century. In one scene in the first part, Red Indians, Blacks and Palestinians can be seen inside a box with wooden bars, guarded by an armed man. A crucified Red Indian can also be seen. At his side stands a man with a skull in his out-stretched hand. Ibn Muḥammad steps forward and faces him saying:

رغم الجمجمة ورغم الماكياج ..
 أو لست أباً بشّار ؟
 من كان يتاجر بجلود الزنج ..
 من كان يسلي المعتمد - بأمر الله ..
 يلقي بعيون الزنج ،
 ينقرها في الصبح دجاج المعتمد ،
 وعند الظهر ديوك جواريه ..
 أو ليس الهندي الأحمر هذا المطلوب
 على هذا اللوح
 هو ابن الأسحم ...
 ما أكثر ما كنت تبدل جلدك
 يا ابن الأسحم .

Despite that skull and your make-up
 You're Abū Bashār, aren't you?
 Trader in Zanj skins
 Engaged to amuse al-Muṭamid
 To chuck eyes of the Zanj around
 For al-Muṭamid's hen to peck up in the morning
 And his concubine's hen to peck at noon?
 And this Red Indian crucified here-
 He's Ibn al-Aṣḥam, isn't he?
 Oh, Ibn al-Aṣḥam! How many times must your skin be torn
 off?(21)

Oppression produces not only misery, but also revolution, continuing throughout the passage of history to produce new revolutionary shoots. Ibn Muḥammad says:

سيظل الزمن يلد ..
 ولأجل لا يعلمه إلا الله ،
 يلد المعتمد بأمر الله
 بعد المعتمد بأمر الله .

وسيلد المعتمد الزنج..

وسيلد الزنج

أكثر من عبدالله بن محمد.

History will constantly give birth to Muṭamid after Muṭamid. Then al-Muṭamid will give birth to the Zanj and the Zanj will create more than 'Abdullāh.(22)

Another aspect of this dialectical understanding of history expressed in the play is man's determination to resist repression. His failures do not induce surrender; they bring fresh determination and inspiration to all generations. This is the message of the destroyed Zanj. The Washing Machine Man puts out false news of Waṭfā's death. Ibn Muḥammad at first believes it, but Waṭfā emerges from the darkness:

كذاب هذا النعش على الأكتاف

وجنازتهم كذابة ...

طارك بأحشائي يا عبدالله بن محمد،

سيظل يرفرف حتى ينطلق وفي منقاره

حبة قمح من طاحون البصرة ..

حبة قمح يلقيها

باسم الزنج وثورتهم

في طاحون القرن العشرين.

The coffin on their shoulders is a lie.
The funeral shouldn't be taking place...
Your bird is within me.
It'll flutter and flutter
Until one day it emerges
Carrying in its beak
A grain from Basra's mill,
And in the name of the Zanj revolution
The grain will be dropped
Into the mill of the twentieth century.(23)

The Magic Box Man appears to represent the voice of history:

صندوق الدنيا !! من يتفرج ؟
 إضرب عنق الشائر..
 إقطع كفيه ..
 إغرس سكينك في عينيه ..
 لكن الشائر ينهض من خلف المتراس ،
 يقرع طبل الثورة

Hey!!! Here is the magic box!
 Come and watch!
 Strike the neck of a revolutionary,
 Cut off his hands,
 Poke your knife in his eye!
 You'll see! He'll come up again
 Behind the barricades,
 Beating the drum of revolution.(24)

These revolutionary messages are not conveyed in a naive or mechanical way. In the last scene, where many characters are crucified, Waṭfā' reminds the audience, in an obviously Brechtian technique, not to wait for a metaphysical power to rescue them. It is the responsibility of the people to liberate themselves:

هل تنتظرون وأنتم فوق مقاعدكم
 معجزة الميلاد ؟
 أن تلد البطلة بطلا ؟..
 لا معجزة فوق المسرح .
 كانت أيدي الزنج
 معجزة القرن الثالث للهجرة ...
 لكن أنتم ...
 ما هي معجزة أياديكم ؟

Do you expect a miracle
 While you sit there on your seats?
 You expect the heroine to give birth to a hero?...
 There won't be any miracle on stage!
 The hands of the Zanj
 Were the third century miracle.
 But you...
 What is your miracle?(25)

However, it could be argued that the tone of these messages is rhetorical. To be fair, the supposed slogans must be seen within the context of the play. With a few exceptions, these themes are explored in relevant and specific situations. Among many scenes in the play, the third tableau of the first part, for instance, is evidence. It shows the official terror of the Abbasids in action against the Zanj. First we witness a slave severely tortured by the caliph's men. Waṭfā' tries to deal with his injuries. Later we are told by al-Baḥrānī about the cruelty of the state:

ابن محمد : هل حدث جديد يا بحراني ؟ ...
 البحراني : قتلوا قبل قليل صاحبك أبا يوسف .
 ابن محمد : أبا يوسف ؟!
 كيف ؟
 البحراني : غرسوه في حفرة طين ...
 ألف من عبدان أبي دعبيل ...
 كانوا يسقون الأرض ،
 ويقيمون سدود الطين .
 نعس أبو يوسف ،
 ثقلت عيناه ...
 وتسرب من سد الطين الماء ...
 وانفتحت شجرة ،
 ورآه خصيان الأرض ،
 غرسوه في الطين ،
 أصبح لحم الإنسان هو الطين ،
 ابن محمد : القتلة ! ...
 البحراني : لم أكمل بعد ،
 ابن محمد : هل ما زال هنالك ما ترويه ؟
 البحراني : عشرة عبدان قد صرخوا
 وقفوا .. غرسوا أعينهم حيث أبو يوسف
 مزروع في تلك الحفرة ،
 لم يرفع أحد منهم رأسه ،
 لم يرفع أحد منهم كفه ،
 لكنهم صرخوا ...

أمسك خضبان الأرض بهم ،
 شدوا أيديهم بحبال للظهر ،
 ألغوا بهم في قرب .. نفخوها ،
 وضعوا في القربة شعبانا ،
 وضعوا حداة ..
 ثم رموا بالقرب العشر ... هنالك في المستنقع .

Ibn Muḥammad: Anything new, Baḥrānī?
 al-Baḥrānī: A while ago, they killed your friend Abū Yūsuf.
 Ibn Muḥammad: Abū Yūsuf! How?
 al-Baḥrānī: They buried him alive in mud.
 ...
 A thousand of Abī Daʿbal's slaves
 Were watering the earth
 And building mud-dams.
 Abū Yūsuf got sleepy,
 He couldn't keep his eyes open.
 He slept... the mud-dam leaked... a gap
 opened.
 He was seized by the slaves,
 They planted him in the mud.
 The human flesh became mud.
 Ibn Muḥammad: Murderers!...
 al-Baḥrānī: I haven't told you all yet.
 Ibn Muḥammad: What more could there be?
 al-Baḥrānī: Ten slaves protested.
 They stared, planting their eyes
 Where Abū Yūsuf was planted in that hole.
 None of them lifted his axe
 And none of them lifted his hand.
 They just shouted.
 The eunuchs seized them,
 Roped their hands behind their backs,
 Pushed them inside water-skins
 Full of snakes and kites and blown up with
 air
 And left them to float away across the
 marshes.(26)

So the scene continues until at the end Ibn Muḥammad declares that violence is the only way left for them to end their sufferings, a declaration which, although something of a slogan, seems a relevant and considered conclusion.

The Sense of History in Non-Historical Plays.

The sense of history in modern Palestinian drama is not, however, to be sought only in plays which use historical themes. Contemporary modes of thought undoubtedly influence the pattern of dramatic construction, and integral to these modes of thought, whether explicit or not, is the way of understanding society, how it is, how it has been, and how it should be. This is a sense of history which, therefore, will be at work in plays of non-historical as well as of specifically historical character.

A reading of representative plays of all kinds, historical, religious, mythical, social or political, suggests that dramatic themes and forms reflect the conflict or the combination in society between a temporal view of issues and views which assert their timeless nature. With a few exceptions, the plays which handle Palestinian-Israeli conflict, for instance, have an uncompromising approach and characters. It is noticeable in these plays that time, in the absolute sense, is always intertwined with time in the most specific sense. In other words, time absolute and time concrete seem to be one thing. Palestine in many plays is absolutely for the Palestinian Arabs. Indeed, Palestinian time and reality have considerably changed with the Jewish settlement, the transfer of land from Arabs to Jews, the establishment of the Israeli state and the destruction of the Palestinian entity after 1948. But it does not follow that a similar change has taken place in the Palestinians' attitude

towards their homeland. The old image of Palestine is still deep-rooted in Palestinian thinking. This can be found in plays written from the thirties up to the present date. In

في سبيلك يا وطن (For the Sake of the Nation), the Palestine of 1932 is portrayed as essentially an Arab entity. The transfer of Arab land to the alien Jews must be resisted by all means. Arabs who involve themselves with anything which might change the status of Palestine, whether by selling land or by abandoning some of their customs for alien ones, European or otherwise, are condemned and treated as traitors or as unpatriotic. This is the case of Abū Ḥilmī and Ṣubḥī in the play. The foresaking of this treacherous path is considered essential for the preservation of the purity of Palestine. The above-mentioned characters, who are involved in land-sale, suffer a deep sense of guilt, and eventually they either commit suicide, as in the case of Ṣubḥī, or repent and return to the way of their own people, as Abū Ḥilmī does, while other characters are depicted as actively involved in resisting the Zionist campaign to buy Arab land by establishing a national fund, as Ḥilmī and Hind do.

In مأساة لاجئة (The Tragedy of a Woman Refugee), the struggle against the Zionists and colonialism is essentially ruthless. It is a holy war which must be carried onward by every patriot. Those who lose their lives in the fight are praised as great martyrs and are rewarded the highest status in the Kingdom of God as well as in their nation.

In the sixties, when the Palestinian resistance was resumed, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is depicted in some plays as severe and irreconcilable. Here, two levels of conflict can be witnessed. To those who are over-optimistic and have wild imaginations, the course of conflict leads to the victory of the Palestinian side. In *شعب لن يموت* (A People Who Will Not Die), the course of events suggests, as a principle, the uncompromising nature of the conflict and the inevitable victory of the Palestinians. The toughest people in both parties are involved in fierce confrontation: the Palestinian Fedayeen versus the Israeli security forces. Each party has its beliefs and practices which show no sign, whatsoever, of retreat, compromise or reconciliation. The Israelis build a luxury hotel on confiscated Arab land, which is a cemetery. Thus the situation is changed by the Israelis. The Palestinian side wants its land back. They reject any change made by the Israelis. The fight is pursued between the two sides strongly and severely, with no sign of compromise on either side:

إنّي لن أرتاح حتى يقضى على آخر عربي
على وجه الكرة الأرضية .

I won't feel comfortable until the last Arab on earth is exterminated, (27)

Ben Yāmīn tells his colleague Hāim. Maḥmūd, on the other hand, has his own solution to the problem:

لقد اشتعلت ثورة شعبنا ولن تهدأ إلا
بقذفكم في أعماق البحر .

The revolution of our people has been inflamed, and it won't be extinguished until you are thrown into the

sea, (28)

he tells Ben Yāmīn, his Israeli interrogator. Although the Palestinians fail to regain their confiscated land, they win the main round of the struggle.

Other playwrights, who do not offer a clear cut solution to the problem, end their plays with a stalemate or a call to the audience, that is to the people, to revolt. Such is the case in *شمشون ودليلة* (Samson and Delilah) and *ثورة الزنج* (The Zanj Revolution). The first, as mentioned earlier, portrays the old-and-new conflict between the Palestinians and the Israelis. It is a ruthless and severe conflict at all stages, on the battlefield as well as in captivity. The play ends with the main rivals, Samson and Rīm, steadfast and determined as ever. Neither of them is broken or has the capacity to knock out the other with a final blow. Moreover, they are not ready to compromise. Rīm is left wounded in captivity, and Samson is portrayed revolving hysterically around a cannon.

It might be argued, however, that ending the play with an impasse indicates that a change, however slight, has occurred in the Palestinian mentality, that an awareness of the historical existence of their enemy is about to strike root in Palestinian understanding of reality. On the other hand, it might be suggested that the nature of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict makes it difficult, indeed, for either party, however dynamic or realistic, to compromise or soften

their rigid positions. There is in fact little prospect of that. On the one hand, the majority of the Palestinian people was uprooted from Palestine, their homeland, replaced by alien people and denied the right to return and the right of self-determination. They are extremely determined to end their exile irrespective of the sacrifices it may cost them. The Zionists, on the other hand, are staying in what they now call Israel and are extremely strong and determined to defend their new nationhood. The unique status of the land, claimed by both sides, makes any acceptable compromise remote. The strong national awareness on the Palestinian side and the strong position enjoyed by the Israelis generally precludes even any sign of flexibility.

This situation is recognized not only among the exiled Palestinians. It is to be found also within the Palestinian community inside Israel itself. بيت الجنون (House of Madness), treats this dilemma as its main theme. About twenty years of co-existence between Jewish and Palestinian communities in Israel have not been able to create any workable compromise. On the contrary, mistrust, insecurity and hostility are the hallmarks of their relationship. The play reflects the mental chaos and the nightmares suffered by the Palestinians. These sufferings are not a product of mere imagination or hallucination, but a realistic result of a tragic relationship between the Palestinians and the repressive power of the Zionist state. Palestinian hopes of self-determination echo through the play side-by-side with Israel's determination to impose its repressive will through violence, deceit and con-

spiracy. In a flash-back, the writer shows the Palestinian in favour of constructing a more normal relationship with the Jew in Palestine, but the aggressive and threatening practices of the Zionist establishment puts the Palestinian off and kills the prospect of a lasting peaceful co-existence.

Some plays have approached this conflict in a different manner. قرقاش (Qaraqāsh), for example, is overwhelmed by an over-optimistic and futuristic sense of history. The writer, who is a Communist Israeli Arab, suggests that the solution to the Israeli Arab dilemma would be through a socialist revolution, in which the Israeli military and racist regime would be overthrown by the masses. The expansionist policy of the tyrant leader, Qaraqāsh, would cost the nation heavy losses. Many people would be killed, social and economic depression would prevail and so on. The masses would no longer be fooled by their leaders. Realizing that their leaders bring them nothing but hardship and humiliation, they would eventually revolt. The whole system would collapse and power would be transferred to them.

Turning from politics to social themes, one can recognize a greater awareness of the changes that take place in the course of history. A close look at the role of women, for instance, can show the extent of change which has occurred in the mentality of some Palestinian playwrights.

In في سبيلك يا وطن (For the Sake of the Nation), for instance, one of the women characters, Hind, who is

depicted as well thought of, is a relatively free woman. She is an employee in an office and a participant in national activities. She has an open love affair with Helmi and can freely mix with other men in social gatherings or dancing parties .

In *نشيد الإِشَاد* (The Song of Songs), the heroine, Shulamite, is portrayed as a rebellious character. She is a young shepherdess whom King Solomon wants to marry. She strongly resists her name being added to his list of wives and ridicules his impetuous desires:

أُتركني .. أتركني ، أيها الطفل النزق .
إِنَّكَ تسيء إليّ بنزواتك الطائشة .

Leave me alone... leave me, you idiot child. I am annoyed by your ridiculous sallies.(29)

She also rejects her mother's advice to marry Solomon or any of her cousins:

إِعلمي يا أمّ أنّ كل نصح تريدين أن تنصحيني به
لن يجد له في نفسي أي وقع أبدا .

You should know, Mother, that all your advice will have no effect whatsoever on me.(30)

Whether Shulamite is motivated by religious feelings, as the writer himself suggests, or is preoccupied with a mysterious search for identity as a woman, as might be understood from her talk and behaviour, one may confidently suggest that she is a determined woman. Despite her young age and occasional naivety and uncertainty, she pursues her own way with determination. She rejects her mother's advice and she

resists the king himself.

The most powerful and perhaps dynamic approach to women in Palestinian drama is that of Bsaisū. Almost all the women characters in his plays are revolutionaries in the full meaning of the word. Rīm and the Mother in *شمشون ودليلة* (Samson and Delilah), for instance, are portrayed not only as human beings who are full of passion and sometimes tears for their beloved who are killed or lost in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, but also major participants in the resistance movement. Rīm's heroic attitude in captivity is the most expressive among her stands in the conflict. Despite all the temptations offered to her by the Israeli interrogators and the torture she experiences at their hands, she remains strong and refuses to make any confession or show any weakness.

Similar characteristics are given to Waṭfā' in *ثورة الزنج* (The Zanj Revolution). She participates, together with Ibn Muḥammad, her husband, the leader of the revolution and other comrades, in the revolutionary movement. She holds up the torch of revolution when the Zanj movement is defeated. Symbolically through her pregnancy and her waiting for a child to continue the revolutionary path, and practically through calling on people to continue the revolutionary way.

The most extraordinary woman character in Bsaisū's drama is to be found in *مأساة جيفارا* (The Tragedy of Guevara). Māryānā, a major character in the play, is portrayed as a

combination of prostitute, diviner, saint and revolutionary. The "virtuous prostitute" is not an uncommon theme in both western and, later, in Arab literature. What makes Bsaisū's Māryānā a unique woman is her remarkable revolutionary stand. She is a woman of courage and principle. She rebels against the rottenness and hypocrisy in society:

أنا ماريانا المومس أتحدكن ،
وأبصق فوق وسائدكن
يا كل الزوجات الشرعيات ...
فمخلصنا لن يولد تحت السرر الشرعية ..
ومخلصنا ليس نبيا ذا معجزة
أو أسطورة .
فمخلصنا إنسان ...
من منا يشعل عود ثقاب من أجل الإنسان ؟!

I am Maryānā, a prostitute.
I challenge you, all you lawful wives.
I spit on your pillows!
Our Saviour won't be born in lawful beds.
Our Saviour is not a prophet with a miracle or a myth.
Our Saviour is a human being.
Who, among us, will light a match for the human
race?(31)

This daring address is backed up by action. Māryānā gives refuge to a bleeding revolutionary who is chased by the security forces. Despite her certain knowledge that her action will put her seriously at risk, she courageously decides to look after him in her own house. Later she is taken into custody and then shot dead.

العتمة (Darkness), also, pays attention to the issue of women in a radical way. It suggests that women have the right to freedom, work, and participation in public affairs. This theme is represented by Nādyah. She is shown as a daring, enlightened and resolute young engineer who

offers to help in repairing the defective electrical system in the theatre. Darkness, she says, affects all people, and all must work together to get rid of it. Her fiancé, Hānī, who is depicted as an empty-headed opportunist and self-important middle-class young man, refuses to let her take part in the work. His reluctant attitude is hardened by comments made by Mājid, a conventional man who thinks that women's participation in work is bad for society. However, Nādyah's strong determination to take part, her genuine practicality on the stage and the appreciation and encouragement she gets from other enlightened people make it difficult for Hānī to maintain his refusal. Nādyah continues her work intensely, quietly and enthusiastically, despite all Mājid's derogatory comments.

The discussion of the sense of history and time in Palestinian historical and non-historical plays has shown two contrasting preconceptions. For some writers, time and history figure mainly as a literary device, as a static lump of existence. To others, they become the heart of a new conception. The first group attempts to overleap the temporal in search of the permanent, thus separating the past from the present to the advantage of the past. The second attempts to form the permanent and the general out of the temporal, thus linking the present dialectically with the past whenever the past is dynamic and emphasizing the present and the future whenever that is the only way for progress and change.

These two contrasting concepts of history and time live side-by-side in Palestinian drama. Nevertheless, there are all the indications that the first is giving way to the second, and that the dynamic is, steadily and persistently, pushing away the static.

Footnotes

- (1) Collingwood: "The Idea of History", p282.
- (2) Driver: "The Sense of History in Greek and Shakespearean Drama", pl1.
- (3) Ibid., p6.
- (4) See al-Aṣḥfahānī: "Al-Aghānī", vol.5, ppl678-1704.
- (5) Al-Ṣafadī: "Masra' Kulayb", pp21-2.
- (6) Ibid., p25.
- (7) Ibid., p55.
- (8) Ibid., p57.
- (9) Ibid., pp98,107,112,123.
- (10) Lindenberger: "Historical Drama", pl0.
- (11) Ibid., p99.
- (12) Ibid., pl40.
- (13) Ibid,
- (14) Al-Ṭabarī: "Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk", vol.9, pp43lff,470ff,48lff,520ff,542ff.
- (15) See for example 'Amārah: "Thawrat al-Zanj"; Ṭ. Husayn: "Alwān", pp546-69; and al-Madānī: "Dīwān al-Zanj".
- (16) Bsaisū: "Thawrat al-Zanj", pl60.
- (17) Ibid., pl63.

- (18) Ibid.
- (19) Those familiar with the politics of the Middle East in the late sixties and early seventies will know the significance of the term "al-Ḥarq al-Iḡlāmī". Arab media did their best to undermine the Palestinian resistance. Progressive Political writers warned the Palestinian resistance against being trapped by media exaggerations of their "gigantic deeds", since by failing to achieve the total aspirations induced in the masses, the resistance might eventually lose its popular support and hence be easily isolated and destroyed.
- (20) Lindenberger: op. cit., p25.
- (21) Bsaisū: op. cit., ppl34-5.
- (22) Ibid., pl73.
- (23) Ibid., ppl78-9.
- (24) Ibid., pl84.
- (25) Ibid., p202.
- (26) Ibid., pl50-4.
- (27) Fatā al-Thawrah: "Shaʿb Lan Yamūt", p85.
- (28) Ibid., p73.
- (29) Al-Dhahabī: "Nashīd al-Inshād", p67.
- (30) Ibid., p58.
- (31) Bsaisū: "Maʿsāt Guevara", pp84-5.

PART THREE

THE NATURE OF PALESTINIAN DRAMA:
AESTHETIC AND ARTISTIC ASPECTS

Chapter V
THEATRICAL ASPECTS

The relationship between drama and theatre has been discussed by drama critics throughout the history of play-writing. The question whether a play can be complete without performance has been answered with equal vehemence in both the affirmative and the negative. Literary men believe in the unaided script. Theatrical men believe in performance. The prevalent opinion, however, emphasizes the relationship and interdependence between drama and theatre.(1) Voltaire suggests that the success of a play lies in the choice of the special aspects of the subject which can be shown in action on the stage.(2) Sarcey maintains that every subject for a play, every theme or plot, contains certain scenes which the playwright is bound to present on the stage.(3) Nicoll, Gassner, Drew, Driver, Priestley, Bentley and many others express similar views.(4)

Writers prominent in Arab theatre have also voiced similar opinions. Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm points out that stagecraft is essential to the completeness of a play, whether or not it is staged.(5) Alfred Faraj finds it inconceivable that a dramatist should write to be read only. The true playwright, he maintains, starts with the intention of presenting a problem to be energetically performed before an enthusiastic and involved audience.(6)

Reading through Palestinian dramatic texts, one feels that our playwrights have always conceived the unity between drama and theatre. They write with the consciousness of the stage and the presentational elements of the theatre ever present in their minds. The way the dialogue, scenes, settings and actions are constructed undoubtedly demonstrates that our playwrights are keen to create theatrically effective situations and techniques. What are these theatrical techniques and how successfully have they been established?

Arab playwriting, as noted earlier, has been influenced by world drama. As a result, theatrical elements and techniques of world drama have found their way into Arab and Palestinian drama. These include the chorus, elements of excitement, music, song and dance, exploration of physical gesture and voice, scenery, lighting, involvement of the audience, and story-telling.

The Chorus

The chorus does not play a major role in Palestinian drama. Most writers have disregarded this deep-rooted theatrical element. The very few plays which employ it do not exploit its full potential. Its participation is limited and its presence short. In *مأساة جيفارا* (The Tragedy of Guevara), for instance, the chorus, called "jawqah", takes part in only one out of thirteen scenes (Act 2, Scene 4). The four women who constitute the chorus introduce the prostitute Māryānā to

the audience with detestation,(7) but when a man appears in the image of Guevara to help Māryānā, the chorus changes its tune and asks the audience to join in and take action:

صار الكرسي سريركم تابوتكم ..
فلننهض ..
من آمن فلينهض .

These seats have become coffins!
Why don't we rise up?
He who has faith should rise up!(8)

In شمشون ودليلة (Samson and Delilah), the chorus makes three brief appearances on the stage taking different shapes and consequently different roles. It does not form a separate permanent entity. Its members are gathered from among the other characters. It comments on events and then disperses, to be formed again from different characters and express different opinions on other events. In the first tableau of the first part,(9) the chorus represents the repressive point of view, condemning Rīm and acting in a hostile manner towards her. In the second tableau of the first part,(10) the group which forms the chorus shows deep sympathy towards Māzin who has been killed in battle.

In قرقاش (Qaraqāsh) the chorus plays rather a descriptive role to begin with:

في كل زمان ..
في كل مكان ..
يأتي في صورة إنسان .
يأتي فيجي الموت ..
ويظل يدوي الصوت ؛
في كل زمان عاش ،
في كل مكان عاش ،
قرقاش ! قرقاش ! قرقاش ،

In all times,
 In all places,
 He comes in man's image.
 He rides and death rides with him.
 A sound echoes, howling forever:
 "He lives in all times,
 He lives in all places,
 Qaraqāsh! Qaraqāsh! Qaraqāsh!"(11)

The chorus later develops a more positive attitude, backing the peasants in their confrontation with the nobles. It challenges the nobles to reveal their real attitude towards the economic crisis from which the nation suffers.(12) It also challenges the soldiers who pride themselves on courage and victories. When soldiers tell of the booty they brought back with them after their victory, the chorus replies "we did not bring ourselves back."(13)

The choruses of these three plays are far from passive. They describe, inform, and sometimes instigate and challenge.

Excitement

In his book, "How Not To Write A Play", Walter Kerr suggests that the theatre has lost its hold on the public because serious drama does not give the theatre what it wants, namely an exciting story, striking characters, plenty of action, colour and gusto.(14)

Most of these theatrical elements are observed in many Palestinian plays, and they certainly create a good deal of suspense and interest for the Palestinian playgoer or reader.

In الباب (The Door), for example, there are exciting characters and conflicts. One can mention the confrontation between God Habā on the one hand and ʿĀd and his son Shaddād on the other, a confrontation in which both ʿĀd and Shaddād meet their death in a mysterious manner. Shaddād's appearance in the Kingdom of the Dead, where he talks to the dead and to God Habā himself, is another exciting scene in the play.

In مصرع كليب (The Slaying of Kulayb), we witness a succession of exciting dramatic actions: the killing of al-Basūs' she-camel, which results in Kulayb's murder; the successful attempt to follow the tracks of Kulayb's body, which has been hidden at a distance from his tribe; the murder of Jassās by al-Muhalhil's men; and the capture of al-Muhalhil by Jassās' tribe. An exciting interlude in between the killing of the camel and Kulayb's murder is Kulayb's dream about beasts attacking him, followed by the soothsayer's prophecy that he is to meet his death.

In قرقاش (Qaraqāsh), there are many exciting events and situations: the sudden presence of the tyrant Qaraqāsh on stage to intervene in the dispute between the peasants and the nobles; the killing of the Revolutionary Peasant who challenges Qaraqāsh; Qaraqāsh's interruption of the peasants' folk-dancing in the field; the love which grows between the Prince, Qaraqāsh's son, and the beautiful peasant girl; the Minister's subtle story to Qaraqāsh about "a prince and a peasant girl", in which he forecasts the kingdom's future; the cruel trials presented in a comic style; the killing of

the Prince and his young lover on Qaraqāsh's orders; the shock which Qaraqāsh suffers when he discovers that the dead prince was his son; and the final downfall of Qaraqāsh and his regime at the hands of the people.

Similarly, **لكع بن لكع** (Luka' Ibn Luka') has many absorbing situations and themes: a sarcastic, bitter Clown; the symbolic re-enactment of the massacre of Kafr Qāsim, where Palestinians meet their death at the hands of Israeli soldiers in cold blood; the meeting between the Executioner and the Young Man; and the symbolic story of Sindbad, the good-hearted Palestinian who is fooled by Shehrazad despite the Clown's warning.

The detective style used in **شعب لن يموت** (A People Who Will Not Die) undoubtedly attracts an audience looking for mystery, surprise and suspense. Zuhayr, the Palestinian who is thought by both Israelis and Palestinians to be an Israeli agent, turns out at the end of the play to be a revolutionary. Palestinian audiences will be amazed to discover that the medical team who nurse Ben Yāmīn, the Israeli intelligence boss are, in fact, disguised revolutionaries led by Zuhayr. Other exciting events in the play include: the confrontation between the popular resistance and the Israeli security forces; Maḥmūd's torture and death under interrogation; the death of an Israeli security officer at the hands of Maḥmūd before his death.

Music, Song and Dance

Music, song and dance are not uncommon elements in many Palestinian plays. They do not only create a lively atmosphere, but also serve as a means of entertainment for Arab onlookers and follow an old Arab tradition of the appreciation and enjoyment of these arts. Well before modern Arab theatre came into existence, the dabkah and other forms of folk-dance, the playing of the Urghūl (the bagpipe), the tablāh (drum), the ʿūd (lute), the flute and the rabābah (rebec), together with folk-songs, have always appealed to Arab audiences. In مصرع كلييب (The Slaying of Kulayb), young women play the lute and sing at a drinking and gambling gathering attended by al-Muhalhil and Hammām.

In قراقاش (Qaraqāsh), the dabkah and flute are played and songs are sung by the peasants on two occasions, when they celebrate the harvest and when they overthrow Qaraqāsh and take power. Military music and chanting are also used in various parts of the play.

The popular poet who recites his poems to the tune of a rebec plays a main part in المطعم (The Restaurant). His image is that of the oppressed and the exploited. His futile challenge to his masters and his pessimistic vision of the present and the future are also main traits in his character. The sad tunes of the rebec and doleful songs are, undoubtedly, capable of creating the right atmosphere for the presentation of this theme.

Military music, dabkah and revolutionary songs are found in many parts of وشيقة سفر (A Palestinian Passport).

فلسطينية

Al-Ḥādī and al-Bashīr, in مأساة لاجئة (The Tragedy of a Woman Refugee), chant some verses to the tune of old Arab songs. They create a mood of enthusiasm and cheerfulness amid the gloomy atmosphere of the play.

In كان لا بد أن... (Rain Had To Fall), the story-teller suggests that an organist plays both joyful and sad pieces of music to express the happy and tragic moods in the play. He also suggests that a group of women present Palestinian folk-dancing at the king's celebrations.

Music and song constitute an organic part in لكع بن لكع (Luka^٤ Ibn Luka^٤). Folk-songs, drumming and expressionist dancing fill many parts of some scenes and sometimes whole scenes. They give the play its most exciting theatrical dimension, and add a unique flavour to its theme. In a scene where the atmosphere is dominated by political confusion and despair, the story tells how the Clown and Budūr are:

ويحتشد وراءهم أحشدهم الصبية والصبايا تقودهم صبية تتمنطق بطلبة
وتنطقها، نقرا، نغما رتيا • ويكون الآخرون يصفقون على النغم
وينشدون النشيد :

طبل • طبل • مزيكا

راح زمان الأنتيكا

اصمد • اصمد مافيكا

راح زمان الأنتيكا

احمي وطننا يحميك

راح زمان الأنتيكا

فتح ، فتح عينيك
راج زمان الانتيكاً ...

ونراهم يطوقون بدورا والمهرج في دائرة من الراقصين والراقصات،
المنشدين والمنشدات وعلى رأسهم الصبية الطبالة .

followed by a crowd of young men and women led by a
young woman girt with a drum, playing a monotonous tune,
while the others clap and chant:

Beat the drum, beat the drum, play music,
The old days are over.
Steadfast, steadfast, but in vain,
The old days are over.
Guard your nation; it guards you,
The old days are over.
Open your eyes, open your eyes,
The old days are over...

The crowd of singers and dancers headed by the Young
Woman Drummer encircle the Clown and Budūr. The Young
Woman Drummer beats her drum and the rest chant and
dance.(15)

This superb atmosphere of burlesque which obviously
mocks at the "Steadfastness Front"(16) is dependent mainly on
the exciting use of drum, dance and song.

Gesture and Voice

The human body and voice must be fully exploited in
drama for it to stand a good chance of success on the stage,
since it is through gesture, voice and speech, among other
things, that an actor, or a character, awakens associations
in the audience, fires its imagination, and creates a good
deal of dramatic effect.(17) There is very little in language

alone, as Evans points out, to indicate the accuracy of the mood or the intensity of the feelings. It is through active directions, he suggests, that the temperature rises and meaning and mood begin to flourish.(18)

The exploration of human voice and body in Palestinian drama has been paid a good deal of attention. But the degree and quality of exploration vary from one play to another. In

بيت الجنون (House of Madness), for example, there is an intense concentration on these elements. In an apparent attempt to compensate for the absence from the play of other characters and voices (it is a one-character play), our writer has filled his play with a detailed description of the gestures of his character, inflexions of his voice and movements of his limbs and body. The description alone reveals a good deal of the character's mood, worries, and psychological condition. Listen to this account from the stage directions of merely the first three pages:

يتعذب النائم في الضوء، وكأ أنه يعاني كابوسا ... يصرخ بأعلى صوته بفرع
قابضا على عنقه بكلتا يديه مستيقظا. ينظر في أرجاء الغرفة مذعورا...
بينما تأخذ يده في الإرتخاء من حول عنقه. يشعل مصباحه ذا النور العادي
وهو لا يزال يتفحص بنظره كل شيء من حوله متحاشيا النظر إلى الجمهور...

The sleeping man (Sāmī) is tormented by light as if he suffers a nightmare... He screams very loudly with fear, holding his neck with both hands. He gets up, looks around the room with great alarm, slackens his hands from around his neck. He light his lamp while still examining with his eyes everything around him, not daring to look at the audience...

At this point, Sāmī starts his monologue. The description of

his movements and gestures continues to accompany his words:

مشعلًا لفافة ... متحسسا عنقه ... محركا عنقه ... يشعل النور
 ثانية ... ينظر حوله بخوف ... يتوقف على الكتاب المفتوح
 أمامه ويقرأ بحزم ... يفلق الكتاب وهو ما يزال يردد وبحزم
 أكثر ... ينظر إلى الرسم متأملا ثم بيأس ... بضيق ...
 يطفىء المصباح ناهضا بتثاقل ... يدعك لفافته في المنفضة ،
 ثم يتجه نحو النافذة ... يزيح الستار ناظرا إلى الخارج
 بأسف ... يسدل الستار عائدا ، يرفع يده إلى أعلى ثم ينزلها
 بعصبية كمن ينتزع شيئا ...

He lights a cigarette... feels about his neck... moves his neck... puts on the light again... looks around him with fear... stops at the book which is open in front of him and reads out loudly... closes the book while still repeating more loudly... looks at the painting with concentration and then says with despair... says with distress... turns off the lamp, gets up heavily, mashes his cigarette in the ashtray and moves towards the window... opens the curtain and looks outside and says sorrowfully... shuts the curtain, goes back, lifts his hand upwards then lowers it downwards with a nervous movement, as if pulling something out...(19)

The description continues at this level of intensity until the end of the play.

There is similar emphasis on gesture and voice in قرقاش (Qaraqāsh), مصرع كليب (The Slaying of Kulayb), شمشون ودليلة (Samson and Delilah), مأساة جيفارا (The Tragedy of Guevara), ثورة الزنج (The Zanj Revolution) and الباب (The Door).

In other plays, the exploration of the characters' bodies and voices is not as vigorous as in these plays. In

(Rain Had To Fall), for example, one can find only a few instances in which the writer bothers to

describe the moods and feelings of his characters. العتمة (Darkness), too, lays little emphasis on the physical actions of the characters. It is interesting to find that these particular plays have not given such theatrical elements the attention they deserve. The writer of the first play is himself a director who knows quite well that a play which is meant to be staged cannot do without such theatrical elements. The second play was meant, in the first place, to be staged, and indeed it was produced years before it was published (produced in 1972 and published in 1978). Perhaps one should say that it was due to these authors' theatrical backgrounds that these elements did not appear in their written texts. In other words, the authors might have left the active direction to the director.

Scenery

The attention paid in many Palestinian plays to scenery, settings and division is another demonstration of the writers' concern about the theatrical aspects of drama. The description of the scenes takes different shapes and styles. In some plays, scenery is very simple, a few words to describe the setting of a whole act or scene. مصرع كليب (The Slaying of Kulayb), for instance, is a five act play. The scene in Act One is described as follows: "The Taghlib tents are next to the Bakrs' in the Najd area." (20) Act Two reads: "At the Bakr quarter, Murrah and his daughter in his tent." (21) Act Three: "al-Mulhalhil and Hammām are in a

meadow near the Taghlib quarter, drinking in company with two slave-girls, Ra'ad and Rabāb." (22) Acts Four and Five have equally brief descriptions of their scenes. The simplicity of the Bedouin life and environment which the play is intended to portray might have influenced the writer to suggest simple scenery.

