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Daniela Potenza

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## THÈSE EN COTUTELLE

avec

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présentée par

**Daniela POTENZA**

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# **The kaleidoscope effect. Rewriting in Alfred Farağ's plays as a multifunctional strategy for a multilayered creation.**

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## NOTES ON TRANSLATION, TRANSLITERATION AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

All translations in the text are mine, unless otherwise indicated. I provide English translations for the titles of the plays only after their first occurrence in each chapter, otherwise I refer to them only by their transliterated Arabic titles. For transliteration from the Standard Arabic, I apply the following phonetic transcription:

|       |       |                    |
|-------|-------|--------------------|
| ء : ' | س : s | ل : l              |
| ب : b | ش : š | م : m              |
| ت : t | ص : ṣ | ن : n              |
| ث : ṭ | ض : ḍ | ه : h              |
| ج : ġ | ط : ṭ | ا : ā              |
| ح : ḥ | ظ : ḏ | و : ū              |
| خ : ḫ | ع : ' | ي : ī              |
| د : d | غ : ġ | َ : a              |
| ذ : ḏ | ف : f | ِ : i              |
| ر : r | ق : q | ُ : u              |
| ز : z | ك : k | diphthongs: aw, ay |

The *hamza* is not written at the beginning of a word. The *tā' marbūṭa* is transcribed as *-a* and *-at* in annexion. The article *al-* is never assimilated. Egyptian Arabic transcription follows the Cairene pronunciation and the phonetic system adopted by Badawi and Hinds (1986, xvi-xviii). For the scholars who have published in languages other than Arabic, I have cited their chosen spelling in Latin characters.

Unless otherwise indicated, bibliography in this study follows the author-date system of Chicago Manual of Style 16th edition. Arabic bibliography is provided apart in Arabic letters, while the author's name in the brief quotation in the text is transcribed. Considered the amount of Alfred Faraġ's cited works, I have used a double-year quotation system where the first year (into squared brackets) signals the first edition and the second one stands for the year of the edition I used. This system avoids a series of letters following references found in a same collection. Besides, it allows immediate contextualization of the reference, in our source and in the time of production. When referring to plays, the year into squared brackets signals the first time they have been performed.

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## INTRODUCTION

### Approach and methodology.

Rewriting is an inclusive concept. Considered its general meaning, it is obvious that a rewriting must be a text written from another text (Gignoux 2005, 108). However, every work is inscribed in a specific relation with the world and also within a genealogy of other texts until its origins. Such relationships can be of different orders (homage, allusion, parody, quotation, reference, plagiarism); they can be easy to list, but hard to theorize (Samoyault 2001, 5-6). The concept of rewriting, then, belongs to the studies of intertextuality, a term that has been used so often that it has become an ambiguous concept within the literary discourse.<sup>1</sup>

Intertextuality formally appeared for the first time in an article by Julia Kristeva. Starting from Mikhail Bakhtine's studies on dialogism, according to which the statements of the characters interact with those of the author, in 1969, Kristeva could affirm that "le mot (le texte) est un croisement de mots (de textes) où on lit au moins un autre mot (texte)" and "tout texte se construit comme une mosaïque de citations, tout texte est absorption et transformation d'un autre texte" (Kristeva 1969, 145). Kristeva's concept was systematized, restricted and redefined in 1982 by Gérard Genette in his book *Palimpsestes. La littérature au deuxième degré*. Genette distinguished between five kinds of transtextual relationships: intertextuality, paratextuality, metatextuality, hypertextuality and architextuality. Within this meticulous taxonomy, intertextuality is only one out of the five forms of relationships between texts. It is nothing but a relation of co-presence between texts:

Sous sa forme la plus explicite et la plus littérale, c'est la pratique traditionnelle de la *citation* (avec guillemets ou sans référence précise) ; sous une forme moins explicite et moins canonique, celle du *plagiat* (chez Lautréamont, par exemple), qui est un emprunt non déclaré, mais encore littéral ; sous forme encore moins explicite et moins littérale, celle de l'*allusion*, c'est-à-dire d'un énoncé dont la pleine intelligence suppose la perception d'un rapport entre lui et un autre auquel renvoie nécessairement telle ou telle de ses inflexions, autrement non recevable [...].

Genette 1982, 8

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<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, the use of the word "rewriting" in studies such as Lafon 1990, where "réécriture" stands for quotations (of others) and repetitions (of himself) (Lafon 1990, 10). Aaltonen and Ibrahim 2016 who use the term "rewriting" as "a metamorphosis, a profound change, such as takes place in its near synonyms such as translation, transformation, and reconstruction" (Aaltonen and Ibrahim 2016, 1. See Potenza 2017).

Another type is the relation the text – in the strict sense – maintains with its paratexte: title, subtitle, foreword, preface, afterword, marginal notes, etc. Metatextuality is the relation of “commentary” tying a text to another that it discusses without necessarily quoting it. Architextuality determines the generic status of the text. As for hypertextuality, it is the subject of *Palimpsestes*. Hypertextuality indicates “toute relation unissant un texte B (que j’appellerai *hypertexte*) à un texte antérieur A (que j’appellerai, bien sûr, *hypotexte*) sur lequel il se greffe d’une manière qui n’est pas celle du commentaire” (Ibid., 13). It is the relation of transformation or imitation through which a text can derive from a prior text (Ibid., 16).

Genette remarked how hypertextuality becomes then:

un aspect universel (au degré près) de la littérarité : il n’est pas d’œuvres littéraire qui, à quelque degré et selon les lectures, n’en évoque quelque autre et, en ce sens, toutes les œuvres sont hypertextuelles. [...] Moins l’hypertextualité d’une œuvre est massive et déclarée, plus son analyse dépend d’un jugement constitutif, voire une décision interprétative du lecteur [...] J’aborderai donc ici, sauf exception, l’hypertextualité par son versant le plus ensoleillé : celui où la dérivation de l’hypotexte à l’hypertexte est à la fois massive (toute une œuvre B dérivant de toute une œuvre A) et déclarée, d’une manière plus ou moins officielle.

Genette 1982, 18-9

Genette systematized these relations on the structural criteria (imitation or transformation) and the functional criteria (according to the regimes of the hypotext and of the hypertext: playful, satiric or serious) of the distinct categories of the hypertexts (parody, travesty, transposition, pastiche, *charge* and forgery) on which finer distinctions can be operated (Ibid., 45-7).

According to Genette’s system, rewriting belongs to the category of *transposition*, namely the serious transformation, “la plus importante de toutes les pratiques hypertextuelles [...] par l’amplitude et la variété de textes qu’y concourent” (Ibid., 291). However, Genette commented that:

Cette sous-catégorisation [la transposition] ne fonctionnera cependant pas comme une taxinomie hiérarchique destinée à distinguer au sein de cette classe des sous-classes, genres, espèces et variétés : à quelques exceptions près, toutes les transpositions singulières (toutes les *œuvres* transpositionnelles) relèvent à la fois de plusieurs de ces opérations, et ne se laissent ramener à l’une d’elles qu’à titre de caractéristique dominante, et par complaisance envers les nécessités de l’analyse et commodités de la disposition.

Genette 1982, 292

From Genette, I have taken the concepts of hypotext and hypertext, the method of approaching the texts, namely, through a direct comparison between the hypotext and the hypertext, which is always one of Farag's plays, and much of the vocabulary that defines those relationships, which are indicated and explained in each initial use and reference. I have also partially adopted the distinction between "purely formal transformations" and "openly and deliberately thematic transpositions," where the transformation of the sense is *manifestly*, or even officially, part of the purpose (Ibid., 293).

A restriction of such a wide category indicated as "transposition" comes from Anne-Claire Gignoux, who adopted the concept of rewriting, typifying it with its massive and visible character and its intentionality. "La réécriture sera donc une pratique consciente, volontaire, et de fait souvent annoncée, affichée par son auteur" (Gignoux 2005, 113 and 116). Briefly, our concept of rewriting involves: massive and visible character, intentionality and self-declaration (in the *text* or in the paratext) of the process.

Under such conditions, the reader is meant to benefit from the game of the hypertext:

la nature du plaisir dramatique engendré par un théâtre fondé sur l'imitation : l'intérêt ne naîtra pas de la découverte d'une intrigue et de personnages radicalement nouveaux mais de la reconnaissance d'un sujet fermement ancré dans la tradition et la mémoire collectives. Ce sont donc les combinaisons nouvelles qui doivent retenir le spectateur et le lecteur.

Piegay-Gros 1996, 117

Theories about intertextuality have always gone together with theories on reception. In 1973, with a remark on Proust, Roland Barthes slightly mobilized the concept of intertext to the part of the reader (Barthes 1973, 59). Michael Riffaterre continued this orientation and emphasized the role of the reader's memory in producing significance. The last one, contrary to the meaning (*sense*) thanks to words which correspond with their non-verbal references, results from relations between these same words and verbal systems external to the text but are sometimes partially quoted in the text (Samoyault 2010, 16-7). So, intertext varies depending on the reader's interpretation: passages that he has memorized and connections that he makes are dictated by his culture rather than the wording of the text (Riffaterre 1981, 4-5).

Riffaterre was interested in the modality according to which intertextuality manifests with the reader while Iser thought of the reader as constructed by the text. As a major representative of the Constance School, Iser speculated about the historical reception and he defines the idea of

considering different readers. An ideal reader can be attributed distinctive features according to the kind of problem that needs to be solved. This type of reader is much easier to create than to depict real readers. An implicit reader, instead, is an idea situating the reader's approach to the text in terms of textual effects with respect to which understanding becomes an act (Iser 1976, 70).

Umberto Eco noted the constructive role of the reader in the creation of the meaning of a text. He developed his theory in *Lector in fabula* (1979). A text, as it appears in its linguistic surface, represents a chain of expressive instances that the recipient needs to actualize. A text, then is emitted for someone who is able to actualize it; moreover, no text is read independently of the reader's experience of other texts. Umberto Eco, then, defined the text as a "presuppositional machine," a "lazy machine" requiring a cooperative work of the reader who actualizes it. The encyclopedia of the reader, namely his possibilities of filling the gaps through his knowledge, can be different from the encyclopedia of the writer.

In this study, hermeneutics and theories on reception are doubly important since two texts and two readers, with different receptions of them, exist. One is the rewriter, Alfred Faraž; the other is the reader (/audience) of the play. The rewriter is first a reader of the hypotext. As such, his reception of the hypotext deeply influences his work. Faraž's reception of the hypotexts cannot be unmediated. Historically determined indirect experiences, such as films, plays, performances, cultural fashions, undergoing debates and international positions occur alongside the text or maybe precede it. Supposedly, the recipient of the play has a relative familiarity, namely a reception of the "surroundings" of the hypotext close to that of Faraž's. As for the hypotext itself, Faraž, who closely approached it to rewrite it, must had a more accurate knowledge of it than the model receiver of the play. Allegedly, in producing extra-textual meaning through references to the hypotext, Faraž considered the gap between his experience of the hypotext and the experience of the receiver of the play.

Invited to a work of identification, the audience reacts because it has an immediate recognition of the intention and of the effects of the reference to the hypotext. Vice-versa, he also reacts when he recognises differences with the hypotext. A "semiotic of alteration" has been elaborated by Jean Peytard who shows that "understanding the meaning is possible only in the zones where it is altered since producing a meaning can be realised only through the transformation of a meaning established in pre-existing narratives" (Peytard 1993, par. 1). Reading then aims at "spotting fractures more than congruences, instability more than

invariance” Peytard 1999, par. 4). This theory becomes even truer for texts obtained through a rewriting. We will look for:

la réécriture qui modifie, c'est-à-dire, partant aussi d'un texte premier, accepte l'altération et tend vers l'altérité [...] Elle relève de la fonction poétique de Jakobson en ce sens qu'elle est attention portée au message lui-même : sa règle n'est pas conformité au texte premier ou au modèle prescrit par des modèles fixés, mais satisfaction d'une exigence virtuelle, réalisation d'un projet en train de s'élaborer.

Domino 1987

In this perspective, rewriting results in both a productive process and a real object, as an effect of the reading and a phenomenon of the writing. Rewriting will be studied as a movement towards the new text. Continuities and ruptures are considered for their production of meaning. In the meantime, formal transformations (transmodalisation), intertextual practices other than the rewriting and the extra-textual context will be considered. The context of production and the context of enunciation (see Maingueneau 1993) are considered as both coincident and not. Farağ's works have clear political messages which need to be situated in the context of production but is also comprised of general messages with an ageless value that are realised through the rewriting.<sup>2</sup> The main interest of this work is to study the text and not the complex process underlying the different represented versions of a play.

Possible criticism to the approach here adopted may be due to the large comparisons between hypertext and hypotext that I draw. However, direct comparison is the basis of my analysis, as such, retracing ruptures and continuities is fundamental to it. I also do not provide one-way interpretations, nor do I dwell on the political messages of the plays since their keys of reading have been already provided. Of course, my work does not aim to be a *complete* analysis of the corpus: the perspective of the rewriting guides and confines the research to focus on the process that has been ignored or can be easily wrongly considered as uncreative.

### **On the Egyptian theatre.**

Inspired by the example of the Italian opera, influenced by the European drama and moulded by old indigenous forms of dramatic entertainment, the first Arabic plays rewrote existing stories, mainly from the *Arabian Nights*. *Nuzhat al-muštāq wa ġussat al-‘uššāq fī madīnat*

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<sup>2</sup> Apart from the articles in the press that generally critique the representation of the plays, a study that considers the representations is Fataḥ Allāh 2008. She even provides sketches of the stage (see, for instance, p. 204).

*Ṭiryāq ft 'l-'Irāq* (The pleasure trip of the enamoured and the agony of lovers in the city of Ṭiryāq in Iraq, 1847) by Abrāhām Danīnūs, *Abū 'l-Ḥasan al-muġaffal aw Hārūn al-Rašīd* (Abū 'l-Ḥasan the Fool or Hārūn al-Rašīd, 1849-50), by the Lebanese dramatist Mārūn al-Naqqāš, - whose first play *al-Baḥīl* (The Miser, 1847) was a rewriting of Molière's play *L'Avare*<sup>3</sup> - and Aḥmad Abū Ḥalīl al-Qabbānī's *Hārūn al-Rašīd ma'a al-amīr Ġānim ibn Ayyūb wa Qūt al-Qulūb* (Hārūn al-Rašīd, emir Ġānim ibn Ayyūb and Qūt al-Qulūb, 1865), to name a few, were all amongst the very first Arabic plays and they certainly exploited the success and easy performativity of the *Arabian Nights* so as to introduce theatre in Arabic-speaking countries.

Popular theatre in Egypt was dominated by farce and melodrama, which existed side by side. The two figures historically associated with these two forms were Naġīb al-Riḥānī (1891-1949) and Yūsuf Wabhī (1899-1981). During his thirty-year long uninterrupted career, al-Riḥānī collaborated with skillful musicians and ironized the urban bourgeoisie, which contributed prominently to the comic theatre. Yūsuf Wabhī, instead, addressed his several plays, as well as melodramas adapted from European plays, to the bourgeoisie and the establishment.

Modern Egyptian drama witnessed an important development from the late 1920s onwards thanks to the efforts of the government, which wanted to differentiate the successful commercial theatre and promoted serious theatre through scholarships to study theatre in Europe and the creation of a school of dramatic arts (in the 1930s). This action was flanked by the growth of the press and theatrical criticism in the spirit of the intellectual and artistic renaissance (*nahḍa*) which was in full force during those years (Ruocco 2007 b, 471-2). The “modern Egyptian renaissance man” (Ostle 1994) was well expressed by a generation of playwrights who were in search of an Egyptian dramaturgy (see Ruocco 2010, 78-88, Carlson 2013). Even though he was born in Lebanon, Faraḥ Anṭūn (1874-1922) was one of the most representative authors of this trend. His most important drama, *al-Sulṭān Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn wa mamlakat Ūruṣalīm* (Sultan Saladin and the Kingdom of Jerusalem, 1914) mirrored the dynamics of the Second World War while Egypt was under the British protectorate and indirectly expressed the necessity of fighting for national freedom (see Deheuvels 2000). Aḥmad Ṣawqī's (1868-1932) successful dramas in verses consolidated the acceptability of drama in the Egyptian society. His historical plays deal with great protagonists of Ancient Arabic and Egyptian History and legends, like Qays' love for his cousin Laylā in *Maġnūn Laylā* (Driven mad by Laylā, 1916 or 1931) and *Maṣra'*

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<sup>3</sup> On Molière's impact on the Arabic theatre and its political value, see Angela D. Langone's extensive research, which also deals with Naqqāš's rewriting of *L'Avare* (Langone 2016).

*Kilyubātrā* (The Fall of Cleopatra, 1917 or 1927-29), which in many ways reminds us of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* (al-Khatib 2001, 256-283). *Qambīz* (Cambyses, 1931) and *'Antara* (1932) are considered "political" plays for they seem to invite Arabs to unite to fight invading enemies (Ruocco 2010, 82). The two brothers Muḥammad (1892-1921) and Maḥmūd Taymūr (1894-1973) provided an original contribution to an Egyptian theatre nourished by the present Egyptian environment (Ibid., 83-7). The Yemenite 'Alī Aḥmad Bākaṭīr (1910-1969) composed historical dramas focusing on traditional values. Through his personal vision of History, he rehabilitates historical or legendary figures, like the caliph al-Ḥakīm in *Sirr al-Ḥakīm bi-Amri-llāh* (The secret of Caliph al-Ḥakīm, 1947) and Oedipus in *Ma'sāt Ūdīb* (Oedipus' tragedy, 1949).

During the 1930s and 1940s, Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm (1898-1987), often referred to as the "the giant of the Arabic theatre" (عملاق المسرح العربي), consecrated the theatre a respectful place in the Arabic literature. In 1935, The National Ministry of Education decided to establish a permanent National Theatre Company in Cairo to encourage the modernist agenda; al-Ḥakīm's *Ahl al-Kahf* (The People of the Cave, 1933) seemed an excellent choice to open this venture (Carlson 2016, 98). Paul Starkey describes 1935 as "a decisive date both in al-Ḥakīm's career as a writer - it was his first printed work and in the modern Arabic drama's History, for the use of a Quranic story (that of the sleepers of Ephesus) as the basis for the philosophical play was unprecedented" (Starkey 1987, 28). The story of "the people of the cave" is in the Sura XVIII as well as in other texts. It tells of the seven sleepers of Ephesus who escaped the Roman persecutions against Christians by hiding in a cave where they slept for three-hundred years. They woke up in a different world. Similarly, the protagonists of the play wake up in a dimension where their reasons for living have perished. The main themes of the play are rebirth in a new world and the desire to go back to the past. Through the rewriting, *Ahl al-Kahf* condensed al-Ḥakīm's point of view in the battle between the old and the new. The play combined the traditional with the modern: the solution of the conflict between the two opposing tendencies – which mirrored, on a minor scale, the social conflict set off by the oppressive British presence, representing the "modern" – was the fusion. Al-Ḥakīm wrote many other serious intellectual dramas of considerable aesthetic quality and philosophical deepness, with limited action.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> This kind of theatre is called by the same author مسرح الذهن, "intellectual drama". Even though Al-Ḥakīm declared that these plays were meant to be unperformed, they are to be considered as "real" plays and not only as theatre to be read, as the example of *Pygmalion* (1942) shows (see Deheuvelds 1995 and Deheuvelds 2006, 493-510). On

With its radical political and social changes, the 1952 Revolution played a leading role in strengthening social and cultural awareness. The monarchy was abolished, and the British occupation ended, the country was declared a republic, and Nasser (Ġamāl ‘Abd al-Nāṣir, 1918-70) became a pan-Arab leader. Committed artists were aware of the adequacy of the stage for spreading nationalistic feelings and expressing critical thought on current social and political events, while on the other hand, authorities perceived the effectiveness of the theatre in inciting public opinion against its rule (‘Aṭiya 2002 ﺑ, 13-16). While the Free Theatre was born, the National Theatre started to produce new playwrights’ works and to proudly adopt the colloquial Arabic into the text.

A remarkable revival of the Egyptian theatre occurred during the fifties and sixties. A combination of factors must have contributed in no small measures to this efflorescence. In the first place, a wave of optimism swept over Egypt in the wake of the army Revolution of 1952. There was expectancy in the air; for a while the nation was galvanized and prepared to embark on new ventures. Because the country was now ruled by a youthful group of army officers, the young felt that the road was suddenly open before them and indeed it was unprecedented in modern Egyptian history for so many young people to find themselves in positions of leadership in journalism and publishing and in the world of culture generally.

Badawi 1987, 140

At first, Nasser’s uprising was accompanied by enthusiasm. The July 1952 Revolution breathed new life into the theatre. It gave rise to a new generation of playwrights who were proud to address the issues of their time through a variety of theatrical molds and techniques. However, the new regime’s methods for executing their goals revealed early on that it would not correspond to its original promises, as such, many were disillusioned with the political rule.

Since the containment and eventual disfiguration of our intellectual leadership, once the pride of the country, and since the total control of mass media through the nationalisation of the press and the unification of political organization, those who did not wish to wear the mask of conformity had to wear the mask of the drama, which enabled them to bring to the surface with relative impunity the ambivalence of life under the Nasser, puritan, *petit-bourgeois* Revolution.

‘Awad 1975, 179

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*Pygmalion* (1942) and its sources, see Deheuvels 1995, 22-32. On Tawfiq al-Ḥakīm’s fame, especially in the West, see Carlson 2016.



During the sixties, the Egyptian theatre was also characterized by an active search for an identity (al-Rā'ī 1975, 177). Accused of being influenced by Western theatre, Egyptian playwrights looked for a way to create an identity for Egyptian theatre. The search for an Egyptian dramaturgy which had taken shape since the beginning of the Twentieth century manifested in the essays of the novelist and dramatist Yūsuf Idrīs, who advocated for a return to the indigenous dramatic forms, to be found in shows such as the *sāmīr*, the *ḥayāl al-zill*, the 'Arāğōz,<sup>5</sup> and the storyteller.<sup>6</sup> Idrīs presented those forms as symbols of the *tamasruḥ* (theatricality) validating the existence of an indigenous Arabic theatre (تأصيل, authentication). At the same time, he recognised the value of these forms in the breaking of the fourth wall (Idrīs 1974, 467-95, Ruocco 2000, 100-101 and Ouyang 1999).

According 'Alī al-Rā'ī, the theatrical output during the sixties in Egypt falls into three categories. The first consist of plays of social criticism, particularly comedies with an evident political content. The second category is the *masraḥ al-turāṭ* (the heritage theater), a category that should include plays which either rely on indigenous dramatic forms or make use of the content of traditional and folk literature in order to convey a contemporary message. The third category includes political drama whose authors either chose a contemporary setting or reconstructed a historical one to make it relevant to the present bring it to bear on the present. Alfred Farağ, with his plays inspired by the *Arabian Nights* and by historical events, Nağīb Surūr (1932-1978), who used popular setting and popular poems to create a powerful theatre, Šawqī 'Abd al-Ḥakīm, with his creative use of popular forms of entertainment and folklore through the reference to Egyptian folktale and popular ballad, and Maḥmūd Diyāb (1932-1983), whose work deals mainly with Egyptian village life, are all considered as main representatives of the *masraḥ al-turāṭ* (al-Rā'ī 1999, 93-4).

Evidently, the efforts made towards the creation of an identity for the Arabic theater converged in a trend, the *masraḥ al-turāṭ*, which led the critic to label it as a category. However, plays like Farağ's *Ḥallāq Bağdād* (The Barber of Baghdad, 1963), inspired by a tale of the *Arabian Nights*, Surūr's and *Qūlū li-'ayn al-šams* (Tell the Eye of the Sun, 1972), relying on a popular story, express strong social criticism respectively against the treatment of intellectuals by

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<sup>5</sup> The *sāmīr* is a popular show with a storyteller, the *Ḥayāl al-zill* is a form of the shadow theatre (see Dorigo Ceccato 1987) and the 'Arāğōz is a hand puppet derived from the Turkish Karagöz. See Corrao 1996 and Nicolas 1987.

<sup>6</sup> Revivals of popular forms of entertainment was not new in the Arabic theatre. See, for instance, the revival of the *maqāma* in Moosa 1983, 93-122.

Nasser's regime and the corruption of the government officials during the Aswan dam construction. Likewise, Ṣalāḥ 'Abd al-Ṣabūr's (1931-1981) drama in verses *Ma'sāt al-Ḥallāğ* (The Tragedy of al-Ḥallāğ, 1965) is another of the many examples of *masraḥ al-turāt* with a sense of political commitment. Indeed, the *masraḥ al-turāt* does not clearly differ from the plays of social criticism because distinctions are not based on the same criteria and cannot be considered as a category as 'Alī al-Rā'ī maintains (see 'Abd al-Qādir 1999, 20).

Margaret Litvin remarks a "bid for political agency" in the years going from 1964 to 1967. As the Egyptian theatre grew more ambitious, playwrights sought to dramatize models of authentic Arab political action. Authentic political action, in turn, required characters qualified as fully fledged moral and political subjects (Litvin 2011, 91). Characters from the heritage or heroes from the past could be powerful symbols behind which hide radical ideas. A free from political content play could send a political message.

Heritage references were also meant to bring the theatre closer to their audiences' taste. Indirectly, rewriting was often part of this process of reinvestment since many *masraḥiyyāt al-turātīyya* rewrite Arabic literature. The use of heritage participated in the projects of consolidation of unity among Arab governments promoted by Nasser. Intellectuals were invited to take an active part in propagating Arab Nationalism.<sup>7</sup> However, while encouraging literary works through funding, Nasser's regim had a total grip on the production of culture, with government censorship operating in this field:

The idea of "art for art's sake" had long been discarded and the directives were for "art at the service of the state." Henceforth, writers were to write, musicians to compose, painters to paint, and even preachers to preach only that which upheld the regime and which exhorted the people to accept their fate as ordained by Allah who had sent the raiyis to deliver his people and lead the Arabs and the Muslims toward a future as glorious as the past when Saladin drove away the unbelievers.

Semaan 1979, 50<sup>8</sup>

As Louis 'Awaḍ remarked,

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<sup>7</sup> On "Arab Nationalism" see Hourani 1983, 206-323.

<sup>8</sup> See also Hourani 1983, 206-323, Ouyang 1999, 391-4 and Amin 2008, 4-5. On censorships and arts in Egypt, see Galal 2000, 106-9. On censorship and literature in Egypt, see Stagh's extensive and accurate study (Stagh 1993) and, particularly, Stagh 1993, 70-5 and 328-9.

It is a great tribute to the Egyptian dramatists that they courageously employed, very often taking tremendous risks, the masks of comedy and tragedy for an intensive auto-critique of the so-called Socialist Egyptian Revolution. [...] Our playwrights, mostly leftist or radicals, because of rigorous censorship and repressive security measures, instead of using the techniques of Social Realism, have opted for the alternative techniques of Socialist Symbolism which normally flourish under reigns of terror. They have used parables and allegories, symbols and vast metaphors, to be able to smuggle their intentions [...]

‘Awad 1975, 191

In this complex context, rewriting in theatre was multifunctional. It could serve both the committed struggle of a theatre in search for identity (which combined with the socialist cultural issues of the moment) and broaden the freedom of expression under strict censorship of a dictatorship government. At the same time, it could meet the preferences of people who were acquainted with traditional dramatic forms but were not still used to theatre.<sup>9</sup>

### **On Alfred Faraĝ.**

Alfred Faraĝ was born in 1929 at his grandmother’s home in al-Zaqāzīq, a town east of the Nile Delta, where he lived until the age of two, after which he went to live in Alexandria with his parents. Faraĝ’s father was an employee at the Revenues and Treasury Department in the Municipal Council of Alexandria. He was well known in Alexandria for his significant memoirs as he mastered both English and Arabic literary styles. He had written two books on philosophy (one on Nietzsche and one on Schopenhauer). Alfred Faraĝ loved his father very much and was deeply influenced by him. His father kept a rich library at home containing Arabic and Western classics (Faraĝ [1998] 2002, 36). Moreover, accompanied by his father, at an early age, Alfred Faraĝ enjoyed the performances of great masters of the time (of comedy and melodrama, respectively) such as Naĝīb al-Riḥānī, who was particularly admired by the author (Faraĝ 1966, 55-9), and Yūsuf Wahbī (Faraĝ [1998] 2002, 29), who both wrote plays in Egyptian dialect.

Alfred Faraĝ’s passion for theatre had started when he was a child. He acted for the first time in kindergarten and then continued acting school plays, while other hobbies were painting, poetry and trips. He completed his kindergarten, elementary, and secondary schooling in Alexandria, except for one year, at the beginning of World War II, that he spent in the safer

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<sup>9</sup> Other references to major Egyptian playwrights are indicated later in this work.

area of Damanhūr. The author remembered sadly, and with disappointment, that year for its lack of cultural activities. He was accustomed to Alexandria, a cosmopolitan city with a rich and productive cultural life. There were, among others, institutions like the British Council, the French Friendship Society, and the American Library which had their libraries and organized lectures, exhibitions, concerts, amateur theatrical performances, experimental arts, exhibits, magic lantern shows, and cinema and such as cultural activities. The Greek community mixed culturally with the Egyptians more than any other foreign community. A Greek cinema owner constantly informed the young men on the French New Wave films and the Italian neo-realism. Famous troupes also came to Alexandria: Faraḡ remembers attending performances by the Comédie Française and shaking hands with Jean Cocteau (Debs 1993, 396).

Despite his father's wishes for Alfred Faraḡ to be a student of law, which was considered a prestigious field, Faraḡ enrolled in the English Literature Department at Alexandria University. There, he was influenced by the English teacher, Enwright, who was a minor poet in England and provided his students with the latest post-war poetry books, even before they appeared in book shops, and which constituted the beginning of contemporary poetry (Debs 1993, 395). Poetry played a significant role in Faraḡ's drama. He wrote it, read it, and listened to it and, even if he left it for theatre, poetry never left him (Faraḡ [1994] 2002, 15 and Faraḡ [1998] 2002, 27-8). During the 1940s, Faraḡ was among the young students revolting against officially accepted values in Arabic literature and the outdated method of teaching it. Faraḡ was attached, instead, to the *ši'r al-Mahḡar* (poetry of Arab expatriates) and the romantic poets. His literary and political revolt was rather socio-political. He was interested in Arabic poetry, in general, Greek mythology, English poetry and theatre (Shakespeare, Eliot, Coleridge), and, of course, in the great Arab writers like Ṭāhā Ḥusayn. Muḡammad Taymūr and Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm, which he considered as his teachers (Faraḡ [1998] 2002, 31). Commenting on the readings that inspired him, Faraḡ declared that he was influenced by Arab poets, fascinated with Pirandello and read Sartre's *Existentialism and Humanism* (Amin 2008, 4). While Brecht's influence is often remarked by critics, Faraḡ admitted that Jean Anouilh influenced him in a more significant and broader way (El-Enany 2000, 176 and Faraḡ [1998] 2002, 30).

During his university years, Faraḡ's political, intellectual, and artistic affiliation was gradually determined. Born into a Wafdist family, he had taken political action against the British occupation, monarchy, and the rule of the landed aristocracy throughout his undergraduate years. At university, he was elected to represent the Faculty of Arts in the Committee of

Students and Workers, which was in the forefront of nationalist action at the time. His adherence to the socialist left made him a committed intellectual.

After graduation in 1949, Faraġ worked for six years as an English language teacher in secondary education in Alexandria. He translated articles and plays and wrote literary essays and theatre reviews in newspapers and magazines. In 1955, he left teaching and became a full-time writer for the newspaper *al-Ġumhūriyya* (The Republic), the mouthpiece of the young revolution of the Free Officers. In his articles, he manifested an interest in popular culture. In 1955, he wrote *Suqūt fir'awn* (The Fall of a pharaoh), which was to be performed two years later, while in 1956 wrote *Ṣawt Miṣr* (The Voice of Egypt), a patriotic one-act designed for the masses celebrating the struggle of the people of Port Said during the 1956 Anglo-French invasion. Its performance in 1956 at the old Opera House in al-Azbakiyya broke with its tradition of catering to elites.

In October 1957, Faraġ got married. A week later, *Suqūt fir'awn* was performed for twelve nights by the National Theatre Troupe in Cairo (Faraġ [1999] 2009, 98). The controversy the play aroused amongst critics brought Faraġ fame overnight and the same year he was awarded the Art Medal from the Egyptian Arts Council. This period marked the development of his literary career. Indeed, the negative campaign against *Suqūt fir'awn* was certainly motivated by political reasons. The play, whose title in a first instance was *Ma'sāt Iḥnātūn* (Akhenaton's tragedy), and then was changed after Ruṣdī Ṣāliḥ's suggestion (Faraġ [1998] 2002, 33), is about the Ancient Egyptian pharaoh Akhenaton. Since at that time Israel referred to Nasser as the pharaoh of Egypt, the censors took the play as a critique of Nasser's leadership and critics disapproved of its eight-scene structure and declared its theme obscure (Faraġ [1999] 2009, 98).<sup>10</sup> In 1958, Faraġ denounced the harsh treatment of local communists by the Egyptian government. This article, together with the controversy surrounding his last play, made him a victim of one of those periodic campaigns traditionally inflicted on the so-called "communists." Together with other members of the intelligentsia, Faraġ was thrown into prison without trial, subjected to physical and moral inhumanities involving bodily torture, hunger, and hard labor (Amin 2008, 9).

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<sup>10</sup> Faraġ wrote an article defending himself and his play from negative criticisms (*Taġriba suqūt fir'awn*, The experience of The Fall of a pharaoh, *al-Ġumhūriyya*, 14 December 1957). Even in 2010, an article by Nabīl Faraġ was dedicated to the play and the unjustified controversy it aroused (Nabīl Faraġ 2010).

During his detention in al-Wāḥāt al-Ḥārīḡa, from March 1959 until February 1963, Faraḡ managed to write a part of the play *Ḥallāq Baḡdād*, (The Barber of Baghdad) which was also staged in prison by fellow prisoners and performed thirteen times. The light-weight comedy rewrites pre-existing tales from the *Arabian Nights* and from al-Ġāḥiẓ's *Kitāb al-maḥāsin wa al-aḡḡād* (see Chapter III.5). Faraḡ declared that *Ḥallāq Baḡdād* was the play closest to his heart because of the strange and difficult circumstances under which it was written and performed. According to him, the performance of the play in prison was much better than the production four years later at the National Theatre. This was because his audience in prison understood the subtext much better, as they compared themselves to the protagonist, who encountered misfortune because he interfered with people's affairs. They too had meddled with the Egyptian government and were punished for it (Amin 2008, 10). *Ḥallāq Baḡdād* was one of the most successful of Faraḡ's plays and was very important to his career (Faraḡ [1998] 2002, 35-6). With time, it was produced in many theatres in Arab countries.

Upon his release in February 1963, Faraḡ was offered his job back at *al-Ġumhūriyya*, which he refused (Stagh 1993, 328). He worked, instead, for the weekly *Aḥbar al-Yawm*, Faraḡ went to see his friend Yaḥyā Ḥaqqī, a famous writer who was then the editor in chief of the journal *al-Maḡalla* and a member of the Writers' Committee of the Ministry of Culture. Faraḡ expressed his desire to concentrate his efforts into theatre and, to his surprise, his friend offered him the position of *kātib mutafarriḡ* (writer in residence). Hired by the ministry to write for the state-owned theatres, Faraḡ had the chance to make his living solely by writing plays. His position of *kātib mutafarriḡ* lasted only three years, but it allowed Faraḡ to write some of his best plays (Amin 2008, 12).<sup>11</sup>

In 1964, Faraḡ wrote *Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī*, a four-act historical drama that was produced the following year by the National Theatre and which took its name from its protagonist, Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī, the murderer of General Kleber during French campaign. The source of information is Ġabartī's *'Aḡā'ib al-āṭār fī 'l-tarāḡim wa al-aḥbār* (Remarkable Remnants of Lives and Events, 1806) which is criticised for its partiality.

The following year in 1965, *'Askar wa ḥarāmiyya* (Cops and Robbers, 1965) was a successful boisterous farce in two acts that, unlike its predecessors, was written in colloquial Egyptian Arabic. The setting of the play is the present. In a state-owned cooperative, a young clerk tries

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<sup>11</sup> On the Egyptian intellectuals and politics from 1952 to 1967, see Gervasio 2001.

to fight official corruption. Although he nearly ends up in prison, he represents an example to the ‘good workers’ who have just elected him to represent them in the Arab Socialist Union. “*Askar wa ḥarāmiyya* is a propaganda play concerned with the treatment of a particular problem at a particular time in a particular place, and with reference to a particular political ideology” which was successful in the context it was written and produced, but it cannot stand the test of time (El-Enany 2000, 191).

During that same year, Faraḡ also wrote three one-act plays: *al-Faḥḥ* (The Trap<sup>12</sup>), *Buqbuq al-Kaslān* (The Lazy Buqbuq) and *Bi ‘l-iḡmā’ + Wāḥid* (Unanimous + One). *Buqbuq al-Kaslān* is the rewriting of a portion of the *Arabian Nights* tale, resulting in a didactic play exalting the Socialist value of work that was produced the following year on television in Cairo (see Chapter III.5). *Bi ‘l-iḡmā’ + Wāḥid* is a “propaganda exercise” (Badawi 1987, 176) in which, by a trick of a young man, a foreigner is allowed to vote in the 1965 Egyptian elections and can support the Nasser’s election. *Al-Faḥḥ* is settled in a village in Upper Egypt. Written in its colloquial language, it presents a depiction of the corruption of the administrative machinery. Muhammad Mustafa Badawi considered it as “by far Faraḡ’s best one-act play” appreciating its lively dialogue, dramatic tension and powerful atmosphere (Ibid., 176-77).

In 1966, Faraḡ received the State Encouragement Prize for Literature for his play *Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī* and in 1967, he received the Sciences and Arts Order of the First Class for his efforts in the promotion of theatre in Egypt. From 1967 to 1973, while continuing to write for the stage, Faraḡ was the first director for the ministry’s al-Ṭaqāfa al-Ġamāhīriyya (Mass Culture) division, where he played a significant role in broadening the appeal of the theatre to the Egyptian masses through extending its traditionally Cairo-based activities to the provinces and promoting the democratisation of culture.<sup>13</sup>

*Al-Zīr Sālim* is a play in three acts and was written and produced in 1967 by The National Theatre in Cairo. Once again, the hypotext is well-known; this time it is not completely fantasy nor real, but an in-between: it is a legend. The *sīra* of al-Zīr became a play which debates issues of power where the main topic is no longer vengeance, but rather justice (see Chapter II.5). In a play-within-the-play fragmented by the present frame-story, characters observe their past

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<sup>12</sup> Translated into English by Denis Johnson-Davies published in *Egyptian One-Act Plays* by Heinemann: London and produced by the Tocad Theatre Company in London, 1977.

<sup>13</sup> Note that in 1966 more than two hundred Marxists, including many of the most brilliant writers, were incarcerated (see Gervasio 2001).

actions (which are enacted in front of them and the public) and comments on them to make the right final decision in matters of governance.

In 1968, right after the military setback of 1967, Faraḡ went back to the rewriting of the *Nights* to express his comments on the situation. ‘*Alī Ġanāḥ al-Tabrīzī wa tābi ‘uhu Quffa*’ (‘Alī Ġanāḥ al-Tabrīzī and his servant Quffa), a hilarious three-acts play with an interlude that was produced the following year by The Comedy Theatre in Cairo, was one of his most successful plays.

*Al-Nār wa al-zaytūn* (Fire and Olives, 1970) is a political drama on the Palestinian cause which adopts the form of documentary theatre. The documentary passages and scenes are clearly designed to provoke intense emotional responses from the audience (El-Lozy 1990, 70). *Al-Ziyāra* (literally meaning “The Visit”, but translated as “The Visitor”, 1971), instead, is a one-act play that was not produced in those years.<sup>14</sup> It shows the strange encounter between an actress and an admirer who wants to kill her in her apartment; she has to play the role of the brave actress until the doorman arrives but at that point, the man suddenly vanishes.

*Ġawāz ‘alā waraqat ṭalāq* (Marriage by Decree Nisi, 1972)<sup>15</sup> is a two-act satire within a melodramatic framework inspired by Pirandello’s theatre and was advertised by Faraḡ as the strongest love story ever shown on the Egyptian stage. People came expecting to see precisely that, but to their surprise they found a dramatized argument between an author, a director, and two protagonists about the content of the play, which was about a marriage between the rich and poor. The play was not granted permission by the authorities for performance until the playwright clearly explained the purpose behind his work. During the first two months of the production, policemen were in the auditorium. According to Faraḡ, it was perhaps the most successful of his plays. The audience loved it and would applaud certain moments which could have driven him to prison (Debs 1993, 400). As a matter of fact, Faraḡ wrote it as an expression of his disappointment with the political and the social situation at the time (Amin 2008, 23). In February 1973, together with sixty-two other prominent writers, Faraḡ found himself on the outs with the State, whose president at the time was Sadat (Anwar al-Sādāt). Faraḡ was involved in the student movements and in the general national upheaval resulting from the no peace no-

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<sup>14</sup> It was translated into English only in 2008 (Amin 2008, 203-25).

<sup>15</sup> *Ġawāz* is the colloquial Egyptian Arabic equivalent of the modern standard Arabic *zawāḡ* (“marriage”).

The literal translation of the title is “Marriage on a Divorce Document.” The play was translated into English, with the title *Marriage by Decree Nisi*, and produced by Tocad Theatre Company in London between 1976 and 1977 and then translated by Ken Wittingham, General Egyptian Book Organization, Cairo, 1992.



war situation which occurred prior to October 1973 War with Israel (Yom Kippur). The collective offence was the signing of a statement initiated by Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm and addressed to Sadat, requesting the release of detained students. The regime replied through the apparatus of the Arab Socialist Union (the only political party at the time), which revoked their membership in the Union and banned them from work in the media. Faraġ's name was removed from advertisement placards for *Ġawāz 'alā waraqat talāq*, before its performance was eventually stopped (El-Enany 2001, 176 and Stagh 1993, 329).

Faced with this situation, Faraġ realised that he could not financially make ends meet and opted to leave the country for Algeria. He worked there from 1973 to 1978 as cultural adviser to the Department of Higher Education and Scientific Research. Afterwards, he moved to London, where he resided with his wife until 1986. During his exile, Faraġ wrote several plays, such as: *Rasā'il qāḍī Iṣbīliyya* (The Letters of the Qadi of Seville, 1975), another play rewriting the *Arabian Nights*; *al-Ḥubb lu 'ba* (Love Is a Game, 1974), a social comedy in three acts, that also appears under the title of *Lu 'bat al-ḥubb* (The Game of Love) in *Riwayāt al-Hilāl* published in 1985; *Aġniyā', Fuqarā', Zuraḥā'* (Rich, Poor, and Suave, 1974), a musical comedy in three acts and *Raḥma wa Amīr al-ġāba al-maṣhūra* (Raḥma and the Prince of the Enchanted Forest, 1977), a children's play in four acts. *Al-'Ayn al-siḥriyya* (The Peephole, 1977) and *al-Ġarīb* (The Stranger, 1978) are both one-act plays where reality and illusion mix together.<sup>16</sup> The first one is an intricate play about insanity, alienation and anxiety who make three different friends (an actor, an attorney and a psychiatrist, each suffering from one of these mental disorders) believing at the same illusion that a woman has been murdered and she is before their eyes. *Al-Ġarīb* is a short play about a woman who comes home after work and finds a stranger in her apartment. She offers him coffee while having a conversation about life with him. Then, the police arrive to catch him since it turns out that he is a dangerous lunatic that has escaped. Once they are away, thinking that the stranger was a fruit of her imagination, she doubts his existence and calls a doctor.

*Dā'irat al-tibn al-Miṣriyya*, (The Egyptian hay circle, 1979)<sup>17</sup> rewrites Edward Lane's account of a farce played during a circumcision celebration attended at Muḥammad 'Alī Pasha palace (Lane 1923, 395-6). The title of the play is reminiscent of Brecht's *Caucasian Chalk Circle* (1943-1945) and indeed Faraġ's play is also set in a village where people struggle with

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<sup>16</sup> Both works are translated by Dina Amin (Amin 2008, 226-244 and 245-253).

<sup>17</sup> Translated by Amin (Amin 2008, 54-66).

authoritative power and are trapped in invisible circles. The play-within-the-play which characterizes this work invites reflections on the underestimated importance of actors and artists in the public sphere of the times in which the play is set as well as in the present.

In 1981, Faraḡ wrote *al-‘Arab* (The Arabs), a two-act political drama published in 1988 by Dār al-Hilāl under the title of *Alḡān ‘alā Awtār ‘Arabiyya* (Melodies on Arabic cords). A few years later, he came back to rewriting with *Ġarāmiyyāt ‘Aṭwa Abū Maṭwa* (*Abū Maṭwa’s adventures*, 1985), a two-act play, from Brecht’s *The Threepenny Opera* (1928), which is an adaptation of John Gay’s *Beggar’s Opera* (1728). Faraḡ’s title was certainly inspired by the protagonist of Brecht’s play, Macheath, nicknamed “Mackie the Knife.” Like his corresponding in the hypotext, Macheath is a charming gentleman thief. The plots of the two plays are similar and, like in the hypotext, appearances of honest people are deceiving. What changes is the set, Faraḡ’s play takes place in Cairo in 1929, and the dramatic devices. As Faraḡ himself stated, this work “caught the rhyme and changed the theatrical rhythm” (Faraḡ 1994, 13).

From 1986 onwards, Faraḡ increasingly spent more time in Cairo.<sup>18</sup> That same year Faraḡ was awarded the Egyptian National Theatre Jubilee Medal. Mubarak (Ḥusnī Mubārak) took a more conciliatory position towards Egyptian writers who were living abroad after Sadat’s censorship. In 1988, Faraḡ wrote his second children’s play, *Hardabīs al-Zammār* (Hardabīs the Piper) which is an adaptation of the *Tale of the Pied Piper of Hamelin*. In the same year, he was invited to write a play for the official celebration of the return of Taba to Egypt. Faraḡ wrote *‘Awdat al-‘arḍ* (The Return of the Land) which was staged before the President himself. The experimental play *al-Šaḡs* (The Person, 1989) did not have much fortune, certainly because of its postmodern structure. *Al-Ṭayyib wa al-širrīr wa al-ḡamīla* (The Good, the Bad and the Beautiful Woman, 1994) rewrites a tale of the *Arabian Nights* and closely resembles *‘Alī Ġanāḡ al-Tabrīzī wa tābi ‘uhu Quffa*.

Once in Cairo, Alfred Faraḡ’s main concern was to have all his plays republished in Egypt. In 1989, many of his plays were published or republished in a 12 volumes collection including unpublished non-theatrical works such as short stories collections, namely, *Layālī ‘Arabiyya* (Arabian Nights, s.d.) and *Maḡmū‘a qiṣās qaṣīra* (A Collection of Short Stories, 1966) and two novels: *Ḥikāyāt al-zaman al-dā‘i ‘ fī qarya Miṣriyya* (Stories of the lost past in an Egyptian

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<sup>18</sup> While he was away, critics continued writing about him. In 1977, ‘Abd al-Qādir wrote a description of *Rasā’il Qāḡī Iṣbīliyya*. The critics nostalgically reminds of the works of the author and invites him to come back to Egypt (‘Abd al-Qādir 1986, 360).

village, 1980) and *Ayyām wa layālī al-Sindibād* (Days and Nights of Sindbad, 1983). Many are Faraḡ's critical essays: *Dalīl al-mutaḡarrīḡ al-ḡakiyy ilā al-masraḡ* (A Guide for the Intelligent Theatre Goer - Theatre Guide, 1965) provide a number of suggestions and some information for appreciating theatre; *al-Milāḡa fī biḡār ṣa'ba* (Sailing on High Sea, 1981), articles on issues concerning writing and particularly the origin and the contemporary and the culture and the audience; *Dā'irat al-ḡaw'* (The Circle of Light, s.d.) is a collection of articles on contemporary personalities from theatre, art, and literature; *Aḡwā' al-masraḡ al-ḡarbī* (Spotlights on Theatre in the West, s.d.) collects articles and reviews on significant productions, *Aḡādīt warā' al-kawālīs* (Conversations Behind the Scenes, 1990) is composed of articles and lectures and *Šarq wa Ġarb* (East and West, published in 1990) is a collection of personal articles. He also wrote a book on Shakespeare: *Shakespeare fī zamanīhi wa fī zamanīnā* (Shakespeare in his time and ours, 2001). And he also wrote a script for television, *Mayy Ziyāda* (1985).

Lastly, Faraḡ's plays show his continuous experimentation and engagement in social issues. *Al-mišwār al-aḡīr* (The Last Walk, 1998) is a woman's monologue about the men who governed her life,<sup>19</sup> while *Tawrat al-ḡiḡāra: masraḡiyya 'an Intiḡāḡat al-ša'b al-filasṡīnī* (Stones Revolution: A Play about the Palestinian Intifada, 2001) comes back to the Palestinian issue more than forty years after *al-Nār wa al-zaytūn*. *Al-Amīra wa al-šu'lūk* (The Princess and the Pauper, 2002), which rewrites once again a tale of the *Arabian Nights*, was being produced at the National Theatre in Cairo when Faraḡ died in 2005 (see Selaiha 2005 a and 2005 b).

Two of Faraḡ's later plays are adaptations of his own plays. One is *al-Sūq: masraḡiyya wa siyāḡa ḡadīda li-lawḡat al-sūq fī masraḡiyya "Qāḡī Išbīliyya"* (The Market: a new play and new treatment of the Marketplace in the play *The Qāḡī of Seville*, 2003) and the other is *Itnīn fī 'uffa* (Two in a Bag, 1991), the translation of *'Alī Ġanāḡ al-Tabrīzī wa tābi'uhu Quffa* in colloquial Egyptian Arabic. Apart from his own work, Faraḡ translated Gorky's diaries under the title *Šuwar Adabiyya* (Literary Portraits, published in 1989). Translations from English to Arabic to which Alfred Faraḡ was working on during his last years were seemingly lost (Nabīl Faraḡ, personal interview, November 2015). Moreover, beside *Tawrat al-ḡiḡāra*, and the new version of *Rasā'il qāḡī Išbīliyya (al-Sūq)*, another unpublished work exists, *Kahramān*, the Egyptian Carmen in two-acts written in 1990 (Debs 1993, 402).

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<sup>19</sup> It has been recently translated by Dina Amin (2008, 267-71).

Faraġ's plays were written to be staged and indeed a greater part of them were produced in former theatres in Cairo some months after they were written. After his return to Egypt, his recent, as well as his older plays were still appreciated, and many were staged at the National Theatre. In 1991, *al-Zīr Sālim* was staged again at the National Theatre. His next piece was *Ġarāmiyyāt 'Aṭwa Abū Maṭwa* (1993). In 1998, four plays by Faraġ were performed at state theaters simultaneously: *al-Ṭayyib wa al-širrīr wa al-ġamīla* and *Dā'irat al-wahm* (a bill of three one-act plays: *Buqbuq al-kaslān*, *al-Mišwār al-aḥīr* and *Dā'irat al-tibn al-Miṣriyya*). Faraġ's plays were staged outside Egypt as well. Productions of many of his works took place in Tunisia, Algeria, Tripoli, Baghdad, Bassora, Damascus, Aleppo, Jordan, Kuwait, London, Berlin and Paris.<sup>20</sup> Certainly, the linguistic choice for most of his dramatic works - the *fushā* sometimes broken by expressions in colloquial Egyptian Arabic - is a prominent issue in Faraġ's production which helped his success in Arab countries other than Egypt.

Nowadays it is almost impossible to find a full collection of his works, even in Cairo, and his plays have not been staged in recent important productions. However, there are signs that Faraġ is still very much appreciated. Recent translations and studies have appeared in Arabic and in English. In 2012, *Šāri'a 'Imād al-Dīn, ḥikāyāt al-fann wa al-nuġūm* ('Imād al-Dīn Street, stories of art and stars, n.d.) was published for the first time. *Suqūt fir'awn* was printed in 2016 by the state owned publishing house al-Hay'a al-Miṣriyya al-'amma li 'l-kitāb.<sup>21</sup> Professors of Dramatic Art speak of him enthusiastically remarking how his plays are enjoyable to read but that they are more valuable when performed. Indeed, some students know Faraġ because they performed his plays in college. Universities also organize amateur performances staging Faraġ's plays, such as the ones directed by Dina Amin at Cairo University. Plays like *'Alī Ġanāḥ al-Tabrīzī wa tābi'uhu Quffa* continue to stimulate debate amongst students, like in Hazem Azmi's lessons at Ain Shams University.

### **Why studying the kaleidoscope effect?**

A conspicuous number of the Egyptian playwright Alfred Faraġ's plays (1929-5005) rewrite pre-existent texts. Plays resulting in such a process of transformation can be considered as reflected images of the hypotexts (namely the rewritten texts) supplemented by new contents and features. Like a kaleidoscope, the rewriting creates multiple patterns by reflecting the pieces

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<sup>20</sup> For a complete list of the productions, see 'Aṭiya 2002, 269-71 and Debs 1993, 397-402, until 1990.

<sup>21</sup> Also, a very recent article about Faraġ sums up his works and life (Ayman 2017).

composing a text, such as its typology, its plot, its characters, its style and its contents. Rewriting, then, produces a kaleidoscope effect.<sup>22</sup>

The complex images produced by the kaleidoscope/rewriting supply various functions. For instance, Faraĝ's rewritings contribute to a recreation of an Arabic identity (through the reinvestment of a common Arabic heritage) and more specifically, to the creation of an Arabic theatre. Faraĝ's rewritings allow as well for a wider audience as it takes known works and subjects and makes them more accessible. Enabling an abstraction from the content of the hypotext this rewriting can become a tool to encode political ideas. In rewriting, Faraĝ activates dramatic potentiality within the literary genre of the hypotext. Then, rewriting can trigger a questioning about the dramatic potentiality of the hypotext as well as about other aspects such as its style or contents. For these reasons, and many more which will be explored further in this work, Faraĝ's rewriting can be studied as a poetics of the text<sup>23</sup> and considered as a multifunctional strategy.

Rewriting also generates a multilayered creation. A play that rewrites a pre-existent text certainly is reminiscent of the former text in its original form (see Monah 2012, 311-17). At the same time, the play is a new work with its own specificity that creates an autonomous pattern. Differences between the two works constitute another layer which imposes a focus on the creative aspects of the play and on the modified aspects of the hypotext. Moreover, layers multiply since the hypotexts are not fixed images. Rather, they change according to the different receptions they have in various times and spaces as well as according to the singular reception of each observer. The rewriting process crafts a new image of the hypotext since it affects its reception.

The metaphor of the kaleidoscope figuratively renders how the process of rewriting in Alfred Faraĝ's plays is in fact a strategy of the multiplicity (multilayered, multiform and

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<sup>22</sup> In her work *Hamlet's Arab journey. Shakespeare's prince and Nasser's ghost* (2011), Margaret Litvin uses a "global kaleidoscope approach", since "Arab audiences came to know Shakespeare through a kaleidoscopic array of performances, texts, and criticism from many directions: not just the "original" British source culture but also French, Italian, American, Soviet, and Eastern European literary and dramatic traditions, which at times were more influential than Britain's" (Litvin 2011, 2). I found Litvin's use of the term "kaleidoscope" after that I had chosen to deal about the "kaleidoscope effect". My choice was derived from a need to express "reflection". I first thought of a game of mirrors, then of a prism and finally, for the reasons exposed above, the kaleidoscope appeared to my mind as the most suitable metaphor for the effect of Faraĝ's rewriting. Litvin's approach confirmed my ideas that "travelling" texts incorporate a variety of images, like a kaleidoscope does.

<sup>23</sup> A poetics of intertextuality is a study of what a text makes of other texts and not how "sources" can allow a better explanation of a text (see Rabau 2002, 16).

multifunctional). It also reminds us that multiple perspectives characterize the reception of texts. The transformative power of the kaleidoscope recalls the transformative power of the rewriting. Moreover, the word “kaleidoscope” (coming from the Greek *kalos* “beautiful” and *eidos* “form” + -scope) evokes the field of arts, to which Faraĝ’s plays belong, and of which beauty is a main feature.

The study of the rewriting as a kaleidoscope effect will enable us to delve into the process of how the plays are created, better understand the plays and to trace some of the specificities of Faraĝ’s theatre - which deserves renewed attention (Carlson 2013, 534) - and, more generally, of the Arabic theatre. At the same time, certain peculiarities of the rewriting as a strategy will emerge; as such, this study can serve as an example of how to approach any text largely deriving from a preexistent text.

### **Summary of the contents.**

Since analogue processes can be traced for the rewriting of hypotexts of the same typology, this study is divided into three chapters, each of which deals with the rewriting of a kind of narration: History<sup>24</sup> (Chapter I), legend (Chapter II) and fictitious tales (Chapter III).

Each of the three chapters will first deal with some of the features of the hypotext, including the reception of that text in the time of its rewriting (part 1 - converting). Then, some aspects of the new text will be compared to the rewritten one. In this way, it will be possible to understand what has been reproduced, objected, deleted, deformed and reinvested in the play at the various levels of the narration, namely the plot (part 2 – replotting), characters (part 3 – re-masking), focalization and style (part 4 – restyling), and contents (part 5 - refilling). Each part is followed by a summary signaled with three stars. In this comparison, the effects of the dramatization (formal transformation) and the effects of reality (extra-textual references) will emerge.

This study excludes the “rewriting of himself,” namely the rewriting of a play Faraĝ himself had written, since it does not share the “kaleidoscope effect” of the other rewritings. In fact, the new plays simply transform an aspect of the rewritten play. These rewritings will be considered as new interpretations of the rewritten play. Nevertheless, notes will briefly elucidate the precise

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<sup>24</sup> I use “history” as a synonym of “past” and “History” as the study of the past and its writing, namely, the history we know, and we have access to.

transformations acted in their rewritings. For the same reason, I will not deal with the rewriting of texts of the same literary genre, namely other plays.

The three texts chosen for the detailed analysis are representative of each of the three kinds (History, legend and tales). For the rewriting of History, I have chosen to analyse *Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī* (1964) amongst three plays of the same kind, because its hypotext is a text indicated by Faraḡ himself (Ġabartī's 'Aḡā'ib al-āīār fī 'l-tarāḡim wa al-aḡbār (Remarkable Remnants of Lives and Events, 1806) and it is in the same language of the hypertext (Arabic). *Al-Zīr Sālim* (1967), rewriting of the homonymous *sīra*, is the only play derived by a legend, so the choice was necessary. As for the rewriting of the tales, the example is 'Alī Ġanāḡ al-Tabrīzī wa tābi'uhu *Quffa* ('Alī Ġanāḡ al-Tabrīzī and his servant Quffa, 1968), because it falls in the middle of Faraḡ's stage of rewriting texts of the same genres. Indeed, it is the third rewriting of the tales of the *Arabian Nights* by Faraḡ. Moreover, it displays many of the modalities that will be used for later rewritings. Despite the three texts are temporally close to one another with barely four years distance between them, the rewriting takes completely different (or distinct) forms, which demonstrates how the hypotext impacts the play.

The parallel structure of each chapter is a natural consequence of a same approach to the different works. The difference between parallel parts in each chapter proves the first hypothesis of this study, namely, that the rewriting is a multiform strategy which mostly variate according to the genre of the hypotext. Moreover, it allows the reader to have a transversal reading of this study. Final remarks on each chapter are meant to retrace general trends in each of the three kinds of rewriting. The final conclusion compares the different transformations of each part and derivates some general reflexions on the practice of the rewriting and on Faraḡ's production. The Appendixes include plots of the plays and of the hypotexts in addition to several extracts of the texts.

## I. PRIVATE SIDES OF HISTORY. THE PAST MEETING THE PRESENT

Dramatizing historical facts is a widespread practice taking different forms and occurring for different purposes. In a spirit of historical revisionism, Farağ's rewritings of History focuses on some aspects of the fact that are disregarded in the hypotext and provides a new story, so that the narration of History itself is questioned. Besides, the play creates symbolic contents for the new story. Since the significance of the play stands also in opposition to its hypotext, the rewriting emerges as a fundamental element, giving contents to the play.

Farağ chose to rewrite historical facts three times. The first time was at the beginning of his career, with the controversial play *Suqūṭ fir'awn* (The Fall of a pharaoh, written in 1955, performed two years later and first published in 1989) which on the surface is about Akhenaton's dilemma between being a good king and being consistent with his pacifist religion. However, the play raised issues of war and peace at a time when Egypt was still at war with Israel and the mention of the word "pharaoh" in the title would have lead the audience to think about their president, Nasser. Similarly, *Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī* (1964) the four-act historical drama examined here in detail, is set during the French expedition and describes the murder of General Kleber by Sulaymān of Aleppo, while, in the meantime, it addresses a contemporary message linked to the specific historical conditions of the context of production of the play. A third play written some years later, *Dā'irat al-tibn al-Miṣriyya* (The Egyptian Hay Circle, 1979), enacts the performance that was part of the celebration of the circumcision of the son of the Pasha Muḥammad 'Alī accounted by Edward Lane in *The Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (1836). In it, actors appear as artists aware of their possible ground-breaking role within the society.

While a study of the rewriting of *Dā'irat al-tibn al-Miṣriyya* would deal with the English review written by Edward Lane, and an analysis of *Suqūṭ fir'awn* would select Arabic Ancient Egyptian Historiography dating before 1955, for *Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī*, it exists a precise, detailed hypotext in Arabic, signaled by Farağ himself. This is one of the reasons why I chose to analyze the rewriting process of this play in the detail.



*Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī*'s hypotext is 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Ġabartī's *'Aḡā'ib al-āṭār fī 'l-tarāḡim wa al-aḥbār* (Remarkable Remnants of Lives and Events, 1806).<sup>25</sup> All critics of the play *Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī* refer to the hypotext or the hypertext before focusing on its text. For instance, Louis 'Awaḍ, who analyzes the play to show that it is a "beautiful failure," resumes a part of Ġabartī's account (1967, 366). As one of the first information, Laila Debs defines Faraḡ's text as "a tamed version of the historical material found in Ġabartī's chronicle" (1993, 216). Amīr Iskandar begins his article on the play by claiming that History says a few words on a matter and then it passes over in silence (2002, 87). Finally, Faraḡ himself, in his foreword to the play, quotes the foremost historian's account of the murder of Kleber and complains about the scarcity of information it provides on Sulaymān of Aleppo (MSH: 8).<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> In a letter Alfred Faraḡ asked to his brother Nabīl a reliable edition of all the four books of Ġabartī's *History*, that it was kept in good conditions and that he had it as soon as possible (Faraḡ [1963?] 2009, 89).

<sup>26</sup> "MSH" stands for *masraḥiyya "Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī"*, namely Faraḡ [1964] 1988; "Ġ" stands for Ġabartī's *History*, namely Ġabartī 1988, while "T" stands for its translation, that is taken from Ġabartī 1993 (Philipp and Perlmann's translation).

Please, note that the plot of the play *Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī* is provided in Appendix together with Ġabartī's account of the murder of General Kleber that Alfred Faraḡ quotes in the foreword to the play.

## **1. Converting - Drama and History. Renewing the old.**

One eminent critic has underlined homologies and differences between *Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī* and the famous Aristotelian rules on the treatment of History in dramas, provided in the *Poetics* ('Awad 2002, 76). What Aristotle maintained was the necessary detachment of theatre from details of facts and its necessary inclination to philosophical matters. As 'Awad's criticism shows, Aristotle is considered a reference for all times and places. Nevertheless, the rewriting of History through theatre has undergone various developments which either partially or completely deny some of the Aristotelian rules.

The continuity between past and present is a central assertion in historical plays of all times and styles (Lindenberger 1975, 6). The historical drama developed by the Romantic Theatre distinguished itself by an opposition to tragedy. Named by Victor Hugo "miroir de concentration," historical drama represents forces going against the existent power. More than a theatre of the historical fact, it is a theatre of the reflection upon history where the authentication of facts is not the main concern, but rather the main issue is a debate on what History does. Then, the playwright can even invent, "travaillant l'histoire comme un matériau littéraire modelable et non comme un fait avéré immobile" (Fix 2010, 13-4).

Another theatrical movement defined rules for the transformation of history into drama. After the First World War, German radical theatre practitioners refused to accept the differences between Tragedy and epic described by Aristotle and linked them in an "epic theatre." The name was coined by the left-wing director Erwin Piscator who in the early 1920s argued that epic theatre could make the stage respond to the political battles of the moment (Brandt 2002, 254). Bertolt Brecht appropriated the term giving it the chief connotation that such theatre must have a narrative mode. Brecht believed that theatre does not merely aim to provide entertainment, but to act as a platform or pulpit for lecture and so, it should teach, it should change attitudes and stimulate action.

### **1.2 Dramatizing History. Different trends.**

In Egypt, Aḥmad Ṣawqī wrote historical dramas in elegant verses dealing with great protagonists of Ancient Arabic and Egyptian History and legend, such as *Maḡnūn Laylā* (Driven mad by Laylā, 1916 or 1931) and *Maṣra' Kilyubātrā* (The Fall of Cleopatra, 1917 or 1927-29), *Qambīz* (Cambyses, 1931), 'Antara (1932) and *Amīrat al-Andalus* (Princess of Andalusia, 1932, the only one in prose; see the analysis of its historical *turāt* in Dardīrī 1980,

99-131). Apart from comedies of manners set in contemporary Egypt, Maḥmūd Taymūr also wrote several historical dramas. *Al-Ḥawwā' al-ḥālida* (Eternal Eve, 1945), dealing with the love of 'Antar for 'Abla, *al-Yawm Ḥamr* (Wine Today, 1945), about Imru' al-Qays, and *Ibn Ġalā* (1951?) are long inadequate dramatic structured works with dozens of characters. *Fidā'* (Sacrifice, before 1951), set in Ancient Egypt, is a light tale of love and loyalty (Badawi 1987, 107). *Ṣaqr Qurayš* (The Hawk of Quraysh, first performed in Tunis in 1955), on the Umayyad Prince 'Abd al-Raḥmān (731-788), is instead an easier play to stage and is well constructed. Its characters present varying degrees of liveness and subordination and the protagonist is one of the most memorable characters in modern Arabic drama (Badawi 1987, 110-11). Also, contrary to the other historical dramas, *Ṣaqr Qurayš* is relevant to the political preoccupations of contemporary Egypt. Emphasising the need to restrain the power of the feudal landlords and to unify the country under the leadership of an enlightened autocratic ruler, the play expresses the mood of the 1952 Revolution.

As the 1952 Revolution constituted a turning point for many aspects of the Arab theatre, it also influenced the use of History. The radical political and social changes brought about by the Revolution renovated the theatre and gave rise to a new generation of playwrights eager to address their contemporary issues in a variety of new theatrical moulds and techniques (El-Enany 2000, 171). This phenomenon can also be seen in 'Alī Aḥmad Bākaṭīr's fictionalization of History. Bākaṭīr, which Faraġ considered as "the one who carried the Arabic theatre on his shoulders for ten years" (Faraġ [1957] 2002, 65), conceived a dramatization in nineteen volumes of early Islamic history and conquests - *al-Malḥama al-islāmiyya al-kubra: 'Umar* (The Great Islamic Epic: 'Umar – the second Caliph, 1963). His *Iḥnātūn wa Nifirtītī* (Akhenaton and Nefertiti, written in 1938 and published first in 1940, then again in 1967) was a proper drama - in verses - with the same historical protagonist of Faraġ's first full-length play (*Suqūṭ fir'awn*). Set in the same period was also Bākaṭīr's *al-Fir'awn al-maw'ūd* (The promised pharaoh, 1945). *Sirr al-Ḥākim bi-amr Allāh* (The secret of the Caliph al-Ḥākim, 1947), instead, is about the Fatimid domination and *Dār Ibn Luqmān* (1960?) is inspired by the sixth crusade. *Al-Dūda wa al-tu'bān* (The worm and the snake, 1967) deals with the Egyptian resistance to the French campaign in Egypt under Bonaparte and culminates in the Cairo revolt. Bākaṭīr's play is similar to *Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī* because of its temporal setting and the time frame in which the pieces were written (just a few months after *Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī*). Moreover, the protagonist is a little-known national figure, sheikh Sulaymān al-Ġawsaqī, a blind man who was president of the "guild" for blind men. Muhammad Mustafa Badawi describes it as an episodic play that "traces the development of his character from a tough worldly figure with

strong personal ambition [...] to a nationalist leader who tried to build up an Egyptian army” (Badawi 1987, 123). Another play by Bākaṭīr deals with the French campaign: *Aḥlām Nābulūn* (Napoleon’s dreams, s.d.). Amongst its characters is General Kleber, who is also a main character in Faraġ’s *Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī*. Bākaṭīr’s use of the past with the aim of better defining it and dealing with it as a metaphor for the present (Badawi 1987, 117) is a trend which Faraġ followed. Moreover, Faraġ also dealt with some same historical facts.

As mentioned earlier, in his book about the Arabic theatre, ‘Alī al-Rā’ī identifies three categories of plays in the Egyptian theatre of the sixties (Introduction). The first includes plays of social criticism, particularly comedies with a political content. The second is *al-masraḥiyya al-turāṭiyya* (theatre of the heritage) that relied either on indigenous dramatic forms or made use of contents from the Arabic heritage (مأثورات) to convey a contemporary message.<sup>27</sup> The third category includes political drama with a setting “from the Arab community’s history” (من تاريخ الأمة العربية) or from the present, and a message relevant to the present (al-Rā’ī 1999, 98). With regards to al-Rā’ī’s remarks, Faraġ’s choice of historical subjects is oriented towards Arab History. Given the topics of Faraġ’s historical plays (*Suqūṭ fir‘awn*, *Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī*, *Dā’irat al-tibn al-Miṣriyya*), it seems that al-Rā’ī’s distinction between political drama with an historical setting and the theatre of the heritage cannot be rigid. To be more precise, it does not work. Arab heritage can also be made of its History, as Faraġ’s three historical plays do. Maḥmūd al-‘Ālim maintains that with *Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī*, Faraġ created “an original tragic hero on the Arab stage, drawn from our intellectual, social, and historical heritage” (al-‘Ālim 2002, 69). Faraġ himself speaks of his plays dealing with *The Thousand Nights* and Arab History as the same phenomenon since they address a common past (Faraġ 1986, 305). The re-enactment of the Arab past must be understood within its complex historical context of the reappraisal of heritage. From one side, it could serve the pan-Arab spirit of the time. This explains why al-Rā’ī speaks of a “history of the Arab community.” On the other hand, history was used to filter the contemporary references in times during which playwrights must face censorship.

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<sup>27</sup> On the concept of *turāt*, see Ruocco 1999, 66-70.

Brecht's epic theatre was a main influence in Egypt during the sixties.<sup>28</sup> Like the use of traditional means of representations was meant to break the fourth wall, the historical set for plays was chosen with the aim of alienating the audience. Faraġ declared that:

إنّ استخدام التراث كإطار مسرحي (...) ينطوي على قصد واضح لإعادة صياغة الحياة عن طريق إعادة صياغة التراث. الموقف الانتقائي من التراث هو بالضرورة موقف نقدي وجدلي منه. واستخدام التراث إطاراً لطرح قضايا معاصرة، هو موقف للحاضر وللماضي.

Faraġ 1986, 319

Using tradition as a theatrical framework [...] implies a clear intention to reformulate the present life through the reformulation of tradition. The selective attitude to the tradition is necessarily critical and dialectal. Using tradition as a framework to introduce contemporary issues establishes an attitude to the present and to the past.

These concepts were already in Faraġ's mind in 1954, when he wrote that history was a framework for contemporary issues to be reflected on through theatre (Faraġ [1954] 2002, 74). Faraġ's ideas show that his concern with Brecht's theories was not complete and many critics have debated this. Atef Ahmed El-Sayyid has confirmed that Faraġ's plays – and *Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī* in particular - have not the theoretic basis as Brecht, so they cannot be considered as epic theatre (1995, 248-9). Clearly, historical plays had to balance the national spirit with the progressive aim, within political restrictions. The playwright's aim derived from the epic trend as well.

## 1.2 Face to the sources. Contesting History.

So, like Bākaṭīr did before him, Faraġ wanted to fill the gaps that Historiography had left. However, his purpose goes further, as he explains in his foreword to the play. After recalling Kleber's murder, the author proceeds with a veritable essay about the truthfulness of the story that has been propelled by Historiography. First, he withdraws the wider context of previous and succeeding events showing al-Azhar's power. Interestingly, he begins his argument by quoting a description that *al-mīṭāq* (the charter) provides of the institution. "The charter" is The National Charter that President Nasser had presented a few years before, on the 21<sup>st</sup> of May 1962, at Cairo University (Nāṣir 1962). What follows is the extract Faraġ quoted in his text:

"لم تكن الحملة الفرنسية على مصر مع مطلع القرن التاسع عشر التي صنعت اليقظة المصرية في ذلك الوقت

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<sup>28</sup> See Rašīd Bū Ša'īr 1983.

- كما يقول بعض المؤرخين - فإن الحملة الفرنسية حين جاءت إلى مصر وجدت الأزهر يموج بتيارات جديدة تتعدى جدرانها إلى الحياة في مصر كلها"

MSH: 9<sup>29</sup>

“It was not the French campaign in Egypt at the beginning of the seventeenth century that awoke Egypt in that time, as some historians say. Instead, the French campaign, when it arrived in Egypt, found al-Azhar crisping with new trends crossing its walls to the life of the entire Egypt.”

In the words of his President, Faraḡ must have found it key to read, re-read and re-write Sulaymān’s story, namely, to write History. Keeping as a key-concept his argument that al-Azhar was a central institution, Faraḡ argues that Sulaymān’s declaration could be fake and he undertakes research to support his reflections. He recollects facts previous to Kleber’s murder (MSH: 9-11) showing al-Azhar’s prominent position about many questions, particularly concerning justice (10). To support his view, Faraḡ quotes sources other than Ġabartī and reports an extract from another famous *History*, *Tārīḡ al-ḡaraka al-qawmiyya fī Miṣr wa taṡawwūr niṡām al-ḡukūm fī Miṣr* (The History of the National Movement and the Development of the Administration in Egypt) by ‘Abd al-Raḡmān al-Rāfi‘ī (1889-1966), who wrote his books beginning in 1926. Faraḡ quotes a text – without mentioning its sources - maintaining that, after Sulaymān’s murder, harsher measures were taken against al-Azhar (11).