Similarly, the scenery in *لكع بن لكع* (Luka' Ibn Luka') is simple. The theme discussed in this play is a complex one, but the structure of the play, which is based mainly on the Magic Box and the Clown, has left no room for any complicated theatrical scenery. All that is needed, according to the writer, is a magic box, a clown, a simple platform and an ordinary audience which is ready to enjoy the entertainment. Except for the spectacular description of the Magic Box and the Clown, there is not much in the play that suggests the writer's concern for the scenery, decor or similar theatrical devices.

In other plays there is a deliberate effort to construct a complicated chain of scenery in harmony with the theme of the play, with the moods of the characters and with the psychology of the audience. There are striking demonstrations of this in plays like *شمشون ودليلة* (Samson and Delilah), *ثورة الزنج* (The Zanj Revolution) and *الباب* (The Door). Take, for example, the opening scene of the first play. It reads as follows:

هيكل عربية رڭاب في منتصف الخشبة . . . في مقدمتها سكان سفينة
وفي مؤخرتها قد ألحقت عربية ، نصفها الأعلى قد غرزت فيه القضبان
الحديدية ، ومن ورائها تطل بعض الوجوه . . . في مؤخرتها قد
ألحقت عربية أخرى يتدلى فوقها نسيج عنكبوت ضخم . . . الجانب
المواجه للجمهور من هيكل العربية تطل منه ثلاث نوافذ تشبه
كل نافذة المقصلة . عجلة العربية الخلفية وعجلتها الأمامية
عبارة عن مربعين كبيرين من الخشب . أمام مقدمة العربية
شارة مرور ضخمة تشبه البندقية المقلوبة ، السونكي مغروس
في الأرض والكعب إلى أعلى . وفي وسط الكعب لمبة كهربائية
تشتعل بالضوء الأحمر وإلى جانبها جندي مرور يشبه التمثال .
أسلاك شائكة تفصل مقدمة العربية عن شارة المرور وعن الجندي ،
ولمبات كهربائية تشتعل بالضوء الأحمر ومثبتة بين الأسلاك . . .
بروجيكتور يتركز فوق النافذة الأولى إلى اليسار ويطل منها
وجه رسمت على جبينه شارة (x) باللون الأحمر .

A skeleton of a passenger bus is located at the centre of the stage. There are passengers from a boat in the front of it. Attached to the back of it is a car with iron bars rammed in through its top. Some faces can be seen behind... Another car is fixed to that one. Above it hangs a huge spider's web... The part of the car facing the audience has three guillotine-like windows. The front and rear wheels of the car are wooden squares. In front of the car is a big traffic sign like a down-pointed gun with its bayonet stuck in the ground and its stock pointing upward. In the middle of the gun-stock is a red light. Next to it, a traffic policeman stands motionless like a statue. Barbed wires with red lights separate the front of the car, the traffic sign and the policeman... A projector is located above the left side window, from which appears a face with a red 'X' sign on its forehead.(23)

Similarly, in الباب (The Door), there is an exciting series of scenes which are capable of stimulating the imagination of the audience. In Act Two where Shaddād decides to challenge Habā and march to Iram, the scenery is specified as follows:

ينفتح الستار عن غرفة ذات طراز عتيق ، ولكنها مجهزة بأثاث متقن المصنع
 فنّي الأداء إلى حدود معجبة . يقع الباب في واجهة المسرح وإلى
 جانب الباب نافذة شرقية تطل على خلاء مترام . في نهايته القاصية
 ترتفع أبراج لامعة لمدينة بعيدة ، طنافس مطرزة وسجادة غنية الألوان
 وسيوف ورماح وتروس معلقة على الجدران . في زاوية الغرفة يقف
 شداد ، رجل في أواسط عمره قوي البنية ، ذكي العينين ، حاد
 الملامح ، يلبس عباءة مذهبة الأطراف فوق رداء من حلقات معدنية
 موشاة بالفضة ، ويضع على رأسه كوفية بيضاء معقودة بشكل أنيق
 وفخور . يبدو شداد وهو يعقد حزامه العريض ويتقلد سيفه ، وفي
 المشهد يواصل إعداد عدته للخروج إلى ما يستطيع المتفرج أن
 يستنتج بأنه ساحة حرب أو مهمة عسكرية . وبعد هنيهة تدخل
 الأم ، أم شداد ، وهي امرأة عجوز تضع على نفسها ملابس بيضاء
 وتلف رأسها بشال شفاف تتدلى تحته جديلتاها الشائبتان . تنظر
 إلى شداد نظرات شاكة ، تدور حوله وتهز رأسها ألما ، ثم تمضي إلى
 ركن الغرفة وتتشاغل بشيء ما .

The curtain opens on a room, old-fashioned in design, but furnished with fascinating, well-made furniture. Embroidered rugs, a richly-coloured carpet, swords, spears and arrows are hung on the walls. There is a door at the back wall of the stage. Next to it is a window which faces east and opens on to a vast space. Shining towers of a distant city stand high on the horizon. In the corner of the room stands Shaddād , a middle-aged, strong, clever man with serious features. He wears silver-decorated armour with an oriental cloak with gilt edges on top. On his head, he proudly wears a smart white kufiyah.(24) Shaddād is seen buckling his broad belt, putting on his sword and preparing for what onlookers take to be a journey to a battlefield or a military campaign. After a while, the Mother, Shaddād's mother, enters. She is an old woman with white clothes. A thin shawl covers her head, with two grey plaits of hair seen beneath it. She looks at Shaddād with mistrust, goes around him and shakes her head with pain. Then she moves to one of the corners of the room and busies herself with something.(25)

The detailed descriptions of the scenes of the above-mentioned plays are certainly meant to be stage directions.

They give illustrative introductions to the events or actions which the audience will live with throughout the scene or the play. They serve as foreshadowing hints^{which} help the audience to imagine and predict forthcoming actions.

As for the content of the scenes, one can easily recognize a Palestinian stamp on most of the plays. Those plays which treat old themes are infused with the old Palestinian or Arab background and tradition. بين جاهليتين (Between Two Dark Ages), مصرع كليب (The Slaying of Kulayb), ثورة الزنج (The Zanj Revolution), امرؤ القيس... (Imru' al-Qays...), الباب (The Door) and other plays are full of old elements such as tents, horses, camels, slave-girls, men armed with swords, spears, armour, and so on. On the other hand, plays like شمشون ودليلة (Samson and Delilah), مأساة جيفارا (The Tragedy of Guevara), شبح الأندلس (The Ghost of Andalusia), وثيقة سفر فلسطينية (A Palestinian Passport) and المطعم (The Restaurant), which are concerned with modern political issues, contain elements of our modern Palestinian environment. Their settings take place in refugee camps, cafes, hospitals, courts, prisons, streets, etc.. Modern devices, such as guns, tanks, explosions, cars, lights, wires, etc., are familiar elements in these plays.

Lighting

Lighting is an organic element in modern drama. To some stage directors, light is the supreme scene-painter and

interpreter. Adolphe Appia says that light's flexibility, fluidity and shifting emphasis provide the opportunity for evoking emotional values in a performance.(26) Antonin Artaud calls for the exploration of the "effects of all kinds of luminous vibrations... along with new ways of spreading the light waves in sheets, in fusillades of fiery arrows". (27) He goes as far as to say that lighting "must recover an element of thinness, density and opaqueness with a view to producing the sensations of heat, cold, anger, fear, etc.". (28)

Lighting has not been an organic element in many Palestinian plays. Historically speaking, there is no sign of lighting directions in plays written before the sixties. In plays like *الشموع المحترقة* (Burnt Candles), *في سبيلك يا وطن* (For the Sake of the Nation), *مصرع كليب* (The Slaying of Kulayb), *مأساة لاجئة* (The Tragedy of a Woman Refugee), and *شبح الأندلس* (The Ghost of Andalusia), lighting has apparently been replaced by suggestions of fixed times for the scenes. Remarks like "the time is midday... sunrise... sunset... midnight" are not uncommon in these plays.

However, when lighting became integral in the scenery of many plays from the sixties onward there was no ambition to create such effects as are sought by some Western theatrical experiments. The function of light in the plays of this period seem mostly to be illustrative more than innovative. in *قرقاش* (Qaraqāsh), for example, we read directions such as: "The curtain opens on a dim light on the stage;" (29)

"Light dims and glares to the rhythm of heavy music;"(30)
 "A spot of light is focussed on one of the nobles;"(31) "The
 spot-lighting moves to another;"(32) "The moment they attack
 him with knives, the light goes off... and when he dies, a
 dim red light comes on."(33)

Light as used here is illustrative in the sense that it
 does not evoke new emotions or create new dimensions to the
 dramatic situation. It mainly illustrates factual elements
 or emphasizes a character or situation. Turning off the
 light or putting on dim red light if a character is killed on
 the stage, as in the case of the Revolutionary Peasant, might
 stand as a final touch to the dramatic effect, or might
 enhance the atmosphere, but does not add a new meaning to
 death or create a new feeling on the audience's part.

Diffused or concentrated lighting and shadow are used in
 وكان لا بد أن ينزل المطر (Rain Had To Fall), mainly to show a
 setting or focus on an important part of the setting.
 Spot-light is specified to follow the movements of the
 story-teller.(34) Flood-light is used to cover the whole
 stage when the enactment requires more space. General light
 floods the stage to show the dancing and singing groups at
 the King's celebrations,(35) Daniel sitting in judgement,(36)
 the drought which spreads over the land after the slaying of
 Aqhāt,(37) the gathering at Yatpan's palace,(38) and other
 situations.

Diffused and focussed light is not always confined to

the illustration of the dramatic situations. In some plays, a genuine attempt is made to give lighting instructions with the intention of enriching the dramatic situation. The complexity of stage directions for the first scene of *شمشون ودليلة* (Samson and Delilah), mentioned earlier in this chapter, is accompanied by a rather imaginative description of lighting:

الإضاءة خافتة على هيكل العربة وإظلام تام على مقدمة خشبة
المسرح بحيث لا يبدو إلا شبح كأس كبيرة وأشباح رجـيال
ونساء وأطفال وأشياء أخرى لا تكاد تبين، منها الشريط
الطويل من الأسلاك الشائكة الذي يفصل بين مقدمة الخشبة
وبين الصالة .

Light is dim on the skeleton of the car. Total darkness covers the front of the stage, so that one can see only the shadows of a big glass, the shadows of men, women and children, the vague shapes of other things like the high barbed wires which separate the front of the stage from the hall.(39)

This shadowy atmosphere which is supposed to be created by the distribution of light and darkness on different parts of the stage can, certainly, project variations of dramatic mood.

In some situations in *وكان لا بد أن ..* (Rain Had To Fall), as at the appearance of Gods El, Baal and Anat, the vibrations, fluctuations and settling down of light are described in such a way as to create an atmosphere of fear, mystery and anticipation. In one situation, the description of lighting goes thus:

اهتزاز في الإضاءة يصاحبه صوت كقصف الرعد . حينما يختفي
الصوت وتستقر الإضاءة يظهر إيل على يمين دانييل الذي
يصبح الآن مبهورا بين الظلين ... الظل الجديد يتحسس بيده
جميع أجزاء جسد دانييل .

The vibration of the light is accompanied by a
thunderous noise. When it dies down and the light comes
to a standstill, El emerges to the right of Daniel, who
now looks in astonishment between the two shadows, those
of Ba'al and El... The new shadow touches all parts of
Daniel's body.(40)

With the help of these vibrations of light and shade,
the whole setting holds some sort of power of suggestion
which can intensify the emotional reaction of the audience.

Audience

The association of the audience in the dramatic process
is a relatively new element in theatre. It was put forward
as an established form by Bertholt Brecht. According to
Brecht's theory of Alienation, the audience is to be consult-
ed and invited to discuss the issues that matter to it and
affect its interests. The means of achieving this is to
alienate the audience so that they can keep themselves away
from any theatrical illusion. They have to be reminded that
what they see has nothing to do with reality. It is only
acting performed by characters in a playhouse; it is up to
the audience themselves to carry out real change in their
real lives outside the auditorium.(41)

Palestinian dramatists have not ignored the importance of this element in modern theatre. Some plays reveal a dynamic relationship with the audience. Two kinds of technique have been applied in the attempt to involve the audience. The first shows characters directly addressing their speech to the auditorium, yet with no actual response from the audience. The characters ask the audience to express their opinions on the issues discussed, call on them to take action and not to be satisfied with the role of passive onlookers, or warn them against impending dangers. Waṭfā' in ثورة الزنج (The Zanj Revolution), for example, calls on the audience at the end of the play to contribute practically to the revolutionary movement if they want an end to oppression and injustice. She also urges them not to identify with the characters they watch, but to ponder the Zanj historical example and draw contemporary conclusions:

هل تنتظرون وأنتم فوق مقاعدكم
معجزة الميلاد؟!...
لا معجزة فوق المسرح...
كانت أيدي الزنج
معجزة القرن الثالث للهجرة
معجزة الثورة.
لكن أنتم...
ما هي معجزة أياديكم؟!
مدّوا أيديكم با لمعجزة الآن.

Do you expect a miracle
While you sit there on your seats?
There won't be any miracle on the stage...
The miracle of the third century
Was the miracle of revolution
Wrought by the Zanj,
But you...
What will your miracle be?
Reach out now, and make a miracle! (42)

The Magic Box Man in the same play makes it his responsibility to enlighten the audience about the cause of the ancient Zanj and their revolutionary movement and the plight of the new Zanj, the Palestinians, and their liberation movement.
(43)

The Story-teller in ... وكان لا بد أن (Rain Had To Fall) attempts to draw the audience's attention to their deep-rooted ancestral culture:

مساء الخير يا محترمت ويا محترمين . الليلة بدّي
أسليكم وأمتعكم وأحدثكم حدوثة عن أجدادنا الأولين .

Good evening, Ladies and Gentlemen. Tonight I am going to entertain you and amuse you by telling you a story of our forefathers.(44)

He is keen to convey to the audience a political message by drawing some conclusions from the story of Paghat, who sought to revenge her murdered brother. She fell captive to her enemies.

لكن يا ناس اللي ... تلون بدنّها باللون الأحمر بتسكت ؟
بترضى بالضميم ؟

But, oh, People, marked with the blood of her murdered brother, how should she keep silent, how endure this wrong?(45)

He says that Paghat took revenge and, because of her revenge, the dry land was watered, the plants grew again, and the blossom was moistened with dew.

Sāmī, in بيت الجنون (House of Madness), addresses

much of his speech to an imaginary antagonistic audience, and one gathers from his comments that this audience responds with gestures, looks and laughter. In many parts of the play, Sāmī puts on trial the attitudes of this audience towards him and his people. He holds them responsible, individually and collectively, for his tragic situation and the oppressive nightmare which he endures. He reminds them of the crimes which they committed against his people. His haranguing his phantom audience shows a simple yet convincing awareness of their attitudes:

لماذا تنظر إليّ هكذا ؟

كيف دخلت بيتي

لماذا وبأي حق فعلت ؟

(بغضب)

لماذا لم تذهب إلى أيّ مكان آخر ؟

إلى الجحيم مثلاً ..

لماذا بيتي أنا بالذات ؟!

(باستغراب)

يا إلهي !

هل نظرت إلى عينيك

إنهما تتوقدان ...

لا بدّ وأنتها ذئبة تلك التي أرضعتك.

(يلف الجميع بنظرات حادة)

يا للجنة ..

ما الذي حدث بحق الشيطان ؟!

لماذا تتخذون جميعكم نفس الهيئة

عندما أنظر إليكم ؟

(يتفحصهم بشك)

مستحيل ! هل أشبهكم أنا بشيء ؟ !

(بحزم)

كلّ .. كلّ .. يستحيل ذلك .

Why are you looking at me like that?
 How did you get into my house?
 Why and what for?

(Angrily)
 Why didn't you go somewhere else?
 To hell, for example!
 Why come in my house?

(Astonished)
 Oh, God!
 If you could see your eyes!
 They're burning with hatred.
 You've been brought up by wolves!

(Stares round the audience)
 Damn it! What the hell?
 Why do you take the same shape
 When I look at you?

(Examines them with mistrust)
 Impossible!
 Do I look like you look?

(Firmly)
 No, that's not possible.(46)

A second group of writers apply a different technique. They do not address the audience as a passive entity, but give them a say in what happens on the stage. It must be noted in this connection, however, that this participation, in the main, does not take the form of improvisation.(47) The role which they play is in the text of the drama, but unlike other characters whose location or performance is originally connected with the stage and the slips of the stage, the location of the participant members of the audience is usually the auditorium. Even when some of these members play their role on the stage, the starting and finishing points refer always to the hall.

A look at الصخرة (The Rock), كيف ردّ الرابي مندل على تلاميذه (How Rabi Mandel Answered His Students), لكع بن لكع (Luka⁶ Ibn Luka⁶), and وثيقة سفر فلسطينية (A Palestinian Passport) shows that the audience play more than a minor role. They participate in the actual dialogue of all of these plays.

In كيف ردّ الرابي على تلاميذه (How Rabi Mandel Answered His Students), for example, the two main characters, Raḍwān, the Arab, and Shlūmū, the Israeli, choose to ask the audience for arbitration. In their heated conflict, a member of the audience comes up to the stage to play the role of a conciliator. He fails and the conflict continues. In an attempt to create some kind of alienation effect, Sayyid⁶Ālam goes up again to the stage to address his fellow members of the audience. He urges them to think about it themselves:

كما ترون ما زال صاحبانا يقتتلان . وهذا هو السبب الأساسي
الذي دفع الكاتب إلى طرح القضية أمامكم . والمؤلف لا يزعم
الموضوعية المحايدة أو الحياد الموضوعي ، فهو ليس حياديا
أبدا ... غير أن المؤلف لا يسعى لفرض موقفه عليكم ، لأنّه
يريدكم أن تفكروا وأن تستخلصوا النتائج بأنفسكم ... هذا
الصراع يجب أن يهمننا جميعا ، وأن يحفز فينا التفكير والحوار
من أجل الحقيقة والسلام وسعادة البشر .

As you have seen, our friends, Raḍwān and Shlūmū, are still fighting each other, and this is the main reason the writer puts this matter to you. He doesn't claim he is neutral or objective. Not at all... But he does not impose his opinion on you either, because he wants you to think and draw your own conclusions... All of us should be concerned about this conflict. It must stimulate our minds in our search for truth, peace and the happiness of mankind.(48)

In other plays, members of the audience do not only

comment or react to what is performed in front of them. They move to the stage, take action and direct the play's events. In العتمة (Darkness), the audience plays the major part. The moment the Lighting Officer appears on the stage at the beginning of the play, members of the audience urge him to start the play. However, it is not long before the lighting system fails. At this point, the course of events completely changes direction and members of the audience assume their roles. They protest against the darkness but soon they offer their help to repair the system. The repairing process goes on until the end of the play. So, too, does the role played by the audience.

The audience in وثيقة سفر فلسطينية (A Palestinian Passport) participate in a different manner. Some of its members engage in a hostile dialogue, and sometimes confrontation, with the characters who represent a repressive regime, namely the Officer and his security men. From the outset, the Officer admonishes the audience not to interfere with his business:

أنتم هنا متفرجون فقط ، أو بمعنى آخر شهود عدالة .

You are here as onlookers, or in other words witnesses of justice.(49)

He reminds them that they are living in the age of democracy.

لسنا كما تدّعي .. نحن في عصر يصعب تمييزه .. ربما كان
عصر الحشيش والأفيون.

Your claim is false! We are living in a peculiar age, perhaps the age of hashish and opium,(50)

replies a member of the audience. However, whoever dare to raise the alarm against this repressive authority would find themselves either dead or taken away by security men. Despite the audience's courageous response to the Officer, the writer does not want the audience to live in an illusion. He makes it clear to them that they are not all wonderful. Some of them have betrayed their fellows. They have been brainwashed by the Officer and have expressed their loyalty to him.

Moreover, the writer reveals to the audience at the end of the play that they are all far from being wonderful. Using the alienation technique,(51) he tells them that what they have seen is nothing but acting, that members of the audience who took part in the play are not really what they seem, but theatrical creations, and that their role as audience was only confined to a rather lazy and indifferent watching. As if to emphasize that what has been said about the audience is right, a member of the audience interrupts the cast:

ما هذا الذي تقولون ؟ مدّعتم رؤوسنا بقصصكم .

What are you saying? You are making our heads spin.(52)

He is supported by some fellow members of the audience.

In لکع بن لکع (Luka' Ibn Luka'), the Clown mostly addresses the audience, getting a dynamic response. The moment the Clown appears with his magic box, telling his story, members

of the audience move up to the platform and take part. Budūr comes in and engages the Clown in interesting dialogue for most of the play. On Budūr's advice, a group of young men and women from the audience go on to the platform and watch the magic box which tells "what has happened and what is going to happen". The Clown asks them to help him re-enact the tragic massacre that took place at Kafr Qāsim.(53) Other members of the audience are called up to the platform and an extraordinary performance follows, demonstrating how cooperation between actors and audience can offer a brilliant new development in popular theatre.

In his attempt to keep the audience fully aware that they are watching a theatrical performance, the writer uses the alienation technique. His characters are able to create an authentic alienation effect free from rhetoric and strongly related to their everyday life. In one of the scenes, Budūr and the Clown exchange their views about the practices of an extremely repressive Arab regime. In the middle of their dialogue we hear a fearful knocking on the doors on all sides of the hall and shouts of "Police! Police! Open up... Open up!". In this uproar, Budūr thinks it is "her turn now". But "they" don't come in and the Clown tells her "it's only acting, just part of our evening entertainment". Then the Clown turns to the audience, strikes his cymbals and says:

لا شرطة ولا بوليس.

فاهدئي يا بدور،

واستريحوا يا جماعة.

لقد كانت الغارة ...

مجرد تشخيص لإشارة مشاعركم .

No police! No police!
Don't worry, Budūr.
Calm down, Friends.
It was only a mock raid
To give you some fun!

He then tells the audience the story of Ibn Quzmān, an Andalusian Arab poet who, lacking an audience, took a monkey with him to attract people round when he recited his poems.

The scene does not end at this point. The moment the Clown finishes his stories, a woman gets up in her seat shouting at him:

كان جديرا بكم أن تعلنوا عن منع الأولاد دون السادسة عشرة
من الإشتراك في هذه السهرة ... أخفتم أطفالنا .

You should have advertised that this "social evening" was for adults only... You've scared the children.

The Clown replies:

كان هذا الأمر ممكنا يا أختي
لو كان من الممكن أن تقي الأولاد ...
بطاقة خط فيها:
" لا تقتل الأولاد دون السادسة عشرة " ،
ثم تلمق بقنبلة تهوي على
صور وصيدا .

That's really not possible
Unless a bomb with a label,
"Not to be used for killing kids",
Could fall on Tyre or flatten Sidon
Leaving the youngsters unhurt!(54)

Story-telling is a feature of the "epic theatre" of Brecht, but it is also deeply embedded in Arab culture. Until recently, Arab story-tellers roamed through Arab towns and villages telling the stories of 'Antarah, Saladin, the Hilāliyyah, Dhāt al-Himmah, Sayf Ibn Dhī Yazan, al-Zāhir Baybars and others. This folk literary device has been successfully employed in three modern Palestinian plays, ... وثيقة سفر فلسطينية (The Rain Had To Fall) وكان لا بد... (A Palestinian Passport), and لكع بن لكع (Luka' Ibn Luka').

In the first play, the Story-teller is portrayed as a positive narrator and commentator. He plays a complementary role which shows not only a clear stand with the "forces of good" against the "forces of evil", but also an apocalyptic vision. The Story-teller starts the play by announcing to the audience that he is going to entertain them by telling them a story of their ancient forefathers, the Canaanites. From beginning to end, he comes in to make comments, explain, condemn or appreciate the events and actions. For example, he tells how the goddess 'Anat was full of hatred and jealousy, how she wanted to gain possession of Aqhāt's magic bow and arrows, how , "blinded by evil", she conspired with Yatpan "the treacherous" to kill Aqhāt "the gift of God", (55) and how Paghat must take revenge on Yatpan "the rascal". (56) The Story-teller does not conceal his satisfaction at the killing of Yatpan at the end of the play. (57)

It must be noted that the Story-teller's role in this play does not go beyond explanation, condemnation or appreci-

ation, or amount to real participation in the play's events, actions or dialogue. The Story-teller addresses all his comments to the audience, not to the characters and he does not engage in any dialogue with the characters.

In وثيقة سفر فلسطينية (A Palestinian Passport), the writer uses a different technique to present his story-teller. He introduces him in a rather late stage, the last scene of Act One. The Story-teller tries to play the traditional role which his predecessors had played for hundreds of years, namely telling the story of 'Antarah and other folk-tales in a cafe and playing his musical instrument, the rebec. However, this traditional role is interrupted from the outset by a young man who swears at 'Antarah and al-Hilālī and Shehrazad and asks the Story-teller to tell a different story. The dialogue which follows between the Young Man and the Story-teller and later, in Act Two, between them and other people in the cafe, complements the change in the Story-teller's character. He now participates with other characters in the events of the play, and abandons the neutral traditional role of story-teller. He is asked by the Young Man to talk about al-Qassām's resistance movement, but he expresses his fear of the authorities if he talks about such affairs, but, encouraged by the Young Man, he agrees to do so. However, the moment he opens his mouth to talk about al-Qassām, "the hero who was killed by the murderers", the cafe is raided by police who take everyone into detention. After five years in prison, so we are told, the Story-teller reappears in the same cafe to tell his story of al-Qassām,

but he is interrupted by the same Young Man who now wants him to talk about the horrible conditions behind bars. Other customers join him in talking about their terrifying experience in various prisons at various times. Later in the play, in the fourth scene of Act Two, the now committed Story-teller changes his attitude again and tells the audience that he is not going to present individual characters on stage. The people themselves must play the roles, not their theatrical representatives. Some episodes of national history, well-known to Palestinians, are briefly enacted by mass groupings.

Every now and then during the performance, the Story-teller stops and comments on some events. A banner reading "Palestine 1947" passes across the stage. This is followed by the re-enactment of events of that period. The Story-teller angrily comments, during the flash-back:

قالوا لنا سنعيدها بعد ثلاثة أيام • جردونا من السلاح
مرة أخرى ... طعنونا •

They told us that we would return in three days. They took away our arms yet again... They stabbed us.(58)

In a sarcastic manner he thanks them because:

سمحوا لنا بالسكنى على أرضهم في معسكرات اعتقال كبيرة،
وسمحوا لنا أيضا بالإشتراك في بناء سجون كثيرة • •
طبعاً مقابل أجر!

They allowed us to stay in their countries in huge concentration camps. They allowed us to join in the construction of many prisons, and with pay!(59)

At the end of Act Two, the writer ends the role of his story-teller, and Act Three continues without him.

Although the Story-teller in this play does not appear at the beginning of the play, he establishes himself as a major element. The vacuum caused by his disappearance is not filled. He leaves the stage with the audience still waiting for him to come back. His failure to do so not only disappoints the audience, but also spoils the theatrical structure of the play and its presentational elements on the stage.

In *Luka⁶ Ibn Luka⁶* (Luka⁶ Ibn Luka⁶), the story-teller is not mentioned by name, but his presence is felt throughout the play. He sometimes comments on what happens, but his main role is to introduce the Clown and other participants and to describe their movements and actions on the platform.(60) In the first scene of Setting One, for example, we read:

ويكون أصحاب الأمسية قد انتدبوا صبيا وصبية يقفان أمام باب
القاعة وهما يحملان طبقا من ورق النخيل ... ويكون المشترك
في الأمسية قد حط رغيفه على الطبق . فنحط رغيفنا ونقبل على
الفرجة منفرجي الأسارير . وفيما نحن على هذه الحال من الإنفراج ،
إذا برجل يدفع أمامه بعربة صغيرة نصب فوقها صندوقا مزركشا
بؤخارف .

The organizers of this social gathering have commissioned a chap and a girl to stand in front of the playhouse holding a tray made of palm leaves... Members of the audience are asked to put loaves of bread on the tray... So we do, and cheerfully we go in to watch the play. While we are in this state of cheerfulness, a man with a clown's dress moves towards the front of the hall

pushing in front of him a hand-cart with a magic box fixed on top.(61)

In another situation at the end of this "theatrical fable" we read:

ويمضون وهم ينثرون الزهور على الحضور • ويكون المهرج في
مقدمتهم •

Led by the Clown, the characters now leave, scattering flowers over the audience.(62)

The theatrical elements discussed above are not the only means used in Palestinian drama. Some forms of the traditional or popular Arab theatre explored in some plays include the Magic Box, the Clown, The Arāgūz, the Poet, the Popular Poet, al-Ḥādī and al-Bashīr.

The Clown and the Magic Box

لُكَّعُ بْنُ لُكَّعٍ (Luka' Ibn Luka') has a magnificent clown. Through his sarcastic political and social comments, comic manner, tragic tales and historical vision he earns a high place in Palestinian and Arab authentic theatre based on the Arab cultural heritage. This kind of theatre does not need a large hall or any complicated equipment. All it needs is a magic box, a drum and a couple of cymbals. The place of performance can be anywhere, a street or a cafe. The audience consists of the people of the street in a village, a town or a refugee camp, who are ready to meet and pass a "mythical

evening", as it is suggested by the story-teller at the beginning of this play. Members of the audience are drawn right into the performance and, with the Clown, create a theatrical language of their own, using allegory, insinuation, and sometimes lively, popular and vulgar language, reminiscent of the Man of Shadow Theatre, where in former days similar language was used in satirical performances. The Clown opens the play, as his ancestors used to do, with rhythmic verse:

قم تفرّج يا سلام على عجائب الزمان!...
 قم تفرّج يا سلام على شيء كان وما كان!
 شوف بوزيد الهلالي قاعد بيعرق بأموالي!
 شوف ذياب بن غانم ، غانم إيش وهو نايم!
 شوف تغريبة بني هلال . صار الحال بقدر الحال!
 قم تفرّج يا سلام على عجائب الزمان!...
 تعالوا تفرجوا على ما كان،
 وعلى ما هو كائن . شيء كان وشيء يرفض أن يصبح
 في خبر كان!.

Dear me! Come and see! Watch the wonders of life!
 Dear me! Come and see! See what happened But it
 didn't!
 See Bū Zaid el-Hilālī spend all my money!
 See Dhyāb Ibn Ghānim just oozing money!
 See Banī Hilāl, chucked out of their country, sharing
 shacks.
 God! How they live!
 Oh dear me! Come and see! Watch the wonders of life!
 Come and see!
 Watch what happened!
 Watch what happens!
 Come and see!
 Something happened!
 You won't forget it,
 Can't forget it all your life!(63)

From beginning to end the Clown tells and acts the story of his people, their worries, the alienation, confusion and oppression which they have experienced in exile and under occupation, their longings, and the mistakes they have made and how they have been fooled and betrayed.

The technique used in this play is unique. As mentioned earlier, the Clown is sometimes introduced by the Story-teller. He speaks his part of the story to the accompaniment of his magic box and musical instruments. Members of the audience help also in the enactment or telling of some parts of his story. At one point, the Clown calls on some youths to look into his magic box and tell the story of what they see. In the same scene, they enact the massacre of Kafr Qāsim:

ويخرج (المهرج) من كشكوله دفا يروح ينقر عليه بطيئا ، ثم يسرع
في النقر على دفه • ويمضي أمام الأولاد ويحيي وهو ينادي :

المهرج : هل جاءكم خبر كفر قاسم
ورقصة الموت في كفر قاسم ؟

فيرد عليه الأولاد منشدين :

" أمّا تفرج يا سلام ، عينك ترى العجائب " ! .

ويتقدم أحد الفتيان نحونا ثم يقول :

أحد الفتيان : عادوا من أماكن عملهم والشمس عائدة
إلى حضن المغيب الفاني ...
عادوا إلى القرية زرافات ووحدانا ،
ولكنهم جمعوا فيما بعد في كومة واحدة .

الفتيان : أما تفرج يا سلام ، واعمل حالك موش شاييف! ...

الفتى : جاؤا وهم يطرحون السلام
على الضابط المكلف ..
شالوم أيها الضابط .

صوت : هل أنتم مبسوطين ؟

الفتيان : تمام أيها الضابط .

صوت : احصدوهم !

ويأخذ المهرج في النقر على دفه . فنسمع صوتا شبيها بصوت طلقات المدفع
الرشاش أو هذا ما ارتسم عبر طبقات آذاننا . ومما يزيد الضغط على
مخيلات عقولنا صرخة أنشوية حادة تنطلق دفعة واحدة من صدور الفتيات؛

الفتيات : احصدوهم ..
احصدوهم ..
احصدوا ..

إلا أننا لا نراهم يسقطون . وإذا بالفتاة نفسها تصرخ :

الفتاة : لماذا لم يسقطوا ؟ لقد حصدوهم !

المهرج : لأنهم لم يموتوا يا ابنتي .

الفتاة : بل ما تـ... ..

المهرج : لو كانوا ماتوا ،
لسمعنا الصخر يبكي ..
فكيف لم يبك من هم بين المحيط والخليج ؟

الفتيان : أمّا تفرج يا سلام ، عينك ترى العجايب ! ..

الفتى : نزلن فرأين الجثث المكومة ،
فأخذن يستعطفن العساكر أن يأذنوا لهن
بالحياة .

فتاة : برأس أمك يا خواجه
أن تتركنا نعود إلى القرية .

فتاة أخرى : أبوس إيدك يا خواجه
خّني لأطفالي .

فتاة شالّة : يخلي لك شبابك
تخلي لي شبابي .

فتاة رابعة : السلام عليكم وعلى عيالك يا خواجه .

وإذا بالفتية والفتيات ، ويكون المهرج في وسطهم ، ينشدون ويرددون
الكلمات التالية على نغم الأغنية العبرية المنتشرة عالميا :

هابينو شالوم عليكم .

The Clown takes a drum out of his sack. He beats it
slowly and then faster, then moves to and fro in front
of the youths:

Clown: Have you come across the news of Kafr
Qāsim,
The dance of death in Kafr Qāsim?

The Youths answer, chanting:

Look! Oh, God! You'll see such wonders!

A youth approaches us and says:

Youth: They came back from work at sunset.
 They came back to the village alone or in
 parties...
 But later they were gathered
 In one heap!

Youths: Look! Oh, God! Pretend you don't see!

They greet the Officer-in-Charge:
 Shalum, Officer!

Voice: Are you happy?

Youth: Yes, Officer.

Voice: Kill them!

The Clown beats his drum. We hear a sound like a
 machine-gun, or imagine we hear it. What makes our hearts
 stop is the shrill cry from the girls.

Girls: Kill them!
 Kill them!
 Kill...

But we don't see anybody fall. The same girl shouts:

Girl: Why don't they fall? They killed them.

Clown: Because they did not die, my child!

Girl: But they did die!

Clown: If they had died
 We should have heard the rock cry out!
 How should they not weep
 Who live between the Gulf and the Ocean?

Youths: Look! Oh, God! You'll see such wonders!

Youth: Some women got out of a car and saw the
 heaped-up bodies.
 They pleaded with the soldiers to let
 them live.

1st girl: I beg you, Sir,
 Let us go back to our village.

2nd girl: I beg you, Sir,
 Let me live for my children.

3rd girl: God save your life, young man,
 Please let me live

4th girl: Peace be on you and on your family,
 Sir.

With the Clown in the middle, all the youths and girls chant to the tune of the international Hebrew song:

Habinu Shalum Alaikhum(64)

This scene, which covers eight pages in the text of the play, is conceived in a fascinating and symbolic manner. The Clown keeps asking for women and children in the audience to re-enact on the platform what had happened on that day, and when the number is sufficient for the scene, they start their "dance of death".

In other situations, the Clown himself does the storyteller's job. He introduces characters to speak for themselves. In one scene, a young man has been symbolically killed in war; the Clown calls upon him. Budūr recognizes that this "young sapling" (الشاب الربيعي) is her son. The Clown asks him to tell his own story. Then he picks up his cymbals, beats them three times and shouts: "It is Masrūr's turn now, the Executioner Masrūr..." Darkness prevails. We hear a laugh like a camel's growl. The Clown's voice is heard: "Masrūr, the Executioner, is very happy." Then we see him spreading his skin rug between him and the Young Man. They stand on it face-to-face and dialogue takes place between them.(65)

The Magic Box Man is also used in ثورة الزنج (The Zanj Revolution), but he is not a clown, nor has he a major role to play. He appears on the stage three times, but his brief presence is not noticed by characters in the play. Although

his speech is relevant to what other characters say or do, or is a reaction to what they say or do, the Magic Box Man addresses his words mainly to the audience. As other characters are not aware of his presence on the stage, the Magic Box Man does not influence the course of events in the play. He sounds like an impartial judge who pronounces his judgements on historical events without being a real participant in them. On one occasion at the beginning of the play, he is introduced as follows:

من الزاوية اليسرى يدخل رجل يحمل فوق ظهره " صندوق الدنيا " ...
ثم يتقدم وهو خارج منطقة الرؤية بالنسبة للرجلين وهو ينفخ في
بوقه الصغير .

He enters from the left corner of the stage with a magic box carried on his back. Then he moves to a point where he is not seen by the two men (the two characters on stage) and blows his little bugle.(66)

The portrayal of his impartiality is yet to be manifested in his words:

صندوق الدنيا والتاريخ على حبل غسيل ...
من يملك أن يدفع حفنة قمح أو حفنة ملح،
أو خيطا في إبرة ..
فليتفرج .
من لا يملك أن يدفع شيئا، فليتفرج .

The magic box and history are hung on a washing line...
He who can pay a double handful of wheat or salt,
Or a piece of thread,
Can watch.
He who can afford nothing can also watch.(67)

In the other two situations in which he takes part, one can feel some change in his attitude. He is now much closer

to a committed judge than to a neutral one. In Part Two the Washing Machine Man plays the role of a reactionary teacher; the Magic Box Man appears and introduces the man who dared to say "No" to his oppressors:

كان الناس يقولون نعم .
 للسلطان نعم ..
 لجواري السلطان نعم .
 لكن الرجل الطيب عبد الله بن محمد ،
 كان عليه أن يصرخ لا ..
 "لا" للوحد وللکذب وللتزوير .

People said "Yes",
 "Yes" to the Sultan,
 "Yes" to the Sultan's girls.
 Easy-going 'Abdullāh Ibn Muḥammad
 Loudly said "No!"
 "No!" to filth!
 "No!" to lies!
 "No!" to fraud! (68)

In the second situation, the Magic Box Man comments on the evil conspiracies against the revolution by the Washing Machine Man and the Doctor, reminding them of the inevitable results of their deeds:

إضرب عنق الشائر ...
 لكن الشائر ينهض من خلف المتراس .

Strike the neck of the revolutionary...
 Still he'll rise up behind the barricade! (69)

Arāgūz

The Arāgūz, it should be noted, has been used only in

ثورة الزنج (The Zanj Revolution). He appears on stage only once, but his presence is strongly felt, probably because he turns up at a very critical point in the play. 'Abdullāh Ibn Muḥammad and al-Baḥrānī are discussing their next step with regard to the repressive regime of the Sultan: "To resist or to submit?" At the height of the argument the Arāgūz appears with a sack of gold in one hand and a bloody head in the other hand. He addresses the audience:

يا زنج البصرة !
 اختاروا بين الكيس وبين الرأس المقطوع ..
 اختاروا بين الذهب وبين الدم .

O Zanj of Basra!
 You have to choose between the sack
 And the unshouldered head!
 Choose gold or blood!(70)

The timing and manner of this appearance suggests that the Arāgūz is a manifestation of Ibn Muḥammad's doubt about the revolutionary path. Not until the end of the scene, when the Arāgūz raises up the sack and the head does Ibn Muḥammad notice his presence and realize that he must decide. Immediately he draws his sword and cuts the cloth that holds the head. "We choose the head!"(71) he declares.

The Arāgūz does not take part in the events of the play. His speech, and the stage directions which describe his movements on the stage, indicate that he is concerned only with the audience, possibly as an attempt by the writer to

prepare them psychologically for the forthcoming actions of Ibn Muḥammad.

The way in which the Arāgūz is dressed and presented on the stage is very original and entertaining. The onlooker will be fascinated to watch the scene as the Arāgūz performs his part!

من خلف الحائط الأيمن لصحن الدار يطل رأس أراجوز
يرتدي طرطورا طويلا مرصعا بقطع الزجاج الملون...

From behind the right wall of the courtyard, the Arāgūz appears. A high pointed cap with coloured pieces of glass is on his head..(72)

At the same time, one is disappointed that such an original theatrical character appears only for a very brief period of time and is not developed into an organic part of the play.

The Poet and the Popular Poet

It is a well-known fact that poetry recital played a significant role in traditional Arab society. At their cultural, political or social gatherings, the Arabs were keen to have poets who by their reading created an atmosphere of dramatic excitement. Poetry and poets are still highly regarded in modern Arab life, and poets are often depicted in drama.

The Poet is a major character in شبح الأندلس (The Ghost

of Andalusia). Like his old counterpart, the Poet in this play appears as a spokesman or a mentor for his people. He encourages them in their fight against the enemy, urges them to be courageous and patient, joins them in the fight, and expresses his fears when they are in trouble as well as his belief in the future.(73)

The tragic stories of some of the ancient Arab poets are the themes of plays such as *أمرؤ القيس* ... (Imru' al-Qays) and *ديك الجن* (Dīk al-Jin), and among the main dramatis personae of *مصرع كليب* (The Slaying of Kulayb) is al-Muhalhil, supposedly the earliest Arab poet. In *المطعم* (The Restaurant), the popular poet, called the Rebec Poet, is employed to present a clear historical vision and represent the conscience of the people.

Al-Bashīr and al-Hādī are used in *مأساة لاجئة* (The Tragedy of a Woman Refugee) and in *بين جاهليتين* (Between Two Dark Ages). Their participation in the events of these plays is limited, but their poetic chanting reminds one of a rich element in traditional Arab life and culture.

Footnotes

(1) Bentley: "The Life of the Drama", p148.

(2) Clark: "European Theories of Drama", p473.

- (3) Ibid, p475.
- (4) See Nicoll: "The Theatre and Dramatic Theory", p39; Gassner: "Masters of the Drama", the introduction, p**; Drew: "Discovering Drama", p105; Driver: "The Sense of History in Greek and Shakespearean Drama", p80; and Priestley: "The Art of the Dramatist", p3.
- (5) Al-Ḥakīm: "Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm Yataḥaddath", p195
- (6) Faraj: "Dalīl al-Mutafarrij al-Dhakī ilā al-Masraḥ", p185
- (7) Bsaisū: "Ma'sāt Guevara", p58
- (8) Ibid., p64.
- (9) Bsaisū: "Shamshūn wa Dalīlah", p236.
- (10) Ibid., p249.
- (11) Al-Qāsim: "Qaraqāsh", p9.
- (12) Ibid., pp15-6.
- (13) Ibid., p36.
- (14) Cited in Preistley: op.cit., p24.
- (15) Ḥabībī: "Luka⁶ Ibn Luka⁶", pp113-4.
- (16) "Jabhat al-Ṣumūd wa al-Taṣaddī" (Steadfastness Front) is a political grouping of some Arab states supposedly "hardline" in their opposition to the treaty signed between Israel and Egypt in 1976.
- (17) See Dean and Carra: "Play-Directing", p67; Peacock: "The Art of Drama", p167; and Black: "Poetic Drama as Mirror of the Will", p23.
- (18) Evans: "The language of Modern Drama", pp49-50.
- (19) Fayyād: "Bayt al-Junūn", pp7-9.
- (20) Al-Ṣafadī: "Maṣra⁶ Kulayb", p21.
- (21) Ibid., p67.
- (22) Ibid., p87.
- (23) Bsaisū: "Shamshūn wa Dalīlah", p206.
- (24) Kufiyah is a traditional head covering used by Arab men.
- (25) Kanafānī: "Al-Bāb", pp 53-4.

- (26) Simonson: "The Ideas of Adolphe Appia", p35.
- (27) Artaud: "The Theatre of Cruelty", p61.
- (28) Ibid.
- (29) Al-Qāsim, op.cit., p9
- (30) Ibid., p15
- (31) Ibid., p32
- (32) Ibid.
- (33) Ibid., p74.
- (34) Jabr: "Wakān Labud an Yanzil al-Maṭar", pp61-2,67,69, 78,82-3.
- (35) Ibid., p60.
- (36) Ibid., p62.
- (37) Ibid., p75.
- (38) Ibid., p79.
- (39) Bsaisū: op.cit.,p206.
- (40) Jabr: op.cit., p60.
- (41) Brecht's theory of "Alienation" is found in Brecht: "A Short Organum for the Theatre". See also Willett: "The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht", pp111-2,116; and Esslin: "The Brechtian Theatre, its Theory and Practice", pp412-7.
- (42) Bsaisū: "Thawrat al-Zanj", p202.
- (43) Ibid., pp120,164-5,183-4.
- (44) Jabr: op.cit., p58.
- (45) Ibid., p82.
- (46) Fayyād: op.cit., pp31-3.
- (47) Improvisation is suggested in two plays: "Qaraqāsh" and "al-Atmih". The writer of the first play suggests that "the audience of the play have the right to intervene in the dialogue and present their remarks in any way they consider appropriate" (the play, p7). There are similar comments in the second play. In the first scene, for example, it is suggested that a dialogue between audience and actor should be encouraged, provided that the audience's remarks are relevant. "The audience may make some comments on Mīlād's

situation. But Mīlād is only to pay attention if he finds the remarks stimulating." (p25). See also pp32,40,58,61.

- (48) Al-Qāsim: "Kayf Radd al-Rābī Mandil 'alā Talāmīdhīh", p27.
- (49) Rabāh: "Wathīqat Safar Filistīniyyah", p12
- (50) Ibid.
- (51) See Willett: op.cit., p169-72.
- (52) Rabāh: op.cit., p62.
- (53) Kafr Qāsim is the name of a Palestinian village where in October 1956, "49 Palestinian villagers who were Israeli citizens were shot in cold blood by Israeli border guards, enforcing a curfew of which the villagers had been given no previous warning" (Mayhew and Adams: "Publish It Not", p160).
- (54) Ḥabībī: op.cit., pp39-46.
- (55) Jabr: op.cit., pp72-3.
- (56) Ibid., p84.
- (57) Ibid., p85.
- (58) Rabāh: op.cit., p51.
- (59) Ibid., p52.
- (60) This particular part of the story-teller's role suggests two things. Firstly, that the unmentioned story-teller might be the writer himself, and that most of his comments and descriptions are meant for readers who might have no chance to see the play in performance. This suggestion is in fact supported by the writer who, talking about his play in an interview, mentions the "reader" of the play rather than the "onlooker" (See interview in al-Karmil, issue no.1, Winter 1981, p196). Secondly, the detailed descriptions and clarifications in the play might be seen as stage-directions.
- (61) Ḥabībī: op.cit., p9-10
- (62) Ibid., p158.
- (63) Ibid., p11-2.
- (64) Ibid., pp31-6.
- (65) Ibid., pp84-90.
- (66) Bsaisū: op.cit., p119.

(67) Ibid., pl19-20.

(68) Ibid., pl65.

(69) Ibid., pl84.

(70) Ibid., pl55.

(71) Ibid., pl56.

(72) Ibid., pl54.

(73) Al-Abbūshī: "Shabāḥ al-Andalus", pp23,37,58,60-1,63,71,75.

Chapter VI

CONFLICT

Conflict is the law of society, life and existence. The countless elements of nature are in a permanent state of tension, strife and contradiction. It is a familiar idea that social, economic and cultural change is due to conflict, and that conflict is behind all changes and transformations of man's condition.(1)

Aristotle's theory of art suggests that drama is an imitation of nature,(2) while the Marxists see it as a reflection of life. It is to be expected, therefore, if either of these theories is applied, to find that conflict must be the essence of drama. For it is conflict which determines the course of plots more than any other single relationship in the play, and paves the way for its actions. Moreover, it is the decisive moment in the conflict which marks the climax of the play and creates the greatest intensity of the dramatic situation.

Almost all drama theorists emphasize that the substance of dramatic situation is the revelation of conflict. Echoing many voices in dramatic history, Alardyce Nicoll, for instance, considers conflict as the cardinal part of drama. All drama, he says, ultimately arises out of conflict. In tragedy there is ever a clash between forces physical or mental or both. In a comedy there is ever a conflict between personal-

ities, sexes or between an individual and society. In tragedy the "pity and terror" issues from this conflict; in comedy the essence of the laughable is derived from the same source.(3)

A dominant form of dramatic conflict has been found in each stage of man's relationship with his natural and social universe as well as his psychological existence.

Conflict between man and supernatural powers (Ananke) which is to be found in the drama of Ancient Greece is the first type to command our attention. From the Renaissance age up to the present day, dramatic conflict lies firstly between the individual and society and secondly between man and himself. An alternative form of conflict dominates the so-called revolutionary drama, showing man in antagonism with his fellow man. Man in this respect is not a mere individual but more a symbol of striving social or national forces: the oppressed against the oppressors, the exploited against the exploiters, the occupied against the occupiers, the dispossessed against the usurpers, and vice versa.

In determining its main course of conflict, Arab drama has assimilated almost all types of conflict throughout the history of drama. Palestinian dramatic conflict was a wave in the mainstream of Arab dramatic conflict with a distinct identity of its own. The Arab-Zionist dilemma in Palestine, and later on the elimination of Palestine as a nation in 1948, and subsequent sufferings and exile of the Palestinian

people have strongly shaped the character of conflict in Palestinian drama.

Among the playwrights preoccupied by Palestinian conflict, either directly or symbolically, we find both those who see this conflict as irreconcilable and those who seek a way out. Different artistic elements of conflict can be recognized accordingly.

Irresolvable Conflict

In the dramas of this trend, conflict proceeds gradually, coherently and logically. The essence and characteristics of this kind of conflict will be studied in two plays:

شمشون ودليلة (Samson and Delilah) and الباب (The Door).

The conflict of the first play does not, in fact, start with the raising of the curtain. The play starts with a tense stalemate which reveals that a previous conflict has already taken place. The car with square wheels, the red lights, the faces marked with red "X"s, the hooks which pick them up, the man with white bandages and some other hints of danger create the initial tension in the play and hence prepare for a new stage of struggle.

Through a flash-back we learn that the hardship suffered by the characters has led not only to nightmare and hallucination but also to intense psychological development and pre-

paredness for the subsequent violent onslaughts and equally violent counter-attacks launched by both sides.

The Palestinians in the play have lost almost everything, their identity, homes and nationhood. The Zionists have gained what their rivals have lost. The Arab regimes, as seen by both Palestinians and Zionists, are hostile and aggressive.

In the first part of the play, the Palestinian are prepared to react mainly against Arab oppression. The confrontation adds fuel to their already fiery relationship. Freedom of speech or action are not allowed to the Palestinians. They appear in the play either besieged or slaughtered, but not, of course, without challenge. They also launch their violent campaigns against their main enemies, the Israelis. Māzin, the Palestinian, frustrated and alienated by the siege imposed on him and his people, manages to escape and struggles against the Zionists. Māzin's death suggests that conflict has been taking place off-stage, yet this part of the conflict is an essential part of the plot. The episodes of conflict which follow that event are mainly motivated by Māzin's rise and fall.

However, by the end of the first part there is an unexpected Israeli attack on the Arabs and the Palestinians and much of their land is occupied. A fresh outbreak of relentless physical and mental struggle starts between the Palestinians and the Israelis. This time the conflict takes

place on stage. Both sides are portrayed as stubborn and resolute. Neither is prepared to give up or compromise. Each party starts an offensive and resists the offensive of the other and so forth until the end of the play. Samson is victorious and succeeds in almost destroying the Palestinians. Māzin, 'Āṣim and many others are dead and Rīm is wounded and in captivity, but Samson fails to impose his conditions. In other words he fails to defeat his opponents. 'Āṣim is captured by the Israelis. He will be pardoned, he is told by Samson, provided he first steps on his rifle. Realizing the humiliation he would suffer from such a gesture, 'Āṣim strongly and proudly rejects the "offer":

ماسورة هذا المدفع هي عنقي ..
 كيف يدوس الواحد منا يا شمشون على عنقه
 مرّت سنوات كنا فيها يا شمشون بلا أعناق ...
 حتى أمسكنا بالمدفع،
 حتى صارت ماسورة هذا المدفع هي عنق الواحد منا يا شمشون.
 إنك لن تفهمنا أبدا .

The gun-barrel is my own neck!
 How could anyone step on his own neck, Samson?
 Some years ago we had no necks as such,
 Yet when we got the machine-gun
 Both our necks and gun-barrels were united.
 You will never understand us, Samson.(4)

'Āṣim is stabbed each time he refuses, until at last he falls dead.

A similar confrontation takes place between Rīm and Rachel and Samson. In captivity, Rīm is promised by Samson that she will be released and reunited with her lost son, provided she collaborates against her comrades in arms. She refuses,

declaring that she will never be a traitor and that her son has become like a drop of blood in her own veins.

Haunted by Delilah's ghost, Rachel wants Rīm to confess that she is Delilah. Rīm persists under interrogation that she is not Delilah but Rīm. That drives Rachel into a passion, and she gashes Rīm's shoulder with a broken bottle.

Apart from this conflict between two hostile forces, there is an inner psychological conflict which shakes Samson's and Rachel's superiority considerably. The ghost of ancient Delilah and the defeated ancient Samson create in them a deep sense of insecurity. In the fourth tableau of the second part, Samson is seen restless and drunk. An expressive dialogue between him and Rachel reveals how deeply the undefeated 'Āṣim and Rīm disturb them:

شمشون : تلك المرأة يا راحيل..
يوجد في داخلها شيء لا يكسر ...
راحيل : إنك متعب .
شمشون : لا بدّ وأن أكسر تلك المرأة ...
راحيل : ما زالت ريم هي الأقوى
ما لم تكسرها .
أنا لا أهذي يا شمشون .

Samson: Oh Rachel, that woman...
has something which cannot be broken.
Rachel: You are tired, Samson.
Samson: That woman must be broken...
Rachel: Rīm is still the strongest
if she is not broken.
That's the truth, Samson!(5)

On the other hand, a sense of guilt has become a characteristic of the Palestinian psyche. The Palestinians

are compelled as a consequence of the war to abandon their homes and belongings and are not allowed to return. They are tormented by that. In an argument between the Father and 'Āsim about the miserable conditions of the Palestinians in exile, the Father tells his son:

كان علينا أن نذبح فوق العتبة ...
ولا نرفع قدما عن تلك العتبة .

We should have been slaughtered on the threshold ...
Rather than lift a foot beyond it.(6)

Rīm says much the same.(7) However, living for years in exile; that sense of deep regret is not only accompanied by torment but also by a pent-up anger which constantly fuels the fires of conflict.

It should be noted that the sense of insecurity on the Israeli part and the sense of guilt on the Palestinian part do not seem to give the writer scope for any dramatic transition in the structure of the characters. On the contrary, the Israeli sense of insecurity and their realization of their failure , despite their superiority, to impose their conditions, heighten their crazed determination to continue on the same path. Their superiority does not give them enough confidence to deal differently with the opponents they have overcome. "Fire and sword" is their only response. On the other hand, the Palestinian's sense of guilt and their indisputable awareness of injustice deepen their rebellious attitude and drive them to further confrontations, regardless of the heavy price.

As a result of that unyielding spirit, neither the severity of the dramatic tension nor the intensity of the dramatic situation are reduced. The power of antagonism is too strong to break. This does not help the plot to move towards its explosive climax, its final denouement. The final turning point which might change the whole course of action is not clearly seen or felt. There is an unbreakable impasse. Samson holds his cannon tightly, and Rīm waits patiently for his fall.

The absence of a breakthrough is inevitable intellectually as well as artistically. Intellectually, it is pointless for those who have unfulfilled hopes, rights and aspirations to surrender and accept final defeat, whatever their sufferings. It is just as inappropriate for those who are intoxicated with power and obsessed by insecurity to give in easily. Moreover, the balance of power typifies the conflict. We witness the material superiority of the Israelis versus the moral superiority of the Palestinians. This balance gives the confrontation the highest degree of momentum and energy.(8) Artistically, absence of breakthrough is inevitable because the antagonistic characters are built in such a strong manner that any radical change in the path of their struggle and their opposition to each other would only weaken the structure of the play, if not destroy its aesthetic harmony.

Similarly, in الباب (The Door), we witness a gradual process of conflict with no imminent reconciliation. The play

opens with and continues through a crisis, the hardship caused by drought and by exclusion from the homeland, and ends in stalemate. Shaddād is unable to break through the locked door, the key to man's self-determination and repatriation.

Between the rise and the fall of the curtain, there are two major phases of conflict. The first one is short and quick. It takes place between Habā, who is believed to be responsible for the drought and 'Ād, who wants to end it by all means other than pleading. Their collision ends with the crushing defeat of 'Ād.

The second phase emerges smoothly from the first. Shaddād continues in his father's path. He fights Habā in order to achieve not only the self-determination which his father has failed to gain, but also a new target, the return to his nation. Both purposes are now rolled into one, involving the search for personal as well as national identity.

Realizing that this purpose must be fulfilled fully and with resolution, the writer designed the process of conflict to go through three phases. The first is the psychological preparation of Shaddād, his Mother and his son Marthad to live with the idea that challenging Habā is necessary and inevitable and likely to lead to Shaddād's death.

The second is the actual physical confrontation between

Shaddād and Habā. Shaddād marches with his forces to Iram. God Habā is lying in wait. A horrific fight breaks out in which Shaddād and his forces are completely destroyed.

The third phase is the intellectual confrontation between Shaddād and Habā in the Kingdom of the Dead. Shaddād scores on many points and Habā's superiority begins to crumble. He stops being in full control of human affairs. He proves to be a phantom created in man's image in a specific historic setting:

لقد خلقت نفسي قدرا حين كان الناس

عاجزين عن صنع أقدارهم .

I created my absolute authority when people were unable to master their own fates.(9)

However, the finishing blow does not come. Habā's final defeat might take place in the onlookers' or readers' imaginative world, but not on the stage. Shaddād's withdrawal in the face of Habā is very unlikely. His determination is too immense for retreat. He is signally defeated in his first confrontation with Habā, but he insists on questioning, even interrogating Habā in the Kingdom of the Dead, with no acknowledgement of defeat. Yet, aside from the imaginative world of the audience, the equation might be different. As mentioned above, the final round of conflict, the apparent finale, is inconclusive. It testifies a standstill materially as well as artistically. Neither of the opposed forces is completely shaken. Habā confidently tells Shaddād, at the

end of their struggle, about his formidable strength:

هذه مملكتي ! هذا الباب فقط : مملكة صغيرة ولكنها
 منيعة . العرش المجهول هو سرّ منعتها ، والصولجان
 غير المرئي هو حارسها الأبدي .

My kingdom is but this door. It is tiny, yet mighty.
 The unknown throne is the secret of its strength, and
 the unseen sceptre is its eternal guard.(10)

Shaddād, in turn, has confidence in his own final victory.

As he tells one of the men in the Kingdom of the Dead:

لسوف أنهد على الباب حتى أحطمه أو يحطمني . ولسوف
 ينهدون هم عليه من الخارج ... حتى يذوب ... ولو
 كلّف ذلك أن أبقي واقفا تحت مصراعيه إلى الأبد .

I will throw my weight on the door until one or the
 other of us is destroyed, and they will do the same from
 their side until it melts... even if we strain at the
 door until the end of the world.(11)

This stalemate, however, is a natural result of Shad-
 dād's still indecisive arguments against Habā and of the
 clear understanding by the writer that human capacity needs
 more time in order to achieve full self-determination for
 mankind.

Conflict and Resolution

Conflict in dramas which represent this trend takes a
 different course, intellectually as well as aesthetically.
 Solutions for national or social dilemmas seem always to be

ready, the bad must be defeated by the good, the oppressor must be overthrown by the oppressed, the traitor must disappear or clear his conscience, the Israeli security machine must fall before the Palestinian revolutionary movement, and so on.

With such prior conclusions, the process of conflict in such plays does not always progress in a gradual, consistent and convincing manner. We witness a technique in which forces of conflict in a play advance smoothly in some stages, leap hastily and turn sharply in others.

The conflict of *في سبيلك يا وطن* (Qaraqāsh), *قرقاش* (For the Sake of the Nation) and *شعب لن يموت* (A People Who Will Not Die) will be discussed in this connection to show the artistic elements which characterize this trend.

The first two plays not only serve as typical examples of this trend but represent a new concept of conflict. In both plays, the mainstream of conflict takes place between forces within one or other camp, Israeli or Palestinian. The two plays have essentially the same theme. Their conflict centres on how to solve the Palestinian dilemma. Nevertheless, they adopt different approaches.

The first play concentrates on the Israeli camp. The writer, al-Qāsim, is an Israeli Arab who is a member of the Israeli Communist Party, Rakah. Rakah believes that the people of Israel must and will have a strong say in resolving

the Israeli-Arab conflict. The Zionist-Israeli ruling class, it says, is a chauvinist and oppressive force. Its downfall must be brought about by Israel's oppressed people.

قرقاش (Qaraqāsh) is written against this background. The Minister and the Nobles led by Qaraqāsh represent the semi-feudal class, the thesis. The oppressed, the anti-thesis, is represented by the Peasants together with an enlightened Soldier and a down-to-earth Prince. Contradiction between both forces leads to the overthrow of the ruling class in accordance with the belief and by the design of the writer.

It can be said that some stages of the conflict would pass an artistic test but others could hardly do so. The play starts with a very short premise (100 words) which indicates severe economic hardship. The Peasants demand the Nobles' help and explanation of the causes of the problem. Mass riots and chaos off-stage are reported by the Revolutionary Peasant. The Nobles react angrily. Qaraqāsh comes on the scene, starts cursing and humiliating the Peasants in a very contemptuous manner, and praises himself in the most arrogant way. However, he is daringly challenged by the Revolutionary Peasant. In this brief, heated confrontation some sort of revolutionary aims might have arisen among the Peasants. Instead, surprisingly, the Peasants are easily incited by Qaraqāsh against their fellow revolutionary. They kill him by their own hands. Thus the first tableau ends, a brief episode of conflict which is neither developed nor

convincing.

At another stage of conflict the Prince falls in love with a Peasant Girl. While on a hunting trip, Qaraqāsh meets the Peasants celebrating the harvest and goes out of his way to humiliate them. The Prince leaves the royal procession and joins the Peasants, an action which can hardly be seen as a natural development. All of a sudden, the Prince breaks the prevailing gloomy atmosphere, approaches the beautiful young Peasant Girl and starts talking romantically to her. It does not take long before she is sharing with him his romantic dreams, a scene which can be easily traced to Arab folk-tales where a rich prince and a beautiful poor peasant fall in love with each other. The Peasant Girl says:

حين يمر ضباب الحلم ..
تبدأ رحلتها الأسطورة .
حين يمر ضباب الحلم ..
تلقاني ساجدة بين يديك
كفراشة سهل مسحورة .
حين يمر ضباب الحلم ..
مرني أتبعك إلى بحر الظلمات ،
وأجوب الجزر النارية
ظلاً ينشد إلى قدميك .

When the misty dream floats by,
 Legend embarks for eternity.
 You find me kneeling at your feet
 like an entranced butterfly
 As the misty dream floats by.
 I'll drift with you o'er the darkling sea
 Floating round the isles of fire.
 I your shadow everywhere.(12)

As an isolated poem inspired by folk-lore, this might be a charming fantasy for those who believe that women should submit to men, but our judgement is rather different if we look at it as part of a dramatic process. As pointed out by Mathews, there is no masterpiece of the drama in which the poetic quality, however remarkable, is not sustained by a solid structure of dramatic technique.(13) This romantic poetic image shifts the play's course of conflict. The Prince finds himself in the Peasants' camp; an inevitable antagonist changes, suddenly, into an ally, with neither intellectual nor aesthetic justification.

Further on in the play another fundamental change in the course of conflict takes place, namely the killing of the Prince and his young lover. As Qaraqāsh knows that a prince in his kingdom is in love with a commoner, he orders both to be killed. His order is quickly executed. This single action leads strongly towards the climax, while the main series of actions (the constant humiliation of peasants, the killing of their comrades, the unjust trial of the innocent, the economic crisis, etc.) do not seem to have any decisive dramatic drive. However, in a mass uprising, the Peasants attack Qaraqāsh's palace and proclaim the end of his tyranny.

From a mechanical point of view, the revolution at the end of the play might seem fairly logical, but intellectual revolutionary intentions cannot by themselves create a convincing denouement for a supposedly revolutionary situation. The force which topples Qaraqāsh lacks a well-designed intellectual or artistic construction. It is not portrayed as having developed any prior, solid organization or solidarity to enable it to launch a full-scale revolution, let alone a successful one. Neither is there any dynamic development or change in the mentality and attitudes of the people who take the actions. At the beginning of the play, they are easily brainwashed by Qaraqāsh into murdering their fellow Revolutionary Peasant, who dares to challenge Qaraqāsh. Qaraqāsh's repressive and humiliating treatment of the Peasants continues throughout the play without any real awareness on the part of the Peasants of their need to organize for action against Qaraqāsh. Through a melodramatic jump, the writer imposes his "cooked" solution to a complicated dilemma.

The second play, *في سبيلك يا وطن* (For the Sake of the Nation), traces the course of conflict in Palestine during the British Mandate. Land-sale by Arab landlords to Jews was seen in Palestinian nationalist circles as a highly detrimental process. A judgement in which an individual or an establishment was classified as patriot or traitor could be mainly dependent on one's position with regard to land-sale. The appreciation of one's culture was also considered essential in a nationalist character.

It was against this background that the Tarazī brothers presented this work. Their middle-class background has a strong influence on the course of conflict in the play. As the Palestinian middle-class has produced land-brokers, land-salesmen and people who have no appreciation of their native culture, our writers, like many other middle-class intellectuals at that time, did not like to see people of their class accused of treason or underhand behaviour. Their sincere sense of guilt and shame is artificially transferred to some of their characters, whose dishonesty is an established fact. It is consequently natural to find that some movements of the conflict are inconsistent, especially at the end of the play.

There are two groups of characters in the play who think and act differently from each other. The first is extremely active in establishing a land-sale business. Abū Ḥilmī, a principal character in this group, arranges a huge sale of land and then dismisses his secretary who refuses to type the land-sale contract. In a monologue, he expresses his determination to pursue his business and his conviction that what he is doing is right for him and his people:

ألا أتوخى رفع الفقر والبؤس عن كاهل هؤلاء المساكين ؟ ...
 سيستعيضون من الأرض مالا ومن الفقر ثروة ... وهب أنني
 دعيت خائناً ، فما الذي يضرني إذا امتلأت خزائني بالمال ؟ ...
 سأسير في طريقي إلى النهاية ... فأقبض على الدرهم صاحب السلطان .

The peasants will benefit: they'll get rich... So long as I get a really big amount of money nothing will happen to me, even if I am looked on as a traitor...

I'll go my own way anyway, right to the end... That way I'll get heaps of money... and power too.(14)

As the plot develops, Abū Ḥilmī bribes a journalist to forge facts about the land-sale, and he succeeds in persuading the Mukhtars to go ahead with the plan to sell their villages' land by exploiting their naivety and poverty and using every possible means to cheat, brainwash and blackmail them. Afterwards, his tactful approach changes to a blatant one; the peasants are dismissed from their land after the sale and go back to him for help, but he orders them to be shown out of his house:

أخرجهم ولا ترني وجوههم •

Show them out! I don't want to see them.(15)

he tells his servant.

Abū Ḥilmī's ruthlessness extends even to his dealings with his own son. Knowing about his father's business, Ḥilmī acts to persuade him not to pursue such treachery. His father responds angrily:

إتك يا بني لا تزال غرّاً جاهلاً •

My son, you are still inexperienced and ignorant!(16)

Ṣubḥī's actions are similar to those of Abū Ḥilmī. He has a share in Abū Ḥilmī's business. He identifies himself with European values more than with his national ones. In short, his participation in the movement of conflict is complementary to Abū Ḥilmī's.

However, all the movements of this first group of characters are confronted by the second group, who defend Arab values and culture and work to preserve land in Arab hands. Their actions are not strong enough successfully to halt or counter the steps taken by their rivals, however. Nevertheless, their challenge takes the plot forward some distance. Still, the writers have already made up their minds on another point of destination, a mere wishful thinking. Through a melodramatic ruse the confrontation diffuses and the conflict is somehow metamorphosed into reconciliation. Ṣubḥī commits suicide owing to his reported inability to cope with his undisclosed problems. All the same he does not forget on his deathbed to wish Ḥilmī, whom he has tried to thwart, success with his national aspirations. Abū Ḥilmī regrets and repents his unpatriotic activities, and clears his conscience by pledging to help the peasants by every possible means. He also relinquishes all the property gained through his land-sale business to his son Ḥilmī, who has been his chief antagonist, granting him the right to do as he pleases with it.

The drastic change in the movement of conflict which results in such an artificial reconciliation between the rivals certainly causes great damage to the aesthetic construction of the play. One can understand the writers' concern about the nation but cannot justify their ideal concept of a "pure" Palestinian. Nor can one justify the writers' disregard for the aesthetics of dramatic conflict.(17) The erratic movement of the conflict in their

play interrupts the dialectical line between the thesis and the antithesis, between those who follow self-interest at the expense of the nation and those who believe that the interests of the nation come first. These two different attitudes are forced into a mechanical reconciliation to produce an abstract concept of "pure" nationalism.

The third representative play of this trend of conflict, شعب لن يموت (A People Who Will Not Die), has been chosen for its direct connection with the contemporary Palestinian resistance movement. The period in which this play was introduced and staged was unusual in the Israeli-Palestinian confrontation. As noted earlier, Palestinian self-confidence was tremendously restored after years of depression and alienation, with the emergence of a new strategy, the guerilla warfare for the liberation and independence of Palestine. Revolutionary slogans such as "Imperialist Occupying Forces are no more than Paper Tigers facing the Revolutionaries" caught the political imagination of the time. The Palestinian Fedayeen rose triumphantly where the Arabs had collapsed in defeat. Many successful operations were launched against Israel by the new movement. The Fidā'ī was hailed by the Arab media as "superman", "great hero", "the only hope of salvation", etc.. In short, there was an exaggerated, euphoric revivalistic mood.

This exultant, clamorous atmosphere is reflected almost literally in the play. It begins with a convincing premise: the intention of the Israelis to build a luxury hotel on

confiscated Arab land, formerly a cemetery, in Jaffa. Furious conflict arises. Two strong determined forces face each other. the Israelis in full power and the Palestinians full of frustration and humiliation. However, the real national conflict materializes gradually in the play to serve as a comprehensive background to the relatively minor theme of the play.

The first act reveals a group of Palestinian youths organizing themselves to confront the Israeli plan. The first movement of the actual confrontation starts with revolutionary-organized popular unrest. This takes place mainly off-stage. The Israeli side tries unsuccessfully to defuse the situation through an attempt to bribe Maḥmūd, a well-known figure in his area. By the end of this act, revolutionary cells are ordered to lead the uprising, an action which gives a new momentum to the already inflammable conflict. The expected bloody confrontation takes place in the first half of the second act. In the second half of the act another severe flare-up takes place in a prison. Violence and cruelty are practiced by the Israelis in an extremely unusual manner. Colonel Ben Yāmīn, who loses an eye in the confrontation, leads the investigation of Maḥmūd, pressing him to reveal what he knows about the revolutionary activists in the area. Maḥmūd obstinately refuses to cooperate. He is subjected to incredible torture, including electric shock treatment, until he dies, but before his death, Maḥmūd is able to strangle an investigator with prison chains.

In this prison confrontation, both parties exchange the most hysterical threats of revenge and contempt. This gives one the impression that a solution to the conflict is almost impossible. Maḥmūd tells Ben Yāmīn:

إِنَّ فلسطين ... لا تتسع إلا لشعب واحد
هو نحن أصحاب هذه الأرض .

Palestine... can only have one people... We are the owners of the land... This land is ours.(18)

Ben Yāmīn's response is similar:

إنني لن أرتاح إلا عندما أرى رصاص مسدسي يستقر
في أحشاء آخر عربي في إسرائيل .. بل لن أرتاح
حتى يقضى على آخر عربي على وجه الكرة الأرضية .

I'll never rest until my bullets spill the guts of the last Arab in Israel, before the extermination of every Arab on earth.(19)

The only difference between the two is that Maḥmūd speaks loudly, directly to his enemy, while Ben Yāmīn's feelings are expressed aside to a fellow Israeli.