A recent study on al-Rāfi‘ī’s works reveals that a “national epic” constitutes a uniform topic of his sixteen’s volumes’ *History* (Di-Capua, 2004). In January 1952, al-Rāfi‘ī’s work was the second history book banned by the Egyptian monarchy, while the first was Ġabartī’s *History*. Several months later, in the wake of the July Revolution, al-Rāfi‘ī’s status had changed dramatically. His books were reprinted and widely distributed, and the president quoted him in his speeches. By the early 1960s, al-Rāfi‘ī had become Egypt’s most awarded and celebrated historian of the 20th century and was selected as Egypt’s candidate for the Nobel Prize (Ibid., 429). Al-Rāfi‘ī presented the French domination as a detailed account of an uncompromising popular struggle. “The various skirmishes, incidents, and clashes were treated as the outcome of this inherent nationalist consciousness.” Everything is exposed as the outcome of nationalist revolutionary consciousness, popular forces, and heroic leaders the nationalist factor and its agents are the central thread that of his Egypt’s modern History (Ibid., 437). Faraḡ’s rewriting

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<sup>29</sup> Nasser’s words might be inspired from the *History* of al-Rāfi‘ī that Faraḡ himself quotes some lines after (see below).

then, must be considered impregnated with such ideology that was permeating the reading of History during his time. Likewise, Bākaṭīr's play seems to be influenced as well by the revival of al-Rāfi'ī's *History*: the protagonist believes that “only a powerful army drawn from the Egyptian people themselves, and not from the Mamluk mercenaries, would have the true interests of the country at heart and therefore be able to protect it from foreign aggressors” (Badawi 1992, 123).

Faraḡ maintains that History might have recorded a fake witness and provides evidence for his theories presenting a polemic view on the torture Sulaymān went through and claims that his confession, which occurred during the second interrogation, might be a lie resulting after a moment reflection. He might have wanted to avoid the involvement of dozens of sheikhs from al-Azhar that must have been acquainted with his intentions. Considered al-Azhar's power, it might have been impossible to act outside its will, as Sulaymān declared. Instead, after torture, he named just the “small fish” (MSH: 13) *فكر في أن يشغل الفرنسيين بصيد صغير*. Then, it could be convenient for the French to believe Sulaymān for several reasons. If Sulaymān was payed by the agha, like he admitted, the Ottomans would be responsible for the murder. On the one hand, this could provide a strategic position for the French to continue their long cold war with the Ottomans and would also prevent another rebellion from al-Azhar if the latter was responsible instead. Once again, Faraḡ remarks that despite Ġabartī's assures that Sulaymān affirmed the truth to the French, the historian equally underlines that the French tortured him until he said what they wanted to know (17).<sup>30</sup> Accordingly, the point of departure of his story will be the one History has not provided answers to:

فمن يكون هذا الفتى الغامض الجاسر؟..  
أي دم يجري في عروقه، وأية أفكار محمومة وعاقلة صحبتته طول الطريق من الجيزة إلى الأزبكية في ذلك  
النهار المشهود.. خطوة خطوة وراء ساري عسكر الفرنسيين؟  
أي الحوافز امتلاء بها قلبه حين كانت يده ممتلئة بمقبض السكين الخطير؟

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<sup>30</sup> Faraḡ's quote respects the core of Ġabartī's message:

(MSH: 17). “أخبرهم بحقيقة الحال فعند ذلك علموا ببراءة أهل مصر من ذلك وتركوا ما كانوا عزموا عليه”.

He informed them with the truth of the fact, so they knew that people of Cairo were innocent and abandoned their previous intentions.

Nevertheless, its interpretation can be easily mislead: “The French obtained what they wanted to know” can simply be the truth or can be a fake version of the facts and this is clearly Faraḡ's interpretation. Nothing confirms that Faraḡ's interpretation is Ġabartī's hidden meaning of his words.

Who was that mysterious daring boy?

Which blood flowed into his veins, which feverish and rational ideas possessed him all the way from Giza to al-Azbakiyya in that memorable day... step by step behind the General of the French?

Which motive filled his heart when his hand was grasping the handle of the īgerous knife?

Claiming that the play will answer to Sulaymān's reflections and reasons for the murder, Faraġ indirectly maintains that his play will provide answers to the question "why?", that Aristotle claimed to be a prior aim of fiction (*poiēsis*), against History, which prefers the temporal succession instead of the causal connection (see, for instance, Eden 2005, 42-4).<sup>31</sup> After having analysed the hypotext, Faraġ would fill the gaps of the motivations of Sulaymān's actions, assuming that his reader would be interested in this kind of questions as well. A third phase would be a (re-)writing of the fact that provides meaning to it without caring for the restitution of the facts according to History. Nevertheless, Faraġ goes further. Before providing explanations for the causes of history through the play, he warns the reader that he wants to explore the context of the fact, as History has reported it (MSH: 9). At any rate History has a fictional side, too.

### 1.3 Between reality and fiction. Writing History.

On the surface, literary writing and historical writing are two distinct practices. However, they can have many points of contact since « toute histoire est écriture, narration, mise en intrigue : c'est par le récit que l'historien organise et structure les faits et événements du passé et qu'il leur donne un sens » (Jacquemond 2006 a, 7 ; see also Mehrez 1994, 3-9). Indeed, Faraġ himself considered Ġabartī both as an historian and as a writer, "a sarcastic social writer, who dips humorism in bitterness" (1989, 28). Equally, as we have seen with al-Rāfi'ī's *History*, the reading of History and its consequent perception differ on the basis of the context of reception. As a matter of fact, it is generally recognized that Ġabartī's narration is full of judgment. Delanoue remarks Ġabartī's "opinions et attitudes franchement aristocratiques : son mépris

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<sup>31</sup> See also Ricœur's "explanatory/understanding phase" of a history text: « (...) j'appelle phase documentaire celle qui se déroule de la déclaration des témoins oculaires à la constitution des archives et qui se fixe pour programme épistémologique l'établissement de la preuve documentaire. J'appelle ensuite phase explicative/compréhensive celle qui concerne les usages multiples du connecteur « parce que » répondant à la question « pourquoi ? » : pourquoi les choses se sont-elles passées ainsi et non autrement ? (...) J'appelle enfin phase représentative la mise en forme littéraire ou scripturaire du discours porté à la connaissance des lecteurs d'histoire » (Ricœur 2000, 1, 69).



pour le populaire, et une certaine tendance à l'indulgence devant les mœurs de la classe militaire » (Delanoue 1982, 5).

Born in Ottoman Egypt in 1753-4, 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Ġabartī was its most illustrious historian (Moreh and Tignor 1993, 11). Ġabartī came from a long line of important scholars and prominent members of Cairo's religious elite. Son of an important 'ālim, Ġabartī was the only one of many brothers to reach maturity. Like his father, he was cultured, received a good education, and became a famous scholar. He directly witnessed of many of the facts he described in his texts and was famous for his three main works he produced while he was still alive (Ibid., 7). *Ta'rīḥ muddat al-Faransīs bi-Miṣr* (History of the French period in Egypt) depicts the first seven months of the French occupation of Egypt. It was written in 1798 "under the immediate impression of the events of the French occupation (Moreh Tignor 1993, 183), namely, "à chaud" (Raymond 1998, 4). *Maḥzar al-taqdīs bi-zawāl dawlat al-Faransīs* (The demonstration of Piety in the Demise of the French State), which was written in December 1801 after the liberation of the Grand Vizier Yūsuf, aims at exonerating the sheikh from the accusation of cooperation with French (Raymond 1998, 4).

*'Aḡā'ib al-āthār fī 'l-tarāḡim wa al-aḥbār* (called "History" hereafter) is a comprehensive work written in two versions (see Moreh Tignor 1993, 183) and it is the hypotext of the play. In its whole, it covers the history of Egypt from 1517 to 1806. The third volume covers the period between 1798-1806, it was concluded in 1806 and provides Ġabartī's last version of the occupation period. The historian included information he could verify from older witnesses, registers, tombstones and other chronicles (Moreh and Tignor 1993, 11). Ġabartī's *History* was a long-forbidden publication because of its criticism of Muḥammad 'Alī, the Viceroy of Egypt from 1805 until 1849. Only in 1880 the entire work was published.

That Ġabartī's *History* provides a particular view of the facts is fair enough. The historian's narration expresses the ideas he had assimilated during his formation, with judgments about men and events, and reveals what he thinks about the French expedition (Delanoue 1982, 3). According to Delanoue, an instance of Ġabartī's admiration of French administration occurs especially in the account of Kleber's murder:

Mais un fait surtout semble avoir frappé ce 'ālim épris de régularité, et aussi – sans le moindre doute – soucieux de voir l'Etat musulman attacher un grand prix à la vie

humaine : l'appareil des formalités dont fut entouré le procès de l'assassin de Kléber, Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī, pourtant arrêté poignard à la main.

Delanoue 1982, 81

Indeed, the historian includes the reports of the trial produced and distributed by the French administration (see I.2). With an attention to detail, precision and charge of judgement, this excerpt is a good sample of Ğabartī's narration.

Ğabartī's account is also the only developed Egyptian point of view about the occupation (Delanoue 1982, 3). Another historian from that time, who also took account of the facts, was Nicolas Turc, with his *Aḥbār al-mašyaḥa al-fransiyya fī Miṣr* (News of the French Chiefdom in Egypt; known as *Muḍakkariyyāt Niqūlā Turk* - Chronicles of Egypt, 1798-1804). As a Syrian Christian, Turc was more detached from the facts than Ğabartī. He describes Sulaymān as "a poor guy in ragged clothes" ("شاب فقير بملابس رثة", Turc 1950, 94) and notes that Sulaymān spoke with effrontery ("بكل وقاحة" Ibid., 95) during the French trial. Like Ğabartī, he found it worthwhile to include the trial documents to his account. A detail in the play appears in Turc's version of facts and it is not mentioned in Ğabartī's account.<sup>32</sup>

Of course, many accounts of the facts are written from the Western side. The point of view of the occupier is expressed already within Ğabartī's account in the trial documents. Then, for instance, in an introduction to *Napoleon in Egypt* - the English translation by Shmuel Moreh and Robert L. Tignor of Ğabartī's *Chronicle of the French Occupation* - Tignor describes Sulaymān as "a religious enthusiast from Aleppo" (Moreh Tignor 1993, 11). A detail that shocked Faraġ was that Sulaymān of Aleppo has been preserved in History by means of his decapitated head being displayed in a museum in Paris, identified as belonging to the assassin of General Kleber. Faraġ recalls that in the foreword:

ثم رأسه.. رأس سليمان الحلبي ذاته!.. محنط مقدد، يطل إلى يومنا هذا على الزائرين من داخل دولا ب  
زجاجي في المتحف الجنائي بباريس، وقد كتبت عليه لافتة تقول: "رأس قاتل. الاسم: سليمان الحلبي"!!..

MSH: 8<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> In both Turc and the play, Sulaymān presents a paper to Kleber to attire his attention (see MSH: 153 and Turc 1950, 94).

<sup>33</sup> Sulaymān's head was and should still be exposed at Musée de l'Homme in Paris.

And then his head. The very head of Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī! Embalmed and dried, can be seen today by visitors from inside a showcase in the Museum of the Criminals in Paris. A tag on it says: “A murderer’s head. The name: Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī”!

On the other hand, Rasheed El-Enany remarks that in contemporary Arab history books Sulaymān is portrayed as a hero (2000, 184). Sulaymān’s statue was erected in Aleppo, and he is shown as a brave man in an Egyptian television series dating from 1976 and in an Egyptian film.<sup>34</sup> Even a novel about Sulaymān was recently written by a Syrian author.<sup>35</sup> The end of an Egyptian television program in 2011 complained about the unfair memorialization of Sulaymān and called for justice with regards to “the Egyptian Syrian Arabic hero Sulaymān from Aleppo.”<sup>36</sup>

Interestingly, the critics who studied Faraġ’s play *Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī*, who are mostly from the Arab world, but also Western, all speak of Sulaymān in either neutral or positive appreciation. El-Enany tries to be as objective as possible referring to Sulaymān only by name (2000, 182), Laila Debs advances some positive judgment by speaking of the French army’s invasion (“a young Azharite Syrian scholar who assassinates the invading French army commander-in-chief in Egypt,” 1993, 215) as does Dina Amin (who describes him as the historical figure Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī, who assassinated the French military commander Kleber in order to free Egypt of the French occupation at the turn of the nineteenth century - 2008, 88); Atef Ahmed El-Sayyid provides a neutral description (“the Azharite Syrian scholar who murdered General Kleber”, 1995, 168); and Nehad Selaiha describes the facts without judgment (2004).

Besides, the meagre article on the French Wikipedia page about Sulaymān quotes Faraġ’s play as an historical reference:

Le dramaturge égyptien Alfred Faraġ a écrit, en 1965, à propos de l'assassinat du général Kléber par "Sulaymān al-Ḥalabi". Dans l'interprétation de Faraġ, on apprend que les

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<sup>34</sup> I have found traces of the series and of the film on YouTube at the following links: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SJkOZr4qQqE> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WkgntIvC8oQ&t=233s>. The series’s title was *Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī* and it was written by Maḥfūz ‘Abd al-Raḥman, while of the film I have few information such as that it was directed by Muḥammad al-Sa’īd Yūsuf and that it was shown recently (2013) in a national chain.

<sup>35</sup> Dāwūd Abū Šuqr, 2016. *Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī (al-mihraz wa al-‘ayn)* - Sulaymān from Aleppo (the awl and the eye) -, Dimašq: al-Hay’a al-Sūriyya al-‘amma li ‘l-kitāb.

<sup>36</sup> *Al-Ṭab‘a al-‘Ulā*, 06/07/2011, accessed on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mrp1IT3XmPA>

Also, the famous journalist Ibrahīm ‘Īsā has recently spoken of Sulaymān’s trial during the program *Amma ba‘du* on Egyption radio Nougoum FM (نجوم إف إم). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yEzfDpmqdU0&t=4s>

motivations de l'assassinat étaient basées sur la révolte populaire arabe contre l'occupation étrangère et de la tyrannie, plutôt que sur des raisons politiques ou de désir de gain financier.

Wikipedia, "Soleyman el-Halaby", 23 January 2017

The controversial image of Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī - the hero / the criminal - leads us to reflect on the different palimpsests coming together in the form of a narration.

In a similar case, Philippe Baudorre declares the difficulty of determining which story becomes "the story" impacting collective memory and how literature could influence it. The specificity of the literary text is that it stays permanently available for many readers and many generations of readers (Baudorre 2006, 36). Since the literary text is not "image recueillie, mais il est créateur d'images" (41), Faraḡ's fictionalization of History might have contributed to create a certain perspective that continues to develop in today's vision of this part of History.

\* \* \*

Ġabartī's narration of Kleber's murder rose Alfred Faraḡ's disdain since he could not accept that Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī, namely a possible symbol of the rebellion of the Arab people against the Western occupation, was treated as a criminal by a prominent Egyptian scholar. Moreover, Faraḡ could not accept that this image had been preserved until his days. Denying truthfulness to Ġabartī's account, Faraḡ decided not only to complete it, but to modify it. With such a critical perspective, Faraḡ claimed, through his play, to aspire to rebuild the events giving a possible (historical) explanation to a fake story that had been perpetrated through the French documents of the French trial and the further narrations that took them as truthful, starting from Ġabartī.

Many theatrical trends have dealt with History in several ways and for different purposes. Faraḡ's approach to History is close to Bākaṭīr's historical plays. Like him, Faraḡ used the past with the aim of better defining it besides dealing with it as a metaphor for the present. This applies to the three plays Faraḡ wrote from historical accounts (*Suqūṭ fir'awn*, *Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī*, *Dā'irat al-tibn al-Miṣriyya*). Significantly, Faraḡ also found that historical facts that had already been employed by Bākaṭīr, like the French Campaign and the Ancient Egyptian history of the rebel Pharaoh Akhenaton, were interesting to him too.

Declarations from the author signal his interest in Bertolt Brecht's epic theatre. Keeping this in mind while reading the play might be useful at least to establish whether the author's purposes

correspond to a real practice and how a different context of production can affect the idea of a different type of “epic play.”

In any case, to analyse Faraĝ’s original rewriting of the hero/murderer story, it is necessary to take account of the three levels of reality which shape our consciousness as we experience a historical play: first, the historical materials which the play derives from its sources (“correct” or not) and which it decides to reenact ; second, the theatrical conventions into which these materials are recast ; and third, the sense of historical continuity that the author gives to that segment of the past he has dramatized. Moreover, such a study cannot fail to consider the influence of our present situation on our interpretation of the work (Lindenberger 1975, 10).

If it is easy to remark on Ĝabartī’s partiality within his accounts, it is difficult to define how the perception of Sulaymān’s historical character had evolved in time when Faraĝ received it. An accurate analysis should take into account cultural products (literature, TV emissions, newspaper articles), history books, scholarly programs, monuments, etc., in a comparative approach that incorporates a collection of countries, Arab and non-Arab. As a matter of fact, Sulaymān’s skull on display as the head of a criminal in the Musée de l’Homme in Paris influenced Faraĝ’s reception of Sulaymān’s act. Likewise, interpretation of History in Faraĝ’s context evidently influenced him. On the other side, Faraĝ’s fictionalization of History might have influenced History’s perception of his readers. And it might continue to influence them/us.

## 2. Replotting - A wide overview. Featuring more than an incredible fact.

Having shown that the comparison between the hypertext and its hypotext is a widely adopted approach to the play, in this section 2, elements of the plot that Faraḡ innovated will be detected. Before carrying out such an analysis, it is important to know that the play is closed by the chorus, that - as will be seen (I.4) – is an omniscient and trustable narrator, who maintain that what has been shown is their story that they have told the public “word for word, letter for letter” THE CHORUS: الكورس: (...) وهذه هي قصتنا التي رويناها لكم الليلة، كلمة بكلمة وحرفا بحرف) [...] And this was our story, that we told you tonight, word by word, letter by letter. MSH: 157). Then, the plot of the play claims to conform to the truth.

### 2.1 Prior events. From the effect to the causes.

In his *History*, Ğabartī reports specifically “the amazing event” (Kleber’s murder) occurred on the 21<sup>st</sup> Muḡarram 1215 (14<sup>th</sup> June 1800) and Faraḡ quotes a part of Ğabartī’s account in the foreword to his play (see Appendix). Faced with this passage, Faraḡ doubts its reliability and attests that his play will provide elucidation about the fact, specifically, about Sulaymān (see I.1). Indeed, in the process of rewriting, on a macro-structural level, a significant difference is switching the attention from the murder itself and the trial, to before the murder, and more specifically Sulaymān’s life before it and examining what could have lead him to committing the murder. The time of the play is 2 May - 14 June 1800 (MSH: 19), instead of the few hours in Ğabartī’s account (from the murder, on the 14<sup>th</sup> June 1800, until the end of the trial). For the same reason, the play is set not only in Cairo, as is the case in Ğabartī’s report, but in Cairo and Aleppo and the road between the cities.

The change of time and space is operated to the detriment of the narration of the trial, which is the largest part of Ğabartī’s account. To have an idea of the proportion conferred to the trial, it is useful to remember that the first account of the murder occupies two pages (Ĝ: 149-151), followed then by thirty-six pages dedicated to reporting the proceedings of the trial (Ĝ: 151-186). Ğabartī includes them entirely as an appendix to his account. The report seems to have fascinated the historian, who writes:

وألخوا في شأن ذلك أوراؑا ذكروا فيها صورة الواقعة وكيفيتها وطبعوا منها نسخا كثيرة باللغات الثلاث الفرنسية والتركية والعربية وقد كنت أعرضت عن ذكرها لطولها وركاكة تركيبها لقصورهم في اللغة ثم رأيت كثيرا من الناس تتشوق نفسه إلى الاطلاع عليها لتضمينها خبر الواقعة وكيفية الحكومة ولما فيها من الاعتبار وضبط الأحكام من هؤلاء الطائفة الذين يحكمون العقل ولا يتدينون بدين وكيف وقد تجارى على

كبيرهم ويعسوبهم رجل آفاقي أهوج وغدره وقبضوا عليه وقرروه ولم يعجلوا بقتله وقتل من أخبر عنهم بمجرد الإقرار بعد أن عثروا عليه ووجدوا معه آلة القتل مضمخة بدم ساري عسكرهم وأميرهم بل رتبوا حكومة ومحاكمة وأحضروا القاتل وكرروا عليه السؤال والاستفهام مرة بالقول ومرة بالعقوبة ثم أحضروا من أخبر عنهم وسألوهم على انفرادهم ومجتمعين ثم نفذوا الحكومة فيهم بما اقتضاه التحكيم

Ĝ: 150-1

The French distributed leaflets on the case in which they discussed the event and its particulars. They printed many copied in three languages: French, Turkish, and Arabic. I was going to ignore the leaflets because of their length and poor style due to the Frenchmen's defective knowledge of Arabic, but then I observed that many people were eager to peruse the leaflets because they contained an account of the event and of the trial; which was indicative of the legal investigation and court procedure of the French who hold reason supreme, and do not profess any religion.

For, indeed, a reckless stranger treacherously attacked their leader and chief; they seized him, interrogated him; yet did not proceed to kill either him or those named by him, on the mere basis of his confession, despite the fact that when they caught him they found him the deadly weapon spattered with the blood of his commander and leader. Nay, they instituted a court procedure, summoned the assassin, and repeatedly questioned him orally, and under duress; then summed those named by the assassin, interrogated them individually and collectively, and only then, did they institute the court procedure in accordance with what the law prescribed.

T: 181-2

Even if Faraĝ quotes Ĝabartī's account, the documents of the trial must have been a source for Faraĝ's play as well as other sources. Ĝabartī does not report all of the details as the French did. He also does not comment on the context of the French documents, leading one to assume that he does not disagree with them. However, it is significant to note that he does not provide them by himself. Faraĝ's version, instead, disagrees with the French narrative (reported in Ĝabartī).

## 2.2 The exposition. Choosing a new introduction.

In both the reports of the trial and the play, a historical context is given before the account of the events surrounding the murder of General Kleber. In the first case, the exposition is provided by the commissioner-rapporteur Sartelon:

فتعلم بلاد الروم والدنيا بكمالها أن الوزير الأعظم سلطنة العثمانية ورؤساء جنود عسكرها رذلوا أنفسهم حتى أرسلوا قتال معدوم العرض إلى الجريء والأنجاب كليبر الذي لا استطاعوا بتقهيره وكذلك ضموا إلى عيوب

مغلو بيتهم المجرم الظالم بالذي ترأسوا قبل السماء والأرض تذكروا جملتكم تلك الدول العثمانية المحاربين من إسلامبول ومن أقاصى أرض الروم وأناضول واصلين منذ ثلاثة شهور بواسطة الوزير لتسخير وضبط بر مصر وطالبين تخليتها بموجب الشروط الذي بمتفقيتهم بذاتهم مانعوا إجراءها، والوزير أغرق بر مصر وبر الشام بمناداته مستدعي بها قتل عام فرنساوية وعلى الخصوص هو عطشان لانتقامه لقتل سر عسكرهم وفي لحظة الذين هم أهالي مصر محتفين بأغويات الوزير كانوا محرومين شققا ومكارم نصيرهم، وفي دقيقة الذين هم أسارى ومجروحين العثمانية هم مقبولين ومرعيين في دور ضيوفنا وضغفاننا تقيد الوزير بكل وجوه بتكميل سوء غفارته تلوه منذ زمان طويل واستهدم لذلك أغا مغضوبا منه ووعد له إعادته لطفه وحفظ رأسه الذي كان بالخطر إن كان يرتضى هذا الصنع الشنيع وهذا المغوى هو أحمد أغا المحبوس بغزة منذ ما ضبط العريش وذهب للقدس بعد انهزام الوزير في أوائل شهر جرميال الماضي والأغا المرقوم محبوس هناك بدار متسلم البلد وفي ذلك الملجأ، فهو مفكر بإجراء السوء الخبيث الذي يستثقل التقدير لا فهم ولا معه تدبير سيما هو عامل شيء لإجراء انتقام الوزير

Ğ: 176-7

Let Europe and the world at large learn that the grand vizier of the Ottoman Empire, its generals and army were so cowardly that they sent an assassin against brave and noble Kleber whom they were unable to defeat. To their shame of defeat they added the shame of a cruel crime the sullies them in the eyes of the world.

You will remember that three months ago the Ottomans, at the call of the vizier, swarmed against us, from Istanbul and the furthest parts of Anatolia, in order to capture Egypt. They attempted to force us to quit by virtue of a treaty whose execution was prevented by their own allies.

Hardly had remnants of this barbarous horde, defeated on the plains of Maṭarīya and Heliopolis, recrossed the desert in shame when rage and despair began to be heard throughout their ranks.

The vizier flooded Egypt and Syria with proclamations calling for the killing of the Frenchmen who have defeated him. He sought to wreak vengeance especially on their general.

At the moment when the people of Egypt, misled by his maneuvers, were experiencing the clemency and generosity of their victor; when prisoners were being received and treated in our hospitals, at that very moment the vizier put everything in motion to consummate the horrible outrage which he had long planned.

To carry it out he availed himself of an agha in disgrace. The crime which he proposed is coupled with the return of favor, and the saving of the already proscribed head.

Aḥmad Agha, imprisoned at Gaza since the conquest of al ‘Arīsh, goes to Jerusalem after the vizier’s defeat, in the first days of last Germinal. The house of the *mutasallim* serves as a prison, and in his refuge he deals with the cruel scheme which he barbarously plotted.



Inconceivable fatality seems to have prepared everything to carry out the vizier's vengeance.

T: 205-6

So, for Sartelon – namely, for the French narrative - the past events concerning the murder relate to the vengeance of the Ottoman vizier.

However, in the play, the chorus focuses the attention on the tragic aspects of the “clemency and generosity of their victor” (see Appendix, Act I, Scenes 1 and 2):

الكورس: في الرابع عشر من أبريل سنة ١٨٠٠ أئذر الجنرال كليبر مدينة مصر بالتسليم، ورفض الثوار الانذار. وفي اليوم التالي بدأ الهجوم. دوت طلقات المدافع على الجانبين طول النهار حتى تصدع متراس البحر وتدفق الفرنسيون تحت وابل من المطر والرصاص من ثغرة في ناحية أبي العلاء. ورموا الحطب في منافذ البيوت وأضرموا النار فاشتعلت واتسع الحريق واشتد وامتد في أنحاء بلاق. وتحت أجنحة النار استعر القتال من بيت إلى بيت، ومن شبر إلى شبر.

ومن بلاق الى باب اللوق إلى المدابع الناصرية والمحجر وقناطر السباع وسوق السلاح الى باب البرقية جرر الفرنسيون زيول الدمار، وفوق جثث القتلى وأنقاض البيوت وأسنة اللهب اقتحموا الخانات والوكائل والحواصل، ونهبوا الودائع والبضائع واستولوا على ما في البيوت من أمتعة وأموال، وما في المخازن من غلال وسكر وقطن وأرز..

أما خط الأزبكية وخط الساكت والرويعي وبركة الرطل وباب البحر والخروبي والعدوي الى باب الشعرية فقد أصبحت خرائب تقشعر لها الأبدان..

وزاد من بشاعة المشهد الدمى أن عسكر الفرنسيين، مدفوعين بفكرة النهب، وأخذوا ينبشون الجثث من تحت الأطلال والخرائب، ويجردونها من الحلبي والأشياء الثمينة.. ثم يطرحونها فوق الأنقاض صورة للهول والفظاعة.. ثم وقف إطلاق النار. وسكتت الرياح بعد العاصفة.

وفي الخامس العشرين من أبريل منح الجنرال كليبر الأمان الوافي الشافي لجميع المصريين. وأبلغ أعضاء الديوان المخصوص أنه قرر حقن الدماء وتأمين الأرواح وضممان السلام.. فخرج الناس من أطلال بيوتهم ينظرون ما يكون. وفي السابع العشرون من شهر أبريل دخل كليبر مدينة مصر في مواكب حاشد رهيب، وقد منحه ضباطه لقب "فاتح مصر".

وفي يوم ٢ مايو ١٨٠٠ نقض الجنرال كليبر اعلان الأمان وأصدر اعلانا بأن يدفع المصريون متضامنين ثمنا لدمائهم مبلغ اثني عشر مليون فرنك، وأن يدفع السيد محمد أبو الأنوار السادات وحده غرامة قدرها ثمانمائة ألف فرنك، وأن يصادر مال سائر زعماء الثورة الذين غادروا البلاد.. وانطلق المنادون في الشوارع..

MSH: 23-4

THE CHORUS: On 14th April 1800, General Kleber announced Cairo's capitulation and the rebels rejected the announcement. The following day, the offensive started. Cannon shots thundered on the two sides all the day long until the barricades of the Nile broke and under heavy rain and a hail of bullets the French made a way through a breach in the direction of Abū 'l-'Alā'. [The Frenchmen] threw firewood through the windows, setting houses ablaze. Fire broke out, it flared up, it spread, raised and broadened until the area of Bulāq. Under the wings of the fire, clash intensified, [spreading] from one house to house, from one spot to another.

From Bulāq to Bāb al-Lūq until al-Madābiḡ and al-Nāṣiriyya, al-Maḡḡar, Qanāṭir [the aqueduct] al-Sibā' and Sūq al-Silāḡ until Bāb al-Barqiyya, the Frenchmen caused widespread destruction. Amid corpses of the ones killed and the ruins of the houses and the flames, they broke into shops, caravansaries, and granaries, they robbed deposits and merchandise. They took possession of all the property and money in the houses, and all the grain, sugar, cotton and rice that were in the stores.

As for the quarters of al-Azbakiyya, al-Sākit, al-Rūwai'i, Birkat al-Raṭl, Bāb al-Baḡr, al-Ḥurūbī and al-'Adawī to Bāb al-Ša'riyya, they became frightful ruins.

The ugliness of the scene was intensified by the French soldiers who were motivated by the idea of the raid, so they rummaged among the corpses under the wrecks and the ruins and divested them of the jewels and the precious things, then they threw them on the rubble. A horribly atrocious image. Then the fire stopped. And the wind silenced after the tempest.

On 25<sup>th</sup> April, General Kleber granted the complete and curative safety for all the Egyptians. He informed the members of the Diwān (assembly) that he decided to prevent bloodshed, warrant life and ensure the peace. So, the people came out from the ruins of their houses looking over for what it would be. On the 27<sup>th</sup> of April Kleber entered Cairo in a majestic and solemn procession. His officers conferred him the nickname "Conqueror of Egypt".

On 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1800, General Kleber rescinded the proclamation of safety and issued a notice that Egyptians all together pay a price for their ransom amounting to twelve million francs, that Sayyid Muḡammad Abū al-Anwār al-Sādāt alone pay a fine of eight hundred thousand francs, and that and that wealth of all leaders of the revolution who fled the country would be confiscated. And town criers took to the streets.

The play maintains the same tone, this time through the words of the town-criers, who recite the penalties over the rebels of the second revolution:

(أزقة القاهرة.. ثلاثة منادون طوافون، كل منهم في حراسة جندي مدجج بالسلاح، وبرفقتة عازف طبل..  
الدكاكين نصف مغلقة والشبابيك نصف مغلقة، والناس تطل بحذر وجمود)  
المنادي الأول: .. السيد محمد أبو الأنوار السادات يدفع غرامة قدرها ثمانمائة ألف فرنك في مدة شهر واحد.  
السيد أحمد المحروقي شبندر التجار.. هارب.. يصادر ماله وعقاره وعقار أهله إلى الدرجة الثالثة مصادرة  
كاملة في الحال. السيد عمر أفندي مكرم النقيب.. هارب.. يصادر ماله..

المنادي الثاني: .. على جميع أهالي القاهرة من أصحاب الحرف والتجار وأهل الغورية وخان الخليلي والصاغة والنحاسين والدالين والقبانية والقضاة والحواة والمفلكين والقردانية والشعراء وبياعي التملك والدخان والشوائين والجزارين والمزينين.. أن يدفع متضامين غرامة قدرها عشرة ملايين وأربعمائة وعشرين ألف فرنك..

المنادي الثالث: .. على جميع ساكني الدور والدكاكين والعقارات أن يدفع كل منهم ما بوازي أجر داره ودكانه وآي عقار آخر يشغله لسنة كاملة.. وذلك حسب تقدير اللجان الفرنسية، وبلا امهال..

المنادي الأول: .. السيد محمد أبو الأنوار السادات يدفع غرامة قدرها ثمانمائة ألف فرنك في مدة شهر واحد...

MSH: 25-6

Alleys in Cairo. Three town criers roam. Each of them is under guard, a soldier heavily armed and is accompanied by drum player. Shops and windows are half closed. The people appear at the windows cautiously and rigidly.

TOWN CRIER 1: ... Sayyid Muḥammad Abū al-Anwār al-Sādāt pays a fine of eight hundred thousand francs within a month. Sayyid Aḥmad al-Maḥrūqī the chief merchant... fugitive... his goods, his property, and the property of his family until the third degree will be totally confiscated straightaway. Sayyid ‘Umar Efendi Makram the *naqīb* ... fugitive... his property will be confiscated...

TOWN CRIER 2: ... All the people of Cairo who are craftsmen, merchants, people from al-Ġawriyya, Ḥān al-Ḥalīlī, al-Ṣāġa, al-Naḥāsīn [coppersmiths], al-Dalālīn, al-Qabbāniyya [scale makers] and judges, illusionists, monkey-trainers, poets, tobacco venders, roasters, butchers, barbers... must pay all together a fine of ten million and four hundred and twenty thousand francs...

TOWN CRIER 3: ... All the ones who have houses, shops, estates must each pay the equivalent of one-year rent of his house or shops or any other estate they are occupying. [Determining the sum of money] is to be left to the discretion of the French commissions, without delay...

TOWN CRIER 1: ... Sayyid Muḥammad Abū al-Anwār al-Sādāt pays a fine of eight hundred thousand francs within a month...

The first crier starts again his speech, establishing a cyclicity of the act.

Most of the account of the chorus does not correspond to any of Ġabartī’s accounts since neither the *History*, not the *Mazhar al-taqdīs* relates the events occurred during the Hijri month Dū al-Qa‘da 1214 (March 27 – April 25, 1800). Indeed, in both texts, there is a temporal gap between Ṣawwāl 1214 (February 26 – March 26, 1800) and Dū al-Ḥiġġa 1214 (April 26 – May 24, 1800).

For the part that is accounted in the *History*, facts, numbers, dates and places mostly correspond.<sup>37</sup> Faraġ converted the dates from the Hijri calendar to the Gregorian, money from riyals to francs and places are referred to with their contemporary names. On the contrary, rhymes and enumerations building up a climax which terminates with Kleber's arrival, is an innovation from Faraġ.

Apart from the proximity of the date and the similarity of the fact, Faraġ uses expressions similar to Ġabartī's account in his play. After having reported the different admonishments the people of Būlāq rebelled against, Ġabartī continues with the account of tragic facts that happened during the rainy days, which closely reminds of the introduction by the chorus:

فغيمت السماء غيمًا كثيفًا وأرعدت رعدًا مزعجًا عنيفا وأمطرت مطرًا غزيرًا وسيلت سيلًا كثيرًا فسالت  
المياه في الجهات (...) وكان معظم كبستهم من ناحية باب الحديد وكوم أبي الريش وجهة بركة الرطلي  
وقنطرة الحاجب وجهة الحسينية والرميلة فكانوا يرمون المدافع والبنبات من قلعة جامع الظاهر وقلعة قنطرة  
الليمون واستولوا على الخانات والوكائل والحواصل والودائع والبضائع وملكوا الدوار وما بها من الأمتعة  
والأموال والنساء والخوندات والصبيان والبنات ومخازن الغلال والسكر والكتان والقطن والأبازير والأرز  
والأدهان والأصناف العطرية

Ġ: 124-5

The sky was covered with thick clouds and shook with alarming and violent thunder. Heavy rains came down and caused torrential floods. The water streamed into the city [...]. The major thrust of their attack came from Bāb al-Ḥadīd and Abū 'l-Rīš Hill, al-Raṭlī Pond, al-Ḥāġib Bridge, al-Ḥusaynīya, and al-Rumayla. They fired their guns and shells from the fort at al-Zāhir (Baybars) Mosque and the fort at al-Limūn Bridge. They took possession of the shops, caravansaries, and granaries; of the deposits and merchandise; they seized the houses and all the property and money in them; likewise the women, servants, boys, girls, stores of grain, sugar, linen, cotton, spices, rice, oil and aromatic articles

T: 156-7

The description of the heavy rains, the enumeration of places and certain expressions, are similar (e.g.: the succession of the words "الوكائل والحواصل والودائع" is the same of Faraġ's text). After an accurate reading of the hypotext, Faraġ selects and re-positions the information.

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<sup>37</sup> There is a day of difference in the account of the military parade in honour of Kleber (26<sup>th</sup> April instead of 27) and in the day of the discourse of Kleber (3 May instead of the 2<sup>nd</sup>).

Certainly, both Faraġ and Sartelon give background information since both account for prior events, but they diverge in themes and judgment. Also, the charge of the negative commentary is new. Faraġ's decision to look for wider sources than the precise account of the murder is meaningful and representative of his desire to include another background, which he must have considered more appropriate.

The reconstruction of the events, together with the poetical aspect, underlines Kleber's part within the tragic events touching Egyptian people. Therefore, the background shifts from the Turkish revenge to the French governance itself.

### **2.3. Events regarding Sulaymān. A new past for the protagonist.**

In his account, Ġabartī provides short indirect news about Sulaymān's act, while "the report of the commissioner-rapporteur Sartelon submitted to the commission charged with judging the assassin of commanding in chief Kleber and his accomplices" reconstructs the facts through the different depositions and the background just exposed.

First, three short scenes are devoted to Sulaymān's actions before going to Cairo. In Scene 4 of Act I, Sulaymān enacts the part of Saladin against Richard the Lionheart, then speaks with his friend Maḥmūd: Sulaymān believes himself to be a new Saladin-figure fighting the invader. After that, Sulaymān is shown again in an intimate situation, this time he expresses to his mother his wish to continue his studies at al-Azhar to become a judge (*qādī*) under the supervision of sheikh Sādāt, a figure the public come to know as a person in trouble. However, Sulaymān is not aware of the situation (MSH: 35-6). Shortly after, and just before his departure, the boy speaks with his friend again about a dream where he was a judge of an important matter: he was condemning Kleber to cry.

The three scenes are powerful because of several reasons. The impersonation of Saladin by Sulaymān, within the production of the play, is impregnated with symbolism (see I.4). Besides, Sulaymān's familiar dimension is placed between two scenes from Kleber's party occurring in another part of the stage (MSH: 32-35). In this way, the double stage allows for a direct comparison between the two different situations which the characters experience.

The introduction of Sulaymān's conversations with his beloved has dual significance: from one side, it provides an intimate aspect of the character's life which - as the study of the characters will show (I.3) - is completely absent in the hypotext. It also presents a broader incentive for

Sulaymān's trip to Cairo that is other than killing Kleber. Indeed, the cause of Sulaymān's trip in the play is his aim to complete his studies in law.

A comparison between the hypotext and the hypertext reveals that such clearly delineated reasons for the trip in the play differ completely from the French report's reasons for the preparation and motivation for the trip to Cairo:

وسليمان الحلبي شب مجنون وعمره أربعة وعشرون سنة، وقد كان بلا ريب متدنس بالخطايا ظهر عند ذا الأغا يوم وصوله القدس ويترجى له سليمان يوم غدره، فقد كان استفتش الأغا عن احتيال أصل وفصل ذا الشب المجنون وعلم أنه مشغل بجامع بين قراء القرآن وانه هو الآن بالقدس للزيارة وأنه حج سابقا بالحرمين وأنه العته النسكي هو منصوب في أعلى رأسه المضطرب من زيغاته وجهالاته بكمالة إسلامه وباعتماده أن المسمى منه جهاد وتهليك الغير المؤمنين فما أنهى وأيقن أن هذا هو الإيمان، ومن ذلك الآن ما بقى تردد أحمد أغا في بيان ما نوى منه فوعد له حمايته وإنعامه وفي الحال أرسله إى ياسين أغا ضابط مقدار من جيوش الوزير بغزة وبعثه بعد أيام لمعا متله وأقبضه الدراهم اللازمة له وسليمان قد امتلأ من خباته وسلك بالطرق فمكت واحدا وعشرين يوما في بلد الخليل بحيرون منتظر فيه قبيلة لذهاب البادية وكل مستعجل ووصل غزة في أوائل شهر فلوريال الماضي

Ĝ: 177

Sulaymān al-Halabī, a mad young man of 24, no doubt already sullied by crime, visits the agha the day he arrives in Jerusalem, and seeks the agha's protection to shield his father, merchant in Aleppo, from the periodic exactions of Ibrāhīm, pasha of that town.

He goes there again the next day. Information has been gathered on the character of this young fanatic. It is known that he is preparing to be accepted as a Koran reader at a mosque; that he is in Jerusalem on a pilgrimage, that he has already performed two other pilgrimages – to Mecca and Medina, and that religious delirium reaches his height in his disturbed head of false ideas about perception of Islam, whose most precious and fullest guarantee is what he calls the Holy War and the death of the infidels.

Aḥmad Aḡa no longer hesitates. He talks to Sulaymān of the mission with which he wants to entrust him. He promises his protection and reward, and refers Sulaymān to Yāsīn Aḡa, in command in Gaza of a unit in the vizier's army, and sends Sulaymān to him a few days later to receive instructions and the necessary funds.

Sulaymān, already excited about his crime, departs immediately. He stops for twenty days at the town of Hebron in the vicinity. He waits for others to cross the desert. Impatient, he arrives in Gaza, in the early days of last Floreal.

T: 206-7

On one side, in the hypotext, the reason for Sulaymān's trip to Cairo is his "religious delirium," which makes him think of the death of the infidels. The "religious delirium" is combined with

the need for help of the father which Sulaymān asks Aḥmad Aḡa and results in accepting the mission to go to Cairo to kill General Kleber. On the contrary, the hypertext provides personal, intimate reasons for Sulaymān's need to seek justice. These reasons are supported by his religious studies to become a judge. Evidently, Farāḡ creates a counternarrative to the French documents.

The travel to Egypt is another counternarrative. In Scene 6 of Act I, Sulaymān is interrogated by the French soldiers who send him back as he was carrying a knife at a time when weapons were not allowed in Egypt (MSH: 41-3). Together with Sa'd, another student from al-Azhar who helps him, he takes the desert route to get to Cairo (43-4). During the trip, he decides to protect a girl who is in an inconvenient situation (46-52). In this case as well, a scene interposes between Sulaymān's actions providing a comparison by opposition which places stronger importance on the facts, e.g.: the army planning to take advantage of their stronger status to rob the Egyptian people (MSH: 44-5).

The four scenes offer another piece of information to the new reconstruction of the previous events. Candid, generous and stubborn since he does not listen to Sa'd's advice, Sulaymān risks his life in order to satisfy his own desire for justice, while French soldiers act to increase their own power. Nothing could be more distant from the mercenary motivation explained in the French report which continues as follows:

وياسين أغا مسكنه بالجامع لاستحكام غيرته والمجننون يواجهه مراراً وتكراراً بالنيهار والليل مده عشرة أيام  
مكثه بغزة يعلمه وبعد ما أعطاه أربعين قرشا أسديا ركبته بعقبيبة الهجين الذي وصل مصر بعد ستة أيام وممتن  
بخنجر دخل بأواسط شهر فلوريال برريال إلى مصر التي قد سكنها سابقا ثلاث سنين وسكن بموجب تربيته  
بالجامع الكبير ويتحضر فيه للسنة التي هو مبعوث لها.

Ĝ: 177

Yāsīn Agha lodges him at the mosque to maintain his fanaticism. The deranged sees him frequently in secret, in daytime and at night. Over the 10 days that he spends in that town Yāsīn Agha gives him instructions and 40 *qirsh*, and finally makes him depart on a dromedary with the caravan that takes him to Egypt in six days. Armed with a dagger, Sulaymān arrives toward mid-Floreal in Cairo where he had already spent three years. Following instructions, he lodges at the mosque, and prepares for his criminal mission, by invoking the Supreme Being and by written prayers which he places on the walls of the mosque.

T: 207

Equally, in the play, Sulaymān's behavior in Cairo differs from what the historical source accounts since Ġabartī does not provide details about the thirty-one days Sulaymān spent in Cairo before the murder. In Act II, Sulaymān first joins his friends Aḥmad, 'Abdallāh and Muḥammad, his colleagues in al-Azhar. Then, he speaks with Muḥammad about the humiliated condition of Cairo. In another scene, he joins his friends again to explain why he went to the army palace in Azbakiyya (which is where Kleber lives) (MSḤ: 69-71).

Sulaymān follows his sense of justice when he meets Ḥiddāya in a café and accuses him. Despite his friend Muḥammad's advice, the boy risks his life, and then he takes the girl. He opposes his friend's objections (MSḤ: 77-9) and then again takes care of the girl who tries to leave sheikh Šarqāwī house (80-4). Sulaymān worries about her future (83-4) and speaks about her with the chorus (84-6). He also speaks with sheikh 'Abd al-Qādir about Ḥiddāya (90-92). Finally, Sulaymān plays with masks, a gesture that carries a symbolic meaning as it shows Sulaymān's ability to understand others' minds (100-6 and I. 3). Hence, in the play, all the actions Sulaymān undertakes while in Cairo as well as before the murder, are to satisfy his personal attempt to seek justice despite the opposition from his friends.

A different story emerges from the French report which continues to affirm the support Sulaymān's colleagues give him:

علاه وتانس مع الأربعة مشايخ الذين قرأ القرآن مثله وهم مثله مولودين ببر الشام وسليمان أخبرهم بسبب مراسلته وكان كل ساعة معهم متأمريين به لكن ممنوعين بصعوبة ومخاطر الوحدة محمد الغزي والسيد أحمد الوالي وعبد الله الغزي وعبد القادر الغزي هم معتمدين سليمان بارتهان ما نواه ولا عاملوا شيء لممانعته أو لبيانه وعن مداومة سكونهم به صاروا مسامحين ومشاركين في قبحة القاتل هو منتظر واحد وثلاثين يوم معدودة بمصر فعقبة جزم توجهه الى الجيزة وبذلك اليوم أعقد سره الى الشركاء المذكورين أعلاه

Ġ: 177

He is received there [in Cairo] by four Coran readers, like himself natives of Syria. He tells them of his mission, he spends all his time with them and they conspire with him, only the difficulty of the undertaking and the danger of it deter him.

Muḥammad al-Ġazzī, Sayyid Aḥmad al-Wālī, 'Abd Allāh al-Ġazzī, and 'Abd al-Qādir al-Ġazzī were taken into his confidence, yet they did nothing to prevent Sulaymān from



consummating the project, and thus became accomplices in their constant and perceived silence.

For 31 days the assassin waits in Cairo for his victim. Finally, he decides to leave for Giza, and on the day of his departure he confides in Muḥammad al-Ġazzī, one of the detainees, the purpose of his trip.

T: 207

## 2.4 Around the fact. Determining actions.

### 2.4.1 Al-Azhar's caution.

In general, in the play, al-Azhar appears to be alert. At the incipit of the play, the scene of the town-criers reveals *in primis* the hard conditions required to release sheikh Sādāt, that are also repeated (MSH: 25-6, see above). Right after, students from al-Azhar (which will appear as Sulaymān's friends) comment on the difficult situation they are facing. Deprived of all weapons, the students can use words instead. Sheikh Miṣbāḥ instructs the students who ask him about what they can do:

علي: أعود للكتب؟ ونحلم في الخفاء، وننتظر؟ إلى متى؟  
مصباح: لا محل للنزق والطيش. هذا أمر! ستكون أسلحتنا من الآن بث وروح في الناس وإنقاذ المنكوبين،  
وتحطيم روح الفرنسيين بالمنشورات، وحماية مولانا السادات بقدر ما نطبق، والصبر حتى نجمع أطراف  
المجاهدين من جديد ونلتقى بزعمائنا..  
محمد: نعم.. لا بد أن يريح الناس رؤوسهم فوق الوسائد بعض الوقت، ويلتقطوا الأنفاس.. وبعد ذلك..  
علي: ويل للفرنسيين منا..  
محمد: ويل لنا منهم..  
مصباح: أصبتما.. ويل للغالب والمغلوب في المعركة.

MSH: 27-8

'ALĪ: Do we go back to the books? Dreaming hidden and waiting? Until when?

MİŞBĀḤ: There is no place for hurrying up. This is an order. From now, our weapons will be diffusion and encouragement amongst the people, rescue the victims and destroy the spirit of the French through leaflets, protection of our lord Sādāt so far as we can bear, and the patience until we reunite all the fighters again and meet our leaders...

MUḤAMMAD Yes, we need the people to rest their heads on the pillows for a while, and gather energies... after that...

'ALĪ: Poor French!

MUḤAMMAD: Poor us...

MİŞBĀḤ: You are both right. In the battle poor is the winner and poor is the defeated.

The imprisonment of sheikh Sādāt is described also in the play in the form of a short scene, in a sort of exposition, after the chorus and the messengers' speech:

(واجهة بيت السادات في قاع المسرح. والحصار مضروب حول البيت. يدخل طابور فرنسي يصطف أمام البيت يمينا ويسارا على رأسه ضابط يطرق الباب. الناس تتجمع.)  
الضابط: (مناديا من ورقة) السيد محمد أبو الأنوار السادات.  
(لحظة. يفتح الباب ويبرز السادات)  
السادات: أنا السادات. ما الخبر؟  
الضابط: أرجو أن ترافقني يا سيد.  
السادات: (يلتفت حواله بصوت عميق) لا بأس. أغلق الباب يا ولد.  
(يتقدم السادات صامتا ويستدير الطابور ليحفه من الجانبين والضابط وراءه بخطوة ويتجه نحو أسفل المسرح، والناس وراء الطابورين يمدون الأيدي لاغطين والنساء تبكي)  
أصوات: إلى أين؟ الله معك يا مولانا! تلفت لنا يا كريم. قل كلمة لأبنائك ومريدك..  
السادات: في النصر نعف، وفي الهزيمة نصمد.

MSH: 40-1

The front of Sādāt's house in the bottom of the stage. All around the house is under siege. A French battalion enters and lines up in front of the house to its right and to its left. The leading officer knocks at the door. People assemble.

OFFICER, *reading from a paper*: Sayyid Muḥammad Abū al-Anwār al-Sādāt.

After a moment, the door opens and Sādāt stands out.

SĀDĀT: I am Sādāt. What is happening?

OFFICER: Please, you should follow me, sir.

SĀDĀT, *turns around with a deep voice*: No problem. Close the door, my son.

Sādāt advances silently and the battalion encircles him from both sides and the officer who is one step behind him proceeds to the lowest part of the stage. The people behind the battalion extend their arms, clamoring, while the women cry.

VOICES: Where? May God protect you, our lord! Turn to us, your kindness. Say a word to your sons and disciples.

SĀDĀT: We are magnanimous in victory, persevering in defeat.<sup>38</sup>

The brevity of the scene remarks the coldness of the exchange. Besides, it closes with the sheikh's words to the people (the voices) charged with a political contemporary message (see

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<sup>38</sup> The translation of the last reply has been suggested by Rasheed El-Enany in a private mail dated on the 9<sup>th</sup> February 2017. For a discussion on this statement, see here 4.1.

I.4). The imprisonment of the sheikh is evoked again later, when Sulaymān asks the sheikh's wife about the sufferance of her husband.

سليمان: سيدتي.. هل تألم مولانا كثيرا؟ (... ) هل توجع؟  
زوجة السادات: ضربوه بالعصى أمامي. ولما رأى الدموع في عيني نظر الى نضرة غضب حتى ابتلعها..  
لك أن تقدر ما حدث كيف شئت..

MSH: 110

SULAYMĀN: My lady, did our lord suffer a lot? [...] Did he feel pain?

SĀDĀT'S WIFE: They struck him with the stick before my eyes. And when he saw my tears, he watched in anger until I swallowed them. You can guess what happened as you wish...

The detail of the son beaten in front of the mother as reported in Ğabartī's account (Ĝ: 135) must have reached Faraġ's attention if he used it in his play. Indeed, the escape of Sayyid Aḥmad Maḥrūqī - the chief of the merchants – and of Sayyid 'Umar al-Makram - *naqīb al-ašraf* - and the account of Sādāt's conditions to be released are a few pages distant (160-1 and 167). As Ğabartī reports, during the night, French soldiers took the sheikh from his house to the citadel, then beat him several times and moved from the citadel to the commander's residence, then again went to the citadel for two nights. They allowed him to go back to his house to collect some of his possessions to provide the caution (Ĝ:133-4). Once he could not provide the amount demanded, the soldiers took him again:

ثم نقلوه إلى بيت قائم مقام ماشيا، وصاروا يضربونه خمسة عشرة عصا في الصباح، ومثلها في الليل، طلبوا زوجته وابنه فلم يجدهما، فأحضروا محمدا السنديوي تابعه وقرروه حتى عاين الموت حتى عرفهم بمكانهما، فأحضروهما وأودعوا ابنه عند أغات الإنكشارية، وحبس زوجته معه، فكانوا يضربونه بحضرتها وهي تبكي وتصيح، وذلك زيادة في الإنكاء، ثم (... ) فنقلوها إلى بيت الفيومي

Ĝ: 135

Then they [the soldiers] transferred him, on foot, to the residence of the commandant and started beating him 15 strokes in the morning and the same at night. They searched for his wife and son but did not find them. So they fetched his disciple Muḥammad al-Sandūbī, and tortured him until he saw eye-to-eye with death. He informed them about their whereabouts. They fetched both, entrusting the son of the agha of the Janissaries and imprisoning the sheikh's wife with him. They beat him in her presence while she cried

and screamed – this to increase the outrage. Then (...) they transferred her to the house of (the sheikh) al-Fayyūmī.

T: 168

So, in his account, Ğabartī too condemns the French behavior regarding the old sheikh Sādāt, particularly his imprisonment. Indeed, this episode has been narrated with consternation despite the author’s disdain for the sheikh (Raymond 1998, 212).

Al-Azhar’s caution is motivated by further reasons. Even students are in danger. At the beginning of Act II, Sa’d and ‘Alī get around in Cairo and commenting on the actions of the French; ‘Alī steals some food from a coffeeshop and French soldiers catch him, while Sa’d manages to escape. As a proof of the French cruelty, ‘Alī is killed in prison while being tortured. The fact is not shown, but the audience understands it from discussions between ‘Alī and the other prisoners (MSH: 59-60) and because the news of his killing is reported to Kleber (MSH: 62-3). As mentioned above, the students in the play decided to wait, so they tried to block Sulaymān’s plan thinking that it can only bring trouble in that moment (MSH: 64-6). Faraĝ underlines the reasons why al-Azhar could not have been unaware of Sulaymān’s intentions, but instead could have preferred to remain silent the truth. So, the fact that sheikh Šarqāwī was suspicious of Sulaymān’s intention is shown in the play when Sulaymān asks for his help to save the girl and the sheikh asks him questions which Sulaymān cannot answer (81-3).

Also, according to the play, other than the four students which Sulaymān named during the trial - Muḥammad, Aḥmad, ‘Abd Allāh and ‘Abd al-Qādir - were totally aware of Sulaymān’s intent. Indeed, Mišbāḥ, who is the most influential amongst the students (see MSH: 26-8) also knew of Sulaymān’s plan. This confirms Faraĝ’s theory that Sulaymān accused only small “small fish” to protect al-Azhar’s important persons (13). Contributing to al-Azhar’s circumspection, are different tendencies amongst the sheikhs who might have developed discussions about the issue (13). So, in the play, sheikh Sādāt and his wife are supportive to the cause (141), while Šarqāwī is reticent and unsupportive of Sulaymān (81-3). In contrast, the French power appears even stronger because it is shown in comparison with al-Azhar, represented by its students and the sheikhs.

#### **2.4.2 French in power.**

In contrast to al-Azhar, which is shown as an intricate, powerful, organized institution that must wait for a good moment to act, the French display absolute freedom of action. In two contexts this is exhibited: balls and military scenes. The two balls (MSH: 28- 40 and 112-14) would

make one imagine that parties of such a nature were frequent, while the chorus declared that the population was under a state of terror (33-4). Women's chats are frivolous and indicate that they believe they own Egypt (MSH: 29). In the meantime, since his arrival to Cairo, Kleber reveals his plan to use coercion against Egyptians and finds that most people approve:

**كليبير:** ضباطي العظام، صديقي المهندس جبلان.. من حقي أن أزهوا بلقب "فاتح مصر" الذي منحه لي رجالي. ولكني أطمح لما هو أبعد من ذلك. أريد أن أكون رجل ما بعد المعركة. أي حاكم المستعمرة القوي.  
**دوجا:** انهم يحسبون حسابا لقوتنا الآن.

**كليبير:** وخطتنا أن نوهمهم دائما أننا أقوى مما يتخيلون.

**جابلان:** أتعنى يا صديقي الجنرال أنك تقصد ارهايهم؟

**كليبير:** وأن تكون أداة الحكم ببساطة هي: القسوة.

**دوجا:** سيكون رجالي، في الخدمة الجباه ومحصلي الغرامات، فرسان خطكم يا جنرال.

MSH: 30

**KLEBER:** My great officers, my friend the architect Ġābilān, it is my right to be proud of the nickname "Conqueror of Egypt" that my men assigned to me. However, I yearn for more. I want to be the man who comes after the battle. The strong ruler of the colony.

**DUGUA:** They must deal with our strength now.

**KLEBER:** Our plan is that we always delude them that we are stronger than what they imagine.

**ĠĀBILĀN:** Does it mean, my friend the general, that you intend to terrorise them?

**KLEBER:** And that the tool of the government be simple: ferocity.

Kleber, who is always shown inside his residence, continues to plan coercive measures to control the population (MSH: 59-61 and 127-131). In the meanwhile, his soldiers abuse their power because of their physical superiority since they possess all of the weapons (41-5, 58-9) and benefit from advanced technology (43-4). Also, they maintain full power over prisoners (MSH: 59-60) and the people in general, which is well represented by the prostitution of the girl (86-90 and 93). The French exercise full power over justice at a point that they hire a criminal as one of their men (115-18).

Ġabartī frequently provides accounts of the French measures against the population. In his account of "the strange event," he does not express a judgement on the French plans against the population of Cairo after Kleber's murder (Ġ: 149, see Appendix). After his temporary anxiety about the people of Cairo is over, his account goes on without any other judgments on this issue. Instead, he expresses appreciation for the murderer's trial. Ġabartī has more admiration than

criticism towards the French measures. As for the French account, it omits information about themselves, apart from referring to their clemency and generosity and the fact they were receiving and treating prisoners in their hospitals (Ĝ: 206).

#### 2.4.3 A particular case. The brigand Ḥiddāya and his daughter.

Episodes relating to the brigand Ḥiddāya have traces in Ĝabartī's account of Bedouins' incursions over people during month Dū al-Ḥiġġa 1214:

ومنها وقوف العرب وقطاع الطريق بجميع الجهات القبليّة والبحريّة والشرقيّة والغربيّة والمنوفية والقليوبية والدقهلية وسائر النواحي فمنعوا السبيل ولو بالخفارة وقطعوا طريق السفار ونهبوا المارين من أبناء السبيل والتجار وتسلطوا على القرى والفلاحين وأهالي البلاد والحرف بالعري والخطف للمتاع والمواشي من البقر والغنم والجمال والحمير وإفساد المزارع ورعيها حتى كان أهل البلاد لا يمكنهم الخروج ببهائمهم الى خارج القرية للرعي أو للسقي لترصد العرب لذلك

Ĝ:140

Another event was that beduins and highwaymen took up positions and cut off the roads in all regions: Upper and Lower Egypt, Ġarbīya and Šarqīya, Manūfīya, Qalyūbīya, Daqhalīya and all the rest. They blocked the way even if it was protected, cut off the road of the traveler, and robbed passing travelers and merchant. They held sway over villages, peasants, townspeople, and artisans, seizing and confiscating goods and livestock such as cattle, sheep, camels, and donkeys, and ravaging cultivated and pasture lands. As a result, villagers could not bring their animals outside the village to graze them or water them, for the beduins would lay in wait.

T: 172

During the trial, Sulaymān refers to the highwaymen declaring that he passed through Hebron because he feared the Bedouins of which the road was full of:

سئل كم يوم قعد في الخليل فجاوب عشرين يومًا.  
سئل لأي سبب قعد عشرين يومًا في الخليل وهل في هذه المدة ما وصله مكاتيب من الاثنين الأغوات فجاوب  
أن السكة كانت ملأنة عرب وأنه خائف منهم فالتزم يستنظر سفر القافلة التي سافر برفقتها.

Ĝ: 167

Q: How long did you stay at Hebron?

A: Twenty days.

Q: Why did you stay twenty days in that village? Did you not receive any letter from the two aghas?

A: I was in fear of the beduins, of whom the road was full. I was waiting for a caravan to make the trip.

T: 197

The play, instead, presents a highwayman as a human case: Ḥiddāya (see I.3). The character does not evolve but is highly symbolic.

In Act I Ḥiddāya's action as a brigand is directly exposed as well as his action as a tax collector in Act III (MSH: 119). Since the two works are similar, the change of profession does not demand an evolution from the character. The colonel, who has just hired him, explains the following to the lieutenant who is astonished by his superior's decision:

الملازم: هذا اللص يا سيدي الكولونيل؟! جابيا؟  
الكولونيل: لا تتجني عليه.. فهو من طيبة قلبه لم يسرق فرنسيا واحدا.

MSH: 118

LIEUTENANT: This thief, sir the colonel?! A tax collector?

COLONEL: Don't think I am crazy. For the kindness of his heart, he never stole a single Frenchman.

His passage from being a thief to a collector of taxes for the French system establishes a direct comparison between the two jobs, assimilating the French practices to the robbery (I.3). In the play, the introduction of direct scenes of the brigand's life and thoughts, and, particularly of his daughter, instead of an indirect summary account, provides a familiar side to the story. It makes the public aware that delinquency can be seen as an effect of the French domination.

Al-Azhar is characterized by a sense of caution which makes it appear as static. This feature that does not emerge from the hypotext. At the same time, innovations from the hypotext serve in affirming its involvement in Kleber's assassination, which is excluded by the hypotext. On the other side, the French are repeatedly shown that they are free to act which is also a condition the hypotext would deny. Indeed, according to Faraḡ, the French decision to accept Sulaymān's declaration that he was charged by the agha, would allow the French to deny their absolute power and keep the Ottomans as an efficacious enemy.

Not only Faraḡ defines specific actions for different realities, but he determines them. He does so in the sense that he molds specific actions for different realities to which Sulaymān's story, as it has been accounted, does not adhere to. Sometimes the play's story remarkably diverges from the hypotext, other times, it expands on details from the hypotext.

## 2.5 A surprising end. Narrating beyond History.

In his account, Ġabartī reports the two words Kleber is supposed to have said to the Alepin when he approached him: ما فيش (in Egyptian Arabic meaning “there is nothing”), which is a common expression to chase away panhandlers when they beg. No space for talking is left in Ġabartī’s account, even if the stretching of the hands proves that the two men must have looked close the one to the other before Sulaymān struck the general. Maybe Faraġ noticed this detail. Certainly, in this excerpt of the event within his narration, he inserted a new detail: Kleber and Sulaymān exchanged other words.

In one of the last scenes, a reporter informs a sheikh that Sulaymān has been found close to the body and that a trial will be held to condemn him. In a hospital, Ġābilān (جابلان - for many verses, an equivalent of architect Protain) talks to General Menou (Kleber’s successor). A strange fact has occurred before the murder. Kleber had pat the assassin’s back and expressed words of admiration to him. Menou decides that this fact must be kept secret: Ġābilān, who witnessed the talk, is forced to remain silent.

In the hypotext, during the first day of the trial, Protain/Ġābilān is at the hospital. The report accounts of his conditions:

شرح جروحات الستوين بروتاين المهندس نهار تاريخه خمسة وعشرين من شهر برريال السنة الثامنة من انتشار الجمهور الفرنساوي في الساعة الثالثة بعد الظهر نحن الواضعون أسماءنا وخطنا فيه باش حكيم وجرايحي من أول مرتبة الذي صار مرتبة باش جرايحي في غيبته انطلبنا من الدفتردار سارتلون أننا نعمل بيان شرح جروحات الستوين بروتاين المهندس وعضو من أعضاء مدرسة العلماء في بر مصر الذي انغدر هو أيضًا في جنب ساري عسكر العام كلهير مدبر الجيوش ومضروب ستة أمرار بسلاح مدبب وله حد وهذا بيان الجروحات الأول في جنب الصدغ(...)

Ġ: 152

Report of the citizen Protain’s wounds

On the 25<sup>th</sup> of Prairial, year VIII of the Republic, at 3 p.m., we, the undersigned, chef physician, and surgeon of the first acting par interim as chief surgeon, were requested by military director Sartelon to report on the examination of the wounds suffered by the citizen Protain, architect, and member of the Institut d’Egypte, who was also assaulted while walking beside the commander in chief Kleber whom he sought for help. We found citizen Protain in a room of the general staff, with six wounds inflicted by a sharp cutting weapon; namely: [...]

T: 183



There is a detailed description of Protain's wounds, but no words from him. Only the day after, on the 26<sup>th</sup> of Prairial, Protain appears before the court where he reads his deposition:

أنا حنا قسطنطين بروتاين المهندس وعضو أعضاء مدرسة العلم في بر مصر أنني كنت أتمشور تحت الكعبية الكبيرة التي في جنينة ساري عسكر وتطل على بركة الأزبكية وكنت برفقة ساري عسكر العام فنظرت رجلاً لابساً عثملي خارج من مبتدأ التكعبية من جنب الساقية فأنا كنت بعيد كام خطوة عن ساري عسكر أنادي على الغفراء فانتهت لأجل أشوف السيرة رأيت أن الرجل المذكور يضرب ساري عسكر بالسكينة ذاتها كام مرة فارتميت على الأرض وفي الوقت سمعت ساري عسكر يصرخ ثانيًا فهميت ورحت قريبًا من ساري عسكر فرأيت الرجل يضربه فهو ضربني ثانيًا كام سكينة التي رمتني وغيببت صوابي وما عدت نظرت شيئاً غير أنني أعرف طيب أننا قعدنا مقدار ستة دقائق قبل ما أحد يسعفنا

Ĝ: 163-4

I, Jean Constantin Protain, Architect, member of the Commission on Arts of the Institut (d'Egypte), state that I was walking with the commander in chief in the large gallery of the garden of the headquarters that faces the (Azbakīya) square, when I saw a man in Ottoman garb emerge from the gallery, where there was a waterwheel well, just a few steps from the general. I then heard the general call the guard. Turning to ascertain the cause, I saw the man in question strike the general, and wanted to defend him but I was strike several times with the same dagger, fell to the ground, and rolled over. Hearing the general shout again I moved toward him, and saw the man strike the general and I, myself, received several new blows. I finally lost consciousness. I can give no further details. I know only that despite repeated shouts, more than six minutes passed before help arrived.

T: 193-4

A deposition, instead of a declaration, allows such reflection and even a detraction from a first immediate report of the facts. On the other hand, even within the wider context proposed by the play, such an action by Kleber does not make any sense. Why should Kleber have known Sulaymān and why would he interpret Sulaymān's stabbing as an answer? An answer to what?

\* \* \*

A strange fact in the end, accompanied by the statement from the chorus that assures the reliability of the story. It also closes the play with an aura of mystery leaving a big question on the entire narrative Historiography has perpetrated.

As the author stated in the foreword, the aim of the play was to question the story that has been written as well as to present a truthful narration through providing personal reasons which might

have influenced Sulaymān's actions with the murder. According to the author, both political reasons and the declaration obtained under torture, must have resulted in a counterfeit story.

The first step taken by the playwright is a shift from the focus which the hypotext placed on Sulaymān's trial and subsequent punishment, to the reasons which might have pushed him to act. So, the time of the play covers a span of forty days (plus the exposition of past facts) and the space of the play covers Aleppo, Cairo and the route between the two cities.

Particularly, the accounts of the chorus and of the town-criers expose the play with a context of coercion for Egyptians. The hypotext, instead, focused on French benevolence for the rebellious Egyptians and harsh measures against people are underlined elsewhere than the account of Ğabartī's murder in the hypotext.

On the other hand, prior events with regards to Sulaymān establish a new past for the protagonist, one which denies his connection to the Ottomans and affirms his own ambition and constant presence amongst the members of al-Azhar. In this case, corresponding information provided by the play denies the little information given by the hypotext.

The French are free to act and overact, contrary to the students and sheikhs of al-Azhar whose action is constantly repressed. This remarked opposition is an innovation from the play and serves to demonstrate the need for protection for al-Azhar (and to justify Sulaymān's false declaration during the trial). Also, absolute power of the French validates their need to prove the possibility of the Ottoman's involvement through Sulaymān's false declaration that he was supported by the agha. Likewise, the case of Ḥiddāya and his daughter shows the negative effects of the French on the population which resulted in corruption.

Kleber speaking to Sulaymān is a symbolic scene whose meaning has to be found beyond History (see I.1.5). For the rest, Faraġ's play is a counternarrative of the hypotext whose wide overview provides a reflection of reality. The play, then, is a "broken mirror," where elements reflected result from a choice and are apparently deformed (Macherey 1966, 142). But, in this case, the deformed elements pretend to be truer than "truth." Indeed, some historians do not invalidate the theory that al-Azhar's state of mind encouraged Sulaymān's actions (Raymond 1998, 212).

### **3. Re-masking - An historical hero. Creating an absolute protagonist.**

Sulaymān is the unquestioned protagonist of the play. The play bears his name as a title, and he acts in almost every scene; the public follow him in all his actions and reflections from when he is still in Aleppo until he is in Cairo. Indeed, Sulaymān's character has interested all the critics of the play. For instance, Bahā' Ṭāhir affirms that the essence of the play is the development of Sulaymān's mind from that of "an idealistic dreamy youth into an adventurous rebel" (1985, 27).

Through the various and different essays of interpreting and defining the character, comparisons have arisen between the character of the play and the historical character. Particularly, Louis 'Awaḍ sees an opposition of the fictional character to the historical and maintains that Faraḡ did everything possible to distinguish them (2002, 79). Similarly, Nabīl Rāḡib claims that the Sulaymān in the play does not represent the historical figure, but rather, the tragic hero. Sulaymān's passion and motivation have been extracted from history and have added a psychological dimension full of tension and hesitation combined with revolt against the coloniser of an Arab country (1986, 211-16). Sulaymān's presence and dominance over the other characters has also been seen as a negative aspect of the play (Selaiha 2004).

In this section, these utterances will be explored. Moreover, the other characters' main function in the play will be dealt as the exaltation of the protagonist, even though most of them retain the names and features of their corresponding characters in the hypotext.

#### **3.1 Sulaymān, the unique hero. Completing the character.**

As Faraḡ remarks in his foreword to the play, History has recorded little information about Sulaymān. So, in a way, the play is meant to shed light on him. Also, the little information collected presents him as a negative character. Sulaymān is often called mad and seemingly does not have any personal motivation in his amazing act which results in the killing of the French General.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī seemed to be a singular subject. That is what emerges from the account of the execution. "Their [of the other culprits] heads were cut off under the attentive eyes of Sulaymān whose sang froid showed a man supported by great firmness of character. Then followed the burning of Sulaymān's wrist. During this cruel and painful operation, he uttered no complaint. Not the slightest change was noticed in his features. Suddenly a piece of wood flew off the fire and fell on his elbow. He uttered a cry and demanded that this additional pain be removed, Barthelemy who was near him and who, following local custom, desired and easily obtained the signal honor of being the executioner, told him ironically: "What, a man as brave as you, afraid of a slight pain? What is it compared to the pain you have been suffering for a quarter of an hour with such courage?" Sulaymān

The play, on the contrary, provides some personal characteristics, such as his self-consciousness, and shifts the motive of his action from foolishness to madness. Moreover, he is a complex character who can enact other roles. This process of transformation which will be studied in greater depth below, depicts a new Sulaymān that in some ways influences an alternative vision of the character conveyed by this Historiographical tradition.

### 3.1.1 Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī, a name that will make History. Creating self-conscious hero.

The image of Sulaymān provided by Ġabartī is roughly defined. In his account, Ġabartī first calls him “a guy from Aleppo,” (“شخص حلبى” Ġ: 149); then, thrice, he refers to him as “the murderer” (“القاتل” Ġ: 150). The locative connotation in the first place comes in opposition to the destruction he would have caused to people (Egyptians) that are not his people, while the second designation defines him for his act. In both cases, Sulaymān is not referred to by a name independent from the act he committed.

Similarly, in the French report, Sulaymān is first designated as “a man of the people” (“رجل من أهل البلد” Ġ: 153) and then he is simply called “the accused” (“المتهم” Ġ: 153). Then, once accomplices are interrogated, Sulaymān is first designated as:

(...) واحدًا اسمه سليمان كاتب عربي حضر من حلب من مدة ثلاثين يومًا.  
Ġ: 157

(...) a Sulaymān who can write Arabic and who came from Aleppo one month before.

“The quoted Sulaymān” (“سليمان المذكور” – 16 occurrences) is alternated with “Sulaymān from Aleppo” (“سليمان الحلبي” – 22 occurrences). Finally, the boy does not sign his declaration anymore as “Sulaymān,” but rather as “Sulaymān from Aleppo” (Ġ: 169). The transition is done. From that moment on the name for Sulaymān has been decided: he will be remembered as “Sulaymān from Aleppo.”

If the historical Sulaymān does not deserve to have a proper full detailed name, the play attaches a considerable importance to the appellation “Sulaymān from Aleppo”. Since the beginning of

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looked at him with fierce contempt: “Infidel dog know that you are not worthy talking with me; do your duty in silence; the pain I am complaining of was not included in the sentence of my judges.” (Philipp, Perlmann 1994, 212-3).

the play, this designation becomes a foremost feature of the character. Sulaymān himself is the first to claim the future reputation of his -we can add, banal- name:

محمود: (...) لو كانت ذراعك قوية كطلاقة لسانك، لكن لك شأن في التاريخ.  
سليمان: (يتوسط المشهد) سيكون لي، ما دام اسمي: سليمان الحلبي!

MSH: 32

SULAYMĀN: [...] If your arm was as strong as your tongue, you'd have a place in History.