The conflict, however, does not end at this stage. A successful undercover struggle has been going on since the beginning of the play. Zuhayr is accused, by his fellow Palestinians, of collaboration with the Israeli security forces. The Israelis also believe he is their genuine agent. On the surface he appears to be an Israeli agent, but in reality he is working for the Palestinian resistance. Thanks to his easy access to Israeli security offices, Zuhayr

creates an atmosphere of terror in security circles. He secretly plants revolutionary leaflets in the offices of security chiefs. His friendly behaviour with them gains their confidence and trust. As in detective films and novels where double agents make secret, well-planned moves, Zuhayr's movements take us by surprise. Ben Yāmīn has had a mental breakdown. An ambulance comes for him, but Zuhayr's revolutionary unit is watching the house. They ambush the ambulance, disguise themselves as medical staff, and fetch Ben Yāmīn. It is a case of crime and punishment:

بنيامين : طبعاً أنا الكولونيل بن يامين .. ناشر الرعب
في صفوف العرب ... أنا قاتل محمود .

الطبيب الأول : أنت قاتل الصباغ يا كلونيل ؟!

بنيامين : نعم أنا قاتله ، أنا قاتله .. آه .. آه ..
أنا قاتله (يضحك) .

الطبيب الأول : وما جزاء القاتل يا بنيامين ؟

بنيامين : القاتل .. القاتل .. ولماذا هذا السؤال ؟

الطبيب الأول : أجبني عن سؤالي .. ما جزاء القاتل في القانون ؟

بنيامين : (برعب) القاتل ؟! يقتل .. يقتل .

Ben Yāmīn: Of course it is I, Colonel Ben Yāmīn, who plant terror in Arabs' lives... I am the killer of Maḥmūd!

1st Doctor: You killed Ṣabbāgh, Colonel?

Ben Yāmīn: (cheerfully) Of course! Yes, me! I killed him.

1st Doctor: What is the penalty for killers... Ben Yāmīn?

Ben Yāmīn: Killers? Killer? Why do you ask me such a question?

1st Doctor: Answer my question. What is the lawful punishment for murder?

Ben Yāmīn: (frightened) Death... death.(20)

At this point, the doctor and his team reveal themselves as Zuhayr and his comrades. Ben Yāmīn and his assistant are

stabbed to death. Thus the conflict ends with the victory of the complete and pure hero and the fall of his incompetent and wicked adversary. The Palestinian "must not" be defeated in this conflict. Due to this "must not", the whole structure of the conflict is built up to lead to the wished-for result, the Israeli fall. It has to be said, however, that there is nothing erratic in the course of conflict in this play. The Israeli characters are portrayed as strong and resolute but with considerable contradictions both among themselves and within each one of them. The Palestinian characters are not so. They are purely strong and courageous. This is simply unreal, but the writers planned it so from the start. It is therefore to be expected that the party which has stronger determination will win.

The detective-film technique of conflict is successfully employed in this play. As mentioned earlier, it creates elements of surprise and suspense which give excitement to readers and onlookers, but the rhetorical style of conflict weakens the aesthetic potential of the conflict. ZuhaYr does not forget to tell Ben Yāmīn before he stabs him:

حاشا أن يوجد في شعبنا خائن أو عميل . كلنا شوّار .

No Arab can be a traitor or agent. All of us are revolutionaries.(21)

It might be argued, nevertheless, that committed writers of an exceptional dramatic period of time might not find it easy to comply with strict measures of aesthetics when they construct their conflict. Also it might be said that the

writers' choice of characters has lead inevitably to that result. His characters are mainly intelligence men and revolutionaries. Such characters are expected to be severe, merciless and uncompromising.

One can understand that such characters would engage in an uncompromising conflict. Nevertheless this kind of conflict does not have to be constructed in a rhetorical style to be effective. Conflict can be highly dramatic without using grand words or loud voices. This by no means suggests that the play lacks the necessary aesthetic elements of the conflict. It basically needs a lower tone of rhetoric to maintain the subtlety which is required for good conflict.

The two kinds of conflict mentioned above reflect the psychological conditions in Palestinian reality. A resolvable outcome of the Palestinian conflict, nationally and culturally, is considered by many intellectuals to be neither real nor possible at this stage of history. The opponents are strong enough to survive each other's attempts to "break through". The correspondence between the intellectual and aesthetic aspects of conflict in the plays which represent this trend of thinking is significant. It creates a sense of equilibrium both in the play and the psyche of the onlooker or reader. It should be noted, nevertheless that such equilibrium does not, by any means, bring peace to the reader or onlooker. The reverse might be correct. It creates a particular atmosphere, a continuous state of tension. It stimulates, mentally and spiritually without being emotional and

teaches without being a sermon. It gives the audience its message in a subtle aesthetic manner. It tells us, indirectly, that the conflict is not yet over; the purification or catharsis, to use Aristotle's term, cannot be achieved unless we ourselves do something, the stalemate must be broken outside the theatre, the characters' responsibility ends at the fall of the curtain and our turn must come to carry that responsibility.

Some intellectuals, on the other hand, approach the dilemma differently. Influenced by an overheated imagination, they are convinced by an ideal necessity rather than by the necessity of reality. Their idealism leads them to believe that the Palestinian "must not" cooperate with the forces of occupation, "must not" sell his land to the enemy, "must" be perfect. If in reality some of these "musts" and "must nots" or assumptions prove to be unrealistic or irrelevant, then reality "must" be ignored or rejected.

This intellectual approach has, as shown in the discussion, a strong influence on the aesthetic structure of conflict in some plays. As noted then, the conflict is resolved to the advantage of the "good" without taking into consideration in most cases the real power of the forces of conflict and their capacities.

The unsubtle manifestation of this kind of conflict in some plays renders them unconvincing. The false reconciliation which brings the movement of the play to its end (For

the Sake of the Nation) or the hasty victory of the oppressed people (Qaraqāsh) might, superficially, please naive readers or onlookers and give them temporary relief, but it does not help to create in them a state of active or dynamic response. Nor does it fire their imagination or intensify their rebellious will.

Footnotes

- (1) See Blechanov: "Taṭawwur al-Naṣrah al-Wāḥidiyyah ilā al-Tārīkh", pp70ff; and Tulaymah: "Fī al-Bad' Kān al-ʿAmal", ppl6ff.
- (2) Aristotle's concept of "Imitation" in drama is described in Butcher: "Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art", ppl16ff,121ff.
- (3) Nicoll: "An Introduction to Dramatic Theory", p40
See also Bradley: "Shakespearean Tragedy", pp7,11, 19ff; Ould: "The Art of the Play", p35; Egri: "The Art of Dramatic Writing; Its Basis in the Creative Interpretation of Human Motives", pp75,174-5; Lumley: "New Trends in 20th Century Drama", pl5; and al-Ḥakīm: "Pygmalion", the introduction, pl2.
- (4) Bsaisū: "Shamshūn wa Dalīlah", p321.
- (5) Ibid., p316.
- (6) Ibid., p226.
- (7) Ibid., pp221-2.
- (8) The dramatic effect created by a rising and balanced conflict between two determined forces in a play is discussed in Egri: op.cit., ppl58ff.
- (9) Kanafānī: "Al-Bāb", pl10.
- (10) Ibid., pl20.

- (11) Ibid., p119.
- (12) Al-Qāsim: "Qaraqāsh", p46.
- (13) Clark: "European Theories of the Drama", p473.
- (14) Tarazī: "Fī Sabīlik yā Waṭan", pp34-5.
- (15) Ibid., p63.
- (16) Ibid., p46.
- (17) The damage which "jumping conflict" causes to a play's structure is described in Egri: op.cit., ppl42ff.
- (18) Fataā al-Thawrah: "Shaʿb Lan Yamūt", p70.
- (19) Ibid., p85.
- (20) Ibid., p113.
- (21) Ibid., p114.

Chapter VII

CHARACTER

People are the most significant element in history. Their actions constitute the essence of the human story. It is to be expected that *dramatis personae* enjoy paramount importance in their special field; one cannot talk about drama as a significant artistic and social phenomenon without putting characters in their proper place at the front. They play, as most critics suggest, the most vital part in the art of dramatic writing. Dramatic character is: first, the playwright's tool in translating the story of the play into action. It creates the plots and actions which form the main structure of the play's theme. Secondly, it offers, through what it does, says, reveals or conceals, through its feelings, thoughts, struggles or problems, the most lively dramatic material. Thirdly, it is the most interesting aspect of the play for readers and audience, for when character is portrayed fully, "in the round", the reader or play-goer gains in understanding of and involvement with this character and people with similar features and problems.(1)

In this chapter consideration is given to the creation of character in Palestinian drama and to the question of whether character holds in it such a central place as suggested above. To answer this question we must consider the means and techniques by which the characters are constructed. Two distinctive types of characters can be traced in Palest-

inian drama: characters as symbols for ideas and flesh-and-blood characters.

Characters as Symbols

Representatives of this kind of characters are usually one-dimensional creations. They represent ideas or issues with which they are thoroughly involved. They are not concerned with everyday relationships, contacts or situations unless they have a direct connection with the central plot of the play. This suggestion does not mean, as will be shown, that these characters lack the warmth or liveliness which are usually experienced in flesh-and-blood characters. The construction of representative characters in a few plays will be discussed in some detail to illustrate the aesthetics of this type of characterization.

الباب (The Door), for example, has eleven characters, one major and the rest minor. The process of characterization is consistent and coherent. This applies to the characters as individuals, as a group in entirety, and in relationship one with another.

Shaddād, the hero of the play, is a strong and determined character. His activities, intellectual and physical, suggest that he is a symbol for national as well as philosophical awareness. He is a symbol of the dispossessed Palestinian who is looking for a national identity (the national

dimension), and a symbol of the Palestinian unbeliever who is searching for an intellectual identity (the philosophical dimension). In other words, Shaddād is an intellectual concept of Palestinian alienation, a symbol of the Palestinian who has lost his harmony with the environment, who has lost his nation as well as his faith in God. In this alienation, he challenges everyone, including God Habā:

أريد الذهاب إليه بملء إرادتي ... لسوف يكون بوسعي
بوسعي أن أواصل رحلتي إليه خطوة خطوة ، لا الخوف
يردني عنه ، ولا اليأس يسد أمامي طريقي .

I want to go to him of my own free will... I will continue my journey to him step by step. Fear will not put me off, nor will despair obstruct my way to him.(2)

All dramatic lines in the play lead to Shaddād, in that almost all other characters, except Habā, enjoy no real significance. They strive hard to strengthen their position in the play, but in vain. Shaddād dismisses their arguments as inaccurate or pointless. This he does with his Mother, Marthad his son, and the two young Dead Men. In an attempt to dissuade Shaddād from taking any action to confront Habā and go to Iram, Marthad asks his father to have faith in life and to be optimistic. Shaddād answers that Marthad's approach lacks depth of experience:

مرشد : تريد أن تذهب إلى إرم رغم الموت الذي
يربط لك الطريق ؟!

شَدَاد : يا بني العزيز يا مرشد ! لقد سئمت ...
غدا حين تكبر ستعرف ماذا تعني كلمة
السأم هذه .

مرشد : أنت متشائم يا والدي ...

شَدَاد : هذا الكلام قديم قدم الكذب نفسه . ألسنت
تري أن التفاؤل هو كذب وجبن ؟!

Marthad: Do you want to go to Iram even though death is lying in wait for you there?

Shaddād: My dear son Marthad, I have had enough of life. ... In old age you will understand the tedium of living.

Marthad: You are pessimistic, Father....

Shaddād: How stupid! Don't you see that pessimism is courage? Can't you understand that optimism is untruthfulness and cowardice.(3)

It should be noted that Marthad's failure, and indeed the failure of the other characters, to influence Shaddād in his course of action is due more to Shaddād's irresistible determination than to weakness in the other characters or their arguments. However, to give more strength to these characters would be to change the course of the play, and would overshadow Shaddād's determination to fulfil his mission. Other minor characters such as Marthad, the Mother, and the two Dead Men are meant to be supportive figures or enabling aspects of the story. Their level of strength is in complete harmony with the degree of their involvement in the plot. These characters are introduced, it seems, to reveal the different aspects of Shaddād's cause and intention rather than their own.

Shaddād's iron determination suggests that he is just an embodied cause. This does not mean that Shaddād's character is an abstract or intellectual construction. He also undertakes great struggles that make him appear as a human embodiment of an intellectual design. In an imbalanced and unequal battle, Shaddād physically confronts God Habā. This causes a radical change in his character as well as in the course of events in the play. Shaddād loses the battle and

meets his death. This event leads to new episodes. Shaddād is revived in order to meet Habā and the two young Dead Men in the Kingdom of the Dead where a round of abstract philosophical conflict takes place.

Shaddād, portrayed to represent a cause, is a one-dimensional character. Almost nothing is revealed about him as an individual, about his personal life and about his relationships with other people. He has no emotional or human aspect independent of the role he is designed to play in the formation of the major plot. In short, he has no relationships beyond that all-consuming cause he represents. Yet the complexity and roundness of his temperament and motivation, his intellectual and sometimes physical activities, his genuine determination, his dynamic belief in human capacity to master itself, the sacrifices he makes, his treatment of God Habā as an illusion which is created by man himself: all these characteristics provide Shaddād and the play as a whole with a good deal of vitality.

One might condemn Shaddād's tragic victory if victory means that the hero makes us feel joyful when he sacrifices himself, but one should distinguish between vainglorious sacrifice and sacrifice for a cause. One might recall Arthur Miller's concept of victory in death: "In a great variety of ways", he argues, "death, the ultimate negative, can be and appears to be an assertion of bravery and can serve to separate the death of man from the death of animals." (4)

Aeschylus' Prometheus has an unmistakable resemblance to Shaddād. Being endowed with forethought, Prometheus knows what he must endure if he brings fire to man to make his survival possible. Nothing does he fail to foresee, yet he defies the God Zeus out of pity for mankind. He endures his fate, however, secure in the knowledge that necessity or destiny will ultimately end his struggle with God and relieve his age-long torment.(5) Shaddād is also endowed with forethought when he rebels against God Habā, but he is determined to carry out his promise:

أن أقاتل هبا ... وأن لا أرتدّ حتى أزرع في الأرض جنتي
أو أقتلع من السماء جنته أو أموت أو نموت معا .

to fight Habā... and not to return unless I plant my paradise on earth or uproot His paradise from Heaven, or die altogether.(6)

Shaddād is portrayed to represent a Palestinian revolutionary symbol. He goes on a journey searching for that which is splendid and noble in life and for salvation, notwithstanding that such a journey will lead to his tragic end.

Shaddād's main rival, Habā, is constructed as a symbol of supernatural power different from any other divine power we know, with contradictory traits which are a combination of two different concepts, one conventional and the other revolutionary. The first is divinity as a limitless power, seen on many occasions in the play. Luqmān expresses his faith in Habā as the most powerful ruler of the world and the

only point of reference for human action.(7) 'Ād is eliminated by clouds sent by Habā as a punishment because he dares to challenge Him.(8) In her argument with Shaddād and Murthid, the Mother mentions Habā as a crushing power.(9) This image of an almighty god is also demonstrated in the confrontation between Habā and Shaddād where Shaddād's bones melt and his sword takes the shape and colour of a stone.(10)

The second, revolutionary concept is of God as an illusion or a mere creation of man's imagination which must be uprooted from man's mind and life. When Shaddād talks to the two young Dead Men in the Kingdom of the Dead about man's humiliating experience with God, Habā comes in, in the guise of an ordinary young man. The whole image of an almighty God collapses:

شَدَّاد : صورتك في حينا ليست كذلك !
 هبا : أنتم نحتم الصورة ...
 شَدَّاد : سيصاب الناس بالجنون لو علموا !
 هبا : القصة عندكم تكبر في ثلاثة أيام ...
 شَدَّاد : ولكن .. لماذا أنت هبا ؟ لماذا ليس أنا ؟

Shaddād: Your image on earth is different!
 Habā: You created my image...
 Shaddād: People will be amazed when they realize that!
 Habā: You magnified my image...
 Shaddād: But why is it you who are Habā, why not I?(11)

Later, Habā admits that it is the inactive people who encouraged him to impose his will on them and to do things on their behalf.

The Mother is also constructed as a symbol and not a full individual. She participates in the events of the play, to play the role taken by any conventional Palestinian or Arab mother. In her arguments with her son Shaddād and her grandson Murthid, she reveals typical characteristics of a mother whose main concern is the well-being of her son and grandson, their safety, and most important of all, their religious faith. On one occasion, the Mother discusses with Shaddād his intention to go to Iram and confront Habā. She advises him to abandon his plan and to settle down, that is, to marry:

لماذا لا تكف عن هذا السخف ؟ لماذا لا تقذف بهذه
الأفكار إلى السعير وتفكر بزواجك ؟ ... حتى متى
سوف تبقى ضائعا ، حتى متى ؟!

This is ridiculous. Why don't you put such ideas out of your head and think of your marriage? ... When are you going to live the life of a respectable person, I ask you?(12)

Shaddād shows no sign of moderating his plans, and his mother answers in words typical of a conventional mother by warning him of the most terrible consequences, namely Habā's severe punishment:

الكاهن لم يكذب قط . ألف مرة تنبأ وألف مرة صدق .
لقد قال إنك إذا خرجت لإرم فستلاقي حتفك على الطريق ...
إنّ هبا لن يغفر لك قط كفرك وإنكارك .

The priest has never lied. His prophecies have always come true. He says that if you set out for Iram you'll meet your death on the way.... Habā will never forgive your atheism and your profane conduct.(13)

Another representative play is *شمشون ودليلا* (Samson and Delilah.) The characterization in this play does not claim the attention of the reader to the same extent that its theme does. Nevertheless, most of the many characters are used mainly to shed light on the different aspects of the threefold theme of the play, i.e., Palestinian defeat and resistance, official Arab oppression and Israeli military victory, and Israeli oppressive measures. In other words, characters are brought in as mouthpieces for an arrangement of arguments and not as independent entities. Except for a few, the characters are known not by individual names but by their titles, such as the Driver, the Conductor, the Father, the Mother, Woman, Face No. 1, 2, 3, etc..

According to their involvement in the plot, the characters can be divided into three groups. Rīm, the Father, the Mother, 'Āṣim, Māzin, the Man with White Bandages, Faces No. 1, 2, 3, Bathroom Attendant, Waiter, Salesman and Passengers are collectively the protagonist of the play. Each one of these characters completes and sometimes repeats the others. Most of them appear as different faces of one cause or one person. They are presented in the play as refugees. Their sufferings, aspirations and dreams are the same. From their speeches one learns that they lost their homes and nation as well as dignity in the first war with the Zionists. Some of them suffer a deep sense of guilt because of their failure to resist the enemy to the end. On the other hand these characters have not had a better deal in those Arab countries where they have taken refuge. They were never granted any

freedom of expression, nor were they allowed to take action against their Zionist enemy from Arab territory.

More than one technique of character-drawing is used in the play to reveal the main characters. Soliloquy and monologue, which bear considerable resemblance to the "stream of consciousness" employed by James Joyce and others are the writer's preferred device in the construction of Rīm's character. In four tableaux out of six, Rīm talks to images, mainly that of her lost son Yūnus, the unseen but ever-present character who is a symbol for the wounded Palestinian conscience as well as the new birth. This manner of character portrayal is successful in revealing the inner aspects of Rīm's psyche. Through meditation, soliloquy, prophecy and sometimes hallucination, much of her tortured imagination, memory, conscience and her past and present life come out in bursts:

الليل طويل وأنا خائفة يا ولدي..
 الليل طويل وأنا وحدي .
 منذ رمتك يدي ،
 وأنا لا أعترف بها يا ولدي .
 أنظر ! هي ذي كفي بأصابعها الخمسة ،
 الأصبع يلعن فيها الإصبع
 خمس أفاع ... تلدغني في عنقي ،
 تلدغني في شدي ،
 تلدغني في عيني .

Night-time is long, and I'm alone, my son.
 I am tormented with fear.
 You were thrown by my hand.

Since then my hand no longer is mine.
 See, here it is with its five fingers,
 Each one cursing the other.
 They are five snakes
 Biting my breasts,
 My neck,
 My eyes.(14)

Despite her individual agonies, Rīm does not represent a particular individual woman. She is a symbol for any mother caught in the fires of war who loses her loved ones. Indeed, it is not too much to say that, except for certain long speeches, Rīm's impressive and poetic presence would stay in the memory of the reader or play-goer, not only as a vivid symbol of a Palestinian woman who suffered and resisted the oppressor, but also as a symbol of the tragedy and resistance of the Palestinian people as a whole.

The second and third groups form the antagonist in the play. The Driver, the Conductor and the Man with Overcoat represent the Arab side of the antagonist. The Driver is a symbol of the Arab leadership, the Conductor and the Man with Overcoat are symbols of the agents and ropagandists of that leadership. These characters, also, have no individual characteristics. Their traits are similar to those of agents and propagandists of any corrupt and tyrannous regime. Their only function is to deceive their people, to brainwash them, to suppress any movement which might threaten their rulers. In one episode, in which the atmosphere of war prevails, the Conductor produces a doll with an ugly hooked nose, a symbol of the Zionists, and sets fire to it in front of the passengers. This event takes place against a background of

noisy amplifiers broadcasting emotional national songs and rhetorical propaganda:

نحن العرب ..

لهب .. لهب .. لهب

غضب .. غضب .. غضب .

We the Arabs
Are flames flames flames
Are anger anger anger(15)

The Israeli side of the antagonist includes Samson and Rachel. As with Palestinian or Arab characters, so with the Israelis: they are portrayed as symbols for military tyranny and arrogance. Their quick victories over Palestinians and Arabs deepen their sense of superiority and contempt for their victims. Samson addresses the Passengers, his defeated enemies:

اقتعدوا الأرض ..

كل يقتعد الأرض ...

هذي هي كفي ..

بين الإصبع والإصبع ،

يجري نهر النيل ونهر الأردن ويجري دجلة .

تحت الظفر وفي راحة كفي أنتم ...

من يكتب منكم ،ليوقع في راحة هذي الكف ..

من لا يكتب ،فليبصم .

Sit down on the ground!
Everybody must sit down on the ground!...
The Nile, Jordan and Tigris Rivers
Flow between my fingers,
And you are under my thumb
And in the palm of my hand....
Those who can write must come over
And sign surrender on the palm of this hand.
The illiterates will be finger-printed.(16)

Another ready-made element in the Israeli character, as portrayed in the play, is its sense of insecurity. The Israeli military superiority and victories could not create any real sense of security in their souls. Rachel's imagination travels deep into ancient history where Samson died tragically at Delilah's hands. This ancient mythical nightmare tortures them. Rachel sees Delilah, the ancient nightmare, embodied in Rīm, the modern revolutionary Palestinian woman. Rachel talks to Samson about Rīm and persistently asks about her real name, and what her name was before. As Rachel meets Rīm in captivity at the end of the play, her sense of insecurity reaches its climax. She will not believe that Rīm is a real name; Delilah is the name and Rīm must be a pseudonym. Rīm, 'Āṣim, or indeed any Palestinian revolutionary must be eliminated before they strike again:

حين الرقبة تصبح ماسورة مدفع،
إلى الرقبة،
يتكسر يا شمشون المدفع،
قدرك أن تكسر أو تتكسر،
إن لنا قدرا آخر يا شمشون ...
قاتلنا الجرح الأول،
وعلينا أن لا نجرح أبدا .

When the (Palestinian) neck changes to the barrel of a
gun
It must be twisted
So that the gun can be smashed.
Your fate is to smash or be smashed.
Among all peoples, our fate is different...
Our first wound would be fatal,
So we must never be wounded.(17)

The large number of characters in the play (there are twenty of them, apart from the Chorus, Passengers, groups and others) has caused some degree of fragmentation in the plot. Faces No.1, 2, 3, for example, appear separately in the beginning of the play to speak at length about the same theme: the denial of the rights of expression and action. The same idea is repeated by the Bathroom Attendant, a Passenger, and the Chorus. The Man with White Bandages speaks about the fall of Jaffa, a theme which is repeated in different words and images by Rīm. The multitude of characters and the interchange in their roles sometimes create noisy activity on stage but do not contribute to the main action of the play, and even slow it down. Indeed, it seems evident that many of the minor characters in this play could be deleted without real loss.

We now move on to discuss the characterization in ^{قراقاش} (Qaraqāsh), a somewhat different play from the two discussed above. It is different not in terms of character portrayal but in terms of the environment in which the characters live and the ideas they represent. The protagonist characters of الباب (The Door), and ^{شمشون ودليلة} (Samson and Delilah), live on the Arab side of the border and their ideas represent a progressive Palestinian position. The protagonist and antagonist characters in ^{قراقاش} (Qaraqāsh) are Israelis and reflect conflicting Israeli viewpoints.

In an attempt to give his play universality, the writer tries to connect Qaraqāsh with tyrannical international

movements. The play starts with the chorus introducing Qaraqāsh:

في كل زمان ،
 في كل مكان ،
 يأتي في صورة إنسان .
 يأتي فيجي الموت ،
 ويظل يدوي الصوت :
 في كل زمان عاش ،
 في كل مكان عاش ،
 قرقاش ، قرقاش ، قرقاش !!

In all times,
 In all places,
 He comes in man's image.
 He rides, and Death rides with him,
 An echo howling for ever:
 He lives in all times,
 He lives in all places,
 Qaraqāsh, Qaraqāsh, Qaraqāsh.(18)

This is followed by a procession on stage of Ancient Egyptians, Ancient Greeks and Modern Europeans accompanied by the voice of Hitler. These groups, crossing the stage separately, are heavily chained and are whipped severely by their masters.

The attempt to make Qaraqāsh a universal figure as far as possible has affected the process of characterization and the nature of the characters. Except for Qaraqāsh, a figure from ancient folklore, all the characters are known by their titles and not by their individual names. There are nobles, peasants, a revolutionary peasant, a thief, soldiers, a young man, a young woman, a prince, a minister, and so on, as well as a chorus. These characters can be classified as collective symbols for the different forces of the play. Qaraqāsh,

the nobles, and others represent tyranny and exploitation. Peasants and others represent the repressed and the rebellious.

The issue of tyranny and exploitation manifests itself from the beginning until the end of the play. The first scene reveals a group of nobles confronting a group of peasants who complain against their miserable conditions. Revolutionary Peasant comes with torn blood-stained clothes to report a riot and some incidents of looting. Qaraqāsh, an absolute ruler, comes in with his men. As foretold by the chorus in the prologue, he brings with him nothing but death. At first glance, one might think that he is a caricature of a tyrant, but his traits are too monumental to amount to an ordinary caricature built up from satirical or tragic sketches. They create a vast panorama of the mentality and behaviour of an exceptional tyrant. Through his speeches and actions, Qaraqāsh is motivated solely by tyrannous desires. He is a portrait of unmitigated fury, cruelty and arrogance. Until his ultimate downfall, his main traits are scarcely modified. Basically, he is a terrifying figure from his first appearance on stage:

أنتم تماثيل حجر،
 أم يا ترى أنتم بشر؟...
 أنا وحدي أحل كل القضايا...
 يهرب القحط لو بسطت جناحي
 فوق أرض وتستجيب العطايا.

Are you statues made of stone ?
 Or are you human beings? ...

It is I who solve problems....
 My spread wings
 Banish drought
 And prosperity prevails.(19)

Qaraqāsh has no love for anyone and has no consideration for anyone's feelings. At one stage, on a hunting trip, Qaraqāsh meets peasants celebrating the harvest and speaks to them with all the contempt and arrogance of a feudal lord:

تخاف الوحوش ،
 وتخشى الطيور
 غناءكم الجهم هذا .
 ولو أنني أستطيع
 لحومكم الفظة المنتنة ،
 لما قصر السيف والقوس فيكم .

Wild beasts and birds would tremble
 At your detested singing.
 But that your flesh
 Is rotten and revolting,
 My sword and my bow
 Would end your song.(20)

He then issues a royal decree:

تتعطل كل الأعمال ...
 وتعم الفرحة كل قلوب المخلوقات
 حين تكون مشيئتنا الملكية في رحلة صيد ...

When Our Majesty is on a hunting trip,...
 There will be a public holiday
 And all creatures must be joyful.(21)

Yet, like a tyrant who lives in an age of democracy, Qaraqāsh likes to practice some forms of democracy. He asks his people how they can get rid of the drought (the economic crisis). Revolutionary Peasant is encouraged by this democratic approach and dares to suggest that they should dig a well in

their land. Qaraqāsh reacts angrily, saying that they should look for a well somewhere beyond their land. Other peasants are impressed by his charisma and his rhetorical promises.

Qaraqāsh tries other supposedly democratic forms, such as the court. On a day of justice, when books of law and the scales of justice are on show on the stage, some people stand trial for alleged crimes. The most comic and bizarre scenes of "justice" are witnessed. One of the accused is a woman who has lost her son in Qaraqāsh's war of aggression. The prosecuting Noble's accusation against her is that she has not been happy when Qaraqāsh's army went to the enemy's land to collect the harvest. The woman reacts by saying that her son did not go to war in a good cause and therefore she has no grounds for joy:

فلماذا أفرح حين يعاد إلي
 قطعة معدن ؟ !
 قطعة معدن ؟ !

Why should I feel happy when I am sent back, not my son, but just his medal?(22)

In reply to her weeping, Qaraqāsh bursts out laughing and passes two rulings: first, the appointment of one of his nobles to be a minister for grief, so that people should not feel sad any more; second, the accused woman must:

تقفين على ساق واحدة ستة أيام ...
 وقبل اليوم السادس تلدين
 سبعة أولاد.
 سابعهم يؤخذ للخدمة في الجندية !
 والستة..أيضا للخدمة في الجندية .

Stand upon one leg for six days...
 Before the end of the last day, you must give birth to
 seven boys.
 The seventh boy will be taken to military service
 And the other six.. will be taken for military service
 as well.(23)

These tyrannous games do not escape vengeance. The writer applies his ideology at the expense of the construction of his characters. The peasants in the play who represent the oppressed, yet lack any strong revolutionary will, attack Qaraqāsh's palace in a bloody revolution. Thus the life and rule of a tyrant comes to an end, the stereotype of a tyrant's end.

Symbolic portrayal of characters can be seen in the Minister, the Prince, the Revolutionary Peasant and others. The Minister, for example, is an opportunist, hypocritical, yes-man, typical of ministers who serve under absolute rulers. In one episode he meets the Prince and learns about his intention to marry a peasant woman. He talks smoothly about the nobility of the Prince, and the unfortunate possibility of his father's rejection of the match. He shows no intention of helping the Prince to do what he wants, but when the Prince hints that he is going to be the next ruler, the Minister reacts quickly:

طوع إرادتك الملكية !

طوع إرادتك الملكية !

I am Your Highness' most obedient servant,(24)

and immediately goes to Qaraqāsh and tries to find out what he thinks of the idea, by telling a fairy story of a royal

prince who falls in love with a poor woman. Qaraqāsh is furious. He orders the Minister to get the two concerned and bring him their dead bodies immediately, on pain of death. The spontaneous response of the Minister is the execution of this order without hesitation:

يا جند العدل !
 يا حراس الحكمة !
 جيئوا مولاي بجثته وبجثتها .
 الآن الآن بجثته وبجثتها .
 (مخاطبها نفسه)
 وليبق على رأسي جسدي .

O soldiers of justice,
 O guards of wisdom,
 Bring their dead bodies to His Majesty, now and without
 delay.
 (Aside)
 My head must remain on my shoulders.(25)

Can symbolic characters claim our attention as strongly as do the ideas that they represent? It is generally agreed that this kind of characterization, if successful, gives the drama an element of universality. But the identification of a character with an idea, a cause, a class or group of people, requires that the character rises above the limits and details of its own individuality, and the lack of individual elements might result in characters who lack the kind of warmth or vividness enjoyed by characters of individual dimensions. Moreover, the generalization which is usually associated with this kind of characters might force the writer to build characters of a stereotyped nature. Palestinian characters of this kind, we have seen, lack neither the vividness of individual characters nor the

abstract elements of stereotypes.

Flesh-and-Blood Characters

Characters of this kind are depicted as individuals who create and are created by events. Such characters are not employed purely as mouth-pieces or symbols for the main theme, but are also involved in other relationships and situations which reveal much of a personal, emotional or social nature. In other words, they are portrayed as flesh-and-blood, many-dimensional beings.

في سبيلك يا وطن (For the Sake of the Nation), for example, employs its characters in a variety of ways. The main theme of the play, true nationalism, is carried by fifteen characters, five of whom are major and the rest are minor. The process of characterization is fulfilled through the relationships between different characters as individuals and their relationships with the various aspects of the play's theme. Self-revelation of the characters is the main technique used in the construction of characters, though sometimes the writer intervenes.

There are two groups of characters in the play representing different values and interests. There is Abū Ḥilmī, a landlord and broker, who deals with Isaac, a Jew interested in buying Arab land. Abū Ḥilmī is helped by Subhī and defended by a bribed journalist. This group is confronted

by Ḥilmī, a nationalist who resists his father's enterprises and a participant in the National Fund and the Land Saving Company. He is supported by Hind and Rajā'. The peasants who are dismissed from their land go to Abū Ḥilmī seeking his support but he orders them out of his house. Later, however, he feels guilty about what he has done to them. He orders the whole of his property and wealth to be put at his son's disposal to distribute in whatsoever way he thinks best.

The characters are enthusiastic in their involvement in minor events and relationships as well as in their participation in the main episodes. There is a broken love affair between Hind and Ṣubḥī; a love affair between Hind and Ḥilmī; friendship between Ṣubḥī, Suād and Widād; a social relationship involving Ṣubḥī, Widād, Ḥilmī, Hind and Rajā'; a love affair and marriage between Ṣubḥī and Suād; and a work relationship between Hind and Ḥassān who work in Abū Ḥilmī's office. These relationships do not lack private individual elements which characterize the relationships of everyday life. There are gossip, parties, talk about family affairs, fashion, cars, work, politics, etc..

In addition to his role in national activities, Ḥilmī, for example, sells his car to help the nation save hard currency. He talks with his girlfriend Hind about their future relationship, and asks her to appreciate his national contribution. Despite his argument with his father on land sale business, he weeps over letters his father sends him. He also attends parties held by Ṣubḥī's group, despite their

disagreement on various matters.

Hind is portrayed as a poor, hardworking employee in Abū Ḥilmī's office, admired by Ṣubḥī, whom she doesn't like because she says he is silly and cares about nothing but new cars and fashion. She loves Ḥilmī who is "a pearl in the crown of youth" and works with him on national matters. She talks with Ḥassān, her colleague at work about life, her dead father, her mother and her feelings towards Ḥilmī and Ṣubḥī. She quits Abū Ḥilmī's office when she discovers the land-sale deals that he conducts.

Ṣubḥī plays the role of the rich young man. His involvement with land-sale business leads him to take Abū Ḥilmī's side in the national dispute. Socially, he admires Hind, and sends her letters and flowers but his failure to attract her attention makes him slander her to her boss. He is also a playboy obsessed by dancing parties and women and money. He gets married to Su'ād, but his marriage is not a happy one. He finally commits suicide.

The other characters are also involved in various situations and relationships. However, all these detailed relationships and personal concerns of these characters are connected intellectually and artistically to the major theme and movement of the play. They all serve the orchestration of the play as a whole. It is true that they are not essential for the construction of the main theme of the play, but their function is of vital importance in creating real

characters of flesh and blood, thus preventing the characters from being abstract and unreal.

It should be noted that the writer's gross distortion of the natural development of the characters has damaged the basic structure of the play. Just before the end of the play, the characteristics of Abū Ḥilmī and Ṣubḥī undergo a sudden and drastic change. With no real dramatic justification, Ṣubḥī unexpectedly commits suicide, and Abū Ḥilmī regrets his past actions, closes down his business, and surrenders his wealth to his opponent.

It is often thought that a character may undergo a radical change either through a gradual development or as a result of an extreme crisis, as in the case of King Lear, but such a change must be consistent with potentialities shown in the play. A character should not suddenly break off and act in a way conflicting with his temperament as already established throughout the play.(26) In the case of Abū Ḥilmī and Ṣubḥī, there is nothing to suggest that this kind of change in their characteristics could occur in a natural manner, although in the case of Abū Ḥilmī, there is one situation in which he reveals some sense of guilt. Through a soliloquy, he questions the fact that land-sale to the Zionists might be considered as treason, but it does not take him long to set his conscience at rest. On the one hand, he tells himself, the business he conducts helps the poor peasants; on the other hand, he wants to build as much wealth as he can.

He concludes that ends justify means:

وهب أنني دعيت خائناً ، فما الذي يضرني إذا امتلأت
خزائني بالمال ؟!

The word 'traitor' means nothing to me as long as I gain a lot of money.(27)

However, the inconsistency in the artistic and aesthetic construction of these characters is not without basis. The authors of this play did not want their characters to remain "traitors" throughout the play. They wanted, I think, to purify these characters, who represent a segment of their people. In order to achieve a dramatic reconciliation, the "pure" national conscience must triumph. One commits suicide; the other abandons his tainted wealth and comes back to the folk. This is a romantic and melodramatic conception, I believe, that causes a fundamental defect in the characters' artistic and intellectual construction. Character in a successful drama as pointed out by Styan is "not the author's raw material, it is his product. It emerges from the play, it is not put into it. It has an infinity of subtle uses, but they all serve in the orchestration of the play as a whole; and so character finds his place in the scheme.... Common sense cannot accept that a character is no more than a mouth for an arrangements of words"(28).

In العتمة (Darkness), the characters have symbolic connotations; some characters appear, as the discussion will show, partly as symbols who could be identified according to

their typical social or cultural background. The cast of this play consists of eleven characters, six of them principal, the rest subordinate and marginal. They are all keen to get rid of darkness and bring light once again. Due to this collective agreement on the main aim, the characters have no major conflict between them. The conflict is limited to the degree of enthusiasm, and to how and by whom the problem must be overcome. This creates different characters as well as different correlations and interactions among them. The nature and temperaments of the characters are completely associated with their different social and cultural background and what sex they are. There are dialectical relationships between their temperaments and their motivations and actions.

François is a committed intellectual whose progressive, practical and democratic approach makes him the most dynamic character in the play. His characteristics are mainly delineated in the course of repairing the lighting system, partly through his relationships with other characters and the audience. Other characters are to be found in François's camp. One is 'Ādil, an honest fellow of a working-class background, portrayed as a man of action. It is he who suggests, at the start of the play, bringing candles into the theatre until the lighting system is repaired, and it is he who implements this idea. In the end it is he, who without much fuss, fixes the system and brings light to the people. 'Ādil seems a coherent character, but there are two dramatic defects which make him at some stages in the play closer to a stereotype than a flesh-and-blood character. 'Ādil is

mentioned in the play as a carpenter, not an electrician. One may wonder how a character with no experience in the field is supposed to deal with a complicated system at a time when a real electrical engineer, Nādyah, fails. Secondly, 'Ādil's unexpected and sudden death, which takes place after he succeeds in repairing the system at the end of the play, makes him sound like a mouthpiece for the authors of the play. Their political stand has intervened to determine his fate. They are keen, I believe, to show through his death that the working class contribute everything, get no credit for it, and are robbed by the upper classes. It is true that 'Ādil and his class are oppressed and exploited in a class society like ours. but it is doubtful whether his symbolic death can create a successful character on the stage.

Another character, Nādyah, is a middle-class engineer and a progressive feminist who has the confidence and courage to assert the new role of women in society. She succeeds in resisting enormous pressure from other characters doing their best to prevent her from participating in fixing the system or indeed in any public activity.

A third character is Mīlād, a drunkard and unemployed man with a good deal of class awareness. In addition to his involvement in the main theme of the play, he is determined to let others know about his personal problems. He does this with humour and sarcasm, which give his character much vividness. At the beginning of the play he is portrayed sitting at the front edge of the stage drinking from a

bottle. Realizing that Mīlād is not doing his job in the lighting room, Francois becomes furious and insists that Mīlād goes immediately to the lighting room. He refuses to do so and starts telling Francois about his problems:

بحب أعرفك ، الست قزازة خضرة شغل خوارنة،

حاكم الخوارنة بيتوصوا بالستات !

I'd like to tell you that Lady Green-Bottle is church-made. I suppose you know how fond priests are of ladies?(29)

He then talks to "Lady Green-Bottle" as a friend who sympathizes with and understands him. For him, this green bottle is marvellous because "she" does not exploit him like Um Elias, the wife of his previous boss:

إم الياس... من العيادة تبعطني أشغل في البستان ،
بتنادي علي أساعدها في المطبخ ،بتبعطني أنصف الكراج ...
إطلع على السطوح ،إنزل على السوق ،إنزل على البريد ،
شوف الدكتور بالعيادة... ما بخلص النهار إلا أناخالص معاه.

Um Elias...used to send me from garden to kitchen to garage to the top of the roof, then to the shops and the post office, then back again to the clinic... By the end of the day I was utterly exhausted.(30)

On the opposite side, there are four characters: Imīl, Hānī, Mājid and 'Alī. Imīl is portrayed as a pedantic intellectual and teacher who sincerely believes in theories rather than practice. He is a sort of man who cannot stop giving advice to others and talking about his "sound" knowledge and achievements. On one occasion he talks about the efforts he has made to develop the local theatre. A flash-back scene, however, reveals that all his claims are unfounded.

Hānī is depicted as a middle-class man with many contradictions. Educated in Europe, he constantly champions European culture and values. His attitude to women is just one example of his contradictory character. He is proud before his liberal or progressive acquaintances of being engaged to an educated woman, Nādyah, but he proves to be a conservative man when it comes to practice. At one stage in the play, Nādyah offers help to the team repairing the lighting system. Hānī does his best to stop her from doing any public work. Nādyah insists that she is entitled to do whatever work she likes. Hānī becomes furious and threatens her:

أسكتي واقعدي محلّك ... إنت بنت عيلة محترمة وبيصرش
تختلطي مع هيك أشكال ... إذا بتطلعي على المسرح ...
هاي آخر مرّة بتشوفي وجهي •

Shut up, please, and be seated... You belong to a well-to-do and respected family. You cannot mix with such common people... If you insist on doing it..., you'll never see my face again.(31)

Hānī is also an opportunist who jumps to claim for himself the achievements of others. He does nothing, for instance, to fix the lighting system, but he is the first one to announce on the stage after the fixing of the system: "See the result of our work!"

Mājid is portrayed as a character of rigid feudal mentality with an undemocratic attitude towards his son and an inflexible stand against Nādyah. He does not hesitate for a moment to beat and insult his son in public if the latter

expresses a point of view different from his own. With regard to the lighting system, for example, Mājīd believes that it is lack of faith in God which caused the defect. When his son dares to suggest that the light might be off owing to a fault at the power station, Mājīd reacts angrily:

إخربى ولله أحسن ما أكسّر أسنانك .

Shut up, boy, or I'll smash your face.(32)

‘Alī is an unemployed young man. He tries to help but he is not serious enough to succeed or to be accepted by others. He is portrayed as a simple, humorous, and good-hearted person, but sometimes he makes stupid remarks about people which cause him to be rejected. Sometimes he annoys Nādyah, once by demanding her name, once by approaching to sniff her hair and again with a coarse remark when she asks ‘Ādil for a screwdriver.

This brief discussion of the characterization of the play shows that the characters, as a whole, are not constructed as flat or stereotyped figures round a single idea or class, but are presented mainly as individuals. As shown earlier, the characters' involvement in the main theme does not stop most of them having different relationships, connections and actions on different fronts. Hānī and Nādyah, for example, discuss their personal relationship, her education and household affairs. Hānī and Francois talk about the theatrical movement in the country and in Europe. Imīl and Francois talk about work relationships and the importance of organization. Mīlād Mājīd, Nādyah and Hānī

argue on the right of women to work and their role in society. Arabism, social development and many other smaller matters are also discussed by the characters in the play.

These minor relationships and involvements of the characters, however, are not disconnected from the main line of the play. The troubles of the nation have political, economical, social and cultural aspects. Nor do these relationships create isolated characters. They are, in fact, an indication of the many-dimensional characteristics of the *dramatis personae*. This suggests that the characterization in the play has adhered to the basic artistic requirement of coherence. With the exception of 'Ādil's death which occurs suddenly at the end of the play, the traits of the characters are revealed gradually, coherently and without drastic jumps.

Our discussion on characterization in Palestinian drama would be incomplete without considering an important element in the artistic and intellectual structure of some Palestinian characters, namely will-power. It is this element which enables characters like Shaddād, 'Ād, Shulamite, 'Āṣim, Rīm, 'Ādil and others to break through the impasse and change the situation to their advantage.

This important element of determined will-power gives the Palestinian character its most distinctive feature. "I challenge, therefore I exist," is a statement which may express the state of mind of many Palestinian characters. It is this particular element which makes the Palestinian

dramatic concept different from the concept of some Arab playwrights. Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm, for example, suggests that a successful dramatic character must enjoy only a limited will-power. The defeat of human character, he adds, must be the conclusion of any confrontation between man and powers superior to him, such as Fate, Time, Space, etc..(34) A similar approach can be found in السد (The Dam) by the Tunisian playwright Maḥmūd al-Masʿadī. Ghaylān, the hero of this play, tries to build a dam to restore life to the barren land of his people. Human as well as divine powers intervene to defeat the project. The dam is built twice, only to be twice destroyed. The first destruction occurs at the hands of the workers who build it, following a dispute between them and Ghaylān. As the dam is constructed again, the goddess Sahbāʿ sends whirlwinds and earthquakes, thus destroying the dam. The play ends with Ghaylān flying in the sky, accompanied by the image of a beautiful woman who has descended from heaven (35). Thus this Tunisian play shows a resignation in defeat (36) which, I argue, is contrary to the ideal frequently held up by Palestinian playwrights, of ceaseless struggle, even in the face of apparent defeat.

In Palestinian drama, will-power is, in many cases, associated with violence.(37) This applies to characters who confront supernatural powers, like Shaddād, or characters who struggle against each other on earth, such as ʿĀṣim, Māzin, Rīm, Rachel, Samson, Qaraqāsh and others. They carry out ruthless and bloody campaigns to impose their points of view.

Determination, which is undoubtedly a reflection of the severity of Palestinian life and conflict, imbues these characters with motion, an essential artistic element necessary to overcome the stagnation which otherwise characterizes the atmosphere in the drama of ideas. It is natural that a character who is determined and ruthless has to do something. This process of doing helps, I believe, to overcome the abstract intellectual approach of some characters, of whom Shaddād, Qaraqāsh, and Rīm are striking examples. It also helps in the development of characters. Shaddād, for instance, could not have developed in such a dynamic manner without his determination and the violent course he pursues.

Extremism and determination, as Gassner points out, can, if skilfully employed, create heroic characters.(38) In an unconventional way, some Palestinian characters have the potential for dramatic heroism. They are committed to a cause, which concerns them not only as individuals but as part of a community. They have the will to defend it and sacrifice for it. Tragic death holds no fear for them. They go deliberately to confront it. Thus, in their fall, the reader will be conscious of the endeavours of his fellow human beings and of their potential for great achievements. The anguish and suffering of Rīm, Rachel's and Samson's sense of insecurity and their gross cruelty and arrogance, Shaddād's sensitivity, his sense of challenge, and consequently his sacrifice, do not easily slip from memory.

Footnotes

- (1) See Egri: "The Art of Dramatic Writing; Its Basis in the Creative Interpretation of Human Motives", pp32ff; al-Rā'ī: "Fan al-Masraḥiyyah", p57; and Zeidān: "Ārā' Tawfiq al-Ḥakīm fī al-Ādab al-Masraḥī", p228-9.
- (2) Kanafānī: "Al-Bāb", p72.
- (3) Ibid., p68-9.
- (4) Miller: "Death of a Salesman", p271.
- (5) Gassner: "Masters of the Drama", p34.
- (6) Kanafānī: op.cit., p63.
- (7) Ibid., pp48-9.
- (8) Ibid., p51.
- (9) Ibid., p62.
- (10) Ibid., p79.
- (11) Ibid., p99.
- (12) Ibid., p59.
- (13) Ibid., pp62-3.
- (14) Bsaisū: "Shamshūn wa Dalīlah", p222.
- (15) Ibid., p284.
- (16) Ibid., p297.
- (17) Ibid., pp318-9.
- (18) Al-Qāsim: "Qaraqāsh", p9.
- (19) Ibid., p19-20.
- (20) Ibid., p40.
- (21) Ibid., p41.
- (22) Ibid., p62.
- (23) Ibid., pp63-4.
- (24) Ibid., p54.
- (25) Ibid., p81.
- (26) See Egri: op.cit., ppl42ff.

- (27) Tarazī: "Fī Sabīlik yā Waṭan", pp34-5.
- (28) Styan: "Manipulating the Characters", p304-5.
- (29) Balālīn: "Al-ʿAtmih", p29.
- (30) Ibid.
- (31) Ibid., pp42,44.
- (32) Ibid., p33.
- (33) Brunetiere declares that drama differs from the other forms of literature in that it must always deal with some exertion of the human will. "If a play is really to interest us", he points out, "its chief character must desire something, striving for it with all the forces of his being" (Quoted in Clark: "European Theories of the Drama", p474). The importance of the strength of will in a dramatic character is also emphasized in Egri: op.cit., pp75ff.
- (34) See al-Ḥakīm: "Al-Taʿāduḥiyyah 32-3,44; "Adab al-Ḥayāh", p199; and "Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm Yataḥaddath", p166. See also Zeidān: op.cit., p227,231.
- (35) See play.
- (36) See ʿUlwān: "Muḥāwalah fī Fahm al-Sad li al-Masʿadī", pp74,78-9. See also al-Qulaybī's introduction to "al-Sad", p30.
- (37) It is interesting to note that similar circumstances in other societies have produced drama similar in this way. Sartre points out that the severity of the French life during and after the Second World War produced plays with characters who violently "thrust into a conjunction where they are forced to make a choice" ("Forgers of Myths", pp123-4).
- (38) Gassner: op.cit., p744.

Chapter VIII

DIALOGUE

The discussion in preceding sections was concerned with theatrical aspects of drama, character and conflict, but this discussion of aesthetic elements of the dramatic process would be incomplete without a consideration of dialogue, the most characteristic feature of drama.

It is recognized in the theory of drama that speech is the most obvious direct element in which to watch the creative process unfolding in dramatic art. The construction of a plot is the skeleton of a play, but dialogue, as Peacock says,(1) is the "intertexture" of the drama that gives it its distinctive character as an art, its "blood and breath" in Drew's words.(2)

This applies to ancient as well as to modern dramatic writings. Drama historians and critics agree that playwriting is the art of telling a story by means of dialogue. It is dialogue that conveys the theme and the episodes of the play, the development of the story, the build-up and colouring of the situation, the formation of characters, the revelation of their various inner and outward features, visions, feelings, thoughts, conflicts, the development and shifts of their relationships and the inflaming of conflict, and dialogue that governs the play's atmosphere and rhythm.(3) However, the structure, nature, language, rhythm and style of dramatic

dialogue together with the atmosphere which they create, differ in time and space and from one playwright to another.

What is the nature of Palestinian dialogue? Is it poetic, prosaic, rhetorical, dramatic or narrative? What sort of language does it use, standard or dialect? How do Palestinian playwrights use speech through the mouths of their characters? Is Palestinian dialogue a genuine reflection of Palestinian conflict, character and environment? In other words, can anyone who reads or hears the speech in Palestinian drama recognize distinctive Palestinian characteristics?

The Language of Dialogue

Patterns of dramatic dialogue are formed by symbols of a specific language in a specific environment. In drama, there are elements of representation and of expression. It incorporates the visual images of scenes and persons. It also uses words in dialogue which may include many kinds of speech: emotive, analytical, declamatory, exclamatory, descriptive, lyrical, musical and so on. These words express, and perhaps create, moods, emotions, and subjective conflicts.(4) The focus on language, its implications, usages and images, is therefore vital in our discussion.

The last seventy years or so have witnessed a heated discussion in Arab literary and artistic circles about the language of playwriting. This discussion was started by the

playwright and critic, Farah Anton. In the introduction to his play, ^{القديمة} مصر الجديدة ومصر (The New Egypt and the Old Egypt), Anton suggests that "If the play is translated or Arabized, its language could be standard Arabic... but we would not be realistic to use standard Arabic if the play and its theme had to do with the affairs of those whose spoken language was vernacular. What would the audience think of this play if they heard papersellers, servants... drunkards and the ladies of the harem speaking standard Arabic? On the other hand it would be only at the expense of standard Arabic if the language of society plays were to be colloquial."(5)

Much heated argument followed Anton's statement. Some critics and writers advocated the use of standard Arabic and rejected any form of dialect. Others took the opposite position and defended the use of dialect as the ideal form of expression. A third party saw the combination of both standard and dialect as a workable solution to the problem. Yet a fourth party, however, tried to create a third level of language, consistent with standard Arabic grammatically and syntactically, following dialect in its pausal or abbreviated forms.(6)

Standard Arabic however, has so far been dominant in the language of Arab playwriting, and Palestinian drama is no exception. Most of the plays have adhered to standard Arabic. It should be noticed, however, that a large number of the plays written in the West Bank under Israeli occupation and meant to be staged have used Palestinian dialect.

A study of some plays written in both dialect and standard Arabic is needed to determine which of these arguments has greater merit.

الباب (The Door) uses standard Arabic with rich metaphors, similes and imagery. One reads with enjoyment the delicately balanced dialogue in many parts of the play, even though it is sometimes long-winded. Listen to this conversation between Shaddād and his mother which takes place just before Shaddād goes out to his final confrontation with Habā:

شَدَّاد : أنت تحسبين أنني خائف ؟ ...
 الأم : أعتقد أنك تخشاه .
 شَدَّاد : مهما يكن ، هذا المحك الأخير ! ليس في الأمر ما يخيف ،
 لقد فُكِّرت به شهورا طويلة مريرة . لقد نمت الفكرة
 داخلي كما تنمو شجرة الزيتون . أتعرفين كيف تنمو شجرة
 الزيتون ؟ غصنا ضخما في الهواء ، مقابل شرش ضخم في
 الأرض عميقا عميقا في الأرض . إنَّ هبا نفسه لا يستطيع
 اقتلاع شجرة زيتون .
 الأم : أية فكرة ؟
 شَدَّاد : (بشراسة) فكرة أن أموت ! أن أقاتل هبا وأمواته
 في الصحراء ، وحيدا إلا من سيفي وذراعي ، أن أخطو
 إلى موتي خطوة باسلة وراء خطوة باسلة ، أن لا أرتدَّ
 حتى أزرع في الأرض جنتي أو أقتلع من السماء جنته أو
 أموت أو نموت معا .

Shaddād: Do you think that I fear Habā?...

Mother: I think you do.

Shaddād: Anyhow, this is the final test. There is nothing to fear. I have been thinking of him for long, tormented months. The idea has grown within me like an olive tree. Do you know how an olive tree grows? A huge branch in the air and a deep root under the ground... very deep. Habā himself can't uproot an olive tree.

Mother: What idea are you talking about?

Shaddād: (Vigorously) The idea of death! To fight Habā and his forces in the desert with no help but my own sword and my own arm. To proceed to my death step by step with determined courage, and not to come back until I plant my paradise on earth or destroy his paradise, Heaven. Or until my death, or both our deaths.(7)

Almost every word spoken here conjures up the scene and at the same time is full of prophecy. Shaddād speaks of unyielding confrontation with Habā, and he later performs that to the full. Even after his death, in the Kingdom of the Dead, he continues his struggle unabated:

شَدَاد : أنا لن أستسلم قط . لقد حاربته هناك وسأحاربه هنا .
 إنني أعرف أن البذرة التي زرعتها في إرم لا بد أن
 تنمو يوما، لا بد أن تشرق من بين الحطام الذي أحرقه
 وذرا رماده في الهواء ...

الرجل الأول : ولكنك مت ! مت ! خسرت كل شيء يملكه البشر ، الحياة.

شَدَاد : لم أخسرها ، لقد ربحتها . أنت الذي خسرتها .

الرجل الأول : إنهم يشتمونك .. يقولون إنك مغرور كافر . ابنك
 نفسه في حفلة تتويجه ، سوف يصب عليك نار حقه ...

شَدَاد : ورغم ذلك ، فأنا الذي صنعت إبنني وأنا الذي جعلته ملكا
 ملكا بملء إرادتي . وسوف يذهب يوما ما إلى إرم ، وهناك
 سيجد الفكرة المحروقة وهي تنمو من جديد ، وسيتغير سيتغير .
 الرجل الأول : وأنت ؟ أي مصير تنتظره ؟

شَدَاد : (يشير إلى الباب) لسوف أنهد على الباب حتى أحطمه أو يحطمني.
 ولسوف ينفذون هم عليه من الخارج...حتى يذوب. هل فهمت ؟ حتى
 يذوب ، ولو كلف ذلك أن أبقى واقفا تحت مصراعيه إلى الأبد .

Shaddād: I will never give up. I fought him there and I'll fight him here. I know for sure that the seed which I planted in Iram will one day grow. It will shine from within the ruins and the dust....

First Man: But you died. You lost everything, life.

Shaddād: I lost nothing! I won! You are the one who lost.

First Man: They are cursing you, calling you an arrogant atheist. Even your son on his coronation day will pour out his hatred for you....

Shaddād: Despite that, it is I who made my son. I who made him king with my absolute will. And he

too will go one day to Iram and then he will find that this ravaged vision is growing again. He will change. He will change.

First Man: What about you? What sort of fate is waiting for you?

Shaddād: (Pointing to the door) I will throw my weight on the door until one or the other of us is destroyed, and they will do the same from their side... until it melts. Do you understand me? Until it melts, even if we strain at the door until the end of the world.(8)

Although the dialogue in this passage, and indeed in most of the play, is of a philosophical nature, the accurate choice of words and the skilful use of artistic means by the writer have created a realistic poetic atmosphere in the play, that helps to soften the density and heaviness which usually characterize philosophical plays. The writer has attempted to harmonize the real world and the symbolic world of the play, an attempt which can be fulfilled only by talented dramatists.(9) He has tried to prevent the philosophical and the symbolic aspects of the play from overwhelming the imagination by bringing his characters back constantly to the level of common life. The symbolic and physical strength of an olive tree is well-known to Palestinians, and therefore it is easy for them to realise what sort of determination Shaddād, their hero, has. Ordinary Palestinians know how dry seeds strike root in the ground and how they grow and give life to strong and fruitful trees. They can easily understand the kind of results their sacrifice might yield. They also know the extent of God's power in their society. Shaddād's unyielding challenge to Habā conveys to them a clear message, that challenging the impossible can be possible. This message could not be as clear in the play as it

is if the language of the dialogue was not concerned with the revelation of the consciousness of the characters. The language used by the characters moves with their consciousness in a dialectical manner which creates a dynamic structure of dialogue. The dialogue's power of revelation corresponds with an important dramatic view which argues that language in the theatre is the "hierophany of consciousness" and must have a share in the work of manifestation.(10)

The use of standard language does not necessarily produce good dialogue in all plays, however. Undramatic standard language produces poor dialogue. An extract from *شعب لن يموت* (A People Who Will Not Die) illustrates this point. Reading through the play one sees no defects in the sentence structure or the words of the play with regard to etymology and syntax, but one can recognise the meagre style in which the dialogue is constructed. Apart from repetition, exaggeration, declamation and rhetoric, which will be discussed later, it has the style of a second-rate newspaper. The handling of the language is without subtlety, and the rhythm of the dialogue has not a hint of sensitivity. When Maḥmūd is beaten by an interrogator in the prison, his intemperate words burst out:

إضرب! إضرب! لماذا توقفت؟ أتظنني سأسترحم
أيها اليهودي الجبان؟ إضرب.. إضرب!

Hit me! Hit me! Why stop? Do you think I'll ask for mercy, you coward Jew? Hit me! Hit me!(11)

When he is advised by the officer in the same scene to tell

the truth about his comrades if he wants to be pardoned, he immediately makes another emotional speech which lacks any sense of deliberation:

خسئت يا جبان ! إنني أفضل صداقة خنزير أو أفعى
على صداقتك ! .. إننا لن نكون أصدقاء أبدا .

Get lost, you coward! I'd rather be a friend of a pig or a snake than of you! We will never be friends.(12)

The tone of such dialogue might at the first hearing sound naturalistic, yet examination would show otherwise. Naturalism, as Evans points out,(13) demands immediacy and directness rather than sophistication, but in what circumstances? Under interrogation nobody, unless mentally disturbed, would be keen to be tortured, let alone invite it. Swearing at the enemy does not change the situation to one's advantage. "Coward" and many other such words and phrases in these extracts, and throughout the play, are repeated at random. Every word in dramatic communication must justify itself dramatically, for it is fatal for a dramatist who is unsure of the balanced movement of his play to try to make up for defects by bursts of melodramatic utterance.

In العتمة (Darkness), dialect is used as a medium of expression. The sound, rhythm, words and sentence structure of this play are naturalistic in the sense that they have their roots deep in the actual speech of Palestinian society. The characters of the play speak what is natural to their tongues, with little metaphor, imagery or simile, except what is normally found in common speech. But the sense of humour

and sarcasm employed makes the greater part of the dialogue energetic and interestingly rich. At the start of the play Francois discovers that Mīlād has not gone to the lighting room of the theatre. Instead he is found lying on his back at the front of the stage with a bottle and some balloons:

فرانسوا : ولك ميلاد ، ايش هدا ، أنت انجنيت ؟
 ميلاد : هيء هيء .. أنا شايف المسرح من بين إجرىك
 فرانسوا : معك خبر إنّه انفتحت الستارة ؟
 ميلاد : آه معاي خبر ، شفتها انفتحت بس بالشقلوب
 وشفتها سگرت كمان ، بس برضه بالشقلوب !
 فرانسوا : هلاً موش وقت مزح . قوم الله يخليك وارجع
 محلك على جهاز الإضاءة . قوم شوف الناس
 عبت القاعة ، لازم نبدا .
 ميلاد : يا زلمة سيبك من المسرحية هلاً ، معانا أكم من
 دقيقة . إيش رأيك انت تنام جنبي وتطلع على
 هالدنيا ؟ إنت عمرك شفتها هيك بالمقلوب ،
 فوقاني تحتاني ؟
 فرانسوا : ولك خلصنا عاد . بلاش أكفر لك هلاً .
 ميلاد : (مستطردا) وإلا أقولك فكرة أحسن. نخلي الناس
 تنام على الأرض ونبدا المسرحية ونخليهم يشوفوا
 مسرحية بالشقلوب ... عبقرى أنا موش هيك ؟ !

Francois: You idiot, Mīlād: What's that? Are you mad?
 Mīlād: Heehee... I can see the theatre through your legs.
 Francois: Do you know the curtain's up?
 Mīlād: Yeah. I saw it go up upside down, an' I saw it go down upside down too!
 Francois: It's not time for messing around now. Please get up and go to the lighting room. You know the hall is full and we've got to get a move on.
 Mīlād: Take it easy... We've still got a few minutes. What do you think of lying down beside me to see the world? Have you ever seen it upside down like that , Francois?
 Francois: Come on, You. You're driving me crazy!
 Mīlād: (Ignoring him): Listen! I've got a better idea. We ask the audience to lie down on the ground, and then we start the performance. They can see an upside-down show. I'm a genius, aren't I?

Francois loses his temper and shouts angrily at Mīlād, pointing out that things cannot go on in this way, but Mīlād takes no notice.

ميلاد : الله يخليك فرانسوا ، بدون صياح وزعيرة •
 يم واصله لهون.
 فرانسوا : يا زلمه الناس قاعدة عم بتستنى •
 ميلاد : طيب خليه ييستنوا شوية • ايش عليهم لو قعدوا
 في القاعة بدل الساعتين ساعتين وعشر دقائق؟!
 فرانسوا : مجنون أنت ؟ ! شو عشر دقائق؟!
 ميلاد : وبقي ساعة كمان ، وساعة • ايش راح يصير ؟ راح
 يتأخروا شوية عن حفله بالتلفزيون ٠٠٠؟ وإلا يعني
 راح يتأخروا عن سهره عند الجيران ياكلوا ويتحلوا • •
 ويمتلوا بطونهم ويحكوا عن الجيران •

Mīlād: Francois, don't shout at me, please. It's too much. You're going too far, you know.
 Francois: People are waiting for us, mate.
 Mīlād: O.K. Let them wait a bit. What's wrong with sitting in the hall for two hours and ten minutes instead of two hours?
 Francois: You're mad! What do you mean, ten minutes?
 Mīlād: Half an hour if you like, an hour, even! What would happen? Would they be late to a silly programme on the telly?... Or late to a party at their neighbours' to fill their tummies with food, sweets and gossip?

Francois talks about their responsibility towards the audience, and Mīlād talks about his problems. Francois is convinced that personal problems must not be an excuse for neglecting responsibilities. Mīlād ignores him and talks to his bottle:

ميلاد : ها ، سامعة يا ست ، عجبك الحكي ؟
 (ملتفتا إلى فرانسوا) ... بيكفي
 إته لما بيكون عندي مشكلة بتسهر
 خضرة جنبي ، بتسلييني ، بتواسيني ،
 لا بتتفلسف ، ولا بتتكبر ولا بتصيح
 عليّ.

Mīlād: Hey! D'you hear me, Lady, what d'you think of

that? (Looking at Francois)... When I have a problem, where would I be without Khadrāh She stays with me, amuses me, stands up for me. She doesn't talk philosophy, look down on me, or shout at me.(14)

This dialogue is undoubtedly verbose, but the energetic style and the dramatic use of dialect make up for any potential defect in the movement of the play. Mīlād's windy, graphic explanation of his situation shows the intensity of frustration he and many others are suffering from. However, one can agree in broad terms with critics who voice their disapproval of the use of everyday language as a medium of dramatic expression, on the grounds that it is metaphorical language which has the greatest dramatic effect.(15) At the same time, one cannot help disagreeing with those who dismiss the employment of common and familiar speech as insufficient for dramatic dialogue, "even when carefully selected and manipulated".(16) Such a statement ignores the fact that familiar common speech can be rich and warm, specially if selected by a sensitive dramatist for a popular, non-literary audience. Creating flesh-and-blood characters for a flesh-and-blood audience involves a deep knowledge and energetic use of the language of the ordinary people.

We see, then, that the artistic quality of dramatic dialogue is not dependent on whether the medium of expression is dialect or standard. The most accurate criterion as far as dramatic construction is concerned has to do with the style, technique, and structure of the play, the choice of words and the artistic handling of language by the writer.

If the playwright contrives to make dialect sound authentic, as Evans points out, while at the same time firmly embodying it in the reality of the play, if there is artistic cohesiveness between the dialect and the words of the play, then the playwright is successful.(17) Dialect can be as authentic and competent as standard Arabic in good playwriting. Handling language, whether dialect or standard, with creative sensitivity,(18) is the most important thing in dramatic dialogue. This sensitivity, Evans explains, is the ability to endow character with appropriate language.(19)

Poetry and Poetic Style

Discussion in Arab literary circles on the language of drama is not confined to questions of standard or colloquial language. It also concerns style. Prosaic or poetic? Classical verse or free verse? These are questions to which Arab playwrights seek practical answers.

A study of Arab drama shows that both prose and poetry have been used in playwriting. It was not until 1940, however, that الشعر الحر (free verse) was first introduced by Bakathir in his play أخناتون ونفرتيتي (Akhnātūn and Navertītī). (20) Free verse then began to be established as a dramatic medium of expression, side-by-side with prose, replacing the traditional form of poetry, الشعر المقفى (rhymed verse).

As part of Arabic poetic drama, Palestinian poetic drama

has undergone a noticeable development with regard to form. The conventional form has given way to the more dynamic modern form whose relatively freer structure has enabled poets to pay more attention to dramatic necessity. Nevertheless, one cannot claim that a radical development in dramatic structure parallel to the change in the form of poetry has taken place. A discussion of two plays, *مصرع كليب* (The Slaying of Kulayb), written in conventional verse, and *شمشون ودليلة* (Samson and Delilah), written in free verse, illustrates these points.

In the first play, there are many situations where the dialogue is lengthier than can be justified in dramatic terms. As examples one can mention: Kulayb's dream, narrated in seventeen lines;(21) his answer to the soothsayer who predicts an unpleasant future for him (thirteen lines);(22) his speech after he is stabbed by Jassās (eleven lines);(23) his request to Jassās to inform his tribe about the event and not to leave his body in the wilderness (fourteen lines);(24)

Hammām's speech about pleasure and adventure (fourteen lines);(25) al-Muhalhil's speech to his tribe in favour of revenge for Kulayb (sixteen lines);(26) Abū Nuwayrah's reply advocating dialogue and opposing revenge (thirteen lines);(27) al-Muhalhil's speech about the battles he led against the Bakr tribe for twenty years (fifteen lines);(28) and his speech in captivity on the betrayal of his comrade-in-arms Ibn Ibān (sixteen lines).(29)

Most of these situations are a burden on the plot of the

play. It is true that the lengthy explanation and exploration of poetic images reveal elements of the psychology of characters and their society and this has an indirect connection with the plot, but this is done mostly at the expense of the movement of the play. Kulayb's death-scene is a good example of how unnecessary words can bring the movement of the play to a standstill and turn a supposedly dynamic dialogue into a lyrical poem. Kulayb in this scene has fallen to the ground dead (خرّ مريعا), yet he takes a large part in the dialogue that follows. Out of fifty-two lines before his final death, Kulayb contributes twenty-six. In two situations he speaks eleven and fourteen uninterrupted lines respectively. In one of them which takes place after he has been fatally stabbed, he talks about al-Basūs' meanness and wickedness, his injuries caused by Jassās and the "infamous" Ibn Ibān, his regret for not killing the two before they did it to him. Then he reminds them of his good deeds to the tribe, its dignity, security and well-being. Finally he talks about their jealousy of his authority, threatening them with a horrible fate for what they have done to him:

تبا لها من مأكرة	تلك البسوس وشؤمها
ومن جراحي الغائرة	أواه من كيد البسوس
	(ثم يلتفت الى جساس وعمر)
غدرا وثنى بأخرى ظالم قاس	يا طعنة يا لحشا من كفت جساس
محامد لكرام غير أنكاس	عمر وبيئ الفتى عمرو إذا ذكرت
عند الذنائب تجري فيه أنفاسي	قد أوديا بدمي فانهل منهمرا
يرمي إلى مصرعي من بعد ايناسي	لو كنت أحسب حقدا في قلوبكما
فدقتما المر من فتكي ومن باسي	لكنت أعملت سيفي وهو ذو خطر
فلو ذكرت غداة القتل أغراسي	جساس يا غادرا بالناب تقتلني
وكنت خيرا لكم من سائر الناس	رفعت من شأنكم في كل بادرة
يوما بسوء ولا تلقى لحراس	أذود عنكم فلا تغشى منازلكم
من بعد راسي إذا لم يفتنكم راسي	حسدتموني على تاجي فذاك لكم

In the other situation in which he is refused a drink of water by Jassās and Ibn Ibān, Kulayb talks about many issues, asking them to announce his death to the tribe, not to leave his body to beasts of prey, to convey his regards to Jassās' father, and to take care of Jalīlah, his wife. In a soliloquy, he also talks to Jalīlah about his dream of foreboding, then to Jassās, to inform him about the pregnancy of Jalīlah, Jassās' sister, telling him not to suspect her and to let her visit his grave. In a philosophical tone, he welcomes death saying that he was never engaged in shameful actions.

The many images in these passages reveal an accomplished epic style, but do not serve any deliberate dramatic movement or plot. The intemperate use of words, the restricted rhymes and the doubtfully connected units (each line or two forming a separate unit) have also resulted in a loose dramatic structure.

Restricting himself to a verse form which contains a specific number of feet, the writer has to put in expletive phrases in order to make the division of the lines consistent and to complete the lines. As a result, the poetic sentence becomes flabby, as do the threads of the dramatic movement.(31) If the writer's concern were with drama more than poetry, he would have crossed out a great deal of his character's speeches without endangering the poetic images and the relevant ideas they portray. In the case of Kulayb's

speech above, for example, the dramatic situation could have done without mentioning Jassās' betrayal, the spilling of his blood, for there is no point in mentioning this when the audience can see for themselves his bleeding wounds. Also, it could have done without Kulayb's appreciation of his own great deeds, an element which is repeated, anyway, on many occasions in the play. The actual confrontation between the rivals is adequate, from the dramatic point of view, to convey to the audience the feelings and the effects required. The long pieces of poetry put in Kulayb's mouth add nothing vital to the action: in fact they slow down its main thrust and delay the reaction to Kulayb's murder and the outbreak of the major conflict.