MAḤMŪD, goes to the middle of the stage: I'll have it, so long as my name is Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī.

A statement that he affirms while moving in the middle of the stage and that will be confirmed some time later by the chorus:

الكورس: سليمان الحلبي.. اسم ليست له رنة مميزة بعد. قال الشيخ الشرقاوي: من؟ فأعادوا عليه: سليمان الحلبي.

MSH: 79

CHORUS: Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī, a name that has not a distinctive quality, yet. Sheikh Šarqāwī asked: who? And he was answered: Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī.

The chorus raises the importance of the character through the repetition of his name during the discussion Sulaymān has with sheikh Šarqāwī, which directly follows the line quoted above. In the reconstruction of the scene by the chorus, the sheikh is supposed to have repeated the name “Sulaymān” six times in order to recall him to his mind. Sulaymān's arrival at his home is announced by voices; sheikh Šarqāwī asks them “who [is there]?” (من) and each time the voices answer him with “سليمان الحلبي” (MSH: 80). The discussion closes with the sheikh still asking and for the last answer, the entire chorus reaffirms the name.

When Sulaymān presents himself to sheikh Sādāt's wife, she also repeats his name:

سليمان: اسمي سليمان الحلبي.  
زوجة السادات: سليمان؟ .. الحلبي؟ .. لم تعد ذكرات معي.

MSH: 110

SULAYMĀN: My name is Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī.

SĀDĀT'S WIFE: Sulaymān? ... Al-Ḥalabī? I still can't remember you.

Besides, after he has worn different masks, he affirms that it was always him, “Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī.” Indeed, he, alone, speaks about himself mentioning his name:

سليمان: (...) الحق عملة ليس لها رنين في المستعمرة.  
ومع ذلك تقع على أنا وحدي.. سليمان الحلبي، تبعة فرز الحقيقي من الزائف.. والعمل أو الكف عن العمل.  
الله معي!

MSH: 145

SULAYMĀN: [...] Truth is a coin which does not ring true in a usurped land. Yet, on me alone rests the burden of distinguish the true from the false; of action or defer from action. May God be with me!

And finally, his enemy, Kleber, is interested in his name after the chorus mentions it:

الكورس: ألا يخطر ببالك أن الناس قد تسميها: شجرة سليمان الحلبي؟  
كليبر: سليمان الحلبي؟ اسم عجيب! لماذا هذا الاسم بالذات؟ أله شأن في التاريخ؟  
الكورس: اسم عرض لنا..  
كليبر: لا بأس به. له إيقاع.

MSH: 151-2

CHORUS: Didn't it ever come to your mind that people could call it 'Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī's tree'?

KLEBER: Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī? A strange name! Why precisely this name? Does he have any historical relevance?

CORUS: It is a name that occurred to us.

KLEBER: Fine. It sounds well.

Contrary to the hypotext, where an evolution of the name as “Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī” has been noted, the repetition of the name in the play represents an affirmation of the character itself; and the affirmation is created by the character itself - who shows to be aware of his importance -, his enemy and the chorus. Besides, this self awareness is maintained despite the banality of the name History attached him, which is in opposition to the hypotext.

### 3.1.2 Sulaymān the mad, from Sulaymān the fool.

Another opposition to the hypotext is that a former trait of the protagonist – foolishness – shifts to madness. There are various times in which Sulaymān is defined as *maġnūn* (which means

both “mad” and “fool”) in the hypotext as well as in the play.<sup>40</sup> Ġabartī does not express any judgement towards him. Instead, the first to define Sulaymān as foolish is Sulaymān himself, during the interrogation of the 26th of Prairial:

فجاوب أن (...) تخمينه أنه مثل المجنون من حين أراد أن يقضي هذا الأمر لأنه لو كان له عقل ما حضر  
من غزة لهذا الأمر  
Ġ:166

I think I was crazy to have undertaken this project. Or else, I would not have come from Gaza to carry out the assassination.

T: 196

None of the accused define him as *maġnūn*. The day after, the adjective *maġnūn* comes back; this time in the report Sartelon submitted to the commission charged with judging the assassin of Commander in Chief Kleber and his accomplices. There, Sulaymān is mentioned as:

سليمان الحلبي شب مجنون وعمره أربعة وعشرون سنة وقد كان بلا ريب متدنس بالخطايا ظهر عند ذا الأغا  
يوم وصوله القدس (...) فقد كان استفتش الأغا عن احتيال أصل وفصل ذا الشب المجنون وعلم أنه مشتغل  
بجامع بين قراء القرآن (...) ووصل غزة في أوائل شهر فلوريل الماضي وياسين آغا مسكنه بالجامع  
لاستحكام غيرته والمجنون يواجهه مرارًا وتكرارًا بالنهار والليل مدة عشرة أيام (...)  
Ġ: 177

Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī, a mad young man of 24, no doubt already sullied by crime, visits the agha the day he arrives in Jerusalem. (...) Information has been gathered on the character of this young fanatic. It is known that he is preparing to be accepted as Koran reader at a mosque.

T: 206

[شركاء سليمان] قالوا باطلاً أنهم ما صدقوا سليمان هو مستعدد بذا الإثم وقالوا باطلاً أيضاً أن لو كانوا  
صدقوا ذا المجنون كانوا في الحال شايعين خيانة (...)  
Ġ: 179

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<sup>40</sup> For a discussion about the *maġnūn* in Arabic theatre, see II.3.3.

In vain [his accomplices] claim that they never believed Sulaymān was capable of this crime; in vain do they assert they would have denounced him had they thought he [literally “this madman”] really intended to commit the crime.

T: 208

Clearly, in the report, the idea of Sulaymān being a fool (idiot) carries more weight, until he becomes “the fool” even from the mouths of “his accomplices” who actually never define him as a fool but are reported having done so.

However, in the play, his friends (the accomplices in the report) often reproach Sulaymān for being crazy. They think he is sick (MSH: 63-4) and discuss his mental state (69). Sulaymān simply acts irrationally when the girl in the desert calls for help (45) and then when she is in the café (111); similarly, he does not think of the consequences of his words when he talks to sheikh Šarqāwī. So, sheikh Šarqāwī thinks Sulaymān must be crazy, but in the meaning of “sick”:

الشرفاوي: حدست أنه مشاغب ومجنون.. أخرجوا! (... مريض هو؟

محمد: نعم.. اغفر لنا يا سيدنا.

MSH: 73-4

ŠARQĀWĪ: I felt that he is turbulent and crazy... Take him out of here! [...]. Is he sick?

MUḤAMMAD: Yes. Forgive us, my lord.

Indeed, Sulaymān must be sick, but cannot be an idiot since he is also capable of deep reflections.

One feature many critics have noticed about the character is his intelligence (عقل). Maḥmūd al-‘Ālim describes him as a totally rational character (“شخصية عقلانية خالصة” 1973, 72), while Louis ‘Awaḍ defines Kulayb’s murder as a murder in cold blood and the character of Sulaymān as a psychological human study of a killer affected by mental disease (2002, 83-4). Amīr Iskandar underlines Sulaymān’s capability of freeing himself comparing it to Hamlet, Jean d’Arc, Macbeth and Prometheus (2002, 91-4).

The accusations of being a fool are denied by the play itself. Simple reasons are adduced by the hypotext - religious fervor and desperation regarding his father’s economic condition - are denied by the complexity of the character in the play. On the one hand, Sulaymān of the play, contrarily to his corresponding character in the hypotext, is extremely philosophical and



contemplative, but on the other, behaves rashly and impulsively, ignoring the consequences of his actions. We can observe or perceive some tragic depth within him that his equivalent does not possess and that is reminiscent of Hamletic madness.<sup>41</sup>

### 3.1.3 Sulaymān's roles.

Another sign of Sulaymān's uniqueness that is in opposition to the hypotext is his ability to identify himself with different characters. This is an innate propensity for him and he always succeeds in doing it properly. The first time Sulaymān appears in the play, he is imagining himself as Saladin:

سليمان: إن كان اسمك رينشارد وأنت قلب الأسد كما سموك، فاعلم بأني أنا صلاح الدين. ولا تعتقد يا ملك الانجليز بأن أرض المسيح عليه السلام قد باركت روحك أو أكسبتك حصانة ما. إني أقول لك، يا أيها الطامع في حصاد ما بذرنا من الزيتون الأخضر.. مكانك! الويل لك! إن كنت أتيتنا حاجا كما زعموك فألق سلاحك، وتقدم في السلام. وإن كنت أتيتنا غازيا كما يبدو من ركابك فتقدم وحدك الى صلاح الدين، ونازلني رجلا لرجل وسيفا لسيف، واحقن دماء رجالك وتابعيك..

MSH: 31-2

SULAYMĀN: If your name was Richard and you had a lion-heart, like you are called, be aware that I would be Saladin. Don't think, oh king of the English people, that the earth of the Messiah, peace be upon him, blessed you or provided you with immunity. You're greedy on the harvest that we sow from green olives. Stay at your place! Woe unto you! If you were bringing us something, as you claim, then throw your weapons away and advance in peace. But if you were approaching to invade, as it seems from your mounts, advance alone towards Saladin and come to me man to man, sword to sword and stop bloodshed of your men and servants...

Sulaymān seems to enjoy playing others' roles. Besides, he seems to do it unconsciously. When he tells his friend Maḥmūd about his dream of becoming a judge, Sulaymān perfectly fits the part as he knows exactly how to act like a judge condemning Kleber to cry (MSH: 37-8).

Also, when he meets the mask-maker, he instinctively plays different characters according to the masks he finds: first, the fairy-tale princess (ست الحسن), the brigand, the witch, the ogre, the constantly fighting Turk (تركي نقير) and, in a rush of change of masks, he also plays the braying donkey, the miser, the old lady acting like a girl, Bonaparte, the mendicant and the fool (MSH: 103-105). In the previous list, the masks corresponding to Ḥiddāya (a brigand) and Kleber

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<sup>41</sup> Hamletic aspects that we will examine later in details (see I.4).

(Bonaparte) are present too, implying that Sulaymān understands the two other main characters of the play and would be able to behave like them, if he wanted.

While acting, Sulaymān changes his voice, the register and adequate the style of speaking according to the character. For instance, when he enacts the witch, he produces assonances:

سليمان: (...) (يلبس قناع الساحرة) "طرشن طريوشن! انزلوا واحضروا بحق ما كشفنا بحق الأمير وجيوشه.. يا خدام هذه الأسماء بحق ما كشفنا عنك غطاءك فبصرك اليوم حديد.. أخرج صانع المسخرة من صورته في الحال إلى صورة قرد فيخلص من زوجته بلا نفقة!" ها ها!

MSH: 104

SULAYMĀN, [...] *wearing the witch's mask*: "Sin sala bim, bam bum! Come and appear in the name of what we found out, in the name of the prince and his army... oh, servants of these names, now that we have unveiled you, now that your eyesight is perfectly clear... transform the mocker's image immediately and turn him into a monkey, so that he gets rid of his wife can leave his wife without paying her palimony!" Ha ha!

Sulaymān is so at ease that he makes jokes and he laughs at them, showing that he enjoys his enactment. The ones who attend his shows (Maḥmūd, when Sulaymān plays Saladin, and the mask-maker in this case) complain about his mess while he acts and, as has been seen, they think he must be crazy. However, Sulaymān never forgets who he is:

محمد: كنت حقيقيا في كل وجه!

سليمان: (بصوت عميق) ومع ذلك كنت أنا دائما: سليمان الحلبي!

MSH: 106

MUḤAMMAD: You were realistic in every face!

SULAYMĀN, *in a deep voice*: Nevertheless, it was always me: Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī.

### 3.2 Secondary characters exalting the hero. Providing doubles to Sulaymān.

#### 3.2.1 Kleber, the enemy.

The best description for Kleber from the play might be "Sulaymān's enemy." Certainly, the French General is not as developed as the protagonist. We always see him acting in the same place: the palace of the General in al-Azbakiyya. It is as if his power is confined to a limited and enclosed space. He is always surrounded by people like him (French in Egypt) and when he first appears, the Marseillaise sounds for him (MSH: 29). His actions are repetitive since Kleber is always shown while having parties and giving speeches and orders on how to rule.

Similarly, while Sulaymān interacts with different characters, and even when he acts like them, Kleber is always surrounded by the same type of people.

One main quality encompasses the character: he is cruel. Cruelty of his actions is exalted since his arrival on the stage (29-31 MSH) and is well expressed by his attitude towards sheikh Sādāt (31). He becomes nervous about ‘Alī’s being killed in prison just because this would not allow him to interrogate his accomplices and by extension, complete his project administering punitive measures to other Egyptians (61). Until the/his end, in his total arrogance, Kleber is persuaded of his absolute power. After having asserted the necessity of using weapons to rule Egypt, Kleber sees himself in a more powerful position:

الكورس: ألا تعرف ما يخبئ لك القدر؟  
كليبير: لا.. تكلموا. أكاليل غار أخرى؟ أمجاد أعظم؟ قيادة الدولة الفرنسية؟

MSH: 152

CHORUS: Don’t you know what fate has planned for you?

KLEBER: I don’t... Tell me. More laurels? Greater glory? The leadership of the French state?

Finally, the weakness of the character has been perceived in his being total evil. His being total evil that does not allow him to be a credible character (‘Awad 2002, 85), nor to interact with Sulaymān (Badawi 1987, 176). Amin underlines that Kleber believes he is the conqueror of Egypt, while Dugua refers to him as “the second conqueror of Egypt” (MSH: 29) since the first one was Napoleon. This means that Kleber is assuming the role of Napoleon (Amin 2008, 96).<sup>42</sup> Role-playing, in this case, is a medium to display the total freedom to play “power” (for a wider discussion, see I.4). As for Ġabartī’s narrative, Kleber does not appear as malicious as in the drama and a variety of information about him can be obtained through his different actions.

### 3.2.2 Muḥammad, the friend (like Horatio).

Conversely, the best description suiting Muḥammad is that of “Sulaymān’s friend” since he seems to have been reshaped from the few information existing in the hypotext just to provide a character which allows for a better definition of Sulaymān. Indeed, Muḥammad is the one who deeply understands the hero. From the hypotext, and especially from the French report,

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<sup>42</sup>Amin finds three levels of role-playing in this scene: “the first being history, the second the French in their grand display of power (Kleber included), and the third Kleber playing the role of the ultimate ruler with his guests playing back with flattery and praise” (Amin 2008, 94-5).

Muḥammad is the youngest of the accused, is twenty-four years old, and has known for Sulaymān three years. Muḥammad first attests to not knowing that Sulaymān was back and later admits that he had seen him once in Cairo and accuses the interpreters to have misunderstood his previous declaration. After being beaten, he also adds that the day before the murder, Sulaymān had informed him of his intention to kill one of the French, but that he could never had imagined that the person was the General himself and that at no time he would imagine that Sulaymān would succeed (Ĝ: 170).

Muḥammad of the hypotext emerges through his few spoken words, which are influenced by the context of the trial. In the play, instead, he is shown through his action, during intimate moments always directly related to Sulaymān. Since the beginning of Act I, Muḥammad seems particularly close to Sulaymān and he is the character with whom Sulaymān spends the most of time. At first, when the group of friends from al-Azhar meets together, Muḥammad laughs at Sulaymān's affirmation of being sick (MSH: 64). Then, Sulaymān and Muḥammad spend some time together, Sulaymān himself is aware that his friend is different from the others and is more like him, so he can overtly speak with him:

**سليمان:** وأنت يا محمد.. عرفتك دائما قوى الجهاد.. ولك أصدقاء.. لست مثل عبد الله وأحمد.. أنت تختلف..  
أين أصدقاؤك؟  
**محمد:** لا تتعجل كل شيء.. انتظر..  
**سليمان:** تنتظرون! أي شيء تنتظرون؟  
**محمد:** ألا ترى الناس كلها في ثياب الحداد؟  
**سليمان:** وما معنى ذلك؟  
**محمد:** معناه أن في كل بيت قتيلا ذكراه لم تبرد بعد.. لا بد أن يخلع الناس ثياب الحداد أولا.  
**سليمان:** أهذا ما تنتظرونه؟  
**محمد:** نعم.. بالضبط. السكينة بعد الحرب.  
**سليمان:** السكينة تقول؟!  
**محمد:** نعم. وحصر احتمالات الموت على المشائق وبرصاص الدوريات في الشوارع.. في أضيق نطاق.  
لقد منح هؤلاء الناس أمان الحياة، وليس من الشرف أن نعلن الحرب الآن ولم يلتقطوا أنفاسهم بعد.

MSH: 66-7

SULAYMĀN: And you, Muḥammad... I knew you were always strong in the fight. And you have friends. You are not like ‘Abd Allāh or Aḥmad... you are different. Where are your friends?

MUḤAMMAD: Don’t rush over. Wait.

SULAYMĀN: Are you waiting? You are waiting for what?

MUḤAMMAD: Don’t you see all the people in mourning?

SULAYMĀN: And what does it mean?

MUḤAMMAD: It means that in every house there is a death whose memory is still fresh. First, people must take the mourning off.

SULAYMĀN: Is this what you are waiting for?

MUḤAMMAD: Yes. Precisely. Tranquility after the war.

SULAYMĀN: Tranquility, you say?!

MUḤAMMAD: Yes, and less possibility to die on the gallows or under the bullets of the patrols in the street... limiting them. Since those people guaranteed life’s security, it is not honorable that we declare war now and we haven’t got their breath back.

During this long fervent discussion (66-69) of which there is an extract provided, Sulaymān and Muḥammad exchange their contrasting thoughts similarly to Hamlet and Horatio (see Badawi 1987, 176 and in the play, especially MSH: 106-8). Straight after, while talking with the group in Sulaymān’s absence, Muḥammad provides a consideration about his friend:

محمد: (...) كأنه يمشي مغمض العينين لا يرى ما أمامه. يا للتعس!

MSH: 69

MUḤAMMAD: [...] It is as if he was walking blindfolded. He cannot see what is in front of him. Tough luck!

When Muḥammad accompanies Sulaymān to sheikh Šarqāwī and then when he meets the mask-maker (MSH: 100), he constantly tries to help Sulaymān and calm him, behaving as a loyal friend would, and finally, he begins to recognize Sulaymān’s sickness.

الشرقاوي: مريض هو؟!

محمد: نعم.. اغفر لنا يا سيدنا.

MSH: 83

ŠARQĀWĪ: Is he sick?!

MUḤAMMAD: Yes. Forgive us, my lord.

But he declares to the group that he never maintained that Sulaymān is mad (98). Muḥammad’s vision of Sulaymān is more the one of a hero:

سعد: الرأي عندي أنه مجنون وخطر.

محمد: لا تتعجل الحكم عليه يا سعد. في الأمر شيء خلاف ذلك كله.. أن له كبرياء وجلدا وروحا للنضال.

MSH: 98

SA'D: I think that he is crazy and dangerous.

MUHAMMAD: Don't hasten your judgment about him, Sa'd. There is something behind all this. He has pride and skin and soul for the fight.

Sulaymān is a hero Muḥammad needs to take care of:

محمد: لأنك لست سليمان الذي عرفناه! تغيرت.. لعلك مريض.. ولن ينفكك جو القاهرة هذه الأيام.

سليمان: (مغضبا) أنا أيضا كرهتها. كرهتكم.. وكرهت الرواق.. نعم.. فلم أجد هنا ولا في كل مدن العرب رجلا يريد.. فيكون له مل يريد!

محمد: أسكت! أنت مجنون!

سليمان: لو أن في عالمنا سنابل قمح أكثر مما فيه من كلمات، وكلمات أكثر مما فيه من بنادق، وبنادق أكثر مما فيه من لصوص.. ما جننت.<sup>43</sup>

محمد: سليمان.. على عيني رحيلك.. ولكن ما يجب لا بد أن يكون.

سليمان: (يتراجع بمكر) ليكن.. وإن كانت بقيت لي من صحبتك ساعات.. دعنا ننطلق في الأسواق ونمرح ما نشاء.

محمد: لك هذا يا صديقي.

MSH: 107-8

MUHAMMAD: Because you're not the Sulaymān that we know. You've changed... maybe you are sick. And the climate of Cairo of these days won't do you any good.

SULAYMĀN, *upset*: I also hate it... I hate you all... and I hate the alleys. Yes, because I don't find here or in any other Arab city a man who wants... and he gets what he wants!

MUHAMMAD: Shut up! You are crazy!

SULAYMĀN: If only in our world spikes of grain were more than words and words were more than bullets and bullets were more than thieves... I am not crazy.

<sup>43</sup> Note the similitude with the following extract from the poem *al-Ṣamūd* (Resistance, 1963), within the collection *Awraq al-zaytūn* (Olive leaves) by Maḥmūd Darwīš (Darwīš, 2005, 49):

|                                  |                           |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| We love the rose,                | إبنا نحبّ الورد،          |
| But we love the wheat more.      | لكنّا نحبّ القمح أكثر.    |
| We love the perfume of the rose, | ونحبّ عطر الورد،          |
| but spikes are purer.            | لكن السنابل منه أظهِ.     |
| Protect your ears from the storm | فاحموا سنابلكم من الإعصار |
| in the tanned chest.             | بالصدر المسّم.            |
| Use your breast as a fence       | هاتوا السياج من الصدر     |

MUḤAMMAD: Sulaymān... to my eyes, you have to leave. However, what needs must be.

SULAYMĀN, *retreating cunningly*: May it be... and if I still have some hours of your friendship, let's go around in the market and have the fun we want.

MUḤAMMAD: You got it, my friend.

Muḥammad is perfectly aware that Sulaymān's madness is sickness and not foolishness. He also knows Sulaymān's intention to kill Kleber, but he will leave his friend free to do what he wants. Like Horatio does with Hamlet, supporting every rash decision Hamlet makes, Muḥammad epitomizes the faithful friend.<sup>44</sup> The ensuing matches with the hypotext as well: Muḥammad knew Sulaymān, and was aware of his intention of killing a Frenchman, but did not stop him. However, the reasons for his actions which has just been explored differ.

### 3.2.3 Ḥiddāya, the counterpart.

Contrary to Sulaymān, who is moved by a sense of justice that overwhelms his rational thoughts, Ḥiddāya al-A'rağ, has little morality governing his behaviour. Accordingly, he appears as a counterpart to Sulaymān and consequently, by opposition, he cements Sulaymān's singular nature. Ḥiddāya has no exact equivalent in the hypotext, but Ğabartī often accounts of the danger of Bedouins in the desert roads, so it can be imagined that Farağ took inspiration from them (see I.2). In this sense, Farağ transformed general information from the hypotext into a character provided with specific traits. These traits respect the general features provided in the story of the hypotext.

When the brigand Ḥiddāya wants to explain his daughter how thieves' chain functions, he includes within this category Kleber as the most powerful of all (MSH: 72-3). He also persuades a French colonel that he can be of help to them, for his being a good highwayman (116-7). Yet, he is a "son from the Arabs" (MSH: 49) and acts according to some morals. So, he refuses to take money from Sa'd, which would have been useful for the release of sheikh Sādāt, and wants to contribute to his ransom, instead (51). Certainly, he has an independent value in the play: he represents the brigands, namely a certain portion of the Arab population who took advantage of the French presence in Egypt. His attitude involves also a deeper dimension if compared to other characters in the play (especially Kleber and most of all Sulaymān). Ḥiddāya himself compares to Kleber when he mentions the General as the most powerful of the thieves (MSH:

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<sup>44</sup> See I.4 for a parallelism between Sulaymān and Hamlet.

73). He had already enacted French General when he wore the cocked hat taken from the peasants at the beginning of the play (49).

As for the comparison to Sulaymān, opposition is the dominant trait. Ḥiddāya manages to adapt to all circumstances and benefits from the disordered Cairo, while Sulaymān suffers from the new state of the city to a point where he cannot stand it (MSH: 107). Ḥiddāya fits the system of the characters with its own specificity derived from a general profile accounted in the hypotext. In contrast to Sulaymān, he exalts the hero's unicity.

Within the *dramatis personae*, another innovation is 'Alī, the Azharite student who is discovered by French soldiers while he is distributing leaflets in French to discourage the occupiers. He appears in this scene and then in prison with his guardian, who suggests to him that he ask for piety and adhere to their roles and setup of the trial (MSH: 60, see I.5). If the play does not account of Sulaymān's trial, the treatment of 'Alī is a prefiguration of what will happen to Sulaymān (according to the play), namely that he will be forced to conform to circumstances and provide a false statement. Likewise, the character of Miṣbāḥ is not depicted in detail, however he is an innovation that completely fits the thesis of the play that some of the older sheikhs must be aware of Sulaymān's intentions (see I.2, MSH: 27-9).

### **3.3 Historical protagonists. Background, stock characters making the group.**

#### **3.3.1 The other culprits.**

In the hypotext, apart from Muḥammad, other students from al-Azhar - Aḥmad, 'Abd Allāh and 'Abd al-Qādir - were mentioned by Sulaymān as they were aware of his intent. 'Abd al-Qādir disappears before the trial, while Aḥmad and 'Abd Allāh are known only through their declarations during the report. In the play, both are all redefined through specific actions.

In the hypotext, during the first inquisition, Aḥmad admits that he knows Sulaymān and that he met him twenty days before. Moreover, he says that Sulaymān had informed him of his intention to commit a crazy act: fight for the Glory of God, which meant killing a Christian, but that he did not tell him the name of the victim (Ĝ: 159-60). During the second round of questions he admits that he knew that Sulaymān wanted to kill General Kleber, but he did not inform the authorities since he believed that Sulaymān was lying and was not be able of succeeding. In any case, Aḥmad had tried with all his force to dissuade Sulaymān saying that:

فجاوب أن سليمان حين وصل من مدة ثلاثين يومًا كان قال له إنه حضر حتى يغازى في الكفرة وأنه نصحه  
عن ذلك بقوله إن هذا شيء غير مناسب وما أخبره على سيرة ساري عسكر.



A: Upon his arrival in Cairo, some 30 days ago, Sulaymān told me that he had come to join the Holy War against the infidels: I sought to dissuade him, and told him this was not a sound plan. But he did not speak to me of the killing of the commander in chief.

T: 201

In the play, Aḥmad first appears during the second act. He becomes aware of Sulaymān's intention of killing Kleber which Sulaymān soon after refutes but remains suspicious. Aḥmad behaves like the others and tries to persuade and stop Sulaymān. However, more than the others, like his equivalent in the hypotext who evidently tries to gain his prosecutors' favor, Aḥmad is the most afraid of the consequences of Sulaymān's actions and invites his colleagues to be cautious:

أحمد: لا تخشى عليه.. أخشى على نفسك.. فسرعان ما يفتشون عن أصدقائه في الرواق.  
عبد الله: (برجاء) لعله يذهب إلى شيخ يستفتيه فيما يدبر، فيثبته عن عزمه.

أحمد: لا وقت لهذه التعليقات.. ان سمعتم كلامي: لينج كل منكما بنفسه.. الطاعون قد حل الرواق! وان كان سليمان ذاب منك كفص الملح<sup>45</sup>، فقد ترك آثار الموت على الأكف التي صافحها، والوجنات التي قبلها، والثياب والأدوات التي مسها، والحجر الذي توسده، والهواء الذي أطلقه من حلقه وهو يضحك.. لينج كل منكما بنفسه.. فوالله اننا سننال جزاء القتلة دون أن نحظى بثواب الشهداء.. لينج كل منكما بنفسه. (... لتفعلا ما تشاءان.. الوداع.. وتذكرا أنى نصحتكما.. لينج كل منكما بنفسه!

MSH: 109

AḤMAD: Don't worry about him. Be worried about yourself. Soon they will search his companions in the alleys.

'ABD ALLĀH, *kindly*: Maybe he has gone to a sheikh who has polled him on what he is plotting and has deterred him from his intent.

AḤMAD: There is no time for reasoning. You heard my words: each of you save himself. Pestilence has reached the alleys! And if Sulaymān has vanished from you like a grain of salt in water he left traces of death on the shoulders that he patted. And the cheeks that he kissed, the clothes and the instruments that he possessed, the stone where his head rest, the air that he released from his throat while laughing... may each of you save himself ... we will get the sanction of the murders without the dresses of the martyrs. May each of

<sup>45</sup> Colloquial Egyptian Arabic expression.

you save himself. [...] Do whatever you want. Farewell... and remember that I have advised you. May each of you save himself!

As for ‘Abd Allāh, during the second interrogation, he precisely justifies the fact that he has not prevented the French authorities from the murder, even if he knew of Sulaymān’s intentions, because he thought that a sheikh would dissuade him:

سئل لأي سبب ما شكاه فجاوب أنه كان يظن أن سليمان المذكور يتوجه عند المشايخ الكبار وأن المذكورين  
يمنعوه ولكن من الآن صار يخبر بالذين يحضرون بهذه النية.

Ĝ: 172

Q: Why did you not denounce him?

A: I thought he would go to the great sheikhs of Cairo, and that they would dissuade him.  
In the future, I shall do so.

T: 202

Moreover, in the play, he affirms his idea more than once (twice, MSH: 69 and 109). Besides, he finally he speaks of the question to sheikh Šarqāwī (109).

The other culprit, ‘Abd al-Qādir, is also present in the play, but since in the *History* he escaped the trial, there are not precise information about him. In the play, Faraĝ had complete freedom to portray him, so he assigned him the role of a wise, cautious sheikh inviting Sulaymān to moderation (MSH: 90-2). Like in the hypotext, he is a sheikh, while the other culprits are not.

### 3.3.2 Dugua, Ĝābilān/Protain, Menou.

On the French side, apart from Kleber, the three characters involved in the murder were General Dugua, the architect Protain and General Menou. In the *History*, General Dugua took command of Kleber’s division when the last one was blessed in the attack of Alexandria. Ĝabartī does not include Dugua in the accounts of the Year 1215. Faraĝ, instead, inserts Dugua in Kleber’s arrival party in Cairo. The party is at Dugua’s palace which historically makes sense and constitutes a precise historical reference. Dugua, in the play, introduces General Kleber to the French people (MSH: 29), then he speaks often with Kleber and agrees with his orders (61-3). His presence serves as a form of support for the action and affirms Faraĝ’s interest in keeping a credible and precise historical background. In Ĝabartī’s account, General Menou, who will take command of Egypt after Kleber, leads the interrogation of the culprits. In the play, he appears at the end, during the interrogation of the architect who was present during Kleber’s murder and admonishes him to keep secret the truth about what happened.

Protain's first declaration occurs on the 26<sup>th</sup> of Prairial since the architect was at the hospital during the first day of the trial and was first examined while there. Hence, Faraġ's introduction of a dialogue between the architect and General Menou at the hospital combines well with the reported account of the French trial. The particularity of the equivalent of Protain in the hypotext is that his name is changed to Ğābilān (جابلان), who does not exist in Ğabartī's account. This *new* architect is present at Kleber's arrival party, which historically makes sense since Protain was already in Egypt and opposed Kleber's strong position against Egyptians. This also makes sense according to his character in the play but is also plausible from an historical perspective since he was a man of the arts, not a military. Ğābilān tries to protect Kleber from Sulaymān (like in the hypotext) and gives his declaration while he is still at the hospital (like in the hypotext). However, his declaration to Menou is an important innovation from the hypotext. Also, he always tried to mitigate Kleber's tyranny. This is another innovation from the play. Perhaps, references for him must be found in places other than in the context of the play nor in the context of History but looking at the context of production of the play (see I.2 and 5).

If the three characters respect some connotations provided by historiography, their behaviours are adapted to the new needs of the play. This is especially clear for Ğābilān /Protain who, maybe for this reason, has his name changed.

### **3.3.3 Sheikh Sādāt and sheikh Šarqāwī (al-Azhar).**

Two of the sheikhs from al-Azhar are shown in opposition of each other in the play. They are sheikh Sādāt and sheikh Šarqāwī. Indeed, as Faraġ stated in the foreword to the play, different tendencies must be found in al-Azhar.

Sheikh Sādāt appears only once but is constantly evoked by other characters (MSĤ: 24, 25-6, 30-1, 36, 39, 72, 110, 141). Everybody loves him and has pity for his situation, except for Kleber who created his pain and perpetuates it (36, 39). Sādāt is depicted as a faultless sheikh. As Sulaymān affirms to sheikh Šarqāwī (82), Sādāt has always taught his students to help people in need and has behaved the same. Moreover, the author lets him deliver a motto for the rational behaviour during tough times (41, see I.4).

It seems that, because of his extreme kindness, sheikh Sādāt has been captured by the French, contrary to sheikh Šarqāwī, who is prudent and continues to be suspicious (MSĤ: 82). Both attitudes roughly correspond to Ğabartī's account. Nevertheless, in the account, despite the French insistence on questioning Sulaymān about his relationship with Šarqāwī, Sulaymān always denies it until he explains:

فجواب أنه ما فتح سيرة المغازاة إلا الى الأربعة مشايخ فقط الذين سئل هل أنه ما تحدث مع الشيخ الشرقاوي  
فجواب أنه ما شاف هذا الشيخ لأنه ما هو من ملته بسبب أن الشيخ الشرقاوي شافعي وهو حنفي

Ĝ: 175

Q: Did you discuss it with sheikh Šarqāwī?

A: I did not see this sheikh, as he is not of my rite. He is a Šāfi‘ī while I am a Ḥanafī.

T: 204-5

Ĝabartī depicts Šarqāwī as a parvenu (see Raymond 1998, 38). If he did not excel in courage like his colleague, Šarqāwī was one of the most important ‘*ulamā*’ during his time. Born poor, he studied hard, won the sympathy of rich people, in 1793 he became the leader of al-Azhar, and in 1798 Bonaparte elected him as the president of the Divan. Šarqāwī went on to write at least thirteen books. Like Ĝabartī, Šarqāwī was able to write sharp critiques of the French occupation when writing of them to the Ottomans (Delanoue 1982, 84-6).

The relationship between sheikh Sādāt and Sulaymān is never mentioned and Ĝabartī often relates to the sheikh and the caution he must pay. Particularly, Ĝabartī evokes it at the beginning of the accounts of the year 1800, just before the account of Kleber’s murder. Certainly, Faraĝ did not create Sādāt’s character according to Ĝabartī’s account, who “dresse un portrait peu flatteur de Sādāt dont il stigmatise l’ambition, l’arrogance et la rapacité” (Raymond 1998, 34). However, even if Ĝabartī does not underline it, the report of events makes him emerge as a brave person and a former authority amongst the other sheikhs and the people as well. So, the playwright might have taken an historically-recognized feature from the character and decided to entrust it in his play.

\* \* \*

Among all the characters in the play, Sulaymān distinguishes himself for being the only one provided with self-consciousness and self-confidence. Sulaymān in the play is considered to be mad since he acts according to logic, even if this logic is not always understood by society and even if this logic goes beyond contingency and ignores consequences. That trait marks a stark difference from the Sulaymān of the hypotext who has been designated by History as a fool. Besides, Sulaymān is the only character who understands all the others, which he proves when he reenacts other people as he frequently does so.

Built as doubles of the protagonist, secondary characters exalt his qualities. Kleber's most suitable definition is as Sulaymān's enemy. With his traits, he is Sulaymān's nemesis. Both the characters self-consciously build a heroic image of themselves, one leaning towards absolute justice and the other towards absolute tyranny. Also, the importance the hypotext agrees to Sulaymān and to Kleber is inverted in the play in a redistribution of qualities to each one. If related to the protagonist, Sa'd too has a former function in the story: as the closest friend of Sulaymān, Sa'd allows Sulaymān to express his innermost thoughts. Ḥiddāya represents a counterpart of the protagonist. As an immoral swindler taking advantage of the situation, he is not in a position of complete opposition to the protagonist as Kleber the enemy is. At the same time, Sa'd exalts Sulaymān extreme justice. The three main characters after Sulaymān amplify his role as a protagonist.

Historical protagonists, instead, keep the same features of the hypotext. Grouped into three main categories, they mainly serve to show three different realities: the French, the other culprits from al-Azhar and two diametrically opposed types of sheikhs). Only Protain, who acts differently, has his name changed.

Finally, contrary to the hypotext, Sulaymān is the uncontested hero of the story. During the French administration at a time when laws do not implement justice, he lives a reality incompatible to him and, since the beginning of the play, he is destined to a tragic end. The end of Sulaymān is a fruit of his own hubris; he does not offer catharsis since it is not shown. His portrayal as an absolute protagonist could not be any different from his portrayal as a fool and "killer of General Kleber" whose trial is quoted by Ğabartī only to show French superiority in matters of justice. The reasons of his over presence in the hypotext has to be found in the lack of his portrayal in the hypertext.

#### **4. Restyling. From authorial to multiple narrative. Introducing polyphony.**

In *Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī*, the narration is divided into different voices. If this feature is typical of theatre, where different characters each express their own point of view, in this play, polyphony can be considered as a modernist strategy aimed at a “democratisation of narration” (Meyer 2001, 9).<sup>46</sup> Multiple perspectives in the play are obtained through various devices. Apart from various voices of characters, different registers and languages, a chorus, a division of the stage, role-playing, metadrama and intertextuality all act as voices telling their own story. These voices are interwoven to draw portrait broader than Ğabartī’s monophonic account; an account that is often criticized for its partiality (Raymond 1998, 3-5). In many cases, the multiplicity of “voices” of the play is motivated by Farāğ’s interest in epic theatre and his aim of creating an alienation effect (I.1).

##### **4.1 Languages and registers. Modulating voices.**

The hypotext did not provide the author of the play direct access to the language of the characters. As Ğabartī complains, the report from the trial is written in “a very bad Arabic” (Ğ: 151, see I.1). Syntax does not follow the natural suite of Arabic, and lexical choices are odd (see Ğ: 171, quoted here, I.3.3). Besides, the trial is reported in indirect discourse and Ğabartī’s account as well is in the third person – apart from the quotation on Kleber’s words to Sulaymān “mē fiš” which is in dialect. Moreover, Ğabartī’s own language has been criticized. Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm brings Ğabartī’s *History* as an example of the mediocre quality an Arabic language book can have (al-Ḥakīm 2008, 135-6 and 160-1).

The language of the play is highly dramatic (Ṭāhir 2002<sup>1</sup>, 114). Characterized by rationality and objectivity, it causes an alienation effect “which peaks in Sulaymān’s talk after deep contemplation and delving into the facts of reality, to lessen the audience’s identification with the character on the stage.” (El-Sayyid 1995, 174). Short sentences lead to the vividness and the flow of action, while long, sporadic monologues emphasize the conflict within the man. Questions and answers serve to discuss the reason why Sulaymān murdered Kleber (Ibid.; see I.1).

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<sup>46</sup> According to Meyer, one of the strategies introduced into the Arabic novel in the sixties was a “democratisation of narration, or polyphony” (Meyer 2001, 9).

In this play, idiolects cannot be distinguished. Only Sulaymān and the chorus master a beautiful poetical language which distinguishes them from the rest of characters. However, through seldom apparitions, a second language – French – breaks the linguistic uniformity. Faraġ’s linguistic choice was appreciated “at a time when most plays annoyed the audience’s ears with vulgarity while claiming to be realistic” (Tāhir 2002 ١, 139).

Hence, on one side, French language is the mark of the occupier’s voice. Military titles, like “general,” “lieutenant” and “colonel” are always employed in French transcribed into Arabic letters, as are: “monsieur” (MSH: 33 twice), “madame” (34), “cologne” (34), “bravo” (31). An entire phrase is reported in Latin letters: “Troupe! En avant! Pour la Gloire!” (45)<sup>47</sup>, which signals the extraneity of a group of people. Indeed, when they are used by Egyptians, they remark on the difference between the two groups, either in terms of dominator/dominated (e.g.: rebels attach leaflets in French, a language they do not understand -MSH: 57-8) or in terms of cultural differences and loss of identity (e.g.: the girl - MSH: 94, see below).

On the other side, different registers of Arabic mix together. The protagonist is capable of poetic expression which is clear in his monologues (see I.5, the monologue of the snakes MSH: 67-8), but he can also reproduce vulgar expressions as well as mispronunciation when he plays with masks (see I.4.4). Finally, his occasional use of dialect alienates the audience from the context of the play (see I.5).

The chorus also has a poetical tone in both his prophetic talks and statements and during his psychological investigation on Sulaymān. At the end of the play, visual imagery is well developed in the chorus’ last talk. In this case, Sulaymān is compared to birds singing on the tree of knowledge (see I.5):

الكورس: طالما تغرد الطيور فوق الشجرة.. سيستجير الأمل بظلها الحاني من لفتح الرياح الحارة، ليطمئن.  
فمن فوهة مدافع السفن الجبارة انطلقت المأساة.. ثم آبت آخر الأمر إلى ظلال هذه الغصون الطرية الوارفة  
لنكتب آخر الكلمات. (...)

MSH: 156-7

CHORUS: As long as birds tweet on the tree, hope will seek with its shadow for my song from the wind of the quarter, to reassure. From the cannons’ mouths of the ships the

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<sup>47</sup> The quotation is exactly like in the play, with its orthographic mistakes too.

tragedy went off... then, at last, they returned to the shades of these tender flourishing branches so that the last words can be written.

A simple statement from the charismatic character of Sādāt when he leaves his home, by force because of the French soldiers, also contributes to an effect of alienation:

أصوات: إلى أين؟ الله معك يا مولانا! تلفت لنا يا كريم. قل كلمة لأبنائك ومريديك..  
السادات: في النصر نعف، وفي الهزيمة نصمد.

MSH: 41

VOICES: Where? May God protect you, our lord! Turn to us, your kindness. Say a word to your sons and disciples.

SĀDĀT: We are magnanimous in victory, persevering in defeat.

The phrase mixes registers and has a contemporary resonance. The first part of it recalls Classical Literature with a hint of the traditional Arabic values of the desert, while the second part might be part of Sulaymān's context. Then, it must be noted that the word *ṣumūd* (firmness, determination) became common in Faraġ's time, some years after the play (El-Enany, private e-mail 2017).<sup>48</sup>

The different voices of the characters are modulated by their language which variates according to the nature of the character (this is the case of the chorus – which has its own style - and of the French – who use some French words). Moreover, in this play, language presents a value itself. French words become a symbol of the loss of identity of “the girl” (Ḥiddāya's daughter), while few words from the vernacular Arabic, occurring between Sulaymān and sheikh Sādāt, alienate the audience from the context of the play. Also, the French language, which cannot be understood by the rebels distributing leaflets, is a sign of oppression, while values like determination and magnanimity pronounced by sheikh Sādāt establish a temporal continuum between the Arabs throughout time.

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<sup>48</sup> Private mail dated on the 9<sup>th</sup> February 2017. The translation as well was suggested by Rasheed El-Enany in the same mail.

See, for instance, Nasser's speech of 10th April 1968. Surprisingly, the sentence has been used recently by Bahā' Ṭāhir (who provided an important critics of the play) in an article about the Revolution of 2011 (al-Maḥlāwī 2011).

Maybe Ṭāhir took it from the play or Faraġ and him shared a common reference. Indeed, they spent together the years in prison just before Faraġ wrote his play.



#### 4.2. The chorus, or the alienating voice.

In its more general form, the chorus is composed of forces (actants), not individualised and often abstract, who represent superior moral or politic interests. Having changed forms and functions throughout time, the Brechtian chorus, which is supposedly the one Farağ took inspiration from, is used as a technique of distancing. Indeed, he concretises a spectator in front of another spectator. As a judge of the action, he has the right to comment it (Pavis 1980, 44-6).

In the play *Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī*, the chorus is first and foremost a narrative voice. After its account of the historical background, the chorus declares its narrative voice through the assertion “ومن هنا تبدأ قصتنا” (MSH: 24, “And here our story begins”). To be more precise, the chorus declares itself as *the* narrator of its own story. Indeed, from the very beginning of the play, it is both omniscient and omnipresent. As has been seen (I.2), the chorus opens the play with a wide historical overview (MSH: 23-4) and, at the end of two acts, it comments on the facts shown in them. So, at the end of the first act, after Ḥiddāya’s action is shown, the chorus assesses the right of brigands to take money by force:

(الكورس في مشهد محايد)

الكورس: إذا كان الغزو بالسلاح يخلق للغزاة حقا من العدم، فإن المناسر يحق لها ما تغتصبه من مال في الطريق.

MSH: 53

The chorus is on the neutral platform.

CHORUS: If the aggression by the sword was really caused by nothing, it is the right of the highwaymen to take money by force in the street.

The chorus’ omniscience even allows us to imagine what sheikh Sādāt would have said to Sulaymān if he were not in prison (MSH: 79-80). At the very end of the play, then, the chorus shifts again to directly speak with the public, thus confirming the idea that they are in fact the narrator of the story:

الكورس: (...) وهذه هي قصتنا التي رويناها لكم الليلة، كلمة بكلمة وحرفا بحرف. وهكذا تنتقل القضية الى المحكمة.

فيا قضاة هذه المحكمة.. لا تحكموا بالقانون، أحكموا بالعدل!

MSH: 157

CHORUS: [...] And this was our story, that we told you tonight, word by word, letter by letter.

And so, the case ended up in the court.

Judges of this court, do not judge by law, judge by justice!

The chorus closes the play by directly addressing the public, who is invited to judge its story, so that the chorus' voice has the possibility to cross the fourth wall.

The chorus is also an internal narrator since it appears amongst the events which are exposed within the play, but not shown specifically by the chorus, even though the chorus admits that the narration is its own story. As proof of the chorus' singular status, Dina Amin hesitates between defining the chorus as Sulaymān's subconscious or the author's voice (2008, 90).

Certainly, sometimes, the chorus helps Sulaymān to express his subconscious. Sulaymān encounters the chorus when he is alone (MSH: 84) and the chorus is there to ask him questions about the real reason of his visit to sheikh Šarqāwī (85-6). Following their confrontation, the motivation of Sulaymān's visit to the sheikh becomes clear to Sulaymān and the public, too. This confrontation is fundamental for Sulaymān's healing:

الكورس: ستشفى بأذن الله.. ومهما كان ينتابك من صداع أو غيثان أو دھول.. فشفاؤك أن تقرأ ذات نفسك  
بفطنة.

MSH: 86

CHORUS: God willing, you will heal. No matter of the headache, the nausea or the daze you can feel, your recovery will be listening to your inner self closely.

So, the chorus has the power to access Sulaymān's subconscious to allow his own deliverance. It reveals Sulaymān's thoughts deprived of Sulaymān's control. Namely, it transports the public to an inner part of the character, part that not even Sulaymān himself can reach, which is done so as "to acquaint the audience with the character of Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī" (El-Sayyid 1995, 173).

El-Sayyid claims that, during an interview, Farağ gave some elucidations about his idea of the chorus:

Farağ admits that he followed the epic technique in using the chorus, the narrator, music, songs, decor, screen and masks. The chorus not only describes and comments on the events, but it also participates in the events and sometimes in dialectic. In addition, it introduces characters and announces its view about events and provides an illuminating

account of the performance for the audience. In doing so, the chorus is a participant in the theatrical action, one which intervenes in events whenever need arises. It asks, interprets and argues. This creates a state of detachment between the audience and the stage in order to give the audience the context to contemplate the presented issue and to perceive its dialectic.

El-Sayyid 1995, 166-7

The intrusive capacity of the chorus is far away from Ğabartī's external top-down account. According to the progress of his reflection, significant differences are noticeable between Ğabartī's three works. As André Raymond points out, "Il s'agit dans tous les cas de la vision personnelle d'une personnalité profonde et complexe sur une phase ambiguë de l'histoire de son pays, non d'une histoire totalement impartiale." (1998, 5)

Since the chorus itself claims to be the narrator, in the fictional frame to which it belongs, the perspective is the chorus' perspective. Acting as multiple voices that oppose Ğabartī's point of view, which is the only point of view of the hypotext, the chorus offers an alternative voice for the story. Although it appears as reliable, it is evident that it offers just a version of the story and, despite its claim of declaring the truth, its point of view is that of a fictional character/device. As a narrating voice, which exposes and comments on facts, which also collaborates with the public to interpret and construct the story, the chorus is a device that allows a reliable point of view of the facts. Particularly, in comparison to Ğabartī's voice, the chorus provides a multi-part objective narration of facts. If Ğabartī's account is supposed to be taken for granted because it does not provide other choices, the multiple voices of the chorus, together with the chorus' multiple functions, invite to reflect with him/them.

#### **4.3 Distributing spaces. Differentiating stories through the stage.**

When acting like a narrator, the chorus usually has a reserved place on the stage (مشهد محايد). When it functions as an interlocutor, instead, it shares the stage with other characters (MSH: 84, 147, 151 and 154), it returns to the reserved place when it provides its final comments (MSH: 156). Since the place accorded to the chorus varies according to the role it plays, the chorus (when working as a chorus) is given an exclusive modality of exposition that underlines their viewpoint.

Similarly, after the exposition by the chorus and a scene in Cairo, thanks to the device of a double stage, scenes of Sulaymān in Aleppo are intertwined with moments from the French ball:

(حفلة راقصة في قصر دوجا حاكم القاهرة، بينما يرقص البعض في ناحية على أنغام هادئة متصلة.. تجلس نساء مختلفات الأعمار في أحد الأركان، ويقف دوجا مع المهندس جابلان والكولونيل والملازم في حلقة يشربون. في خلال المنظر ستضيئ مصطبة في عمق المسرح ليجري عليها التمثيل، وسيتغير المشهد فوقها.. وقد كتب عليها "حلب الشام" بخط واضح. وهي الآن خافية تماما.)

MSH: 28

A dance party in the palace of Dugua, governor of Cairo. While some dance in a part on a calm song, women of different ages sit in one corner and Dugua drink in a circle with the architect Ġābilān, the colonel and the lieutenant. A platform in the depth of the stage will be lit; on it a change of scenes will take place. On top of the platform, a sign in clear letters reads "Aleppo, Syria". But for the time being that platform is not yet illuminated.

After a brief scene showing Kleber and French men and women during the party, Sulaymān's action is introduced as follows:

(يبتعد كليبر قليلا عن مرمى سمعها. يجمد المشهد ويخفت الضوء، ويضيء المشهد الخلفي. خلاء. شجرة عجفاء في جانب المنظر. سليمان الحلبي في موقف تصدي وقد شهر فرغ شجرة كالسيف في يمينه. في العشرين من عمره. عصبي. ذكي. فصيح. ويبدو أصغر سنا مما هو في الحقيقة. صوته يبدأ خافتا ثم يتصاعد كأنه يقترب من بعيد)

MSH: 31

Kleber walked away from earshot. The scene freezes and the lights dim, while the scene behind lights up. Pause. A dry tree stands on the side of the stage. Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī is in front position. He has shown the hollow of the tree with the sword in his right hand. He is in his twenties. Nervous, smart, well spoken. He seems younger than what he really is. His voice is faint at the beginning then it rises as if he was coming from far away.

Together with Sulaymān's voice starting low and then becoming louder, the small place he occupies in the stage is symbolical of first having first a small place within the story before becoming the protagonist. As the stage directions show, this place is at first small and isolated. There, the boy enacts Saladin in front of his friend in his home in Aleppo (MSH: 31-2), then the focus shifts for a while to Kleber's party through the change of lights from the backstage to the front stage (32-5) and then again to the back (Sulaymān talking with his mother, 35-6) and to the front (always Kleber's party, 36-7). However, this is revealed as being strategical since, in the next scene, Sulaymān moves to the bigger stage where the party freezes (37).

The difference between the entire stage with the French ball and the tiny platform where Sulaymān acts is symbolical of the difference of amplitude of exposition conceded to the

traditional narration: a huge space is allotted for the French and a small platform for the protagonist. Nevertheless, however far and small, the platform is central, which anticipates the central role of Sulaymān in the events to come (Amin 2008, 96-7). Besides, according to Farāġ's stage directions, Sulaymān moves to the downstage and roams amongst the French ball scene which freezes, then Sulaymān returns to his platform. Hence, despite the difference of space allocated to Sulaymān and the French, the first one only moves and "maintains his tiny place, far, elevated, and beyond their reach" (Ibid., 97). The double stage provokes a direct comparison between Sulaymān's movement since he always changes action and Kleber's immobility, implying that the spatial distribution is intentional.

A different nature of spaces is reserved for the characters throughout the play. So, actions concerning the French and actions concerning the Arabs do not share the same spaces. Particularly, Kleber always acts in closed spaces, while Sulaymān moves in diverse spaces. The visual potential of theatre is used to comment on the difference between the two groups. On the one hand, the focus on Sulaymān's actions is accentuated by his spatial freedom. On the other hand, Kleber's actions are marked by their location which places him in need of safety. Certainly, attributing a character a specific kind of space contributes to the definition of his actions and to the character himself.

Similarly, the differentiated use of the stage creates different modalities of narration according to one or more characters. Namely, the distribution of the space multiplies the modalities of narration to discriminate two parallel distinct stories that eventually converge. Such a creation of two modalities of narration according to the two stories becomes significantly important if compared to Ğabartī's narration which strictly follows a chronological order divided by the different years and months and maintains a certain thematic coherence. Moreover, the transformation from the lone story of the hypotext to the double story of the hypertext is marked more by the fact that Ğabartī does not allow a place for Sulaymān and the students from al-Azhar as well as for the life of the brigands. Henceforth, the second story is an innovation of the play, and its own ways of exposition settle its existence. The audience can explore the inner reality of Sulaymān and al-Azhar which had been ignored by Ğabartī, while the circumstances of the Frenchmen's actions are embedded in their own reality.

The double stage opposes the hypotext's first person narration allowing a dialogue between two narrations of two linked stories. Providing them large spaces on the stage as a symbol of their power, the perspective over the French does not cause empathic feeling. Moreover, contrary to

Ġabartī's narration, such a visual difference provides movement to Sulaymān which is also symbolical of his own activity in the story and which also equally contrasts the hypotext.

#### 4.4 Role-playing. Exchanging voices.

Polyphony is increased through the recurrent role-playing the characters enact within their role. As has been shown (here, 3.1), Sulaymān is keen on acting. When playing the role of different characters, the hero is providing a plurality of selected voices. The masks Sulaymān wears represent different cases. They range from typical characters (the brigand, the miser, the old woman behaving like a young lady, the jester) to animals (the donkey), fictive characters (the witch, the ogre, the *sitt al-ḥusn* - fairy-tale princess or heroine) and specific persons (Bonaparte) (MSH: 103-5).<sup>49</sup>

Amongst these reenactments, the old woman behaving like a young lady is a reenactment of a reenactment which confers a double level to the performance:

سليمان: (...) (... في قناع العجوز المتصايبية) يتوشلون إلى أن أتشوج. ولكن بعدهم! لا أتشوج إلا على كفي.  
أشم النبي حار شني. هيء هيء هيء هيء.<sup>50</sup>

MSH: 104

SULAYMĀN, [...] *in the mask of the old lady doing the girl*: They're begging me to marry them. They wish! I'd only marry if I feel like it. The name of the Prophet protects me! Ha ha ha.

Furthermore, the character of the old lady who has embellished herself to seem younger is the famous instance Pirandello uses to explain the difference between comic and humoristic (Pirandello 1908).<sup>51</sup>

Making use of - temporally incoherent - main dramatic references, Sulaymān is a conscious actor. Indeed, he is aware of the power of masks and, consequently, of the mask-maker:

سليمان: أنظر الى هذا الرجل يصنع للناس وجوها غير وجوهم. (...) يستطع وحده أن يمون مدينة كاملة بما يكفيها من الرياء.

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<sup>49</sup> The series of re-enacted characters closely reminds us of Peachum's performance in Faraġ's play *Ġarāmiyyāt 'Atwa Abū Maṭwa* (1990).

<sup>50</sup> Note that the pronunciation of the sounds "s" and "z" as "š" reproduces the misspelling of an old person.

<sup>51</sup> Faraġ affirmed that he was fascinated by Pirandello (Faraġ [1991] 2002: 41 and Amin 2008, 4). Other intertextual references are studied here (E).

SULAYMĀN: Look at this man who makes faces for the people without their faces. [...] One is able to provide to an entire city the adulation it needs.

And Sulaymān knows the mask-maker's servility:

سليمان: ولكنك تصنع هذا الوجه للرزق ولا للفن. فضباطهم يحبون أن يلبسوا وجه بونايرته ويتشبهون به. وبينما هو في جبال النمسا يصرخ (في قناع بونايرته): " إلى الأمام! المجد أو الموت!!" فيسقط في طرفة عين خمسة آلاف قتيل يكون وجهه هنا في قصر الأزيكية يضحك ضحكة بلهاء على رأس أبله.

MSH: 104

SULAYMĀN: But you make this face for subsistence and not for art. Because their officers like to wear the face of Bonaparte and look like him. In the meanwhile, in the Austrian mountains, he shouts (*in the mask of Bonaparte*), "Ahead! Glory or death!!" And in the blink of an eye five thousand fall dead while his face his here in the palace of al-Azbakiyya with a most idiot smile.

He expresses his thoughts and makes the other characters and the public aware of it. So, after he has played various roles, he throws the mask of the jester to the mask-maker telling him that the jester's mask is his face (MSH: 105).

Sulaymān enacting the judge in front of Kleber (MSH: 37) is another instance of role-playing. It prefigures the end of the play, where Sulaymān will confront his enemy proceeding to the murder, namely, with his final judgment. As has been seen above, Sulaymān also plays the role of the enemy when he emulates Napoleon (104).

Kleber too plays the role of Bonaparte when he is announced at the French ball as the "second conqueror of Egypt" (MSH: 29) and a little later he calls himself the "conqueror of Egypt," while this is the title attributed to Napoleon. "Yet Kleber lives the lie that he is indeed the primary leader and constantly underplays the role of Napoleon" (Amin 2008, 93). On the other hand, Hiddāya, another main character, plays Kleber: he wears the tricorne and maintains that it makes him a more respected thief since, according to him, French are at the top of the hierarchy of criminals (MSH: 49 and 72-3).

Repeated role-playing enables a refraction of voices from one character to the other. Role-playing infringes one character's self and reproduces it through reenactment of others. Allowing voices to be exchangeable, role-playing reveals characters' consciousness of the multiplicity of

the points of view while its metadramatic charge keeps the public aware that they are watching a performance.

#### 4.5. Hamlet and Saladin. Intertextual voices of heroes.

##### 4.5.1 Hamlet's words.

Many have seen in Sulaymān and, more generally, in the whole play elements that evoke Hamlet (see Litvin 2011, 113). For Sulaymān's aiming at attaining justice disregarding reality, Louis 'Awaḍ has seen in Sulaymān "a strange mixture of Joan of Arc – who had voices crowding her head - and Hamlet – who was filled up with questions and a quest for truth between contradictions of the existence and life" ('Awaḍ 2002, 79). As has already been mentioned (see I.3), Muḥammad shares many of his traits with Horatio, Hamlet's faithful friend. Both Hamlet and Sulaymān want to kill the usurper (Claudius and Kleber). Also, similar articular passages of the play are reminiscent of *Hamlet*. For instance, when Sulaymān makes his friends swear that they will not reveal his plan:

محمد: ما بك؟ أنت مريض؟ ..

سليمان: نعم..

محمد: ما بك؟ تكلم..

أحمد: نعرضه على طبيب.

سليمان: لن أشفى..

عبد الله: ما هذا الألغاز؟ .. أخزى الله شيطانك..

سليمان: دوائي عزيز..

أحمد: أيا ما كان..

محمد: أنت تهزل كعهدنا بك.

سليمان: لا.. لا.. هذه المرة لا..

عبد الله: أ يكون الولد عاشقا؟

أحمد: ما هو دواؤك.. موعد غرام؟

سليمان: شش أقسموا على المصحف ألا تنفوها بكلمة، ولا همسة، ولا غمزة عين، ولا هزة رأس.. أقسموا..

MSH: 63-4

MUḤAMMAD: What do you have? Are you sick?...

SULAYMĀN: Yes...

MUḤAMMAD: What do you have? Speak...

AḤMAD: Let's bring him to a doctor.

SULAYMĀN: I won't heal...



‘ABD ALLĀH: What’s all this mystery? May God humiliate your evil.  
SULAYMĀN: My cure is precious...  
AḤMAD: Whatever it is...  
MUḤAMMAD: You are joking as usual.  
SULAYMĀN: No... no... not this time.  
‘ABD ALLĀH: Is the boy in love?  
AḤMAD: What’s your cure... a date?  
SULAYMĀN: Shsh! Swear on the Quran that you won’t utter a word, a whisper, a wink,  
nod... swear...

The reiteration of the demand for an oath closely resembles Hamlet’s oath with his friends Horatio and Marcellus:

HORATIO: Good my lord, tell it.  
HAMLET: No. You’ll reveal it. [...]  
And now, good friends,  
As you are friends, scholars and soldiers,  
Give me one poor request.  
HORATIO: What is ’t, my lord? We will.  
HAMLET: Never make known what you have seen tonight.  
HORATIO, MARCELLUS: My lord, we will not.  
HAMLET: Nay, but swear ’t.  
HORATIO: In faith, my lord, not I.  
MARCELLUS: Nor I, my lord, in faith.  
HAMLET: Upon my sword.  
MARCELLUS: We have sworn, my lord, already.  
HAMLET: Indeed, upon my sword, indeed.

*Hamlet*,<sup>52</sup> Act III, Scene 5

Yet, more significant is the similarity between Sulaymān’s hesitation in killing his enemy and Hamlet’s monologue “to be or not to be:”

سليمان: وجائزتي الصحيحة هي المعرفة الكاملة.. وأين لبشر ضعيف بها! فلا قاضي القضاة، ولا أولياء الله  
الصالحون ولا حتى ذلك المجتمع العلمي الفرنسي الذي زعموه يحصى دبيب الكواكب في السماء، يستطيع  
أن يحكم ويعرف أن الحكم صحيح.  
أن أقتل.. ذلك أمر بسيط. ضربة واحدة في وسط الصدر باليمين بينما الذراع الأخرى تحتضن.. وإن حادت  
الأولى فالثانية لن تحيد. وبعدها. العدالة أم الظلم؟

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<sup>52</sup> I have taken an adapted to Modern English version of *Hamlet*.

SULAYMĀN: My real award is full knowledge. And how could a weak human being acquire it completely... for nor the chief judges, nor the righteous *awlīā'* of God, not even the French Scientific Society claimed to be able to calculate the planets' movement in the sky, judge and find out the right judgment. To kill... this is a simple thing. One hit in the middle of the chest with the right arm while the other arm hugs... and if the first one failed, the second won't. And after that. Justice or oppression?

This is the question.

HAMLET:

To be, or not to be? That is the question -  
 Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer  
 The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,  
 Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,  
 And, by opposing, end them? To die, to sleep -  
 No more - [...]  
 For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,  
 Th' oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,  
 The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,  
 The insolence of office, and the spurns  
 That patient merit of th' unworthy takes,  
 When he himself might his quietus make  
 With a bare bodkin?

*Hamlet*, Act III, Scene 3

The famous expression "this is the question" is a clear sign that Sulaymān's soliloquy is inspired by Hamlet's. If the question is different - life for Hamlet and justice and knowledge for Sulaymān -, both Hamlet and Sulaymān list several people who act contrary to their purpose and both anticipate in their mind their action (death in the form of long sleep for Hamlet and stabbing Kleber for Sulaymān).

Apart from precise quotations, like in *Hamlet*, in Faraġ's play, a dilemma exists, and justice is concerned. However, a main difference between the two protagonists is that, contrary to Hamlet who represents the paralysis of will, Sulaymān is a symbol of total will. He does not ask himself if he wants to be or not. He cannot avoid himself being, despite his friends' suggestion and consequences of his actions.

Faraḡ plants an intellectual hero of potential tragic proportions and with distinct Hamletian echoes. [...] All Faraḡ's efforts to invest his hero with Hamletian features - a meditative cast of mind, a rich imagination and a predilection for clowning in moments of crisis - and to develop his obsession with justice into a moral dilemma remain purely verbal, superficial and come to naught.

Selaiha 2004

Even if Sulaymān's cogitations on universal justice indeed sound incongruous, these citations act like "emblems of psychological depth, quick signals that Sulaymān is full-fledged rational moral subject" for simple gestures can be sufficient to an audience who already knows *Hamlet* (Litvin 2011, 113).

Hamlet works as a symbol, so that Faraḡ does not need to expand the comparison between Sulaymān and Hamlet to produce Hamletian traits for his protagonist and it also provides another voice to Sulaymān. In the scenes depicted above, reference is enough to identify Hamlet's expressions. It is as if Sulaymān was speaking toward Hamlet, too. In words that double their charge through intertextual loans, Sulaymān speaks with a second distinguished voice that corroborates his own.

#### **4.5.2 Sulaymān plays Saladin. The reference to an historical myth... and to the President.**

The first time Sulaymān is onstage, he is playing the part of Saladin talking with Richard the Lionheart (see I.3.1 for the entire quote and its translation). Saladin and Richard the Lionheart represent respectively the Muslim world and the Christian world. Hence, Sulaymān's monologue draws a poetical parallelism between his mission and Saladin's action. Since the confront is obtained through the stands of two great heroes, and not with battles and clashes between soldiers, this scene is "the spirit of epics" ('Awaḡ 2002, 80).

Apart from the symbolic value the scene could have, the choice of precisely Saladin as the hero representing the Muslim/Arab defense must be inscribed in the context of the production of the play as the image of Saladin in modern Egypt acquires specific meanings.<sup>53</sup> Indeed, in the modern period, the image of Saladin has undergone a process of revision that has made of him an Arab hero for several reasons. Emmanuel Sivan shows that Saladin has some recurrent features: he is the unifier, the exemplar leader and the liberator. In Nasser's times, he was

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<sup>53</sup> On the Mythification of History through intertextual references, see Mehler's study on Amīn al-Rayḡanī's *Naḡnu wa-Hārūn al-Rašīd* (Mehler 1999).

promoted as the “champion of Pan-Arabism” (1995, 27), even though he was a Kurd (42-3). Also, the eagle that represented him first became the emblem of the Arab Liberation flag (1953) and then appeared in a short-lived flag for the United Arab Republic (1958-61).

Transformation of the character’s image into the hero of important contemporary Arabic issues must be identified in Literature from the end of the Nineteenth Century and the beginning of the Twentieth, especially in Faraḥ Anṭūn’s play *al-Sulṭān Salāḥ al-Dīn wa mamlakat Urūṣalīm* (Sultan Saladin and the Kingdom of Jerusalem, 1914). The construction of the image of the virtuous, liberating and unifying chief comes out of the Muslim prince idealized by the ancient sources (Deheuvels 2000, 189-203).

Thanks also to a contribution from the theatre, during the twentieth century the myth of Saladin had undergone an evolution; when Faraḡ wrote his play, Saladin had just been used in a popular film. Two years before *Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī*, the Christian Egyptian filmmaker Yūsuf Šahīn in his film *Saladin* (1963) also used a certain number of topics for political aims. Faraḡ himself, as a child at school, had performed in a “didactic” play called *Salāḥ al-Dīn wa malik al-malak al-Inḡlīz*, Saladin and the King of the English (Faraḡ 1998 [2002], 28).

Saladin embodies law and justice against a religious war. His fight is against the economical profits of the West (Eddé 2008, 581-2). Indeed, the Saladin from the film closely reminds us of President Nasser. The first reference is in the protagonist’s name: the title of Saladin was *al-malik al-nāṣir* (The Victorious King). Other references to the President are manifest: he has the same high forehead, same gaze, same profile (Sivan 1995, 23). Aside from the Arabic laicism, all the forces unite in making a mirror of the president, since he is the unifying force for all Arabs (Mobarak 2006, 241, Sivan 1995 and Semaan 1979).

In 1976, another play about Saladin confirmed the tradition. In Šarqāwī’s *Šalāḥ al-Dīn, al-Naṣr al-Aḥmar* (Saladin, the Red Eagle), “Saladin is painted as the champion of the people against all forms of oppression, and in his fight against the Crusaders, as the embodiment of all the noble ideals of chivalry inspired by his Islamic faith” (Badawi 1987, 219). In 1988, Faraḡ himself will use again Saladin as a character for his play *‘Awdat al-‘ard* (The Return of the Land), written for the official celebration of the return of Taba to Egypt. The play is settled in the present, but Saladin appears to explain that men should trust more their own contemporaries and call less on past heroes (Faraḡ [1988] 1989, 31-5). The advice comes from a character that has become the symbol of heroism.

Like Hamlet, Saladin's reference offers another voice for Sulaymān. Speaking like Saladin, the play's protagonist channels his ancestor's mythical ideals that multiply the voices within the play. Apart from the mythical image, behind that character stands a person in flesh and blood and the audience should be aware of that. On the other side, intertextual references in Ğabartī's account are original documents. As has been seen, Ğabartī explains that, despite the poor language used, he decided to insert the documents of the trial in his account because people were interested by them, so they had an impact on the reality. In Ğabartī's perspective, their value in his work is that they are original evidence, in the details they contain and because they give the possibility of judgement to the reader who can directly approach them (and ascertain the French fair trial).

\* \* \*

When Ğabartī wrote his *History*, he sympathized with the French more than with the Ottomans. Reporting the partiality of Ğabartī's narration, André Raymond claimed the lack of an account of the occupation written by a man with less prejudices (1998, 5). Through his play, it seems that Faraġ wanted to replace Ğabartī's single vision with a more democratic representation of the story, where different voices have the right to speak.

Language, with its different registers, style and choice (Arabic or French) creates variation in the play. Contrary to the hypotext, difference multiplies modalities of expression according to the role attached to the character (e.g.: the chorus) or to the function of the dialogue (e.g.: the French). However, language is also useful in providing voices with a sound of contemporary reality (e.g.: Sulaymān, sheikh Sādāt).

Multiple perspectives are inherent to theatre and are represented by the different characters onstage, but in *Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī*, a chorus claims to be a narrator. Being a plural narrator and a privileged interlocutor of the protagonist, the chorus firmly opposes Ğabartī's singular *superior* position about facts and acquaints the public with the truth of the narration.

Another instance of the polyphony is the rational use of the stage. At the beginning of the play, the double stage allows two simultaneous narratives which are directly comparable thanks to the proximity and the shared temporal space. At the same time, the use of the stage mirrors the existence of a double pulpit: one allocated for the foreigners and one for the locals.

Recurrent role-playing within the role allows for "characters exchanging voices" which increases the polyphony of the play since the public is constantly reminded that every mask

produces a voice. Sulaymān, Kleber and Ḥiddāya play different roles, namely they are able to speak through the voice of the other. Sulaymān is a champion: he plays himself in the future (as Kleber's judge), his enemy (emulating Napoleon) and his counterpart (a brigand). He can *now* speak with multiple voices, while his point of view was ignored in the hypotext.

Sulaymān in speaking Hamlet's words charges the story with a referential intertextual voice. Similarly, Sulaymān playing Saladin includes the powerful voice of the myth and the reference to the President. In both cases, the economy of the play is safe, since the cross reference is telling. Intertextuality in the play is used in the form of references working as a second voice that widens and validates Sulaymān's actions. On the contrary, in the case of Ğabartī's account, the inclusion of trial documents serves in defining and detailing the facts.

From the authorial narrative of Ğabartī, where his point of view is the only existent one and is frequently apparent, Faraġ provides his play with a multiplicity of voices that bring new materials to deconstruct the hypotext.

## 5. Refilling - Symbolism and performativity. Fighting for a change.

In the final paragraph of the foreword, *Sulaymān: mind and dagger*, Faraġ affirms that the essence of Sulaymān's heroism consists of having presented “in one single act, at one moment, a conclusive answer to the first challenge of European imperialism to the East in our modern era” (MSH: 18).<sup>54</sup> If these are the aspects of the story Faraġ wanted to highlight (or create), there are many layers of meaning obtruding his work.

### 5.1 An absolute value: justice.

By nature, tragedy is keen to make sense out of events:

The reciprocal traditional relation between History and tragedy makes it difficult for us wholly to separate one from the other in our consciousness. History magnifies an action to create a properly « tragic » effect, while it also provides the verisimilitude necessary for us to take a play seriously. Tragedy, in turn, gives History a way of making « sense » out of what might otherwise be a chaos of events; (...).

Lindenberger 1975, 73

So, the play focuses its attention on the reasons and the context of the action. If Sulaymān's act (a murder) is seen as a negative action, the reasons of it can create a new meaning. For that, a translation of perception is needed and, in *Sulaymān Ḥalabī*, this occurs through the presence of high symbolism.

#### 5.1.1 Legal oppression.

As has been mentioned above (I.1), Ġabartī is fascinated by the procedures of the French administration. In his account of the strange event, he finds it worthwhile to include the entirety of the trial documents since they show a justice-based government which he admires (Ġ: 150-1). Ġabartī was aware of the modern spirit of the French revolution and the Napoleonic era and its slogans of liberty, equality and fraternity. Despite this, his (third version) of the *History* is addressed to Ottomans and frequently despises the French. He takes French as an example of “quite different of what we saw later of the deeds of the riff-raff of soldiers claiming to be

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<sup>54</sup> The original quotes as follow:

(...) يقدم بفعل واحد، وفي لحظة خاطفة، إجابة شاقية على أول تحديات الاستعمار الأوروبي للشرق عصرنا الحديث (MSH: 18).

Muslims and fighters of the Holy War who killed people and destroyed human lives merely to satisfy their animal passions” (T: 182, Ğ: 151).

Faraġ, instead, focuses on the weaknesses of such an organized system. In the foreword, he maintains that the whole trial was a set-up and it was made possible since it was convenient either for Sulaymān or for the French, too. The play shows this theory. Particularly, behaviours of the French administration with regards to the Egyptian population appear as oppressive practices masked with a sense of legitimacy. In the preface of the play, Faraġ remarks how Sulaymān was beaten according to the local costumes. The death sentence (by impalement) is so known that Faraġ does not even have to quote it in the foreword of the play or show it in the play.

Most of the French characters’ actions displays them overpowering the people. Kleber talking with his men, soldiers exhibiting their power, French women claiming their rights over Egypt are all evident negative actions whose impact is increased by the opposition with al-Azhar’s cautious movements. Indeed, the use of the stage increases the contrast between the Azharite scholars and the French soldiers as well as between Sulaymān and Kleber. Likewise, the chorus exposes the harsh modalities of French repression during the play’s incipit. The harsh penalties imposed on sheikh Sādāt are a clear instance of the oppressor’s measures. Indeed, those penalties are not meant to be payed since it is evident that the sheikh does owe that money. They are meant, instead, to oppress him throughout his life (MSH: 30-1). The town-criers’ call for sheikh Sādāt’s fines displays the French’s overpower.