However, this discussion should not give the impression that long speeches dominate the whole play. There are situations in which the movement proceeds well and the dialogue is quite short and dynamic. Examples are: the killing of al-Basūs' she-camel;(32) the search for Kulayb's body, which marks the beginning of the counter-offensive by Kulayb's men;(33) the party at which Hammām, al-Muhalhil and their friends are enjoying themselves;(34) Jalīlah's return to her tribe after the killing of her husband,(35) the return of one of the horsemen who is sent to investigate the whereabouts of Jassās;(36) and the announcement of Jassās' death.(37)

In these situations, the poet has given way to the dramatist. This success is achieved mainly by the deliberate

language used by characters, the measured division of the lines between characters who participate in the events. Each of them takes only enough space to express his position. One character says a part of a line, and another continues the same line, and so on. The necessity of filling the gap between the beginning and end of a line does not exist when more than one character can share the same line. The scene at the drinking and gambling party illustrates such lively and dynamic dialogue. Al-Mulhalhil is told by his brother Kulayb to end his obsession with drink and women and to reform his behaviour, but he will not listen.

همام : أشر النصيحة قد بدأ في الكاس
المهلل : فاشرب فديت ودع كلام الناس
همام : أمهلل يثنيه عن لهو الصبا شان ؟!
المهلل : بعيد ذا عن المقياس
همام : أمهلل عن وصل نعم ينثني ؟ !
المهلل : لا ، لا فمن أنفاسها أنفاسي .
همام : ماذا أجبت أخاك ؟
المهلل : قلت له أخي
لا تستمع لوساوس الجلّاس

Hammām: Another glass? How seriously will you take Kulayb's advice?
Al-Mulhalhil: Cheers, my Friend! Don't mind what people say!
Hammām: You're not a one to heed the killjoys!
Al-Mulhalhil: No! Impossible!
Hammām: No more fooling about with Nu'm?
Al-Mulhalhil: You bet! What a girl!
Hammām: So how did you answer your brother?
Al-Mulhalhil: I told him: Brother, don't pay attention to idle gossip.(36)

The second play, شمشون ودليلة (Samson and Delilah), has not escaped the trap into which مصرع كليب (The Slaying of Kulayb) has fallen. The writer has used free verse as a

medium of expression, and therefore is able to overcome some of the obstacles which dog plays in traditional verse. There is no rhyme to stick to, and the image, not the line, is the main unit of poetic structure. Yet, a new dangerous element has been created for the play by this new form. The poet is tempted to go further in exploring his imagery and ideas. Throughout the play, the reader is faced with characters who turn out to be "poets" and who are obsessed with exploring and going into the detail of the background of their images to a point where dramatic necessity is ignored. At the beginning of the play, the writer employs five characters to express only one idea, the lack of freedom and action and the necessity of finding a redeemer. The play opens with Face No.1 engaging in a speech of thirty-five lines.(39) This is followed by Face No.2 who continues the same message through ten lines(40) and Face No.3 who speaks nineteen lines.(41) This general debate is followed by a more specific account, by the Man With White Bandages, of the downfall of Jaffa, and the story of a woman from that city, in twenty-one lines.(42)

The Jaffa woman then speaks for twenty-three lines, expanding her story and telling of her tragic situation after the loss of her child and her city, largely repeating what has just been said.(43)

It should be noted, however, that the premise, which takes five characters and one hundred and six lines to present, is necessary to the play, although the length of the speeches, the number of characters, and the repetition of ideas in different poetic images are unnecessary to the

aesthetics of dramatic dialogue. The expansive statements and emotions of some characters exceed the scope of the drama, a fault deplored by critics.(44) The oppression and frustration which are undoubtedly intensely expressed in these passages would not need more than one or two characters to convey in fewer lines.

On another occasion, Samson expresses to Rachel his amazement and fear at the strength of Rīm's resolve. Here, Rachel makes a speech of twenty-one lines about the necessity of breaking Rīm, about how she followed Samson across the ages, how she came by ship to Haifa, how she was with him in the war of June 1967, how they were able in six days to defeat the Arabs, and how they share the same fears and the same fate.(45) Immediately after Samson's reply of three lines, Rachel launches into a further nineteen lines, repeating in different words and images, the same idea all over again.(46)

With such long speeches, one cannot expect the plot to proceed energetically in all parts of the play. It is true that the exploration of poetic images sometimes colours the situations, but one feels the need of some arguments justifying the absolute dramatic necessity for most of these monologues.

In this connection there is a general problem in poetry and drama. The sensitive relationship between the two arts when they are used in playwriting has been the concern of

critics and playwrights. T.S.Eliot, for example, has always referred to this dilemma. In his criticism of his own play, "The Family Reunion", he points out that some passages are beyond the characters, and that the speakers have to be presented as falling into a kind of trance-like state in order to speak them. They are so remote, he says, from the necessity of the action, that they are hardly more than passages of poetry.(47) Peacock expresses a similar view in his criticism of Claudel's plays. The fault in Claudel's plays, he argues, is that the "expansive statement of emotions" by characters "overflows the discretion of the framework of drama and theatrical performance" to such an extent that they "luxuriate and hold themselves up, checking their flow into action...They become static, monumentalised as grandiose expressions of feeling".(48)

Applying this to Bsaisū's play, one would not hesitate to suggest that the relaxed structure of parts of the dialogue was, in a sense, beyond the essential movement of the play. However, the heaviness and stillness in the play's atmosphere, which results from the long passages of dialogue, are softened by other passages which are terse. In one scene, towards the end of the first part of the play, Rīm shows impatience with the inaction of the authorities and tries to incite her fellow passengers to do something. The smooth and simple lines that follow show the dynamics of a more forceful and energetic dialogue.(49)

Long speeches and complex ideas expressed by some

characters are not invariably irrelevant or static. In quite a few situations there are original metaphors and similes, simple and rich imagery, which undoubtedly create a good deal of poetic effect, serve the needs of dramatic communication, and give momentum to the dramatic movement. One poetic image, which depicts the mood of a newly subjugated but indomitable people, should be mentioned to show the writer's artistic and dramatic ability. The dialogue takes place between the Father and 'Āṣim after the Israeli conquest of Palestinian land in 1967:

الأب : ماذا نفعل ؟
كل الأرض احتلت .
عاصم : نفعل يا أبت ما تفعله الأرض إذا ضربت بالفأس
تعطي عودا أخضر .
نحن ضربنا يا أبتني بالفأس
شق السونكي الصدر .
وعلىنا أن نفعل ما تفعله الأرض
حين يشق الأرض المحراث ...
يكبر يا أبتني ساق البارود الأخضر ،
يفضرب جلد الأرض ...
وكعبة قمح طيبة يا أبتني ، تصبح سنبله ،
تصبح سنبله رصاص .

Father: The whole land has been conquered.

What can we do?

'Āṣim: We must do what the earth does
When it is ripped by the plough, Father!
It gives out green shoots.
We have been ripped by the plough, Father!
The bayonet has cleft the chest!
We have to do what the ploughed earth does.
It holds the seeds of dynamite...
The green blades of dynamite
Pierce the earth's skin...
Grains of wheat, Father, become countless ears of
wheat --
And we? -- volleys of bullets!(50)

'Āṣim's speech here is not only a forthright and

relevant answer to a specific and relevant question; it is also a general and symbolic answer to the main thrust of human drama. It widens the scope of poetic art to include a human experience. The dialectical images, such as the struck earth yielding new life, are simple and commonly known. The connection between this image and the image of an injured man is extraordinary. Earth struck by the plough gives new life;

so, too, human beings respond when their land is invaded. Such organic and authentic poetic images undoubtedly satisfy a major demand of dramatic theory by their universality. "Characters in a poetic drama", Drew says, "act and speak with the greatest particularity and individualism, have a trick of passing into a realm where they speak purely as symbols of general human experience." (51) On the other hand such a poetic response is not alien to the movement of the play. 'Āṣim's answer does not only predict a political response, but also implies the action which follows, (52) the actual resistance by 'Āṣim, Rīm and others, which carries the play vigorously forward. Such artistic construction, which brings poetic imagination to the service of practicalities of dramatic communication, is regarded by many critics as essential to the success of verse drama. (53)

Narrative Style

Related to the use of poetic style in Palestinian drama is the question of narrative style. As mentioned earlier, Arab popular epics were until recently narrated by story-

tellers in cafes and on street corners and were a very popular entertainment for the Arab public. This general appreciation of narration and story-telling encouraged some writers to exploit this narrative style and to use it as a means of dramatic expression.

In plays like الباب (The Door), شمشون ودليلة (Samson and Delilah), وكان لا بد أن... قرقاش (Qaraqāsh), (Rain Had To Fall), and لكع بن لكع (Luka^ك Ibn Luka^ك), to mention only a few, some of the actions and episodes, which should really take place live in front of the audience, are instead narrated by the characters. They are presented as events in the past and not, as required by strict dramatic rules, in the present.

Events in الباب (The Door) like the building of Iram, Shaddād's confrontation with Habā and the consequent destruction of the city and of Shaddād and his army are told by characters speaking in the past tense. Take for instance the destruction of Shaddād and Iram:

- الرجل : أخبار جديدة جعلها رسول عاد من وراء أسوار إرم
مرشد : ماذا يقول ؟
- الرجل : كان شَدَاد في نصف الطريق حين هبَّ صوت مكالمات أجفل
حصانه فرماه . قال الرسول إِنَّ شَدَادًا وقف وواصل مسيره
في غيوم الصوت السوداء ، كان صوتا رهيبا شقق الأرض
ففاصت إرم فيها ثم انطلقت من الشقوق السنة نيران
أحرقت الأخضر واليابس . يقول الرسول إِنَّ شَدَادًا ضاع في
عاصفة الصوت ، ذابت عظامه ، ولم يبق إلا سيفه ملقى
على الرمل وقد صار في لون وشكل الحجر . أما الحصان
فقد مضى في الصحراء على غير هدى ! ...
- مرشد : والرسول الذين لحقوا به ؟
- الرجل : ذوبتهم ذيول العاصفة وهم أجساد محروقة في الرمال .

- Man: Fresh news has come with a messenger who was at Iram's walls and made his way back.
- Marthad: What does he say?
- Man: Shaddād was on his way to Iram when there was a sound like rushing wind which caused the horse to shy and Shaddād fell off. The messenger said that Shaddād stood up and continued his march enveloped in tumult and black clouds. There was a terrifying roar which split the ground asunder and Iram was engulfed in the earth. Then flames burst from the ground and wreaked havoc everywhere. The messenger says that Shaddād was swallowed up in that howling inferno. His bones melted and nothing remained but his sword, which was left on the sand with the colour and shape of a stone. His horse had aimlessly roamed off into the desert...
- Marthad: What about the people who went with him?
- Man: The storm-noise had melted them. They were burnt-up in the desert.(54)

Some major actions in *وكان لا بد أن...* (Rain Had To Fall) also take place off-stage. The mysterious mythical killing of Aqhāt, the discovery of his remains, the sadness, drought and dearth which fall upon Daniel's people, the manner in which Paghat breaks the prison bars, are episodes which the story-teller relates to his audience in the past tense.

In *شمشون ودليلة* (Samson and Delilah) there are characters whose main role seems to be recounting events rather than enacting them. The Man With White Bandages tells the story of the fall of Jaffa and the story of the woman of Jaffa who abandoned her son and kept her luggage instead. The woman tells her own story. So does Māzin. In one of the situations, he expresses his scepticism, or perhaps irritation, about his father's repeated statement that he possesses a house and a banana grove near Jaffa and that he still has "the papers and the key". Māzin never forgets the moment, he tells his

father, when he was in his first days at school. The teacher asked him to draw a banana. He could not, because he had never seen one. They had a banana grove near Jaffa and they still had the evidence. What irony! His classmates laughed at him and he cried:

أول أيامي في تلك المدرسة أمام اللوح الأسود
كانت حصة رسم.
طلب مدرسنا أن نرسم إصبع موز..
إنك لم تحضر يا أبتى يوما إصبع موز،
لكن كنت تحدثنا عن شجر الموز
في تلك البيارة .
وأكتب الأطفال على تلك الكراسيات،
كل يرسم ..
ماذا يرسم يا أبتى
ماذا يرسم طفلك ، من يملك والده بيارة
فيها شجر الموز ، ولم ير يوما إصبع موز ؟
سقط القلم وبقيت تلك الورقة في الكراسة بيضاء .
ووقفت أمام اللوح الأسود ..
قال مدرسنا أرسم .
أرسم ماذا ؟
إصبع موز !
وبكيت ..
حتى همس مدرسنا في أذني
أو لم تر إصبع موز ؟
وصرخت :
إن أبي يملك بيارة ،
إننا نملك بيارة موز في يافا .
ضحك الأطفال
من لا يضحك يا أبتى
من طفل لم ير إصبع موز ،
وأبوه يملك في يافا .. بيارة موز ؟ !
من لا يضحك من أوراقك ؟ !
من مفتاحك ؟ !

Rachel also tells her story, how she came to Haifa in Palestine and how she was with Samson in the 1967 War.

Narrated events are the dominant feature in ثورة الزنج (The Zanj Revolution). Most of the characters tell each other stories and say what happened to them at that time in history, the third century Higra. One story is that told by al-Baḥrānī about Abū Yūsuf and his comrades who were tortured and killed with extreme cruelty at the hands of the Caliph's men, and the story of Ibn Muḥammad which was told by the Magic Box Man, Waṭfā', Ibn Muḥammad himself, and others.

In لكع بن لكع (Luka' Ibn Luka'), story-telling is the style mainly adopted by the Magic Box Man and the Story-teller, the principal characters. The dialogue between characters portrays events that have already taken place more than it unfolds a plot with actions.

In قرقاش (Qaraqāsh) there is a situation in which the Minister tells Qaraqāsh in a symbolic style, the story of a king who, due to his wicked deeds and hastiness caused his own and his kingdom's downfall. "I have an interesting story to relate," the Minister tells his king, and goes on to tell how a prince had fallen in love with a poor woman. His all-powerful father, a king, disapproved and ordered their death. The result was that the whole kingdom fell into ruins.(56) It is obvious that by telling this story, the Minister aims at exploring Qaraqāsh's mind with the intention of warning him of the terrible consequences if he were to adopt a similar position.

The use of narrative in drama raises an essential question: can drama successfully accommodate story-telling?

With the exception of Brecht, who creates and advocates the epic theatre, story-telling in drama is not appreciated by most Western drama critics, past or present. The narrative and dramatic forms of presenting a story are considered to differ fundamentally, with different constructive principles and aesthetics.(57) True dramatic situation must, as one critic points out, enact, not describe or tell.(58) Another critic suggests that "all descriptive and narrative props should be banished from the stage."(59)

Some Arab drama critics have also criticised the employment of narration in drama. In his study of Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm's drama, 'Alī al-Rā'ī disapproves of the use of narration in "Sulaymān al-Ḥakīm" which, he thought, weakened the structure of the play.(60) Does story-telling really harm the construction of drama? Or should dramatists restrict themselves to a tight dramatic style in order to write good plays? I think they should not, for two reasons. Firstly, story-telling is far from being an outmoded entertainment or an old-fashioned literary form among the Arabs. Historically, Arab audiences have always appreciated this form of popular entertainment. The art of story-telling in theatre is gathering momentum in present-day Morocco, Algeria, Lebanon, Palestine and other Arab countries. Secondly, the elements of unity in arts are more than those of separation.(61) Critics usually accept the association of music, dance, song,

lighting, decor, etc, with drama on stage. One can see no reason to exclude the story-telling which, if well employed, enriches the theatrical show. It creates, especially in plays with historical themes, a free movement in time and place for both characters and audience. The criterion by which one should, I think, accept or reject the combination of the dramatic and the narrative technique in playwriting lies not in applying the classical orthodox rules of drama, but in whether a piece of drama can stimulate and entertain its audience. At the same time, the narrative must prove aesthetically organic to the dramatic structure of the play.

With regard to Palestinian drama, one can say that the story-telling is an integral part in most of the plays discussed earlier. The reader or onlooker cannot help being moved by Māzin, in *شمشون ودليلة* (Samson and Delilah), telling his story of being a refugee who never had the chance of seeing a banana, despite the fact that his father possesses, on paper, a banana grove. Māzin's story is not superficially attached to the movement of the play. It is an expressive reponse to his father's claim. At the same time, it is linked strongly to his rebellious attitude which leads him to take action and fight the enemy.

Similarly, the Minister's story in *قراقاش* (Qaraqāsh) is not just a long piece of irrelevant information or a boring talk by a king's minister to his king. It is a prophecy which serves as a hint as to what will happen later, a foreshadowing meant to prepare the audience for some future

action. For the murder of the Prince and his lover later in the play is identical with the Minister's supposedly imaginary story.

In ثورة الزنج (The Zanj Revolution) and لكع بن لكع (Luka' Ibn Luka'), the narrated events are exciting and structural parts of the drama. This technique succeeds in drawing a dynamic line linking past and present experiences.

In الباب (The Door) and وكان لا بد أن ينزل المطر (The Rain Had To Fall), the writers are obliged to tell rather than to enact because of the difficulty or even impossibility of enacting mythical episodes or events. The construction and destruction of Iram in the firstplay, or the killing of Aqhāt and the discovery of his remains in the eagles' gizzards in the second play are not easy scenes to perform on a stage with very simple props, such as one finds in Palestine.

Rhetorical Style

The history of drama shows that a great deal of stage dialogue is very rhetorical, as Bentley points out.(62) Preaching and sermon, are distinctive characteristics of the theatre of ideas and commitment, and are clearly to be found in some of our plays whose main feature is the appreciation of the "heroic" attitude of Palestinian characters and the disregard of the enemy's characters. Preaching and sermon,

it should be noted, do not only refer to content, but also to form. As argued by Bentley, there is an organic connection between preaching and the style of a dialogue.(63) We shall consider the effect of rhetoric on style in Palestinian dramatic dialogue by a study of *شعب لن يموت* (A People Who Will Not Die) and *شمشون ودليلة* (Samson and Delilah).

Rhetoric in the first play fills almost every page. The moment the parents know that their son Maḥmūd has joined the revolution, outbursts of rhetoric erupt in the play. The Father expresses his great pride in his son:

إِنَّ لَنَا الْفَخْرَ كُلَّ الْفَخْرِ فِي تَعَاوُنٍ وَلَدْنَا مَعَ هَؤُلَاءِ الْأَبْطَالِ .
إِنِّي الْآنَ أَرْفَعُ رَأْسِي عَالِيَا .

We have the greatest honour that our son is cooperating with those heroes. I can hold my head high now!(64)

More big words spring from the Father when he is informed about Maḥmūd and his comrades' planned action against the enemy:

لَقَدْ آتَى لِلْبَرْكَانِ أَنْ يَتَفَجَّرَ .. ! لَقَدْ آتَى لِلْقَيْدِ أَنْ يَتَحَطَّمَ !
لَقَدْ آتَى لِلَّيْلِ أَنْ يَنْجَلِيَ ! لَقَدْ آتَى لِلشَّعْبِ أَنْ يَرْحَفَ !

It is time for the volcano to erupt!... It is time for the chains to snap! It is time for the darkness to clear! It is time for the people to march on!(65)

As the play proceeds, the rhetoric takes a different tone. It takes the form of inflated appreciation of Palestinian characters and their heroic deeds. At one point, Maḥmūd and his comrades are putting the final touches to their plan to confront the Israelis, who have decided to break a popular uprising. One comrade, Marwān, is given the order to stay

behind to report back to headquarters. He expresses his deep dissatisfaction and regret because he has not been given the chance to fight with them:

ما هذا يا محمود ؟ أتحرمني من شرف الاشتراك في المعركة ؟

أأقف متفرجا وأنتم تخوضون غمار الموت ؟ هذا لن يكون .

What is this, Maḥmūd? Why do you deprive me of the honour of taking part in the battle? Do you want me to stand by idly while you're confronting death? No, that can't be!(66)

Maḥmūd makes an emotional political speech before going into battle:

مرحبا بالمعركة ، فأرواحنا وقودها، وأجسادنا جسور

يمر عليها الشعب الصامد، وجماعنا سارية ضمة

لرايتنا الخفاقة .

فمرحبا بالقيّد فهو أساور الرجال،

ومرحبا بالمشنقة فهي أرجوحة المجد،

ومرحبا بالمعركة فهي عرس المناضلين،

ومرحبا بالجراح فهي أوسمة الشرف ،

ومرحبا بالموت فنحن شعب لن يموت .

Hail to battle! Our souls are its fuel!
Our bodies, bridges for our surging fighters!
Our skulls, crests atop our high-held standards!
Hail to chains, bracelets of manhood!
Hail to the scaffold, for the chairing of heroes!
Hail to battle, wedding-feast of the brave!
Hail to wounds, our badges of honour!
Hail to death, our people will not die!(67)

This idealistic heroism is, however, translated into action. The battle breaks out, and Maḥmūd falls into captivity. The more cruel the Israeli security men, the more rhetorical Maḥmūd becomes. At one point, when the interrogators are torturing him, his endurance is that of a super-man such as one sees only in films of fantasy. What concerns us here, however, is the language he uses in his answers to

the interrogators. Ben Yāmīn starts taking off Maḥmūd's nails with pincers, but Maḥmūd's reaction is as before:

سفلة جناء! يحيا شعبنا البطل .. عاشت فلسطين
حرّة عربية .. تحيا الثورة الفلسطينية .. الويل لكم يا جناء .

You are mean cowards. Long live our heroic people!
Long live Palestine, free and Arab! Long live the
Palestinian revolution! Woe to you, cowards!(68)

The extent of his resistance does not stop at beating off all the interrogators' approaches. It goes beyond human power. While in chains, Maḥmūd attacks one of the interrogators, David, who, he thinks, has insulted him, by strangling him with his chains:

إخرس! أنتم الكلاب .. أنتم حثالة البشرية,
وأنا الذي سأنتقم منك لنفسي ولشعبي ولرفاقي .

You shut up! You are sons of bitches, the lowest of the low of the human race. This is my revenge, for myself, my people and my comrades!(69)

The interrogators do not get any more out of him by electric shock treatment, either. He dies in the electric chair, shouting:

أموت وتحيا فلسطين! يحيا شعبنا البطل
تحيا الثورة الفلسطينية! تحيا العاصفة .

I die and Palestine lives! Long live our heroic people!
Long live the Palestinian revolution! Long live
al-ʿĀṣifah!(70)

The Palestinian hero is not seen as a superman only by his fellow Palestinians but also by his antagonists. In a scene where security is being discussed among Israeli officers, the threat of the Palestinian resistance troubles them deeply. Palestinians are mighty giants who plant death and

fear throughout Israel:

حاييم : الموت يهدد السكان في كل مكان . هذا غير معقول .
ديفيد : نعم يا سيدي غير معقول . إنني أصبحت أشك في
أمر رجال العاصفة هؤلاء . إنهم ليسوا بشرا إن
أعمالهم تدل على أنهم مرده شياطين .
حاييم : بل أكثر من مرده ! أكثر من شياطين . فعلى كثرة
ما تتخذ الدولة من احتياطات، فأعمال التدمير
والنفس لا تتوقف .

Hāim: Death is threatening the people everywhere.
Unbelievable!

David: Yes, Sir, it's unbelievable. I'm confused about these
men of al-ʿĀṣifah. They are not human... Their deeds
suggest that they are devils, giants!

Hāim: More than devils! More than giants! Despite all the
security measures taken by the state, their destructive
activities still go on!(71)

Against this rhetorical acclamation of Palestinian hero-
ism, there is a tone of unsubtle denigration of the Israelis.
Palestinian characters waste no time in cursing and condemn-
ing the Jews:

هداهم تفكيرهم اليهودي القذر أن ينبشوا مقبرة
المسلمين ليقموا عليها الفندق .

Their mean, dirty minds have led them to unearth a
Muslim graveyard and build a hotel on it,(72)

Maḥmūd tells his father. The Father answers:

الأنذال الجبناء . ويح لهم ! حقا إتهم خلفاء شيلوك ،
جلادو الأحياء والأموات .

Mean and cowardly people they are! Woe to them! They
are the descendents of Shylock indeed! The executioners
of the living and the dead!(73)

However, it is not only the Palestinians who use this
language to condemn the Israelis. The Israeli characters
themselves adopt the same style, pointing to their own

cowardice and meanness. At one point, a threatening letter is found by the prison commander, Ḥāim, on his desk. The commander is frightened and wants to leave the prison altogether:

حاييم : لقد أرسلت عشرات الطلبات إلى إدارة المخابرات
لتنقلني من هذا الجحيم ، ولكن كل جهودي ذهبت
أدراج الرياح . هذا مخيف . هذا مخيف .
رابين : أتودّ الانتقال من هنا يا سيدي الكابتن ؟ ولمن
تترك هذا السجن الضخم المخيف .. سجن عكا
الذي ترتعد من ذكره الأوصال ؟!
حاييم : ترتعد من ذكره الأوصال ؟! أي أوصال هذه يا رابين ؟!
رابين : أوصال المساجين العرب .
حاييم : نكتة سخيفة .. نكتة سخيفة ... إنّ الأوصال التي
ترتعد هي أوصالنا نحن ، أوصالنا يا غبي . فنحن
نعيش في هذا السجن وفي إسرائيل كلها على فوهة
بركان سينفجر لا محالة ، سينفجر . أفهمت ؟!

Ḥāim: I have sent letter after letter to Intelligence Headquarters asking them to transfer me from this hell, but in vain. It's frightening! Frightening!
Rābīn: Do you want to be transferred from here, Sir? Who will take responsibility for such a frighteningly huge prison as Acre prison? Its very name makes them quake with fear!
Ḥāim: Makes who quake with fear? Them or us, Rābīn?
Rābīn: The Arab prisoners.
Ḥāim: A silly joke... A silly joke... We're the ones who are scared, you fool. We are living, in this prison, and in the whole of Israel, in the mouth of a volcano. It will certainly erupt! It will certainly blow up! Do you understand?(74)

The writer misses no opportunity to show the "rapidly deteriorating psychological condition" in which the Israelis are living. The dialogue goes on the same way, to a point beyond dramatic credibility or justification. In fact, the characters' words are no more than the author's own. There is no real attempt to choose words which are in keeping with the characters. Another striking example of the extent to

which inflated use of the author's rhetoric can undermine the dialogue comes in the closing scene. Ben Yāmīn, who has lost an eye in the battle, is in a disturbed condition. He is ridiculed by everybody including his wife, Sarah, whose speech reveals nothing but a rhetorical pro-Arab character:

ألم أقل لك إنّ دماء العرب المسفوكة ستظل ناراً ملتهبة في
شرايينهم وعروقهم تهتف بهم أن انتقموا ؟ ألم أقل لك
إنّ الألوف من أطفال العرب الذين فتحوا أعينهم على النكبة
سيمرخون بعنف وقوة " أين آبائنا ؟ أين أرضنا ؟ أين مجدنا ؟
أين كرامتنا ؟ " والجواب سيكون هناك خلف هذه الحدود
الملعونة . تجثم الصهيونية ، إسرائيل ، اليهود - قتلوا
الآباء وهتكوا العرض ، وسلبوا الوطن وشردوا الأهل . وهنا
ستتحول هذه الآف إلى مردة عتاة وجبارة قساة تسدوس
بأقدامها الأخضر واليابس . سيتحول هؤلاء إلى براكين
وزلازل .

Didn't I tell you that shed Arab blood will remain like a fire in their veins, calling for revenge... Didn't I tell you that thousands of Arab children who have witnessed the (1948) disaster will scream abroad "Where are our fathers? Where is our land? Where is our glory? Where is our dignity?" The answers will be found there, behind those damned boundaries. Zionism, Israel, the Jews, killed our fathers, raped our women, usurped our land and kicked out our people. These thousands will become great and cruel giants. Their feet will stamp over everything. They will become earthquakes and volcanoes.(75)

The choice of Sarah, the wife of a colonel in the Israeli security forces, to be a staunch supporter or even sympathizer with the Palestinian cause convinces nobody. Of course, an anti-Zionist position can be taken by an Israeli, but the character chosen to represent this position is not the right person. Sarah is the crude mouthpiece of the author and her high-flown, florid and oratorical pro-Arab speech reveals more about the author's bias than about his ability to create a genuine character.

Rhetoric does not always take such overblown or unsubtle forms of propaganda and preaching. In *شمشون ودليلة* (Samson and Delilah), for example, the Palestinian and the Arab are not portrayed as unblemished heroes, but as human beings with human defects. The language of preaching takes a more subtle shape: advice conveyed from one character to another. The Father advises his son, 'Āṣim and all his comrades in the resistance movement to put their ideological differences aside in order to maintain national unity:

أعرف أنك كبش قضية ،
وهناك من هو كبش شان ،
وهناك من هو كبش ثالث .
كونوا ما شئتم يا ولدي ...
كونوا ما شئتم أعلاما مختلفة ...
ولكن كونوا يا ولدي قبل الألوان فلسطينيين !

I know that you are a battering-ram,
That there are other battering-rams.
Be whatever you like, my son...
Be under whatever different flags you like...
But first of all be Palestinians!(76)

On another occasion, the Father gives 'Āṣim his views on the right revolutionary path, which heads away from any terrorist or adventurist attitude, such as plane-hijacking, and so on.(77)

Rīm also has some advice to offer to her son, Yūnus. She warns him not to underestimate or disregard the enemy, but to take him seriously. The enemy is not a lifeless doll as portrayed by the distorted Arab media, but is real and dangerous:

لا يا ولدي !
ليست لعبة ورق أو شمع أو حجر هذه الدمية ...
إحذر هذى الدمية .
كل أصابع بارود عدوك محشو
في بطن الدمية .
إحذر يا ولدي ، إحذر يا يونس !

No, my son,
This doll is not like playing-cards or wax or stone.
Beware of it!
This doll is stuffed with enemy dynamite!
Take care, my son,
Be careful, Yūnus!(78)

She warns him against falling victim to false celebrity or naive publicity:

لكن ستجيء إليك الكاميرا تعطيك الصورة ،
والكلمة تعطيك الإعلان .
إحذر يا ولدي !
كن ثورة ،
واحذر أن تصبح إعلانا عن ثورة .

Oh, my son,
Beware the camera, beware publicity.
Be revolutionary,
Not an advertisement for revolution!(79)

A similar preaching style characterizes the language used by the Mother, Face No.1, Face No.2, Face No.3, and other characters in the play.

The generally mild sermon which takes the form of patronizing advice changes sometimes to a stronger tone than that of advice. It conveys protest and a bitter call to the people to participate, not to be satisfied with the role of passive onlookers. After it is revealed that Māzin has been killed in one of the operations against the enemy, 'Āṣim bitterly reproaches the audience for their indifference:

لو يتسلل أحد منكم يا مئة المليون !
 لم أنتم في الصالة ؟ !
 يا مئة المليون ..
 لم لا تأتون إلى الخشبة ؟
 ونمثل نحن جميعاً فوق الخشبة ! .

Oh, people of the hundred million!
 If only one of you infiltrated the enemy lines!
 Why do you stay in the auditorium?
 Why don't you come up here on stage
 So we can all act together?(80)

However, rhetoric as in the above-mentioned plays, especially *شعب لن يموت* (A People Who Will Not Die) has not done the structure any good. Hiding behind their characters and using them as mouthpieces for their own ideologies, the authors have fallen into a dangerous trap.

In *شعب لن يموت* (A People Who Will Not Die), the high-flown words and highly-inflated tones make the characters look like caricatures. In *شمشون ودليلة* (Samson and Delilah), the patronizing tone used by most of the major characters reveals more about the writer's point of view than about the individual characteristics of his dramatis personae. When the Father advises his son 'Āṣim not to become an arrogant celebrity, the first thing to cross one's mind is Rīm's advice to her son, mentioned above. The words are different, but the tones and the themes are identical.

Rhetoric, as suggested by Bentley, can produce sublimely thrilling performances.(81) Moreover, a great deal of rhetoric is found in the drama of Shaw, Brecht and other

leading modern dramatists, and this is certainly what Lessing(82) has in mind when he speaks of the stage as a pulpit, not dull moralizing, patronizing, exaggerated exhaltation or denigration such as we have seen in the above plays.

Palestinian dramatic dialogue, one may conclude, is a true reflection of Palestinian life and circumstances. In rhythm, mood and construction, it emphasizes challenge rather than reconciliation. As shown earlier, blatant rhetoric, strident images and intemperate speech structure are to be found side-by-side with thoughtful speeches, rich images and subtle approaches. Whether it be standard or dialect, poetry or prose, narrative or dramatic, the language of dialogue, too, takes sustenance from the Palestinian scene.

Footnotes

- (1) Peacock: "The Art of Drama", p166
- (2) Drew: "Discovering Drama", p112.
- (3) See Evans: "Language of Modern Drama" ppixvi-xviii; Egri: "The Art of dramatic Writing, Its Basis in the Creative Interpretation of Human Motives", p232; Faraj: "Dalīl al-Mutafarrij al-Dhaki ilā al-Masrah", ppl10-1"; Drew: op.cit, pp236-7; al-Rā'ī: "Fan al-Masrahiyyah", p24; Mandūr: "Al-Adab wa Funūnuh", p 120; al-Ḥakīm: "Fan al-Adab", pp 142, 149-50.
- (4) Peacock: op.cit, ppl57,168. See also Nicoll: "Dramatic Dialogue", p339.

- (5) Cited in 'Īd: "Taṭawwur al-Naqd al-Adabī fi Miṣr", pp110-1
- (6) al-Ḥakīm: "Al-Ṣafqah", the epilogue, pp158-9.
- (7) Kanafānī: "Al-Bāb", p63.
- (8) Ibid., pp117-8.
- (9) Drew: op.cit, p231.
- (10) Cole: "The Theatrical Event, A Mythos, A Vocabulary, A Perspective", pp110-1.
- (11) Fatā al-Thawrah: "Sha'b Lan Yamūt", p70.
- (12) Ibid.
- (13) Evans: op.cit, p87.
- (14) Balālīn: "Al-ʿAtmih", pp26-9.
- (15) See Black: "Poetic Drama as Mirror of the Will", p129; Drew: op.cit, pp225-6; Peacock: op.cit., pp218-20; and Nicoll: op.cit., p351.
- (16) Nicoll: op.cit, p344.
- (17) Evans: op.cit, p90.
- (18) Ibid., p112.
- (19) Ibid. This view is shared by many Arab critics. See, for example Yūnus: "Al-Usus al-Fanniyyah li al-Naqd al-Adabī", p180; 'Ayyād: "Tajārub fī al-Adab wa al-Naqd", pp20-1; K. Ismā'īl: "Al-Shi'r al-Maṣraḥī fī al-Adab al-Miṣrī al-Mu'āṣir", p159; Shukrī: "Thawrat al-Fikr fī Adabīnā al-Ḥadīth", pp310-11; and Mandūr: op.cit., pp120ff.
- (20) K. Ismā'īl: op.cit., p90.
- (21) Al-Ṣafadī: "Maṣra' Kulayb", pp47-8.
- (22) Ibid., pp52-4.
- (23) Ibid., p61.
- (24) Ibid., p63.
- (25) Ibid., p88.
- (26) Ibid., pp110-1.
- (27) Ibid., pp113-5.

- (28) Ibid., ppl23-5.
- (29) Ibid., ppl44,147.
- (30) Ibid., pp61-2.
- (31) Most contemporary Arab critics agree that the use of rhymed verse as a means of dramatic expression may disturb the construction and development of a play's plot and the supposedly organic relationship between characters. See for example al-Rā'ī: "Masraḥiyyāt wa Masraḥiyyūn", pp265ff; and al-Sayfī: "Al-Drāmā Bayn Shawqī wa Abāzah", pp232ff.
- (32) Al-Ṣafadī: op.cit., p21.
- (33) Ibid., pp77-82.
- (34) Ibid., pp92-4.
- (35) Ibid., p183.
- (36) Ibid., ppl25-7.
- (37) Ibid., ppl34-6.
- (38) Ibid., p91.
- (39) Bsaisū: "Shamshūn wa Dalīlah", p207.
- (40) Ibid., p209.
- (41) Ibid., pp210-1.
- (42) Ibid., p212.
- (43) Ibid., pp213-14.
- (44) Peacock: op.cit, p228.
- (45) Bsaisū: op.cit, p317.
- (46) Ibid., p318.
- (47) Eliot: "Poetry and Drama", pp 27-8.
- (48) Peacock: op.cit., p228.
- (49) Bsaisū: op.cit, pp259-62.
- (50) Ibid., p292.
- (51) Drew: op.cit, p223.
- (52) Successful playwriting has always required a dialogue which foreshadows coming events. See Egri: op.cit., pp233-4.