Kleber affirms that hate is the natural harvest for an invading army during a “colonisation” (مستعمرة, MSH: 34). The elimination of weapons cannot be effective since weapons will be created when pride persists (35) and humiliation is the only way to disarm the people (36). In this regard, notice that history books and similar research report that keeping weapons was forbidden, but weapons never totally disappeared in Cairo.<sup>55</sup> Thus, in the play, the mentioning of weapons being created by people during the first revolution (35) is not historically plausible. Instead, it serves the fiction in creating another everlasting symbol of the resistance of the people, since they can create their defense from deprivation.

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<sup>55</sup> Raymond relates of six-hundred kilograms of powder found in August 1799 in the house of *hāġġ* after a denunciation by the neighbours (1998, 360). One wonders if French soldiers would have been searching for a small knife.



In the story of the play, the French epitomise the oppressors: when peasants complain that the French did not leave anything for them (MSH: 49), Ḥiddāya admonishes them to obey his orders like they do with French as there is no difference between him and them (49). The idea is reiterated by the chorus' statement at the end of the first act (53). Also, his men search peasants like the French soldiers do with Sulaymān and Sa'd (52).

The oppressor assumes his racial superiority. In the quip of the first soldier who affirms that a Syrian cannot deal with knowledge stands one of the many symbols of French power oppression:

الجندي الأول: المعرفة يقول! أي شيء هي المعرفة يا حلبي؟ أتدري ما هي؟

MSH: 42

FIRST SOLDIER: Knowledge, he says! What is knowledge, Alepin! Do you know what is it?

The oppressor is clearly distinguished from the oppressed. Indeed, symbols exhibiting identity are disseminated through the play in different forms: the French hold flags (MSH: 49), the Marseillaise sounds when Kleber enters, they organize balls. They reveal to be blind to the other's culture. Notice that the women are astonished that the locals do not rest on Sunday (29). Language is another sign of their extraneousness. Soldiers shout words in French when marching (45), French words are recurrent (see I.4.1) and locals are forced to use the language of the oppressor when communicating with them. Sa'd and 'Alī complain that they do not even understand while they are distributing leaflets in French. Ironically, 'Alī affirms that he will end up on the gibbet for hanging papers in a language he cannot even read (57). 'Alī's statement reveals to be partially true as he is caught and ends up in prison. Though, he will not die on a gibbet. The set-up of the trial will not take place since his opposition to the oppressor's system drives him to death before it can take place. So, 'Alī is caught and taken to prison, the jailer explains to him the procedure that will follow and how he will be treated "according to his rights" in front of the court:

السجان: ستري أننا قوم نحتكم للعقل، ونوفر لك حقوق السجين، لا نأخذك بفعاليتك في ساعتها، بل نقبض عليك ونسألك فتجيب ونكتب بذلك فحصا بعد فحص، ونعيد السؤال من عليك.. وندقق في تدوين اجابتك. وندعك فترة، ثم نعيد السؤال من جديد- حسب الأصول- حتى تعترف..

علي: لا داعي لكل هذه العناء.. أنا معترف..

السجان: عظيم.. بعد ذلك ندخل في مرحلة سؤالك عن أصحابك من هم، المرة بعد المرة. ولن يتجاسر أحد

على ضربك أو اهانتك أبدا ان اعترفت. أما في المحكمة فسيخاطبك الجميع بكل احترام. تقدم للقاضي وأنصحك ألا تشكو هيئة السجن له. نعم سيستمع لك، ولكن ذلك لن يكون في صالحك أبدا..

MSH: 59-60

JAILER: You will see that we are a people who judge with reason. And we will provide you with prisoner's rights. We don't take you for your deed in the spot, but we catch you, we interrogate you and you answer, we write each examination, we start again with the questioning... we check the recording of your answers, we let you rest, then we start again with the questioning – properly – until you confess...

'ALĪ: There is no need of all this trouble... I confess...

JAILER: Great... after that we enter the second phase: to ask you who your companions are, again and again. Nobody will dare beat you or ever offend you if you have confessed, and everyone will address you in full respect. You go forward to the judge and I advise you not to complain about prison with him. Yes, you could, but that wouldn't be in your favor at all.

Such explanations sound like instructions of a set-up in which the end is already decided upon and the prisoner just must play his role. Twice the officer affirms that they are “a people who judge using the mind” (MSH: 59 and 60) while he repeats twice to 'Alī that he must just admit he is miserable (“غلبان” 60). For the sake of appearance, everything will seem done according to laws, but truth is revealed in this dialogue, thanks to the play. Since he does not want to conform to the system, 'Alī will not play the part and will die before the trial, causing the orchestrator's grief which, in line with his character, turns immediately into rage (62).

Differences between French and Egyptians are also represented by the new techniques of administration the French own which often raise curiosity and fear amongst the locals. Egyptians listen to town-criers in their houses, from behind their windows. Sulaymān is surprised by the soldiers' deeds: they clean their guns and look into things Sa'd explains him are powerful tools allowing to see close what is far. He does not even have a name for “field glasses.” Faced with the knowledge of the modern advantages that the French possess, Sa'd feels powerless (MSH: 43-4). On the other side, French manners create fascination. For instance, Ḥiddāya respects General Kleber since he reads and writes in French and his men obey him with good manners and decency. His admiration for the General is such that prevents him from stealing from his men (MSH: 73).

Ḥiddāya's daughter is the clearest symbol of the oppression. She does not have a proper name, nor a defined identity. Without a mother and with a father who does not take care of her, she hides her real identity behind the features of the oppressor, becoming completely oppressed.

Her absence in the hypotext is the first sign of her important value in the play. The girl fools herself by drinking wine which she at first confuses with water (MSH: 78). She tries to trick the soldiers by pretending to be Ḥiddāya the highwayman, and then she thinks the wine made her imagine the presence of the soldiers and sits to count the money she has stolen. In that moment, soldiers recognize she is a girl and catch her. They speak of her as if she were an object (89). Next time she appears, at the beginning of Act III, the girl is adorned with jewels, her femininity is underlined by fully garnished fine French clothes (MSH: 93). She uses French words (*décolleté, gentil*, 93). She has adopted a Christian concept of redemption by asking forgiveness. She imitates French women at a point that she has even appropriated racial ideas:

شاب؟ عربي؟ تقولين أسمر؟ ياه! ما أحلاه! ما رأيك فيه؟! يا ليت! يا ليت!

MSH: 93

A boy? Arab? You say black? Ah! How nice! What do you think of him? Oh, I wish!

She seems to have forgotten she is Arab. So, while French are “gentil,” Arabs are rude (MSH: 93). Her discourse supposes she started to drink alcohol. Then she keeps dancing for French soldiers who clap their hands. She has even taken a French name. As she announces to Sulaymān, who could not provide a name for “her sister” when talking with sheikh Šarqāwī, now her name is Marguerite (111)<sup>56</sup>, and it is this sign that her identity has been created through the invader’s culture.

The use of reason to solve questions that fit exactly politics’ needs seems to come as a critique of Ğabartī who, instead, admires the rationality of the French, “those judging according to intelligence” (Ĝ: 151). On the other hand, some of Faraġ’s ideas agree with Ğabartī and contrast historiographic studies. To Raymond, Ğabartī oversays when he sees in the French expedition « une sorte d’entreprise délibérée de démoralisation de l’Egypte, par l’abaissement du statut de l’Islam, par l’encouragement donné à la dissolution des mœurs, par le bouleversement de l’édifice social. » (1998, 318). While, certainly, one must deny the declared objective of the French expedition, namely the Egyptian cultural elevation (Ibid.).

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<sup>56</sup> Marguerite is also the emancipated maid the son of a rich landlord Ḥasan falls in love with in Muḥammad Taymūr’s play *‘Uṣfūr fī l-qafaṣ* (A bird in the cage, 1918). Maybe the choice of this name is a tribute to the author Faraġ admired (see Faraġ 1966, 55-9).

### 5.1.2 The mind and the knife: weapons to get free.

In a context where oppression is legal, the hero has but few effective weapons in his hands. In this regard, the title of the foreword to the play is meaningful: *Sulaymān: mind and dagger*. Classical weapons for a fighter are first and above all mental and then physical force. The weapons Sulaymān owns are shown clearly at the beginning of the play where they are exposed as powerful symbols. When Sulaymān travels to Egypt, French soldiers stop him and send him back because he was carrying a knife while weapons were forbidden for locals. The whole dialogue is highly symbolic. Indeed, it has been created on purpose since this episode is an innovation from the hypotext in which Sulaymān never mentions a stop on his way to Cairo and such checkpoints are more reminiscent of Faraġ's time than that of the Napoleonic expedition (see later for a discussion about checkpoints). Only the ban on weapons is an historical fact which Ġabartī gives account of.

First, a soldier asks Sulaymān his name, then his provenance, his destination and the reasons of his trip:

الجندي الأول: ما بغيتك في القاهرة؟  
سليمان: الأزهر الشريف. أطلب العلم.  
الجندي الأول: العلم؟ يقول العلم.. (يلتفت لزميله) أسمعت يا جاك. ذاهب إلى السوريين يتعلم. ماذا تتعلم؟  
سليمان: المعرفة..  
الجندي الأول: المعرفة يقول! أي شيء هي المعرفة يا حلبي؟ أتدري ما هي؟  
سليمان: شجرة..  
الجندي الأول: شجرة الخطيئة! مكانك لا تتقدم.  
الجندي الثاني: فتشه.  
الجندي الأول: (يفتشه) ليس معه شيء، ١٤ قرشا وسكين.  
الجندي الثاني: سكين؟ أرني. ماذا تفعل بهذا السكين في القاهرة؟ تتعلم به؟  
سليمان: أتشحن به القلم لأكتب.  
الجندي الثاني: لا مرور لك.. عد من حيث أتيت.. اذهب!  
الجندي الأول: لا تعده يذهب يا جاك. رجل يطلب الأزهر.. لعله خطر. ومعه سكين..  
الجندي الثاني: ليذهب إلى الجحيم. ما لنا به. غيره.

MSH: 41-2

FIRST SOLDIER: What are you looking for in Cairo?

SULAYMĀN: The holy al-Azhar. I call for science.

FIRST SOLDIER: Science? He says science? (He turns to his companion) Did you hear, Jacques? Syrians looking for science. What do you learn?

SULAYMĀN: Knowledge...

FIRST SOLDIER: Knowledge, he says! What is knowledge, Alepin! Do you know what is it?

SULAYMĀN: A tree...

FIRST SOLDIER: The tree of the original sin! At your place. Don't come on.

SECOND SOLDIER: Search the man.

FIRST SOLDIER, *searches him*: He does not have anything. 14 piastres and a knife.

SECOND SOLDIER: A knife? Let me see. What do you do with this knife in Cairo? You learn with it?

SULAYMĀN: I sharpen my pencil with it to write.

SECOND SOLDIER: You won't pass. Go back from where you come. Go!

FIRST SOLDIER: Don't let him go back, Jacques. A man that seeks for al-Azhar... maybe he is dangerous. He has a knife...

SECOND SOLDIER: Let him go to Hell. We don't have anything to do with him. Next one.

So, when asked about the reason for his trip, Sulaymān's idea appears clear: he is seeking knowledge. For that, he needs a pencil, while the knife is functional to the pencil. For an audience who knows the suite of the story, the metaphor is clear: the knife (the weapon that Sulaymān will use to stab Kleber) is a tool to achieve a more important goal than killing Kleber (implementing justice). Killing Kleber, instead, is what the hypotext considers Sulaymān's purpose.

The recurrent motif of the tree in the play validates the theme of knowledge. In a study on intertextuality in the Contemporary Arabic Literature, Luc-Willy Deheuvelds has retraced intertextual references concerning the motif of the tree as a common feature of the sixties (Deheuvelds 2006, 33-44). In those texts, the hyperonym "tree" tends to have universal symbolic meanings. Contrary to what one would expect, hyponyms defining the tree's species does not have a realistic function but are used to generate emotional reactions (34-6) or they are linked to a "symbolique d'époque" (37).

In Faraġ's theatrical production, that is the case of *al-Nār wa al-Zaytūn* (The Fire and the Olive Tree, 1970), a play about the Palestinian occupation where the olive tree stands as a symbol of Palestine (e.g., Faraġ [1970], 140). In this play as well, when Sulaymān acts as Saladin, the "green olive" indicates Palestine's fertility (MSH: 31). As for the intertextual reference of the

tree in *Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī*, it is clarified by the soldier who interrogates Sulaymān during the checkpoint, since the soldier mentions the tree of sin, which is, after the Genesis, a common symbol of knowledge (MSH: 156).

The tree accompanies Sulaymān throughout the play. When the hero first appears, playing the role of Saladin four years before the event, a meagre tree stands by him and he holds a tree branch in his hand as a sword (MSH: 31). Then the tree is defined as a symbol of knowledge in the checkpoint scene, and it appears again at the end of the play. In the garden of the General's residence in al-Azbakīya, Sulaymān is next to a tree. This time, the tree is green and luxuriant ("شجرة عملاقة ورافة" MSH: 147): now Sulaymān has achieved knowledge. The presence of the tree is remarked by Sulaymān himself who declares that he needs get his breath back under that tree (147). Under the tree, Sulaymān exchanges with the chorus (147-150).

On the other side, Kleber "infatuated, observes the immense tree" ("كليبير يلاحظ الشجرة العظيمة" "بافتتان" MSH: 151) and the chorus asks him some questions about its longevity. Kleber wants to carve his name on it, but the chorus apprises him that it will be Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī's tree. It is under that tree that Sulaymān will kill the General, stealing Kleber's chance to achieve eternity through his name left on the bark of the tree. Debs has seen it as the ideal place to illustrate the hero's triumph in acquiring the knowledge he seeks. Sitting under the protective shade of the tree, Sulaymān elaborates on the purgation which occurs ensuing the act (Debs 1993, 233). Interestingly, the tree, which is an innovation from the hypotext, has been given a leading position in the film too: when, during the process, in a flashback, Sulaymān recalls how he killed General Kleber, he is shown observing the general from behind a huge tree.

The fictive construction of factual material clearly proves that History in Faraġ's play is a narrativized past. "Far from being one code among many that a culture may utilize for endowing experience with meaning, narrative is a metacode, a human universal on the basis of which transcultural messages about the nature of a shared reality can be transmitted." (White 1980, 6). Faraġ's play openly adopted "a perspective that looks out on the world and reports it" (Ibid., 7). As we have deduced from the author's statement in the foreword of the play, the author intended to modify the perception of History. After this analysis, we can add that he not only denied the past narration, but he imagined a new narrative for the story.

Faraġ's theme is a "rational justification of the political assassination of a tyrant" (Badawi 1987, 175). Drama is used as a medium for expressing a general truth like in al-Ḥakīm's plays, adding that "history being only a framework" and that the playwright relies on the historical aspect

merely as a “scaffolding” from which to relay his message (Ibid., 174). Sulaymān’s decision, set against the harrowing reports of terrible oppression, mass devastation, of looting, burning, killing and ruthless extortion, seems perfectly natural and morally justified (Selaiha 2004). Sulaymān’s fight is not the story of this scholar as an individual, but rather, a demonstration of the struggle of a people against their oppressors, which is true for Egypt, but also for any other reality, no matter how far in time or space (al-Naqqāš 2002, 71). Indeed, rebellion against colonialism is the natural right of the oppressed and must never be neglected (Rāḡib 1982, 51). The universality of the situation shown in the play has been proved by different interpretations of it. Sulaymān’s quest is the same of Saladin’s. Lozy’s revival in 2004 was manifestly referring to Iraq but could also apply to Palestine (Selaiha 2004).

Certainly, in its final lines, the play contains a message for the administrators of justice. In a sort of moral for the story, the chorus addresses to real judges inviting them to judge according to justice and not to law (see I.3.2, MSH: 157). Once again, the play settles its meaning against its hypotext. If for Ġabartī the French trial was a useful example for judges to admonish practices of direct killing applied by Ottomans (Ġ: 151, see above), for Faraġ, the French trial - that the play does not show, but the audience knows – supports his idea that judgment must be fair, which does not always correspond to being lawful.<sup>57</sup>

The admonishment of the chorus is more meaningful if compared to the similar admonishment of the commissioner-rapporteur Sartelon:

هذه الرواية المنقولة في اليوم السابع والعشرين من شهر بربريال السنة الثامنة من إقامة الجمهور الفرنسي عن الوكيل سارتلون بحضور مجمع القضاة المفوضين لمحاكمة قاتل ساري عسكر العام كلهر وأيضًا لمحاكمة شركاء القاتل المذكور: يا أيها القضاة إن المناحة العامة والحزن العظيم الذي نحن مشتملون بهما الآن يخبران بعظم الخسران الذي حصل الآن بعسكرنا لأن ساري عسكرنا في وسط نصراته ومماجده ارتفع بغتة من بيننا تحديد قاتل رذيل ومن يد مستأجرة من كبراء ذوي الخيانة والغيرة الخبيثة (...)  
وقط ما ظهر سيئة أظهر من هذه السيئة التي أنتم محاكمون فيها من صفة الغدارين ببيان الشهود وإقرار القاتل وشركائه والحاصل كل شيء متحد ورامي الضياء المهيب لمناورة ذا القتل الكريه إننا راوي لكم سرعة الأعمال جاهد نفسي إن ظفرت لمنع غضبي منهم منها

Ġ: 175

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<sup>57</sup> Similar reflections about law and justice exist in Tawfiq al-Ḥakīm’s *Yawmiyyāt nā’ib fī l-aryāf* (Diary of a Country Prosecutor, 1937). See Deheuvelds 1987, 217-9.

On the 27<sup>th</sup> Prairial, commissioner-rapporteur Sartelon submitted his report to the commission charged with judging the assassin of commander in chief Kleber, and his accomplices.

Members of the juridical commission! The general mourning and profound grief around us sufficiently indicate how great is the loss that the army has just suffered. Our general, amidst his victories and glory, was suddenly wrenched from our midst by the dagger of a depraved assassin whose mercenary hand was directed by the greatest traitors and by wicked zeal. [...]

Never has a crime been better proved than the one whose treacherous perpetration you are called upon to judge. The depositions of the witnesses, the confessions of the assassins and his accomplices, in a word – everything dovetails to throw horrid clarity upon this infamous assassination. I am going rapidly to review facts; and to curb, if possible, the indignation they arouse in me.

T: 205-209

Both the chorus and Sartelon address the court after it has been acknowledged with facts. In the play, that follows the epic trend, no place is allowed for sentimentalism, nor for judgment or for plots. The story has been showed; at the end of it, the audience must think about it, reflect on it and (supposedly) act. As for Sartelon, his discourse needs to be a *real* argument: he first advocates for the audience's attention, and then he evidently re-arranges the story so that it can fit his purpose (see I.2).

## **5.2 Mirrors of reality. Breaking the illusion.**

Critics agree that *Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī*, although based on historical characters and events, by its universality, is a play that can represent different realities. Since the events described in the play took place in 1800, “this is an alienated history, which provides the context for the audience to observe the events from a distance to contemplate and think about what he sees before him, and to establish a link between the past and the present.” (El-Sayyid 1995, 172).

Indeed, there are many references exceeding the context of the play, especially its temporal dimension. Some are certainly done on purpose. In an alienating perspective, the epic serves the two functions: relating events to history on one level and relating to everyday life on another. Hence, historical ruptures push the audience to reflect on reality. Others, that often overlap with the first ones, create a parallel dimension where Egypt of the sixties - the context of production of the play – would have been easily recognized by the audience.

If the wink to Pirandello is only a supposition (see I.4), a reference to Brecht appears more evident. In Act I, when Sulaymān says to Maḥmūd that he had a dream in which he was a judge,



Maḥmūd asks if he had to arbitrate upon two mothers fighting over a child. Sulaymān laughs, then answers that he dreamt of Kleber instead:

سليمان: حلمت أنني أحكم في قضية كبيرة.

محمود: طفل تتنازعه امرأتان؟

سليمان: ها ها.. بل رأيت في منامي أنني أنزل درجا خفيا (ينزل إلى المشهد الأمامي الذي جمد)

MSH: 37

SULAYMĀN: I dreamt that I had to judge a prominent issue.

MAḤMŪD: A child contented between two women?

SULAYMĀN: Ha ha... But I saw during my sleepover that I was descending invisible stairs. *He descends to the frontal stage, which is frozen.*

Seeing that Faraḡ appreciated Brecht's *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* and that later on one of his plays was inspired by it,<sup>58</sup> the reference to two women claiming maternal custody over one child is most probably Brecht's play, even if the tale exists in many texts and one of them is the Bible (1 Kings 3, 16-28 – known as Salomon's judgement).

References go beyond literature. Kleber mentions Thomas Paine, the English-born American political activist who was one of the Founding Fathers of the United States. The reference to Paine alludes to a context extraneous from the play which invites the audience to abstract the whole passage from the context of the play:

كليبر: قرأت "توم بين" أكثر مما ينبغي يا مهندس.

جابلان: وما الفرق بين أن نكون عصابة لحساب الدولة وأرباب الدولة.. أو أن عصابة لحساب أنفسنا.. ما الفرق؟

كليبر: لقد جننا نؤمن تجارتنا في المنطقة. أ لا تعلم ذلك؟

جابلان: (متهكما) ولكن حصيلتنا من الحملة تجاوزت حدود أرباح التجارة الحرة.

كليبر: واذن؟..

جابلان: (جادا) يجب أن تفكر في ذلك يا جنرال ثورة الفرنسية.

MSH: 129

KLEBER: You've read Tom Payne more than you should, architect.

ĜABILĀN: What's the difference between being a gang on behalf of the State and employers of the state, or being a gang by ourselves... what's the difference?

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<sup>58</sup> *Dā'irat al-tibn al-Miṣriyya* (The Egyptian Hay Circle, 1979).

KLEBER: We came to secure our business in the region. Don't you know that?

ĜABILĀN, *sarcastic*: But our outcome from the expedition went beyond the limits of the profit of the free trade.

KLEBER: And so, what?

ĜABILĀN, *serious*: We need to think of that, General of the French Revolution.

Not only do references go beyond the context of the play through intertextual allusions (see Genette 1982, 8-9), but also the mention of the French Revolution and its principles draws from what Umberto Eco calls “the encyclopedia of the reader” (Eco 1998, 67 and 70).

History, as the audience has learnt outside fiction, is the necessary frame to contextualize the play. For instance, the ostentatious French ball at the beginning of the play is a pretention of being dominant, while (it is known that) the French occupied Egypt for only three years. Thus, through the reference to reality, such a celebration results as a role-playing, ostentation of power (Amin 2008, 94).

In this regard, we can notice that more than once the principles of the French Revolution are used in an alienated perspective. Namely, liberty in the French tongue is employed to show how the French colonialists abandoned the principles of their revolution. An evidence of French partial implementation of their principles existed in the hypotext already and Faraĝ repeatedly remarks it.

When Ĝabartī praises the method of the French trial, he adds that, during the (French) trial, Sulaymān was beaten according to the modalities of the country (“على طريق البلد” Ĝ: 155, 170 – synonymic expressions are used). Faraĝ repeats this expression twice in his foreword (MSĤ: 6 and 13). Besides, in the play, ‘Alī dies in prison and the play suggests that is because of torture. Faraĝ does not need to remember what Sulaymān’s exemplar punishment was since the audience would know that his hand was burned and that he was killed by impalement (Ĝ: 179). Hence, the reference to History comes as a response to Ĝabartī’s partial narration.

Now, in the light of what the audience knows of the principles of the French revolution, Ĝabartī’s statements sound alienated. Other issues of alienation are Sulaymān’s mask wearing (MSĤ: 103-5), which illustrates the extent of falseness hidden behind the apparent faces (El-Sayyid 1995, 174), and language (here I.4 and El-Sayyid 1995, 172-3).

In her review of El-Lozy’s revival of the play, in May 2004, Selaiha had a clear idea about Faraĝ’s intent when he wrote Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī:

It is possible that, like many of his contemporaries, Faraḡ, once he got to work on his material, could not resist, consciously or otherwise, using history as a mask through which to comment on the present. In the 1960s, memories of the British occupation of Egypt were still fresh in the minds of Faraḡ's generation and in his preface to the play he pointedly compares the assassination of Kleber in 1800 to that of the general commander of the British forces in Egypt, Sir Lee Stack, in 1924. But it is not to the British occupation that the play seems to point. The 1952 coup d'état managed to get rid of the British but not of military rule.

Selaiha 2004

When the play was written, military rule represented Nasser's presidency of the Egyptian Republic. In the description of Egyptian life under the tyrannical ruler of the French imperialists, Egyptians could recognize aspects of life under the dictatorship of Nasser (Badawi 1987, 175). At the beginning of the play, Kleber refers to himself as "the ruler of the colony" (MSH: 30); when Sulaymān says that "the only person the ruler of the colony is scared of is the writer or the artist" (MSH: 142), it cannot be said that Faraḡ is thinking of Kleber. "The man inspiring such thoughts in Sulaymān is not primary a foreign imperialist, but an absolute ruler, a despot" (Ibid., 175).

Kleber, as a negative image of the President, is flanked by a positive idea of the same person represented by the hero, Sulaymān. Sulaymān, like Nasser and like Saladin (a symbol that had already been used to represent Nasser), is an Arab fighter for justice against the Western menace. Through this double system of references reminding us of Nasser, Faraḡ could highlight both positive and negative actions of Nasser's administration.

Some scenes from the play are reminiscent of Egypt during the sixties and particularly, the impact of the government's secret service on life under despotic rule more so than the context of the play itself. Hamdi Abdel-Aziz's thesis that the metamorphoses of humans into dogs under military rule was a recurrent motif in the plays of the sixties fits well Faraḡ's work (Selaiha 2004)<sup>59</sup>:

سليمان: أهذا حياة.. التي يحيها الناس؟ (... ) فمن الحياة ما يفضله الموت (... ) أن نلبس العار ونأكل الندم وتنبت عقولنا أفكار خطيرة. وعيون شريرة ترصد الواحد كثعابين أرسلتها السحرة إلى مائدة طعامه فتصده عن الأكل، وإلى عمله فتذهله عنه، وإلى فراشه فتزرعه بالشوك. وعندئذ تفتح أبواب الجحيم! الجحيم يصبح

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<sup>59</sup> Nehad Selaiha wrote of "a recent PhD thesis, *The Worldview in the Theatre of the 1960s* by Hamdi Abdel-Aziz".

نبض الدم في العروق: اركع وادفع! قدم رجولتك للمهانة وأطفالك لأنياب الجوع وعنق جارك للمشنقة. قدم قدم! واركع ودافع! وعش.. لتملأ عينيك بالتراب وحلقك بالحجارة. عش لتتحول بفعل الساحر الفرنسي الأسود من رجل إلى كلب. وإذا بلغ بك الغيظ وقطعتك الحشرات.. لا تتأوه.. واضرب الحائط الذي تختار وتشاء بالرأس أو بالقدم ما تشاء.. ففد منحك كليبر ساري عسكر الفرنسيين أمان الحياة!!

MSH: 67-8

SULAYMĀN: Is it a life what people live? No, death is better than such a life [...]. We wear shame and eat regret and dangerous ideas dig our minds. Evil eyes follow each man like snakes loosed by wizards to his dining table to prevent him from eating and to his work to distract him from it, to his bed to plant thorns there. Then the Gates of Hell are flung open, hell becoming our daily life routine. The pulse of blood coursing in our veins seems to say: ‘Kneel and submit... Surrender your manhood to humiliation, and your children to hunger’s fangs of and your neighbor’s neck to the gallows. Come on, come on! Kneel and submit! And live... live to fill your eyes with dust and stuff your mouth with rubble... Live to be metamorphosed by the French black magician from a man to a dog. And if you are desperate and you are broken from the pain, don’t complain, but hit the wall that deceives you as you wish, with the head or with the foot. Scatter the garbage as you will, prostrate yourself to other than your creator as you will, lose face or your tears as you will... for Kleber, the French army commander has granted you life’s safety!!

Certainly, the passage describes a modern police state and is not about foreign occupation. Kleber’s name at the end of the talk sounds extraneous to the context just described, just like “French” for the black magician sounds redundant. Indeed, the singular use in the play of the daily used colloquial version of the word “French” (الفرنسيين) approaches Sulaymān to the contemporary context. Likewise, the checkpoint scenes and frisks (MSH: 41-2) are more reminiscent of Faraġ’s Egypt than of the French domination. Therefore, the play describes an experience familiar to Faraġ but alien to the historical context of the play. Like Kleber in the play rules behind the name of the French Revolution dictates, Nasser’s military dictatorship was masquerading as the rule of the people. Through symbolism, allegory and differences with the hypotext, the play criticise the system.

### **5.3 A performative utterance: the writer fighting the ruler.**

If Kleber mirrors a negative side of Nasser’s rule, while Sulaymān represents some of his positive features, the hero of the play allows for other interpretations as a real person. First, a breach in the depiction of Sulaymān can be noticed. He seems to have forgotten his Syrian identity and speaks of Cairo as if it were his country:

سليمان: هذا مكان مرتفع، خرب جدا. أستطيع أن أرى منه القاهرة كلها. ياه! ما أعظمها وما أتعسها! وطني ومنبت أفكارى وآمالي والقلب النائض لأولاد العرب. على أني كرهتك يا قاهرة. وغثيت منك.

MSH: 111-2

SULAYMĀN: Here, from this high mound of wasteland I can see the whole of Cairo. O what a great city it is, and yet how wretched! Cairo, my homeland, the source of my thoughts and hopes, the beating heart of all the Arabs. How I hate you, how you fill me with nausea.<sup>60</sup>

Sulaymān clearly thinks like a son of the Arab Nationalism. He is an Arab nationalist who sees Egypt and Syria as one nation (Amin 2008, 88). As has been seen, Sulaymān is also a hero with a deep psychology and some intellectual features. Apart from looking for justice, he is a *‘ālim* searching for knowledge and, in that, he is aware to be an exception compared to the rest of the people:

سليمان: ولكن أعجب الأشياء في هذا البلد هو أنا.. الطريد الضعيف الشكاك. وجانزتي الصحيحة هي المعرفة الكاملة..

MSH: 142

SULAYMĀN: But the strangest thing in this country is I... The chased, the weak, the suspicious. My real prize is absolute knowledge...

We recognize in Sulaymān a pan-Arab intellectual who would not accept compromise, precisely like Faraġ. Conversely, if we consider Faraġ’s life, he himself was “a Sulaymān.” Under Nasser’s presidency, Faraġ had personally experienced the rigors of the new regime spending three years in prison, just as other intellectuals at the time did.

As Faraġ confirmed to Laila Debs in an interview at his home London in April 1992, he has never believed in compromise if it opposed his principles. Indeed, in 1973 he preferred to be exiled from Egypt for thirteen years and consequently have his work barred from being published in his country rather than reconcile with the government after that he signed with sixty-four writers, a petition to President Anwar Sadat, asking for the release of imprisoned student demonstrators. Faraġ did not want to submit an official apology to the government, so

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<sup>60</sup> This translation is taken from Badawi 1987, 175.

he was forced to leave. He admitted that he suffered no regret because he remained loyal to his principles and would continue to do so even if his life was threatened (Debs 1993, 264).

There are many other features bring Sulaymān close to Faraġ. For instance, the play shows several times that Sulaymān's power rests in his words. Other characters notice that, namely his friend Maḥmūd who sees him playing the part of Sulaymān and remarks how sharp his tongue is (MSH: 32). More precisely, as has been shown, Sulaymān is able to play with the words of others (see I.3) as if he were acquainted with drama. Moreover, his friend Maḥmūd laughs at his alienating allusion to Brecht's play (see I.4). Besides, in a quote previously reported (MSH: 68), Sulaymān invites the audience to "break the misleading wall" ("واضرب" MSH: 68). Considering that the whole play is meant to be "epic" and the traces of alienation are various, the wall is a clear reference to the fourth wall of theatre, which Brecht invited dramatists to break in order to stimulate action in the audience.

"At certain points in the play, the historical mask thins out to a dangerous point as Faraġ's anger seems to get the better of his craftsmanship and he vents his rage through his characters" (Selaiha 2004). One of these points is clearly the sharp critic to "the ruler of the colony:"

سليمان: الآن.. من هنا أستطيع أن أرى موكبك. راقبتك أياما وأنا أعجب كيف قيض الله لرجل غاصب مثل هذا الجبروت! طبول قوية! .. والناس تتباعد من حوله كأنه الطاعون. ومع ذلك يقترب اليه الأعيان كأنه نبع الخير! ويا لهيبته! ينظر حواليه بتؤدة كتمر أسود سلطان يخرج بعد الظهر للنزهة شبعان ريان، يتفقد مملكته في وقار. أو كرجل يرى دون أن يكلف نفسه التلفت، أشياء يملكها تماما ويعرف أنها دائما في مواضعها هنا وهناك. ولا تتم نظرتة عن خوف أو ضغينة! وهذا هو الشيء المدهش في الموضوع كله. حركة الذراع أو الساق تهتز هزة طفيفة جنب الفرس.. باقتصاد معجز. هذا الرجل لا يصدر الأوامر باللسان.. فبطرفة عينه يأمر فيكون. وظيفة عجيبة أن يكون رجل واحد هذا الحاكم المطلق فوق مستعمرة، في عنفوان القوة ولا شيء يقلقه أبدا.

MSH: 142

SULAYMĀN: And now, from here, I can see your procession. I have observed you for days, wondering how God has granted power to such a man like this usurper! Loud drums ... And the people distance themselves from him as if he had the plague. Yet, he is approached by prominent personalities as if he was a source of good. How awe-inspiring! He looks around him slowly as a black tiger, a sultan promenading in the afternoon with a full belly, inspecting his kingdom with pride. Or as a man who sees without the effort of turning his head, things he possesses completely and knows they are always in their places here and there. His look reveals neither fear nor malice and this is the amazing thing in the whole matter. The slight movement of the arm or the leg beside the horse...

In miraculous thrift. This man does not issue commands with his tongue... With the twinkling of his eye he orders, and all is done. A strange office, this, for one man to be this absolute power over the colony... At the height of his power and nothing ever worries him.

Faraĝ's cathartic value is evident so that "one could regard the play as a kind of cathartic exercise intended to relieve its author's frustration and purge him from a destructive passion through the figurative killing of Nasser disguised as Kleber" (Selaiha 2004). In the period between 1964 and 1967, playwrights were bidding for political agency. The pursuit of interiorized subjectivity was a proof of moral personhood. So, as the Egyptian theatre grew more ambitious, playwrights strove to create dramatic exemplars of authentic Arab political action and Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī was one of them since he was read as brave opponent of a tyrannical regime (Litvin 2011, 101).

Considerations can go beyond the cathartic value and get to performativity if we consider, all together, three features of the play. First, the play is about the fight of an intellectual against the tyrannical ruler who can be easily identified with the playwright himself and President Nasser. Second, it invites the public to reflect upon that story to react to their ruler. And third, the play was written to be shown under Nasser's rule.<sup>61</sup>

If the play shows Sulaymān/Faraĝ attacking Kleber/Nasser, the performance of the play during Nasser's rule is itself attacking Nasser. It is Faraĝ's performative utterance that, in the time of its being, acts against the President. So, by being both self-referential and constitutive of reality, the play can be called "performative" in John Langshaw Austin's sense which differs from Erika Fischer-Lichte's idea of the performance's transformative power of the audience (2008). Here, we do not study the transformative power on the audience since, until 1967, the audience was still called for recognition instead of action (Litvin 2011, 113).

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<sup>61</sup> The term "performative" was coined by John L. Austin. He introduced it to language philosophy in his lecture series entitled "How to do things with words," held at Harvard University in 1955. Linguistic utterances not only serve to make statements, but they also perform actions, thus distinguishing constative from performative utterances. As a matter of fact, a statement of the kind "I do [take this woman to be my lawfully wedded wife]" in the course of a marriage ceremony, does not simply assert a preexisting circumstance, but it creates it. Another example of explicit performative utterance Austin provided is "I name you..." Other instances are: "I apologize," "I promise," "I resign," "I dedicate this to..." etc. It is impossible to classify them as true or false. Speech entails a performative power.

For a discussion about the transformative power of performance, see Erika Fischer-Lichte (2008), *The Transformative Power of Performance*.

This study claims, instead, a transformative power on the image of the President. Now, the play helps us in understanding the complicated relation between intellectuals and power in Nasserite Egypt, it is undeniable that it affects our vision of the President in history, just like any other work of fiction on Nasser does (see Khalifah 2017). The play shows Nasser that was liable to be attacked.

It is not certain whether the play had an impact on Nasser's image, and more specifically on Nasser's impact on the people, when it was represented. Indeed, Egyptian critics of the time are careful to avoid drawing any links between Kleber and Nasser and between Sulaymān and the fighter/intellectual/Faraḡ, though has been demonstrated that they emerge clearly during our reading and certainly during the representation in its context of production and of reference.

Anyhow, the play itself provides Nasser's answer. We have said that the end of the play has an aura of mystery since it does not correspond to the hypotext nor to any historical hypothesis (see I.1). Indeed, at the end of the play, Ġābilān/Protain, still recovering at the hospital, has something to confess to General Menou:

جابلان: عندما طعنني القاتل عاد إلى كليبر ليجهز عليه، وكنت ما أزال مفتوح العينين، ويا لي مما رأيت! رفع كليبر ذراعه اليسرى وربت على كتف قاتله وهو يطعنه الطعنة الأخيرة. وسمعت صوت صديقي العظيم يقول له بنبرة ساحرة: "لقد أجبتني!" قال له: "أجبتني"، كأنما كانت بينهما مسألة. سمعت بأذني ولا تعوزني الجرأة لأقسم على ذلك. لقد "أجبتني!" قال له. أجابه!

MSH: 156

ĠĀBILĀN: When the murderer stabbed me, he came back to Kleber to finish him off, and my eyes were still open, and what I saw! Kleber raised his left arm up and patted the shoulder of his murderer who inflicted to him the last stabbing. I heard the voice of my great friend saying to him in a charming tone: "Indeed, you answered me!". He said to him: "You answered me," as if there was a matter between them. I heard that. I heard that with my ears and I don't lack the guts to swear it. "You answered me," he said. He answered him!

If we think of Sulaymān as mirroring Faraḡ, then a conversation between Ġābilān and Kleber preceding the murder can also be interpreted in a specific way. Before his murder, Ġābilān is walking in the garden with Kleber, when he notices Sulaymān:

جابلان: عاد مرة أخرى..

كليبر: من تعنى؟



جابلان: هذا الولد.

كليبر: لم أراه قبل ذلك.

جابلان: ماذا تقصد.. لم تره قبل ذلك؟ أ لم تأمرني بإعطائه حسنة ونحن نتفقد قشلاق الأرمن؟

كليبر: ماذا دهاك جابلان؟ أنت تهزل بغير شك.

جابلان: نسيت؟ عجباً! أ لم تنهه بنفسك عندما اقترب منا عند المرسى في الصباح ففر؟

كليبر: هذه هي المرة الأولى التي أراه فيها. هل جننت؟!

جابلان: ويحك! هذه نكتة ولكنها بلا مرح. امش يا ولد امش من هنا! امش!

كليبر: لا تطرده جابلان، فقد قلمنا أظفارهم. سأنظر ما مسألته.

MSH: 153-4

ĜĀBILĀN: He came again...

KLEBER: What do you mean?

ĜĀBILĀN: That guy.

KLEBER: I've never seen him before.

ĜĀBILĀN: What are you talking about... you've never seen him before? Didn't you order me to give him money while we were inspecting the barracks of the Armenians?

KLEBER: What's wrong with you, Ĝābilān? You are certainly joking.

ĜĀBILĀN: Did you forget? Strange. Didn't you yourself shout at him when he approached us in the port in the morning and he fled?

KLEBER: This is the first time I see him. Are you crazy?!

ĜĀBILĀN: Come on! This is a joke without fun. Walk boy, walk away from here! Away!

KLEBER: Don't chase him, Ĝābilān, we cut their nails. I will see what his matter is.

Ĝābilān recalls two episodes that he remembers exactly, while Kleber does not. The place of the first episode is the barracks of the Armenians, where Kleber might have said to Ĝābilān to give him “الحسنة”, which is a very generic word meaning “charity”, but also “favor.” This term might allude to a good action Faraġ received from Nasser. Moreover, the word used for “barracks” (قشلاق) comes from Turkish and is not used by Ĝabarfī. Both the linguistic choice and the subjects sound enigmatic. Maybe, in those words, Faraġ meant an indication to the prize he was awarded in 1957? Then, the reprimand might refer to the massive incarceration of intellectuals of 1959 that was supposed to disarm “them” (MSH: 154) قلمنا أظفارهم). So now, the president will *see* what is Sulaymān/Faraġ's matter (ما مسألته سأنظر ما MSH: 154): the reference to the play seems possible.

The previous are mere theories. Such interpretations of the play derive from the facts that those episodes do not correspond either to the thesis of the play which supports the idea that Sulaymān's act was motivated by personal reasons, or are coherent with the hypotext or with

History, they might contain precise references to Faraḡ's life and encounters with "the enemy" who does not even remember him. I would be more confident about them if there were some direct opinions from the audience of that time. Or if there were details about the place the prize of the Art was awarded or where Faraḡ was when he was condemned to prison. Another clue might come from a hypothesis on the change of the name of Protain into Ğābilān.

However, a major critic of the time, Bahā' Ṭāhir, who was in prison with Faraḡ, spoke of *Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī* as a "problem play," using the word "مسألة". According to him, the "problem play" distinguishes itself from the tragedy because in the tragedy, human relationships are in the forefront of the plays and they constitute the means by which the aspects of a tragedy are displayed. In the "problem play", instead, the events and the characters are there to clarify the theme (Ṭāhir 1985, 26-7). In that case, the performativity of the play would be a key to interpret the play. The play then might contain also Kleber/Nasser's acknowledgement of the "answer" (represented by the play itself). In reality, that answer never came.

\* \* \*

The play *Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī* not only re-actualizes the story, it rewrites it with new connotations. Then, from one side Faraḡ's work aims at regenerating History through the contestation of a story that is part of history. So, two stories can be seen within the play: the "old," official story of the hypotext that has been contested and the "new" one hypothesized by the hypertext.

From the other side, the new story of Sulaymān is charged with symbolism that elevates it to universal meanings. Sulaymān's powerful mind as well as his knife, are his weapons to become free, and an absolute value emerges: a quest for justice against the unfair - though legal - domination. Hence, in Faraḡ's play, Sulaymān's fight becomes a symbol of any repressive, dictatorial government and Sulaymān's murder becomes a symbol for any legitimate act of resistance.

Besides, the play makes some references to specific realities. In the trend of the epic theatre, intertextual references together with an historical frame are necessary to understand how the play can act as mirrors of reality, breaking the illusion of the fiction. Some references exceeding the dimension of the play evoke the context of enunciation of the play, instead.

Indeed, fighting the ruler might be interpreted as an actual proposition since similitudes between Kleber and some aspects of Nasser's rule are clear. The French expedition and General Kleber can be seen as a façade. Behind it, Nasser's rule appears as a coercive and violent rebellion as the only way to resist. In this symbolic story, Ḥiddāya's daughter, that is an innovation from the hypotext, represents Egypt.

So, two performed realities appear in the play, one is (reviewed) past, the other is present. The past is modified so that it meets the present, while the present play tries to impact the past with its new vision of History. Faraḡ "wanted to explore this particular moment of history where the first confrontation between the colonial West and the East took place; a confrontation which continued from then to the present time of the play ... The story of Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī was used to bridge the gap between the past and the present" (El Hadi 1993 in El-Sayyid 1995, 172).

In his intellectual struggle for justice against the tyrant, a cathartic exercise of the author appears clear: Faraḡ metaphorically kills Nasser's despotic attitudes. Besides, the play presents a performative utterance since, thanks to the simulated agency of the play, Faraḡ is *really* fighting the ruler. Until now, an image of Nasser as a tyrant subjected to the criticism of intellectuals is conveyed through to the play. The play says and acts at the same time.

Yet, the intellectual framework is the one of the ruler. Faraḡ's vision of History is mitigated by the cultural directions of the times (see I.1). If Faraḡ criticizes the French/any system of oppression because their justice is decided by politics and History may perpetuate a lie, even if he repoliticizes history, he still acts according to the ideological system he attacks and thus, he implements the new nation-state narrative.

## Final Remarks on Chapter I

Faraĝ's rewriting of History follows some common patterns. Particularly, a prominent aspect of all the plays rewriting History is an exploration of the private side of the facts that History does not provide. Faraĝ's rewriting of History re-imagines the past. Also, the past exposed in the play has many points of contact with the context of production of the play.

First, in these plays, the playwright's attention is directed to the renovation of History. As we have seen, in *Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī*, Faraĝ informs his reader on the partiality of the hypotext though the latter is normally reputed as an eminent historical source. Faraĝ took a similar stance towards the hypotext of his play *Dā'irat al-tibn al-Miṣriyya* (The Egyptian Hay Circle, 1979) which enacts a performance presented during the celebration of the circumcision of Pasha Muḥammad 'Alī's son that was accounted by Edward Lane in *The Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (1836). As indicated in the subtitle of the play, *Dā'irat al-tibn al-Miṣriyya* is a "*masraḥiyyat al-muḥabbazūna*", a play of the *muḥabbazūna*. The *muḥabbazūna* were non-specialized actors who played farces in public spaces (streets or markets) or in private houses. Lane described their farce as low, ridiculous and vulgar (Lane 1923, 395).<sup>62</sup> However, it seems that these performances were very subversive.

Besides, actors needed to be skilful since they were also the dramatists of the performance (al-Ra'ī 1999, 49-52). And so, in the play, the rehabilitation of their performance, the *taḥbīza* – which is part of the *turāt* – is one of the main concerns of the playwright. *Suqūt fir'awn* (The Fall of a pharaoh, 1955), which is the first play Faraĝ wrote, explores the moment during which the Hittites invaded Akhenaton's Kingdom, which was the subject of one of Bākaḫīr's drama's (1940). The story is not taken from a specific source. History says that Akhenaton's reaction following Hittites' invasion was of inertia. Allied kings from the Near East asked him for military assistance (which is documented in the so-called *Amarna Letters*), but he did not reply. The play provides details about the pharaoh contradicting the conventional view over Akhenaton's neglect of political affairs. In the first two cases, the partial narration of the hypotext, that Faraĝ does not share, is criticized and contested.

According to Faraĝ, Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī cannot be considered a criminal as Ĝabartī considered him. Likewise, the *muḥabbazūna* cannot be considered the performers of a low and vulgar farce,

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<sup>62</sup> In 2006, Sadgrove defines it as "low and ridiculous," "a primitive kind of *commedia dell'arte*" (Sadgrove 2006, 374-5).

as Lane did. Similarly, Akhenaton has to be known for his interior dilemma as well and not just for his political failure. Faraġ's contestation is more evident in the case of authorial narratives (Ġabartī's and Lane's) which also represent the viewpoint of the foreigners since Ġabartī was generally favorable to the French campaign and Lane was an English traveler. The stage allows deleting the "heterobiography"—the first-person fictional account of a historic life and erases the ethical implications of first-person narration's authorial responsibility (see Boldrini 2012). Faraġ kills the author/narrator and fragments responsibility within a group of characters.

Indeed, the three rewritings of History aim at renovating History. The plots of the three plays provide a wide overview of facts that the hypertexts do not report. Indeed, in *Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī*, the focus is on the events happening before General Kleber's murder. In *Suqūt fir'awn*, the attention is driven into the pharaoh's moral dilemma between fighting or being consistent to his pacific belief, while History books usually provide an account of the fact itself; that the pharaoh was not capable of stopping the Hittites' invasions. Similarly, in *Dā'irat al-tibn al-Miṣriyya*, from the performance accounted by Lane, the attention shifts to the reasons of the performance explicated by the same *muḥabbazūna* after their performance. Both in the hypotext and in the play, the *taḥbīza* enacts the abuses farmers suffer during the tax collection, in front of the pasha but in the final moments of the play the actors comment on the *taḥbīza* just enacted (Faraġ [1979] 1990, 230-1).

The plays' protagonists become positive characters, while in the hypotext they were either portrayed as negative characters (*Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī*) or not positively defined (*Suqūt fir'awn* and *Dā'irat al-tibn al-Miṣriyya*). In every case, the hypotext did not pay heed to their characterization, while the plays made them protagonists. Faraġ uses the intellectual and ethical role of literature in shaping our thoughts on these matters. In a progressive dismantling of the hypotext's authorship, in *Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī*, polyphony becomes a main aspect of the play. It is realized through different devices, such as metadrama, language and intertextual references. Similarly, in *Suqūt fir'awn*, Scene 1 of Act I shows an artist writing the story of the pharaoh in his tomb (Faraġ [1985] 1989, 179). The metafiction underlines the role of the transmitter in deciding the historical (mis)fortune of a character. In *Dā'irat al-tibn al-Miṣriyya*, the transition from Edward Lane's text to Faraġ's text is remarkable. Lane, the author of the hypotext, becomes a character of the play, namely his voice becomes one amongst the others, more specifically, the pasha and the actors of the *taḥbīza*. He speaks broken Arabic which indicates that he is not integrated in the society he describes. The *muḥabbazūna*, instead, are both the protagonists of the play within the play and have the possibility to express their

viewpoint after the performance. Moreover, the title of the play closely reminds us of Brecht's *Caucasian Chalk Circle* (1943-1945) and indeed Farāḡ's play is also set in a village where people struggle with authoritative power and a play-within-the-play is enacted, as well.

The *muḥabbazūna*'s discussion about their ground-breaking role within the society (Farāḡ [1979] 1990, 230-1) is metadramatic and performative. The play-within-the-play, which characterizes this work, invites reflection on the underestimated importance of actors and artists in the public sphere during the time in which the play is set, as well as in the present. Its reflection on the present is obvious, even more if we think of the context of production. Farāḡ had to leave Egypt because of his plays. However, the play also bears a universal message about the importance of the intellectual/artist's action within the society. Similarly, in *Suqūt fir 'awn* the pharaoh mirrors any ruler who is unable to take action during moments of crisis. Its political message is "the need for action in the running of affairs in human society is paramount" (Badawi 1987, 172). However, *the pharaoh* reminded the public of Nasser.<sup>63</sup> Likewise, in *Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī*, Sulaymān's fight is a symbol against any despotic rule, but during Nasser presidency, it would remind the audience of authoritarian measures taken by him. The protagonists fight in the play and their fight is performative since they speak against the power. A universal message as well as some specific relevance to the present exists in the three plays.<sup>64</sup>

Acting like a kaleidoscope, new writings of History mix and reflect the elements of the hypotexts generating patterns that are common to all of them. The rewriting of History shows the hypotext while it distorts it by elevating the protagonists, widening the event related to them, multiplying the points of view of the characters of the story, creating everlasting symbols and images reminiscent of the present. As such, it provides a private perspective to the official stories which affect the hypotext. This, in turn, makes the audience rethink it through a story that aims to better represent the past, since it *shows* it and takes as testimonies a plurality of authoritative voices. Little is left to the audience's interpretation. Indeed, plays rewriting

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<sup>63</sup> Within the context of production of the play, Farāḡ's choice of the plot has some additional connotations. In the mid-fifties, when the play was written and produced, the pharaoh's incapacity to deal with the invasion of his lands, would have easily been interpreted as Nasser's fault in defense of the Palestinian cause. Indeed, the message of the play was considered obscure and the play was considered controversial.

<sup>64</sup> Recent rewritings of History show female rebellion. For instance, *Rayā wa Sikīna* (Rayā and Sikīna 1983), by Bahḡat Qamar (see Karmoety 2005, 250-1) and *Zig Zig* (2016), a play by Laila Soliman that is being performed throughout Europe. From 12 to 21 October 2017 I had the pleasure to watch it at Nouveau Théâtre de Montreuil. The difference with Farāḡ's rewriting of History is marked. According to Laila Soliman, interpretation must be left to the audience and facts are to be shown avoiding personal interferences. See Soliman's interview on Ahram online (Elsirgany 2016).

History are multifunctional. With factual information, they contribute to the education of the audience, while political issues handled in the play contribute to the propaganda, like the topic which is a narrativized past, and propagates the idea of pan-Arabism.

## II. A LEGEND FOR A CONTEMPORARY AUDIENCE. SUBVERTING VALUES.

In 1967, Alfred Faraḡ wrote his play *al-Zīr Sālim*, which performed the same year at the National Theatre in Cairo.<sup>65</sup> During that time, Faraḡ was the first director of the Mass Culture Division (*al-Taqāfa al-Ġamāhiriyya*) within the Ministry of Culture whose director was Tarwat ‘Ukāša, and had started the al-Husayn Tent Theatre tradition (*Surādiq al-Husāyn*), which was a tent built in the neighborhood of al-Husayn, in Cairo. Until now, theatrical, musical, and folkloric performances are presented there during every evening of Ramadan. At the end of every evening, a storyteller would perform the *Sīra Hilāliyya* on the *rabāba*<sup>66</sup> (Amin 2008, 13).

The public going to the National Theatre might have been acquainted with the al-Husayn Tent Theatre and with the direct linkage between the story of al-Zīr Sālim and the more popular *Sīra Hilāliyya*. Then, the play *al-Zīr Sālim* might create specific expectations for the audience. As during the summer of that same year, 1967, the Egyptian military defeat deeply influenced the Egyptian theatre, which had to face the strong clutch of censorship and since Faraḡ had already created plays with contents relevant to the present behind a well-known hypotext (see Introduction), the legend of al-Zīr might have created expectations at this subject, too.

The hypertextual relation between the play and its hypotext is displayed in the title already. Even if the hypotext is recognizable, profound changes affect the language, the structure and the content of the *Sīra*. Major innovation resulting in the new contents that the play attached to the story of *al-Zīr Sālim* have not always convinced the critics. Badawi, for instance, remarked that “it is doubtful if the popular medieval folk romance can bear the deep philosophical significance that the author has obtrusively thrust upon it” (1987, 179). Al-Ḥaḡāḡī declared that Faraḡ “put new shrouds around the *sīra*” (1984, 64). Beginning with some considerations about the choice of the hypotext in relation to the context of enunciation, and to some formal features of the hypertext (II.1), the different transformations of the plot (II.2), the characters (II.3), the style (II.4) and the contents (II.5) will be explored in detail.

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<sup>65</sup> See the introduction for a general contextualization in Faraḡ’s production and Appendix for the plot of the play.

<sup>66</sup> The *rabāba* is a simple musical instrument with a small resonance box, one or two strings, held vertically and played with a bow.



## 1. Converting - A *sīra* as a drama. Mirroring the heritage.

Many plays rewrite myth and legends. Indeed, myth is a material of predilection of the theatre (see al-Ḥarrāt 2004). In the Egyptian theatre, the myth of Oedipus, for instance, has been the subject of many plays, such as ‘Alī Aḥmad Bākaṭīr’s *Ma’sāt Ūdīb* (Oedipus’ tragedy, 1949), Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm’s *al-Malik Ūdīb* (King Oedipus, 1949) and ‘Alī Sālīm’s *Kūmidiyā Ūdīb: enta illi ‘atalt al-waḥš* (The Comedy of Oedipus: You’re the One Who Killed the Beast, 1970) (see Carlson 2005). Al-Ḥakīm based another “drama of ideas” (Badawi 1987, 27, also called “play of the mind” Hutchins 2003, 93) on the Greek myth (*Pygmalion*, 1942; see Deheuvelds 1995). As for al-Ḥakīm’s *Ahl al-Kahf*, the legend has its sources in the Koran. *Sulaymān al-Ḥakīm* (Salomon the Wise, 1943), as the author claimed, is derived from the Old Testament, the Koran and the *Arabian Nights*.<sup>67</sup> Al-Ḥakīm also dramatized a myth from ancient Egypt, *Īzīs* (Isis, 1955) which was the subject of Naḡīb Surūr’s *Minēn Agīb nēs* (Where I Find People, 1974).

The two legendary Arabian desert lovers Laylā and Maḡnūn are the protagonists of many plays, such as *Qays wa Laylā* (1877), by the Lebanese Ḥalīl al-Yāzīḡī, Aḥmad Šawqī’s *Maḡnūn Laylā* (The Mad Lover of Laylā, 1931) and, in a certain way, of Šalāḥ ‘Abd al-Šabūr’s *Laylā wa al-Maḡnūn* (Laylā and the Mad Man, 1970), which takes place before the 1952 Revolution and in it characters prepare an amateur stage production of Šawqī’s play. ‘Azīz Abāza (1898-1969) wrote of two other legendary lovers of the pre-Islamic era, Qays and Lubna (*Qays wa Lubna*, Qays and Lubna 1943).

Šawqī also wrote a play about ‘Antar (*‘Antara*, 1932), the protagonist of a legendary pre-Islamic hero who became the subject of a popular romance. Maḥmūd Taymūr as well dealt with the love of ‘Antar for ‘Abla (*al-Ḥawwā’ al-Ḥālida*, Eternal Eve, 1945)<sup>68</sup>, while in *al-Yawm Ḥamr* (Wine Today, 1945) he wrote of Imru’ al-Qays. The other great writer of dramas in verse, al-Šarqāwī, also had his play inspired by a popular hero, *al-Fatā Mahrān* (Mahrān’s Chivalry, 1966).

So, when in 1967 Faraḡ wrote his *al-Zīr Sālīm*, taking the homonymous *sīra* as a hypotext, a tradition of plays dramatizing Arabic epics existed before him. However, exclusive to Alfred Faraḡ is the attention he addressed to the genre of the source he took and to its treatment. As a

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<sup>67</sup> For an accurate analysis of the intertextual relations between the play and the legend of the seven sleepers, see Denooz 2002, 93-103. Denooz shows similarities of the play with the Japanese legend of Urashima (Ibid., 102).

<sup>68</sup> For a list of Egyptian plays on ‘Antar, see Ḥusayn 1993, 178.

matter of fact, as he started the writing of the play *al-Zir Sālim*, he asked his brother Nabīl the most ancient edition of this *sīra* and a French article on the Egyptian folklore (Faraḡ [1967?] 2009, 88).

### 1.1 Under the name of the *sīra*. Defining the heritage.

In the foreword to his play, Faraḡ affirms that al-Zīr is

صاحب السيرة الغريبة التي ألهمت المؤلف الشعبي العظيم المجهول ملحمته "الزير سالم"

MZS: 161<sup>69</sup>

The protagonist of the strange *sīra* which inspired the great popular unknown author to write his epic *al-Zīr Sālim*.

The word *sīra* is mentioned thrice in the six-page foreword to the play. Nevertheless, none of the editions accounting the adventures of al-Zīr Sālim report the word *sīra* in their title, while the common mention is *qiṣṣa*.<sup>70</sup> The reason of this discrepancy becomes clear after that the definition of the *sīra ša ‘biyya* will be considered.

*Sīra ša ‘biyya* (or “popular *sīra*”) is the modern Arabic designation (coined by Arab folklorists in the 1950s) for a genre of lengthy Arabic heroic narratives. These narratives, which in their manuscript corpus refer to themselves equally as either *sīra* or *qiṣṣa*, are works of adventure and romance primarily concerned with depicting the personal prowess and military exploits of their heroes. Pseudo-historical in tone and setting, they base many of their central characters on actual historical figures or events. Nevertheless, details of history are soon transcended by the imaginative improvements that fiction provides, with the result that history is usually reflected only along general levels of setting, atmosphere and tone.

Heath 1997

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<sup>69</sup> From this moment on, “MZS” stands for *masrahiyya “al-Zīr Sālim”*, namely, Faraḡ 1988 [1967 ب]. “SZS” stands for the *Sīra*, namely *Qiṣṣat al-Zīr Sālim* 1950.

<sup>70</sup> For a list of titles, see Gavillet Matar 2005, 1, 25-32. If the word *sīra* appears in a title of a book accounting of *al-Zīr Sālim*, our hero has only a marginal part in the tale, while protagonists are others (e.g., *Sīrat Kulayb wa al-bahḡa* and *al-Sīra al-Yamāniyya*, Ibid., 25).

For a discussion of “popular” in Faraḡ’s drama, see also Potenza 2016 a.

Therefore, Faraġ's appellation of the *Qiṣṣat al-Zīr Sālim* as *sīra*, while he uses the word *qiṣṣa* in its general meaning of "story" (MZS: 161-166), belongs to the trend of the Arab folklorists Heath refers to. In this context, it might be useful to remark that:

Le folklore est une discipline qui, sous différentes dénominations - Volkskunde, folklore, ethnographie -, s'est constituée en Europe à partir de la fin du XVIIIe siècle, pour se consacrer à la culture et aux traditions dites populaires dans les sociétés européennes. Il vise la collecte et l'étude des croyances, usages et savoirs immémoriaux, transmis de génération en génération, qui seraient le fait du peuple par opposition à la culture des élites. Ainsi défini, le domaine couvert par cette discipline est immense : il comprend la littérature ou tradition orale, avec les contes, les chansons, les légendes, les épopées, les proverbes, etc. Il porte sur les danses, la musique, les jeux, les costumes.

Perrin 2004, 21

Though Faraġ does not use the term "folklore" in his forward to the play, he uses the term in a few other writings, revealing a full acknowledgement of the word and its implications:

لكل شعب ثقافة مهما كانت درجة تمدنه أو تحضره، تعليمه أو عمله ... لكل مجتمع بشري ثقافته التي يعتمد عليها مصدرا للمعارف والسلوك وللإنتاج ومقياسا للعلاقات الاجتماعية وللرأي العام ولتذوق فنونه وفنون الآخرين... الخ...  
وهذه الثقافة الريفية، التي تعتمد عليها أغلبية المصريين، لها أساليب وطرق للتعبير الفني هي ما درجنا على تسميته "بالفولكلور" ... الفن الشعبي ... وللفن الشعبي لغة وتراكيبه...

Faraġ [1981] 1989, 368-9

All people have a culture no matter his degree of urbanisation or civilization, education or occupation ... every human society has a culture which they use as source for the knowledge, the behaviour, the production and a standard for the social relationships, the public opinion, the taste of his and others' arts, etc. This rural culture, on which most Egyptians rely, has techniques and methods for the artistic expression which we are used to calling "folklore"... the popular art... and the popular art has its own language and structures...

"Folklore" is used within a sense of "otherness" that the word generally implies,<sup>71</sup> while the author uses the word *turāt* (heritage) to designate the sources, like the *Arabian Nights*, which

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<sup>71</sup> "A great deal of the difficulty [of defining 'popular culture'] arises from the *absent other* which always haunts any definition we might use. It is never enough to speak of popular culture; we have always to acknowledge that with which it is being contrasted. And whichever of popular culture's others we employ, mass culture, high culture,

are perceived as a part of his culture (see, for instance Faraġ 1994, 398). As a matter of fact, the etymology of the word *turāt* entails such a distinction:

Le mot *turāt* dérive du verbe *warīta/yarītu*, « hériter », pour désigner « ce que laisse un individu après sa mort ». C'est encore le seul sens donné dans les dictionnaires du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, comme le *Farā'id*, et jusqu'à ce jour dans le *Munġid*. L'emploi de ce terme pour désigner un ensemble de textes relevant de la sphère littéraire ou pour renvoyer à un patrimoine culturel est donc indissociable de l'idée d'héritage, et de legs.

Perrin 2009

Also, recent studies on Alfred Faraġ's drama refer to *turāt* and Faraġ himself mentions some authors who engaged in the use of the *turāt* in their works and theoretical writings (Faraġ 1994, 398-99).<sup>72</sup>

Similarly, Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm treats the word folklore with a meaning different to *turāt*. Al-Ḥakīm uses *fūklūr* in his earlier writings (namely, *al-Ṣafqa*, *The Deal*, 1956), while he later shifts his attention upon the *turāt* (in *Qālabunā al-masraḥī*, *Our Theatre Mould*, 1967) and does not mention (anymore) the word "folklore".<sup>73</sup> Yūsuf Idrīs and 'Alī al-Rā'ī prefer to use the word and the meaning of *turāt* over *fūklūr* to define the trend that interested (them and) the Egyptian theatre of their time.<sup>74</sup>

The other appellation Faraġ uses twice in his foreword referring to his hypotext is *malḥama ša'biyya* (MZS: 161-6), where both *malḥama* (epic) and *ša'biyya* (popular) cross-refer to a

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working-class culture, folk culture, etc., it will carry into the definition of popular culture a specific theoretical and political inflection." (Italics in the source. Storey 2008, 13).

<sup>72</sup> Faraġ mentions Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm's *Qālabunā al-masraḥī* (1967), the foreword of the play *al-Farāfīr* (1964) by Yūsuf Idrīs and *Masraḥ al-ša'b*, by 'Alī al-Rā'ī.

<sup>73</sup> See his "explanation" of the play *al-Ṣafqa* (1956), particularly the expression "الفولكلور الشعبي" (the popular art "the folklore", al-Ḥakīm 1988, 161) and the introduction to *Qālabunā al-masraḥī* (al-Ḥakīm 1981, 5-23), where he uses the word *turāt* several times, remarking a different trend from *al-Ṣafqa* where he tried the use of الفنون الشعبية الريفية (the popular arts of the countryside, al-Ḥakīm 1988, 10) and his later work *Yā Tāli' al-šaġara* (*The Tree Climber*, 1962) about which he speaks of تراثنا الشعبي (our popular *turāt*, al-Ḥakīm 1988, 10). Clearly, the heritage is perceived as something close to him, while the folklore is felt as something "other". See also Pugliesi 2010, 93-5.

<sup>74</sup> In the foreword to his play *al-Farāfīr*, where a series of articles published before are collected under the title *Nahwa masraḥ miṣrī* (*Toward an Egyptian Theatre*), Yūsuf Idrīs chooses the word *turāt*, used five times against *fūklūr* used only once. *Fūklūr* is used with a different meaning than *turāt* ("أولئك الذين لا عالم تراث" "I am not an historian, nor a philologist, neither a scholar of *turāt* or a folklorist. Idrīs 1964, 8). 'Alī al-Rā'ī entitles one of the chapters of his book on Arabic theatre "*al-turāt*" with the meaning of "tradition" (al-Rā'ī 1980, 29-45). In the same book, he uses the word *turāt* and words derived from it about eighty times, while "folklore" occurs only once and three times in the adjective derived from it, *fūklūrī*. Moreover, he uses *turāt* for Faraġ's sources (114).

folklorist perspective.<sup>75</sup> *Malḥama* is a term which acquired the meaning of “epic” only in recent times:

The ancient meaning of *malḥama*, pl. *malāḥim*, was ‘bloody fight’, ‘battlefield’. Muḥammad himself was called *nabī al-malḥama*, an expression understood as meaning ‘prophet of contention’ (but also of reconciliation). The term acquired the further sense of prediction, eschatological prophecy, e.g. the *malḥamat Dāniyāl*, al-Jāḥiẓ states that the first author of a *qaṣīdat al-malāḥim* was Ibn ‘Aqb al-Laythī. Ibn Ḥaldūn notes that by *malāḥim* the Maghrib peoples meant prophecies concerning future wars and the duration of dynasties. Reverting to this concept, Sulaymān al-Bustānī has proposed the use of *malḥama* to signify *šī‘r qaṣāṣī*, epic poetry, a term accepted among men of letters.<sup>76</sup> The name *sīra ša‘biyya* is, however, preferred for popular Arabic epic cycles.

Canova 1998, 498

In the theatrical field of the Twentieth Century, the word “epic” recalls the famous “epic theatre,” the theatrical movement initiated by Erwin Piscator and Bertolt Brecht among others. In this regard, Faraḡ has a clear idea of the difference between epics and the epic trend, which he calls *malḥamiyya*.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> The words are used together four times, while the adjective “popular” is referred to the author of the *malḥama*:

صاحب السيرة الغريبة التي ألهمت المؤلف الشعبي العظيم المجهول ملحمته "الزير سالم" (MZS: 161)

and another time is employed in its plural:

في عصر الملاحم الكبيرة (العصر المملوكي) (MZS: 161)

Other occurrences are: *القصة الملحمية* (Faraḡ [1981] 1989, 369), *الملاحم الشعبية* (Faraḡ 1994, 59), *الملاحم الكبرى* (Faraḡ 1990, 58) and also:

استلهمت تراثنا القومي والشعبي: ألف ليلة وليلة، الجاحظ، وملحمة الزير سالم (Faraḡ 1990, 105)

<sup>76</sup> *Iliyāda Hūmīrūs*, Sulaymān al-Bustānī (trans.), Cairo (1904), 162-75. Reference taken from the bibliography of the article.

<sup>77</sup> See, for instance, the following statement:

المسرح العربي اتجه إلى الملحمية بتأثير التراث وخاصة ألف ليلة وليلة، فهو أقرب إلى سرد الحكايات منه إلى تركيز الموقف. وتأثرنا في هذا المجال كان بالقصة العربية وليس ببريخت. وإذا تشابه توجهنا مع نظرية بريخت، ولكن توجهنا جاء من باب ألف ليلة.

Faraḡ 1990, 68

The Arabic theatre addressed to the epic trend under the influence of the tradition and particularly of the *Arabian Nights*. Indeed, it is closer to the storytelling than emphasizing the attitude. In this field, we were influenced by the Arabic tale and not by Brecht. Our tendency resembles Brecht’s theory, but ours came from the door of the *Arabian Nights*.

See also Faraḡ 1990, 70 and 105 and, here, the Conclusion.

Faraġ uses also the concept of *ša 'bī* (popular)<sup>78</sup> which goes hand-in-hand with the idea of folklore.<sup>79</sup> « La discipline du folklore, telle qu'elle s'est historiquement constituée en Europe, se fonde sur la diversité culturelle observée à l'intérieur d'une même société, où une culture "savante", "dominante", "officielle" ou "centrale" se distingue d'une culture "populaire" » (Perrin 2004, 121). Indeed, considering that "popular culture is not a historically fixed set of popular texts and practices, nor is it a historically fixed conceptual category" (Storey 2008, 14) helps us in understanding why certain works were perceived as folklore by Faraġ and his contemporaries, while others were considered *turāt*.

As for the literary genre Faraġ took as an hypotext, the *sīra*, it is not homogenous (Canova 1998, 726 and 1985, 116). Differences in themes exist particularly between the earlier *siyar* (which were known as early as the 12<sup>th</sup> century) and the works from the Mamelukes period (Madeyska 1991, 193). Besides, "there are significant differences in style, content, and historical origin among members of the genre" (Heath 1997).

Indeed, the word *sīra* is translated in many ways into Western languages (e.g., popular epics, popular romances, *Volksroman*, folk roman, Arab chivalrous romance, *épopée*, epos, saga, folk epics, deeds, saga or adventures), so that the *sīra* might seem a quite a heterogeneous category. Nevertheless,

these works form a cohesive genre by reason of their shared emphasis on heroes and heroic deeds of battle, their pseudo-historical tone and setting, and their indefatigable drive towards cyclic expansion; one event leads to another, one battle to another, one war to another, and so on for hundreds and thousands of pages.

Heath 1997

As a matter of fact, some manuscripts refer to themselves as *siyar* and fit their self-definition within the category, while some other works which share common features with them have been designated as *siyar* only in modern times. Another feature associated with the *sīra* is that

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<sup>78</sup> In the foreword to the play only, the adjective *شعبي/ة* is used eight times, three times in regard to the author of the *sīra* and the other times for the *sīra* itself (MZS: 161-6). Note the expression *الفن الشعبي* (Faraġ 1994 ب, 58 and Faraġ [1981] 1989, 369).

<sup>79</sup> The word "folklore" exists since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century and comes from "folk + lore" where "folk" comes from the Old English "folc" and means "people" and "lore" means "A body of traditions and knowledge on a subject or held by a particular group, typically passed from person to person by word of mouth" (Oxford Dictionaries online).

it is mainly Arabian,<sup>80</sup> which fits the Arab nationalist propaganda Faraġ supported (see Introduction).

Faraġ's reappraisal of this specific heritage acts against the criticism that accompanied it and prevented from an attribution of real interest and value to the *sīra* until recent times both for ancient reasons and modern complications, as "social stratification and its associated problem of language" (Lyons 1995, 1, 3-4). Within this context, the choice of rewriting the story of al-Zīr might have been influenced by the fact that, while the *Hilālī geste* - to which al-Zīr is linked – is still alive in many regions of the Arabian world and Faraġ himself provided a performance of it (see the Introduction to this Chapter II), the story of al-Zīr, as a story told amongst a public, seems almost faded (Gavillet Matar 2005, 1, 138). As Faraġ himself declared,

وإذا كان هذا المنحى يبيث حياة جديدة في ملحمة شعبية كاد التقدم العلمي والصيغ الفنية الحديثة تبيد آثارها،  
كادت السينما والمسرح والتلفزيون والقصة تلقى بها إلى الظل.  
إذا كان هذا المنحى يبيث فيها حياة جديدة، فلا بد من الاعتراف بفضل النهضة العربية والثقافية الجديدة التي  
وجهتنا نحن الكتاب والفنانين ناحية التراث (...)

MZS: 166

So, this approach revives the traces of the popular epic that the scientific progress and the modern artistic formulations are close to erase. The cinema, the theatre, the television and the fiction almost throw it in the shadows. So, if this approach revives it, then we have to give credit to the new Arabic and cultural renaissance that steered us– writers and artists – in the direction of the heritage [...]

As proof of Faraġ's contribution, through his play, to the definition of the *sīra* as a genre, a few meaningful textual examples can be mentioned. As stated above, *siyar* from the Mamelukes period differ remarkably from the earlier *siyar* to which the adventures of al-Zīr Sālim belong to. Differently from the earlier *siyar*, "in the *siyar* which were produced during the Mamelukes period or later, the world of fairy tales begins to predominate, with all the accompaniments and themes that are well-known from the *Arabian Nights*" (Madeyska 1991, 193). In the play, the hero sleeping for seven years (MZS: 247), the presence<sup>81</sup> of a *ġinniyya* (MZS: 189) and of a

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<sup>80</sup> Most of *siyar* are Arabian and, taken together, cover almost the whole of recorded pre-Islamic and Islamic history. Nevertheless, early Persian history is represented by *Sīrat Firūz-Šāh*, in the *Story of Bahrām Gūr*, and in the *Sīrat Iskandar*. Besides, from a wider cultural perspective, Arabic *siyar* are examples of a larger body of popular literature that existed in most parts of the Islamic world. Apart from Arabic, many of these epics exist in multiple versions in different languages, such as Turkish, Persian, Georgian, Urdu and Malay (Heath 1997).