- (53) See, for example, Evans: op.cit., p78; and Eliot: op.cit., p29.
- (54) Kanafānī: op.cit, pp79-80.
- (55) Bsaisū: op.cit, ppl18-9.
- (56) Al-Qāsim: "Qaraqāsh", pp 76-9.
- (57) Clark: "European Theories of the Drama", p308.
- (58) Dawson: "The Drama and the Dramatic", pl7.
- (59) Pirandello: "Spoken Action", pl53.
- (60) Al-Rā'ī: "Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm: Fannān al-Furjah wa Fannān al-Fikr", p59.
- (61) See Butcher: "Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art", p28; Wellek and Warren: "Theory of Literature", ppl25-6; and Brecht: "A Short Organum for the Theatre", pl04.
- (62) Bentley: "The Life of the Drama", p85.
- (63) Ibid., p87.
- (64) Fatā al-Thawrah: op.cit, p24.
- (65) Ibid., p28.
- (66) Ibid., p42.
- (67) Ibid.
- (68) Ibid., p74.
- (69) Ibid., p77.
- (70) Ibid., p81. Al-ʿĀṣifah is the military wing of Fatah organisation, a major party of the Palestine Liberation Organization.
- (71) Ibid., pp 54-5.
- (72) Ibid., p27.
- (73) Ibid.
- (74) Ibid., pp44-5.
- (75) Ibid., p93.
- (76) Bsaisū: op.cit, p 228.
- (77) Ibid., p295.

(78) Ibid., p287.

(79) Ibid., p278.

(80) Ibid., p267.

(81.) Bentley: op.cit, p87. See also Peacock: op.cit., p222.

(82) Cited in Bentley: ibid.

PART FOUR

THE FUNCTION OF PALESTINIAN DRAMA

Chapter IX

THE FUNCTION OF PALESTINIAN DRAMA

Art was a magic tool, serving man in his struggle to master nature and develop social relationships. Its decisive function, as Fischer puts it, was "to exert power: power over nature, an enemy, a sexual partner, power over reality, power to strengthen the human collective." (1)

The human collective found physical effort inadequate in the search for food without a symbolic parallel: the artistic activity that accompanied the process of labour. This symbolic parallel united the members of the collective, revived their energy and furthered their aims. The primitive songs were labour calls, their rhythms organizing the group's practical movements. (2) "The Palaeolithic hunter and painter", Hauser says, "thought he was in possession of the thing itself in the picture, thought he had acquired power over the object in the portrayal of the object. He believed the real animal actually suffered the killing of the animal portrayed in the picture. The pictorial representation was to his mind nothing but the anticipation of the desired effect." (3) Art in these early times, Hauser points out, had very little to do with beauty or aesthetics; (4) it was a mere weapon of the human group in its struggle for survival.

The nature and function of art have changed with the passage of time and the changes in social systems, human

conditions, man's intellectual and aesthetic awareness and spiritual needs. In drama and theatre, which came into being later than other arts, cognitive and educational functions always went hand-in-hand with aesthetic and emotional enjoyment, even though the emphasis on these elements differed at different stages in the development of these arts.

Conflict, we noted earlier, is the essence of dramatic situation. Conflict between Man and Fate (Ananke) was the theme of Greek drama. According to Aristotle, dramatic treatment of this kind of conflict was meant to purify human beings. Purgation or Katharsis, to use Aristotle's word, is the end of drama (tragedy). Tragedy is a vent for the emotions of pity and fear we bring from real life. It artistically stirs and expels these passions, leaving a pleasurable calm, an emotional cure. In other words, the dramatist found out how the transport of human pity and fear might, under the excitation of art, be dissolved in joy, and the pain escape in a purified tide of human sympathy. (5)

In the Middle Ages, the feudal-religious culture precluded representation of conflict between Man and God or Fate, or of social conflict between men. The main aim of drama and theatre was moral and ethical: Christ's agonies and man's sins were the main themes to be treated in theatre.

The Renaissance witnessed the death of the feudal world and the birth of the bourgeoisie. A new drama came into being with the conflict between man and society as its main

theme and the analysis of the human psyche as its main purpose. Depiction and exploration of conflict between social duty and individual emotions on the one hand and between individual and social freedoms on the other hand were the aims of Romantic drama and so-called Modern drama in turn.

The crisis in capitalist society produced a third kind of conflict, the conflict between man and himself. This finds its manifestation in the Absurd, Surrealist, and Existentialist theatres. Sartre, the leading existentialist, sets out deliberately to attack the mind of his audience, to confound its prejudices, and to leave it with a "headache". His are plays which "trouble our conscience, discover our anxieties and uproot our beliefs,"(6) to use Lumley's words.

A new and radical movement in drama and theatre emerged from the hands of Brecht and others. This Alternative theory sees conflict between classes as the intellectual core of theatre and alienation as its aesthetic. It is not the aim of this theatre to create illusions about an artificial harmonious society but to arouse awareness of a reality which is subject to change. Its aesthetic principle is that the enjoyment given to the audience has to do with the exploration of new ideas about the struggle of the oppressed masses and their participation in change for better conditions and understanding. "Our theatre," says Brecht, "must give the thrill of comprehension and train people in the pleasure of changing reality. Our audiences must not only hear how

Prometheus was set free but also train themselves in the pleasure of freeing him. They must be taught to feel in our theatre all the satisfaction and enjoyment felt by the inventor and the discoverer, all the triumph felt by the liberator." (7)

Is Palestinian drama influenced by any of these theories? What is its aim? Have Palestinian playwrights developed any particular notions or concepts of theatre to reflect and explore the reality and the tragedy of Palestinian life?

Palestinian drama is committed drama. It sets out to reveal, interpret and explore the dimensions of the Palestinian cause and to defend its political, social and revolutionary values. As noted earlier, whether its themes are taken from history, religion, mythology or social life, they always have one dominant aim, the search for identity. In their effort to emphasize, sharpen and preserve this identity, Palestinian dramatists have undertaken a manifold task: revival of their cultural legacy, portrayal of the people's suffering and the challenge it creates, presentation of international revolutionary experience, self-criticism, even self-condemnation.

The revival of the Cultural Legacy

The awakening of Arab and Palestinian nationalism coincided, as mentioned earlier, with the revival of past cult-

ure. In their efforts to find a new formulation of their identity, some playwrights saw the value of historical, mythical and religious themes. They recalled great events, significant names, values and stories from Palestinian and Arab history. Some playwrights, as we have seen, were concerned with the accurate revival of historical material; others were concerned with the spirit of past events and paid little attention to actual historical happenings or original mythical episodes.

امروء القيس بن حجر (The Slaying of Kulayb) and مصرع كليب (Imru' al-Qays Ibn Hujr) show that historical episodes relate to present reality with no direct reference whatsoever to contemporary happenings. In portraying the tribal conflict in pre-Islamic times, the course of events of the el-Basūs war, and its bloody consequences for the tribes involved,

مصرع كليب (The Slaying of Kulayb) achieves many aims: a. It gives new life to old material which has long held a place in Arab memory. b. It shows the human losses suffered by the warring parties in ancient Arabia, and conveys a message of peace to the warring parties in modern Palestine. c. It depicts Kulayb's arrogance in victory, which led to his subsequent defeat, and to warn that such attitudes by any people could lead to the same result.

As well as reviving old material relevant to modern Arab culture, امروء القيس بن حجر (Imru' al-Qays Ibn Hujr) attempts to draw indirect parallels between the past and the present. Imru' al-Qays, the ancient Arab poet, sought help from a

foreign power, Rome, to regain his lost throne; as a result he lost his life (the story suggests that he was poisoned by the Romans). King Fayṣal of Syria, to whom the play was dedicated, naively thought that foreign powers were keen to help the Arabs achieve their independence from the Turks; not only did he fail to achieve independence, since the Arab nations fell under a new occupation by the British and the French, but also he lost his throne and was exiled by the French immediately after their occupation of Syria. In these plays, however, rediscovery of the past is the writer's preoccupation, and they adhere faithfully to the past events.

In ثورة الزنج (The Zanj Revolution), the historical material is of very little use as a history lesson. The writer shows the oppression suffered by the Zanj, the repression practiced by the Abbasid aristocracy and the rebellion of the Zanj against that ruling class, but all of these issues are presented in a very general way. The importance of the revolutionary path is the point which the play tries to convey to the oppressed Palestinians. The portrayal of similar repression from their own past history would have a profound effect on an audience deeply rooted in Arab history, and would establish an active relationship between the play and the audience. As Lindenberger suggests, the possibilities of interchange between audience and drama are endless where the themes are historical and national.(8)

الباب (The Door) employs an ancient theme, the myth of 'Ād, to convey a modern political and cultural message of

undoubted relevance to modern Palestinian thinking and life. In the old myth, the cause of man is discussed philosophically, but by emphasizing the return to Iram in the play and by the uncompromising challenge to God, The play adds a revolutionary national dimension to the purely philosophical one. The thesis that God is a mere illusion created by Man himself is a revolutionary argument in the modern Palestinian cultural environment. It is this combination between the radical philosophical and national aspects which give the play a much more subtle Palestinian appeal and make it sound more than a mere dramatization of an old myth.

قرقاش (Qaraqāsh) aims to present a theme relevant to the contemporary Israeli-Palestinian conflict and to draw a moral from the story of an old Arab ruler. Qaraqāsh, in the play, preserves some of the traits of the mediaeval Arab tyrant familiar to popular Palestinian memory. At the same time, he bears comparison with an Israeli military dictator, a change which takes Qaraqāsh away from the letter of historical accuracy yet keeps him close to the spirit of the original.

Some Palestinian plays emphasize religion, its ethical values and spiritual aspects. In بين جاهليتين (Between Two Dark Ages), for instance, we witness a lengthy dramatization of the boyhood of Muḥammad, showing his "holy" and "miraculous" character. The revival of this particular religious element in past culture, according to the play, must always be of special value, not only because of the

greatness of the people involved and especially of the Prophet, but also because of the divine nature of his mission. It is a message for "all peoples in all places at all times," one of the characters says. The message conveyed by the writer has to do with a sacred mission of a nature and function which is "enduring" for all peoples on earth.

It must be noted that the creation of new heroes and anti-heroes is a clear aim in these plays which deal with ancient material. The recreation of Shaddād, the hero of الباب (The Door) was to establish a new role for a new Palestinian hero, that is to say, to bring into being a Palestinian who struggles for self-determination, the return to the homeland, the achievement of his liberty as opposed to God's dominance and the authority of the occupying power, a Palestinian who is ready for challenge and sacrifice however difficult the obstacles are and however strong the forces of his enemies.

The recreation of Samson and Delilah aims at giving a new spirit of resistance to the overrun Palestinians and to show that struggle is the only way to end the siege and miseries suffered by the modern Palestinians at the hands of the victorious modern Israelis.

The recreation of Ibn Muḥammad and some of the other characters such as the Executioner in ثورة الزنج (The Zanj Revolution) is similar in aim to that of Samson and Delilah. They undoubtedly have many features which in essence resemble

those of the modern Palestinian who rebels against the oppressive and merciless Arab regimes. Although there is no mention of contemporary names, the many faces of Ibn Muḥammad and the Executioner and the movements of characters through different times and spaces, undoubtedly, indicate the modern Palestinian and Arab elements in these characters.

The dynamic presentation of old heroes in Palestinian drama is meant to enrich the present-day Palestinian experience and to create new Palestinian heroes and thus it participates in the process of transforming the Palestinian will from one marked with inaction, frustration, oppression, humiliation etc., to one characterised by a strong determination to challenge the oppressor, to resist injustice and to struggle for better conditions and a more promising future.

The Presentation of International Historical Experience

The national legacy is not the only historical material used in Palestinian drama. International historical material has also been a source for such plays as *مأساة جيفارا* (The Tragedy of Guevara) and *ملحمة الحرية* (The Epic of Liberty). In the first play the historical theme has nothing to do with Arab history. Guevara is a Latin American revolutionary leader, but the revolutionary movement he led, and his character, were in no way alien to the Palestinian resistance movement. Because of their special circumstances, the Palestinian are not unfamiliar with international revolutionary movements. Progressive circles have been concerned to intro-

duce a revolutionary mood into their cultural activities and to line the national and international experiences of struggles against colonialist and imperialist powers. Owing to the internationalization of the Palestinian struggle and the complementary nature of revolutionary movements all over the world, the introduction of Guevara, a socialist revolutionary character, could enrich the Palestinian dramatic and political experience.

It should be noted that the episodes of the play do not correspond in detail with chronological facts. The writer's main concern is to present a revolutionary symbol in the most general manner. In its totality, the play does not conflict with the truth about the Latin American hero, but the conclusions and the details are the writer's. By taking Guevara's tragic death as his theme, the writer gives a fresh revolutionary example to his fellow Palestinians. He introduces to them a great hero who does not hesitate to sacrifice himself for the revolutionary cause. He tells his audience in an unambiguous, albeit magical, manner that despite his death, Guevara is still alive as an ideal and as a model for those who share a similar destiny.

The appearance of Guevara on the stage as a live person after his death might be seen as unrealistic, but this magical or symbolic appearance does not seem inconsistent even with the socialist concept of art. The making of magic is not the ultimate purpose of art, but a magical residue in art, as Fischer points out, cannot be eliminated, for

"without that minute residue of its original nature (magic), art ceases to be art".(9)

The second play, ملحمة الحرية (The Epic of Liberty), draws its theme from the African resistance movement. The characters and episodes of this non-historical history play(10) have nothing to do with any actual historical characters or happenings. They are a product of the writer's imagination. He builds his story on the conflict between blacks and whites in Africa and the struggle by the African liberation movement against the white regime and its apartheid system. The whites in the play realize after a destructive but futile campaign against the blacks that recognition of the rights of the blacks is the only way for peaceful coexistence and reconciliation.

Although the writer does not mention the Palestinians, it is not impossible to read some Palestinian implications between the lines. Drawing the comparison between the white rule in Africa and the rule of the Zionists in Palestine is not an unfamiliar discussion in Palestinian politics. The writer introduces this African theme as an example which could work in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The Israelis will have peace only when they recognize Palestinian rights and abandon their racist policies, an outcome which will come about only through Palestinian struggle.

By choosing their themes from non-Arab experiences, our writers have attempted to comprehend the wholeness of human

experience. Non-national subjects in history plays are not an unfamiliar phenomenon. Lindenberger argues that Hegelian and Marxist approaches to history have created a new sense of continuity during the past century. Universal history has been able to address itself to an audience with something of the immediacy which was formerly the province of national history.(11) During the composition of "Emperor and Galilean", his long panoramic drama in the life of Julian the Apostate, Ibsen explained his choice of "so remote" a theme by saying: "The historical theme I have chosen has a closer connection with the the currents of our own age than one might at first think. This I regard as an essential demand to be made of any modern treatment of material so remote, if it is, as a work of literature, to be able to rouse any interest".(12)

Fischer puts the question in a wider humanistic context when he suggests that people try to escape from an unsatisfactory existence into a richer one, and that they desire to accomplish their unfulfilled desires through other figures, other forms and other experiences. They long to absorb the surrounding world and make it their own: "Man's desire to be increased and supplemented indicates that he is more than an individual. He feels that he can attain wholeness only if he takes possession of the experiences of others that might potentially be his own. Yet what a man apprehends as his potential includes everything that humanity as a whole is capable of."(13)

The Portrayal of Suffering and Challenge

Defeat and challenge have been major elements in Palestinian contemporary reality, and a major concern of many plays throughout modern times. *مأساة لاجئة* (The Tragedy of a Woman Refugee) depicts the suffering of the Palestinians who suddenly find themselves stateless refugees. As a result of the war in 1948, they lose their homes, properties and loved ones. Their dependence on the contributions of the UN and other charity organizations deepens their sense of humiliation.

In *أسرة شهيد* (A Martyr's Family), one can feel the bitterness suffered by a family who have lost their father as a martyr, and their passionate yearning for the lost homeland. In both plays, however, people challenge the aggressor. They fight back in the belief that their action against the enemy is essential to their survival. Those who are lost in the campaign are regarded as great and glorious patriots.

بيت الجنون (House of Madness) shows the nightmare experienced by a Palestinian living in Israel and his determination to end the injustice done to him by the usurper of his nation. It also shows the inevitable destruction of any hope of a peaceful solution between the Palestinians and the Israelis. Discrimination against Palestinian Arabs in Israel is an established fact. All attempts to heal the rift between the two parties have been doomed to failure by

Israeli oppressive acts against the Arabs. The play presents its hero, from the start, in an unbalanced state of mind. His violent action against the oppressor gives the impression that the tragedy of the Palestinians is too deep to be solved peacefully.

Revolution versus oppression is an equation which can be found in *Bsaisū's* plays. In *شمشون ودليلة* (Samson and Delilah), the ~~writer~~ aims to depict the profound depression and resentment of the Palestinian people in exile. While in theory Arab regimes claim to have given much support to the Palestinians, in practice the contrary is true. The Arab have offered the Palestinians nothing but oppression, rhetoric and siege. This treatment, together with a strong yearning for their homeland, has eventually led them to carry arms and to start a violent campaign against their Israeli enemy. The whole family in the play is depicted as shouldering the responsibility for change and advocating the adoption of the revolutionary path.

In *ثورة الزنج* (The Zanj Revolution), one can observe the association between the sufferings and resistance of the Zanj, who lived in the ninth century, and those of the Palestinian who lives in the twentieth century. The great suffering of the Zanj was bound to produce a revolution against the ruling Arab aristocracy of the time, as is the case with the Palestinians at the present time. Their difficult conditions have resulted in a resistance movement against their oppressors.

شعب لن يموت (A People Who Will Not Die) conveys a similar message. The confiscation of Arab land by the Israelis provokes the Palestinians. They realize that rebellion is the only effective means left to them to resist Zionist policies. In the confrontation between Maḥmūd, the prisoner, and Ben Yāmīn, his Israeli jailer, the former tells the latter that:

انّ فلسطين لا تتسع إلا لشعب واحد ، هو نحن أصحاب
هذه الأرض وهذا الوطن ... افعلوا ما شئتم .. مزّقوا
جسدي ، مزّقوه ! أما روحي ، أما إصراري ، أمّا
عزيمتي عزيمتي فلن تإليها .

Palestine is only for one people, namely us the owners of this land and this nation... Do whatever you like. You might tear my body apart, but my soul and my determination are beyond your reach.(14)

This message is an indirect call for the people to follow the revolutionary path. In other words, the people are alive because they do something to stop the aggression and they will survive as long as they resist the occupation. "You resist, therefore you are alive" is the clear message which the play conveys to Palestinian audiences and readers.

Man's struggle for sovereignty, liberty and self-determination is the message which can be read in الباب (The Door). Human dignity and liberty are completely connected with nationhood, according to the play's hero. Shaddād has built the city of Iram and has been denied the right to enter it by a superior power. Realizing the injustice done to him, Shaddād decides to challenge that power. He is determined to

confront it, even if that means his defeat and death. Shaddād is given a difficult choice, either to accept Habā's conditions, which means living in a humiliating exile, or to resist Habā's conditions, which means fighting him back, and hence facing death. By choosing the latter, Shaddād sets an example for his fellow Palestinians. In this sense, the play foretells what was to grow in the Palestinian mind and lead to the emergence of the resistance movement in 1965.

This apocalyptic vision is, indeed, a genuine response to the call which usually echoes in the world of great art, namely the anticipation of the future. "It has always been one of the most important functions of art," writes Walter Benjamin, "to create a demand for the complete satisfaction of which the hour has not yet struck." (15) A similar opinion has been expressed by Andrew Breton: "A work of art has value only if tremors from the future run through it." (16) An Arab critic has also emphasized the same concept: "The function of the writer.. and the function of the insect's feelers are identical. The writer feels about and precedes his society.. to explore the potential, to know the elements of change and to grope the way." (17)

The perceptive concept of the function of drama which combines the portrayal of issues of major concern in reality and the urge for challenge is not inconsistent with the socialist concept of the function of art. The clinical description of reality, Fischer suggests, is never the purpose of art. The essential function of art for those who

are destined to change their reality, he says, is that of moving, enlightening, and stimulating action.(18)

Self-criticism and Self-condemnation

The attempt to create new heroes and to adopt a revolutionary approach in Palestinian drama is sometimes accompanied with strong criticism. Some aspects of Palestinian reality are ridiculed and some attitudes severely condemned.

The criticism of some practices with regard to political conflict in modern Palestine is a strong feature in *في سبيلك يا وطن* (For the Sake of the Nation). The play condemns Arabs who sell their land to Jews. The preservation of Arab land in Arab hands, according to the play, is a major criterion by which anybody is judged as a traitor or a patriot. Characters who are involved in selling land to Jews are portrayed as selfish and unpatriotic. The condemnation of such characters is dropped only at the end of the play, when they regret their actions and repent.

The departure of the Palestinians from their homeland after their defeat in the 1948 war has preoccupied Palestinian thinking and feeling. Among the plays which discuss this theme with great sensitivity are *شمشون ودليلا* (Samson and Delilah) and *جسر إلى الأبد* (A Bridge to Eternity). Palestinian attitudes are shown in these plays to be far from ideal. Self-condemnation and a strong sense of guilt and

regret cannot be missed in many parts of the first play. Māzin questions the credibility of his sister Rīm, who, after the fall of the nation under Zionist control left her child behind. He denies her the right even to be his sister, telling his father:

أنا لا أعترف بها ...
تعترف بمجنونة
ألقت بالطفل
واحتفظت يا أبتى بالمرّة؟!

I will not recognize her, Father...
Do you recognize a crazy woman
Who has abandoned her child
And kept her luggage instead?!(19)

Rīm spells out her tormenting sense of guilt about her past following her realization that she has lost her child, speaking to her son's image:

منذ رمتك يدي
وأنا لا أعترف بها يا ولدي.
أنظر هي ذي كفي بأصابعها الخمسة،
الإصبع يلعن فيها الإصبع ...
كالحيّات الخمس أصابع كفي الخمسة،
تلدغني في عنقي،
في شدي،
في عيني.

You were thrown by my hand, my Son.
Since then my hand is no longer mine.
See, here it is with its five fingers...
Each one cursing the other.
They are five snakes
Biting my breasts,
My neck,
My eyes.(20)

The Father, also, expresses his bitter feelings against their departure from the homeland:

كان علينا أن نذبح فوق العتبة ...
ولا نرفع قدما عن تلك العتبة .

We should have been slaughtered on the threshold...
Rather than lift a foot beyond it!(21)

The question of Palestinian guilt has been explored in a much more subtle manner in *جسر إلى الأبد* (A Bridge to Eternity). Fāris is a Palestinian who suffers from a strong sense of guilt. The Ghost and Rajā', the other main characters, represent two conflicting forces in Fāris' psyche. They turn him into a schizophrenic. The Ghost symbolizes his psychological torture. Fāris thinks that he committed a crime when he left his mother, i.e. his nation. He is constantly visited by the Ghost, who reminds him of his crime and the punishment he must endure.

Rajā', on the other hand, symbolizes a psychological relief ("Rajā'" is the Arabic word for "hope"). Her role in the play is to give him comfort and to reveal that he is innocent. His conviction that he is responsible for his mother's death, i.e. for the loss of the nation, is too deep to uproot easily. He finds himself forced to believe the Ghost whenever he comes to him to remind him of his "crime and punishment":

كل ليلة ... لا يقول إلا ما قاله في المرة الأولى . وفي كل
ليلة أقول لنفسي لا ، لا ، لن أردّ على صوته وهو ينادي .
ولكن ما أن يبدأ بقرع الباب حتى أجد نفسي مسوقا إلى
الاستجابة كأنما بفعل قوة مجهولة .

Every night (the Ghost) says exactly what he said the first time, and every night I say to myself "No, no, I won't answer when he calls for me." But the moment he starts knocking at my door, I find myself forced to respond as if by some unseen power.(22)

Eventually his agony becomes unbearable:

أحس أحيانا أنني فأر تعس أطيقت وراء ذيله مصيدة جبارة ،
وهو لا يستطيع أن يفعل شيئا سوى أن ينتظر قدوم صاحب
المصيدة للفتك به .

Sometimes I feel that I am an unlucky mouse who has walked into a huge trap and can do nothing but wait for the trapper to kill him.(23)

Fāris' psychological pains are considerably reduced, however, whenever Rajā' comes to visit him, in other words when he has hopes that he is innocent, and by the end of the play, he is completely relieved when Rajā' proves his innocence after a long investigation.

It is interesting to note that two different approaches have been adopted in these two plays with regard to the Palestinian sense of guilt. Characters in *شمشون ودليلة* (Samson and Delilah) admit their share of responsibility for defeat, departure and the abandoning of homes during the war of 1948. Their reaction is a combination of regret and revolution to clear their conscience and atone for their wrongdoings.

The hero of *جسر إلى الأبد* (A Bridge to Eternity), on the other hand, admits the responsibility, but after a long discussion and investigation, he draws the conclusion that he

must not hold himself responsible for what had happened. He does not take this stand because he wants to flee responsibility but because he finds that strong feelings of guilt result for him only in pain and inaction, since Fāris is determined throughout the play that he must die as a punishment for a crime that he might have committed. The revelation that his mother's death and his absence occurred only by coincidence was adequate to prove his innocence and hence clear his conscience. The writer was also keen to give an answer to the many who constantly blame the Palestinians for the tragedy that befell them. His judgement, to acquit the accused Fāris, is, I think, a conscious as well as unconscious self-defence.

The criticism of Palestinian character and reality extends, however, to include some practices of their resistance movement. In *شمشون ودليله* (Samson and Delilah), the Father denounces what he describes as adventurous actions such as plane-hijacking. The denunciation is not expressed in a straightforward manner, however. It takes the form of advice from a father to his committed revolutionary son:

يا عاصم قل لرفاق سلاحك،
 العالم قد فتح عينيه علينا الآن.
 وعلينا أن نكسب صوته،
 نكسب قلبه.
 إنا ما جئنا لنحطم آنية زهور،
 كي نخطف طائفة...
 جئنا للعالم ضد جريمة،
 وعلينا أن نقهرها لا بسلاح مقامر،
 لكن بضمير ووجدان وأمشاط رصاص الشائر.

Tell your comrades in arms, 'Āṣim,
 That the world has opened its eyes on us...
 And we have to win its heart and its voice.
 We did not rise up to smash a flower-vase,
 To hijack an aeroplane...
 We called out to the world against a crime,
 And we have to vanquish it,
 Not with a gambler's stroke...,
 But with the conscience and the bullets
 of the revolutionary.(24)

The clashes and disputes among revolutionaries, their exaggerated rhetoric and their failure to build a strong relationship with the masses are also criticized by the writer and seen as a serious threat to their resistance movement. The Father tells his son, 'Āṣim:

علينا أن نعرف ... كيف نقيم جسورا
 بين الشوار وبين الشوار،
 بين الخشبة والصالة...
 ألا نسقط في مصيدة شعار
 يرتفع وراء شعار.
 حين يزايد يا ولدي الشوار،
 تموت الثورة والشوار.

We have to know...
 How to build bridges between revolutionaries,
 Between the stage and the audience...
 We must not fall victims to hollow slogans.
 With arrogant revolutionaries, my Son
 Revolutions can't survive.(25)

However, the Palestinians are not the only party to be criticized. Arab regimes are strongly condemned in the same play. Their repressive exercises against their own peoples and against the Palestinians and their hollow rhetoric and clamorous propaganda are the root cause of Arab defeats and failures. People are not allowed to express their views. Those who dare to defy the rulers' will or question their

conduct are either imprisoned or killed. The people are ordered to stay silent if they want to keep their heads on their shoulders. They are supposed to believe any official statement, even if it claims that "Haifa has been liberated!" One Passenger tells another:

أولا تعلم أن هنالك أوراقا قد طبعت
أصدرها بنك العربية؟...
لو قال لك الكمساري إن العربية في حيفا،
فادفع ورقة صمت ... واسكت !

Don't you know
That "papers of silence" have been issued
By the car's bank?...
If the Conductor has told you that the car is in Haifa,
Pay a "cheque of silence"...and shut up!(26)

The practices of Arab regimes produce an atmosphere of fear and indifference among the vast majority of their peoples. Those peoples are not saved from the writer's denunciation. The state of inaction and stagnation created by their silence provokes the anger of the most affected among the Palestinians. The call upon people to wake up, see their deteriorating conditions and face their bitter reality is echoed in many parts of the play. In a moment of distress Rīm addresses the passengers angrily:

أو ما ضاع لأحد منكم شيء يا ركاب العربية ؟
أو ما ضاع لأحد منكم نهر أو بقرة ؟
أو ما ضاع لأحد منكم وطن يا ركاب العربية ؟
يسأل : لم ضاع ومن ضيعه ؟
لم تخفون رءوسكم .. تحت وسائدكم ؟

Haven't any of you lost something?
A river or a cow?
Haven't any of you lost a nation
And wanted to ask why it was lost

And who is responsible for its loss?...
 Why do you hide your heads
 Beneath your pillows?(27)

Shaddād, in **الباب** (The Door), is also sick of the stagnation and boredom which are dominating his conventional society. When his mother tries to persuade him to abandon his "peculiar" idea of fighting God Habā, in other words to act against his oppressors, Shaddād tells her:

لا أريد أن أعيش بحكم العادة، لا أريد أن أنجب
 أطفالا، فذلك ليس أمرا ضخما وهائلا: إن الفأرة
 تفعل ذلك بتواضع.

I do not want to live this habitual life. I do not want to give life to children. That is no great achievement. A mere mouse can do it."(28)

In **العتمة** (The Darkness), bitter criticism is aimed at two groups in society. The first consists of intellectuals with a middle class background whose only contribution is pedantic talk about matters irrelevant to the problems of their people. In this connection, one can visualize the process of mending the electrical system in the theatre. Some people are doing their best to repair the system, but Imīl interrupts them constantly to make sure that the person who is doing the job knows about the history of electricity, its laws and the nature of light. He goes further and speaks of the necessity of knowing the order of the universe before one dares to take any such responsibility. This attitude does

not pass without strong condemnation from other characters.

Sāmī shouts at Imīl:

بكفي عاد بكفي... إرحم أعصاب اللي قاعدين. إذا في
تمثال لليأس هو إنت... إنت حجر ميت بدون إحساس
كل جملة حكيته كانت جملة ميتة... نظرياتك كلها من
بره لبره، جمل رنانة... العتمة هذي اللي شافينها هي منك
ومن أشكالك اللي عايشين في الدنيا عشان يورونا اليأس..

Enough is enough!... This is very boring indeed... You are a monument to despair... You are as dead as a stone... Every phrase you utter is dead... All your theories are mere rhetoric... The darkness which prevails now is your fault and the fault of people like you, whose only purpose in life is to bring us despair.(29)

The criticism of some of the attitudes of this group extends to their hypocrisy. Some of them advocate women's liberation whenever they deal with enlightened progressives, but in the presence of conservative people they retreat and reveal their real reactionary practices. They are also condemned for their inferiority complex with regard to western culture. They champion European artistic values, look down on their own, and do not bother even to see any show produced by national theatrical groups. Hānī suggests to some members of a national theatrical group to leave the country for Europe if they are interested in improving their standards, because in his view their country "is a hopeless case." (30) Francois reacts to Hānī's remarks, retorting:

بتقول إنك بتحب المسرح، والمسرح في بلدنا موش كل هالقدّه.
يا ترى إنت إيش عملت عشان اتعلي المستوى؟...
إذا كل واحد عنده البذرة عشان يبني بيطلع بره، مين
بيضل هون ؟

You say that you like theatre, and that our theatre is no good! I wonder what you have done to improve it?... If people with potentials should leave the country, there'd be no-one left!(31)

The opportunistic attitude of this group is also put on trial. Imīl and Hānī try to take the credit for others' achievements. They do nothing, for example, to repair the lighting system, yet they rush to announce to the audience at the end of the play that they have done it, that the light is on again thanks to "their" efforts!

Hānī's indifference and uncooperative attitude would also demonstrate to the audience the incompetence of such a class. Hānī finds it very interesting to talk about Nādyāh's engineering certificate as a masterpiece of decoration, to talk about his "magnificent" birthday party and his "elegant" car, at a time when others are doing their best to get rid of darkness.

The main characteristics of Hānī and Imīl are depicted in the play in a manner that would irritate not only other characters in the play, but also the audience and readers. Condemnation and revulsion are appropriate feelings towards a class whose attitudes reveal opportunism, hypocrisy and impracticality.

The second group whose behaviour is put on trial is represented by a religious reactionary character. Arab values

and culture are threatened, according to Mājid, by children who don't obey their fathers, women who dare to act independently from men or who advocate the right to work outside their homes, and by those who drink alcohol. Arab defeats, Mājid points out, are caused by breaking away from traditions and religious values. And "darkness", he concludes, is a punishment for us because we have abandoned the path of faith.(32)

These views are challenged and ridiculed by other characters. Nādyah, who defends women's right to liberty and freedom of action, speaks angrily against Mājid's reactionary suggestions and remarks. Ḥusām shows his dislike of his father and resents his repressive treatment. Mīlād is sarcastic about Mājid's rejection of progressive trends in society:

ما قلته يا صاحب الفضيله !
معناه أن نغتال دورة الزمان..
معناه أن نطرد من حياتنا المكان .

What you have said, your noble honour,
Means the killing of the circle of time
And the cancellation of space from our life.(33)

The lengthy discussion of Mājid's interpretation of social and political problems is meant, I think, to review and criticize a prevailing culture in Palestinian society where unrealistic explanations are often given for national ills and dilemmas.

The philosophical structure of Palestinian culture as a whole is strongly attacked in الباب (The Door). As mentioned earlier, the play regards the metaphysical aspects of religion as a great danger to both Palestinian culture and struggle. The play suggests that the belief that God is responsible for defeats or failures of the people is an illusion which must be brought to an end. The defiant behaviour of the play's hero is motivated by a principle which values human action against God's oppression. Shaddād tells the two men in the Kingdom of the Dead:

أرمت أن أفك عن رقاب الناس الذاهبين
إليه الآيبين من عنده ، التاركين تحت
قدميه كل كبريائهم وشجاعتهم .

I wanted to take the yoke off the necks of men
who go to him and leave their pride and courage
at his feet.(34)

The emphasis on man, not God, as the saviour, is a theme to be found in مأساة جيفارا (The Tragedy of Guevara). What gives this theme a particular significance is that it is presented through a controversial character, namely a prostitute. Māryānā is portrayed as a great revolutionary woman whose actions and words reveal a strong condemnation of the prevailing conventional values in society. She addresses the audience:

أنا ماريانا المومس أتحد اكن ،
وأبصق فوق وسائدكن ،
يا كل الزوجات الشرعيات .
فمخلصنا لن يولد تحت السرر الشرعية ،

ومخلصنا ليس نبيًا ذا معجزة
أو أسطورة.
فمخلصنا إنسان .

I am Māryānā, a prostitute.
I challenge you, all you lawful wives!
And spit upon your pillows.
Our Saviour won't be born in lawful beds.
Our Saviour is not a prophet with a miracle
Or a myth.
Our Saviour is human.(35)

Our discussion has shown that the function of drama, as envisaged and practiced by Palestinian playwrights has a dialectical relationship with the major aspects of Palestinian reality. The manifold mission of drama parallels in a dialectical manner the aspirations and concerns of the Palestinian people.

Both dynamic and static elements of Palestinian culture and life are reflected in dramatic themes and have coloured the nature and the role of drama. In its attempt to portray the people's concerns and struggle and to raise the awareness of its audience, Palestinian drama has tried various means of emotional rhetoric, preaching, provocation, condemnation, inference and mental stimulation.

Footnotes

(1) Fischer: "The Necessity of Art", pp35-6.