<sup>81</sup> It is a character ("a girl") that plays the role of a *ġinniyya* (MZS: 189).

couple of characters named respectively ‘Aġīb and Ġarīb (MZS: 258) are innovations from the *Sīrat al-Zīr Sālim* which all belong to the common patterns and famous stories of the *Arabian Nights*.<sup>82</sup> Their inclusion adds to the specific story of al-Zīr Sālim certain features which are referred to the genre of the *sīra* in its whole.

The *Sīrat al-Zīr Sālim*, like many other *siyar*, has recently been a centre of interest in different contexts. In 1970, a series of five stamps from popular stories was issued in Syria and one of them depicted al-Zīr.<sup>83</sup> The Egyptian poet from the “sixties generation”, Amal Dunqul (1940-1983) has written a *qaṣīda*, *Maqtal Kulayb* (The murder of Kulayb, 1976), in which Kulayb symbolizes Palestine. One famous TV series deals with the *geste* of our hero (*al-Zīr Sālim Abū Laylā al-Muhalhil*, 2000, by the Syrian Art Production International). In addition, some recent studies focus on the *Sīrat al-Zīr Sālim*, such as Marguerite Gavillet Matar’s edition and translation of a Syrian manuscript of the *sīra* (Gavillet Matar 2005). Another play on the *sīra* exists; it is *Zīr Sālim and Dr Faust*, by Chakib Khoury,<sup>84</sup> while a play has been derived from Faraġ’s play mixed with *Hamlet* (*al-Zīr Hamlet*, in French, text and direction by Ramzi Choukair, staged at Le Théâtre de Belleville in March 2016).

## 1.2 A popular late version as hypotext. Following the tradition.

Many texts describe the adventures of al-Zīr Sālim and sometimes the differences between the stories are vast.<sup>85</sup> There is no direct reference from Faraġ regarding the specific version he chose as source for his play. Both a comparison between different texts and a consideration of the context of production of Faraġ’s play allows us to assume that, if Faraġ had based his play on a text, it must have been either the Ġumhūriyya or the Ḥuṣūṣī edition which were both published under the title of *Qiṣṣat al-Zīr Sālim Abū Laylā al-Muhalhil* and were common in 1967. Slight

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<sup>82</sup> The *ġinniyya* is a common motif of the *Arabian Nights* (El Shamy 2006, 545), the hero’s seven years of sleep is reminiscent of the story of the magic extended sleep that exists in the *Arabian Nights*, too (El Shamy 2004, 428). ‘Aġīb and Ġarīb are protagonists of a story in the *Arabian Nights* (n. 625-636). The seven years’ sleep is also a reference (declared by the author in the preface to the play) to Tawfiq al-Ḥakīm’s play *Ahl al-Kahf*.

<sup>83</sup> The stamp covers a series of main sequences of the plot: al-Zīr and Ġassās on a horse, with Kulayb on the ground writing on a stone, with Ġalīla close to him, while Ġassās is about to kill him and al-Zīr, followed by a lion, is about to attack Ġassās.

<sup>84</sup> Translated into English Naoum Abi-Rached (Kaslik, USEK, 2016).

<sup>85</sup> Gavillet Matar 2005, 1, 21 and Lyons 1995 give account of two recensions.



differences exist between the two editions, so that it is neither possible nor relevant to our study to establish whether Farağ chose the first or the second.<sup>86</sup>

Stylistically, the texts from the Ğumhūriyya and the Ḥuṣūṣī edition maintain many typical features of the oral transmission, like the preface *qāla al-rāwī* (“the narrator said”) for the narrator’s comments which are generally in prose, while the dialogues between characters are in verse. In contrast to other versions though, this version of the *sīra* is composed with 70% of prose while only the rest is poetry (Gavillet Matar 2005, 1, 46). According to Marguerite Gavillet Matar (2005), this text can be included in a “semi-savant” tradition as it draws from a list of narrative sayings common to all popular epics. At the same time, it includes some episodes known only from classical sources that do not exist in other popular versions. The language of the prose is close to the literary language and contains some words from the dialect (Ibid., 46). As it will be seen later, the language of this specific version results in a compromise between the original language of the oral tradition and some “corrective” adjustments made by the editors.

Different from other versions, this *Qiṣṣat al-Zīr Sālim* starts with an account of the supposed genealogy of the four brothers Muḍar, Iyād, Anmār and Rabī’a and clearly assures the transition to the Hilālī cycle.<sup>87</sup> Other peculiarities in the content concern the account of al-Ġarū’s adventures. In this regard, the version taken by Farağ is more condensed than others (Gavillet Matar 2005, 1, 53) and provides more unity to the protagonist’s story. This version voluntarily removes two famous episodes of vengeance. This divergence might imply a change of values in the times during which the semi-savant edition was fixed (Ibid., 54). Invocations to Allāh and Muḥammad are anachronisms signaling a will to rely the story on a posthumous religious dimension, while other Christian versions of the story exist as well.

A comparative analysis between the different versions of the *sīra* shows that the semi-savant edition is a result of many confluences and it does not generate any tradition by itself (Ibid., 55). From one side, choosing the common version of the al-Zīr story supposes a series of specific features that serve the hypotext of the play. From the other, regardless of its proper contents, the fact of choosing the most common version determines the specific insertion of the

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<sup>86</sup> Also, a summed-up edition in twenty-four pages exists from al-Ğumhūriyya whose plot is different from the play (see Gavillet Matar 2005, 1, 27).

<sup>87</sup> See the Appendix for a plot of the *sīra*.

play in the most popular tradition of the *sīra*. Thereby, it avoids any diversion from the general matter that details from other versions might have.

Indeed,

the *sīras* do not represent static fixed texts but are rather re-inventions of the same narrative. This means that, with each re-telling, a different, specific version of the story emerges. Each version of a popular epic assimilates various cultural layers and, in being uniquely different, reflects the life of a group particular in time and space.

Dorpmüller 2012, 2

Continuing a tradition within a range of versions, Faraĝ follows a practice bearing the very own existence of the *sīra*, which endures selecting its hypotext/s according to its different contexts, purposes and (oral or written) mode of expression. In this sense, Faraĝ emulates the subject of the story and its lasting practices providing his own version of the myth “enrobé de littérature” (Brunel 1988, 11).

### **1.3 An epic conflict for the stage. Refracting the heritage.**

Generally, the *geste* exalts the Bedouin values as force, courage, and defending honor (Gavillet Matar 2005, 1, 138).<sup>88</sup> Particularly, the law of revenge has been considered the motif supplying the action to the *Qiṣṣat al-Zīr* (Ibid., 162). Disliking the idea that a bloody revenge might have attired the interest of generations of audiences until present, Faraĝ affirms the existence of other topics in its stead, like al-Zīr’s immense love for his brother Kulayb, his bravery and heroism (MZS: 163-4). Faraĝ demonstrates that he wants to make use of the mythical essence of al-Zīr Sālim, the “malléabilité, cette disponibilité aux applications historiques” (Beugnot 1988, 1161) which is proper of the myth. Also, the numinous quality assigned to the myth and which is constantly present through inescapable prophecies in the *sīra* is an element that Faraĝ wants to reshape so that it can include the idea of the miracle (MZS: 164-5).

Typically, situations of conflict are shaped, verbalized and debated by the Greek tragedy. Similarly, the *sīra* of al-Zīr establishes a concept in a precise, specific way with the Arabic theatre. After Faraĝ’s declarations in the play’s foreword, a will to enact a process like the Greek tragedy, where the tragic hero survives until present day thanks to the invention of a

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<sup>88</sup> For a study of the rewriting of the myth, see Hubert 2006, 101-200.

language capable of representing his deeper conflicts, is noticeable. Indeed, the transfer of the Greek epic to the stage causes a remarkable phenomenon, as explained below:

Or la connaissance que nous avons de la mythologie grecque se confond ordinairement avec l'histoire des héros grecs dont les épreuves et les actions les plus remarquables ont été *fixées* par la tragédie grecque, (...). La *doxa* mythique liée à Phèdre ou à Œdipe ou à Médée est donc tributaire de la tragédie et elle constitue, plus qu'un hypotexte, une hyporeprésentation mentale susceptible d'être sollicitée par un texte dramatique. C'est ainsi que Médée est devenue par et depuis Euripide celle qui tuait ses enfants pour se venger d'un époux infidèle – ce n'était pas à l'époque où Euripide a composé sa tragédie.

Vasseur-Legangneux 2004, 28

In an analogous way, within the play, Farağ remarks on some aspects of the character. He wants the character of al-Zīr undergoing a phenomenon, which typically concerns myth, namely to make it a “simple enoncé narrative” (Ibid., 29) isolated from a specific narrative (the *sīra*, the play, the *musalsala*). Such a practice allows micro-sequences of the narration to be actualized per the new structure made by the play. Within a similar process of transfer, unmaking and remaking, from the epic to the theatre, the Arabian epic can stay alive and develop new narrative features. This seems to be Farağ's aim according to his foreword to the play.

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Initiating a process of revival which is being continued until today, Farağ uses the *sīrat al-Zīr Sālim* as a subject for his play. With his declaration to regulate the transmission of heritage through an adjustment of values from the myth to the theatre, Farağ joins the convention that has derived tragedies from myths. Similarly, he aims to isolate aspects of the myth according to his idea of the play (and the myth itself). If the play can be an image of the myth, the latter should be meant as a reflection of the hypotext whose *direction of propagation is deflected* in the hypertext.<sup>89</sup>

On the other side, the reappraisal of the myth of *al-Zīr Sālim* takes the same modality of transmission of the *sīra* itself. For his play, Farağ chooses an historically later common version of the *sīra* which ensures that there are no distracting variations from the commonly known

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<sup>89</sup> Cfr. « Le mythe ne cache rien et il n'affiche rien : il déforme. Le mythe n'est ni un mensonge ni un aveu : c'est une inflexion. » (Barthes, 1970, 215)

story of the hero. Selecting this particular hypotext for his play in order to adapt it according to his own creation, Faraḡ follows the tradition in a two-folded way. He follows the modalities of transmission of the tradition and he also continues the tradition itself.

Indeed, it is first and foremost in the perspective of a revival and systematization of the tradition/heritage (*turāṭ*) that the play must be understood. The autonomy of the hypertext from the hypotext is out of question. Nevertheless, the sensible use of the words *turāṭ*, *malḥama*, *ša‘bī* and *sīra* confirms Faraḡ’s engagement in the reappraisal of the “heritage.” Whether this reappraisal is in regard to the heritage or to the folklore, the statement changes according to the one who makes it. In the perspective of the dramatists who were implementing it, they were reactivating their own heritage/tradition for their works and not for a cultural “other.”

Anyway, through their conscious reappraisal of a certain cultural material (regardless of its stronger connection to the nationalist movement or with the epic trend), an image of heritage was being created and the play *al-Zīr Sālim* must be inscribed within this process. The play *al-Zīr Sālim* considers the *sīra* as a specific genre and its rewriting is seen as a contribution to this process of giving content to a category that was being shaped, and more specifically, to the creation of the category itself.<sup>90</sup> Certainly, one of the main aims of the author in rewriting the story of *al-Zīr Sālim* is the action of mirroring and reproducing it through its reappraisal.

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<sup>90</sup> As a prosecution of the trend, note that in Dorpmueller 2012, all the articles refer to *siyar*. Doufikar-Aerts even discusses about “*Sīrafication*.” Lyons, instead, uses “Arabian epic” in the title of his study and sometimes the titles of the epic works by the mention “*sīra*,” maybe according to his sources (Lyons 1995). For instance, he relates the *qiṣṣa* of *al-Zīr* without commenting about the *sīra* as a narrative genre (Lyons 1995, 12). Besides, he also uses the mention *sīra* for *al-Zīr Sālim* (Ibid., 6). Recent editions report the mention *qiṣṣa*, like the one from Manṣūrāt al-ḡamal, *Qiṣṣat al-Zīr Sālim al-Kabīr* (2013, Baḡdād, Beyrūt). Shamy recognizes the difficulty of determining the narrative genre of a text. However, assigning a particular text to a narrative genre is a determination of considerable importance. Indeed, the affective experience a narrative generates, and the perceived characteristics of the genre are highly interdependent (Shamy 2004, xix). Note that Edward Lane translated the term *sīra* as “life,” for the *Sīrat Abū Zayd* and for the *Sīrat al-Zāhir* (Lane 2014, 398 and 437). Following modern and Faraḡ’s perspective, this study will use the term *sīra*, too.

## 2. Replotting - An inquiry over the past. Focusing a new *sīra*.

The play's plot is an intricate version of the *Sīrat al-Zīr Sālim* re-elaborated in the form of a flashback, which is realized through a play within the play where characters reenact their past (see Appendix for the plot). This resettlement of the events has been considered as breaking the rules of the epics to create a drama (Sallām, 77). Certainly,

Faraġ has succeeded in achieving in his adaptation of the story of al-Zīr Sālim, corresponding to Brecht's excellence in treatment of the classics, is weaving a plot from the Original epic without depriving the tale of its rich details, nor of its full traditional artistic flavour and psychology.

Debs 1993, 311

If many critics find difficulty in following the play's plot,<sup>91</sup> such a difficulty is eliminated for an audience who is acquainted with the *sīra*'s plot and for whom, supposedly, the play was formerly written. As such, even though the play is (hardly, but still) intelligible without knowledge of its hypotext, it keeps its link with the hypotext.

A comparison of the play's plot with its hypotext will bring back the link between the play and the *sīra* that an ideal receiver would perceive. Besides, such a study will add new reflections that only an accurate comparison of text-to-text could reveal. Indeed, the transformations the plot of the *sīra* undergoes, if studied in detail, will help in detecting the specific molding of the plot Faraġ chose for his creation. Particularly, this study considers four main transformations (displacements, digest, equivalences and innovations) and their impact on the play both singularly and as a whole.

### 2.1 The logical order of the story. Displaced identities.

If the action of the play and the action of the *sīra* are reduced to some essential narrative sequences, they will mostly coincide. In the following list, Roman numerals refer to the fabula of the play, Arabic numerals provide the order of the exposition of events in the play (the plot), while the list follows the order of the events in the *sīra*.

- (i) (6) Murra, the chief of the Bakr tribe and Rabī'a, chief of the Taġlib, were brothers ruling together in peace upon the Syrian borders. Murra's daughter, Ġalīla, was betrothed

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<sup>91</sup> Many critics remark a confusing exposition of the events in the play (See, for instance, Salmāwī 2002, 122 and 'Īsmāt 1982, 141).

to Rabī'a's son, Kulayb. King Tubba' Ḥasan from Yemen invaded the territory of the two tribes, killed Rabī'a and expected to marry Ğalīla. Ğalīla and Kulayb operated a ruse after which the Yemeni king got killed and they could then marry each other.

(ii) (2) Ğalīla and Kulayb lived happily for a few years. They had a daughter, Yamāma.

(iv) (4 -C) Ğalīla plotted against al-Zīr Sālim. Despite Kulayb's love for his brave and dissolute brother, he supported his wife.

(v) (5 -C) When the old Su'ād, sister of Tubba' Ḥasan, came to avenge her brother, al-Zīr was away from the castle and Kulayb was left without protection. Pushed by Su'ād, Ğassās - Ğalīla's brother - killed Kulayb. Before dying, Kulayb invoked his brother's vengeance. (\*)

(viii) (8) The war between the two tribes broke out. Countless murders were committed by al-Zīr Sālim who claimed that he would stop to fight only when Kulayb could be alive again.

(ix) (11) Al-Zīr killed his nephew, the son of his sister Dībā'.

(xi) (12) Dībā' spared his brother's life.

(xii) (13 -C) Al-Zīr stopped fighting for seven years.

(vii) (7) Yamāma refused the negotiations from the Bakr.

(x) (9) Al-Zīr killed his sister Dībā''s husband.

(iii) (3) Ğalīla was pregnant with Hağras, Kulayb's son. (\*)

(vi) (10 -C) Ğalīla hid Hağras.

(xiii) (14) Hağras went back to the camp of his mother's family. He met his sister Yamāma and they recognized each other.

(xiv) (15) Ğassās was killed.

(xv) (1 -C) (The moment between Ğassās' murder and Hağras' coronation)

(xvi) (16) Hağras became the new king of Bakr and Tağlib, putting an end to a war that had lasted for decades.

Even if the major sequences of the intricate plot rest globally unchanged, the play encompasses the temporally linked sequence of facts, as its action starts when the *sīra* ends, namely in the moment when Kulayb's son, Hağras, takes power. This sequence is in brackets since it does not find a precise correspondent in the hypotext as Hağras directly seizes the power, without hesitation or discussion. Conversely, this moment is important in the play since it is constructed as a frame constituted by the moment during which Hağras is about to take power. A reenactment of the past events by he himself and the other characters allow him to evaluate the past and make the right choice whether to accept or refuse the bloodied throne. In the list of sequences above, this moment is named "C", for "commentary". It is easy to see that the reenactment of events happening before 1 -C constitute the largest part of the play's plot, which is therefore a large flashback, apart from its last scene, which is the epilogue (16).

The return to the present moment (C) is recurrent, as it appears in the previous outline. The star (\*), instead, features the only remarkable chronological disruption in the linear sequence of the *sīra*. As the retrospective narration in the play differs from the linear plot of the hypotext, the play must be received differently from someone who has previous knowledge of the hypotext, recognizes the events and knows where to situate the scenes of the play within al-Zīr's story than from someone who does not have the prior knowledge.

The continuous interruption of the linear sequence of events may be better understood considering a "mémoire partagée" (Samoyault 2001, 16-7) of the hypotext. For the same reason, the elimination of the surprise effect from the flashback accounting Hağras' existence might have been avoided in the play since Hağras' existence would not be a surprise. Some other differences also exist between the fabula of the play and the fabula of the hypotext. Note that negotiations in the *sīra* are asked only years after the war had started, while in the play they come right after Kulayb's death. This kind of inversion clearly supposes a different meaning of the event. In the first case, the proposition comes as a demand for pity, while in the play it occurs as a preventive measure. The difference between the plot of the hypotext and the new one results in a change of the order of events of the fabula, which entails clear modifications in their meaning and in a new logic of reception of the story proving that the linear order does not supply anymore the reasons of the narration specific to the play, so a new reconstructed ad hoc plot substitutes it. Therefore, identities between the two stories exist and are conspicuous, but their new place within the narration displaces their meaning, too.

## **2.2 Few adventures in the *sīra*. Digesting the subject matter.**

With their episodic structure of its storyline, the continual repetition of a limited number of narrative patterns and motifs, popular epics tend to be long (Heath 1997). Then, in contrast to a formal feature of the hypotext that would not fit the play, many adventures peculiar to the *sīra* are reduced in the hypertext. Here, reduction is studied through the three main processes of transformation regulating it (excision, condensation and allusion). Such an analysis allows the reader to grasp the digest of the *sīra* that Farağ creates within his play.

### **2.2.1 Excision of excursus.**

In the *sīra*, the extensive genealogical account provided at its very beginning specifies that the whole war concerns nothing more than the same extended family, since Ḥasan, the Tubba' king

of Yemen, who attacks Kulayb, is his own uncle.<sup>92</sup> Facts at the very end of the *sīra* accounting of al-Ġarū's progeny until al-Zīr's death have the central role of linking al-Zīr's story with the notorious Hilālī epic. Particularly, al-Ġarū's grandson, al-'Aws, and his granddaughter Mayy are the parents of Āmir. In turn, Āmir is the father of Hilāl, ancestor of the Banū Hilāl. Linking the end of al-Zīr Sālim's with the *Sīrat Banī Hilāl* does not only ensure the transition between al-Zīr's story and the Hilālī epic, but also increases the importance of the story of al-Zīr itself. Conversely, in the play, the two cousin tribes' war and the involvement of al-Zīr undergo a "pure and simple suppression" (Genette 1982, 323); in other words, they are *excised* (Ibid., 323). The consequential dissociation of the story of al-Zīr Sālim from the cycle of the Banū Hilāl, increases its detachment from the tradition. Likewise, the erasing of the fabulous trip of al-Zīr to the lands of the Jewish King Ḥakmūn, after that his sister al-Ḍibā' has spared al-Zīr's life, results in a void of action in the play in front of seven years of adventures in the hypotext. Besides, the (political-) religious element is deleted and presence of magic is reduced, too.<sup>93</sup>

An excursus is never completely detached from the main narration. So, deleting it implies changes on following facts. Al-Zīr's trip to Ḥakmūn's Kingdom is linked to a prophecy according to which Ġassās would be victorious only if he took al-Zīr's horse. This is an important part of the narration and yet completely disappears in the drama.<sup>94</sup> In the *sīra*, the

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<sup>92</sup> As the *sīra* used to name characters after their nicknames, while the play employs their official names. So, for instance, al-Zīr is called Sālim, or prince Sālim, al-Ġarū is called Haġras, Tubba' is called Ḥasan, Ḍibā' appears only as Asmā and Ḥarb appears through the name Su'ād, which is, in the *sīra*, the first name mentioned amongst the several appellations she received when she was born. Following this difference, this study will use the play's nominalization when dealing with the play and the names used by the *sīra* when dealing with this one. The plots of the play and of the *sīra* are provided, together with some sketches of the different transformations (Appendix).

<sup>93</sup> Sent in a chest away in the sea, our hero arrived half dead on the shores of Beirut where he was rescued by some fishermen (SZS: 75). The Jewish King Ḥakmūn saved him through the cures of his doctor. During some years, al-Zīr kept his identity hidden and worked as a groom, paying attention to two extraordinary strong horses born from a mare and a horse from the sea, al-Aḥraġ and Abū Haġlān. Upon the incursion of a powerful Christian king, al-Zīr distinguished himself with his chivalry virtues. Then, he revealed his identity and was allowed to go to the Murras, back to his own war. In the play, instead, after that al-Ḍibā' spares al-Zīr's life, al-Zīr is healed by a doctor in his jester's tent. To recover, he sleeps for seven years.

<sup>94</sup> Ġassās had already failed once to steal the black foal belonging to al-Zīr's brother, 'Ubayd (SZS: 61-3.) When al-Zīr went back to the tribe of Murra and Ḥakmūn allowed him to take whatever he wanted, al-Zīr took weapons and his horse al-Aḥraġ. Murra managed to buy al-Aḥraġ that was hidden in al-Zīr's ship and gave it to Ġassās. Then, al-Zīr returned to Beirut to fetch Abū Haġlān, his other favorite horse who revealed to be a good companion since he saved al-Zīr from two of the three pit traps, by leaping out of them. As for al-Aḥraġ, before knowing his real identity, al-Ġarū recognized the value of his uncle's horse and declared that he would fight al-Zīr only if al-Aḥraġ would have been given to him so Ġassās allowed him to take the horse. When al-Ġarū passed to al-Zīr's side and went to kill Ġassās, the prophecy could come true, as he was riding al-Aḥraġ.



Jewish King Ḥakmūn is a positive character, essential for al-Zīr's victory. Faraġ, then, chose to erase an important topic, which is the alliance between the main hero with a Jewish King.<sup>95</sup>

Other accounts, such as the early life of Su'ād, are deleted from the play. Su'ād, also called Ḥarb (which literally means "war") is shown as "an amazon" (Lyons 1995, 3, 659) who would only marry a man who could defeat her in a duel. In the play, Su'ād appears on the stage as the sister of Tubba' (MZS: 36). Some aspects of her character can be deduced from her authoritarian behavior with her husband. However, the direct detailed account from the *sīra* makes clear her nature and supplies a definite reason for her daring action.

### 2.2.2 Condensation of battles.

The reduction of battles differs in many aspects from the excision of the excursus. Continuous battles occur during the decades lasting war, before it and after as well. Consequently, deleting some battles reduces several events of the same typology into a few symbolic ones. When analyzing this process, repetition must be considered as a feature of the *sīra*, while it is not suitable for the stage. Obviously, representing a battle on a stage creates many difficulties in the mimesis of it. First, because of the mass of people that such a representation would need: thousands of warriors fight in immense battle fields in the desert in the *sīra*. Moreover, vivid descriptions of killings are more likely to be imagined than represented, such as al-Ḍibā' seeing the head of her son coming on a horse, or al-Zīr killing hundreds of men bare-handed and leaving his enemies' bodies falling in two parts to the ground. How could such numbers of people and scenes of pieces of men be on a stage as impressive as they are in a story? Of course, in contexts of the kind of the *sīra*, laws of credibility must be suspended. That means that such scenes could not be naturally reenacted.

Within the *sīra*, accounts of battles are rich in detail for the set, modalities of the attack, strategies undertaken, emotional reactions, numbers of warriors and of dead, etc. These details provide variations to the different episodes so that each battle and fight presents specific features. For instance, Šaymān's murder is the first of al-Zīr's killings and it is meaningful as al-Zīr killed his own nephew, son of his beloved companion Hammām; al-Zīr sent the young boy's head on the back of his horse and his mother, al-Zīr's own sister Ḍibā', saw it first (SZS: 53). The first battle between the two cousin tribes is striking for the quantity of warriors

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<sup>95</sup> Kulayb's cry for "not giving up" has been interpreted as a message about Israeli invasion of Palestine. A positive Jewish king, then, would not fit with the message of the play (see II.5).

involved. After three months, about a hundred thousand dead from Murra's side and ten thousand from al-Zīr's (SZS: 56-9). Then, a curious episode occurs in which al-Zīr kills thousands of Ğassās' men in an ambush with his thunderous shout (SZS: 63). The battle of al-Ra'īnī, the King of Abyssinia who gets to Syria, is singular for the way Ğassās' call for help develops. When went to Abyssinia in order to ask the King's help, who was the nephew of Tubba', Ğassās prompted his request maintaining that Kulayb had killed his uncle Tubba'. Contrary to Ğassās' expectations, the king became upset with him, for his belonging to the same family as Kulayb. Only Ğalīla's seductive qualities could save the expedition. Indeed, she had been brought on purpose in case of need (SZS: 66-70). The same battle shows al-Zīr's intellect as he disguised himself as poet and killed the King of Abyssinia inside Murra's camp so that the Abyssinians thought the betrayal came from the Murras. Finally, Ğalīla and al-Zīr are more capable than Ğassās. Likely, al-Zīr's initiative in defending Ḥakmūn's Kingdom during the Christian King Birġīs, even though he was working as a stableman in a foreign country, confirms his bravery. Murra's death is meaningful as it happens through a reversal of a trap meant to kill al-Zīr. Šaybūn's fight against his uncle al-Zīr shows al-Zīr's care, this time, for the son of his companion, Hammām. Our hero ended up feeling sorry that he had to kill such a noble adversary. In the following fight, Hammām had to mask his identity to face al-Zīr. The last wondrous victor is the decisive: al-Zīr and al-Ğarū killing Ğassās.

The crucial fight between al-Zīr and his beloved cousin Hammām epitomizes the effects of reduction. The *sīra* focuses on the contrast between the two different forces besieging al-Zīr; from one side, his duty to kill, which his deceased brother asked to him and, from the other, his love for his sister and for his companion Hammām. Al-Zīr had killed two of his own nephews and his cousin and friend. Hammām, on his side, faced al-Zīr because he killed his sons. Al-Zīr's sister forgave him because he convinced her of his duty to avenge their brother Kulayb. In this passage, instead, the play insists on Asmā's anger (which will later evolve later into pity). The conflict between love and the necessary vendetta is not a matter of the play. Indeed, there, the order for murders is inverted: al-Zīr first kills Hammām and then he kills his son. Such an important change does not undermine the construction of the play since the episode is transplanted in a narrative that provides a completely different imaginative dimension.

الرسول: يا عرب. تعالوا تعالوا..

أصوات: ماذا حدث؟

الرسول: حدث شيء عجيب. شيء مدهش. ذلك أن الأمير سالم المغوار في ألف ألف فارس جبار اقتحم مضارب بكر ومدينتهم بقصد أن يذيق الموت أطفالهم وعيالهم. فما صمدوا لهجمته الشجاعة إلا أقل من

الساعة، ثم انهارت صفوفهم وتفرقت سيوفهم (...) وتصدت له النساء بعويل وزئير ولكنه كان يأخذ الخمسة بضرية سيف واحدة (...) حتى صرخت أختها أسما، ويا لهول عينيها، تحمل على يديها رضيعاً قتيلاً وتصيح كالمجنونة: "أين أخي الكافر، أين أخي العربي!" فما أن رآته ورآها، بصقت عليه ورماتها بلسان لهب من عينه الساخطة (...) وسبقتم (الحيش) أنا لأحكي لكم هذه القصة العجيبة والواقعة الفريدة.

MZS: 224-5

MESSENGER: People! Come, come...

VOICES: What happened?

MESSENGER: Something strange happened. Something incredible. Prince Sālim the valiant, over millions of fighters the mighty, assaulted the Bakr's camps and their town to inflict death upon their children and family. They resisted his fearless attack for less than an hour, then their ranks broke down and their swords dispersed. [...] Women addressed him with lamentations and snarls while he was taking five with a single slash [...] until his sister Asmā screamed. What terrible eyes her eyes! She was carrying in her arms a dead baby. She was shouting like a mad: "Where is my brother the Godless. Where is my brother the reveler!" Once she saw him and he saw her, she spat at him and he launched flames at her from his angry eye [...]. I came before the army to tell you this astonishing story and this unique event.

The account of Asmā and Hammām's son's death is obtained in the play through different lights from the previous scene and a mixture of sounds introduce a new fact. Like in the *sīra*, Faraḡ opts for giving space to imagination through a speech instead of showing the action. The messenger, as a storyteller, filters and summarizes the events, so that, exactly like in the *sīra*, the public can imagine them per their description and uses metaphors and exaggeration to keep their attention. Moreover, the playwright integrates some direct speech to show Asmā's precise reaction and finally offers a reason for why he tells the story: "I came before the army to tell you this astonishing story and this unique event." Even if it goes against the principle of showing the action, accounting is a frequent practice in theatre (Pavis 1980, 332). Like this case, reported action is useful for recalling violent scenes and in its contribution to reduction.

Though they vary from one to the other, like many other adventurous acts occurring in repetition (e.g., al-Zīr's labours, the test of the three apples, the hidden pits al-Zīr escapes thrice), the several battles reiterate the same typology of event. In their reduction from several to a few, a *condensation* of a main portion of the text might be seen.<sup>96</sup> Apart from reducing the vivid,

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<sup>96</sup> Genette describes the condensation as a « sorte de synthèse autonome et à distance opérée pour ainsi dire de mémoire sur l'ensemble du texte à réduire, dont il faut ici, à la limite, oublier chaque détail – et donc chaque phrase

frequent, detailed and varied battles which constitute an essential aspect of the *sīra*, the few essential ones accounted in the play undergo a further process of reduction which changes their nature.

### 2.2.3 Allusion to the hypotext.

In any case, an audience who knows the *Qiṣṣat al-Zīr Sālim* will remember that adventures and battles are a decisive part of the story. At the beginning of the play, where the amount or the level of detail of information is crucial as the audience expects to learn something about the problem or conflict of the story, the main characters and the time and place of the scene, the exposition is fragmentary. The action starts *in ultimas res*, during the supposed coronation of Hağras when his family comments about facts of the past that have not been elucidated to the audience yet. Such a phenomenon normally serves to bring about questions from the audience whose curiosity is stimulated by the gaps of information. However, in the case of *al-Zīr Sālim*, who is the protagonist of a famous hypotext, a fragmentary exposition could work, instead, as an allusion,

un énoncé dont la pleine intelligence suppose la perception d'un rapport entre lui et un autre auquel il renvoie nécessairement telle ou telle de ses inflexion, autrement non recevable.

Genette 1982, 8

The fragmentary exposition in the play of the narrative block concerning al-Zīr's four labours illustrates how allusion works. In the *sīra*, in the first part of the account, the hero does not show up. Then, before his main venture, he carries out four labours similar in kind, but each one more dangerous than the other. He proves to be honest, attached to his brother and supernaturally strong, particularly in his fight against the lions. Sālim's labours are the first *aristeia* of the hero. Succeeding in all of them, he eventually moves to the Lions Well, where he kills all the lions and builds a castle from their skulls to avenge the death of his donkey which was killed by a lion.<sup>97</sup>

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– pour n'en conserver à l'esprit que la signification ou le mouvement d'ensemble » (1982, 341). This study applies the same definition to a main portion of the text, instead of to the text in its whole.

<sup>97</sup> A sand divination warned Murra's sons that al-Zīr would be a source of danger to them. They approached their sister, Ġalīla, who promised to have him killed. To convince her husband Kulayb to kill his beloved brother, Ġalīla told Kulayb that he had tried to dishonor her. She warned Kulayb that the murder must be kept secret (SZS: 28). So, during the first labour, Sālim was asked by his brother Kulayb to go hunting with him. When Kulayb's spear

In the play, Sālim's labours come in the form of a short partial reenactment of only one of the adventures. Sālim is playing and drinking with some people in his room inside the castle, when someone asks him to show the story (*qiṣṣa*) of his lion hunt. Sālim responds through a performed tale of his adventure. A man disguised as a horse, while Sālim approaches as if he was riding it and tells:

سالم: اندفعت بفرسي إلى بئر السباع.

ثالث: كيف ماؤه؟

سالم: شفاء من الخوف. تركت الفرس ونزلت البئر أملا قربتي فدهشتني شهقة للفرس وصيحة عالية قفزت لها راجعا فوق، وإذا بسبع كاسر مال يقيس بناظريه فرسي، فأطلقت صيحة رمته علي.

MZS: 180

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missed a lion and this last one was following him, al-Zīr saved his brother by striking the beast with his dagger, then went on to extract its heart and ate it in front of his astonished brother. Once back at the castle, Kulayb told Ġalīla about the amazing exploit of al-Zīr trying to persuade her to spare his life, but without succeeding. Ġalīla proposed to kill him in the Lions Well. She planned to make him go down inside the well and then cut the rope and leave him there to die. The day after, Kulayb took his horse, his brother al-Zīr and a hundred knights to the well. While al-Zīr was inside the well, he heard horses attacking the scared knights and his brother.

Unable to get out, al-Zīr loudly cried which made the horses escape. At that point, Kulayb loved his brother even more and let him go out from the well, while Ġalīla's anger grew upon seeing Kulayb coming back with his brother. Then, Ġalīla pretended to be sick and in need of the healthy lions' milk and wanted al-Zīr to fetch it. She asked him to go unarmed claiming that he was brave enough to go without a sword. Al-Zīr went to the forest, a lion threateningly approached him, but he managed to kill it. However, then the lion's female mate arrived with its seven babies and became particularly aggressive as it saw the dead lion. Al-Zīr climbed a tree,

ثم رمى نفسه من الشجر فجاء راكبا عليها فقبض عنقها من رقبته وألصق رجليه ببطنها بقوة وعزم شديد حتى لم يعد لها سبيل أن تتحرك من مكانها ثم سحب السكين وهو يضحك ونحرها كما ينحر الجزار الغنم وملاحق من لبنها وقطع رأسها بعد ربط أعناق اشبالها بالحبال وساقهم أمامه كالكلاب

SZS: 31

Then he launched himself from the tree and brought the lion up, he caught its throat from its neck and tied its legs to its belly with strength and great resolution so that it could not move from its place anymore, then he pulled the knife laughing like a butcher about to slaughter a sheep and chased its milk, then he cut its head and lied its cubs' necks with a rope and he drove them before him like dogs.

People welcomed al-Zīr in amazement, while Ġalīla was full of anger. Ġalīla thought a bit, then she came up with a new plan: this time Kulayb had to pretend to be sick. When al-Zīr heard the news, he ran to his brother's bed and proposed that he himself provide the cure. Following the plan, Kulayb answered that he needed water from the Lions Well. There, al-Zīr found a lion sleeping. Al-Zīr believed that it was unfair to kill a lion treacherously. So, he tied his donkey and went down into the well to fetch some water. When he came up, the lion was eating his donkey. He managed to ride the lion until the camp, where people surrounded him in amazement bringing women and children and striking the lion's head while al-Zīr was telling them about the event.

Kulayb too heard al-Zīr's story and allowed his brother to behave freely in his castle, but al-Zīr affirmed that, after his donkey's death, he needed to either to kill all the lions or his donkey had to come back alive. He retired to the Lions Well with some servants and weapons which Kulayb had provided him. Al-Zīr went hunting every day to avenge his donkey until he killed all of them and built a castle from their skulls (SZS: 36).

SĀLIM: I rushed with my mare to the Lions Well.

THIRD: How's its water?

SĀLIM: A cure from fear. I left the mare and I went down in the well to fill my skin bottle when a whoop from the mare and a loud cry surprised me. I climbed to come back on the surface where a ferocious lion stopped by, seizing my mare with its eyes, so I let out a cry that turned and made it launch at me.

The lion approaches Sālim and fights against him, while the audience runs away in fear. 'Aġīb, the jester, jokes and reproaches Sālim for having scared the people. The companions come in and watch with caution, then laugh.

Certainly, the tale performed with spectators on the stage running away in fear and appearing again and laughing is an impressive scene, but it is an account, namely an indirect representation and as such, it is surely less effective than a reenactment on a real audience. Besides, it is a short scene, especially if compared to the long original account. To be precise, the event reenacted by al-Zīr mainly corresponds to the fourth labour, when al-Zīr goes to the Lions Well to fetch some water.

Some changes in contents are al-Zīr's riding a horse instead of his donkey. This difference leaves the theme of the donkey undeveloped.<sup>98</sup> Besides, an innovation is that al-Zīr hears a cry from his horse, and he goes up from the well when the lion is only watching him. In addition, the lion has come after al-Zīr went down into the well. Indeed, al-Zīr decided to spare his life as it was sleeping, which was an interesting point as for al-Zīr's honesty in the hypotext. Considering that this is the only scene in the play showing a fight with a lion, though indirectly, it can be seen as a condensation of all al-Zīr's adventures.

In a process of elision, Sālim reenacts only one of his four labours, which is a mix between the first (al-Zīr must catch water from the Lions Well) and the third adventure (al-Zīr brings seven lions to the castle). The episode loses its previous meaning from the hypotext as a series of more dangerous perils ending in a climax and instead becomes a mere proof of Zīr's power in a case accounting of lions. As mentioned above, reenactment and condensation are products of the dramatization, however, they also affect the content.

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<sup>98</sup> Many are the references to donkeys in al-Zīr's story. For instance, the case accounted above, then al-Zīr making a castle from skulls of lions he has killed to avenge his donkey and al-Zīr's comparison between a horse and a donkey. Note that in Arabic Classical Literature donkeys are often rode by men of power.

On the other hand, at this point, al-Zīr should be considered as a famed hero, known in reality for his adventures. Just as spectators within the drama already know the tale, spectators of the play must know it too as al-Zīr is a notorious hero in Arabic culture. It seems evident that Faraġ stimulates the memory of spectators who are implicitly invited to fill the gaps of the theatrical narration with their own knowledge. Finally, there is no need to fully represent al-Zīr's adventures and his phenomenal strength since he is known to be "the lion rider" (Lyons 1995, 1, 97). Indeed, in the play's foreword, accounting general information about al-Zīr, Faraġ mentions that the hero rushed to the Lions Well to provide a cure for his brother, despite all the ruses Ġalīla has excogitated against him (MZS: 162). Such a detail from the labours is not accounted in the play itself, since it is assumed that the reader knows it. This confirms our assumption of the allusion as a reductive process. Clearly, allusion works on the "mémoire partagée" (Samoyault 2001, 16-7) of the hypotext, where the recognition of a certain portion of text causes pleasure to the reader.

### **2.3. A theatrical *sīra*. Distorting equivalences.**

If reduction provides some necessary formal transformation in the transfer of the plot from the *Sīra* to the play, other innovations that are particularly apt for the stage amplify the theatrical substance. These innovations are in line with the events of the hypotext so that only a closer look at the hypotext will reveal that they are in fact Faraġ's inventions. In other words, in the *sīra*'s frame of reference, they are perceived as highly similar parts of a whole to look alike as much as possible. Hence, they can be defined as equivalences made for the stage. Nevertheless, they contribute to creating the new *sīra* inquired in the play.

For instance, when Tubba' invaded Syria, he forced Murra to accept that he would marry his daughter al-Ġalīla, though she was already betrothed to her cousin Kulayb. The two cousins then planned a trap upon the despotic king. About these facts, both the *sīra* and the play agree. Also, in both narrations, Kulayb disguises himself as al-Ġalīla's jester,<sup>99</sup> while men hide in the coffins containing the bride's clothes. But then, while in the *sīra* the protagonist of the event are al-Ġalīla, Kulayb and Tubba', the scene from the play also includes Ġassās and al-Zīr (MZS: 193-4). Considering the context of the *sīra*, the two cousins could actually be involved with the

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<sup>99</sup> Disguise, in general, and disguise as a poet, in particular, is a feature from the *Sīrat al-Zīr*. Apart from Kulayb in this case, al-Zīr also disguises himself to kill the Abyssinian king, al-Zīr's brother 'Ubayd disguises himself as a groom, etc. Disguise is a common feature of theatre, too. For instance, many are the disguises employed in *As You Like It* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Faraġ provides a second disguise of Sālim as a jester, which is then completely in line with the *sīra* and particularly apt for the stage.

murder. Indeed, in the *sīra*, al-Ġalīla's brother Hammām hides himself in the chests, participating in the expedition, which appears as a mere detail in the narration.

On the contrary, the presence of both Sālim and Ġassās in the play is a significant difference in the plot. On the point of being killed, Tubba' blows the candles out so that the room becomes dark and the identity of the killer cannot be clear. Tubba''s move is a real *coup de théâtre* (sudden and surprising event) introducing a crucial innovation: Kulayb is entitled to the throne after an agreement and not because of his full right as the killer of the tyrant. From this moment on, the personal contrast between the cousins begins. Ġassās becomes jealous as he thinks he is the rightful heir to the throne. For this reason, he follows Su'ād's plan and Kulayb eventually dies. In the *Sīra*, the murder of Tubba' has an important consequence in the narrative: it causes Su'ād's revenge which eventually leads to Kulayb's murder. Besides, it allows Kulayb to be king. In a small passage, the Sons of Murra express their disapproval towards Kulayb's rule, which might be an additional reason to Ġassās' support to Su'ād in his murdering.

Contrarily to the *Sīra*, the murder of Tubba' is not the real cause of contrast between Ġassās and Kulayb. Ġassās' hostility comes instead from an interpretation of the sands, which revealed that he had to kill Kulayb. This interpretation is confirmed by the same Tubba' who, before being killed, revealed a long prophecy foretelling the future of the Arabs with the coming of the prophet Jesus and then Muhammad, the different prophets, the Umayyad, then the Abbasid Dynasty and then the coming of Gog and Magog (SZS: 19-21). The prophecy includes that Kulayb himself will be killed by Ġassās and al-Zīr will spread war all over the country.

Completely fitting Tubba''s discreditable conduct in the hypotext, the move from Tubba''s equivalent in the play sanctions the ill-fated destiny of the Qays just like his prophecy in the hypotext. At the same time, it provides some generic specificity to the play which contributes to creating an aesthetically qualitative product. Thematically, it shifts from the decisive power of destiny to the self-determination of men. Likewise, being in a state of war is no longer a fact that has to happen, but a fact caused by humans, who are Tubba' in the first case and Ġassās after. The elimination of Tubba''s prophecy also decreases the supernatural aspects of the *Sīra* and erases the religious element, as well (II.5).

A second equivalence Faraġ constructed for his play substitutes the seven years' break from war of al-Zīr with some implausible seven years' sleep. The motif of the seven years' break is already present in the *Sīra*. Al-Zīr is warned twice by the Saintly Nu'mān to stop his war as seven ill-fated years would come. Both the seven years' sleep and the seven years' retirement



from the war correspond to a heroic eclipse from the war caused by the hero's inactivity. As for the reference to the supernatural, it comes in many forms in the *sīra*: ominous dreams, prophecies, and divinations, powerful horses born in the sea and al-Zīr's terrific shout capable of supernatural actions, just to quote a few.<sup>100</sup>

Finally, on a purely thematic level, nothing would prevent the *Sīra* from the hero's seven years' sleep. However, considering that the epic narration in its whole is made up of adventures leading to more adventures, a seven years' inaction appears as nonsensical. Indeed, even if al-Zīr takes a break of the war, his adventures continue. During the first seven ill-fated years, al-Zīr was caught drunk in his tent and brought to his sister who spared his life and sent him away to the sea in a chest. He arrived in the Kingdom of Ḥakmūn, where he worked as a groom and raised the two powerful horses, then distinguished himself in a war.

On the other side, from a dramatic point of view, a seven years' total break is important. For the continuation of the story, years must pass, but they do not all have to be accounted. Indeed, as it has been shown, there are many processes of reduction which the plot from the *sīra* goes through in its transfer into the play and the elision of the excursus of the Kingdom of Ḥakmūn is one of them. Moreover, after Sālim recovers from the seven years' sleep, he has lost his memory. This allows the public to be aware of Sālim's identity (together with his jester 'Ağīb), while he himself and all the other characters are not, until he abruptly regains his memory in front of his enemy Ğassās in another *coup de coup de théâtre* which results in two main recognitions: from one side that the poet is Sālim and, from the other, that Hağras is the son of Kulayb and the public could have not known before because none of the others knew his real identity (MZS: 279). Nevertheless, anagnorisis is typical of theatre.

Another example of equivalence for the stage is the change of the prophecy originally saying that Ğassās would be safe if he killed al-Zīr's horse - meaning that he was to be killed by someone riding it - with a prophecy saying that Ğassās would be killed by Kulayb's sword. Such a transformation allows a considerable reduction of the plot. Instead of frequent references to al-Zīr's horses and perils related to them, with horses raised, stolen and recaptured, bought treacherously, exchanged, etc., in the play, a couple of references to Kulayb's sword serves as a substitution. By chance, Ğalīla offers Kulayb's sword to Hağras when he is still a child, then

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<sup>100</sup> For extensive information about the motif of magic in the story of al-Zīr and in works other than the Arabian Epic, see Lyons 1995, I, 64-72.

she discovers that Ğassās feels safe since – according to him – he has collected all his swords and he will escape from the prophecy that states only the sword of the one he killed can kill him.<sup>101</sup>

This substitution of the prophecy of the horse with the prophecy of the sword allows for the creation of many theatrical features. The public shares with Ğalīla the pleasure of knowing what Ğassās ignores, namely that the sword is not in his possession. Also, only the public has the privilege of knowing that when Hağras gives his sword to al-Zīr, he is making a fundamental move towards the end of the war. Finally, Ğassās' recognition of Kulayb's sword in the hands of al-Zīr constitutes a double anagnorisis as it allows Ğassās to recognize his death and for al-Zīr to recognize Hağras.

In the *sīra*, Ğalīla fabricates the claim that Sālim had touched her body. The reader knows that as she says so to Kulayb. In the play, instead, the public sees Ğalīla taking advantage of a situation. While Sālim is playing with a girl who pretends to be a *ğinniyya* and he is blindfolded, she substitutes herself with the girl and lets him touch her (MZS: 190). The theatrically powerful scene introduces a *ğinniyya* into the story of al-Zīr. No reference to the jinn is made in the hypotext, while magical elements modulate in different forms, such as a magic chain, a powerful wooden sword, various ominous dreams, supernatural horses' features and al-Zīr's powers.<sup>102</sup> Then, as mentioned above, if al-Zīr's narration does not mention any jinn, Farağ includes the story of *al-Zīr* into a unified category of the *sīra* which contains jinns, too.

Apart from providing important dramatic material to the play, equivalences clearly distort the plot of the hypotext in a subtle way as they insinuate a range of possibilities that plausible in the hypotext. The new meanings they produce are useful for the general tendency of the plot which is to produce a reflection about a subject (the story of the *sīra*).

#### **2.4 Comments and reflections. Innovating the *sīra*.**

This new section focuses on a component of the plot which establishes a key change with the *sīra* providing, at the same time, a new topic for the play. Commentary, namely a verbal or

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<sup>101</sup> Note that in the *sīra* that Kulayb's actual killer is Su'ād's servant who kills Kulayb upon his request, while the play changes the killer to Ğassās. In this way, the new prophecy makes sense and the personal opposition between Ğassās and Kulayb and, then, Ğassās and Sālim becomes stronger.

<sup>102</sup> See Lyons 1995, 1, 66 for the magic aspects in the Arabian epic and "jinn" in the Narrative Index, Ibid. 2, 412-15.

written remark expressing an opinion or reaction, is studied here as an evident innovation in the play shifting the focus from the facts (i.e., the “what?”) to the way (“how?”) and the reason (“why?”) they happened. If in theatre, *parler c’est agir* (see Introduction) and action through comments result in a frequent practice, dynamic as it can be, this kind of action deeply differs from the physical action which is typical of the epic.

Still, the public of *al-Zīr Sālim* should be acquainted with the story and the question he bears in his mind should more of “How-is-it-going-to-happen?” rather than “What is going to happen?”. Indeed, the play’s plot refers to the actual logical arrangement of events and actions used to explain “why” something happened, while the (modified) plot of the *sīra* designates “what” happened in a mainly chronological order. The first main innovation on the plot of the hypotext is the existence of a framework story that has no equivalent in the *sīra*. As a matter of fact, the major action of the play is Hağras’ investigation of the past and his questions directed to the protagonists to better understand the events; the whole play is an analysis of the story of the *sīra*.<sup>103</sup>

The play starts *in ultimas res*, with Hağras entitled to the throne, even though he refuses it. Either by being interrogated by Hağras, or speaking on their own initiative, Ğalīla, Asmā, Yamāma and Murra express their opinion about Hağras’ refusal. In the perspective of understanding the past so that he can decide about the future, a reenactment of facts follows. Comments about Hağras’ reaction provide a first contact with the characters. Through their way of speaking and what they say, the public begin to know the different characters. Within the narration, Hağras gets to know them too and develops his own view of the facts. Hağras’ comments are sometimes answered through the reenactment, which works as an evidence:

(يتجمعون عند الشباك بينما يتقدم هجرس جانبا من جليلة في أسفل يمين المسرح)

هجرس: أكان عمي مجنوناً؟

جليلة: (يدها على فمها) شش. انتظر.

MZS: 183-4

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<sup>103</sup> Note that Hağras asking for the past events to be recalled has a correspondence in the *sīra*. After having been told of his identity, before fighting his uncle Ğassās, Hağras wants to hear his mother Ğalīla telling him the truth. After that Ğalīla accounts the whole story in a poem, pointing out that she disguised his identity for his own sake, Hağras bursts into tears and hugs his mother (SZS: 113).

They [the girl, the jester, Sālim and some companions] gather at the window while Hağras advances to Ğalīla's side in the lower right part of the stage.

HAĞRAS: Was my uncle crazy?

ĞALĪLA, her hand closing her mouth: Shsh! Watch.

In other cases, an answer is needed, even if facts show themselves, as Ğalīla tells her son, after he follows her to the lower part of the stage.

هجرس: ولكنك أنت صفتت له بيديك. رأيتك تصفقين. تعرضت له ولم يتعرض لك..

جليلة: أما رأيتك بعينيك يعربد في بيتي. كان يترنح سكران في دهاليز القصر، ولعله كان يغازل الوصيفات.

أهذا حياة الملكة؟!

هجرس: اجبي! رأيتك بعيني تنصين له الشرك. لم؟

جليلة: بسبيك أنت.

هجرس: أنا؟!

MZS: 191-2

HAĞRAS: But you slammed into him with your own hands. I've seen you. You faced him, he did not face you.

ĞALĪLA: You've seen him with your eyes feasting in my house. He was reeling drunk in the corridors of the palace and maybe he was even flirting with the maids. Is this the life of a queen?!

HAĞRAS: Answer me. I've seen you with my eyes setting a trap for him. Why?

ĞALĪLA: Because of you.

HAĞRAS: Me?!

Comments also order the reenactment since they follow Hağras' needs for reconstructing the past. For instance, Tubba's murder is reenacted as sub-flashback since it had happened before the reenacted events up until that time. Yet, sometimes not even protagonists can say what exactly happened and the only way of knowing is to see it. Then, some facts do not require any comments but rather, tears come instead. After the murder of Kulayb, at the end of the first act, Hağras bursts into tears (MZS: 205), while later, he feels sympathy for "his younger self" (MZS: 222).

The right of commentary is given to Su'ād as well. Hağras allows her to speak in her favor so that he can better understand the reasons behind her actions (MZS: 209-211). Approaching the end of the reenactment, comments are mainly deductions. After a long speech, comments in the form of questions and answers follow, leading to the reenactment again (MZS: 248). Finally, Hağras enters the subplot. As he becomes a protagonist of the facts, comments disappear and

only appear again at the end of the play, when Hağras draws the commentary's conclusion from the whole story.

In the *now* of the frame-story, comments bring the play to its denouement, as they allow Hağras to face his future. At the same time, comments carry the framed narration and contextualize it. Conversely, the reenactment constitutes a second (inner) story which is an essential part of the commentary which constitutes the subject-matter.<sup>104</sup> As a separate meta-narrative part does not exist in the hypotext, all the comments from the outer story appear as a clear innovation which is not even plausible in the *sīra*. Within the inner plot, comments come instead in the form of physical action in many cases, for instance, Kulayb talking about his wonderful castle and family (MZS: 178); Sālim and Kulayb speaking about Sālim's behavior (184); Ğassās commenting about Kulayb's rule (196); Sa'd and Su'ād talking about Tubba's rule (197-8), Ğassās' description of his situation (213) and many others. On the other hand, the fool commenting about marriage (182), and Sālim's philosophical considerations about justice and nature derived from his own experience with regards to his brother's vengeance, do not occur in substitution of physical action in the hypotext, but rather they are innovations introducing new material for reflection on the story of al-Zīr.

Al-Zīr contemplates, too, but his reflections constitute a minute portion within a large physical action. For instance, around the end of the story, al-Zīr bought a foal and a young donkey that seemed particularly strong to him. Four years after having raised them, he remarked that a donkey, even if it had a better aspect than a horse, kept behaving according to his lower nature which would always distinguish him from a horse. From this episode, al-Zīr was able to draw out a moral for mankind in the form of poetry (SZS: 95). Clearly, a small cogitation is issued from a fact implying physical actions. In fact, al-Zīr is around when he sees the two animals, he pays the owners, years pass by, then he rides both and finally addresses a poem to people.

Kulayb's apparition in a vision to his brother also illustrates reflection occurring instead of physical action. While al-Ġarū promises Ğassās he will kill al-Zīr soon,<sup>105</sup> a "strange thing" (أمر عجيب, SZS: 110) happens to al-Zīr. He has a dream where Kulayb reproaches him for not

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<sup>104</sup> Narrative techniques and particularly the meta-theatrical aspect will be examined in a separate paragraph.

<sup>105</sup> Al-Ġarū did not know his real identity until his sister Yamāma recognized him. He was always told that he was the son of Šālīs, a half-brother of Ġalīla. When he was fifteen, he had a dispute with one of his cousins and decided to move from his maternal house. He particularly loved his uncle Ğassās. So, when this one called him to fight al-Zīr, he is willing to help him.

doing enough for him. After some sand interpretations, he discovers that a man “from the same flesh and blood” as him will appear and he will kill Ğassās. Similarly, in the play, Kulayb appears as a ghost to Sālim. He emphasizes that he does not have any human need (he does not eat, nor rest, nor have feelings). Then he says some enigmatic words that, contrary to the dream, are not interpreted by anyone:

كليب: تحت عرشي بقعة من دمي. اغسلها بماء رائق.

MZS: 219

KULAYB: Under my throne there is a blood stain. Wash it with clear water.<sup>106</sup>

Thus, Sālim continues his fight, but keeps thinking about his situation. Conversely, following al-Zīr’s dream, sand divination is used. Al-Zīr informs Yamāma and the other girls about the news, he meets al-Ğarū for whom he feels empathetic towards, and finally, upon al-Zīr’s request, Yamāma recognizes al-Ğarū through a test involving the three apples and the uncle and the ally nephew. In the play, the anagnorisis concerning Haġras’ identity happens only when Ğassās is dying and Sālim and al-Ğarū actually do not choose to fight together. Clearly, the difference between the two events is accentuated by their consequences, the former leading to more physical action and the second to more reflection.

Likewise, the modality of al-Ğarū’s recognition marks an important shift from physical action to intellectual analysis in the play. As mentioned above, al-Ğarū’s identity in the hypotext is revealed by the test of the three apples.<sup>107</sup> In the play, instead, Yamāma and Haġras meet by chance close to Kulayb’s tomb, where Yamāma is still mourning her father, while at the same time is escaping from an unwanted marriage with her cousin Zayd; a marriage which her despotic uncle Ğassās orchestrated and lastly, Haġras joins the party which he heard from far away. Only after a long dialogue about love and family, Yamāma understands that the boy she is speaking with might be her brother. Indeed, she knows that her mother was pregnant when her father died. Then, when she tells him her name (*yamāma* in Arabic means “dove”), he cooes

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<sup>106</sup> The blood’s stain reminds me of the “dull red stain on the floor” in Oscar Wilde’s *Canterville Ghost* (1906, Ch. I). *Canterville Ghost* as well when offered food answers that he does not eat anymore (Ch. V). However, Sālim’s reply that he will collect all the water of the seas (MZS: 219) recalls Macbeth’s question “Will all great Neptune’s ocean wash this blood clean from my hand?” (Act II, Scene 2).

<sup>107</sup> Yamāma had been warned by his uncle about the presence of someone, reminding him of Kulayb, and who also knew that her mother was pregnant when her father died. She tested the boy by throwing three apples at him and seeing if he could cut them exactly in two parts. This was a trick her father, Kulayb, had taught Yamāma to recognize people that were from their family. As the boy succeeded, his recognition is obtained.

at her, a habit that her father, Kulayb, had; she notices this similarity to her father, however, she does not immediately recognize him.

Particularly, Yamāma understands that Hağras is her brother because he states that he is the son of Šālīs and Ğalīla and, as Yamāma remarks, it would have been impossible that Ğalīla had had a son with Šālīs the same year her father died. So, the test of the apple (one instead of three) is only an additional form of proof. Similarly, the soldiers who were sent by Ğassās and were looking for Hağras, reach the same conclusion from a logical reasoning based on a temporal evaluation, remarking that Šālīs died thirty years before. In the *sīra* a time inconsistency exists as well but it is ignored and a simple practical test, together with unexplained empathy and sand revelations, instead of reflection, produced in the form of a commentary, serve to reveal the real identity of the boy.<sup>108</sup>

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The whole play is constructed as an inquiry over the past where the frame-story is made up of actions in the form of a dwelling word which propels and regulates the order of events of the inner plot. Just as in the inner story comments still have a crucial place, the whole plot of the play spins around the motif of the inquiry.

Vis-à-vis the *sīra*, the increased importance of comments derives from the dramatization. Nevertheless, the new story of al-Zīr results in a deliberate shift from action to reflection, from doing to thinking. Differently from the *sīra*, Hağras needs to know facts and more importantly, he needs to know what the others think about facts so that when confronted with their comments

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<sup>108</sup> According to the *sīra*, Šālīs is Ğalīla's half-brother who had been killed by al-Zīr after his trip to the Kingdom of Ḥakmūn, which means it only happened a few years before. How could al-Ġarū grow up believing that he was the son of Šālīs, if Šālīs died when he was already at least fifteen years' old? Hağras, instead, knows that his father died before he was born, while, always according to the play, he had been killed thirty years before. Evidently, Farağ does not respect the features that Šālīs has in the hypotext, nor he criticizes the specific incongruity of the *sīra*. Otherwise, the observation would be that Šālīs was dead three years earlier (and not thirty, as the soldiers said). However, that would not matter as Hağras left his family when he was only a child. It seems that Farağ wants to allude to the incongruity of the *sīra*, for the ones who already know it, but, on the other side, he wants to maintain the logic of his own narration.

Many other contradictions are to be accounted in the *Sīrat al-Zīr*, which is normal since the story has been kept alive through oral tradition for centuries. Some incongruities, like this one that has just been shown, appear in only certain versions (See Matar Gavillet 2005, 1, 129-30).

A conference held in Paris, on the 22<sup>nd</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> September 2016, discussed time in different epics. VIIe Congrès international du Réseau Euro-Africain de Recherches sur les Épopées (REARE), *La temporalité dans les épopées : structuration, fonctions et modes d'expression*. The outlines of the conference remarked how precise temporal references can be a secondary concept in the epics.

he can put together his own understanding of the past. A comparison between the plots of the two texts makes clear the deliberate shift from action to reflection, which establishes the inquiry as a foremost motif for the play. Indeed, the process of reordering the plot follows a new necessary exposition of facts to investigate. Within the new order, identities are displaced and their meaning within the narration is different as well.

In addition, a summary of the *sīra*'s plot from the play only grants unity and cohesion to a text which by nature, it does not have. Indeed, excision, condensation and allusion reduce the *Sīra* to its *digest*, namely « un récit parfaitement autonome, sans référence à son hypotexte, dont il prend directement l'action en charge. [...] le *digest* raconte à sa manière, nécessairement plus brève (c'est la seule contrainte), la même histoire que le récit ou le drame qu'il résume, mais qu'il ne mentionne et dont il ne s'occupe pas davantage » (Ibid., 346).

As the reduction of a text cannot be a pure quantitative transformation (Genette 1982, 321), through its process of selection and reduction of the adventures, the plot of the *sīra* is compacted so that it leaves space for new material, but also a new image of the *sīra* is provided. Like the displaced identities and the digest of the plot, even the equivalences for the stage contribute to the creation of a new image of the *sīra*.

In other words, reduced to its *digest*, the plot of the *sīra* is a version of the *sīra* which can be commented on within the frame-narration. The frame-narration then, has a primary role in the play, while the *sīra* is subordinated to it. Built over a contrast with the hypotext, the whole plot of the play is an inquiry investigating the new image of the *sīra*. As a result, it is the *sīra* as a category that is being questioned.



### 3. Re-masking - Old roles for modern minds. Revitalising the *sīra*.

Characters from the play keep the same role from the hypotext. Nevertheless, they present deep modifications in their way of thinking, so that they can be considered as an element based on the *sīra* that innovates it. As a first instance, the reduction of the symbolic meaning of names will be considered as a sign of breaking with the tradition. This is acknowledged by the existence of meaningful names in the secondary text which only appears clear if the drama is compared to its hypotext. Then, some new characters Faraġ created for his play and their contribution in achieving dramatic effects will be studied. Finally, two groups of characters, the mad and rulers, will help this study retrace the new traits Faraġ wanted to insert in his characters adjusting them according to the new logic of his play.

#### 3.1 One first name. Breaking the tradition.

A first sign or suggestion of the characters' modern traits appears with their names. Generally, the names of characters are an important indicator of their nature. In the *sīra*, characters are referred to with different names since epithets are used for several reasons.<sup>109</sup> One of these is for the antonomasia the epithet provides, which is also common in theatre since it defines the character and prepares the critical judgment of the public (Pavis 1980, 44). Faraġ, instead, uses only the first name of the characters. So, for instance, in the *sīra*, the name Ḥarb (standing for Ḥarb al-Basūs) recalls the war-causing act of Tubba' 's sister; Ḥasan al-Tubba'ī is commonly named Tubba' from his family name and *zīr* is a nickname meaning "seductive."

Moreover, in the drama, some names are deprived of the article most of the time, whereas it commonly accompanies the name in the *sīra*, e.g., al-Ġalīla (the splendid) becomes Ġalīla and al-Yamāma (the dove), becomes simply Yamāma. In the play, al-Zīr is often called "prince Sālīm" (*amīr Sālīm*) and no one, apart from Ġassās who once calls him by "al-Zīr," which is

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<sup>109</sup> Besides, before the Westernization of Arab names, nomenclatures might have been composed of a whole system of different components (e.g., the *ism*, the *laqab*, the *nasab*, the *nisba* and the *kunya*) giving precise indications as to the surname (which was in its origin a nickname), the patronimic, the tribe, a place the person has lived in, physical peculiarities, a quoted remark, etc. Epithets in the *sīra* function either as telling names or also to supply a variation for the *rāwī* who can choose according to the needs of the rhymes.

For instance,

سالم البطل الشهير المقلب بالزير. (SZS: 3)

Sālīm, the famous hero named al-Zīr

وكان له بنت جميلة الطباع شديدة الباع تعارك الأسود والسباع اسمها أسما وتلقب بالضباع. (SZS: 3)

He had a beautiful daughter her name was Asmā named al-Dibā' (the hyena)

also the nickname he is referred to in the title of the play. Consequently, his other meaningful and recurrent nickname, “al-Muhalhil” (the fine in writing verses) never appears.<sup>110</sup> Both the elimination of nicknames and the elision of the article from the names reduces their symbolic meaning.

The fact that both nicknames are not used in the text but occur in a first position in the paratext (“al-Zīr Sālim,” in the title) and in the stage directions, signals how important they are for the performance directions. Similarly, following the theatrical conventions, some characters are mentioned by their role in the play. So, the servant is simply called *al-waṣīfa* (the servant), knights appear as “the first,” “the second” and “the third;” other instances are *al-ḥakīm* (the doctor), *al-tābi‘* (the servant), *al-rasūl* (the messenger) and the *‘aḡīb* (jester).<sup>111</sup> Apart from *‘aḡīb*, which is also a proper name, they are only minor characters and their names are mentioned almost only in the secondary text.

In the twentieth century, playwrights (particularly Brecht and Ionesco) have started to play with the individualizing aspect that a name can bring, e.g., the same character can hold two different names (see Ubersfeld 1996 a, 102-3). Certainly, Faraḡ does not deviate far from the tradition and his practice in these regards cannot be compared to Brecht (see Lozy 1990). However, Faraḡ imposes a modern use of official names upon a classical tradition. Moreover, a case in point marks his different position from the classic criterion of choosing names. While in the *sīra* Yamāma is not an evocative name, in the play, Faraḡ creates a story which creates a reason to that character’s name. More specifically, once, Kulayb calls Yamāma by cooing (MZS: 178); after some years, when Yamāma is close to the tomb of her father and speaks with Haḡras, she associates him to her father as he instinctively coos to her once she tells him her name. So, Yamāma’s meaningful name is justified by its role in the plot and not as an individualizing sign.

### **3.2 Characters born on the stage. Roles from old to new theatrical tradition.**

Another attribute of modernization is the introduction of characters that are typically employed on the stage. Most of them are devices providing an indirect narration, like the confidant, the messenger and the chorus. Since normally the theatre shows the action instead of alluding to it

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<sup>110</sup> For an exhaustive list of different names employed in the *Sīra* for the different characters, see Gavillet Matar 2005, 2, 435-45).

Note that, like for Tubba‘, Faraḡ employs the nickname as an adjective in the list of the dramatis personae (i.e., al-Tubba‘ Ḥasan and Sālim al-Zīr).

<sup>111</sup> ‘Aḡīb is also a proper name and it appears in the hypotext too as the name of the cousins of al-Ḡarū (SZS: 104).

through speech, such characters are utility devices which allow for respect of the mimesis to reality and, at the same time, to benefit of the advantages of the fiction. Others, like soldiers, even if they exist in the hypotext, take a typically theatrical role – the chorus - which is new to the hypotext. Similarly, the “stuck men” and the jester do not have similar correspondents in the hypotext but can be found in a Modern theatrical tradition and consequentially increase the aspects of Modernity in the play.

### 3.2.1 The confidant and the messenger.

Ġalīla’s maid is her confidant. She is shown twice, both times listening to Ġalīla’s secrets and offering her advice or suggestions, she encourages her lady to calm down and reassures her:

(تتقدم جليلة من فوق المصطبة ترمق الأخوين ثائرة الأعصاب. خلفها وصيفتها تحزم لها رداءها)  
 جليلة: انظري اليهما يضحكان.  
 الوصيفة: لا تعكري دمك يا سيدتي.  
 جليلة: آي. تؤلمنني.  
 الوصيفة: سامحيني.  
 جليلة: أخشى على حملي.  
 الوصيفة: سيكون فرحة للعرب.  
 جليلة: اياك ان تتفوهي بكلمة عنه لأحد.

MZS: 187

Ġalīla advances from above the terrace looking upset at the brothers. Behind her, her maid ties her dress.

ĠALĪLA: Look at them laughing.

MAID: Don’t get upset, my lady.

ĠALĪLA: Ouch! You hurt me.

MAID: Forgive me.

ĠALĪLA: I am worried about my pregnancy.

MAID: It will be a joy for the Arabs.

ĠALĪLA: Never speak a word of him to anybody.

The confidant has no proper name, and in the secondary text she is referred to as *al-waṣīfa*, literally meaning “the maid.” She does not have a previous role in the action, and she allows the public to be aware of Ġalīla’s pregnancy, of the prophecy linked to her son and of Ġalīla’s fears both in general and towards Sālim. She also allows the audience to be aware of Ġalīla’s regret in plotting against Sālim and her enduring fears for her son (MZS: 253-4). Since she is mainly a theatrical device, the confidant has no correspondent in the hypotext. In the *sīra*, al-

Ġalīla's feelings are expressed by the omniscient narrator and, when she speaks of her sorrows, as her social context and times implicate, she does not have a confessor.

Like the confidant, the messenger allows the account of crucial events that have occurred off-set. Just as in many Shakespearian plays, a messenger appears with the sole purpose of delivering news. His *rthesis* (or speech) which has been studied above, as a case of reduction through narration, for its length (20 lines) as a discourse emanating from one person without interruption, is comparable only to the protagonist's soliloquies and to the soldiers' conversations.

### 3.2.2 The chorus.

In Faraġ's play, soldiers do not participate directly in the action. However, they are invisible protagonists of it. As such, a space is given to them in the "telling" part, so that they can comment as directly involved protagonists, like the chorus. Three soldiers approach Haġras and speak about their identity and roles within the war with an astonishing awareness of their condition accompanied by a refined expression of their ideas for being soldiers. Their words are suspect for being settled in the context of the *sīra* most of all if compared to the discourses of their colleagues the knights within the framed story.

(يخرج من الجماهرة ثلاثة جنود على سيماهم عنف المعركة ولكن بلا عهات. يتقدمون لهجرس)  
الجنود: سنتكلم نحن عن صغار الناس، أولئك الأباء والذين اصطلمها الآخر لسان لهيب فيها. نحن لسانا طلاب معالي لنفكر في الأمور المعقدة، الطبيعية هيأتنا لنكون طلاب حياة، رعاة وزارعين وصناعا وحراسا، سواعد قوية ومطامع صغيرة ونفوسا طيبة. لسنا من أمراء بكر أو تغلب.

MZS: 245-6

Three soldiers come out from the crowd. They bring traces of the war's violence, but without invalidity. They step forward to Haġras.

SOLDIERS: We will speak of small people; those parents and those sons who were burnt by the flames, to the very last one. We are not greatness' seekers to think about complicated matters for nature has created us to be life's seekers, shepherds, peasants, craftsmen, guards. Strong arms, small ambitions and kind souls. We are not princes of the Bakr or the Taġlib.

The soldiers speak together in one voice and engage in a political discussion, clearly form an artificial element which used to break the dramatic illusion. Even if in the context of the framework of the play - where the main action is a comment to the inner plot - its role of judge-spectator fits the fiction well, its singular form of expression deliberately makes of a

metadramatic device. Acting as a collective character, the chorus speaks as a mouthpiece for the world. They catalyze the attention of the audience who can see their projection in him and will sympathize with them. However, as the chorus expresses the voice of a community, they need to be faced by a community to exert their cathartic force (Pavis 1980, 59-60). Not only does a chorus not exist in the hypotext, but also the soldiers do not have a voice. If they had been ignored by the *sīra* and the inner narration, they acquire a primary role in the comment and are meant to speak to a community.

### 3.2.3 Stuck men.

In the play, soldiers reveal their impossibility to decide for themselves. Similarly, Sālim's men (فرسان تغلب) in the play never act. Instead, they speak as individuals without names (they are named as "the first," "the second," etc.,) and have static dialogues which lead to nothing (SZS: 226-9 and 237-8). When Sālim is being taken from his tent by Ğassās' men, Sālim's men are present, they observe the entire scene and do nothing until the body is carried away:

الأول: كأنهم يحملون غرارة.

الثاني: لعلهم يحملون غرارة.

الثالث: أهم رجالنا؟

الأول: هذا سؤال.

الثاني: أيجرؤ غير رجالنا على دخول خيمة الأمير؟

الأول: (مستكفا) وسؤال.

الثالث: معناه أنهم رجالنا.

الأول: لنتأكد.

الثاني: تأكدنا بلا أسئلة.

الثالث: أنت متأكد؟

MZS: 237

FIRST: As if they were carrying a sack.

SECOND: Maybe they were carrying a sack.

THIRD: Are they our men?

FIRST: This is a question.

SECOND: Does anyone, other than our men, dare to enter the prince's tent?

FIRST: *Objecting*. And a question.

THIRD: That means that those are our men.

FIRST: Let's make sure.

SECOND: We have confirmed without questions.

THIRD: Are you sure?

Logically, such static characters would hardly exist within the action of the *sīra*. Indeed, knights are always shown while fighting. Static characters are typical of the Absurd drama where in many cases dialogue seems to have degenerated into meaningless prattle. If they not entirely belong to the Absurdist trend because their behaviour is not based on a theoretical concept, the “stuck men” of Farāğ’s play come esthetically close to it.

### 3.2.4 The jester.

Another character who exists only in the play is ‘Ağīb, whose name literally means “jester.” More than the jester, which exists both in the hypotext and in the hypertext,<sup>112</sup> ‘Ağīb presents some specific features, similar to the Shakespearian fool, whose character and function is much more complex than a simple entertainer,

His comedy may be anarchic, but his use of the words is deliberate; his punning and riddling sharp and witty. Traditionally melancholic, the fool rarely intervenes in events. He usually remains emotionally disengaged from the other characters and his detachment allows him to comment on their actions rather like a chorus. [...] In the tragedies, the fool often provides comic relief but again his function is complex and even symbolic. Free from the conventional restriction of the master/servant relationship, he may provide a distorted but illuminating reflection of the behaviour of the hero.

McConnell 2000, 99

Funny and witty, ‘Ağīb is kind-hearted. Like the Fool in *King Lear*, he does not lie to his master who shows a complex form intimacy, one that combines tenderness with moments of hostility (Foakes 1997, 56). When Sālim wakes up after seven years of sleep and wants to know what has happened, cannot tell his master the truth, as it is unbelievable and would surely hurt him. However, ‘Ağīb is unable to lie to him. So, he uses his ability to play with words in order to escape having to answer the question (MZS: 255-60). He possesses genuine qualities of attachment and affection which go beyond the master/servant relationship and touch on

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<sup>112</sup> Note difference with the jester, “a professional entertainer at the court whose job was to amuse king and courtiers with his clowning” (Mc Connell 2000, 99). Jesters and fools traditionally wore “motley,” a costume with a fool’s cap, or hood, with ass’s ears and bells, and carried a “bauble,” a mock scepter or staff of office. In the hypotext and in the hypertext as well, Kulayb masks himself as a jester (عجيب SZS: 13) in order to fool the tyrant Tubba‘ into the trap he organized with Ġalīla.

As for ‘Ağīb of the *Arabian Nights*, apart from the name, which is clearly related to the tale only in association with Ġarīb, the ‘Ağīb of the play does not have traits similar to him.

devotion. He is master of himself. Indeed, he saves his master from certain death entrusting him to the doctor (MZS: 241-2).

However, as a proper fool, ‘Ağīb displays his intellectual freedom through his power and ability with words. For instance, he often uses dramatic irony to complete his comic function. Based on the discrepancy between the audience’s and characters’ knowledge of certain information, ‘Ağīb’s irony often lays on background knowledge of events provided by the hypotext. Thus, duplicities or puns can be understood by the audience because the play is a hypertext and the audience are capable of already knowing the story of the *sīra*, while the characters within the fiction are ignorant of their future and therefore lack sufficient insight. In this sense, sometimes ‘Ağīb seems to be a metadramatic character coming from reality instead of the play’s fiction. Indeed, he is able to maintain objectivity and, like the Fool in *King Lear* who is “an evil that remains horribly sane” (Frank Kermode 2000, 189), ‘Ağīb is one of the few characters in the play that escapes mental insanity.<sup>113</sup>

### **3.3 The unreason of the sixties. A medical glaze over characters.**

In contrast to the hypotext, many characters in the play are mentally insane. Madness is a common subject in the Arabic theatre, and madness in *al-Zīr Sālīm* is of a specific kind. It is far away from Aḥmad Šawqī’s 1868-1932 “romantic fool” in *Mağnūn Laylā* (The Mad Lover of Laylā, 1931) from the “wise fool” in Emile Ḥabībī’s pessimist or the “holy fool” (the proper *mağnūn*) (Ouyang 2013, 80-1). Madness is not the main subject of the play, like in Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm’s *Nahr al-Ğunūn* (The river of madness, 1935), where it is a useful symbol to question absolute standards (Deheuvelds 1995, 48). Since « la folie est l’*autre* de la raison mais un autre dont le rapport à celle-ci varie selon les époques » (De Waelhens 2005, 597), the perception of folly has to be contextualized. The “other of the reason” here is to include in the context of the sixties and particularly within Foucault’s PhD dissertation *Folie et Déraison. Histoire de la folie à l’âge classique* (1961) which is based on theatrical instances (Sforzini 2015) and had an impact on contemporary theatre (Han 2012). Indeed, in *al-Zīr Sālīm*, many characters are clinically mad. At the international level, an important reference of a play dealing entirely with the subject of clinical madness is the famous *Marat-Sade* by Peter Weiss (1964), while Arabic instances of this kind are the many plays *Zanzalaḥt*, (The Chinaberry, 1963) by

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<sup>113</sup> Note that ‘Ağīb does not appear in the frame story similarly to the Fool in *King Lear*, who disappears from the play without an explanation.

the Palestinian poet 'Iṣām Maḥfūz (1939 - 2006) and *Bayt al-ḡunūn* (The House of Madness, 1965) by the Palestinian playwright Tawfīq Fayyāḍ (1939), where madness is considered an issue concerning an entire people.<sup>114</sup> In the play, the theme of folly is not the subject nor is its questioning at the center of the reflection. However, a detailed comparison with the hypotext will show the modern nature of madness in the play which will be seen later as a fundamental support to the contents of the play.

### 3.3.1 Yamāma had a trauma.

An instance of transformation into a mentally unstable character applies to Yamāma. In the *sīra*, while Ḡassās was looking for Kulayb, before Ḡassās hit him to death, he met al-Yamāma and asked her where her father was (SZS: 45). Hence, al-Yamāma was far away when her father was murdered. Indeed, she knew of Kulayb being murdered only after Šaybān's murder (SZS: 53). Then, she stands on al-Zīr's side and pushes him to keep going after vengeance. On the contrary, in Faraḡ's play, Kulayb's beloved daughter Yamāma is present during her father's murder and attends to his rash reaction when her mother Ḡalīla approaches him before he dies.

جلیلة: من الخائن؟ (لكليب) زوجي وابن عمي وحبیب فؤادي.

(تقدم جلیلة الكأس. يضرب كليب الكأس بظاهر يده فتسقط. تفرع جلیلة. ترتطم یمامة في حزن أبيها الذي

یتحامل على نفسه ویقف مستندا على كتف یمامة.)

MZS: 204

ḠALĪLA: Who's the betrayer? *To Kulayb*. My husband and cousin and beloved of my heart.

Ḡalīla presents him the cup. Kulayb hits the cup with the back of his hand and it falls.

Ḡalīla startles. Yamāma flops in her father's lap. With effort, he stands leaning against Yamāma's shoulder.

On a symbolic level, the scene is cyclical. It starts with Kulayb's hand on Yamāma's shoulder as a tender paternal gesture and it ends again with Kulayb's hand on Yamāma's shoulder, but this time to help him stand. If Sālīm is the one Kulayb addresses for seeking revenge, Yamāma is his last support, instead of Ḡalīla, who has been harshly rejected by her husband. From this crucial moment on Yamāma behaves strangely. Yamāma lives enclosed in this moment for years so that it appears to be structured as a trauma causing her madness.

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<sup>114</sup> Mental insanity will be a recurrent topic for other Egyptian playwrights; one of them is Lenin al-Ramlī (1945). Ouyang 2013 provides various instances of madness in the Arabic novel (77-136).



During Murra's peace proposal, Sālīm replies that he needs to ask to Yamāma, in his stead. For three consecutive times, Yamāma replies to Murra's significant offers with one simple condition:

يمامة: أريد أبي حيا.

مرة: الجنون اذن مس هذه الأسرة، بعد الشقاق والقتل. الجنون!

سالم: بل العقل. اسأل يمامة.

MZS: 212

YAMĀMA: I want my father alive.

MURRA: Madness befalls this family, after the dispute and the murder. Madness!

SĀLIM: But this is reason. Ask Yamāma.

Yamāma wants her father alive. Her grandfather Murra and her mother Ġalīla, who always addresses her with affection, presume that she has gone mad.

The war has been happening for years, when Yamāma appears again. She is close to her father's tomb asking her uncle rhetorical questions aimed at glorifying her father and family, while pushing him for a bitter fight/war. After this dialogue, Sālīm decides to start killing children. If Yamāma's attitude and the inciting of her uncle to the war are common of both the hypotext and the play, Yamāma wandering around her father's tomb is a new motif. The *sīra* presents a description of her grief after her father's death while at his tomb (SZS: 54). In the play, she still appears in mourning seventeen years later. At night, she meets her brother Hağras there. Before recognizing him, they exchange a long a dialogue. Hağras sees her alone close to a tomb, her eyes are red. Upon his questions, she tells him that her father has been "gone" seventeen years, but that he is not dead and that he will come back through a miracle.

هجرس: يا طيبة، ماذا تفعلين أنت هنا في الليل. فهميني.

يمامة: أبكي حبيبي وأسقيه وأناجيه.

هجرس: قريبك؟

يمامة: أبي.

هجرس: عينك محمرتان. أ بكيت كفايتك؟

يمامة: لا بكاء يكفيني.

MZS: 267

HAĜRAS: Good girl, what do you here during the night? Let me understand...

YAMĀMA: I cry my beloved, I bring him water and I whisper to him.

HAĜRAS: A relative?

YAMĀMA: My father.

HAĜRAS: Your eyes are red. Didn't you cry enough?

YAMĀMA: No amount of crying is enough for me.

After a long dialogue (the only one she carries on of this importance), Yamāma recognizes her brother and cheers up, while he is shocked to see her eyes are still red from her father's death seventeen years before (MZS: 273). Hence, Haĝras deduces that Yamāma is one of the *maĝanīn* (crazy persons) who live in cemeteries. Indeed, Yamāma seems to spend most of her time close to her father's tomb.<sup>115</sup>

Unable to accept her father's death, until the end, Yamāma refuses that someone else could be the king. When her brother asks her if she wants him to be the king, she refuses affirming that the only king is her father (MZS: 174 “*يَمَامَةُ: لا ملك إلا أبي*”). And even after the reenactment of the past, she still cannot accept the present reality to go forward (MZS: 281 “*يَمَامَةُ: لا برئ إلا* “*”واحد*”). Yamāma's mental disease makes her unable to be conscious of the present. She lives enclosed in the past since she has lived a trauma that is shown remarkably in the play, while it does not exist in the hypotext.

### 3.3.2 Ĝassās has become strange.

In the *sīra*, Ĝassās is depicted as fearful and as a coward. He has been manipulated by Ḥarbū and, like the stars had predicted, he has found himself in a situation where he must protect his clan from the ruthless al-Zīr, who is killing all his people. Ĝassās is not able to compete with his exceptional enemy. He fails and keeps failing until his death comes at the hand of his own beloved nephew. At this point, the war ends.

In the play, at the beginning of the fabula, Ĝassās is simply a submissive person. He happens to be Ḥasan's killer, but he weakly accepts his sister's will and lets Kulayb take the throne in his stead (MZS: 195). So, Ĝassās knows that he is the one who killed Kulayb and seems to want to ask for his right to rule, but he gives up as he is not brave enough to oppose his sister and his

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<sup>115</sup> In this behavior, and in keeping with longstanding mourning, she recalls the famous Greek heroine Electra. And this similitude is underlined precisely during her encounter with her brother which is like Electra and Orestes' recognition. Another hint to the character of Electra is that she exchanges the love for her father with love for a man when, anyways, her father is already dead, like Kulayb (see reply above MZS: 266 and 268, for a more precise reference).

two cousins. From this moment on, differently from the static Ğassās of the hypotext, the character of the play transforms following the events concerning him. Once Kulayb has become king, Ğassās develops a personal jealousy as he persuades himself that he is the legitimate one entitled to the throne. Despite his brother Hammām's call for being prudent, Ğassās becomes jealous of Kulayb as he sees him behaving like a prince while they, also princes, are not rich nor behave according to their status (MZS: 178).

When Su'ād addresses him as "king," she strikes his feeling of subjugation in regards of Kulayb and provokes his jealousy. In the hypotext, instead, his feeling of menaced honour allows Ḥarb to take advantage of him to achieve her vendetta. Clearly, Ğassās' jealousy is based on his weakness. He cannot manage to be patient when Su'ād is rude and almost beats her. Her prophecy of him killing Kulayb convinces him to act against his cousin and ruler, as he only acts because of his confidence in the stars. He kills Kulayb while the other is unharmed and refuses to fight, he then runs away proving his cowardice once again. After this action, Ğassās becomes anxious. He resigns and thinks that his family will see him as the traitor and will ban him. When he hears voices, he seizes his bow and arrow and forces his own brothers to put their swords away if they want to approach him. Moreover, when they inform him that he will be the war chief for their side, he accuses them of depreciating him. He threatens them that he will remember that they dared to offer his neck to the enemy. His mad words are accompanied by savage laughs.

جساس: انن فقد احتقركم ومرغكم في التراب ورفض رقبتى التي بذلتموها له بكل سخاء، ثم أصبح لا مفر لكم من الالتجاء لفارسكم وبطلكم. (...) ولكن اعلموا أن أخاكم لن ينسى أبدا أنكم عرضتم عنقه على خصمه. عنق جساس أفرسكم وأرفعكم رأسا. مرحبا بالحرب والسلاح. سأذل تغلب ولن أنسى بكر. سأذل سالم، سأذلكم. (...) (يضحك بوحشية).

MZS: 215

ĞASSĀS: He humiliated you and rolled you in the dust. He refused my neck that you sacrificed to him with great generosity, then you couldn't escape from resorting your knight and hero. [...] Just know that your brother won't forget that you offered his neck to his opponent. The neck of Ğassās the greatest knight and the most honorable among you. Welcome to the war. I will humiliate the Taglib and I won't forget the Bakr. I'll humiliate Sālim. I'll humiliate you all. [...] *He laughs savagely.*

Differently from the hypotext, Ğassās tries to be alone and is against everyone. However, his brother persuades him. Ğassās is still extremely fearful at one point and presumes Sālim is

allied with the devil and, as a result, ends up having visions. He says that his spear struck Sālim, then looked back at his hand and yet no blood was on Sālim's body. Once again, his brother Sulṭān warns him: this might be a fruit of his own imagination. Ğassās will not approach Sālim anymore as it is too risky for him (MZS: 220). Further on, Ğassās warns Sulṭān and the three soldiers who are tasked with being attentive since Sālim is dangerous, even when sleeping and any small mistake can mean their death (MZS: 235). Indeed, he makes others work to catch Sālim (MZS: 235), while in the *Sīra* he simply was not aware that his brother Sulṭān had a plan of killing al-Zīr (SZS: 74).

After the seven years in which Sālim has disappeared, Ğassās lost his mind. Against everybody's will he was supposed to be celebrating a marriage between his son Zayd and Kulayb's daughter, Yamāma. To Ğalīla, his decision to marry Zayd to Yamāma sounds crazy, and she says so twice (MZS: 249). He shouts and uses his voice to oppose everyone who disagrees with his decision, namely his father, his sister and his son. Lastly, Ğassās is confident that he is powerful because of a prophecy which said that he will be killed only by the sword of the one he killed, so by Kulayb's sword. Consequently, he has collected all the swords. Since Haḡras is the one who should have the throne and Murra ensures that he is alive, Ğassās orders his men to catch him in seven days. This means it would happen before the wedding, and that during the wedding, they would drink the wine of victory in his skull. Besides, he promises either reclusion or death to Ğalīla (MZS: 253).

Surrounded by all the jewels and valuables he has collected from everybody, laughing crazily, Ğassās appears in the apotheoses of his madness (MZS: 277). Alone, he admits his loneliness and that richness does not fulfill his heart and eyes. In any case, the end is close. When Sālim appears and they recognize each other, Sālim seizes his sword ready to fight, while Ğassās once again orders others to kill him in his stead (MZS: 279). Struck to death by Sālim, Ğassās recognizes Kulayb's sword. His end has come.

Ğassās' insanity is evident in his words, gestures, actions, in the way other characters describe him and for his affinity to a famous mad: Macbeth.<sup>116</sup> Most of Ğassās' behavior and traits link

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<sup>116</sup> "Some Shakespearean echoes, particularly from *Macbeth*" are also seen from Muhammad Mustafa Badawi in regard to the extremely poetic use of the classical language (1987, 179).

In 1972, Eugène Ionesco writes *Macbett*. Through his rewriting, he wanted to show the tragic cyclic nature of History. The content of Ionesco's play widely differs from Farāḡ's drama. For a discussion about Ionesco's rewriting, see Lemesle 2014, 145.

him to Macbeth, the famous protagonist of the homonymous masterpiece by Shakespeare. Like Macbeth, Ğassās has been misled by prophecies he strongly believes in and which make him feel safe. He has visions and only when the end is approaching, after he has reflected on his solitude, while still certain that the prophecies guarantee his invincibility, he discovers that the prophecy is not on his side. His lust for personal power, made greater by a plotting woman (Lady Macbeth and Su‘ād) and based upon prophecies, results in damaging psychological effects. Subsequently to the events he has faced, Macbeth has become obsessed with crime and punishment (Martin 2003, 105) and Ğassās as well. Like Macbeth, at the end of the drama, Ğassās is full of “abject and his self torment” (MZS: 248). The statement is given by his father Murra, at the beginning of the third act:

مرة: (...) فبعد سبع سنين من اذلال أولاد العم تحول جساس إلى شخص غريب، ما تقول عنه جليلة انه مجنون، وما أقول أنا أنه ذليل وظالم نفسه.

MZS: 248

MURRA: [...] after seven years of the cousins’ humiliation, Ğassās transformed into a strange person. What Ğalīla says is that he is crazy, and what I say is that he is contemptible and abuses himself.

### 3.3.3 Asmā is resigned to her disease.

Within the array of mentally insane characters, Asmā is the only who recognizes her pathology. At the beginning of the framework story, she says two strange sentences proving her total resignation about the context.

أسما: (تضحك في نزق) لا يريد العرش!  
جليلة: مشينا سكة طويلة إلى هذه المصالحة يا ولدي. اما العرش أو استئناف الحرب.  
أسما: فليحرق خشبة في النار سبع مرات، ولن يتطهر أبدا.  
مرة: (لأسما) اسكتي!

MZS: 173

ASMĀ: *Laughing irritated*. He doesn't want the throne!

ĠALĪLA: We've walked a long path to come to this conciliation, my son. Either the throne, or the war resumes.

ASMĀ: Burning wood in the fire seven times and still it does not purify at all.

MURRA: *To Asmā*. Silence!

When questioned by Haġras, Asmā overtly declares that she reacted to the situation “in folly” (بجنون MZS: 177). Asmā laughs briefly, then loudly and then she declares that she is crazy (MZS: 173, 177). Curiously, her equivalent in the hypotext is called al-Dibā‘, “the hyena” but nothing makes the reader think of her as a hyena,<sup>117</sup> while Asmā in the play laughs in situations that are not joyful, which is reminiscent of the animal's typical sound. She understands when Sālim declares eternal war on her husband's family, and her problems start from the moment she loses her definite place in society; since she is from the Taġlib, but she is from the Bakr, too, as are her son and her father (MZS: 213). Indeed, after Sālim has killed her husband, her first reaction is to swear vengeance to her brother (MZS: 216), whereas in the *sīra* she only reprimands him (SZS: 53 and 100). However, Sālim also kills her child, so that her brother, husband and her son are all dead. Asmā does not want Kulayb's son to die and reproaches Sālim that he is carrying a fratricide war:

أسما: أ تعلم أن سيفك يضرب في لحمك، أن دمك ينزف على رمحك!؟

MZS: 216

ASMĀ: Do you understand that your sword bites your flesh and your blood flows from your lance?!

After that she has condemned and cursed the war, she appears desperate, singing metaphorical words to Murra:<sup>118</sup>

(تدخل أسما مهوشة الشعر ممزقة الملابس زائغة البصر. تقترب ببطء من مرة. ترتمي تحت قدميه تغني)  
أسما: (بنبرة خفيفة هادئة) السماء رائقة، وقد انجلى قرص الشمس. زوج بأخ، وأخ بابن عم. يا الغرابية  
الصفقة!

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<sup>117</sup> In the Arab folkore, the hyena (الضبع) is described as a sinister animal. Particularly, it is regarded as a coward, stupid and totally reprehensible and ill-omened beast (Viré 1997). However, in pre-Islamic Arabia, the hyena had less bad reputation and was simply considered as a game-animal (Ibid.) An textual internal reference to the hyena is in a poem of the *sīra* in which al-Ġalīla compares al-Zīr to the animal, like it, he plays as a fool with stones (SZS: 30).

<sup>118</sup> Ophelia, in *Hamlet*, Act IV, Scene 5, also sings some crazy words about the death of her beloved.

Asmā enters. Her hair is ruffled, her clothes are torn up and her sight is distorted. She slowly approaches Murra and falls to his feet, singing.

ASMĀ: *In a feeble and calm tone.* The sky is bright, and the disk of the sun has reached his way. Husband with brother, brother with cousin. What a strange bargain!

Her desperate demeanor is the same as in the *sīra*, where she appears in black, with messy hair and surrounded by women and children crying and mourning. She proceeds to the Lions Well to blame her brother for the death of her son (SZS: 53). On the contrary to the hypotext, Asmā's son here is only a child (MZS: 225, she carries him in her arms). Despite all the pain she has experienced, and even at the end of the play, she still asks for her son and her husband's vendetta ("فأين دم ولدي؟" MZS: 281), love and pity prevail over vengeance when she saves her brother. If in the hypotext, the motivation of her act is to be reinserted in a clan's mentality, the "new" Asmā results in a character who must be rejected. She acts according to love and pity paying her goodness with an irresolvable mental conflict that ultimately leads her to a madness which she is completely aware of and resigned to.

### 3.3.4 Su'ād has to be mean.

As for Su'ād, in the frame tale, when she explains her reasons for revenging her brother, her laugh is loud and out of context (MZS: 211). Su'ād has come with her husband with the aim of avenging her brother Ḥasan's assassination through Kulayb, Ḡassās and their whole family. Despite the fact that she is blind and old, she behaves with authority in regards to her husband Sa'd, who accompanies her and yet disagrees with her actions. Her authority becomes impertinence with Ḡassās and Kulayb. Her intent is to spread evil without any desire of bringing back the past joyous times, when her brother was the ruler. Su'ād is able to manipulate Ḡassās' mind since she understands his weak point, namely his jealousy of Kulayb's power, and she takes advantage of it, thus making Ḡassās act on her behalf.

If Ḡassās is similar to Macbeth, Su'ād presents some features of the three witches. Indeed, Su'ād waits for the victim to appear and, like them, addresses him as "king," even though he is not. Like the witches with Macbeth, Su'ād tricks Ḡassās through an ambiguous prophecy in which she tells him the stars say that he will kill Kulayb and take his throne (MZS: 199). Like the witches, she uses the victim's weakness (see *Macbeth*, Act IV, Scene 1). During the enquiry, while others accuse her of being mean (especially Ḡalīla), she claims that she did not actually do anything, that she was unarmed and that Ḡassās, is the only one guilty. She goes away laughing loudly (MZS: 210). Ḥarb, instead, is simply seen as a villain (Lyons 1995, 1, 109),

especially in the ways she tricks Ġassās through the device of the magical camel. Certainly, she has a blessed heart (سعاد من قلب موجع SZS: 38 and 41), but her psychological manipulation and her hysterical reaction justified as inescapable consequential acts after her brother's death are innovations of the play.

### 3.3.5 Al-Zīr Hamlet.

Only one character behaves in an abnormal way in the hypotext, and he is al-Zīr.

At a first sight, al-Zīr is an orthodox tribal hero (...). The fires of war warm the audience in the familiar heroic manner, but the shadows that they cast, at times resemble those of older gods and it is this that adds an element of unpredictability to the pattern (...)

Lyons 1995, 1, 97

Al-Zīr rules lions, lives in retirement, demands for his dead brother to be alive and he alone opposes all his uncle's family. All al-Zīr's behaviours, strange as they are, are socially accepted in the context of the *sīra* because of the vendetta he must achieve. Even it is not shown, Sālim is alluded to behave like al-Zīr.<sup>119</sup> However, some aspects of his character do not coincide with al-Zīr's conduct.

The differences between Sālim's and al-Zīr's reflections are clear. Indeed, many new traits of Sālim are reminiscent of Hamlet. Both are obsessed with a ghost, continuously think about life and justice and both are entitled to the vendetta of a dear and honest family member whose throne has been usurped (Selaiha 1991).<sup>120</sup> Sālim's resemblance to Hamlet distances him even more from al-Zīr. First, Sālim's similarities to Hamlet explain why Sālim is referred to as prince even though he has never been a prince in the *sīra*. Even more than the hero in the hypotext, Sālim is eccentric, like Hamlet. Relating sorrow and blood, vengeance and grief, with his father's ghost spurring him to seek vengeance, it seems logical for Hamlet to lose sanity and to become thirsty for revenge.

In the same way, differently from the *sīra*, Sālim does not have anymore thirst of adventures. Instead, like Hamlet, he has *logically* lost sanity. Moreover, like a proper tragic hero, and

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<sup>119</sup> See here the examples of allusion. Nevertheless, the presence of the *ġinniyya* reduces Sālim's powers with regards to al-Zīr's powers as she is said to have lead the lions to the castle and not Sālim (MZS: 181).

<sup>120</sup> In her book about "Hamlet's Arab Journey" (2011), Margaret Litvin does not mention Sālim's similarities with Hamlet. However, the two characters have many features in common. Moreover, the two plays share the theory that theatre has a real impact on its viewers and this is shown by the many metadramatic devices leading characters to *see the truth*.



contrary to the *sīra*, Sālīm faces a tragic death fighting his enemy.<sup>121</sup> Since “Hamlet has become the prototype of the enigmatic, sensitive and thoughtful young man, damaged by a corrupt society (...)” (Sinfield 2015, xxii), like a talking name, such a close resemblance to the important Shakespearean character crosscuts ages and cultures and activates a package of ready-made features adding to the identification and definition of the character as tragic.<sup>122</sup> Sālīm is the mad hero looking for justice in an unfair world.

### 3.4 Imposing images of rulers. Each governor is different.

In the play *al-Zīr Sālīm*, a whole array of rulers displays strength or weaknesses in their practice of the power, providing different samples of modalities of governance that could not exist in the time of production of the hypotext (Sallām, 82).

Other representations of men entitled to power exist in the works of other Egyptian playwrights, such as Bākaṭīr’s *Ma’sat Ūdīb* (The Tragedy of Oedipus, 1949) and *al-Zā’im al-Awḥad* (The Sole Leader, 1959); the only overtly political play by Maḥmūd Taymūr, *al-Muzzayyifūn* (The False Ones, written before 1952), that was formerly entitled *al-Zā’im* (The Leader) (Badawi 1987, 105), put the matter of governance in the heart of their message. In response to the 1952 revolution Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm’s *Ṣāhibat al-ḡalāla* (Her Majesty, 1955) came which is “a facile attack on the cupidity and lust of the dethroned King Farouk” (Badawi 1987, 62). *Al-Sultān al-ḥā’ir* (The Sultan’s Dilemma, 1959), written by the author when he was in Paris, amongst other themes, produces a modern variation on the theme of the Mirror for Princes, “a parable about good government” (Badawi 1987, 73). From 1966 is *Maṣīr ṣarṣār* (The Fate of a Cockroach), where the King of Cockroaches is a satirical representation of Nasser. Within the same context of production of Faraḡ’s play, namely after the 1967 defeat, Maḥmūd Diyāb’s *Bāb al-futūḥ* (The Gateway to Success, 1971), initially banned by the censors, is closely reminiscent of *al-Zīr Sālīm* for many reasons other than the topic of governance as a central matter for the play (see II.4.3, the two-temporal dimension of the play). Also, ‘Alī Sālīm’s *Kūmidiyā Ūdīb: enta*

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<sup>121</sup> Bahā’ Ṭāhir noticed how this death constitutes the final biting mockery of the hero’s tragic existence (Ṭāhir 2002<sup>1</sup>, 129).

<sup>122</sup> A recent play, *al-Zīr Hamlet* (in French, text and direction by Ramzi Choukair, staged at Le Théâtre de Belleville in March 2016) mixes together Hamlet with Faraḡ’s play. Sālīm has been compared to Caligula, too as both individuals demand the impossible (Ṭāhir 2002<sup>1</sup>, 130). Bahā’ Ṭāhir must refer to *Caligula* by Albert Camus (1944) in which the protagonist, obsessed with the quest for the absolute, asks for the moon after his sister’s death, and then starts a series of murders.

For a general discussion about Sālīm as “a pure tragic hero,” see Rāḡib 1986, 83-4 and here, 5.1.

*illi 'atalat al-wahš* (The Comedy of Oedipus: You're the One Who Killed the Beast, 1970) and *Bakaliuriūs fī hukm al-šu'ūb* (B.A. in Ruling Peoples, 1970) directly deal with the question of governance and the responsibilities of the leader.

Politics is a prominent issue in Farağ's plays. As his political commitment deeply affected his life, his pen was his strongest weapon in the political fight. Particularly, along his production, other rulers are major characters of a play. The pharaoh of *Suqūt fir'awn*, the caliph of *Hallāq Bağdād*, the general Kleber in *Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī*, later, the pasha of *Dā'irat al-tibn al-Miṣriyya* all embody rulers of different epochs possessing features making them allegories of President Nasser.<sup>123</sup> In these regards, the different instances of rulers will appear as an evident contemporary innovation in the creation of the contents of the play.

### 3.4.1 Murra, the authority.

Both in Farağ's play and in the *Sīra*, Murra is represented as the authority. Since his brother Rabī'a has been killed and he is the oldest left, he is supposed to guarantee a kind of equality between his sons and daughters and the sons and daughters of his dead brother (MZS: 174). His presentation at the beginning of the play leaves no doubt about his role.

مرة: الآن يا ولدي.. حضر أمراء بكر وأمراء تغلب، وتصالحت القبيلتان المختصمتان على مبايعتك والولاء لك (...)  
(مسترسلا) بكوني سيد قبيلة بكر، وجدك لأمة جليلة، وعم أبيك الراحل كليب سيد قبيلة تغلب وملك جميع العرب  
القيسيين بكريين وتغلييين.. سأجهر بالمبايعه.

MZS: 172

MURRA: Now, my son, the princes of the Bakr and of the Taglib are present. The two disputing tribes reconciled to pledge allegiance to you. [...] *Continuing*. Being the chief of the tribe of the Bakr, your grandfather from the part of your mother Ġalīla, and the uncle of your departed father Kulayb, chief of the tribe of the Taglib and king of the princes of all the Qays, Bakr and Taglib... I will speak out of the pledge of allegiance.

Hağras addresses him as *šayh* when he wants to underline his responsibility upon the past events (MZS: 210, 247). His presence in the framework story must have been crucial for Farağ if he decided to keep Murra alive while, in the hypotext, Murra dies in the three pits trap he had conceived for al-Zīr. Until the end, Murra has the last word on what is right and what is not. He

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<sup>123</sup> On the qadi of *Hallāq Bağdād*, see El-Enany 2000, 181, while on Kleber in *Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī*, see Chapter I. 5.

confirms or opposes other words (MZS: 148, 149), advises Kulayb on how to properly behave (MZS: 178), he judges (MZS: 212), he hushes (MZS: 176, 280), and he discerns what belongs to a king and what does not:

مرة: عادة غير ملكية. الملوك لا يطرحون الأسئلة يا ولدي، بل يجيبون عليها.

MZS: 173

MURRA: A habit which does not belong to kings. Kings don't ask questions, my son, they answer them.

He is the first one who speaks at the beginning of the play and the one who proclaims the inquiry over. His son Ğassās cannot deal with the events, but Murra always maintains control over the situation. He behaves with moderation and tries all compromises to bring peace back for his people, even against his own family. Indeed, after his son Ğassās has killed the king (Kulayb), he speaks with Sālim to look for a compromise which would also imply giving him two thousand camels, Ğassās' life and two of his sons' lives (MZS: 212). He seems to care for his people more than his own family or his own life, but he is not influential as all his actions do not lead to effective results. His system of values and behaviours from the old generation do not allow for governance in the present. He is given respect but cannot have any more power.

### 3.4.2 Kulayb and the family.

On the other side, giving priority to his family instead of his people, Kulayb compromises the safety of his kingdom. Different from the *Sīra*, where Kulayb underlines the necessity of killing Tubba' according to a law of revenge, in the play, in his stead, his brother Sālim remarks the necessity of killing Ḥasan:

فقال (كليب) لا بد من قتلك كما قتلت أبي

SZS: 18

And he [Kulayb] said: I must kill you like you killed my father.

سالم: نقتلك بما تستحق لا بما نطمع فيه .

MZS:191

SĀLIM: We'll kill you because you deserve it, and not because we want it.

Different from the *sīra*, Kulayb has become king thanks to his wife Ġalīla, who decides what the best solution is for everybody. So, he is not rightly entitled to the throne, but he obtains his role due to a secret agreement arranged by his wife.

كليب: انتظري. سنتحقق أولاً من منا قتله واستحق العرش.  
جليلة: أيعقل هذا؟! قضيتك ومكيدتي. وهذا أخوك الأصغر، وذاك أخي الأصغر، العرش لك. عرش أبيك.  
كليب: لا لا. في الأمر شيء. (...) أنا آخر ما أستحق العرش.

MZS: 195

KULAYB; Wait. First, we will check who of us killed him and deserves the throne.

ĠALĪLA: Does it make sense? Your issue and my setup. This is your younger brother, and that is my younger brother. The throne is yours. The throne of your father.

KULAYB: No, no. There is something wrong. [...] I am the last one deserving of the throne.

When Kulayb becomes king, he is completely happy with his life: he is proud of his soldiers and his brother, his wife, his daughter, and his brave brother Sālim. He is also fulfilled by his beautiful garden, his equity and his castle claiming they are the best in the world (MZS: 175), mixing all together his duties as a king and his happiness as a father. When Ġalīla wants Sālim away from the castle, he is reluctant since, despite his brother's dissipated conduct, he enjoys spending time with him. However, he indulges his wife, never thinking about the consequences for his safety as a king once his brave and trusted brother will be chased away from the castle:

كليب: ليس في بلادي كلها مثله رجلاً... هذا الأخ، الصديق، الفارس، الرجل، وأجدني على رغمي واقفاً ضده. هيبة الملك تفرض ضد إرادة القلب. ارحل عن مدينتي يا سالم سنة (...) وحيد كل منا وأعزل كجناح بلا رفيق.

MZS: 191

KULAYB: In the whole country, there is nobody like him... the brother, the friend, the man, and unfortunately, I find myself standing against him. The prestige of the king imposes against the heart's will. Sālim, flee my town for a year. [...] Each of us alone and defenseless like a wing without its pair.

In the *sīra*, instead, al-Zīr decides to leave and to never come back. Then, when Kulayb felt that he would need his brother's protection, he called for him to come back and al-Zīr preferred to stay away from the palace. Finally, in the play, Kulayb loses his happy life when walking unarmed in his garden with his daughter as he refuses to fight Ġassās; he lets his cousin kill

him while he is unarmed. In the *sīra*, instead he had made many attempts to calm his cousin and finally, the last one had killed Kulayb in a trap (particularly, SZS: 46). “Kulayb's mistake is his pride, negligence and denial of his cousins’ rights over the throne.” (Debs 1993, 325). In his behavior, Kulayb simply does not seem to care about being a king as he only worries about his family.

### 3.4.3 Sālim is an individualist prince.

In the play like in the *sīra*, Sālim is not interested in a throne:

كليب: أما كنت تود لو تجلس مكاني؟

سالم: أنا بك مكانك.

كليب: والعرش؟

سالم: العرش، والكأس زيادة.

MZS: 186

KULAYB: Would you like to sit at my place?

SĀLIM: I am with you at your place.

KULAYB: And the throne?

SĀLIM: The throne, and the cup is an excess.

Nevertheless, as in the play Sālim becomes a prince, his behavior as an entitled man appears. He does not give explanations to his men but provides them with alcohol and women (MZS: 226). His men complain about Sālim’s behavior, who does not sit on the throne and instead lives by his sword and acts freely while they are soldiers and their duty is to just fight, they cannot know, nor think or complain. So, as seen above, when Sālim is taken by Sulṭān and other soldiers from his tent, they do not move as they cannot think (MZS: 237-8). Sitting on the throne means dealing with the matters of the kingdom. Sālim, instead, is devoted to keeping his complete freedom.

Also, Sālim acts for a complete justice, which is impossible to obtain on earth (MZS: 234). Despite his bravery and truthfulness, which makes him appreciated by people and helped when he is vulnerable, Sālim, like al-Zīr, is not apt at ruling. Only in the hypertext the consequences of such a behavior regarding governance are shown. Indeed, for the first time, Sālim can be dealt with as a prince (see Debs 1993, 349). Moreover, another divergence from the *sīra*, namely the death of Sālim before seeing the outcome of his brother’s revenge, “constitutes the final biting mockery of the hero's tragic existence” since it bears no meaning for an individual possessing the psychological characteristics of such a prince (Ṭāhir 2002, 109).

#### 3.4.4 Ğassās, the despot.

Ğassās has no family of his own; he is not devoted to freedom and does not belong to the old generation. But still, he is not a good king even though he, instead of Kulayb, is supposedly entitled to the throne. Ğassās' weakness prevents him from being a good king. When he agrees with his sister's decision about making Kulayb king, even if he kills him, Ğassās conforms to a decision that he despises. Indeed, as explored above, soon after, he will complain about Kulayb being king. Ğassās never acts in the first person as he is fearful and needs prophecies to find the courage to act. The fact that Ğassās does not want to face his enemy, does not mention his name and wants him only if dead, denotes a terror and an extreme care for his own life, despite his role of chieftainship. When Sulṭān brings Ğassās a half-dead Sālim, Ğassās must be overcome by ambition if he makes a mistake so stupid and fatal that saves his enemy.

Contrary to the advice of his brothers, now that his enemy is knocked out, Ğassās decides to leave Sālim's body to his sister Asmā so that she can have her revenge killing him and he can immediately go fighting. The idea of Asmā saving her brother in secret does not even pass by his blinded mind. Ambition makes him different from his equivalent in the hypotext. Different from the hypotext, Faraġ allows Ğassās to become a king. As a king, Ğassās perfectly embodies the role of the despot, particularly after seven years his enemy is absent, and he feels unrivalled.

جساس: أيها السادة. اعلموا أن أجود الخمر هو ما يدير الرأس وأجود النساء من يذهلن العقول، والثراء هو ما يغري بالاستبداد، والكبرياء هو ما يشيع في الآخرين المذلة.

MZS: 248

ĞASSĀS: Gentlemen, just know that the best wine is the one making the head turning. The best women are those amazing the mind. And wealth is what tempts tyranny. And pride is what humiliates others.

#### 3.4.5 Haġras, the democratic.

The whole play is built around the inquiry of Haġras who, though he is its rightful heir and his grandfather Murra wants him to be king, he does not want his father's throne. For him, the reason is simple: he cannot accept a throne that has caused so many deaths within his family without knowing their causes. This attitude is peculiar for Kulayb's son in the play only. In the *sīra*, indeed, al-Ġarū does not hesitate: following the customary rule, he kills the usurper and earns his place. Even though the play stops in the moment Haġras decides to be the king and no practical evidence is given about his conduct as a king, many clues are given about his idea of governance. First, the young boy is a seeker of truth and this is shown by his continuous

questioning of everyone, including his family and other people (MZS: 245-7, see also Fataḥ Allāh 1998, 186-87). He needs to know everybody's perspective, even Su'ād's (MZS: 209-10) and asks his family if they want him to be the king (MZS: 173). Indeed, he is the only one that has not made mistakes (Debs 1993, 325). He strongly trusts the mind:

هجرس: ثمة ما هو أقوى من السيف والخنجر. العقل. إن تبرير القتل أفضع من القتل. وتغطية الدماء بستر من المعاذير  
أبشع من سفكها.

MZS: 281

HAĠRAS: What is stronger than the sword and the knife is the mind. Justifying the act of killing is worse than the act itself. Disguising blood with excuses is more disgusting than shedding it.

According to his logic, Haġras has spent time thinking before consciously taking his decision. As Muḥammad Abū Dūma has remarked, in the *sīra* al-Ġarū is a warrior like his father Kulayb and he becomes king because of his familial linkage and because he killed Ġassās; in the play, on the contrary, Haġras is the rightful heir because he has not killed anybody (1995, 34). And so, he acquires his legitimacy from his democratic concept of power which distinguishes him from his equivalent in the hypotext and from all the other *images of rulers*.<sup>124</sup>

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Most of the characters of the *sīra* keep their role in the play. However, they undergo a process of modernization engaging the play in its whole. A first evident proof of this transformation is the choice of their first names, instead of their nicknames, which marks a conscious shift towards a modern characterization.

Provided with explanations for their behaviors and mental declines for the circumstances characters handle, many of them are reconceived as clinically mad. This madness emerges in all its aspects new to the hypotext. Therefore, it can be related to a modern perception of mental diseases and of a modern trend in literary criticism that considers the causes and drivers of human behavior. When this new interpretation of characters is connected to famous theatrical characters, whose inner disease still speaks to nowadays audience, such new traits of the

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<sup>124</sup> Specific references to the present reality of the author within Haġras' behaviour are evident and will be studied further, within the contents of the play (see II.5).

characters clearly breaks with their correspondents from the hypotext. This is done so with the aim of creating a range of fools easily recognizable.

Also, contrary to the *sīra*, where rulers exist but are not precisely defined as such, a group of characters in the play present specific features in the way they rule or how they conceive power and governance to a point where they clearly represent distinct types of rulers. The distinct kinds of power that are shown within the play do not belong to the imaginary of the *sīra* and instead, provide a modern characteristic to the characters and, consequentially, to the play. This is seen more clearly in the following examination of contents discussions about governance belong to the message of the play (see II.5).

As for the new characters, they are exclusively characters born on the stage. Some of them, like the confidant and the messenger find their reason in the key role they customarily play in the dramatic action. In other words, they can be justified by the formal transformations of dramatization. The chorus has a traditional place in the drama and is a metadramatic device, stressing the new dramatic aspect of the play face its hypotext while pretending the existence of a community of spectators. Finally, the chorus constitutes a precise reference to a contemporary theatrical trend. More than the chorus, the jester presents features that fall outside of the *sīra* and refer, instead, to the theatre of Shakespeare. The stuck men are likewise not an exclusive theatrical device but belong to a precise theatrical tradition.

The reference to specific theatrical patterns is itself an affirmation of the dramatization as it is evocative of the belonging to a *new* genre. Besides, illogical dialogues from Prince Sālim's men and their inaction typically belong to the modern Theatre of Absurd and evade the features of the *sīra* transferring the characters into contemporary times. Apart from providing specific dramatic substance to the play, they entrust the play a tradition other than the *sīra*, attaching a new modern substance to the hypotext. While keeping their old role (from the hypotext), the characters have modern minds.



#### 4. Restyling - The shape of truth. Opposing a style.

*Al-Zīr Sālim* has a singular structure. The drama is built upon a flashback realized through a reenactment of the past in a play within the play. The within play is fragmented by the framework narration which regulates it deciding over the order of the reenactment of the past. According to Muhammad Mustafa Badawi, “this somewhat Brechtian technique robs the play of much of its immediacy and dramatic effect, and so makes it a poorer play” (1987, 179)<sup>125</sup> while, according to Bahā’ Ṭāhir, the reenactment allows the public to understand the truth within its dramatic position and not through its temporal chronology (2002 ĩ, 113), and the complicated flow of events is well settled through a division of the stage in several levels (‘Abd al-Qādir 1986 ĩ, 43).

The language as well has turned the interest of critics in controversial statements. All the critics agree that the Classical Arabic is the right choice as it enhances the Ancient context of the *sīra*, but then Badawi admits that some of the speeches “possess a rare beauty, but they are the author’s own poetry, not the poetry of his characters – another defect in the drama” (Badawi 1987, 179). Conversely, this poetry, on its own, is widely appreciated (Ṭāhir 2002 ĩ, 109 and 113, Badawi 1987, 179; Rāğib 1986, 134; Debs 1993, 316).

The following part of the study aims at showing that the language and the structure of the play are co-operating tools for a reflection on truth (and lies) both in real life and in fiction. Since both the language and the structure of the play radically differ from the hypotext, a comparison by opposition to it will support our analysis. Particularly, as the language and the structure of the *sīra* are typical aspects of its style (see Madeyska 1991), the study will deal with the opposition to the style of the hypotext as a tool to question the truth of a narration.

##### 4.1 Conflicts of words. Contrasting the language.

The language of the *Sīrat al-Zīr Sālim* varies in the different versions. Gavillet Matar shows the differences between the manuscript she studied and other editions, particularly the one Farāğ used as a hypotext for his play (that she calls “the semi-savant edition”). Despite the differences, the language of the *sīra* is Middle Arabic.<sup>126</sup> Middle Arabic is an intermediate, multiform

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<sup>125</sup> One cannot speak of “Brechtian technique” if there is not a Brechtian aesthetic, as it is the case of Farāğ’s plays (see here the Conclusion).

<sup>126</sup> The matter of the language of the *sīra* will not be discussed here. Madeyska (1991) and Gavillet Matar (2005) clearly show the features of the Middle Arabic respectively within the *siyar*, in general, and the *Sīrat al-Zīr Sālim* in both the semi-savant version and in one manuscript from the oral tradition (Madeyska 1991, 194-5 and Gavillet

variety, characterised by the interference of the two poles (Classical and colloquial) on the linguistic continuum and by some other specific features (Lentin 2004, 434). It was used especially during the Middle Ages as a versatile and familiar means of expression suitable for literature without great intellectual aims and facilitated access to written culture for both writers and readers (Lentin 2008, 217). In its being an intermediate variety stands the particularity of Middle Arabic which presents a set of possibilities allowing some shifts from one to the other pole of the linguistic continuum.<sup>127</sup> As it will be shown later for the rewriting of the *Arabian Nights*, when Faraġ wrote *al-Zīr Sālim* he had already made use of a language close to Middle Arabic in his plays. Different from those plays and from its hypotext, *al-Zīr Sālim* is most of all in Classical Arabic. Clearly, Faraġ chose a language that contrasts with the language of the hypotext.

Disregarding the historical linguistic reality, Nabīl Rāġib affirmed that Faraġ made the right choice using Classical Arabic for this play and estimated it the proper language for its set (Nord of the Arabic Peninsula in the Fifth Century AD);<sup>128</sup> he regretted that in *al-Zīr Sālim* “the level of the *fushā* is one for all the characters none excluded” and maintained that, even if the status of the characters is the same, Faraġ could have created specific expressions typical for each of them (1986, 180 and 186-7).

The adequacy of Classical Arabic to the context of the *sīra* will be discussed later. For now, the study will focus on the second affirmation since Faraġ has clearly created a variety of idiolects for the different characters and examples of many ways of expression for the different statuses exist. For instance, the language of the confidant differs from the language of her mistress:

جلیلة: أخشى على حملي.  
 الوصيفة: سيكون فرحة للعرب.  
 جلیلة: اياك إن تتفوهي بكلمة عنه لأحد.  
 الوصيفة: عجا لك. تخفين مثل هذا النبأ؟

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Matar 2005, 1, 73-92). For instance, a mark of the Middle Arabic in the *siyar* is the congruence of broken plural inanimate nouns with broken plural adjectives and the lack of the congruence of broken plural nouns referring to male human beings with adjectives and verbs (Madeyska 1991, 194). Moreover, Madeyska and Gavillet Matar agree in the role of the editorial process for the written versions that aimed at introducing uniformity in language and style and to refine the language (Madeyska 1991, 195, Gavillet Matar 2005, 1, 132).

<sup>127</sup> Middle Arabic will be examined in further detail (see III.4).

<sup>128</sup> The language used in the Arabian Peninsula in common life during the Fifth Century was not Classical Arabic but consisted of different dialects.

جلیلة: أخاف أن يكون بنتا.

الوصيفة: سيكون ولدا بإذن الله. (...) أخوه يا ست الناس. ولكن الولد غير الأخ. (...) لا تعكري دمك يا سيدتي.

MZS: 187-8

ĜALĪLA: I am worried about my pregnancy.

MAID: It will be a joy for the Arabs.

ĜALĪLA: Never speak a word of him to anybody.

MAID: Strange! Are you afraid of such a news?

ĜALĪLA: I fear that it will be a girl.

MAID: It will be a boy, God willing. [...] His brother, my lady. But the son is something else. [...] Don't make your blood bad, my lady.

The confidant speaks with ready-made expressions, like “لا تعكري دمك” (literally: “don't ruin your blood”) which she uses twice in the same dialogue (see II.3.2). Likewise, contrarily to the other characters, she uses religious formulaic expressions (بإذن الله). Moreover, she seems to not have a wide range of terms in her vocabulary since she employs the same sentence for calming down her mistress twice. Besides, she calls her mistress by an exclusively typical Egyptian appellation (يا ست الناس), which can be inscribed to overt colloquial items commonly inserted by Arab novelists in “patently emotive contexts” (Somekh 1993, 181).

Murra as well uses expressions which distinguish him from other characters but, on the other side, his language signals his higher social status and his authoritarian position. The *ṣayḥ* uses short sentences, but he can produce long and articulated speeches (MZS: 172). Another mark of his speeches is to assert or deny others' statements (see 3.4).

Similarly, the soldiers/chorus use highly poetic language, like in the following example:

الجنود: سنتكلم نحن عن صغار الناس، أولئك الآباء والأبناء الذين اصطلمها لآخر لسان لهيب فيها. نحن لسنا طلاب معالي لنفكر في الأمور المعقدة، الطبيعية هيأتنا لنكون طلاب حياة، رعاة وزارعين وصناعا وحراسا، سواعد قوية ومطامع صغيرة ونفوسا طيبة. لسنا من أمراء بكر أو تغلب.. معظمنا أقرباء لهم بقرابة بعيدة أو موالى يدينون لهم بالطاعة أو رعايا صغار. نحن حملنا عبء الحرب كله على سواعدنا. ومع ذلك فلم تكن بالحرب الوطنية لنجاهد فيها ضد الغزاة دفاعا عن أرضنا وأرزاقنا، ولم تكن بالحرب التي يفرضها البر بالجار أن تعرض للاعتداء فاستصرخ جاره.

MZS: 245-6

SOLDIERS: We will speak of small people; those parents and those sons who were burnt by the flames, to the very last one. We are not greatness' seekers to think about complicated matters for nature has created us to be life's seekers, shepherds, peasants, craftsmen, guards. Strong arms, small ambitions and kind souls. We are not princes of the Bakr or the Taglib... Most of us are distant relatives to them or clients owing them obedience or small subjects. We bear all the burden of the war on our shoulders. Nevertheless, this has not been a national war, where we would have defended our homeland and livelihood against invaders. Neither did it break to defend neighbor under assault, crying for help, as tradition dictates.

Sentences are well connected the one another through a focused juxtaposition of concepts: *لسنا من أمراء بكر أو تغلب* is reinforced by the antithesis *صغار* and *صغيرة*, *صغار* is reinforced by the antithesis *أقرباء*.<sup>129</sup> Those figures' antithesis appears again as a combination of a name with an adjective opposed in meaning: *بقرابة بعيدة* that was preceded by a word from the same semantic field (أقرباء).<sup>129</sup> Those figures' prominent semantic values are confirmed by repetitions, e.g.: "war" (*حرب*) appearing twice here and many more times during the whole speech signaling a shift of the focus on this subject.

If the soldiers' talk is too poetical to be theirs and the subject is too well exposed to come from soldiers' elaboration, this is because, in this case, they act as a chorus. Indeed, otherwise, soldiers in their normal interaction have a poorer form of language. They can barely put some words together and are stuck in a subjugated position because they do not make proper use of language. Their conversations do not hold real communicational functions and all their talks end without a conclusion (MZS: 217, 227-9, 237-8). When Sālim beats one girl that was dancing for one of his men, this one ("the first one") feels offended and asks his companions for their opinions, but they do not provide any replies:

الثالث: ارفع يدك على سيفك.

الأول: لم؟

الثاني: وفر جهدك للحرب. أنت مقاتل. لم توجع رأسي بالأسئلة؟

الأول: لأعرف.

الثالث: أنا لا أعرف.

الأول: لا تعرف ماذا؟

الثالث: لا أعرف عم تتكلم.

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<sup>129</sup> Note that the *sīra* makes large use of fixed semantic pairs often rhymed which makes the formation of rhymed phrases easier (Madeyska 1991, 201). Amongst them there is the opposition small-big.

الأول: عن اهانتني!

الثالث: (يصفعه) هل أهنتك أنا؟

الأول: هذا سؤال مؤلم.

الثالث: لكي تعرف يجب أن تتألم. امش نجد لنا ما نتسلى به...

الأول: لم يجبني أحد بعد.

(ينتهي الثالث لصفعه ولكنه يعدل من اليأس منه ويخرجون.)

MZS: 228-9

THIRD: Wield your sword!

FIRST: Why?

SECOND: Save your best for the war. You are a warrior. Why do you hurt my head with your questions?

FIRST: To know.

THIRD: I don't know.

FIRST: You don't know what?

THIRD: I don't know what to talk about.

FIRST: About my humiliation.

THIRD: *He slaps him.* Did I humiliate you?

FIRST: This is a painful question.

THIRD: You need to get hurt in order to know. Let's find something to amuse ourselves...

FIRST: Nobody has answered me yet.

The third one is about to slap him, but he desists and thinks better of it. They exit.

Language, then, not only differs following the character, but also depends on the theatrical role confided on the specific talk. Besides, language in theatre also have a theatrical role within the wider dimension of the drama. Indeed, the idiolect of the servant-confidant is comic for the audience since the gap between her language and the language of all the other characters provide release of tension. Similarly, some of 'Ağīb's speeches are comical thanks also to the repetition of fixed expressions typical of the jester. Note, in the following text, the repetition of "as you can see" and the simple language of the jester and the others from al-Zīr's company:

عجيب: اخجلوا أيها السادة من ضعف قلوبكم، فلست إلا عجيب مضحك مولاي الأمير.

(يدخل الندماء ينظرون بحذر ثم يتضحكون)

الأول: أرعبتنا الله يجازيك.

الفتاة: وأين كنت يا عجيب وسيدك يصارع الأسد؟

عجيب: كما ترون. كنت في جوف الأسد.

الرابع: وكيف نجوت؟  
عجيب: كما ترون. حين حز مولاي رأسه، خرجت معافي.

MZS: 181

‘AĠĪB: Shame on you, sirs, for the weakness of your hearts. It’s no one but I, ‘Aġġib, the jester of our lord the prince.  
The drinking companions enter. They look carefully, then laugh.  
FIRST: You scared us. May God punish you.  
GIRL: Where were you and while your lord was fighting with the lion?  
‘AĠĪB: As you can see. I was in the lion’s stomach.  
FOURTH: And how did you make it out?  
‘AĠĪB: As you can see. When my lord cut his head off, I came out safe and sound.

The “as you can see” is particularly comical since it refers to a reenactment and not to the reality, so it is not used in its meaningful context. Its repetition doubles the comic effects. The fictionality of the language is evident in the words exchanged between Sālim and Kulayb during their fight (184-7):

كليب: خذ بالك! (ضربة سيف يفلت منها سالم) أنت شديد الحذر.  
سالم: لا تجاملني وأنت ملكي.  
كليب: وددت لو ذراعي في قوة ذراعك.  
سالم: ذراعك أقوى.  
كليب: لا أعرف مجانا منافقا مثلك.  
سالم: خذ بالك!  
كليب: أخطأتني، ولكن عن عمد.  
سالم: لا أكاد أرى من سهر ليلة الماضية.

MZS: 186

KULAYB: Watch out! *Sālim avoids a sword strike*. You are very careful.  
SĀLIM: Don’t flatter me. You’re my king.  
KULAYB: I wanted to check if my arm is stronger than yours.  
SĀLIM: Your arm is stronger.  
KULAYB: I don’t know an insolent as dishonest as you.  
SĀLIM: Watch out!  
KULAYB: You missed me, but intentionally.  
SĀLIM: I almost can’t see. I stayed up so late the last night.

The dialogue between the brothers is rhythmic, since the sharp short phrases resemble the hitting blows of the swords, which manifests Farāğ's skill at combining language and action as two faces of the same coin (Rāğib 1986, 186-7). Sālim's language and his style differ from the language and style of the *sīra* and from the general language of the play. The following passage is a clear stance of the "extremely poetical use of the Classical language in which, incidentally, there are some Shakespearean echoes, especially from Macbeth" (Badawi 1987, 179):

سالم: ما لم يحدث أبدا أفضل من كل حدث، وما لم يكن أبدا أكمل من الأرض والسماء. انما نحن فوضى لامعة، فماذا تريد؟ أريد أن يقبض الظلام بأجنحته على الصحراء، أن تتضب العيون ويتطاير الحصى. أن يبيد العالم أو يعود كليب. لا خير في شيء إلا أن يكون ما أريد، والعدل الكامل هو ما أريد. (...)

MZS: 234

SĀLIM: What did not happen at all is better than all that happened. And what has not been at all is more complete than the earth and the sky. We are a bright mess. So, what do you want? I want the darkness to spread its wings on the desert, the springs to deplete and the gravel to fly apart. That the world wipes out or Kulayb comes back. There is nothing good unless what I seek come true. And full justice is what I want. [...]

Finally, Farāğ also made a circumscribed use of the style of the *sīra* as well. As it has been mentioned above, the style of the *sīra* is one of its distinctive features. One main feature is the mixed constitution of the text: 70% of the plot is made up of an ordinary and rhymed prose, with poetry insets (30%) (Gavillet Matar 2005, 1, 46). The story-teller (*rāwī*) speaks in the third person in a rhymed and rhythmic prose (*sağ*'), while characters generally express themselves in poems. Produced by individual writers for educated readers, the *sağ*' is a purely stylistic tool.

In the *sīra*, the language of the rhymed prose is simple, the vocabulary is not elaborate, and the repertoire of rhymes is limited to the best-know words; (...) the *sağ*' seems to perform a dual function: it serves to ornament the language, and at the same time it is an important mnemonic device in the oral story-telling technique. This is suggested by the fact that it is in the rhymed prose of the *sīra* that the majority of fixed word sets, formulaic expressions and phrases so characteristic of oral literature occur.

Madeyska 1991, 195

Here follows an instance of the prose of the hypotext. After al-Zīr's exhortation of his soldiers at the beginning of the third day of the battle, the *rāwī* accounts:

فتعجب الفرسان من شعره ومقاله وانذهلت من قول قتاله وكذلك اندهشت باقي أبطاله (...) ثم إنهم أكلوا<sup>130</sup> الطعام وبقوا في الخيام ولما طلع النهار واشرقت الشمس بأنوار تأهبوا للحرب فتقلدوا<sup>131</sup> بالسيوف ودقوا الطبول وركبوا<sup>132</sup> الخيول وتقدمت الفرسان والأبطال إلى ساحة القتال وكذلك فعل الأمير مرة وجساس ويلوذ بهم من عظماء الناس والتقت العساكر وتقاتل بالسيوف وكان الأمير المهلهل في أول الجحفل فصاح والتقى الفرسان بقلب قوي وهو يهدر كالأسد ويضرب فيهم بالسيوف ويقول يا لثارات كليب ليث<sup>133</sup> الصدام وزينة الليالي وكان كلما قتل فارسا يعيد هذا الكلام فقصدته الأبطال من اليمين والشمال وهو يضرب فيها الضرب الصايب ولا يبالي بالعواقب

SZS: 58-9

The knights were amazed by his poetry and sayings and were fascinated with what he said about his fight and the rest of the heroes were surprised (...) then they ate and spent the night in the tents and when the sun rose, and its light was bright, and they prepared to the war, they carried the swords and beat the drums, rode the horses and joined the place of the fight. Amīr Murra and Ġassās did the same, while the greatest people took side with them. The armies met and started killing with their swords. The amīr al-Muhalhil was in the first legions, cried and faced the knights with his strong heart and was yelling like a lion and beating them with his sword and saying "Oh, for the vengeance of Kulayb, the lion of the combats and the joy of the nights. And every time he killed a knight, he was repeating the same words. The knights were coming at him from all directions and he was beating without mistake neglecting the consequences.

For some of its features, the messenger's account in the hypertext seems to be extracted from the *sīra*:

الرسول: حدث شيء عجيب. شيء مدهش. ذلك أن الأمير سالم المغوار في ألف فارس جبار اقتحم مضارب بكر ومدينتهم بقصد أن يذيق الموت أطفالهم وعيالهم. فما صمدوا لهجمته الشجاعة إلا أقل من الساعة، ثم انهارت صفوفهم وتفرقت سيوفهم وهربت أبطالهم وتبددت رجالهم، فانطلق الأمير كالسهم الطائر إلى بيوتهم بعزم حديد ورجال صناديد، ففي لمح البصر كان بين نساءهم وشيوخهم يطعن في الصغار ويتجاوز عن الكبار، صرخت الأمهات وتصدت له النساء بعويل وزئير ولكنه كان يأخذ الخمسة بضربة سيف واحدة (...) حتى صرخت أختها أسما، ويا لهول عينيها، تحمل على يديها رضيعاً قتيلاً وتصيح كالمجنونة: "أين أخي الكافر، أين أخي العربي!" فما أن رآته ورأها، بصقت عليه ورمأها بلسان لهب من عينه الساخنة (...)

<sup>130</sup> كلوا in our text.

<sup>131</sup> تقلد in our text.

<sup>132</sup> ركب in our text.

<sup>133</sup> بالثارات كليب ليس in our text.



MESSENGER: Something strange happened. Something incredible. Prince Sālim the valiant, over millions of fighters the mighty, assaulted the Bakr's camps and their town to inflict death upon their children and family. They resisted his fearless attack for less than an hour, then their ranks broke down and their swords dispersed, their heroes fled, and their men dissipated. The prince launched as a dart to the houses steely determined, his men were tough. In the blink of an eye he was amongst their women and their old men, stabbing the children and leaving out the adults. Mothers were crying, and women addressed him with lamentations and snarls while he was taking five with a single slash [...] until his sister Asmā screamed. What terrible eyes her eyes! She was carrying in her arms a dead baby. She was shouting like a mad: "Where is my brother the Godless. Where is my brother the reveler!". Once she saw him and he saw her, she spat at him and he launched flames at her from his angry eye [...]. I preceded them [the army] to tell you this strange story and the singular event.

Particularly, like in the hypotext, "the language of the rhymed prose is simple, the vocabulary is not elaborate, and the repertoire of rhymes is limited to the best-know words" (Madeyska 1991, 195). Nevertheless, a main transformation occurs in the hypertext, namely the absence of Middle Arabic instances existing in the excerpt from the *sīra*. See, for instance, in the *sīra*, the lack of the congruence of broken plural nouns referring to male human beings with adjectives and verbs - used in singular, feminine (e.g.: *وانذهلت الفرسان والأبطال*, *وتقدمت الفرسان* and *التقت العساكر*) and the suppression of the *hamza* (الصائب instead of الصائب) and *وقاتل* (فقصده الأبطال).

Apart from that, at the lexical level, we can notice that many instances of words like *مغوار* and *جبار* which are listed in Madeyska's study amongst most frequent epithets describing a warrior (Ibid., 197) appear as epithets for Sālim in the first lines of the *sīra* already (SZS: 3). Also, a limited use of lexicon from the dialect (notice the word *عيال* meant as "family") also recalls the language of the hypotext. Besides, the abundant use of similes and metaphors is typical of the *sīra*, too. Expressions like "كان يأخذ الخمسة بضربة سيف واحدة" are reminiscent of the expression of the type "وضربه بالسيف فوق على الأرض قطعتين" (SZS: 25). The rhyme "حديد،" exists in the hypotext already (SZS: 102), while the exaggeration (ألف ألف) recalls the same figure existing in the *sīra*, especially in the case of warriors.

Logically, in the hypotext, the large part of the narration provided by the third-person point of view is not personally characterized. Speeches from the different characters also do not lead to

distinctions. Indeed, idiolects would be moderated by the fictionality of the verse and by the equal social status of speaking characters. Even though poems in the *sīra* present some freedom in comparison to the Classical *qaṣīda*, normally they still obey many formal requirements, like the unique rhyme and the division of the verse in two hemstitches. A certain freedom in the expression, symptom of modernity, is noticeable in strophic traces.<sup>134</sup>

Nevertheless, none of these features go towards the creation of idiolects. Consequently to the poetic form, for instance, on a general basis, a linguistic difference between Tubba‘’s or Ġalīla’s speech would not be noticed, despite the first one is an old king living in Yemen and the second is a younger girl from the Syrian border and the linguistic difference is meant to be such that the narrator even mentions the existence of an interpreter (*turġumān*) in order to let King Rabī‘a and Tubba‘ understand each other (SZS: 8).

When Ġalīla answers her brothers, who have just asked her help to kill al-Zīr, she replies in the following terms:

|                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| مقالات الجليلة بنت مرة      | تعالوا اخوتي اصغوا لقول                |
| تريدوا قتل أبو ليلي المهلهل | أخوه كليب خلفه مثل غول                 |
| ومن خلفه غدِير وبرقان       | سباع الغاب في يوم المهول               |
| وست وأربعون بنو أبيه        | يجوكم راكبين على الخيول                |
| وتركب خلفهم كل الفوارس      | فوارس تغلب مثل الفحول                  |
| ولكن سوف أرميه بحيلة        | تحير كل أصحاب العقول                   |
| ويبقى كليب يقتله بيده       | ويجعله طريحا على السهول <sup>135</sup> |

SZS: 27

<sup>134</sup> A poem has a rhyme of the type: aaaaaaabbab (SZS: 90) and another one has rhyme axaxabab aba where x and b always rhyme with the *ṣadr* (SZS: 109).

<sup>135</sup> Since many are the misspelled words (that do not fit neither the meter nor the meaning) in the Ḥuṣūṣī edition and in the Dār Sādir’s edition, I have confronted this and the other poems I have analysed with the 2012 edition from Manšūrāt al-Ġamal (Cfr. 2012, 49).

What Ġalīla, the daughter of Murra, said: “Come my brothers, listen to what I say.  
 Do you want to kill Abū Laylā al-Muhalhil even if his brother Kulayb is behind him like  
 a ghoul,  
 and is after him perfidious and bright (like) lions of the forest in the terrible day?  
 Besides, forty-six brothers would come against you on their horses,  
 and after them would be all knights from the Taglib and they are (strong) like stallions.  
 Instead, I am going to prepare a ruse that will leave the minds doubtful.  
 I will let Kulayb kill him with his own hand and abandon him in the desert.”

The answer is clear and shows Ġalīla steadfastness well. As a matter of fact, after she has spoken, her brothers thank her for her concern and leave straightaway for the road (SZS: 27). Indeed, Ġalīla goes straight to the point and the solution of the situation. Her brothers have told her that al-Zīr must die, so she finely communicates the complexity of the situation (i.e., metaphors show Kulayb’s force), the consequence and the solution (i.e., the final concise hemistich). Repetitions serve the assertive purpose (فوارس and كل الفوارس; ومن خلفه and خلفه). The language presents some typical usage of Middle Arabic: note that the أبو is the second term of the annexation, then, according to the rules of the Classical Arabic, it should be at the indirect case (أبي); the counted noun referred to the number forty-six should be at the direct case (so بنا instead of بنو); the conjugation of the verb for a broken plural is at the feminine instead of the masculine (تركب كل الفوارس). Also, at the second verse, we find the verb تريدوا instead of تريدون.

First and foremost, transcending the informative function of the poem within the fiction, rhyme and repetition of words allow an easier memorisation of the text for the real *rāwī* who would have recited the *sīra*. Note that the text of the *sīra* presents characters speaking in verses as normal. Within the fiction, everything maintains coherence in these regards. As it will be shown, the *rāwī* affirms that characters said the verses that he mentions; characters express appreciation for the verses just heard, etc. In this sense, the voice of the *rāwī* and the voice of the character are indistinguishable. Also, the introduction to the poem by the *rāwī* (مقالات الجليلة) (بنت مرة) is itself part of the poem.

Similarly, Tubba‘’s imposition to Murra to marry his daughter Ġalīla comes in very clear terms due to the conscious use of the art of eloquence that uncertainly belongs to this character as well:

يقول التابع اليميني الكباري      أنا يا قيس زال الهم عني  
 ألا يا مرحبا يا أمير مرة      أنا منكم وأنتم اليوم مني

تري لولا الجليلة لي تعاتب      وجابت لي الحسب والنسب مني  
 فما علمت أننا يمنا وقيسا      بني جدين أخوين بطني  
 بقينا أولاد عم يا مسمى      والذي راح راح بلا تواني  
 فلا تعتب على بقتل أخيك      ما قد سار إلا بالعلم مني<sup>136</sup>

SZS: 16

Great Tubba‘ from Yemen said “Oh Qays, I am not worried anymore. Feel welcome, *amīr* Murra. From today on, I am part of you and you are part of me. I wonder if Ġalīla was not upset with me and she brought to me nobility from lineage and she took from me nobility due to the great deeds of my family, I would not be aware that we, Yaman and Qays, are descendants of two [ancestors who were] brothers, as I think, we are cousins, and what happened has gone without lingering. Do not blame me of having killed your brother since it happened beyond my knowledge.”

The extracts present the same meter as before (*wāfir*). The construction of the meaning is finely elaborated. In the final rhyme obtained through the repetition of the sound *nī*, the singular first-person pronoun (in the object case) is always present. Three times out of six the same word is repeated (مني). This insistence on the first person is supported by the enunciation and the repetition of the singular first-person subject pronoun (أنا) both times at the paramount position of the beginning of the *‘ağz*. Apart from the rhyme, the first-person object pronoun is repeated twice more (لي in both cases). Then, the twice presence of the plural first-person pronoun (in بقينا and أننا) remarks a union between the speaker and the receiver (so, Tubba‘ and Murra) which was anticipated by the affirmation: “أنا منكم وأنتم اليوم مني” (I am part of you -plural- and from today you -plural- are part of me). And all these pronouns contrast the only singular second-person pronoun at the end of the last *ṣadr* (أخيك), which represents the real matter of the speech. Namely, despite Tubba‘ - the first person narrator made clear by the abundance of the first person pronouns either in the object and in the subject case - has killed Murra’s brother, he wants to convince his addressee Murra that they are one singular entity – “we.”

The ingenious usage of pronouns is clear: everything must oppose the horrible murder of Rabī‘a by Tubba‘ and he wants to relativize it according to a common belonging (“we,” descendants of two [ancestors who were] brothers, which is a familiar connection expressed in Arabic by

<sup>136</sup> Slight modifications follow Manšūrāt al-Ġamal 2012, 32-3.

the common expression that Tubba‘ uses “أولاد عم”. Two other common expressions containing figures of style are used to reinforce the message. One contains assonance (والنسب الحسب) and the other is made up of a repetition (والذي راح راح). The last one affirms the past of the action, while the first helps the memorisation. Again, supposedly, rather than for the character who speaks, the quality of the poem varies after the situation and relating to its function besides the fiction.

For instance, Ġalīla is able to create finer poetry in more delicate situations, like when she wants to persuade Kulayb to kill al-Zīr:

تقول الجلييلة يا محفوظ أتاني علم بحال أخوك  
 وشاع العلم بكل القوم غني الناس مع الصعلوك  
 وصار الناس بقبل وقال وكل البدو عليك ضحوك  
 أنت أمير كبير القوم وقيس وحمير قد هابوك  
 فكيف يكون أخوك الزير وقومك من أجله يجافوك  
 كيف بقالك رأس يقوم والرعيان لقد عابوك  
 فاقتل أخيك بسيفك وإلا قومك قد لاموك  
 فكل العالم تحكي فيه يقولوا الزير بقي مهتوك  
 فهذا الأخ ومثله ألف بيوم الضيق فما عانوك  
 أخاف يقولوا كل أهله مثله والعالم يشكوك<sup>137</sup>

SZS: 28

Ġalīla says, “Oh well protected, the news about your brother came to me.  
 And the news spread all over the world, the wealthiest people and the beggars,  
 and the people started to murmur and talk. Even the Bedouins laugh at you.  
 You are a great king and the Qays and the Ḥimyar used to be afraid of you.  
 So, how can you still consider al-Zīr to be your brother while, because of him, your people  
 are distant with you?  
 How can you still stay among the people when princes criticize you?  
 So, kill your brother with your sword, otherwise your people will blame you.  
 Everybody talks of this and says that al-Zīr is a scandal.  
 This brother and even if you had a thousand, they would not help you the day you have a  
 problem.

<sup>137</sup> Slight modifications follow Manšūrāt al-Ġamal 2012, 51.

I am scared that it will be thought that all his people are like him and everybody would complain of you.”

The character provides a poem in the *mutaqārib* meter with a rhyme in *ūk*. The poem is well elaborated. Note, for instance, the climax in the enumeration of the different people who know the fact and react to it (all the community, wealthiest people and beggars, Bedouins) and the opposition between the status of the people enumerated and the status of Kulayb (أمير كبير القوم) that was important, at least in the past (notice the presence of the particle *قد*). And if, on one side internal rhyme (يقوم, القوم, القوم), reiteration of words (particularly قوم which supports the value of Kulayb in regards of his function as a king) serve to improve the effectiveness of the message, in this case they certainly have the foremost function of helping the teller memorize the text.

Idiolects' complete absence of is particularly clear in a subcategory of the *qaṣīda* that is found in the *sīra*: the *answer* poems. Frequently, two or three poems from different characters present the same rhyme; they are one the answer of the other and are intertwined only by short prose comments by the narrator. In this sort of poetic spar, the personal expression of the character is erased.<sup>138</sup> Al-Zīr is often able to answer using the same verse as others. He *answers* his nephew Šaybān (SZS: 52-3), his sister Asmā (53), Yamāma (61-2), to Sulṭān (92), and Hammām (50-51). Sometimes the first poem belongs to al-Zīr, then the interlocutor answers and again al-Zīr's answers back. They are separated by a brief comment by the *rāwī* so that three poems in sequence present the same rhyme and appear as a unique composition, like when al-Zīr exchanges with Hammām (50-51).

Many other significant instances can be included in our list, like monologues that the characters articulate before dying, whose high register compares to their content (e.g.: Tubba', SZS: 19; Kulayb, SZS: 58 and al-Zīr, 126), but, with a final example, the focus will be on the protagonist, al-Zīr. Al-Zīr Sālim al-Muhalhil, whose epithet *muhalhil* (مهلهل) comes from the verb *halhala* (هلهل), “to wave” indicates that he is “the waver” of poetry (مهلهل الشعر).<sup>139</sup> Indeed, in the *Sīra* he is described as eloquent (فصيح الكلام SZS: 25), he is the most prolific in composing verses and manages to modulate poetry to the various situations that he faces. For instance, when he recalls one of his adventures with the lions, his expression is smooth:

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<sup>138</sup> See Gavillet Matar 2005, 1, 111-13 for an analysis of the contents of *answer* poems.

<sup>139</sup> According to some, it also means “fine warrior”, like in the expression مهلهل بالرمح, skilful with the spear. See Ibn Rašīq 1988, 1, 191 who also underlines al-Muhalhil's role in the development of the *qaṣīda* (Ibid.).

أنا مهلهل فعزمي يفلق الحجرأ      والإنس والجن تخشى سطوتي حذرا  
قالوا أخوك كليب اليوم منطرحا      على الفراش ضعيف الجسم والبصرا  
فجنته عاجلا حتى أسائله      والعقل في حيرة مما عليه جرى  
قلت له كيف حالك أنت أخبرني      فقال لي يا مهلهل كيف أنت ترى  
أريد شربة ماء اطفى بها ظمئي      من بئر صندل يزول الهم الكدرا  
فسرت حالا لذلك البئر في عجل      قبلت قصدي وعدت اليوم مفتخرا  
هذى فعالي وكل الناس ترهيني      حتى الأسود وأهل البأس والأمرأ

SZS: 34-5

I am the Muhalhil and my determination splits stones. Humans and jinns fear my authority. Beware!