- (2) Tulaymah: "Muqaddimah fī Nazariyyat al-Adab", p41.
- (3) Hauser: "The Social History of Art", vol. 1, p26.
Childe also talks about the importance of magic art in the paleolithic society, and suggests that "the artist-magicians may have been liberated from the exacting tasks of the chase to concentrate on the reputedly more productive ritual, they would be assigned a share in the proceeds of the hunt in return for a purely spiritual participation in its trials and dangers." ("What Happened in History", p48.)
- (4) Hauser: op. cit., p27-8. See also Fischer: op. cit., p36.
- (5) Aristotle's theory of Katharsis is discussed in detail in Butcher: "Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art", pp246ff. See also Symonds: "Studies of the Greek Poets", p303.
- (6) Lumley: "New Trends in Twentieth-Century Drama", p145.
- (7) Cited in Fischer: op. cit., p10.
- (8) Lindenberger: "Historical Drama", p6.
- (9) Fischer: op.cit., p14.
- (10) "Non-historical history play" is a term used by Lindenberger to refer to that type of play which is centrally concerned with historical issues without being based on any actual historical occurrence (Lindenberger: op.cit., p25).
- (11) Lindenberger: op. cit., p9.
- (12) Cited in Lindenberger, ibid.
- (13) Fischer: op. cit., p8.
- (14) Fatā al-Thawrah: "Sha'b Lan Yamūt", pp70, 72.
- (15) Cited in Fischer: op. cit., p205.
- (16) Ibid.
- (17) 'Ayyād: "Tajārūb fī al-Adab wa al-Naqd", p302.
- (18) Fischer: op. cit., p14. See also Lenin: "Articles on Tolstoy", pp346, 351-2, 355, 358, 361; Lavritski: "Fī Sabīl al-Wāqi'iyyah", pp71-2, 123, 482, 484; Borsov: "Al-Wāqi'iyyah, al-Yawm wa Abadā", pp60-1, 247; Mīnah: "Nāẓim Hikmat wa Qaḍāyā Adabiyyah wa fikriyyah", pp206-7.

- (19) Bsaisū: "Shamshūn wa Dalīlah", p214.
- (20) Ibid., p222.
- (21) Ibid., p226.
- (22) Kanafānī: " Jisr ilā al-Abad", p247.
- (23) Ibid., p272.
- (24) Bsaisū: op. cit., pp294-5.
- (25) Ibid., p303.
- (26) Ibid., p235.
- (27) Ibid., pp238-9.
- (28) Kanafānī: "Al-Bāb", p67.
- (29) Balālīn: "Al-ʿAtmih", pp39-40.
- (30) Ibid., p52.
- (31) Ibid., pp47, 52.
- (32) Ibid., pp33-4.
- (33) Ibid., p65.
- (34) Kanafānī: op. cit., p97.
- (35) Bsaisū: "Maʿsāt Guevara", p84.

CONCLUSION

Drama and theatre in their present forms are not Arab in origin. The extent of assimilation of these alien arts into Arab culture varies from place to place and one cannot claim that they are a strong organic part of Palestinian cultural life. Some writers have made great efforts but, up till now, Palestine has no fully professional drama writers and no theatre companies able to undertake a season of any length. Plays are staged by amateur theatre groups and the drama writers are poets, novelists, journalists, historians or educationists by profession. Cultural, financial, political, organizational and technical factors have denied these arts a secure existence. The censorship by the occupying forces in particular has created severe obstacles for Palestinian drama and theatre. Nevertheless, the many plays which are written or staged show distinctive Palestinian characteristics in both content and form.

With regard to content, Palestinian drama is committed drama. Its dominant theme has been the manifestation of the Palestinian people as a nation. Religion, history, myth and social life have inspired the writers to express the various aspects of this national theme. There are two main approaches:

The first approach implies a general call for the people to unite, to show sincere love for their nation, to preserve their land and culture, to rely on themselves and not on

foreign powers to achieve their goals, and to appreciate Arab and Islamic values.

The second approach implies a call for revolution as the means to save the Palestinian nation from destruction. Two trends can be traced here, both calling for sacrifice, celebrating the *fedā'ī* and expressing passionate love of the nation. The difference lies in their artistic and intellectual approach. Generally speaking, experiments of the first trend are simple and direct, while the second is more subtle. The call for revolution of the first trend is motivated in some plays by religion and in others by revenge. The image of the nation has a distinctive romantic aspect, vividly enhanced by the sudden and devastating expulsion of the Palestinians from their homeland. The image of the Jew becomes stereotyped, closer to caricature than to reality. A Jew is shown as a mean, cowardly and cunning enemy with a jealous loathing of Islam. One can also detect an excessive confidence in Arab strength and an underestimation of Zionist capacities.

Owing to the internationalization of the Palestinian problem and the emergence of a new revolutionary mood among the Palestinians and, indeed, the involvement of many writers in the resistance movement, a second trend has arisen in the call for revolution. The religious dimension has almost disappeared from the works of this new generation of writers. There is no mention of Allah as the great saviour, the *fedā'ī* sacrifices himself for the sake of his nation rather than for

God, and revenge is not endorsed as the way towards liberation. The revolutionary himself becomes the great saviour. International experiences relevant to the Palestinian struggle are introduced. Democratic revolution becomes the right path for change. Women begin to be portrayed as full participants in the revolution and public life. The yearning for the homeland, though deep and strong, serves a less romantic goal. Self-criticism and even self-condemnation are expressed in many plays. The condemnation of the repression of the Palestinian people by the Arab regimes becomes as clear a theme as the condemnation of Zionist oppression. The image of the stereotype Jew has generally changed. He is now an Israeli or a Zionist who is an arrogant and insecure giant.

These various forms of national manifestation in the drama have been a true reflection of political and social changes in the course of the Palestinian national struggle. Nor has this been, generally speaking, a narrow nationalism. The cultures of the Canaanites, the Arabs and the Moslems have all had a bearing as have international revolutionary movements.

The discussion of the aesthetics of the drama has shown various methods of aesthetic construction of the themes. This applies to presentational elements of the drama as well as to conflict, character and dialogue. Thus, indigenous theatrical devices such as *arāgūz*, the magic box, the storyteller, *al-maddāḥ*, *al-Bashīr*, *al-Ḥādī*, the poet, the popular

poet, music, dance and song are used, while elements of world theatre such as light, decor, chorus, voice and gesture, audience-involvement, the alienation effect, detective style and other elements of excitement and suspense remain dominant in the great majority of plays.

The construction of conflict, character and dialogue follows the writers' political and intellectual approaches. When some writers display exaggerated optimism and over-heated imagination, the conflict in their plays tends to resolve mechanically to the advantage of their ideal characters or ideas, without taking into consideration the real power and determination of the antagonists or the other side of the argument. Other writers are more realistic and dynamic. They do not envisage a smooth resolution of the conflict. A resolvable conflict is seen by these writers as neither real nor possible at the present time. Their characters, protagonists and antagonists alike, have sufficient will-power to present their arguments and counter-arguments without imminent resolution of the conflict.

These two different approaches to conflict and character construction reflect on the dialogue. While emotional rhetoric, strident images and intemperate speeches are to be found in one group of plays, in the other there are thoughtful speeches, stimulating images and subtle inferences. Nevertheless, in its rhythm, mood and language, the dialogue of Palestinian drama as a whole emphasizes challenge more than reconciliation.

Appendix

SUMMARIES OF PLAYS DISCUSSED

الباب THE DOOR, (1964), by Ghassān Kanafānī.

A five act play which is inspired by the ancient Arab myth of Shaddād and the city of many columns, Iram. Act One opens with 'Ād's delegation, Luqmān, Qayl and Ra'd, discussing the drought which has befallen their nation and the decision of their king, 'Ād, not to ask God Habā for water but to ask the deities of Mecca. Luqmān condemns his colleagues for obeying 'Ād's order. While they argue, three clouds pass over the stage. A voice asks Qayl to choose one of the clouds. Ra'd asks Qayl not to choose the black one because it carries death, but 'Ād insists that Qayl chooses the black one as it is their only chance to get rid of Habā. 'Ād and his men are attacked by the black cloud and immediately annihilated.

In Act Two Shaddād, 'Ād's son, follows his father's path. He builds the great city of Iram, but is prevented from entering it. Nevertheless, he decides to march to it with his armies to face Habā. His mother and his son Marthād try their best to stop him. Shaddād argues fiercely that life without freedom of action is futile and base, and that confrontation and death are the way of salvation.

In Act Three it is understood through a dialogue between Marthad and Mother that Shaddād, his armies, and his city have been completely destroyed in the confrontation with Habā. Marthad tries to convince his grandmother that his father was right.

The scene changes in Act Four to the Kingdom of the Dead where Shaddād speaks with two Dead Men about their "life" there. God Habā enters and participates in the dialogue. Shaddād argues with Habā about the source of God's power, and about the importance of man and his potentialities. God Habā admits that his authority is built on human weakness.

In the last act, Shaddād rebels against the monotonous life in the Kingdom of the Dead and urges the two Dead Men to search for a way out of slavery by breaking down the door which separates the world of the dead (Kingdom of God) from the world of the living (World of Man). They, for their part, try to persuade him that such action is impossible and that to attempt it is futile. Shaddād rejects their arguments and strides towards the door as the curtain falls.

بيت الجنون HOUSE OF MADNESS, (1965), by Tawfīq Fayyāḍ.

A one-character play which puts into focus the plight of the Palestinian Arabs living inside the Zionist state. National persecution suffered by the Palestinians at the hand of

their Zionist rulers and their struggle for survival echo strongly throughout the play side-by-side with their rulers' determination to impose their repressive rule by all violent and deceitful means. This theme is presented symbolically in two acts.

It starts with Sāmī, a teacher from Haifa reading extracts from the Egyptian myth of resurrection. The moment he glimpses a portrait of a woman hanging on his wall, tormenting streams of memories spring out before his eyes. There follows a flashback to his own tragic history. The portrait is of Lubnā, a Jewish woman with whom he had been deeply in love. Their similar backgrounds of tragedy, dispersal and separation from their loved ones, the denial of freedom and the oppression suffered by them both, had drawn them to each other and demonstrated their need for each other's trustworthy comradeship. Lubnā became pregnant and, to Sāmī, the awaited baby meant an end to pain and suffering, but this dream did not last long. Under pressure from the Man With the Black Hat (a symbol for Zionist ideology), Lubnā had undergone an abortion.

Deprived by the Zionists of the chance to have this child, that is to say, of living in his nation in peace, freedom and equality, Sāmī becomes furious and decides to act to defend his very existence. He kills Lubnā, hoping that he will get rid of the nightmare that had been tormenting his life. The play ends, still in the nightmare.

بين جاهليتين BETWEEN TWO DARK AGES, (194-?),

by Darwīsh Miqdādī.

An epic play of twenty-nine scenes (مجالس) which is concerned with the special circumstances of Muḥammad's life and with his divinity.

It starts with a portrayal of some religious practices in al-Ka'bah of Mecca shortly before the emergence of Islam. This is followed by the attempt made by Abrahah, Emperor of Abyssinia, to invade Mecca and destroy al-Ka'bah, an event which ends in the total destruction of the Abyssinian armies by the divine Abābīl Birds.

The scene changes to Ṣan'ā' market where a Jewish priest meets 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, Muḥammad's grandfather, and tells him that a child is about to be born in his clan who will be the last awaited prophet.

A series of episodes follow this prophecy, all of which reveal aspects of Muḥammad's divinity. Angels, jinn, sooth-sayers, Christian and Jewish priests, prominent people from the Arab peninsular and beyond present their ecstatic testimonies in support of the awaited prophethood of Muḥammad, before and after his birth, right up to his marriage with Khadījah, where the play ends. The most dramatic among these testimonies are those of Jewish and Christian priests, the choruses of Persia and that of Muḥammad himself. The Jewish priests adopt a hostile attitude towards Muḥammad.

One of them, Yūsuf, falls unconscious when he sees the baby Muḥammad, and predicts that the Jews have no future in Arab land.

Christian priests, on the other hand, adopt a sympathetic and appreciative attitude towards Muḥammad. Some of them even express their wish to witness Arab victory over the Jews. The Christians who take a hostile position in the play are the Romans. Their attempt to assassinate Muḥammad is thwarted by a dreadful bull sent by God.

The Chosroes of Persia dreams that the battlements of his palace are destroyed and that the divine fire of Persia dies out, a dream which is interpreted as a warning of the forthcoming Persian catastrophe at the hand of the awaited Arab prophet.

Among the many miraculous events recounted about Muḥammad is the visitation by three angels who open his heart, purify it and seal it with a seal of light.

ثورة الزنج THE ZANJ REVOLUTION, (1970), by Muḥīn Bsaisū.

This two-act play is inspired by the Zanj rebellion against the ruling Abbasid aristocracy. The characters move in time and place from Old Basra of the tenth century to twentieth century Palestine and vice versa in a manner which puts a great emphasis on the dialectical dimension of history.

past, present and future.

The play starts with the Magic Box Man telling the audience how truth is distorted by falsifiers of history (represented in the play by the Washing Machine Man and the Ticker Man). Their primary aim is to delude people by discrediting revolutionary movements. The Washing Machine Man suggests that they get hold of the face of Palestine and dye it. A woman from Palestine appears and denounces this suggestion. The Ticker Man argues with the Washing Machine Man that it would be easier if they recalled an old face. The choice of 'Abdullāh Ibn Muḥammad, the leader of the Zanj revolution, creates a similar dilemma for them as he, too, appears, giving a warning against distortion of the Zanj revolutionary principles.

The Washing Machine Man suggests that they go back to Palestine. A panorama of the tragic life of the Palestinians and the ways they are exploited is movingly presented on stage. 'Abdullāh Ibn Muḥammad reappears to identify some of the people from his time, the executioner, and some of his Zanj comrades. The scene changes to Old Basra. The tragic situation of the Zanj and their revolution are reviewed by 'Abdullāh Ibn Muḥammad, Waṭfā', his wife and their comrade al-Baḥrānī.

While the Zanj revolution suffers defeat, Waṭfā' discloses that she is pregnant. The Washing Machine Man and the Ticker Man try to discredit her. As they fail in this, they

attempt forcibly to bring about an abortion. An executioner is instructed to do the job, but realizing that Waṭfā' nursed his wounds during the Zanj revolution, the executioner releases her. He suggests she goes back to Old Basra but Waṭfā' expresses her wish to stay in the twentieth century to hand a gun to the dispossessed Palestinian revolutionaries.

The scene changes to a vast space full of crucified people, all of whom are in the image of 'Abdullāh Ibn Muḥammad. Waṭfā' is bewildered by not being able to identify the real 'Abdullāh Ibn Muḥammad who is supposed to give the awaited child a name and a flag.

The play ends with Waṭfā' telling the audience that the Zanj performed a miracle when they revolted against their oppressors and that it is the turn of the audience to take action in support of their revolution.

جسر الى الأبد A BRIDGE TO ETERNITY, (196-?),

by Ghassān Kanafānī.

This play was written to be presented on the radio in a series of ten instalments. It concerns the agony of a young man, Fāris, who fears that he may be responsible for the death of his mother.

Fāris is hit by a car and the motorist, Rajā' (a woman), fears for his safety. He asks her not to worry, for he has

been visited by a ghost who warned him that he would live to "witness only six Tuesdays but not the seventh." The reason is that he is to blame for the death of his mother.

Intrigued and impressed, Rajā' tells the story to her father, but he is worried by her belief in the ghost story and seeks help from a doctor who says the young woman is only under some strain. Rajā' continues to be excited by the encounter with Fāris, and seeks reassurance from a psychology teacher at her college.

To stem the tide of her father's fears, she tells him that the story of the ghost was untrue, but unable to convince herself of the story, she goes to visit Fāris.

Rajā' grows even more taken with Fāris, but the ghost returns to announce that Fāris has only one more Tuesday to live. Rajā' inquires about the circumstances in which Fāris' mother died. Fāris tells her that he had to go abroad to earn a living for his mother and for himself, but, owing to her old age, the mother did not want to be left on her own. As the hardship got severe, Fāris decided to go abroad without letting his mother know. When he came back two months later, he found that his mother had disappeared.

Rajā' sets off on an urgent investigation, and finally establishes that Fāris' mother had died before he left the town. Thus his innocence is proved, the ghost does not return and (just as the word "Rajā'" in Arabic means "hope")

Fāris knows that things will change radically if he lives with Rajā'.

شعب لن يموت A PEOPLE WHO WILL NOT DIE, (1968),

by Fatā al-Thawrah

A three-act play which portrays the struggle of the Palestinian minority in Israel.

Act One starts with Father and Mother expressing their concern about the frequent absence of their son, Maḥmūd, from home. Their enquiries establish that their son is not involved in any kind of immoral misbehaviour as the Father had at first thought, but in revolutionary activity. The Father and Mother bless their son and his comrades and their house becomes a centre for their secret activities. It is revealed that this revolutionary group is particularly concerned about an Israeli plan to expropriate the land of an Arab cemetery to build an hotel on it. The group initiates action against this, a popular uprising which results in the arrest of Maḥmūd, the killing of his comrades and other demonstrators, and the loss of an eye by Ben Yāmīn, an Israeli intelligence commander.

In Act Two, the dramatic movement splits into two lines. The first reveals the panic in the Israeli intelligence circles caused by threatening letters planted in their offices by unknown people. The second line reveals the terrible methods of interrogation used by Ben Yāmīn and his officers in Haifa

prison. It is in this prison that Maḥmūd, who shows the courage and resolution of a superman, meets his death.

These dramatic lines are developed in Act Three to focus on the rift on the Israeli side. The officers accuse each other of cowardice. Sarah, Ben Yāmīn's wife, explains how Israeli repression against the Palestinians, together with Palestinian determination, will bring an end to Israeli pride. Ben Yāmīn becomes mentally disturbed. As his condition deteriorates, his wife and his associate call for an ambulance. It is revealed at the end of the play that the medical team who arrive to nurse Ben Yāmīn but finish him off instead, are disguised revolutionaries. Moreover, they are led by Zuhayr, an Arab who is thought by both the Arabs and the Israelis to be a sincere agent for the Israeli intelligence.

شمشون و دليلة SAMSON AND DELILAH, (1971), by Mu'īn Bsaisū.

A two-part free-verse play which is inspired by two myths, Samson and Delilah, and the Tale of Jonah. Its main theme is the sufferings of the Palestinians at the hands of their Israeli and Arab oppressors and their struggle against those adversaries.

The play opens with a skeleton of a bus with square wheels erected on the stage. Depressed faces appear from the windows of the bus to protest at their miserable situation.

They are immediately lifted up by hooks. A crazed clairvoyant, Rīm, appears and tells how she lost her baby Yūnus after the fall of Jaffa in the Zionists' hands in 1948. Her family, Father, Mother and brothers 'Āṣim and Māzin discuss their tragic conditions. Māzin decides to join the resistance movement. Later the Driver and the Conductor (symbols for Arab officials) appear on the stage. A symbolic discussion takes place between them and passengers of the bus. A big effort is made by the Driver and the Conductor to deceive them. The Palestinians reject their blandishments and decide to take action. Māzin is killed on the border in a battle with the Israelis. Explosions are heard on the stage. The Driver and the Conductor are desperate to contain this movement before it spreads over the whole area. The Palestinians warn each other against Arab attempts to eliminate their movement; however the resistance movement pursues its course and the Israeli-Arab war of 1967 breaks out. The Arabs are defeated and parts of their land are occupied. Samson, the arrogant Israeli military leader, announces his crushing victory over the Arabs.

However the shock of the new defeat is absorbed by the Palestinians, and the revolution is pursued. Rīm, 'Āṣim and many others are captured by the Israelis. Despite that, the Israelis are portrayed as suffering an immense sense of insecurity. Against this background, Samson orders 'Āṣim to step on his machine-gun. He refuses and later dies under torture. Rīm is asked by Rachel (another Israeli) to confess that she is Delilah. She insists that her name is Rīm and

not Delilah. Rachel strikes Rīm's shoulder with a broken bottle. Explosions are again heard behind the bus. The curtain falls with Samson revolving around a cannon, and Rīm holding her bleeding wound, predicting Samson's fall.

العتمة DARKNESS, (1972), by Balālīn.

This six-scene play discusses in unambiguous symbolism various aspects of the national dilemma. It uses the play-within-a-play technique.

The first play starts with Francois, the director, looking for Mīlād, the lighting officer, who disappears when the performance is due to start. Francois urges Mīlād to go back to the lighting room. He refuses to do that. Instead, he calls on Francois to lie next to him and see how the world is turned upside down. When the audience urge him on, however, he agrees to do his job. At this point, the original play starts with a monologue by Francois speaking of how tired he is of his humiliating life, planning to commit suicide, as the way to real relief. The suicide does not take place however, because of a sudden blackout on the stage. The original play is cancelled and another play starts. Voices from the hall protest against the darkness. Arguments follow about why the system has gone off, and how it can be repaired, and these continue until the end of the play. 'Ādil, a carpenter is very keen to do the job. A pedantic intellectual, Imīl, tries to discredit him. 'Ādil

suggests that candles should be brought into the theatre if no-one is yet able to repair the system. A heated argument takes place between Imīl who talks about the dangers of such an action, and Samīr, who regards Imīl's objections as unnecessarily negative, offering nothing but fear and despair.

The repairing process continues. Nādyah, a woman electrical engineer offers her help, but her status-conscious middle-class fiancé, Hānī, tries to stop her from going to the stage. Failing to stop her, Hānī himself goes to the stage, and, changing his tune, talks about his brilliant fiancée. Mājid, a conservative man, protests against Nādyah's presence on the stage, for the participation of women in public life, he emphasizes, means "the end of our civilisation".

The discussion of social and cultural values continues until the light comes back. Characters move happily on the stage, but unexpectedly, 'Ādil, the person who succeeds in repairing the system, falls dead. The play ends with Hānī and Imīl, who have done nothing to repair the system, announcing in an opportunistic manner: "see the result of our hard work and effort".

في سبيلك يا وطن FOR THE SAKE OF THE NATION, (1933),

by Shafīq and Wadī' Tarazī.

A five-act play which puts two Palestinian attitudes on trial. The first is represented by Abū Ḥilmī, a feudal landlord and land-broker, his nephew Ṣubḥī, Widād and Su'ād, all of whom give top priority to their selfish individual

interests. Abū Ḥilmī and Subḥī are portrayed as individuals whose main concern is to get rich by selling land to Jews without taking into consideration the threat posed by such action to national interests or to the interests of the peasants who would become landless. To achieve his goals, Abū Ḥilmī uses various deceitful means. He persuades the Mukhtars (chiefs of villages) to sell their village lands, exploiting the economic hardship from which they and the peasants suffer. Subḥī, Su'ād and Widād have nothing to do with nationalist activities. Their principal concern is to arrange parties, to talk about cars and fashion, to ridicule aspects of Arab culture and champion European values.

The second is represented by Ḥilmī, Hind and Rajā'. They regard land, native culture and the nation as values which merit protection. They also appreciate creative elements in other cultures. They are involved in activities of the Palestinian National Front established to preserve land in Arab hands. Hind, Ḥilmī's girl-friend and Abū Ḥilmī's secretary, refuses to type a land-sale contract and prefers to be dismissed from work rather than participate in such "treacherous" actions.

Conflict between these two groups dominates the main course of the play. In a melodramatic style, however, the play ends with an artificial reconciliation between those who are considered traitors and those who are regarded as nationalists. Subḥī regrets his incorrect national attitude and commits suicide and Abū Ḥilmī admits his wrong-doing against

the nation, puts his property at the disposal of his son, Ḥilmī, and vows to help in every way he can the peasants who were dismissed from their land by the Zionists.

قرقاش QARAQĀSH, (1969), by Samīḥ al-Qāsim.

A free-verse play which tells, in a prologue and four acts (الوحات), the story of the life and fall of the tyrant Qaraqāsh.

The prologue starts with a chorus announcing that Qaraqāsh is an eternal nightmare who, despite his human image brings nothing but death and destruction. This is followed by chained people led like animals and whipped by their masters as they pass across the stage.

Act One shows that the country is suffering from a serious drought (economic hardship). This is expressed by a group of tired peasants in the presence of some silent nobles. Qaraqāsh joins in to reassure the peasants, in a contemptuous manner, that he has the will and means to rid them of the hardship. He suggests that "another well must be searched for beyond our land". A revolutionary peasant rejects Qaraqāsh's proposal, suggesting that they dig a deep well in their own land. Urged on by Qaraqāsh and excited by his persuasive promises, the peasants murder their revolutionary fellow.

In Act Two Qaraqāsh achieves victory, which makes him yet more arrogant than ever. While on a hunting trip, Qaraqāsh meets peasants celebrating the harvest. He treats them with contempt, ordering them never to sing such "rotten" songs. The prince, Qaraqāsh's son, however, falls in love with a peasant girl. He asks the Minister to sound out his father about his love affair.

In Acts Three and Four, Qaraqāsh holds his "day of judgement". In the most bizarre and comic manner, Qaraqāsh passes judgements against those who are supposed to have committed crimes against the nation. A woman who grieved at the death of her son in Qaraqāsh's war is sentenced to stand still on one leg for six days. On the seventh day, she must give birth to seven boys all of whom must be conscripted into the army. On this day of judgement, the Minister approaches Qaraqāsh and seeks his views on a love affair between "a prince" and a common woman. Qaraqāsh immediately passes the death sentence on the couple and orders their bodies to be brought to him. Discovering that the prince thus murdered is his own son, Qaraqāsh is shocked, but soon recovers to challenge "death" calling on people to prepare themselves for war again. At this point, the angry masses attack Qaraqāsh's palace and kill him. Thus a repressive reign ends and a just rule is established.

لُكَا بْنُ لُكَا LUKA' IBN LUKA', (1980),

by Imīl Ḥabībī.

A narrative play of three parts (جلسات) which discusses aspects of the Palestinian dilemma, and employs various literary and theatrical devices such as symbolism, sarcasm, the clown, the magic box, folklore, story-telling and flash-back technique.

The play starts with the clown calling on the audience to watch wonders. Budūr, who represents Palestine, emerges from the hall to engage with the clown in a dialogue that reveals her sufferings and her fears. As Budūr disappears, the clown calls on a group of young men and women to look into his magic box. Later, the clown calls upon them to help him re-enact the tragic event of Kafr Qāsim. Dancers, singers and a drummer take part in it. The scene, however, opens Budūr's wounds. Again she talks with the clown about the repressive measures used against the Palestinians by Arabs and Israelis alike. The clown then calls upon Badr (Budūr's son) to re-enact his tragic story with Masrūr, the executioner, who symbolises Israel. Another confrontation between characters which symbolize extremist Arabs and Israelis takes place in the other world. It reveals that, unlike Israeli extremism, Arab extremism is nothing but empty rhetoric.

The symbolic presentation of the theme continues in the third part. The Palestinian resistance movement is represent-

ed by Sindbad, a tired man with multiple wounds. Contrary to the clown's advice, Sindbad asks al-Dughful, an ugly, rich Arab, to support him, but the latter is busy building false glories for himself, mostly at the expense of Sindbad. Sindbad then turns to Shehrazad (a symbol for Arabism) for help, but gains nothing practical or useful.

In this depressing atmosphere, the clown and Budūr discuss the prospects of bringing Badr back to life and of a more secure future for him. As Badr appears on the stage, his mother, Budūr, lays a bunch of red flowers under his feet and leaves the stage in tears.

مأساة لاجئة THE TRAGEDY OF A WOMAN REFUGEE, (1950),
by Muḥammad Jāmūs.

This five-act play is inspired by the tragic events of the 1948 Arab-Israeli war. It discusses the plight of Palestinian refugees, their sufferings and struggles.

The play opens with Thurayyā and Fāṭimah, two refugee women, expressing their deep grief over the destruction of their nation and the loss of their friends. They are joined by Khālīd, Thurayyā's son, a young man with great nationalist feelings as well as frustrations. Khālīd decides to join the resistance movement. Some members of this movement, who are portrayed as great heroes with extraordinary courage, engage in a battle with a group of Zionist soldiers, "a band

of monkeys", as Khālīd puts it. Khālīd falls as a martyr. His martyrdom evokes in his comrades mixed feelings of sadness and pride. Thurayyā, the broken-hearted mother, learns about the death of her son. She, together with other refugees, mourns him with deep grief. A dialogue which takes place between Thurayyā and a UN employee reveals how miserable Thurayyā is after the loss of her nation, husband and son. Later Thurayyā's cousin, Sa'd, promises to accompany her to visit her son's grave. Obsessed by hope of return to the homeland, Thurayyā dreams that her people are happily and enthusiastically celebrating victory over the Zionists. She also sees her martyred son, Khālīd, alive and cheerful. She tries to hold him close, but wakes and realises that she is dreaming. Overwhelmed by a sense of the agony and tragedy of reality, she becomes insane and dies. The play ends with a call from Saḥar, another refugee, to revenge Thurayyā and the nation.

مصراع كليب THE SLAYING OF KULAYB, (1947),

by Muḥyī al-Dīn al-Ṣafadī.

This five-act play is written in rhyming verse and is inspired by a pre-Islamic tragic event, the al-Basūs War. The play starts with Kulayb talking to Jalīlah, his wife, about his victories and his undisputed leadership over Wā'il, the mother tribe. Jalīlah reminds him of the high status of her two brothers, Jassās and Hammām. Kulayb feels deeply offended by what she says but guards his resentment in his

heart. One day, Kulayb finds out that the she-camel of al-Basūs, the aunt of Jassās and Hammām, has been with his camels. He immediately orders his servant to kill it. Pre-occupied with the serious consequences which might result from such an action, Kulayb has nightmares when he sleeps. Once he dreams that a snake, a lion, a wolf, and other monstrous beasts attack him. The soothsayer prophesies that tragic events will take place and warns Kulayb to stay away from potential enemies. Kulayb rejects the soothsayer's interpretation of the dream, stating that he is too courageous to be scared of any danger.

However, al-Basūs gets very angry over the loss of her she-camel. Jassās and his brothers promise their aunt that Kulayb himself will pay the price. Murrah, Jassās's father, and leader of the Bakr tribe, together with some of his chiefs, tries to cool the situation down, reminding those who want to take revenge of Kulayb's great deeds for their tribe. The call for peace, however, fails to assuage Jassās's thirst for vengeance and Kulayb is killed. Discovering Kulayb murdered, his tribe, the Taghlib, rises in fury. Al-Muhalhil, Kulayb's playboy brother, takes over the leadership of the tribe and sends a delegation to the Bakr demanding the head of Jassās or Hammām or Murrah as the only alternative to uncontrolled bloodshed. After much discussion, the delegation is told that none of its demands can be met but that they could have either a thousand camels or one of Murrah's younger sons. The delegation rejects this offer, and war breaks out with enormous losses on both sides. In the last

stages of the war Jassās is killed by Taghlib's horsemen while al-Muhalhil is taken into captivity. But he is later released and the call for peace is revived by both sides. Delegations from the warring tribes meet to discuss prospects for peace. The play ends with reconciliation.

نشيد الإنشاد THE SONG OF SONGS, (1949),
by 'Adnān al-Dhahabī.

This two act play derives its title and the names of some of its characters from the Old Testament. According to the writer, it portrays the conflict in the human psyche between reason and religious feelings.

Act One, at Solomon's palace, starts with a monologue by Shulamite, a shepherdess, expressing her profound loneliness and bewilderment. Her misery, she concludes, will end as soon as she meets "Him" (God).

Shulamite's presence at the royal palace takes Solomon by surprise. He tries to comfort her and to find out what is troubling her, but she dislikes his patronizing attitude. Solomon cannot fathom her, and asks one of his maids of honour to try, but she, too, fails to learn what it is all about. Solomon becomes more curious to discover it for himself. His talk with Shulamite reveals that she has an unknown lover for whom she yearns. Solomon's "logical" arguments make Shulamite more confused and she hurriedly

leaves the palace. Solomon misses her greatly, but feels humiliated and jealous of that unknown lover who proved to be stronger than he.

Act Two shows Shulamite in the wilderness with Rayḥānah, her mother, who expresses concern about the change in her daughter's behaviour. She also suggests that Shulamite comes back with her, so that she can be married to Solomon and thus end the rumours about her odd actions. In the middle of this argument, Solomon joins them and talks to Shulamite directly about his love for her. "You can never command my heart", she tells Solomon. The play ends with Shulamite making her way to "Him", leaving the mother and Solomon behind bewildered.

وثيقة سفر فلسطينية A PALESTINIAN PASSPORT, (1976),
by Walīd Rabāḥ.

A three-act play which portrays the struggle and sacrifice of the Palestinians.

The curtain opens with light moving from one part of the stage to another, revealing aspects of a Palestinian scene: hanged bodies; demonstrators hit by British soldiers; a woman and three children sitting by a tent, two of the children shot dead as they move their arms.

The scene changes to show an Arab military court in 1960, where a man stands trial for possessing an unlicensed

hunting gun, intending to use it to overthrow the government. The accused is not given any chance to defend himself but manages to say that he is innocent and that he was savagely tortured during the investigation.

The scene changes again to a cafe where a story-teller is about to start the evening by narrating his conventional stories, 'Antarah, Shehrazad etc. A young man protests against these "boring" stories and suggests instead that the story-teller should give an account of al-Qassām resistance movement in Palestine. The moment the story-teller starts talking about al-Qassām, the police attack the cafe and arrest everybody.

After his release from prison, the story-teller goes back to the cafe to tell the story of his torture. This is interrupted by a voice ordering the customers to put their hands up and leave the place. The customers get ready to defend themselves, succeeding in stopping a new attack by security men.

The story-teller changes his style by using the flash-back technique. Banners which read "Palestine 1929, 1930, 1933, 1936, 1947" appear in successive scenes to be followed by the enactment of historical events. The story-teller intervenes to comment on some of these events.

Act Three is presented without the story-teller. It shows the American and the Devil plotting against the resist-

ance movement. Shooting, explosions and funerals on the stage suggest the tragic effect of American involvement.

The play ends with a man chiding the audience for their indifference and inaction which bring on them nothing but oppression and injustice.

وكان لابد أن ينزل المطر RAIN HAD TO FALL, (1975),
by Muḥammad Jabr.

This one-act play is a dramatization of an ancient Canaanite mythical epic called "Aqhāt Ibn Daniel". The story-teller, who plays an important role in it, starts by informing his audience briefly about the religion and culture of their forefathers. He then introduces their just ruler, the half-human half-god King Daniel, worshipping God El, and appealing to him to bless him with a son.

El answers Daniel's prayer and the new-born baby is named Aqhāt. Daniel's people celebrate this gift of God with ecstasy.

While sitting in judgement, Daniel meets the Divine Smith and Artificer, who presents him with a bow and arrows. He passes them on to his son, Aqhāt, telling him he must guard them. One day, so we are told by the story-teller, Aqhāt goes hunting. He meets Goddess 'Anat who expresses her desire to possess his magic weapons, promising him wealth and

immortality. Aqhāt refuses her offer. 'Anat gets angry and plans, with a knight called Yatpan, to take his bow and arrows by force. The plan is carried out and Aqhāt is killed, a crime which renders the earth infertile.

Daniel learns about the murder of his son and the drought. He performs ritual dirges and offers sacrifices to restore fertility to the land. Paghat, Aqhāt's sister, sets out to revenge her slain brother. She disguises herself as a knight and goes to meet Yatpan. Under the influence of liquor offered to him by Paghat, Yatpan admits that he killed Aqhāt. At this point, Paghat attacks Yatpan but fails to kill him and is held in detention. Eventually she manages to free herself, find her way to Yatpan and kill him. She, too, is killed by one of Yatpan's knights.

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Footnote

(*) A theatre group in the West Bank.

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(3) Periodicals

Newspapers:

Al-Fajr	(Jerusalem, daily, Arabic)
Al-Fajr Weekly	(Jerusalem, English)
Al-Quds	(Jerusalem, daily, Arabic)
Al-Siyāsah	(Kuwait, daily, Arabic)
Al-Waṭan	(Kuwait, daily, Arabic)
Al-Ittiḥād	(Haifa, daily, Arabic)
Al-Ṭalī'ah	(Jerusalem, weekly, Arabic)
Al-Sharq al-Awsat	(London, daily, Arabic)
Al-Ra'y	(Amman, daily, Arabic)
Jerusalem Post Magazine	(Jerusalem, weekly, English)
Jerusalem Post	(Jerusalem, daily, English)
The Guardian	(London, daily, English)
The Times	(London, daily, English)
Financial Times	(London, daily, English)
Yidiot Ahronot	(Tel Aviv, daily, Hebrew)
Ha-Aritz	(Tel Aviv, daily, Hebrew)

Magazines:

Al-Karmil	(Beirut, quarterly, Arabic)
Shu'ūn Filistīniyyah	(Beirut, monthly, Arabic)
Al-Aqlām	(Baghdad, monthly, Arabic)

Journal of Palestine Studies (Beirut, quarterly, English)

Al-Majallah (Cairo, monthly, Arabic)

Al-Jadīd (Haifa, monthly, Arabic)

Fuṣūl (Cairo, quarterly, Arabic)

Al-Ghad (Jerusalem, monthly, Arabic)

Al-Hawāḍess (London, weekly, Arabic)

Al-Mustaqbal (Paris, weekly, Arabic)

(4) Encyclopaedias and Religious Works

Encyclopaedia of Islam

Encyclopaedia Judaica

The Qurān

The Bible.