I have been told “Your brother Kulayb is forced to stay in bed since he his body and view are faint.”

So, I joined him quickly to ask him since I was perplexed about what happened to him.

I said to him “Tell me, how are you?” and he said: “Oh Muhalhil, (I am) as you can see.

To quench my thirst, I want some water from Şandal Well which relieves the worries and the pain.”

So, I rushed to that well, I achieved my purpose and came back proud today.

Here are my deeds and all the people are intimidated by me, even lions, the strongest and the rulers.

Poetry in this case flows just as a tale is meant to do. The verse is *basīf*. Couples of words recur (حتى الأسود وأهل البأس والأمرأ) (الجن والبصر and الإنس والجن) to fill the verse, like enumeration does.

In other instances, instead, al-Zīr encourages his soldiers with a short, simple and redundant poem beating a rhythm of the action:

ولما طال المطال وشفى غليله من الأبطال أنشد وقال  
ذهب الصلح أوتردوا كليبا<sup>140</sup> أو نبيد الحين بكرا وذهلا  
ذهب الصلح أوتردوا كليبا      أو تنال العداة قهرا وذلا  
ذهب الصلح أوتردوا كليبا      أو تعم السيوف شيبان قتلا

SZS: 58

<sup>140</sup> كليب in the three verses in the original.

After a while, he satisfied his hate for the knights and started to say:

No reconciliation will take place. Either you bring us back Kulayb or we will exterminate the people of the Bakr and Ḍuhl.

No reconciliation will take place. Either you bring us back Kulayb or the enemy will have subjugation and humiliation.

No reconciliation will take place. Either you bring us back Kulayb or swords will invade the people of Šaybān.

The insistence of the sound *tāl* in the *rāwī*'s introduction to the poem perfectly fits the beating rhythm of the poem itself, in *ḥafīf* meter, with the identical repetition of the *ṣadr* for its whole and the symmetrical division of the tripartite sentences in each verse which sounds like an insistent drum.

Since every character produces adequate verses in each situation, the protagonist (who faces different and numerous events) must master the art of poetry. No wonder al-Zīr is a talented poet.<sup>141</sup> Clearly, the variation of the register and of the style follows the situation. Moreover, poetry is a mnemonic device and linguistic requirements for oral repetition. Hence, idiolects for the different characters are not even considered in a possible contribution to the plausibility of the story.

The language and style of the hypotext and the hypertext contrast in at least two ways. First, the play is almost entirely in Classical Arabic instead of the Middle Arabic of the *sīra*. Secondly, its language and style differentiate according to the characters speaking, while the *sīra* does not. With a unified form of expression for the different characters and characters expressing themselves in verses, the language and style used in the *sīra* disrupts the coherence of the fiction since the function of the text (the oral repetition) prevails on the effect of reality. In other words, the audience must overlook the limitations of the medium so that these do not interfere with the acceptance of those unconvincing premises; namely, the audience must actuate a suspension of disbelief.

In the case of the play, despite idiolects providing a hint of realism, the language Faraḡ uses is neither the real language spoken in the time and space al-Zīr was supposed to have lived in, nor respects the language of its hypotext. Certainly, one must consider the needs of the works in terms of reception. Both the *sīra* and the play must have used a widely intelligible language to

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<sup>141</sup> Like al-Zīr, 'Antara too is a famous poet protagonist of a *sīra* (whose name is more commonly spelled as 'Antar when it indicates the legendary hero). Other reasons for the attribution of poetical skills to the hero are syncretism (see Lyons 1995, I, 94) and the prestige of being a poet.



overstep regional boundaries. Middle Arabic is the choice of the *sīra* and Classical Arabic is Faraġ's choice. Indeed, a plausible alternative for Faraġ could have been the Egyptian dialect (since it was his language and the language he and other playwrights used for their works). Nevertheless, as critics maintain, Faraġ chose the right language for the context he dealt with (Rāġib 1986, 180).

Then, what makes Classical Arabic a more appropriate language than the Egyptian dialect when the real language spoken in al-Zīr's context was a mixture of different dialects? Apart and together with the aim of acquiring a wider audience within the Arab speaking world, Faraġ's use of Classical Arabic finds its roots in the nationalist project and should be considered as an ideological stand. Indeed, Arabic serves as a unifying identity symbol which Faraġ was using as a device to convey his political point of view:

Language is a communication tool and a cultural vehicle, which implies that it is also a reference for identifying 'ours' and 'theirs', a content of loyalty and hostility, of social and cultural status. For nationalists, language is a tool that connects past and future, projecting a reconstructed centripetal unity out of the centrifugal reality of the present.

Kallas 2008, 343

In a certain way, Faraġ assumes the false idea that Classical Arabic was a common language spoken in Ancient times. Indeed, with the existence of idiolects, the play does not demand a complete suspension of disbelief for the linguistic aspect like the *sīra*. Certainly, the language and style of the play contrast its hypotext and the plausibility of the story in favor of a political aim. By the way, the last contrast was a feature of the hypotext, too. The difference in the aim of the linguistic choice in the hypotext and in the hypertext is clear. From one side, obvious medium limits (recitation and perpetuation of the text) can be perceived. From the other, a hidden misuse of the language - since idiolects are well elaborated - emerges, together with an ideological position that affirms itself through contrast.

#### **4.2 Plays within the play. Framing the *sīra*.**

In *al-Zīr Sālim*, the present is determined and molded considering the past and the past is seen again and reevaluated in light of the present (Ṭāhir 2002 <sup>1</sup>, 107). That means that the reader comprehends the truth about every scene from within its essential dramatic position and not through its temporal chronology (Ibid.). Then, the play is made of a play within a play whose two parts are not separable.

Instead, the structure of the *sīra* is cyclical:

Of Shklovsky's two types of construction, "linking" and "framing," *The Arabian Nights* represent "framing" and the hero cycles "linking" – "most frequently found in works which present the various deeds of a single hero." In the cycles the scope of the linkage can be extended beyond the hero himself to cover his clan, (...). Further, as a matter of narrative convenience, the hero is normally taken as the centre of a heroic group, whose members multiply the number of episodes that can be attached to his story.

Lyons 1995, 1, 73

Hence, the hero's cycles are composed of linked stories liable to increase the narrative matter. In the specific case of the *Sīrat al-Zīr* the linkage is horizontal, in the sense that it goes towards the chronological development of the story, and vertical, with many excursions juxtaposing the main narration, regardless of a sequential suite of the events. Besides, the *Sīrat al-Zīr* is linked with another cycle, the *Sīrat Banī Hilāl*, to which it provides the preamble. Precisely, the play presents a closed story starting with Hağras who does not want his father's throne and ending with him finally taking the throne and ensuing power. Within this frame-narration, an inner story is made of past events exposed in the form of a reenactment.<sup>142</sup>

The succession of these events is enclosed by the frame-narration which regulates them in small separated pictures. Some of them still enclose other reenactments. For instance, Sālim having his adventure with the lion is double-framed by either the reenactment of the past and the present frame (Sālim from the present reenacts Sālim from the past which reenacts one of his adventures from a far past). Su'ād and Sa'd's recalling of their marriage is also a double-framed narration since, within the reenactment of their past, they recall a further past which results in double-framed of two later moments in time.

The origins of the play within the play can be traced back to the XVI Century in Italy and England. A prominent instance of a third level narration exists in Corneille's *L'Illusion comique* (1635-36) where the plays within the plays are used to praise the theatrical genre. With its predominance of appearances and its endless search of variety and change, the *Illusion comique* is one of the most illustrative Baroque plays (Hutier 2006, 86-96). Like in Corneille's play, the

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<sup>142</sup> Richard Van Leeuwen has recently proposed an explication of the recurrent links between a framing story and the king being its main character in the *Kalila and Dimna*. As a king embodies the social and cultural values of the empire, and it is his duty to guard their perpetuation, he is the protagonist of the instructive level of the tale (the framing tale) (van Leeuwen 2017, 24-51).

complicated form is inherent to *al-Zīr Sālim*. The play would substantially change if its form is modified. In other words, the game of illusions is so developed that a baroque track has an impact on it. Its form opposes the linking and expansive structure typical of the *sīra* with a multiple-framed structure. The play is an enclosed system including another system that is enclosed both in its temporal dimension (the past) and within the frame narration. Moreover, third level narrations multiply the enclosed structure of the play and clearly opposes it to the expandable matter of the *sīra*.

The opposing structure might be a coincidence. Nevertheless, an accurate attention to the hypotext and a consequential implication in the hypertext is confirmed in plays such as *‘Alī Ġanāḥ al-Tabrīzī wa tābi ‘uhu Quffa* (that will be examined in the next part) for which Faraġ affirmed that, through the intermezzo which is within a story, he willingly reproduced the framed structure of the *Arabian Nights* (Faraġ 1989, 12 and 71).

#### **4.3 A show of truth. Diverging traces of authenticity.**

After the Renaissance, the device of the play within the play went out of fashion. It appeared again in the Twentieth Century with the new aim of providing “an explanation to the nature of reality” (Hornby 1986, 38 and 45). If the stage was meant to be a mirror of the world from which it was supposed to take substance (Goldoni 1761, xiv-xv), in the Twentieth Century, the theatre often became a tool to show reality through evident illusion; the play within the play was a useful device for this. In Modern times, the use of a play within a play has been done by Brecht and Piscator as a means to teach and educate the public. According to them, it can be used as an alienating technique allowing the audience to engage in a cerebral reflection instead of having an emotional involvement. For Brecht, it would separate the framed presentation from its framing commentary and direct attention to the didactic message, placed in the central frame within the drama.

On the other hand, before them, Pirandello’s idea that life and theatre coexist in both reality and onstage had found the play-within-the-play a useful device for revising the truth-value given to the different layers of illusion (Hornby 1986, 43). In many of Pirandello’s plays, the subject is theatre itself. Thus, stage reality and stage illusion are confused, showing that, in the reality like in theatre, knowledge is problematic. As for the play within the play in Faraġ’s *al-Zīr Sālim*, the recollection of dispersed testimonies surrendered to Haġras’ hearing in the form of tableaux might have been inspired by the episodic structure which Brecht wanted in his epic theatre to interrupt the plot’s flow. However, Brecht’s rapid serial presentation of scenes was inspired by

the Expressionist theatre and exists in Absurdist theatre as well (e.g.: Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm's *Yā Tāli' al-šağara*) and Farağ's device is not aimed at distancing the audience.

#### 4.3.1 Poems and reenactment

Muhammad Mustafa Badawi describes the play within the play as “events leading up to the present [that] are reenacted before him [Hağras] and us in the form of a series of tableaux” (1987, 179). Interestingly, Rāğib sees these tableaux as verses of poetry, “succeeding each other in harmony without ever weakening the dramatic continuity of the work” (1986, 134).

Poems are an integral part of the hypotext. The *sīra* is composed of a main third-person narration in prose intertwined with frequent first-person poems, which give a first-hand insight into the story. Poems complete the rhythmic and rhymed prose (*sağ'*) of the past external narration working like direct present evidences provided by the characters themselves whose speeches are introduced by the narrator and then quoted in the first person in a fixed form of the kind: [name of the character] says/said/what the character said was/ upon what [name of the character] said, etc. The introduction by the narrator can occur either before or within the poem, taking the first hemistich or the whole first verse. After the poem, usually the reaction of the audience is provided preceded by recurring formulas such as:

فلما فرغ من / فلما انتهى/ فلما كمل - كلامه/ شعره/ من هذا الشعر/ شعره ونظامه

When he finished/ when he concluded/ when he completed – his talk / his poetry / this poetry / his poetry and verses

As for the play, a division of the stage allows for a division of the temporal dimension. Characters as spectators stand in a lower part of the theatre, while an upper part is devoted to the reenactment of the past. Logically, characters that will die during the reenactment do not appear in the “present” frame. This is the case for Kulayb and Ğassās. Indeed, Hağras from the frame tale is happy to see his father within the play (MZS: 178).

Generally, characters from the first (present) scene reenact themselves within the past narration. That is particularly clear for the three characters who fit also the narrative role, like Ğalīla, who goes up and down the stage (MZS: 205, 222) and Murra, who is another story-teller. When Murra explains to Hağras that his uncle Ğassās became a strange person, Hağras replies with an exclamation of skepticism, to which his grandfather invites him to see the past.

هجرس: هذا من أغرب ما سمعت.  
مرة: نعم، إلا أنه حقيقي. انظر إليه...

HAĠRAS: This is the strangest thing I've heard.

MURRA: Yes, but it is real. Look...

Obviously, the older Haġras, who reappears in a past temporal dimension a few hours preceding the present (MZS: 260) and appears in all the scenes from the frame, is the same character.<sup>143</sup> Su'ād, as well, is always the same character, even if she comes to the present frame to express her reasons in front of the nineteen-years-old Haġras about twenty years later she made the war started (209). Similarly, the army literally goes on the other (present) side moving from the lower part of the stage to the upper one (I. 3.2.2, MZS 245-6).

Certainly, such a complicated moving back and forward in time and space of characters keeping the same appearance breaks the mimesis as they appear the same while they should appear as having grown older. Nevertheless, singular strategies in the staging of spatial and temporal shifts avoid confusion. Ġalīla is the only character who continuously moves between the two levels of the narration. As the main character responsible for her son's ignorance about facts, Haġras' mother has the duty to reveal the truth, about the past, to her son. She holds an ongoing conversation with Haġras, while acting her part as well on the lower (past) stage and in the present action. Murra, as well, participates in the dialogue with Haġras and plays his part in the past (MZS: 210-11). Su'ād, instead, appears in the frame tale at the beginning of a new act (209), which breaks with her previous appearance in the past narration. Also, the army, acting as a chorus in the present frame, appears at the beginning of an act (245).

#### 4.3.2 A search for truth. Subjectivity against objectivity.

Reenactments in the play work like poetical insets in the hypotext and they are a fundamental part of the narration. As for their contents, a major difference is noticeable between the play and its hypotext. Contents of poems in the *sīra* express someone's words in the context of special occasions. Hence, they serve different purposes. The first poem is Murra's, who asks his brother Rabī'a for permission to marry his daughter ʒibā' to his own son, Hammām (SZS: 2). Kings can use poems to talk to their people. In this sense, Tubba's discourses (4 and 5) are very different in their tone from the poem Rabī'a's sings to his people (7). Al-Zīr's speeches,

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<sup>143</sup> Ġalīla has been seen as a "narrating voice, a participant in the reenactment of the past, and an audience to her own life story." (Amin 2008, 73). Certainly, she is the main interlocutor to Haġras and helps him unravel the past from which she is part, too. However, Murra as well participates in the narration and the within play is regulated by at least the three of them.

urging his knights to the war, are so impressive that they surprise others amongst them (58 and 59) and his people thank him for his words (64). Diviners talk in poems (12, 14, 110). Tubba‘’s prophecies are expressed through long poems (19-22). Su‘ād and Ğassās speak in poetry, too (38). Apart from her charm, Ğalīla seduces al-Tubba‘ through her art of speech (18) and poetry helps her also to persuade the King al-Ra‘īmī to support her brother’s war against al-Zīr (67-8; this poem is influenced by the quatrain structure). However, she also uses poetry in private moments, with her brothers and with her husband (27, 27, 28, 30) both of whom reply to her with poetry (29, 30). When Ğalīla’s son asks her to tell him the truth about the past, she told the story from the beginning to the end:

(...) فعلمته بالقصة من أولها الى آخرها ثم أشارت تقول من فؤاد مبتول:  
الجليلة قالت أبيات ملاح نار قلبي بالحشا زادت لظاه  
استمع يا ولدي في ما أقول  
(...)  
فلما فرغت الجليلة من شعرها بكى بكاء شديدا ولام أمه

SZS: 113

She [Ğalīla] informed him [Hağras] about the entire story, then proceeded by speaking honestly.

Al-Ğalīla said beautiful verses: the fire of my heart burned,

Listen my boy, to what I say [...]

And when she finished her poetry, he broke down in tears and blamed his mother.

When she ends talking, her son breaks down in tears. As a discourse expressed in a fine way, it has an impact on one’s emotions. Ğassās becomes pale after Kulayb’s recites a few verses after he struck him (SZS: 46). Kulayb’s famous request of not compromising comes in verses, too (47-8 and 48-9) and when the *banāt Kulayb* go to Kulayb’s corpse and see the poem, their sadness becomes greater:

ولما رأوا<sup>144</sup> ذلك الشعر الذي كتبه على الصخر زادت أحزانهم<sup>145</sup> وأخذن يلطن على وجوههن

SZS: 53

<sup>144</sup> رأين in Classical Arabic.

<sup>145</sup> أحزانهن in Classical Arabic.

When they saw those verses written on a stone, they became sadder and started slapping their faces.

In turn, her couplet of verses has caused her uncle more pain (SZS: 54), so al-Zīr reassures her with “the finest verses” (أحسن أشعار أهل الفضل والادب) (SZS: 54),

فلما انتهى الزير من هذه المرثاة وسماعتها السادات تعجبوا من فصاحته وما احتوت عليه من الالفاظ الرقيقة  
والمعاني البليغة وقال والله لقد أجاد سالم الزير شعره بهذا الكلام الذي هو كالدر النضير.

SZS: 55

When al-Zīr finished his elegy and the ladies heard it and were marveled by its fluency, its fine expressions and its eloquent meanings, he said: “Sālim al-Zīr’s poem excelled with this discourse which is like a golden pearl!”

Similarly, al-Zīr’s grief increases consequently to the two verses from al-Yamāma urging him to seek revenge. As stated above (4.1), amongst al-Zīr’s values, there is his talent as a poet: al-Zīr’s verses are worth more than money: “يقول الزير أبو ليلي المهلهل بيوت الشعر ما تغلى بمالي”<sup>146</sup> and his talent in composing poetry allows him to disguise himself as a poet and kill al-Ra‘īnī. Indeed, generally, “the emotional core of the epic tradition lies in the speeches of its heroes” (Reynolds 1995, 163). Finally, in the very last page of the *sīra* before dying, al-Zīr leaves the servants some enigmatic verses that seem incomplete to al-Ġarū. Understanding the missing part, Yamāma reveals the hidden message of the mysterious verses: al-Zīr had been killed by the servants, so the poetry was a stratagem to communicate his last words and obtain justice from the dishonest servants (SZS: 128). Also, poems *in answer* can produce a specific meaning since they are formally connected the one to the other. From one side, they can show affinity between characters (see examples of *answers* below, 4.2). But answers are used ironically as well, like when Yamāma says to Ġassās that he cannot buy her uncle’s horse and he *answers* with a couplet of verses that he is going to steal it (SZS: 61).

Despite their distinct functions, all poems have a common point: they are personal. When the voice shifts from the third-person narration to the first-person, the personal point of view appears and the use words manifest aspects of each character. Indeed, in the play as well, there is an example of a personal point of view, which evidently differs from others’ vision of the fact. And that it is Su‘ād’s discourse. In this case, the audience (Haġras and the real public) can

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<sup>146</sup> SZS: 96. The final ي is due to metrical adjustment.

identify the differences between the subjectivity of the character and the truth of the facts because he has just seen it reenacted before his eyes. The very point of the reenactment is that it is the only way for Hağras to get close to the truth. Once the facts are exposed and not narrated, the perspective shifts from the personal to the objective and the public understands that the two might not correspond; events are “subjected to the cool and honest gaze of reason” (Selaiha 1990).

#### 4.3.3 Behind the truth. Metadrama at work.

A further emphasis on the difference between exposition and narration is obtained using multiple metadramatic devices.

Briefly, metadrama can be defined as drama about drama; it occurs whenever the subject of a play turns out to be, in some sense, drama itself. There are many ways in which this can occur. In one sense, [...], *all* drama is metadramatic, since its subject is always, willy-nilly, the drama/culture complex. A playwright is constantly drawing on his knowledge of drama as a whole (and, ultimately, culture as a whole) as his “vocabulary” or his “subject matter”. At the same time, his audience is always relating to what it sees and hears to the play as a whole, and beyond that, to other plays it has already seen and heard, so that a dramatic work is always experienced at least secondarily as metadramatic.

Hornby 1986, 31

Apart from the reenactment, which provides a play within a play and clearly places the within play as the content of the discourse, other metadramatic devices also exist. For instance, Su‘ād who is blind, by mistake, addresses the (real) audience in her speech instead of Hağras, thereby breaking the fourth imaginary wall standing between the stage and the real audience:

سعاد: (تتقدم بنفسها. عمياء لا تتبين طريقها. توجه الكلام خطأ ناحية الجمهور) لا يا سيدي. لا تضع ذنبيكم علي. فما أخبت أن يقال: دست سعاد بينهم الفتنة وفرت. نعم. أنا سعاد أخت الملك حسان تبع الذي قتلتموه غيلة. (...). نح يدك وافسح الطريق فقد انتهت لعبتي.

MZS: 209-10

SU‘ĀD, *she presents herself. Blind, she does not discern the way. She addresses her talk to the audience*: No, my sir. Don’t put your sins on me. How mean is to say: “Su‘ād



insinuated the trouble among them and fled. Yes, I am Su‘ād, sister of King Ḥasan Tubba‘ that you murdered. [...] Keep your hand clear the way as my role is over.

Does Su‘ād unwillingly break the fourth wall addressing her speech to the real audience? She might be a self-conscious character if she admits that her role is over.<sup>147</sup> Similarly, Murra’s order at the end of the reenactment can be interpreted as a reference to the within play, that he, as a narrator decides is finished:

مرة: فليرفع كل منكم سيفيه. فهذه النهاية.

MZS: 480

MURRA: All of you put his sword away since this is the end.

Other general metadramatic devices can be retraced in the play. For instance, the *anagnorisis* between Haḡras and Yamāma is too long to be true (MZS: 265-275). This dialogue has been criticized for being “too theatrical” (Ṭāhir 2002 أ, 114). However, it can be understood as another metadramatic feature of the play. Also, the soldiers advancing in the front and speaking like a chorus overtly break the laws of mimesis inviting a reflection on the theatre (MZS: 245-7). The messenger who acts exactly like a typical story-teller from the *Sīra* is over the lines of the mimesis and instead seems to be an overtly intertextual reference.

Narrative strategies constantly remind the audience that they are in front of an imaginary world. A similar effect has Sālim and ‘Aḡīb reenacting Sālim’s adventure with the lions, which is a play within the play within the play. As a proper inner play, it is secondary to the main action, characters prepare their role as actors attributing to each one a role and they use masks; there is an audience that even reacts to the play influencing the flow of the action by its intervention. Less structured as a play, but still implying a type of game with roles is Sālim and Kulayb’s simulated fight with their fictional speech. Moreover, within the main play within the play, Haḡras’ reaction to the view of himself as a child clearly raises reflection on the drama as a subject-matter:

هجرس: (هامسا) أ هذا أنا؟

جلیلة: (ذراعها على كتفه) نعم يا ولدي. نعم.

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<sup>147</sup>According to Amin, “although the device makes the characters within the outer play aware of the presence of the past, it does not in anyhow make the drama, as a whole, self-referential or the characters self-conscious. The metadramatic in this play only serves the plot by filling the historical gap and educating the characters (and real audience) about past events” (2008, 74).

هجرس: أما كان أحد يعلم بمولادي؟  
جليلة: قليلون، مرة وأسما. جساس وسالم لم يعلما، ولا الآخرون...  
هجرس: (يتقدم خطوة) ما أظرفه! (ثم يضحك من نفسه) أستطيع أن أراه عن قرب؟ طبعاً لا... ومع ذلك  
يهفو قلبي إليه...  
(...)

هجرس: (...) (يصيح) حذار سيقع!  
جليلة: (تشهق ثم تضحك) لا. ساقك قوية.  
هجرس: اذن فقد كنت أنا ذلك الذي سيقع. آه!

MZS:222-3

HAĠRAS, *whispering*: Is this me?  
ĠALĪLA, *her arm on his shoulder*: Yes, my son. Yes.  
HAĠRAS: Did anyone know of my birth?  
ĠALĪLA: A few. Murra and Asmā did, while Ġassās and Sālim didn't, nor did the others.  
HAĠRAS, *stepping forward of one step*: How nice! *Then he laughs alone*. Can I see him  
closer? Of course, I can't... However, my heart desires it... [...] *Shouting*. Watch out!  
He's going to fall!  
ĠALĪLA, *breathing, then laughing*: No, your legs are strong.  
HAĠRAS: It was me falling. Ah!

The doubling of the stage goes within the doubling of the action. This specific procedure entails the meaning of the play since there is a *mise en abyme* of the subject, which is the past. Finally, at the beginning of the third act, the following statement by Haġras goes beyond the fiction:

هجرس: يا الأطياف الكارثة. ففي هذه المجزرة الشنيعة فضلا عن ذلك اباء وأبناء ليس لهم في الحرب ناقة ولا جمل. ألا يتكلم عنهم أحد. ألم يجار أحدهم بالشكوى والرفض بينما الأمراء يتطاحنون بهذه القسوة.

MZS: 245

HAĠRAS Oh, shadows of the disaster! In this abominable massacre, in addition to that, fathers and sons were completely extraneous to the war [litt.: "they have neither a female camel nor a male camel in the war"]. Is no one speaking of them? Did any of them complain or decline while the princes were fighting so cruelly?

If today the expression "لا ناقة له في الأمر ولا جمل" simply means "being completely extraneous." its literary meaning (they have neither a female camel nor a male camel in the war) here has the full right to be considered. Indeed, not only the whole *Sīrat al-Zīr Sālim* is often referred to as

“the war of the camel,”<sup>148</sup> but also, as al-İşfahānī maintains, the utterance comes exactly for the same camel in a episode from the *ḥarb al-Basūs* (al-İşfahānī 2008, 28), from the same cycle of *al-Zīr Sālim*. Faraġ, in his play, eliminated the camel, as a measure for Tubba‘’s sister to start the war: in the play, Su‘ād alone damages the vineyard. Since there is no more camel in the play, by his statement, Haġras is confirming to the audience that the absence of the camel is a conscious position of the play to re-establish the truth of the story. Moreover, through the intertextual allusion, Haġras comes out not only from the present or the past of the narration, as he usually does, but even from the fiction itself and directly comments on the *sīra* to which, by the way, he belongs to. The whole criticism comes in a line. In that moment, the drama unites reality and, at the same time, invites the audience considering the title and labels. In other words, an expression used in the right place, for those who understand it, breaks the fourth wall and goes to the very heart of the play: what is true in a narration?

\* \* \*

On one side, the first opposition Faraġ actuated when he rewrote the *Sīrat al-Zīr Sālim* is the choice of language. Though Classical Arabic has been considered as the adequate language with regards to the subject, its opposition with the Middle Arabic of the hypotext and with the real language of the context in which - according to the tradition - al-Zīr has lived in, reveals the ideological reason behind this choice. It also reveals the existence of a political message in the play which the language also channels and this is Faraġ’s commitment to the pan-Arab project.

Secondly, contrary to the hypotext, the language of the play varies for the different characters. If Classical Arabic constitutes the linguistic basis, variations supply specific idiolects to the different characters, singular effects within the role played by the character and within the wider dimension of the drama, like the release of tension. Some dialogues are so poetic that they cannot belong to the character but are clearly the author’s creation (Badawi 1987,179). Such a statement agrees with the metadramatic aspects noticed in the play. In that sense, the linguistic deviation would assume a meaning in the self-reflection of the play, whereas the implausibility in the *sīra* presumes a suspension of disbelief.

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<sup>148</sup> As a matter of fact, Gavillet Matar entitles her edition of al-Zīr Sālim as *La guerre de la chamelle* (2001).

The main metadramatic device is the reenactment of past events which is a structural element of the play. Occurring in the form of “small tableaux,” such intertwining authentic narrations recall the poems in the hypotext which structurally are functioning in a comparable way as both provide a firsthand insight of the story. Nevertheless, in the play, the reenactment is necessary since the personal account is not considered truthful. In the play, artifice is essential to finding the truth. At the same time, the numerous metadramatic devices break the dramatic illusion.

In a similar strategy to the *sīra*, where the narration is integrated by missing tiles necessary to complete the story (the poems), the reenactments instead serve to generate a reflection of the pretense of the real world, which is clearly an innovation from the hypotext. Considering this altogether, the reenactments of the past form a play within the play.

In other words,

The narrativization of past events is not hidden; the events no longer seem to speak for themselves but are shown to be consciously composed into a narrative, whose constructed – not found – order is imposed upon them, often overtly by the narrating figure. The process of making stories out of chronicles, of constructing plots out of sequences, is what postmodern fiction underlines. This does not in any way deny the existence of past real, but it focuses attention on the act of imposing order on the past, of encoding strategies of meaning-making through representation.

Hutcheon 2004, 63

The construction of the play opposes the typical linking fluid structure of the hypotext with narrations inclosing within other narrations, thereby producing a movement of broken linearity enhanced by the various tableaux with lighting interchange with the commencement of every scene. In this regard, the meaning of Faraĝ’s approach can be seen closer to Pirandello’s poetics than Brecht’s:

[...] one may conclude that Faraĝ’s dramatic theory is derived from Brecht’s theory of epic theatre. Yet, Brecht’s is deeper, more consistent and well-defined. While Brecht’s theory is based on a philosophical concept and on a particular ideology, Faraĝ’s has no such clear grounds. Brecht’s theatre is a radical challenge to the old theatre and its technique, but Faraĝ simply follows Brecht’s example. Faraĝ added nothing to the alienation techniques created by Brecht. In fact, Faraĝ’s fragmented opinions are not tantamount to a theory of theatre.

El-Sayyid 1995, 168

Because of the transformation of the structure and the language of the hypotext, the play opposes its own, new, style. Through the opposition of a style which, from one side provides realism and from the other continuously breaks it, the drama claims its new needs with the particular aim of dissecting fiction and truth and investigating the present through the reinterpretation of the past.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Selaiha claimed that the “delicate balance” Farağ attained between Brecht and Shakespeare and the Greek in *al-Zīr Sālīm*, made the play one of the most taxing in production. The 1990 production in the National Theatre, directed by Hamdi Gheith “made the show a real treat” (Selaiha 1990).

## 5. Refilling - A political matter. From legend to reality.

In explaining the relation between her play *Yā 'Antara* ('Antar, 1977) and the homonymous *sīra*, Yusrā al-Ġindī used Faraġ's *al-Zīr Sālim* as an example of a legend from the past speaking in the present (Ḥusayn 1993, 179). The following analysis considers the context of the production of the play, former criticisms and Faraġ's declarations. At the end of the study some key political messages will be clear as addressed to the public. At the inner level of the text, the transformations of the hypotext are radical. Old topics find new life and new meanings, while other ones are inserted *ex novo*. After the study of the topics of the play as innovations from the hypotext, the message and the contents proper of the drama will be more evident.

### 5.1 A fight for justice. From custom to tragedy.

In both the play and the hypotext, Sālim wants to fight until he can make his brother alive once again. Such a condition is *naturally* impossible to be realized unless "a strange fact" (SZS) or "a miracle" (MZS) happens. The fight is resolved since, in both cases, Kulayb metaphorically comes back alive with the appearance of his son.

In the *sīra*, al-Zīr fights to avenge his brother's death. Vengeance in the *sīra* is realized as an archaic form of resolving conflicts which generates other conflicts perpetuating a potential infinite chain of crimes. Al-Zīr's struggle began because of Tubba's invasion and his sister's vengeance upon Kulayb; when the feud passes amongst cousins, Kulayb's request parallels the gravity of the matter: his brother al-Zīr cannot be pitiful. The effect is terrible, but it comes out of logic based on a customary behaviour. Al-Zīr says he will stop when his brother is alive, without ever questioning the fact that he would really come alive. Previously in the *sīra*, he said the same for his donkey which had been killed by a lion. Al-Zīr's logic can be resumed as: "since he has lost his brother, he will vindicate him as he asked, killing everybody. The only condition to stop him: that the reason he does it ceases, namely, if Kulayb comes back alive."

As Faraġ thought that the bloody revenge could not have been the emotive factor of the *sīra* (MZS: 163), in the play, Sālim, on the contrary of al-Zīr, *really* wants his brother alive. The strange demand is first formulated by Yamāma (211-2) since she refuses to accept the reality that has traumatized her (see II.3.3). Then, Sālim accepts it (MZS: 212) and makes it his own objective. That is clear when he knows of Haġras' existence and speaks with Ġalīla about it:

جليلة: سالم. أنتظن حقا أن أبادة بكر ستبعث كليبيا حيا؟

سالم: نعم.

جلیلة: أنت مجنون، وكلما أوغلت في الحرب ستزداد جنونا.

سالم: لا بد أن تتم العدالة.

جلیلة: وكلما ازددت جنونا ستزداد وحشية.

سالم: أمين.

جلیلة: لقد نلت كفايتك من الانتقام.

سالم: ليس الانتقام بغيتي.

جلیلة: ما بغيتك؟

سالم: كليب حيا.

جلیلة: أيرجع الزمن؟! أترتد الريح؟!!

سالم: حيث يكون سالم، يحدث هذه مرة واحدة...

MZS: 232-3

ĜALĪLA: Sālim, do you really think that Bakr's extermination will make Kulayb alive again?

SĀLIM: Yes.

ĜALĪLA: You are crazy and the deeper you go into the war, the more you will be crazy.

SĀLIM: Justice must be done.

ĜALĪLA: And the more you will be crazy, the more you'll be brutal.

SĀLIM: Amen!

ĜALĪLA: You've had enough of revenge.

SĀLIM: My aim is not revenge.

ĜALĪLA: What's your aim?

SĀLIM: Kulayb alive.

ĜALĪLA: Does time come back? Does the wind come backwards?

SĀLIM: Where Sālim is, this happens once...

Sālim's fight emerges as a need for establishing justice, a perfect justice. Though, such a kind of justice is impossible since it defies nature and "the strange deal" (like Asmā calls it, MZS: 220) between nature and man. Sālim's logic is more along the lines of: "he has lost his brother, it is his right to have him back." But he must face the laws of nature, and particularly, time. Twice the question of time is relativized in the play. Once with Hağras' apparition who metaphorically brings time back. A second episode is when Sālim falls asleep for seven years and then wakes up to find that he has lost his memory. In the foreword to the play, Farağ claims that ever since he read Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm's *Ahl al-Kahf*, he ceased to enjoy the concept of time in any literary artwork until he comprehended the epic of al-Zīr Sālim and the role of time (MZS: 166).

Certainly, time is not the principal topic of the play (Ṭāhir 2002 أ، 108). Time is important in the matter of achieving absolute justice, as the justice cannot really happen since time is one of the natural conditions man must live with. Therefore, Sālim, the contrary of al-Zīr, wants to defy nature and its laws and his fight is beyond his human nature. In this regard, Sālim is a tragic hero, unimpeded by the realities of daily life and interested by superior matters that cannot find a solution, as he says in his monologue under the stars:

سالم: (...) لا خير في الشيء إلا أن يكون ما أريد، والعدل الكامل هو ما أريد. أعدل أن يبيع دم أخي بألف ناقة، وقد دفعت ولا خيار لي في الصفقة؟! أعدل أن أبيع دم ملك كريم بدم قاتل الملك الكريم؟! (...) كل عدل عبث. الشعر والحب والسلم عبث...

ذلك أن الزمن عدو البشر، فالزمن يبطل العدل، حيث لم يمكن أن يكون ما لم يكن، حيث لا يمكن ألا يكون ما قد وقع. إلا أن معجزة واحدة تحقق العدل العميم. معجزة ما أصغرها... أن يرتد الواقع لحظة ليبطل جريمة، وينقذ مجنيا عليه. (...) القصاص؟! أيرجع القصاص ميتا إلا أن تتولانا معجزة؟! أو يتفجر المعجزة بضربة سيف جبارة في المستحيل كما ينقذ في الصخر الشرر؟! أنتخلق المعجزة في بحر الدماء كما تتخلق الحياة من نبع ماء؟! (...) نحن ندفع كل هذا ثمنا. يا نجوم السماء. يا منطلق الرياح والعواصف وشحنات المطر في السحاب. نحن ندفع الثمن كامل وافيا، فأين أخي؟!

MZS: 234-5

SĀLIM: [...] There is nothing good unless what I seek comes true. And full justice is what I want. Is it fair to sell my brother's blood with a thousand camels? I paid and I don't have any option in the arrangement?! Is it fair to sell the blood of a noble king with the blood of the killer of the noble king?! [...] All justice is vain. Poetry, love and peace are vain...

This is because time is an enemy of man, for it annuls justice. It is not possible for something to exist when it never existed. Only what has happened is possible. However, one miracle fulfils universal justice. One miracle, how small... For reality to retreat for a moment to prevent a crime and save the victim. [...] The retribution?! Could retribution bring back the dead, if not by miracle? [...] We pay for everything with a price. Oh, stars from the sky, spirits of the winds and the tempests, loads of rain in the clouds, we pay the entire price fully. So, where is my brother?!

Retaliation cannot be a solution for Sālim since it does not represent justice and he wants only full justice. Facing his weakness in front of the sky (symbol of the powerful nature), Sālim asks himself if he should struggle against the torment. This a typical question of a tragic hero who discovers unsolvable adversity, and yet he persists (Debs 1993, 330).



Farağ employs similar dramatic devices to those used by Shakespeare in *Hamlet* to demonstrate the severe inner conflict Sālim suffers from. The ghost of Hamlet's father, for instance, appears to incite Hamlet to avenge his death and Kulayb's ghost appears to Sālim from a clear blue sky to further the darker side of his brother's existence, that side belonging to the nonhuman world of ghosts, blood, and destruction (MZS: 218-9 and Rāḡib 1986, 81-2).

Like Sālim, other characters are involved in interior struggles. A case in point is Yamāma's reaction when she recognizes Haḡras: she first tells him to move away, then to come closer (MZS: 274). "Yamāma's position is the position of two extreme forces combating a single situation, the past versus the present." In such a situation, she cannot decide if being jubilant as she found her brother or sad for losing her father (Debs 1993, 335).

Similarly, 'Aḡīb does not know if he should be happy for his master's loss of memory or not (MZS: 259); Asmā finds herself at the center of the conflict and manifests contradictory feelings (revenge for the murder of her husband and her son by Sālim and heartache for her brother) (MZS: 213, 216 and here, 3.3). Also, Haḡras has controversial feelings towards his mother when he accuses her as the cause of Kulayb's death (MZS: 191), but that is resolved sometime later, after a reenactment of the past elucidating her reactions (MZS: 211).

Finally, all the characters apart from Haḡras, and contrary to the hypotext, possess tragic traits. Particularly, each of them makes a mistake and suffers its consequences. Kulayb's mistake is his pride, negligence, and denial of his cousins' rights to the throne. Sālim's mistake is his request for an impossible justice along with Yamāma, which led to the savage attacks and the extermination of many lives from both sides of the feud. Ğalīla's mistake is that she deliberately caused Sālim's expulsion from her husband's palace and cleared the way for the murderer. Yamāma's mistake is the madness of her request. Ğassās's mistake is his reversal to absolute cruelty and evil. Those tragic traits reflect the extent of the tragedy that the characters are involved in.

In the author's words,

They [characters of the play] all search for impossible justice. If it is in my right to say that tragedy is a struggle with a superior power or a radical stand in the nature of man, then what I am capable of saying is that man is ambitious, and the source of his apprehension is his inability to fulfill the absolute. He understands the absolute, he knows

it but is unable to fulfill it. The universe by nature does not give the absolute under any circumstances.

Debs 1993, 324<sup>150</sup>

## 5.2 Knowledge and reason. The new need to understand.

The tragic dimension of the play is confirmed by the appearance of madness. Enclosed in different deadlocks, characters become insane. Such a huge phenomenon allows the definition of a semiology of madness linked to the present reality of Faraġ's or even to realities where madness is linked to the fall of a utopia. From Maḥmūd Darwīš's writings, Wen-chin Ouyang has elaborated on a theory that fits Faraġ's play, too:

Madness is at the same time expressive of the profound sense of alienation and powerlessness experienced in life with the nation-state when the imagined Utopia falls short of the ideal and turn into a new site of oppression. It is the unveiling of the nation-state as an apocalyptic world in which the fragmented selfhood of the individual is forever haunted by an impossible quest for coherence.

Ouyang 2013, 80

The idea of *utopia*, indeed, is close to the *ambition* Faraġ speaks about for his characters. Given the context of production, the utopia falling into a site of oppression can be seen in many realities, both close and in the future for Faraġ.

The creation of Israel, with the occupation of Palestine, is possibly what Faraġ had in mind when he created his work. The events were close in time and space and to were close to his heart. This idea is supported by the total suppression of the episode of the hero's exile to the Lands of Ḥakmūn, the good Jewish king of the *sīra*. Also, Faraġ wrote *al-Nār wa al-Zaytūn* (1969), a documentary drama about the Israeli invasion two years after. As mentioned above (Introduction to II.5), others have used the same story to symbolize the cousins' struggle in Palestine (Gavillet Matar 2005, 1, 139).

Nevertheless, as Muhammad Mustafa Badawi underlines, two events in the meantime had contributed significantly to the wide spread of commitment in the Arabic writers: the Palestinian tragedy of 1948, which exposed the basic political weaknesses and corruption of

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<sup>150</sup> Laila Debs translates an interview conducted by Riyāḍ 'Īsmat and published in *Maġallat al-masraḥ wa al-Sinīmā*, Issue no 50 (n.d.).

Arab régimes and hence the total irresponsibility of authors in taking refuge in a romantic world of beauty and day-dreams, and the 1952 Egyptian Revolution (itself an indirect consequence of the Palestinian war) with its advocacy of the masses' cause and that of the proletariat and its far reaching repercussions throughout the Arab world (Badawi 1985, 12).

As a matter of fact, most of the critics of the play see it as a general plea for many Arabic countries, particularly after a production in 1981. "In *al-Zīr Sālim* the historical events shed light on the present Arab community which is torn by disputes and conflict," while "Hağras represents one of the Arab masses who seeks the impossible hope for harmony in the contemporary Arab World" (El-Sayyid 1995, 248 and 187, see also Abū Dūma 1995, 31) and a governor depicted like Hağras is in direct relation with the 1952 Revolution (Sallām, 82).

It is in the multiple images which can be seen behind the play, where the richness of the play lies. This study underlines this aspect instead of sanctioning that the play is a metaphor of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It highlights the Modernity of the topic. It has already been seen that in the hypotext truth can come from everyone's mouth. Even the future is always bright through prophecies. In the play, not even the past is discernible. Indeed, with his need for seeking the truth, Hağras faces multiple difficulties. First, every character is involved and cannot be a reliable witness in Hağras' inquisition. Characters have lost reason and do not even know the truth. On the contrary of many mad people in literature, the clinically mad here are no more illuminated than the "normal" ones. Indeed, Hağras looks precisely for someone who has not been driven mad to reconstruct the events (MZS: 177). Conversely, the show of truth might work as a cure and offer them redemption, but it does not. Yamāma keeps her obstination and refuses her father's eternal departure, Asmā denies the possibility of an honest government, Su'ād leaves in hysterical laughs and Ğassās dies while he is still crazy. There is no escape from their disease which is pathologized as dysfunctional and dangerous.

Opposing insanity, reason is the other great theme of the play which clashes with the hypotext at many levels. The innovation of the plot occurs foremost regarding portions of the text dealing with commentary and reflections; also, *al-Zīr*'s character is completely different since he is mad. Indeed, he is keen to think more than fight. Finally, the whole drama is molded to follow Hağras' logical reconstruction of the events. This reconstruction takes a stronger value in the reasoning it enhances if considered in a Brechtian perspective:

The shifts between the present and the past then back to the present serve to alienate Hağras from any emotional involvement in the progress of the events, so that he may assess them fairly, especially as they are laden with human passion and vice. He is

allowed to participate with the staged action in the same manner as Brecht provokes his audience to partake in the action.

Debs 1993, 314

Besides, many other small elements develop the theme of reason, like the identification of the two brothers through a long talk, Hağras' recognition by the army through a process of reasoning, and Hağras' final speech is an exaltation of reason as a powerful weapon (MZS: 281, III.3.4.5).

(...) it is doubtful if the popular medieval folk romance can bear the deep philosophical significance the author has obtrusively thrust upon it. It taxes our credulity to find that within the pre-Islamic tribal context of the Arabian desert, the scene set by the author for his action, characters like al-Zīr Sālim could make speeches, or deliver monologues in which they grapple with subtle and sophisticated concepts, such as absolute justice and man's struggle with time.

Badawi 1987, 179

Certainly, the theme has a more significant importance just because it is clearly obtrusive to the hypotext. Farağ uses the late arrival of Kulayb's son in the story to make him, in the play, an outsider. New to the facts concerning his family, external to the emotions that have subjugated his relatives' minds within the bloody conflicts, Hağras is the one who can see with new eyes. As an outsider, he can reflect objectively on the lapsed events. He represents the present and the events are the past, and both of the works participate in reviewing the issue of the war rationally. The lesson Hağras brings from the outside occur directly in front of the audience, which is often reminded of the *reality* of the facts on the stage. Knowledge and reason are the two weapons everybody must understand and take decisions, particularly in matters of politics.

### **5.3 Democracy is the miracle. From prophecy to self-determination.**

Contrasting the constant changes of the setting and lighting denoting continuous change of time, an element remains fixed throughout the play: the throne (العرش). Its function exceeds that of merely representing a stage property. Instead, it is the metaphor of greed; because of what it represents, the bloodshed began (Debs 1993, 315). Considering the setting of the play, it is strange to find a throne in the desert. However, such a dramatic symbol of the political power is omnipresent. The relevancy of the throne in the play is enhanced by its scarce recurrence in the hypotext (a couple of times, SZS: 48-53). For its contrast with the context of the play (which

is the same as the hypotext), the throne acquires importance. Indeed, it is a symbol of a main topic of the play: governance.

Within the analysis of characters, it has been shown that a series of rulers appears with specific traits which allows this study to trace different profiles and consider their different value and shortcomings. Now, it must be considered that the hypotext supplies Faraĝ a perfect environment to discuss the matter of the good ruler, since no religious (Muslim) ruler is possible in the pre-Islamic context of the *sīra*. This condition is suitable to Faraĝ's politic view, which tended to exclude religion from politics. While at the same time, it does not solicit a debate as to why he did not choose a religious ruler as the good one.<sup>151</sup>

Contrary to customary succession in the tribal context of the *sīra*, where the king (الملك) takes the power, either by hereditary succession or by force, directly after the death of his predecessor, in this case, the seizing of the throne is problematized for the following reasons. First: through a change of the plot, since Kulayb is not the legitimate king according to every aspect. Second: through a change in the traits of the characters which makes them symbols of several types of rulers. Specifically, Sālim is a prince, while al-Zīr never was. Third: through the structure of the play, in which commentary maintains a prominent place.

Apart from Haĝras, who is still not a king but makes promises for the better, each ruler makes mistakes leading to his own fall. As has been pointed out, Murra is too old to deal with the present facts, Kulayb is too ingenuous, Sālim is individualistic and Ğassās is greedy. Because of their defects, none of them can hold on to the power. As it is remarked by the elision of the camel, characters of the play are responsible for their actions. Soldiers explain it well in the chorus: the war was the princes' responsibility. And this is for each of them, even if someone else led them to make mistakes. Su'ād discharges all responsibility of her machinery to Ğassās, who carried out the action, and she reminds the public of this (she addresses the audience), while Ğalīla, who maintains her sanity for the whole play, asserts the idea from another side: she does not entirely believe in prophecies. On the contrary, Ğassās, who completely trusted the prophecies, yet was killed.

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<sup>151</sup> Problematic approaches to the existence of God in our world are provided, instead, by the contemporary plays of Yūsuf Idrīs. See, for instance, *al-Farāfir* (1964) in which the world is conceived in terms of a play the author of which has left half-finished and disappeared, so that authors must improvise their parts.

The question of responsibility is linked with prophecies. Together with geomancy, they are frequent and unquestionable in the hypotext. In the drama as well, prophecies do not fail. However, their presence is reduced, and they are strictly connected to the topic of nature. Indeed, Sālim symbolically questions the stars about the reason for accepting fate as the end of all man's actions. Following his seven-years deep sleep, Sālim has changed: after his loss of memory, his crave for blood has been replaced by love for nature and life (Debs 1993, 323-4). The evolution from a fatalist life to self-determination is inherent in the play.<sup>152</sup>

Likewise, in the play, Hağras deserves his place since he *behaves* as a good ruler. Inquiring upon the past, asking for everybody's consensus and showing a clear idea of governance, Hağras has lead a hard way to be the ruler thanks to his rational approach to the events.

هجرس: (...) أنا أفف تحت الشمس، بكل حقيقتي وحقيقتكم، بلا زيف. سكبت الدموع الصادقة على قتلكم أعماما وأخوالا، ولكنني فكرت مع ذلك. استقرتني سيوفكم المتجنبة والمتصدية، ولكنني مع ذلك فكرت.

MZS: 282

HAĞRAS: I stand under the sun, as I truly am, and you are, without falsity. I shed sincere tears on your dead, from paternal and maternal uncles, but still, I gave it some thought. Your defending swords agitated me; still, I gave it some thought.

Nevertheless, even if Hağras has become a ruler through his efforts, his appearance is beyond human possibilities. He represents something exceptional, the only good possibility to have Kulayb alive, in the hypotext and in the play as well. Hağras is first proposed to seize the throne because he is Kulayb's son. Then, he also deserves it because of his being apt for the throne. What is important to understand here is that the miracle already affects events before it happens. It is the idea of a possible miracle that propels Sālim's fight.

Like in Farağ's other plays, hope (even for the impossible) is the key factor for salvation. Until someone will fight despite the enormity of his task keeping hope, a new (good) order will be restored over the ruins of the old one. There will be no place for Sālim in the good system, though he is needed to establish it and he himself and his fight are necessary until the end. Weather the fight can come from an entire people, instead is also something considered in the play.

عجيب: أ أفرح أم أحزن؟ خسرت بذلك الأمير العظيم وكبست الصديق المسالم. أه. لو أننا سالمنا وسولمنا،

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<sup>152</sup> For a discussion about fate and Modern Egyptian Literature, see Badawi 1985, 66-82.

لعربدنا عربدة، وانتشينا نشوة! ولكن الطريق ضيق والسلم عسير، ذلك أن الرجل المسالم هو الرجل الذي يمشي على يديه ويتداول الأشياء بقدميه. فكل المبادل والأسلحة والشرور التي في الدنيا انما تتداولها الأيدي، وتسعى اليها الأقدام. أما ما تسعى اليه الأيدي وتتداوله الأقدام فكله خير في خير...

MZS: 259-60

‘AGĪB, *aside*. Shall I be happy or sad? I lost the great prince and won a peaceful friend. If we had sought peace, then we would have been euphoric. But the path is narrow and the stairway steep. That is because the peaceful man is the man who walks on his hands and handles objects with his feet. Matters such as expenditure, weapons and evil in the world are handled by the hands and sought after by the feet. But what is sought by the hands and handled by the feet is but goodness...

‘Aġīb, who often knows the truth better than others, has his own idea: what comes next is revolution from the people.

\* \* \*

The contents of the play revolve around some main themes which are all innovations from the hypotext and, for this reason, by opposition, have a stronger impact on the play, whose title is still the same as the *sīra* (*al-Zīr Sālim*).

Two main new topics are justice and governance and they are linked to one another. Both are issued from a tragic conflict causing madness amongst the characters. Conflict, madness, justice and governance are a topical mix that has been seen as a metaphor of the fall of different national utopias. In this sense, the message could (and can) easily be historicized. Within the Epic trend, “historicizing the events provides the context for the audience to judge them and compare the past and present constructively” (El-Sayyid 1995, 186).

Opposing the insanity, Haġras represents the good ruler who acts according to reason. Directly and indirectly, he constantly invites the audience to appreciate his behavior. Supposedly, his positive character amongst negative ones might suggest for the audience to emulate his manners and look for a ruler behaving like him. Indeed, like the audience, he is attending a play and he will comment on it and react following what he has learnt from it.

As for the reason of al-Zīr, the strange component in his thinking is magnified in the character of Sālim to develop the impact of the impossible request he demands (MZS: 164). His impossible demand of achieving absolute justice leads him to an impossible victory. Indeed, if vengeance in the *sīra* is “a feeling of genuine savagery” (Lyons 1995, 2, 5) and is a

(fundamental) part of the story, in the play the tragic conflict is annihilated, together with his tragic protagonist, in order to allow a better future to come.

The public is not asked to question the validity of Sālim's demand (Debs 1993, 321). Expectations that go beyond the natural laws are important in the story since they propel the fight and cause the revolution of the system. What matters is that from the ambition of winning a fixed system (that can be nature, fate or a nation) action rises. In this sense, hope is the basic for the radical stand against social and political issues.

Faraĝ's effort in this context is a political call for (real) men to adhere to idealism and act in bettering their social and political conditions using reason. After all, Haĝras' understanding of reality when watching past events being performed assumes that theatre has a real impact on its viewers.



## Final Remarks on Chapter II

Only once Faraĝ rewrote a legend. In that specific case, two main aspects of the hypotext, which is a *sīra*, must have influenced the play. The first aspect is that a legend stands in between reality and fiction. Consequently, Faraĝ did not contest some facts of the *sīra* as he did while rewriting *Historiography*. Indeed, a change of the facts narrated would not impact the vision of the *sīra* since, by definition, a *sīra* can go through many versions. The second aspect is that a legend does not have an author. Therefore, Faraĝ did not contest the authoritarian voice of its anonymous writer. He contested, instead, its values and subverted them to make the legend fit for a contemporary audience.

Since a *sīra* was not considered as a literary genre until the thirties, when scholars started to define it and treat it as such, Faraĝ's rewriting of what was generally named *qiṣṣat al-Zīr Sālim* (the story of al-Zīr Sālim) and then had started to be called *sīra*, supported the *sīra*'s categorization. As a *sīra* is part of the classic Arab heritage (*turāṭ*), by the *sīra*'s rewriting, Faraĝ was providing a new life to a classic work and he was aware that he was contributing to the survival of this kind of *turāṭ*. His changes of the *sīra*, even if they occur in the hypertext, modify the values of the *sīrat al-Zīr Sālim* itself and affect the *sīra* as a category in its whole.

As for the plot of the play, a third feature of the *sīra* that Faraĝ had to consider was that a *sīra* is hundreds of pages long, while Faraĝ's plays last from a few minutes to several hours at most. So, in this case, Faraĝ had to reduce the hypotext significantly to make it fit in a play. In this task, a fourth peculiarity of the *sīra* came to his help: some characterizing elements of the *sīra* are part of the "encyclopedia of the reader" (Eco 1998, 67 and 70). The audience's "mémoire partagée" (Samoyault 2001, 16-7) allowed Faraĝ to insert allusions, namely, simple references to famous episodes of the *sīra*, that would be enough for the public to recall a part of the hypotext, and so he could select the parts of the *sīra* that he wanted to show. Along the same principle, Faraĝ could also dismantle and recompose the *sīra* in a new order that was not any more chronologic, but which followed a logical reconstruction of the events.

The play starts when the war is over, and the moment has come for Haĝras to seize his father's throne. Haĝras' decision to know the truth before becoming a king molds the structure of the play and its contents, too. The play is composed of a frame with the present events and a play-within-the-play made of short episodes which reenact the past that Haĝras is curious about. Short episodes intertwining with the present narration are reminiscent of the poems of the *sīra*, which interrupts the third-person narration with first person insights about the facts. In the *sīra*,

characters are entitled to express their own thoughts through poems. Interestingly, in Faraġ's play the personal point of view of characters is not trustworthy. So, the effect of trustability is provided through reenactment.

While in the *sīra* the unquestioned protagonist is the terrible al-Zīr, in the play, Kulayb's son Haġras becomes of former importance since the play starts and develops around his doubt of becoming king. Other characters as well benefit from new importance. Particularly, characters are defined according to two criteria: their ability in governing and their relationship with madness. For instance, Ġassās, Kulayb's killer, in the play becomes similar to Macbeth: he becomes increasingly obsessed with the idea of power to a point where he becomes crazy, while Murra, the grandfather does not die during a battle, like in the *sīra*, but is still alive when Haġras inherits the throne, and represents the old authority which is wise and fair, but is incapable of adapting to the new circumstances. Similarly, al-Zīr, who now is called by his first name, Sālim, is still a brave knight who wants to avenge his brother and kills his own cousins and nephews, but now his vendetta is motivated by a sense of total justice and by deep reflection. This egoistic attitude makes him an unfair prince. On the contrary, Haġras, who does not simply inherit the throne because he is Kulayb's son and he has killed his uncle Ġassās, but he first wants to know the reasons for the war and have everybody's approval. This becomes a symbol of the democratic power.

Ġassās' despotic power is due to his jealousy and, similarly, Yamāma's cruelty in the play is motivated by a state of shock she experiences since her father's death and so, she is merciless because she is sick. Likewise, Su'ād named Ĥarb manipulates Ġassās and has hysterical reactions as inescapable consequences of her brother's death, while in the *sīra* she is depicted as a villain that causes the decennial intertribal war. Bad behaviour motivated by attitudes, which turn into obsessions (like in the case of Ġassās), as a result of trauma (like for Su'ād and Yamāma), or narrowed points of view upon an issue (as for Sālim - al-Zīr), modify the message of the *sīra*. As Haġras teaches everybody, one can understand a situation only by seeing it from the outside. The play shows the *sīra* with the *real* motivations supporting the conflict.

The act of "updating," "recontextualizing," and "dusting off" old or foreign narratives to make them "relevant" and easy to digest in the present day can end up consolidating dominant forms, canonical sources, and current power relations. [...] transferring pre-existing material into another language, culture, or medium involves an exercise in self-

definition through an act of appropriation of the foreign, which raises issues around a given society's self-representation and the reiteration of ideological exclusions

Laera 2014, 9

When adapted to the new society, the message is new, too. Vengeance is no longer of value, so it cannot regulate the events of a legend. In its place, each one has a personal reason to continue to fight. Once the causes are understood, they can be faced and solved. Through logic, Hağras eradicates the conflict, and his lesson is valuable for the contemporary society.

Acting like a kaleidoscope, the rewriting of the *sīra* deflects the elements of the hypotext modifying their aspect. Now, characters have psychological thickness and motivations for their actions, they have power over the events and act accordingly to regulate them. Their good actions lead to democracy and peace. Contemporary values substitute the idea of vendetta. The new image of the *sīra* replaces the old one, the *sīra* is enhanced and invites to political agency. Any of these aspects is part of the new patterns created by the rewriting's kaleidoscope effect.

### III. CHEERFUL PLAYS. FRAMING THE POLITICAL IN THE *ARABIAN NIGHTS*.

*‘Alī Ğanāḥ al-Tabrīzī wa tābi ‘uhu Quffa* (‘Alī Ğanāḥ al-Tabrīzī and his servant Quffa), written by Faraĝ in 1967 and performed in 1968, is perhaps Faraĝ’s absolute masterpiece. Certainly, it is the most studied out of all his works; it has been translated into English and German and was performed in Berlin in 1986 (Debs 1993, 401); around 25 years after Faraĝ wrote it, he wrote also a version of it in Colloquial Arabic Egyptian (*Itnīn fī ‘uffa*, Two in a Bag, 1991).

The play is about *‘Alī Ğanāḥ al-Tabrīzī*, an extravagant prince who, through abundant lifestyle and generous hospitality, has lost his entire inheritance, and Quffa, a passing cobbler who becomes his servant and follows him in a distant land. Thanks to ‘Alī’s power of imagination, people believe that he is waiting for the arrival of a rich caravan. Even the king trusts ‘Alī, who ends up marrying his daughter and has complete access to the king’s treasure. Suspicion of ‘Alī’s actual reality arises when the caravan fails to arrive and the massive loans are left unpaid.

From the couple’s arrival in the East, the play recalls a tale of the *Nights* in which, at the end, a caravan magically appears thanks to the intervention of a jinn. The play, instead, does not allow magic to have an effective power, and ends with the people of the town waiting and the couple escaping thanks to a trick. Two other tales of the *Nights* give contents to the plot of the play. The first one provides the motif of the imaginary table at the beginning of the play and the second one is slightly changed to make the interlude between the two acts of the play. In 1968, a play by Faraĝ was supposed to contain a political message, like many others of his plays did. The playwright had already written two other plays from the *Arabian Nights* which had contained a political message. Together with six other plays and a novel, *‘Alī Ğanāḥ al-Tabrīzī wa tābi ‘uhu Quffa* is part of the eight works which Faraĝ wrote taking the *Arabian Nights* as the hypotext.

The study of the play compared to its hypotext will focus on the plot and, particularly, on the implicit quotations of the hypotext in the play (2). Then the characters will be analyzed with a focus on the couple, ‘Alī and Quffa (3). Stylistic features of the play will be compared to its hypotext. Among them, attention will be paid to the technique of the play within the play, the language and the technique of the repetition (4). Reflections on the theme and the message of the play will be followed by some considerations on its reception and on its comic aspects together with a review of other rewritings of the *Nights* which constitutes a trend in our author’s dramas (5). Plots of the hypotext and of the play are provided in the Appendix.

Since over the past century and a half the *Arabian Nights* are one of the eminent sources of the Arabic theatre, the study will first focus first on the following topics: the *Arabian Nights* at the dawn of Arabic theatre; the *Arabian Nights* during the social turn of the Egyptian theatre and Farağ's accurate reflections on the *Arabian Nights* within his works and in the theatrical trend of his generation (1).

## 1. Converting - *Arabian Nights* enacted for the Arabic drama. Reinvesting the heritage for multiple purposes.

### 1.1 An old source for the new theatre. Meeting the audience's tastes.

The first theatrical text published in the Arab world, *Nuzhat al-muštāq wa ġussat al-‘uššāq fī madīnat Ṭiryāq fī ‘l-‘Irāq* (The pleasure trip of the enamoured and the agony of lovers in the city of Ṭiryāq in Iraq, 1847) by Abrāhām Danīnūs, from the far western part of the Ottoman Empire, Algeria, has extended dialogues in verse which are frequently unacknowledged quotations from the *Arabian Nights* (Sadgrove 1996, 61).<sup>153</sup>

One of the first plays to be represented, *Abū ‘l-Ḥasan al-muġaffal aw Hārūn al-Rašīd* (Abū ‘l-Ḥasan the Fool or Hārūn al-Rašīd, 1849-50), by the Lebanese Mārūn al-Naqqāš (1817–1855), was an adaptation of the *Tale of the Sleeper and the Waker* from the *Arabian Nights* (see Ruocco 2007 a, 159-62). Aḥmad Abū Ḥalīl al-Qabbānī (1833–1902) wrote several plays inspired by the *Arabian Nights*. The first one was *Hārūn al-Rašīd ma ‘a al-amīr Ġānim ibn Ayyūb wa Qūt al-Qulūb* (Hārūn al-Rašīd, emir Ġānim ibn Ayyūb and Qūt al-Qulūb, 1865), based on the *Tale of Ġānim ibn Ayyūb*. A popular play which he wrote while he was exiled in Egypt was *Hārūn al-Rašīd wa Uns al-Ġālīs* (Hārūn al-Rašīd and Uns al-Ġālīs), was based on the story of *Nūr al-Dīn ‘Alī and Anīs al-Ġālīs* (see Marzolph, Van Leeuwen 2004, 117).

In all his plays, al-Qabbānī concentrated important aspects of the Arabic culture, like music, poetry and the tradition of storytellers (see Ruocco 2012, 264). In that time, the *Nights* offered a wide range of familiar characters, themes and motifs capable of interesting and pleasing the public to an art, the theater, which had only recently been acquired in the Arab states. Also,

From the birth of Arabic drama in the second half of the nineteenth century, Arabic dramatists have resorted to history as a major source for devising their plots. Because they were still novices in the art of drama and lacked the theatrical heritage readily

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<sup>153</sup> Amine has remarked that Moreh's review presents the play as "an attempt to familiarize the Arabs with the making of spectacle and dramatic poetry [...] That is, Moreh's review is biased by the Eurocentric claim to mastery of the genre." (Amine 2006, 157). However, the aforementioned review contains some objective truth: a "spectacle" meant as a theatrical play that follows the Western dramatic and theatrical model was new for Arabs and, as a pioneer, Danīnūs was trying to interest the Arabs with this new spectacle. For this reason too, he must have inserted material from the *Arabian Nights* into his play. Indeed, he was not the only Arab theatrical pioneer who perceived the value of the tales of the *Nights* for the early Arabic theatre.

available to Western playwrights, it was understandably convenient for them to draw their plots from history or literary traditions familiar to them.

Al-Shetawi 1990, 47

Or perhaps, the *Arabian Nights*, with their old practice of being performed by the *ḥakawātī*, are to be considered the theatrical tradition of the Arab world. Storytellers perform tales in front of an audience. Like actors, they use mimicry and change their voice. The theatrical tradition went from the *Nights* to the theatre in just a quick jump.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, particularly in Egypt, several popular plays combined song and dance with characters and plot material from the *Arabian Nights*. Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Quddūs (1888-1969), Naḡīb al-Riḥānī (1892-1963), Badī‘ Ḥayrī (1853-1966), and many others, composed one or more popular comedies and vaudeville entertainment inspired by the popular tales of the *Nights*, like Aladdin’s adventures, *Ma‘rūf al-iskāfī* (Ma‘rūf the Cobbler), Qamar al-Zamān and Budūr (see Bencheneb 1974, 7 and Marzolph, van Leeuwen 2004, 746). Such musical plays had enormous success. As they were entertaining, those plays had a significant role in attracting the audience:

La plupart n'étaient, à vrai dire, que de simples divertissements. Mais avec leur mise en scène parfois éblouissante, leurs décors et leurs costumes d'une prodigieuse richesse, elles étaient propres à satisfaire les goûts de faste et de grandeur d'un public qui, échappant momentanément aux contraintes de la réalité, allait retrouver au théâtre le souvenir de son passé glorieux, des vertus des Arabes d'avant et d'après l'Islam.

Bencheneb 1974, 7

During the same years, between 1926 and 1931, the Algerian playwright Sellālī ‘Alī, better known as ‘Allālū (1902-1992), wrote all his plays in colloquial Arabic; three of them were rewritings of well-renowned tales of the *Nights*. His characters were just roles and the contents of his plays were not original. However, he managed to create plays that the audience found hilarious. Believing that theatre should make itself accessible to all types of public, he took advantage of the full range of possibilities offered by modern drama, from scenic arrangements and lighting, to song, dance and music (Bencheneb 1977, 29-37). As for the narrative material, it seems that the *Arabian Nights* fit his purpose.

## **1.2 The intellectual turn. Justifying the contents.**

Beside musical theatre,

[...] aux alentours de 1930, quelques hommes de théâtre conçoivent une ambition nouvelle. Ils nourrissent une vive curiosité pour toutes les manifestations de la vie et de l'âme, ainsi qu'un désir ardent d'initier les spectateurs arabes tant aux recherches de la pensée qu'aux découvertes de la science européenne. Il leur arrive aussi de s'interroger sur la condition humaine. Leurs réponses portent l'empreinte non seulement de leurs convictions philosophiques, mais de leurs opinions politiques et sociales. C'est dans cet esprit qu'ils abordent à leur tour les *Mille et une Nuits*.

Bencheneb 1974, 7

Tawfiq al-Ḥakīm (1898–1986) is the protagonist of a modern intellectual theatre. His plays *Ahl al-Kahf* (The People of the Cave, written in 1928 and published in 1933), *Šahrazād* (Shahrazad, written in 1928 and published in 1934), *Sulaymān al-Ḥakīm* (Salomon the Wise, 1943), *Alf layla wa laylatān* (The Thousand and Second Night, 1948) *Bayt al-naml* (The house of ants, 1952), *Šams al-Nahār* (Princess Sunshine, 1965), and *Hārūn al-Rašīd* (1969) are all more or less inspired by the *Arabian Nights*. This time, the rewriting of the tales is intended to satisfy the playwright's esthetics, which combines philosophical reflection with drama (Bencheneb 1974, 14) within his closet dramas (مسرح الذهن, "intellectual drama", see Deheuvels 1995, 8-17).

Though that is not the aim of the author, especially in *Šahrazād*, the intertextual reference works as a connector between "high" literature and "popular" literature, demolishing the wall of prejudices standing between the two and inciting the large audience to take part in the message of the play. *Sirr Šahrazād* (Shahrazad's Secret, 1953) written by 'Alī Aḥmad Bakāṭīr (1910-1969) follows al-Ḥakīm's example analyzing Shahryar's unhappiness. *Šahriyār* (Shahryar, 1954), written by 'Azīz 'Abāza (1898-1973), opposes Shahrazad to her sensual sister Dunyāzād and uses the heroine of the *Nights* as a symbol of spirituality. Similarly, at the end of the seventies, Rašad Rušdī (1912-1983), employs Shahrazad as a symbol of the nation.

From the sixties onwards, when the Arabic drama was engaged in an active search for an identity (al-Rā'ī 1975, 177), the *Nights* held a special place in Arabic drama. In the early sixties, the novelist and dramatist Yūsuf Idrīs called for a return to the indigenous dramatic forms, to be found in shows such as the *sāmīr*, the Ḥayāl al-ẓill and the 'Arāgōz (Idrīs 1974, 8-19). In 1967, the giant of the Arabic Theatre, al-Ḥakīm emphasized the importance of such a trend for the Egyptian drama (al-Ḥakīm 1981). Idrīs' theories have been collected in the prefatory notes on the staging of *al-Farāfīr*. His dissertation starts in a quite provocative manner:

نقرأ دائما في الصحف وفي الكتب ونسمع في الندوات السؤال: هل هناك مسرح مصري حقيقة؟ هل وجد



أصلاً؟! وأين اختفى إذا كان قد وجد؟ ولماذا اختفى؟ أسئلة غريبة لأنها لو ترجمت لمعناها الحقيقي لكانت مثل أن نسأل: هل هناك شعب مصري حقيقة؟ هل وجد أصلاً؟ وأين اختفى إذا كان قد وجد ولماذا؟

Idrīs 1964, 8

We always read in the press, in the books and we hear in seminars the question: “Does a real Egyptian theatre exist? Did it ever exist?! And where was it gone if it existed? And why did it disappear? Strange questions indeed, since if we translate them into their real meaning, it was like asking: “Does a real Egyptian people exist? Did it exist originally? And where did it disappear if it existed, and why?”

Following the same tone, Idrīs presented different shows as symbols of the *tamasruh* (theatricality) validating the existence of an indigenous Egyptian theatre. He also recognized the value of these forms for approaching the theories of the political theatre through the breaking of the fourth wall (Ibid., 15).

In 1969, a conference was held by UNESCO in Paris and its topic was the Arabic Theatre. In that occasion, the Syrian artist and scholar of Arabic theatre Chérif Khaznadar, who was living in Paris, discussed a long essay entitled “Pour la recreation d’une expression dramatique arabe. De l’intégration de cette expression aux moyens audio-visuel.” By mentioning “expression dramatique” he was including “toute expression à caractères audio-visuels.” So, he could consider all the tales, songs, diction of poems and other texts as dramatic expression (Khaznadar 1969, 39). Amongst all these forms (that he enlisted and described in detail) there were “formes et aspects du théâtre pris dans son concept occidental” (55-61).

Finally, Khaznadar proposed some solutions regarding the recreation of the Arabic dramatic expression. It should not emulate Western Theatre, but rather keep its original authentic forms. Like al-Rā‘ī, who was the president of the Commission of the United Arab Republic, Khaznadar too expressed his dislike with regards to the theatre with a stage frame. Al-Rā‘ī considered it harmful for Egyptians, while he underlined the success in Egypt of spectacles in circles (al-Rā‘ī 1969, 217). Khaznadar concluded his intervention by affirming that the Arabic theatre was part of the big family of the Asiatic theatre, which is a total theatre par excellence (Khaznadar 1969, 70). Generally, the effort towards the creation of an identity (*ta’şīl*) for the Arabic theater converged in the heritage theater (*masraḥ al-turāt*), a category including plays either relied on

indigenous dramatic forms or made use of the content from traditional and folk literature in order to convey a contemporary message (al-Rā'ī 1980, 93-4).<sup>154</sup>

From the early sixties until his last work, Alfred Faraġ wrote seven plays taking material from the *Nights*: *Ḥallāq Baġdād* (The Barber of Baghdad, 1963), *Buqbuq al-Kaslān* (Lazy Buqbuq, 1965), 'Alī Ġanāḥ al-Tabrīzī wa tābi 'uhu Quffa' ('Alī Ġanāḥ al-Tabrīzī and his servant Quffa, 1968, translated as *The Caravan*), *Rasā'il qāḍī Iṣbīliyya* (The Letters of the Qadi of Seville, 1975), *Itnīn fī 'uffa* (Two in a Bag, 1991 – colloquial version of *Alī Ġanāḥ al-Tabrīzī wa tābi 'uhu Quffa*), *al-Ṭayyib wa al-širrīr wa al-ġamīla* (The Good, the Bad and the Beautiful Woman, 1994), and *al-Amīra wa al-ṣu'lūk* (The Princess and the Pauper, 2002).

In 1977, the Syrian playwright Sa'dallāh Wannūs (1941-1997) wrote his play *al-Malik huwa al-malik* (The King is the King) based on the tale *The Sleeper and the Waker*. The tale serves as a basis to express a political lesson: the identity of the ruler is of no importance, since each ruler is despotic, and the only way to change the situation is to destroy the ruler/ruled system (Dorigo Ceccato 2006 and Barakat-Saad 1994). The tendency to use the *Arabian Nights* for social criticism continues today. In many plays, characters from the *Arabian Nights* appear anachronistic while comical effects combine with criticism of political leader (see Marzolph, van Leeuwen 2004, 719 and Ruocco 2012, 265). Besides, the *Nights* are present in many kinds of narratives, from the novel, to the story and the cinema, in Arabic and in many other languages (see Irwin 2004, 22-4 and Wiebke 2004, 54-61).

### **1.3 Faraġ's plays and the *Arabian Nights*: a never-ending trip.**

The seven plays Faraġ wrote taking inspiration from the *Arabian Nights* deal with the hypotext in diverse ways. Faraġ's plays inspired by the *Arabian Nights* are part of the *masraḥ al-turāṭ*. Nevertheless, he was aware that the theater he was involved in was not original from the Arab states. Faraġ believed instead that the inspiration of the heritage had to be aimed at discovering a national and original formula for the art of theatre, albeit a national Arabic formula for contemporary ideas. Heritage references were meant to bring the theatre closer to their audiences' preference. As such, he had to balance the national spirit on one side with the

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<sup>154</sup> In her PhD thesis "Critical Discourse within European Plays in the First Half of the Twentieth Century and the Manifestations of a Similar Phenomenon in Modern Egyptian Drama", Dawood devotes a chapter on "Critical metadrama in Egypt since 1960s: reforming Egyptian theatre through European form" (Dawood 2014, 230-284). Friederike Pannewick well explains the role of the storyteller in the contemporary Arabic theatre (Pannewick 1999).

progressive aim on the other; this was not in contents alone but in the form as well (al-Hasan 1984, 378).

Faraḡ was completely aware that his choice for using the *Arabian Nights* as the hypotext for many of his plays was in fact due to the context of production he was part of:

وقد تأثر جيلنا في الأربعينات والخمسينيات بالكفاح الوطني والمد الثوري للاستقلال والتحرير من التبعية، وكان لهذا التوجه الجياش في شبابنا تأثير نافذ على اختياراتنا الأدبية والفنية، خاصة في مجال التأليف المسرحي بالنسبة إليّ.

Faraḡ 1994 ب, 397

Our generation in the forties and the fifties was influenced by the patriotic resistance and the revolutionary struggle to achieve independence and liberation. As we were young, such overwhelming tendency was very influential on our literary and artistic choices, especially when it came to play writing, in my case.

As a participant of the artistic trend of those years, Faraḡ contributed practically through his works, while thirty years later, as a critic, he explained what happened to the theatre of that time. Faraḡ writes that when he was young, he was annoyed by the dominant idea that the Arabic theatre was a fruit of the cultural modernization and that it should imitate the European theatre. Together with other artists of that time, they tried to eradicate that idea. And for that, they needed to search for “principles or sources or artistic or literary attestations that would take the position of the *turāṭ*” (Ibid.).

Faraḡ reminds us that, in that period, al-Ḥakīm wrote *Qālabuna al-masraḡī*, Yūsuf Idrīs staged *al-Farāfīr*, ‘Alī al-Rā’ī wrote three articles that were reunited under the title *Masraḡ al-ša‘b* and he himself made “his artistic attempts in the inspiration of the literary tradition of the *Arabian Nights*, the epics, al-Ḡāḡiz and other works” (Faraḡ 1994 ج, 398). For him, the *Arabian Nights* had a special function:

وقد ساعدتني ألف ليلة في خطتي لمحاولة تأكيد الهوية العربية لمسرحنا الحديث، كما ساعدتني أيضا في محاولة تأصيل أطروحات مسرحيات الاجتماعية والفلسفية ونفي أي إيحاء بالتغريب لفكرة العدالة الاجتماعية، أو فكرة العلاقة بين الوهم والحقيقة، أو غير ذلك.

Faraḡ 1994 ب, 397

The *Arabian Nights* helped my project of attempting to affirm the Arab identity of our modern theatre. They equally helped me in my attempt to provide a base for the thesis of

the social and philosophical plays and to reject any symbol of the Westernisation of the idea of social justice, or of the idea of the relation between fantasy and reality and so on.

Faraḡ also underlined the transformative power of the *Nights* since in its frame tale Shahrazad manages to prevent Shahryar from killing other girls. For the author resorting to the *Nights* might want to achieve the same transformative scope for his audience (Faraḡ 1990, 59).

Faraḡ identified three stages in his use of the *Nights*, where the last one was attained by *Rasā'il Qāḍī Iṣbīliyya* (The Letters of the Qadi of Seville, 1975). He acknowledged a direct and clear inspiration of the *Nights* in *Hallāq Baḡdād*, a less clear one in '*Alī Ġanāḥ al-Tabrīzī wa tābi'uhu Quffa*' and a rather particular one in *Rasā'il Qāḍī Iṣbīliyya*. He explained that this last work, the three letters, do not have their origin in the *Arabian Nights*, but that they are comprised of similar narrative elements following the style of the *Nights* which he employed in new tales; almost as if they were forgotten tales from the *Arabian Nights*, or were nights that were lost from the Egyptian version of the *Arabian Nights*<sup>155</sup> (Faraḡ 1994, 400).

وكانت ألف ليلة وليلة هي الدخول إلى المسرح العربي الحديث منذ القرن التاسع عشر، وهو باب الدخول الذي نفي الغربية عن هذا الفن الحديث والتحديثي، واجتذب له الجمهور. وفي جيلنا ساهمت ألف ليلة وليلة في تعريب المسرح، وفي دخوله الوجدان العربي، وفي تأكيد مصداق الأطروحات الاجتماعية والسياسية في مضمون المسرحيات المستلهمة من ألف ليلة وليلة، كما ساهمت في توسيع قاعدة المشاهدين للمسرح والمحبين والمتذوقين له. وكما نذكر دائما فضل ألف ليلة وليلة على الأدب العربي والعالمي، فلا بد أن نذكر فضلها على المسرح العربي بخاصة.. ومن يتعمق في البحث في جماليات الأدب العربي الحديث أو المسرح أو الفنون بوجه عام، فلا بد أن يعثر على عناصر تأثير ألف ليلة في كل هذه الفنون من ناحية الشكل والتراكيب الفنية والخليل الإبداعي، وهذا أثره لمن هو أكثر مني تخصصا في دراسة الفنون.

Faraḡ 1994, 400-1

The *Arabian Nights* were an entrance to the modern Arabic theatre from the 19<sup>th</sup> century and they were the entrance door to *deforeignise* this modern and modernist art; moreover, they captivated the audience.

For our generation, the *Arabian Nights* contributed to the Arabisation of the theatre, to make an Arab theatre and to reaffirm the authenticity of social and political thesis in the

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<sup>155</sup> At least a part of the tale in the first letter is actually an unmarked quotation from the *Arabian Nights*, *The Tale of the Second Calendar*, nights 13-14.

contents of the plays inspired by the *Arabian Nights*. They also contributed to the enlargement of the theatrical audience, its lovers and its connoisseurs.

As we continue to remember the benefits of the *Arabian Nights* to the Arabic and global literature, we need to remember their benefits for the Arabic theatre. Whoever focuses their research on the esthetics of the modern Arabic literature, theatre or arts in general must notice the factors of the influence of the *Arabian Nights* in any arts in regards of the form, the artistic composition and the original fantasy. I leave this endeavor to those who are more specialized than me in the study of the arts.

In the foreword to *al-Amīra wa al-ṣu'lūk* (The Princess and the Pauper, 2002), Faraḡ describes his last encounter with Shahrazad as if he knocked on the door and Shahrazad opened it and welcomed him, he reminded her of his last visit in the past (his works rewriting the *Arabian Nights*) and then Shahrazad replies:

قالت شهرزاد: "زياراتك تتباعد". اعتذرت قائلاً: "ربما كانت السن.. أو الصحة.. أو متاعب المهنة..". قالت:  
"صادرت على كل عتاب.. تفضل.. فاجلس حيث تشاء". دخلت الصالون، وكان العازفون ينشدون في  
الموسيقى موشح "لما بدا ينتنى" .. والمستمعون يقولون "الله!"

Faraḡ 2003, 5

Shahrazad said, "Your visits have become rare." I apologized saying, "Maybe it was because of the age, or health, or I was tired of my work...", "You did not leave me space for blaming you. Please, take a seat where you want" she said. I entered the living room and musicians were singing the *muwašṣah* "Lammā badā yataṭannā" while listeners were amazed.

It was 2002 and Faraḡ was making his seventh visit to Shahrazad<sup>156</sup> (Faraḡ 2003, 5). It was his last play and Faraḡ was still playing with the *Nights*.

\* \* \*

The intertextual relation between the Arabic stage framed theatre and the *Arabian Nights* exists since the former was born. The *Arabian Nights* can be considered as an alternative source to the theatrical tradition that the Arabic theatre did not have, or as a part of the common dramatic traditional forms.

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<sup>156</sup> Faraḡ does not consider the colloquial version of *Alī Ḡanāḥ al-Tabrīzī wa tābi'uhu Quffā*, but he includes in his list his novel *Ayyām wa layālī Sindbād* (Nights and Days of Sindbad, 1985).

Certainly, in the first place, the *Arabian Nights* was the main source for the newborn Arabic theatre. It was then used for its highly entertaining contents in musical plays. In the thirties, particularly with Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm's philosophical plays, the *Arabian Nights* became a useful base, with its known contents, on which the playwright could insert his own theoretical ideas.

When, in the sixties, the Arabic theatre was searching for an identity, the *Arabian Nights* supplied both the need of (Arabian) theatricality and the roots in the Arabic heritage which were two major features theorized by the critics of the time. At the same time, setting and contents from traditional fiction allowed playwrights to disguise political ideas and contemporary messages.

Alfred Faraġ knew all the stages the *Nights* and the Arabic theatre went through together. He appreciated both the *Nights* and the various works that had been composed from them. He was fond of the philosophical theatre of Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm and he was completely involved in the developments within theatre that was taking place in Egypt towards the end of the fifties.

Alfred Faraġ understood that a play issued from the *Arabian Nights* and settled in the realm of the supernatural of the *Nights* could borrow its language as well. In those times, the language of the *Nights* was not defined yet as "Middle Arabic," but Faraġ saw that it was a direct language, easier than *fushā* and that it could be understood by a wider Arabic audience. That language could serve the Arab identity of his theatre.

Besides, Alfred Faraġ realized that the employment of the heritage affected his theatre. Thanks to their appearance on the stage, the hypotexts he used were becoming part of a tradition, they were becoming the cultural heritage. As he knew the *Arabian Nights* from their adaptations and then he reached for the original tales, he produced adaptations of the tales to allow them a new life.

Faraġ's seven plays that are based on the *Arabian Nights* have certainly contributed to a revival of the old collection of tales and not only of their contents, but of their characters, their language, their motifs and their style, too.

## 2. Replotting - A new story from the *Nights*. Cutting, pasting, deleting and adding pieces.

If the story of '*Alī Ġanāḥ al-Tabrīzī wa tābi'uhu Quffa*' is considered from the perspective of the rewriting, namely looking at the hypotext and then at the hypertext, the process of transformation will appear complex since the play's plot is conceived from various tales of the *Nights* to which new narrative material is added as part of the author's invention. As for the modalities of the plot's transposition, tales are developed through properly theatrical modules. Therefore, for instance, direct speech substitutes reported facts. Those speeches follow the typical succession of replies of different characters which often corresponds to a fragmentation of the text of the hypotext into rhythmical action.

The relation between the plot of the play and the plots of the hypotext is studied first at the macro-level (2.1) and then at the micro-level (2.2 and 2.3). Innovations are analyzed in the last part of this part (2.4), while reiteration is studied as a part of the stylistic emulation (4.3). Finally, the tales which Faraġ does not mention as his source of inspiration but that integrate the play are revealed below (2.5).

### 2.1 Three tales as a basis. Weaving threads of illusion.

The main surprising feature of the play's plot is that it is a composition of many tales from the *Nights*. As Faraġ affirms, despite their differences, the three tales he chose each have a common element: they all deal with the topic of illusion.

استوحيت قصة التبريزي وقفة من ثلاث حكايات في "ألف ليلة وليلة" .. هي حكاية المائدة الوهمية، وحكاية الجراب، وحكاية معروف الاسكافي. تصور الأولى شابا غنيا يمازج ضيفا عابرا ما حكه طمعا في كرمه. وتصور الثانية رجلا وقع ضحية وهم عجيب بأن الدنيا بأسرها تلخصت فكانت في جراب صغير خيل له وهمه أنه مالكة. أما الثالثة فتحكي عن اسكافي فقير أراد أن يتجنب في غربته هوان السؤال فتظاهر بالثراء والسخاء حتى انهالت عليه الهدايا والقروض ممن طمعوا في ثرائه وفي سخائه المزعومين. ومع أن الحكايات الثلاث متباعدة من حيث مواقعها في "ألف ليلة وليلة"، ومن حيث جوهرها ومذاقها.. فقد ألحت على فكرة أنها متجانسة جدا. فكل من الأبطال الثلاثة أملى عليه تكوينه النفسي وخياله الخاص الرغبة في ايهام النفس والغير – باقتدار – بوجود غير الموجود في الواقع. والايهام فعل يصدر عن ملكة عظيمة من ملكات الانسان – التخيل والتخييل – ملكة شديدة التنوع وعجيبة.

I derived the story of al-Tabrīzī and Quffa from three separate tales in the *Thousand and One Nights*, “The Imaginary Table,” “The Sack,” and “Ma’rūf the Cobbler”. The first portrays a rich youth who plays a prank on a guest of his who had set much store by his generosity, while the second shows a man who fell prey to the fantastic illusion that the whole world had so shrunk that it was contained in a small bag whose owner he was. As for the third tale, it centers on a poor shoemaker who, traveling in a foreign land, seeks to save himself the humiliation of begging by posing as wealthy and generous man, with the result that he is showered with presents and loans from those who place their hopes in the so-called wealth and generosity.

Although the three tales are widely spaced in the *Nights* and seemingly different in their appeal and purpose, yet the thought haunted me that they were in fact connected. For each of the three protagonists was naturally inclined to delude himself and others, in a very convincing manner, into believing a total fiction. Now delusion is an act which emanates from a great human faculty, amazing in its intense diversity: imagination and fiction.

ED<sup>158</sup>: 349

The three tales Faraġ mentions - whose plots are provided in the Appendix - undergo significant transformations. Most importantly, the selection of part of their plot retains their central components or the most salient portion of the plot, while leaving aside its incipits and epilogues. For instance, the incipit of the play is an innovation, but the entire scene is easily identifiable with a part of the tale known as the story of the imaginary table. From that, we can recognize the central part, namely, a poor hungry man who is attracted by the healthiness of a man and joins him to eat at his table, which is only imaginary. Since no food appears, but the host and his servants behave as if food was there, the beggar does the same.

On the contrary, the introduction and the end of the play differ from its hypotext, as well as its context and specific connotations. So, the tale starts with a beggar (a brother of the barber) who is looking for mercy, while the play starts in the wealthy man’s mansion:

وصل (أخي) إلى دار في غاية ما يكون من الملاحاة والظرف وفي وسطها بستان ما رأى الراؤون أحسن  
منه وأرضها مفروشة بالرخام وستورها مسبولة فصار أخي لا يعرف أين يقصد فمضى نحو صدر المكان

<sup>157</sup> From this moment on, we will use “AĜT” to indicate the play *‘Alī Ġanāḥ al-Tabrīzī wa tābi ‘uhu Quffa*.

<sup>158</sup> Translations of the play are taken from El-Enany and Doria, 1995 and it is indicated as “ED.” Few changes have been made to keep the translation more similar to the English translation of the hypotext when quotations occur or to keep the translation closer to the original text.



فرأى أنساناً حسن الوجه واللحية فلما رأى أخي قام إليه ورحب به وسأله عن حاله فأخبره أنه محتاج فلما سمع كلام أخي أظهر غماً شديداً ومد يده إلى ثيابه ومزقها وقال: هل أكون أنا ببلد وأنت به جائع لأصبر من ذلك ووعده بكل خير ثم قال: لا بد أن تمالحني فقال: يا سيدي ليس لي صبر وإني شديد الجوع فصاح: يا غلام هات الطشت والإبريق ثم قال له: يا ضيفي تقدم واغسل يدك (...)

ALL<sup>159</sup>: n. 43

[My brother] came to most beautiful and elegant building, paved with marble and adorned with hangings, in the middle of which was a garden whose like he had never seen before. He looked round in bewilderment, not knowing where to go, and he then advanced to the head of the room, where he saw a man, bearded and with a handsome face, who stood up to greet him. The man asked him who he was, and my brother told him that he was in need. On hearing this, the other showed great concern, and stretching out his hand to his clothes, he tore them, saying: 'Are you to be hungry in a town in which I live? I cannot bear the thought of it.' He promised my brother all manner of good things and said: 'You must share my salt with me.' 'Sir,' said my brother, 'I am at the end of my endurance, for I am desperately hungry.' 'Boy,' shouted the man to a servant, 'bring the basin and the jug.' Then, to my brother he said: 'Come and wash your hands.'

Lyons 2008, n. 33

In the play, after Quffa listens to the talk of 'Alī and Ṣawāb, he puts a cloth over his eyes to pretend that he is blind, then he enters the court:

**قففة:** أليس في هذه المدينة رجل مضياف يضيف اسكافيا تعبت قدماه في طلب الرزق ويتألم؟

**علي:** من بالباب!

**قففة:** (يدخل إلى وسط البستان) أنا يا سيدي. قففة. اسمي قففة. وصنعتي اسكافي. دائخ في الشوارع أبيع النعال

ولا أحد يشتري مني حتى بهرت الشمس عيني وأخشى أن أكون عميت من الضعف والجوع. أما تجرب نعلا

يا سيدي بحق ساعة الغذاء هذه وهي مباركة.

**علي:** حظ حملك يا مسكين! يا صواب! أسرع بالغذاء لي ولضيفي.

**صواب:** (يتردد) يا سيدي..

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<sup>159</sup> From this moment on, "ALL" is used to indicate the *Arabian Nights* (*Alf Layla wa Layla*). The edition we've chosen is taken from Būlāq II (for a complete recension of the different edition, see Akel 2016). After an accurate comparison with editions from Būlāq I, we realized that Būlāq II was closer to Farāq's rewriting. For instance, only in Būlāq II the third brother of the barber is named Quffa.

As for the translation into English, we have used its most recent translation, Lyons 2008. Slight modifications are due to the differences of the original Arabic texts (we remind that Lyon's translation is from Macnaghten edition, known as Calcutta II) and to keep the direct speech when it exists in the original so that it keeps its closeness to the direct speech of the play.

QUFFA: Is there no hospitable man in this city to invite a shoemaker whose feet are worn with travel and who's in pain?

'ALĪ: Who's at the gate?

QUFFA, *enters the middle of the orchard*: It is me, my lord. Quffa. My name's Quffa; I make shoes. I've been going round the streets to sell my shoes, but no one will buy any. The sun's glare has hurt my eyes, and I fear I may have lost my sight from weakness and hunger. Sir, won't you try a pair in the name of the lunch time that's a blessed time?

'ALĪ: Lay down your burden, poor man! Şawāb! Bring lunch for me and my guest, and hurry!

ŞAWĀB, *hesitating*: Sir...

ED: 310

The general lines of the story are the same apart from the fact that Quffa differs from his equivalent in the tale (see III.3) and that, contrary to the servants in the tale, Şawāb does not stand his master's trick. The tale has a second part which ends with the misfortunes of the poor after the owner's death, which is erased from the play.

The first part of the tale clearly constitutes a story complete in its form. It has tension which increases because of the strange behaviour of the Barmecide, then it reaches its peak when the guest slaps the host, and then the tension is released with the entry of real food and a happy ending (twenty years of happy life). Then, the second part of the story starts as a new narrative. After a long break, the poor brother faces new adventures. For these reasons, and others, the second part of the tale has been considered a posthumous addition to the original tale (Guillaume 2004, 185). As for the play, this is not the end, yet. On the contrary, this is only the beginning. No real food follows the episode of the imaginary table and the palace goes to a new owner. The protagonist leaves for adventures in the company of his new servant.

Another difference between the *Tale of the Imaginary Table* and the first act of the play is the motivation of the action. In the tale, the wealthy owner shared his imaginary dinner with the beggar to make fun of him. 'Alī, instead, does not trap his visitor because he wants to play a trick on his guest, but rather because he constantly acts (see III.5).

Both Quffa in the play and the guest in the tale react in an unexpected way. They start behaving as if they were drunk and slap the host. In both cases, when the latter asks the beggar the reasons of his action, the beggar answers that wine has caused the loss of his manners but, while the owner of the tale appreciates his guest's humour (real wine was not served at the imaginary

table) and the two become friends, 'Alī is offended and starts beating Quffa (with an imaginary whip).

Similarly to the *Tale of the imaginary table*, the *Tale of Ma'rūf the Cobbler* is integrated in the play as a "cut and paste" of its most salient parts that do not include its introduction and its end (see Appendix). In both cases, a man is financially bankrupt. Being in a country where nobody knows him, he dissimulates his richness. He first donates the money that a friend lent to him to people who do not know him, and he claims the existence of an endless caravan full of richness. People believe him, thinking they can get some profit. However, with time, the merchants' patience fades away. So, they approach the king to let him deal with the matter.

In both cases, after hearing the merchants' story, the greedy king decides to befriend the stranger. In both stories, the king does not heed his vizier's advices against the foreigner and trusts the stranger. Convinced of the visitor's wealth, the king offers him his daughter's hand in marriage and free access to his coffers. Both lucky men nearly empty the king's coffers, spending enormous amounts for the marriage and donating to the poor. Since the caravan does not arrive, the vizier encourages the king to test Ma'rūf on his real identity through the princess, but the princess decides to stand with her beloved and instead protects him.

The interlude separating the two acts of the play is an adaptation of the *Tale of the Sack* (n. 331). Again, the main central motif is used in its integrality. In the play, one can only imagine why the two men are in a court. Indeed, while the account of the *Nights* follows a typical narrative structure of the tale (disruption of a quiet situation, climax and solution), the interlude starts *in medias res* and follows the same patterns of the tale (see Appendix). On the macro-level, the nucleus of the hypotexts remains, while the edges are cut to build a uniform narration. On the micro-level something analogous happens.

## **2.2 Same facts. Keeping details.**

So, certain details regarding the way the wealthy man welcomes the beggar in the play are kept the same as in the hypotext. Similarly, details from the episode of the imaginary table are left almost unvaried, as shown in the following examples:

وجلس (أخي) معه على تلك السفرة الموهومة وصار صاحب المنزل يومئ ويحرك شفته كأنه يأكل ويقول

لأخي: كل ولا تستح<sup>160</sup> فإنك جائع وأنا أعلم ما أنت فيه من شدة الجوع،

ALL: n. 43

Then, my brother sat with him at that imaginary table and the host went through moving his hand and his lips pretending to be eating, and he kept saying to my brother: ‘Eat and don’t be ashamed! I know how hungry you must be.’

Lyons 2008, n.33

علي: (يقبض على ذراعه) تعال اجلس هنا في صدر السفرة، واضرب بيدك فيما شئت من الأطباق لا تستح<sup>161</sup>. أنا أعلم ما أنت فيه من شدة الجوع.

AGT: 233

‘ALĪ, *taking him by the arm*: Come and sit here at the middle of the table and help yourself to any dish you fancy. Don’t be ashamed! I know how hungry you must be.

ED: 311

The owner praises the goodness of his bread:

فجعل أخي يومئ كأنه يأكل وهو يقول لأخي: كل وانظر هذا الخبز وانظر بياضه وأخي لا يبدي شيئاً، ثم إن أخي قال في نفسه: إن هذا الرجل يحب أن يهزأ بالناس فقال: يا سيدي عمري ما رأيت أحسن من بياض هذا الخبز ولا ألد من طعمه فقال: هذا خبزته جارية لي كنت اشتريتها بخمسمائة دينار

ALL: n.43

My brother started to make a pretense of eating as his host urged him on, saying: ‘Eat up and look and try this beautiful white bread.’ As my brother could see nothing, he said to himself: ‘This fellow likes making a fool of people.’ Out loud he said: ‘Never in my life, sir, have I come across whiter or more delicious bread.’ ‘It was baked’, replied the host, ‘by a slave girl whom I bought for five hundred dinars.’

Lyons 2008, n.33

Likewise, ‘Alī invites Quffa to sit with him and taste the *same* good white bread:

علي: انظر هذا الخبز وانظر بياضه... (كأنه يقدم له الخبز)

<sup>160</sup> Both our edition of the *Nights* and the play reports “لا تستح” instead of the correct form “لا تستحي”.

<sup>161</sup> See note above.

قفّة: (كأنه يتناول الخبز وما يزال يقاوم خوفه) الله! أحلف لك يا سيدي عمري ما رأيت أحسن من بياض هذا الخبز (كأنه يقطع ويأكل) ولا أذ من طعمه. (جانبا) أما خبز! علي: هذا يا صاحبي خبزته جارية كنت اشتريتها بخمسمائة دينار

AGT: 233-34

‘ALĪ: Look at this beautiful white bread... *He makes as though he offered him bread.*  
QUFFA, *as though taking the bread and still trying to overcome his fear:* Fabulous! By God, never in my life, sir, have I come across whiter or more delicious bread. *As though cutting a piece and eating.* Nor more delicious food. *Aside.* Bread indeed!  
‘ALĪ: This bread, my friend, was baked by a slave girl whom I bought for five hundred dinars.

ED: 311

Both lunches continue with meat:

ثم صاح صاحب الدار: يا غلام قدم لنا الكباب الذي لا يوجد مثله في طعام الملوك، ثم قال لأخي: كل يا ضيفي فإنك شديد الجوع ومحتاج إلى الأكل، فصار أخي يدور حنكه ويمضغ كأنه يأكل وأقبل الرجل يستدعي لونا بعد لون من الطعام ولا يحضر شيئاً ويأمر أخي بالأكل، ثم قال: يا غلام قدم لنا الفراخ المحشوة بالفسق

ALL: n.43

Then he called out: ‘Ho boy, bring in the stew. You cannot find as good as this in the kings’ tables. Guest,’ he said to my brother, ‘start eating for you are hungry and you need food.’ My brother started moving his jaws and munching, while the host kept calling for one type of dish after another. Nothing came, but he kept on urging my brother to eat. Eventually he told the servant: ‘Ho boy, fetch the chickens stuffed with pistachios!’.

Lyons 2008, n. 33

علي: ذق من هذا الكباب الذي لا يوجد مثله في طعام الملوك.

قفّة: (كأنه يأكل) صدقت والله. مدهش..

علي: كل يا ضيفي فأنت ضعيف محتاج إلى الأكل. ذق هذه الفراخ المحشوة بالفسق..

AGT: 234

‘ALĪ: Try this stew. You cannot find as good as this in the kings’ tables.

QUFFA, *as though eating:* Delectable, indeed.

‘ALĪ: Oh my guest, start eating for you are hungry and you need food. Try these chickens stuffed with pistachios!

ED: 311

Then, the guest starts to play, in the tale...

ثم قال: كل ما لم تأكل مثله قط فقال: يا سيدي إن هذا الأكل لا نظير له في اللذة وأقبل يومئ بيده إلى فم أخي حتى كأنه يلقمه بيده وكان يعدد هذه الألوان ويصفها لأخي بهذه الأوصاف وهو جائع، فاشتد جوعه وصار بشهوة رغيف من شعير. ثم قال له صاحب الدار: هل رأيت أطيب من أباريز هذه الأطعمة فقال له أخي: لا يا سيدي فقال: كثر الأكل ولا تستح فقال: قد اكتفيت من الطعام.

ALL: n.43

'You will have never tasted like this before,' he said, 'so eat up.' 'This is excellent, sir,' agreed my brother, and the man began to move his hand towards my brother's mouth, as though he was giving him mouthfuls to eat. He kept on enumerating particular types of food and describe them to my hungry brother, who grew even hungrier and longed for a barley loaf. 'Have you come across anything more tasty than the seasoning of these dishes?' asked his host. 'No, sir,' said my brother and the other replied: 'Eat heartily and don't ashamed.' My brother said, 'I've had enough of food'.

Lyons 2008, 33

And in the play:

**قفة:** (كأنه يذوق وقد بدأ يستمتع باللعبة) الله! لا إله الا الله! يا مولاي. هذا الطعام لا نظير له في اللذة. (يفعل كأنه يلقمه) بالله خذ هذا الصدر من يدي ولا ترده. (جانبا) الولد خليع وظريف والله. ان كان عرضه يمازحني أمازحه ليكافئني بعدها. (يصيح) الله الله!..

**علي:** أكثر وتلذذ ولا تستح. رأيت بالذمة أطيب من مرة هذا الأطباق؟

**قفة:** عمري! (يضحك ويعربد وقد ذهب خوفه وغلبه مرحة)

**علي:** لو لا براعة هذا الطباخ كنت طردته لأنه قليل الحياء ويخالفني في كل شيء.

**قفة:** (يفعل كأنه يلتهم بهمجية أطعمة من مختلف الأطباق بعيدها وقريبها ويلتقط ما يتساقط من يديه ويمسح ما يتسرب من فمه أو على ملابسه .. الخ) حيا الله قلة حيائه!

**علي:** كل ولا تقتصد.

**قفة:** (يتلوى على الأرض) أه يا بطني. سيدي اكتفيت.

AĞT: 235

QUFFA, as though tasting it, and beginning to enjoy the game: Yum-yum! By God, my lord, this food's the most delicious I've ever eaten. As though offering him food. Take this chicken breast from me: don't say no. Aside. A nice chap he is. If he's having a joke at

my expense, I ought him to humour him: maybe he'll reward me later. *Ecstatically*. How delicious!

'ALĪ: Eat heartily and be not ashamed. Tell me honestly, have you ever tasted anything more tasty than the seasoning of these dishes?

QUFFA: Never! He laughs boisterously, his fear completely gone now.

'ALĪ: I only keep this cook because he's so clever. Otherwise I'd sooner give him the sack, because he's rude and contradicts everything I say.

QUFFA, acts as if he were frantically gobbling different foods from all the dishes near and far, picking up what he drops and wiping off what dribbles from his mouth or falls on his clothes: God bless his rudeness!

'ALĪ: Eat, eat!

QUFFA, *writhing on the ground*: I am full! I can't, sir.

ED: 311-2

Afterwards, in both stories, it is time for the dessert:

فصاح الرجل على أتباعه أن قدموا الحلويات فحركوا أيديهم في الهواء كأنهم قدموا الحلويات ثم قال صاحب المنزل لأخي: كل من هذا النوع فإنه جيد وكل من هذه القطائف بحياتي وخذ هذه القطيفة قبل أن ينزل منها الجلاب فقال له أخي: لا عدمتك يا سيدي وأقبل أخي يسأله عن كثرة المسك الذي في القطائف فقال له: إن هذه عادتني في بيتي فدائماً يضعون لي في كل قطيفة مثقلا من المسك ونصف مثقال من العنبر. هذا كله وأخي يحرك رأسه وفمه يلعب بين شذقيه كأنه يتلذذ بأكل الحلويات، ثم صاح صاحب الدار على أصحابه أن أحضروا النقل فحركوا أيديهم في الهواء كأنهم أحضروا النقل وقال لأخي: كل من هذا اللوز ومن هذا الجوز ومن هذا الزبيب ونحو ذلك وصار يعد له أنواع النقل ويقول له: كل ولا تستح. فقال أخي: يا سيدي قد اكتفيت ولم يبق لي قدرة على أكل شيء فقال: يا ضيفي إن أردت أن تأكل وتتفرج على غرائب المأكولات فالله الله لا تكن جائعاً.

ALL: n.43

The man cried to his servants: 'Bring in the desserts' and they were moving their hands in the air as though they were bringing them. 'Take some of this to eat. It is good,' said the man. 'Eat some of these doughnuts. Take this one before the syrup runs out of it.' 'Sir, may I never be deprived of you,' said my brother, and he then started to ask his host about the amount of musk in the doughnuts. 'This is my custom,' replied the other. 'My people put a *mitqāl* of musk in each doughnut, together with half a *mitqāl* of ambergris.' All the while my brother was moving his head and his mouth and waggling his jaws. He was then invited to help himself: 'Eat of these almonds and walnuts and sultanas - naming different kinds of dried fruits - 'Don't be shy' – but my brother said: 'Sir, I am full. I can't eat no more.' 'If you want to eat and enjoy yourself, my guest,' said the host, 'then for God's sake don't stay hungry.'

Lyons 2008, 33

علي: الآن الحلويات. يا صواب. الحلويات.

قفة: (جانبا) أسال لعابي وأوجع معدتي لعنة الله عليه. غير أنني أتعلق بالأمل.

(يدخل صواب كأنه يحمل طبقاً كبيراً يضعه ويخرج)

علي: كل من هذه القطايف يا صاحبي. (يقدم له قطيفة) بحياتي خذ هذه القطيفة قبل أن ينسكب منها العسل.

قفة: (كأنه يتناولها بفمه) لا عدمتك يا سيدي (يمضغ بتلذذ) ياه! ما أكثر المسك! (يلحس شفثيه)

علي: أعلم أن هذه عادتي في بيتي. أحتم عليهم أن يضعوا في كل قطيفة مثقال من العنبر. ثني بالنقل يا أخي..

قفة: ما أكبر هذا الجوز وما ألد هذا اللوز، وما هذا الزبيب في حجم المشمش.. (كأنه يكسر ويلتهم)

علي: كل يا صاحبي ولا تحتشم.

AGT: 236

‘ALĪ: It’s time for dessert. Şawāb, the desserts!

QUFFA, *aside*: He’s made my mouth water and stirred up my hunger. Damn him! Still, there may be hope yet.

‘ALĪ: Try these doughnuts, my friend. *As though offering to him one*. Take this one, before the honey drops out of it.

QUFFA, *as though eating it*: Thank you, sir. *Chews enjoyably*. Yum-yum! There is so much musk in it. How on earth can you afford so much musk? *Smacks his lips*.

‘ALĪ: This is how I like it made in my house. I instruct them to put a measure of musk and ambergris in every doughnut. Have some nuts, my friend.

QUFFA: Oh, how big these walnuts are, and how delicious these almonds are! Gosh! These sultanas are as big as apricots. *As though cracking and eating*.

‘ALĪ: Eat, my friend, and don’t be shy!

ED: 312

The same courses are brought out in the tale and in the play, but the guest (Quffa) claims the dried fruits instead of the host, with a fine variation disrupting the repetitive pattern of the tale.

In both cases, at this moment, the guest reacts to the host’s strange behavior:

ثم فكر أخي في نفسه وفي استهزاء ذلك الرجل به وقال: لأعملن فيه عملاً يتوب بسببه إلى الله عن هذه الفعال.

ثم قال الرجل لأتباعه: قدموا لنا الشراب فحركوا أيديهم في الهواء حتى كأنهم قدموا الشراب، ثم أوماً صاحب

المنزل كأنه ناول أخي قدحاً قال: خذ هذا القدح فإنه يعجبك، فقال: يا سيدي هذا من إحسانك وأوماً أخي بيده

كأنه يشرب فقال له: هل أعجبك؟ فقال له: يا سيدي ما رأيت ألد من هذا الشراب، فقال له: اشرب هنيئاً

وصحة،

ALL: n.43

Then my brother thought to himself that he would do something to make his host sorry for what he had done. ‘Bring the wine,’ said the man, and the servants moved their hands



in the air as though they were doing this. The man then gave my brother a cup and said: 'Take this and tell me if you like it.' 'Oh sir,' he replied motioning with his hand as though he were drinking: 'Very good.', 'Do you like it?' asked the other, 'Oh sir,' my brother replied, 'I've never tasted a wine more delicious than this.' 'Cheers and good health,' he said.

Lyons 2008, 33

In the tale, the guest recognizes the host's trick and plays the same game. Like him, Quffa enjoys the wine:

**قفة:** والله أصبحت بيننا مودة ولعن الله الحشمة. (يضرب على كتفه بقوة)  
**علي:** (يضحك ويضربه على صدره بقوة) فكيف بنا بعد يومين؟  
**قفة:** ياه! (يتمرغ على الأرض) سنصبح اخوة لحم ودم ونعمة. آه يا بطني!  
**علي:** كن قاسيا عليها وكل، فأنت ضيف الأمير علي جناح التبريزي الذي تتحدث بلذة طعامه الركبان..  
**قفة:** وياما سمعنا. (يقوم على ركبتيه ويفعل كأنه يختطف الطعام اختطافا من فوق المائدة)  
**علي:** ليس من سمع كمن رأى وتلذذ.  
**قفة:** أثار حلاوة الطعام شهوتي ولم يعد عندي صبر على المضغ.. هو (يصطنع الزغطة)  
**علي:** ماذا جرى لك؟  
**قفة:** هو. ماء. هو.. أشرب.. هو..  
**علي:** ماء؟! ليس في بيتنا من يشربه، وانما نشرب أجود الخمر. يا صواب! الخمر وأسرع. (يصفق)  
(يدخل صواب كأنه يحمل أدوات الخمر فما يرى قفة يعانى الزغطة حتى يفرغ. يضع الأدوات ويجري)  
**علي:** (كأنه يصب لصديقه) ذق هذا الشراب فإنه يعجبك.  
**قفة:** (يشرب ويتنهد بارتياح ثم يعود يممص في الكوب الموهوم ويتلذذ) ما هذا الشراب يا سيدي؟!  
**علي:** هل أعجبك؟  
**قفة:** جدا.

AGT: 237-8

QUFFA: To hell with shyness! We're friends now! *Claps 'Alī heartily on the shoulder.*  
'ALĪ, *laughs and hits Quffa forcefully on the chest:* You should see what we'll be like in two days' time.

QUFFA, *writhing on the ground:* We'll be like two brothers! Oh, my stomach!

'ALĪ: Eat – tell your stomach to put with it! You're enjoying the hospitality of the famous 'Alī Ġanāḥ al-Tabrīzī, praise be to his food caravans!...

QUFFA: I've heard of it everywhere. Gets up on his knees and makes as though he was snatching food from the table in a frenzy.

'ALĪ: Hearing isn't like seeing and tasting.

QUFFA: Oh, it's so delicious. I don't have the patience to munch properly... *Hiccups.*

'ALĪ: What's the matter?

QUFFA, *hiccups:* Water! *Hiccup.* I need to drink. *Hiccup.*

'ALĪ: Water? There's none in my house; I only drink the best wine. Ṣawāb, the wine and be quick! *Clapping.*

Enter Ṣawāb, as though carrying the wine and the glasses. He sees Quffa hiccupping and is terrified. He puts down the tray and runs away.

'ALĪ, as though pouring for his friend: You'll like this wine.

QUFFA, makes as though he was drinking with obvious enjoyment: What is this, my lord?

'ALĪ: Do you like it?

QUFFA: Very much.

ED: 312

In the play, talks are modulated into a theatrical rhythm and they are expanded, while the substance is unchanged. The hypertext presents the same descriptions, but in the most apt form for its genre, namely the direct speech. As the underlined words show, the connotations of the food are reproduced in the play without any variation.

Various are also the details kept from the *Tale of Ma'rūf the Cobbler*. In this case, speeches are fragmented to introduce theatrical rhythm, while only a change of content occurs:

هو أكبر التجار ولا يوجد واحدٌ أكثر مالاً منه، لأن أمواله وأموال أبيه وأجداده مشهورَةٌ عند تجار مصر وله  
شركاءٌ في الهند والسند واليمن وهو في الكرم على قدرٍ عظيمٍ فأعرفوا قدره وارفَعوا مقامه وخدموه واعلموا  
أن مجيئه إلى هذه المدينة ليس من أجل التجارة وما مقصده إلا الفرجة على بلاد الناس لأنه محتاجٌ إلى  
التغريب من أجل الربح والمكاسب، لأن عنده أموالاً لا تأكلها النيران وأنا من بعض خدمه

ALL: n.986

'He is the greatest [merchant] of them all, and as far as wealth is concerned, no one has more. His fortune, together with those of his father and his forefathers, is famous among the merchants of Cairo and he has associates in Hind, Sind and Yemen. He is also an

extremely generous man and so, bearing in mind the position he holds, you should show him respect and do what you can for him. I can tell you that it is not trade that has brought him here, but an urge to see foreign parts. He doesn't need to leave home to look for profit, as he has so much money that no fire could burn all of it. As for me, I am one of his servants.'

Lyons 2008, n. 992

**قفة:** (ينتقل يسارا) أموال وأموال أبيه مشهورة في العواصم والثغور. ولا يوجد في الدنيا رجل أكثر منه مالا. له شركاء في الهند. في السند. في اليمن. في مصر. في فارس. في بلاد الفرنجة..  
**شخص ٢:** (يبلغ صاحبه في آخر الصف همسا) له شركاء في الهند وبلاد الفرنجة..  
**قفة:** (ينتقل يمينا ثم يعدل ويعود وهم خلفه كتلة واحدة) وهو في الكرم على قدر عظيم فاعرفوا قدره، وارفعوا مقامه، واخدموه..  
**شخص ٣:** (لصاحب له في آخر الصف همسا) في الكرم عظيم..  
**قفة:** واعلموا أن مجيئه إلى هذه المدينة ليس من أجل التجارة، وما مقصده إلا الفرجة على بلاد الناس، لأنه غير محتاج. جاء للفرجة.  
**شخص ١:** (لصاحب له في آخر الصف همسا) غير محتاج. جاء للفرجة.  
**قفة:** غير محتاج إلى التغريب من أجل الربح والمكسب لأن عنده.. (لحظة ثم ينتقل بسرعة لليمين وهم خلفه)..  
**شخص ٢:** (لصاحب له في آخر الصف همسا) سيقول ما عنده..

AGT: 280-1

QUFFA, *moving left*: All cities and ports of the world know of his wealth. There is no man under the sun richer than he. He has partners in India. In Sind. In Yemen. In Egypt. In Persia and in the lands of the Barbarians.

PERSON 2, *as with Person 1*: He has partners in India and in the lands of the Barbarians. QUFFA, *moves right and then changes his mind while they follow him in one mass*: He is also an extremely generous man and so, bearing in mind the position he holds, you should show him respect and do what you can for him.

PERSON 3, *as with Person 1*: He is extremely generous.

QUFFA: I can tell you that it is not trade that has brought him here, but an urge to see foreign parts. He doesn't need to do business. He came for tourism.

PERSON 1, *as before*: He's not here for business. He's a tourist.

QUFFA: He doesn't need to leave home to look for profit, as his possessions... *Pauses for a second, then moves quickly to the right, followed by them.*

PERSON 2, *as before*: He'll tell us about his possessions...

ED: 323

In the play, the repetition of “plenty” comes from the *Nights* as well, while the talk is fragmented according to theatrical rhythm:

وصار يقول له التاجر علي بحضرة التجار: يا سيدي لعلك جئت معك بشيء من القماش الفلاني فيقول له: كثير وكان في ذلك اليوم فرجة على أصناف القماش المثلثة وعرفه أسامي الأقمشة الغالي والرخيص فقال له تاجر من التجار: يا سيدي هل جئت معك بجوخ أصفر قال: كثير قال: وأحمر دم غزال قال: كثير وصار كلما سأله عن شيء يقول له: كثير.

ALL: n. 986

In the presence of the traders, ‘Alī started to ask: ‘Master, have you by any chance brought any material of such-and-such a kind with you?’ To which Ma‘rūf would answer: ‘Plenty.’ Earlier that day ‘Alī had showed him various types of costly fabrics and had taught him the names of both what was expensive and what was cheap. So when a merchant asked whether he had any yellow broadcloth, he said: ‘Plenty.’ When another asked: ‘And a cloth as red as gazelle’s blood?’, he replied: ‘Plenty.’ And anything he was asked, he provided the same answer: ‘Plenty.’

Lyons 2008, n.992

التاجر: سيدي. لعل في قافلتك شيء من الديباج الموصل.

علي: كثير..

الشبندر: هل بقافلتك يا سيدي جوخ حلبي؟

علي: كثير..

الشبندر: أحمر ودم الغزال؟

علي: كثير..

صاحب الخان: مولاي معه أحمال وأحمال من القمشة المثلثة.

AGT: 272-3

MERCHANT: Sir, do you have any silk from Mosul in your caravan?

‘ALĪ: Plenty.

CHIEF MERCHANT: Is there any velvet from Aleppo in your caravan, sir?

‘ALĪ: Plenty.

MERCHANT: Red and as red as gazelle’s blood?

‘ALĪ: Plenty.

INNKEEPER: His Highness has brought loads and loads of expensive cloth with him.

ED: 323

Constituted by entire portions fused with the welcoming text, the previous case, as well as others in the play, such as the dialogue between the vizier and the king about ‘Alī’s identity (AĜT: 292-3 and n. 989), are implicit quotation (*impli-citation*). Masked, and so completely enigmatic, their presence is revealed by other signs given by the author (Gignoux 2005, 44-5), in this case, in the foreword to the play, and also through the utilization of famous tales from the *Nights*.

### 2.3 Towards a moral. Erasing details.

Some of the details of the story from the tale are neatly deleted in the play. These details all have thematical features in common. For instance, the usual title of the *Tale of the Sack* is the *Tale of the Sack of the Kurd*. Also, the protagonist of the tale is ‘Alī the Persian. Faraĝ, instead, refers to the tale as “the tale of the sack” and the two litigants are anonymous so that the (ex) Kurd does not bring anymore “a company of Kurds” to testify for him, but “a bunch of friends and a usurer” (n. 331 and AĜT: 302, see Appendix). Similarly, while ‘Alī Ĝanāḥ al-Tabrīzī has not a name linking him to famous persons, but just a very common first name, a strange second name and a *nisba*, the wealthy man who welcomes the sixth brother of the barber, instead, is from the family of the Barmecides.

Faraĝ also erases the physical mutilation that is the peculiarity of the barber’s brothers. If Quffa pretends to be blind, his equivalent in the hypotext ends up castrated and has his lips cut off, while the character named Quffa in the *Nights* (the third brother of the barber) is blind (n. 39)<sup>162</sup>. Curiously, the evocation of blindness in the play, on the contrary, is reminiscent of what Quffa should be, but he is not. Physical mutilation and sexual references are punctually deleted from the new content of the sack. For instance, in the original list: “a prostitute with two villainous pimps, a hermaphrodite and two good-for-nothings,<sup>163</sup> one blind man and two who can see, a lame man and two who are paralyzed” are reduced to “a blind and two sighted” in the play (n. 295 and AĜT: 303, see Appendix).

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<sup>162</sup>Belonging to a religion and affection of physical mutilation are the main common features of the characters of the *Cycle of the Hunchback* (see Guillaume 2004, 185-6 and 198). According to Guillaume, there is no signification of these features, and especially of the religion (Guillaume 2004, 198).

<sup>163</sup>According to Traini, this word (علق) also means *cinedo* “catamite” (Traini 2004, 960), which suits the context better than “good-for-nothing” (Lyons 2008, n. 295) and “gallow bird” (Burton 1888, 151). Gabrieli, instead translates the word “علق” as “hanged man” Gabrieli 1976, II, 210. Further on in the list, the same word is translated as “pimp” by Lyons (see Appendix to Chapter III).

Also, couple relations are extracted from their specific context and dealt with in a sublimated way. For instance, Ma'rūf's marriage with the princess is told in the tale: they sign the contract of the Islamic marriage and then they spend their wedding night (n. 989-990). In the play, instead, all these details are avoided: the curtain closes while the king gives the keys of the treasure to 'Alī, a symbolic act that, together with the following scene in Act II, in which 'Alī is in his palace, provides an ellipse. On the other side, contrary to the hypotext, 'Alī has already met the princess before the king proposes her hand in marriage to him. To be more precise, in the play, the princess asks her father to take 'Alī as her husband. Besides, in the play, there is no longer harpy wife of the cobbler and the reason of his departure is exchanged with an imprudent management of money.

Suppressions examined above concern what might shock, touch or trouble the reader's innocence. It can take either the form of massive amputation or scattered pruning. Genette defines this kind of elimination as "expurgation," namely a type of excision "à fonction moralisante" (that aims at making more ethical) or with an edifying aim (Genette 1982, 330-31).

#### **2.4 'Alī finds his man. Innovating the hypotext.**

Generally, the scene does not use some of the narration's modalities. Summarizing expressions of the kind "and this happened again and again"<sup>164</sup> cannot be directly transposed on the stage and one of the options adopted by Faraġ in this case, was expanding and detailing (AĠT: 272-3). Many additions can be closely related to the new genre of arrival of the narrative substance. For instance, a comic addition is based on the episode of the imaginary table and anticipates it. When Quffa approaches the palace, he hears the talk of a master and his servant and (mis)understands that they are about to eat. The scene is comical because the audience knows more than the character.

The praising of 'Alī, instead, is similar in the two texts. However, one detail establishes a remarkable difference with the hypotext. The play expands his properties, so that Ma'rūf has partners in India, Sind and Yemen. 'Alī too has partners there as well as in Egypt, Persia and in

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<sup>164</sup> Like, for instance, in the *Tale of the imaginary table* (n. 43), the sentence:

وأقبل الرجل يستدعي لونا بعد لون من الطعام ولا يحضر شيئاً ويأمر أخي بالأكل،

The host kept calling for one dish after another. Nothing came, but he kept on urging my brother to eat. (Lyons 2008, n. 33)

the lands of the Barbarians (في بلاد الفرنجة). This innovation creates an evident exaggeration which entails the play. Together with other innovations, like the discussion between ‘Alī and Ṣawāb and the whipping episode in the scene of the imaginary table, it introduces the opposition between reason and imagination (see III.3 and III.5). Globally, additions provide coherence to other additions and together make content proper of the play.

In the tale, the vizier convinced the king to test Ma‘rūf on his real identity through the princess. Asked by the princess, Ma‘rūf confessed his whole story to her. Instead of reporting it to her father, she decided to save him. In the play, instead, this episode is changed so that it details the character of the foreigner. Asked by the princess, ‘Alī does not answer but he tells three stories while he accidentally hurts the king and the vizier hiding in the room. Most probably he does that because he has discovered that the vizier and the king are spying on him, or maybe it happened just by chance. This episode contributes to the ambiguity of the character.

Likewise, in the *Tale of the Sack*, “a piece of bread and an olive,” instead of “a little orange peel and some olive stones” as the content of the bag, tightens the thematic link between the interlude and the rest of the play since ‘Alī’s philosophy is that a piece of bread and an olive are the beginning and the end of the world.

Furthermore, many additions remind us of another text that has nothing to do with the *Nights*: Bertolt Brecht’s *Herr Puntila und sein Knecht Matti* (Mr Puntila and his man Matti, 1940). For instance, in the incipit of the play, the discussion about time between ‘Alī and Ṣawāb reminds us of the conversation about the time between Puntila and the waiter in the incipit of the play *Mr Puntila and his man Matti*:

PUNTILA: Waiter, how long we been here?

WAITER: Two days, Mr Puntila.

PUNTILA, *reproachfully, to qadi*: Mere couple of days, you hear what the man said? [...]

What day’s today then?

WAITER: Saturday, Mr Puntila.

PUNTILA: You amaze me. In my book it says Friday.

WAITER: I’m sorry but it’s Saturday.

PUNTILA: That’s not what you said just now. [...]

Mr Puntila and his man Matti, Act I, Scene 1

علي: ما معنى كلامك يا صواب؟

صواب: معناه يا سيدي أنه لم يبق لك في هذا القصر إلا ساعة زمن ويأتي مالكة الجديد ليتسلمه.

علي: غلط! الصحيح أنه بقيت لي في القصر ساعة زمن.

AĜT: 223

‘ALĪ: What do your words mean, Şawāb?

ŞAWĀB: They mean, my lord, that there’s only one more hour left for you in this mansion before the new proprietor comes to take over.

‘ALĪ: Wrong! You mean I’ve still got one more hour in this mansion.

ED: 308

Interestingly, in this particular moment in the play, the beggar “from the *Nights*” appears for the first time standing behind the door of the palace, like Matti in Brecht’s play, whereas the tale described him since as wondering in the streets looking for fortune (see III.2.1). Also, ‘Alī’s absurd questioning of Şawāb, which is an innovation from the hypotext, is similar to Puntila’s questioning of Matti (AĜT: 223-230 and Brecht, 4-11, Act I, Scene 1). Then, ‘Alī’s pact with Quffa is very close to Puntila and Matti’s agreement and it is absent in the hypotext, like the motif of the master being drunk which is predominant in the first scene of the first act of Faraġ’s play and it is a constant in *Mr Puntila and his Man Matti*. “Puntila discovers a human being” (title of Act I of the play), so ‘Alī finds his *man* and both masters engage in a relationship which lasts throughout the play, whereas the hypotext does not provide such a motif.

Other details of the plot recall of Brecht’s play. For instance, Puntila has financial problems and one option to solve them is by selling his estate, while ‘Alī has just sold it when the play begins (Brecht 1940, Act 1, Scene 1); Puntila speaks about whipping men (Act I, Scene 1) and ‘Alī whips Quffa (AĜT: 240); Puntila and the Princess make fun of the Attaché like ‘Alī and Quffa do with the vizier (Act I, Scene 5 and AĜT: 291); the vizier himself presents many similarities with the Attaché (see III.3.3); the scene “Tales from Finland” recalls the stories ‘Alī tells to her princess (AĜT: 323-33) and also ‘Alī’s theory that three are the men who can kill by law (the executioner, the doctor and the soldier) reminds us of Puntila’s meaningful statement “If I want to clobber a man to death I do it within the law or not at all” (Act I, Scene 3).

## **2.5 More *Nights*. Enlarging the hypotext to the whole collection.**

Faraġ states that there are three tales which he took inspiration from. However, other tales directly contribute to the plot of the play. The *Tale of the Imaginary Table* is part of a cycle of tales known as the *Tales of the Brothers of the Barber of Baghdad*. The protagonist from the tale of the imaginary table is the sixth brother of the barber, while the third brother of the barber



was blind, and his name was Quffa. One day, Quffa knocked at the door of a rich building to beg for money from its owner. The last one asked who was at the door, but Quffa did not answer until the owner came to the ground floor. So, he asked Quffa what he wanted. Once he knew the reason for Quffa's visit, he told him to come with him. Quffa followed him thinking he would be offered some food. When they reached the rooftop, the man asked Quffa a second time what he wanted. Quffa answered again that he was looking for money. Then the man replied that he would not give any money to him since he had not appreciated that a poor made him go downstairs without answering. Quffa started his descent, but he fell on the floor. Some blind friends came to his help. The owner, who happened to be a thief, saw the fact and followed them. While the blind men were sharing their money, they did not notice the stranger amongst them. When they saw him, they cried for help, but the owner pretended to be blind like them and accused the real blind men to the qadi, saying that they pretended to be blind. The qadi did not allow them any time for giving a defense and Quffa became penniless.

Certain parts of the *Tale of the Third Brother* appear in the play: first, the name "Quffa," then the motif blindness, though in the play it is just a pretension. Moreover, a very similar story is narrated by 'Alī when he avoids answering the princess' questions:<sup>165</sup>

علي: (...) كنت في بلدي شحاذا. ومرة ساقني القضاء والقدر إلى دار عالية ذات طوابق طرقت بابها. وسمعت صاحب الدار يسأل من أعلى طابق: "من هذا؟" فلم أكلمه. فنزل وفتح لي الباب ورآني وقال لي: "ماذا تريد؟" قلت: "شئنا لله". قال: "أدخل واتبعني". ولم يزل يصعد من سلم إلى سلم وأنا ألهث وراءه حتى وصل إلى أعلى سطح وسألني: "لم لم يجيبي حين سألتك من الباب؟" قلت: "خشيت أن تستكثر النزول وتصرفني". قال: "حسنا فعلت". وبعضا الغسيل نزل علي وهو يقول: "خذ لله يا أسفل السفلة! خذ لله!"

AGT: 324-5

'ALĪ: [...] I used to be a beggar in my country. But one day, destiny led me to a house of many floors. I knocked at the door. *Begins to act the scene and the princess looks very amused.* and heard the landlord shout from the top floor, "Who's there?" but I didn't answer. So he came down, opened the door and asked, "What do you want?" "A favour," I said. "Follow me," he said. He kept climbing one flight of stairs after another while I panted behind until he got to the top floor. Then he said, "Why didn't you answer when I asked you who was at the door?" "I was afraid you might think it wasn't worth your trouble to come down, and you'd tell me to go away," I said. "Well done!" said he. And with a broomstick (draws his sword and holds it by the blade) he charged me (strikes with

<sup>165</sup> I have deprived the text from the stage directions because they refer to a second level of meaning which would be unclear here.

his sword, in the air and over things until he hits the curtain) shouting, “Here’s a favour, you bastard. Here’s a kindness for you.”

ED: 338

The *Tale of the Third Brother* is brought into the play as an “integration-absorption,” where “le texte absorbe l’intertexte sans même pas le suggérer au lecteur. Aucune marque distinctive ne permet de l’identifier avec évidence” (Gignoux 2005, 44). Consequently, only after an accurate control of the hypotext, a curious reader will be able to distinguish between Faraĝ’s emulation and quotations from the hypotext. For instance, on the contrary with this one, the other two tales of ‘Alī, do not have precise correspondents in the *Nights*.

The abundant and redundant narrative material composing the *Nights* does not help the task. As a matter of fact, one can easily be sure of identifying a tale chosen by Faraĝ, while it is just one of the many tales describing the same situation. In this regard, the *Tale of ‘Alī the Egyptian* (*Nights* n. 425-443) has been seen as the source of inspiration for the motif of the prince who has lost his inheritance, leaves his mansion and travels on a caravan (al-Hasan 1984, 429-30), as well as ‘Alī and Quffa’s trip has been associated to the first trip of Sindbad the sailor (Debs 1993, 62). However, “the motif of the youth squandering his fortune occurs in several *Arabian nights*, for example in the story of ‘Alī Šār and Zumurrud” (Van Leeuwen 2005, 216); as for the travels and the caravan, excluding magical means, it is the most logical way to go from Baghdad to China in the *Arabian Nights*, indeed, Ma’rūf the cobbler is waiting for a caravan.

Faraĝ made another interesting employment of the plots from the *Nights*: he played with courses different from the hypotext that a story can follow. The beggar in the *Tale of the Imaginary Table* only thinks that the wealthy host must be joking, so he plays too and then he finds out that his supposition was true; the man starts laughing and they become great friends. In the play, instead, Quffa thinks either that ‘Alī must be joking or that he must be crazy. In both possibilities, the most suitable solution according to him is to start acting, so he plays and then ‘Alī continues the farce and Quffa understands that ‘Alī was not joking. The motif of the visionary master is inserted in the original tale, so the plot of the play develops differently from the hypotext. Similarly, asked by her father the king and the vizier, the princess in the *Tale of Ma’rūf the Cobbler* questions her husband alone on his real identity, Ma’rūf reveals to her that he is poor and then the princess decides to keep the secret and lie to her father and the vizier. In the play, instead, the vizier refuses the princess to be alone when she questions her husband because he thinks that she might lie to them. As he if had learnt the lesson from the hypotext,

he suggests to the king to hide in the room and they listen to 'Alī's answers. Both Quffa's and the vizier's further suppositions play with the sequences of the story that are different from the hypotext.

\* \* \*

The three tales Faraĝ quotes as his sources for the play are not the only ones he borrows from the *Nights*. Other narrative material contributes more or less directly to the plot of the play. Indeed, the *Nights* in their whole are to be considered the hypotext of the play, while the central parts of the three tales are put together to make the most of the plot of the play, which is centered on illusion; the common theme to the three tales.

Many details from those texts are transferred into the play, while a few of them are provided with a theatrical rhythm through fragmentation. Integrated in the hypotext without any signal, they are all implicit quotations from the *Nights*. This practice manifests, from one side, the *Arabian Nights*' suitability for the scene and, from the other side, Faraĝ's ability in inserting pieces of the hypotext while keeping the hypertext uniform.

Other portions of text, instead, are erased to expurgate the play from ideas, like racial, sexual and religious prejudices and from the comic based on physical deformity, that are nowadays considered inappropriate. Through his expurgation, it seems that Faraĝ wanted to maintain a certain moral for his play which those elements would have disrupted.

Innovations provide further unity to the hypertext. Inserted in the narration borrowed from the *Nights*, they are so well integrated that they pass unnoticed as intrusive material. However, their function is fundamental since they act as a type of glue for the new coherent story. Some innovations to the three tales have intertextual relations with sources that are distant from the *Nights* within their genre and their context of production. From Brecht's play *Mr Puntila and his Man Matti*, the play absorbs portions of the master-servant relation, which was absent in the hypotext and treats the illusion as a peculiarity of the master, affirming the play's theme.

Some tales, which the author does not mention, are integrated in the micro-level of the play. Brought into the play as "integration-absorptions," those quotations provide narrative substance to the play and, most of all, they introduce a game of recognition for the reader who can detect their origin. Occasionally, slight changes of the course of events from the tales to the play also produce an intertextual game between the author and the receiver of the play who is a connoisseur of the *Nights*.

Generally, the plot of the play can be seen as an image provided by the kaleidoscope, where many pieces coming from the *Nights* recompose together to make another image: one, new story. Small or big pieces from the tales, mixed, reordered, intertwined with innovations and that can still be perceived as elements from the *Nights*, can be ascribed to the *Nights*' *sgangherabilità*, a concept elaborated by Umberto Eco which literally means "dismantability" attributed to *The Bible*, *Hamlet* and *The Divina Commedia* as works of art that can be dismantled and infinitely quoted thanks either to their structural complexity and the number of their characters, or the imperfect fusion of their sources (see Jachia 2006, 61).<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> The "sgangherabilità" of the *Arabian Nights* is the object of my contribution "Alfred Farag's Arabian Nights. A constant experimentation in the Arabic drama," for the conference *Les Mille et une nuits : Sources, transformations et liens avec la littérature, les arts et les sciences (II)*, INALCO (CERMOM, ANR MSFIMA) and Harvard University (CMES), Paris, 9-11 December 2015, forthcoming in the proceedings of the conference.

### 3. Re-masking - Behind the mask. Creating identities.

Before analyzing the characters of the play in a comparison with their equivalents in the *Nights*, it is important to consider that,

in accordance with the general notion of popular storytelling, the characters in the stories are “flat characters” without any pretension of psychological depth. They serve as emblematic actors identical with their role in the story. They do not possess individuality, a complex inner life, or a will of their own. This kind of character to some extent resembles the *homme récit* (“man as narrative”) described by Tzvetan Todorov (1969; 1971): the characters are actors who do not reflect on their actions, but are propelled by the events accounted in the story. They are not individuals with an ability to choose; instead they rather merge with the events. They tell who they are by telling about their experience. In that way, characters are primarily roles instead of individuals.

Marzolph, Van Leeuwen 2004, 709-10

Farağ affirms that his couple comes from the *Arabian Nights* and that they are purely fictional characters (AĜT: 363). Nevertheless, our study will show how a thousand years journey into the new story still encompasses them. From one side, they land in a new genre, regulated by laws implying their change. On the other side, they move in time and have a precise space. The following analysis will focus first on the theatrical combinations of the characters and, particularly, on the master/servant duo (3.1). Secondly, specific traits of the duo will be studied as a mark of their modernity and for their extra-fictional references. Finally, secondary characters will be analyzed.

#### 3.1 Isotopes of the duo. Redefining relations of power.

‘Alī can be easily identified with the mansion’s patron in the *Tale of the Imaginary Table*. He is the one who plays pranks on his guests. In some ways, he is also Ma‘rūf the cobbler, since he lives a very similar adventure together with Quffa. Then, Ma‘rūf the cobbler, in the play, is doubled in the two characters of ‘Alī and Quffa as well. As for Quffa, in the play, he also corresponds to the third brother of the barber, who is punished for his impudence.

Different from their equivalents in the *Nights*, ‘Alī and Quffa are a master/servant couple. That means that their definition comes mainly in the opposition established by one another. If in the hypotext, from being two strangers, we are told that the beggar and the host of the imaginary table end up being friends like brothers, the relationship between ‘Alī and Quffa is better defined. Such an actantial model centering on the duo is an innovation from the hypotext.

Indeed, this dichotomy is useful to characterize the subjects of a play. In the semiotic ensemble, some “traits distinctifs à fonctionnement binaire” (Ubersfeld 1996 a, 979) can be retraced.

So, if ‘Alī is a dreamer, Quffa is realistic. For instance, when the couple lands in the far-away city, ‘Alī sees their chance to make money, while Quffa is desperate (AĜT: 250). ‘Alī is educated and Quffa is ignorant. ‘Alī knows exactly the value of precious stones (284-287), he mentions ‘Umar al-Ḥayyām (309) and Aristo (312), while Quffa does not even recognize their names (313). ‘Alī is generous, whereas Quffa is a miser. ‘Alī has lost all his fortune giving parties and money to his companions (225-6), whereas Quffa jealously keeps his savings, begs for money and is obsessed with counting it. For instance, the second act opens with Quffa screaming: “حاسبي!” (Let’s settle our accounts!) and continues with him claiming his bill through hilarious jumbled counts (307-310; see also 248 and 351). ‘Alī is confident and Quffa is insecure (244, 262, 266), and so on.

This series of oppositions simplifies the task of “identifying” them since their *codified roles* (Ubersfeld 1996 a, 98), master and servant present opposite features. However, further on, they reveal to be a poor cobbler with some savings and a man who has lost all his properties. Hence, the mask of their role is contradicted by their real status. As Quffa says, the capital is his own and so ‘Alī is the servant (AĜT: 295). The master/servant relation is more complex than what it seems at the beginning.

According to their social status, when they meet the princess and both like her, ‘Alī courts her and marries her while Quffa cannot (AĜT: 294). According to ‘Alī, the maid, instead, would be an appropriate wife for Quffa (295). Once they arrive in the new country, ‘Alī knows and decides how both should behave (248) and Quffa complains about that (294). On the other side, Quffa is fascinated by ‘Alī: he dislikes many of ‘Alī’s actions, but he has been captivated by his charm (246).

‘Alī even provides a new name to Quffa. That is an important innovation from the hypotext and a meaningful sign of their relationship as a duo. From the first time ‘Alī meets Quffa, despite the second one presents himself as Quffa, ‘Alī always calls him Kāfūr not caring about his complaints.<sup>167</sup> In a first stance, right after their meeting, ‘Alī names his servant Kāfūr and Quffa highlights what seems a mistake to him:

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<sup>167</sup> Considerations about the names of the characters are provided below (here, 3.2).

علي: لم أعد أحبك يا صواب. سأسافر مع خادمي كافور (يشير إلى قفة)  
قفّة: (مصححا) قفة يا سيد.

AGT: 241

‘ALĪ: I no longer like Ṣawāb. I’ll travel with my servant Kāfūr. *Pointing at Quffa.*  
QUFFA, correcting him: Quffa, master.

ED: 313

Then, after their trip to China, Quffa patiently repeats to ‘Alī what is his real name:

علي: اعلم يا كافور ...  
قفّة: اسمي قفة يا سيد.  
علي: أعلم يا كافور أن المدينة كلما ازداد ثراؤها كثر الشحاذون فيها. (...)

AGT: 250

‘ALĪ: Learn, Kāfūr, that...

QUFFA: My name is Quffa, master.

‘ALĪ: Learn, Kāfūr, that the richer a city is, the more beggars it has. [...]

ED: 316

And this happens twice:

علي: ولكن اسمع يا كافور ...  
قفّة: قفة يا سيد.  
علي: اسمع يا كافور. إن اتخذت صنعة وأنت غريب عن المدينة فلا مفر من أن ترشو شيخ الصنعة ليقبلك.  
(...)

AGT: 254

‘ALĪ: But listen, Kāfūr...

QUFFA: Quffa, master. Quffa.

‘ALĪ: Listen, Kāfūr, no matter what craft you choose to work at, as a stranger in the city, you’ll need to bribe the chief of the craft to let you join. [...]

ED: 317

Some minutes after, Quffa tries to understand why he cannot keep his name, and the result is comical because, again, Quffa obtains but ignoration from his master:

علي: تمام. أنا علي جناح التبريزي أغني أغنياء بغداد والأرض الممتدة من الصين حتى الأندلس، وأنت تابع وخادمي كافور.

قفّة: وأي بأس في أن أكون قفّة؟

علي: عندئذ سترى التجبيل والاحترام والاستقبال الرقيق.

AGT: 255

‘ALĪ: [...] I’m ‘Alī Ġanāḥ al-Tabrīzī, the richest man in Baghdad, or anywhere else, between China and al-Andalus, and you’re my servant Kāfūr.

QUFFA: And what’s wrong with being Quffa?

‘ALĪ: Then you’ll see the respect, the veneration they [people] will show us.

ED: 318

From that moment on, Quffa will not complain to ‘Alī anymore, who continues to call him Kāfūr and presents him to others as his servant Kāfūr. However, when Quffa gets drunk, he still reminds what is his name and complains that he does not have it any longer:

الأميرة: اخرج يا كافور! ماذا تفعل هنا؟

قفّة: حتى السيدة لا تنادينني باسمي. واقف!

الأميرة: ماذا تريد؟

قفّة: حقي. جئت أطلب من السيد حقي. (...) (لعلي) أريد أن تعينني ملك على هذه المدينة! هه!

علي: أنت اسكافي. ما علمك بوظيفة الملك؟

قفّة: طيب شبندر. ما هو يا ملك يا شبندر. أمير. عينني أمير. كثير على أمير؟!

الأميرة: كيف يعينك أميراً يا كافور؟ كيف يصنع ليعينك أميراً؟ إنه لا يملك ليفعل.

قفّة: بسميني علي جناح التبريزي. محمد جناح التبريزي .. حسن جناح الاصفهاني.. زي بعضه.

علي: سم نفسك ما شئت. ما دخلي أنا.

قفّة: لا تسمي كافور. أنت سميتني كافور.

علي: أهذا ما تريد؟

قفّة: لا.

علي: ماذا تريد؟

قفّة: أسكر.

AGT: 338-41



PRINCESS: Get out, Kāfūr! What are you doing here?  
 QUFFA: Even my mistress won't call me by my name!  
 PRINCESS: What do you want?  
 QUFFA: I want my due. I've come to demand my due from the master. [...] I want you  
 ['Alī] to appoint me king of this city. There.  
 'ALĪ: You're a cobbler. What do you know about a king's job?  
 QUFFA: Alright. Make it a chief merchant. Or a prince. Make me a prince. Is that too  
 much for me?  
 PRINCESS: How can he make you a prince, Kāfūr? He doesn't have the power to do that.  
 QUFFA: Let him name me 'Alī Ğanāḥ al-Tabrīzī or Muḥammad Ğanāḥ al-Tabrīzī or  
 even Ḥasan Ğanāḥ al-Iṣfahānī...  
 'ALĪ: Call yourself whatever you like. What have I got to do with it?  
 QUFFA: Don't call me Kāfūr. You called me Kāfūr.  
 'ALĪ: Is that what you want?  
 QUFFA: No.  
 'ALĪ: What do you want?  
 QUFFA: To get drunk.

ED: 343

Quffa suffers from the status that 'Alī has conferred to him and which is manifested by his new unwanted name. Once he loses his own identity and disliking the one given to him and represented by the name "Kāfūr", jealous of the identity that 'Alī has chosen for himself, Quffa asks to be given another name. However, when it comes to choosing it for himself he gives up and shows his powerless condition, typical of the servant. He is the only one who uses his original name for himself. In Scene Three of the last act, while 'Alī is waiting for his execution and Quffa joins him, 'Alī calls him, "Kāfūr!" and, at first, Quffa corrects him:

علي: كافور؟  
 قفة: قفة يا سيد. تذكر أرجوك.

AGT: 347

'ALĪ: Kāfūr?  
 QUFFA: Quffa, my master. Do remember, please.

ED: 345

'Alī ignores the request and then, while listening to the last will of his master, Quffa lets 'Alī call him Kāfūr without replying. In the only action excogitated and acted by himself alone since

his meeting with ‘Alī, in his plan to save him, Quffa arrives in disguise, wearing a cloak, a beard, and a huge turban and harshly addresses the merchants:

قفة: (... ) ألا تعلمون يا رمم الأرض أني حسن شر الطريق خادم سيدي وما سموني حسن شر الطريق إلا لكون ضربتي تسبق كلمتي؟!!!

AGT: 358

QUFFA: Don’t you know, scum of the earth, that my name is Ḥasan the-Evil-on-the-Road, my master’s servant, and that I’m called that because I strike sooner than I speak?

ED: 348

Quffa has finally named himself. His name is childish and ridiculous, and it does not correspond to anything characterizing Quffa. However, it works with the merchants and allows him – still a servant – to free his master.

‘Alī is a master because he deals with Quffa as if he was in a position below him and Quffa is a servant just because he behaves like a servant. As Quffa clarifies, ‘Alī is his master with his capital ("سيدي برأسمالي" AGT: 343). Despite their economic condition contradicts the role customarily society accords to them, they behave according to that role. Such a bi-polarisation ‘Alī-Quffa is not only the typical theatrical couple master/servant that can be inscribed in the theatrical strategies innovating the hypotext. The relation between them is defined by new ideas of power developed in the literature of the twentieth century where “the worker knows 300 words, the master 1000, that is why he is the master.”<sup>168</sup> In this manner of being a master, ‘Alī can even deny his role in a way that confirms it:

قفة: ولكن يا سيدي أنا صرفت على الرحلة، وأنا تابِعك.

علي: أنا تابِعك.

قفة: أنا اسكافي فقير. وأنت سيد عظيم..

علي: أتبعك بصفتي سيدك.

قفة: ده أنا الخدام.

علي: وأنا السيد الذي يخدمك.

قفة: ده أنا يدك ورجلك..

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<sup>168</sup> Translation of the title of Dario Fò’s play “L’operaio conosce 300 parole, il padrone 1000, per questo è lui il padrone.”

علي: عقلك يخدم يدك يا اسكافي، أم أن يدك تخدم عقلك؟

قفّة: الولد ده مقنع بشكل! (...)

AGT: 248-9

QUFFA: But master, you've made me pay for the expenses of the journey even though I'm only your servant.

'ALĪ: I'm your servant.

QUFFA: I'm only a poor cobbler, but you're a gentleman of the nobility...

'ALĪ: I serve you in my capacity as your master.

QUFFA: But I'm the servant.

'ALĪ: And I'm the master who serves you.

QUFFA: I'm only like a hand or a foot to you...

'ALĪ: Tell me, cobbler, which serves the other: your mind your hand, or your hand your mind?

QUFFA: God! Isn't he convincing? [...]

ED: 315-6

### 3.2 'Alī the utopist and Quffa the cobbler. Individualizing the characters.

Beside distinctive traits, 'Alī and Quffa own individualizing signs contributing to the creation of a new semiotic ensemble which is proper to the hypertext. Apart from Quffa being a cobbler like Ma'rūf and 'Alī living the same adventures as Ma'rūf, there are a few features which protagonists share with the characters of the hypotexts.

Differently from the hypotext, 'Alī owns a singular and meaningful name. The name "'Alī Ğanāḥ al-Tabrīzī'" offers a double reading. We can see it as "'Alī Ğanāḥ from Tabrīz," where "'Alī'" is a first name, "'Ğanāḥ'" is a family name and "'al-Tabrīzī'" is a *nisba*. Yet, considered the meaning of *ğanāḥ* (wing), "'Tabrīzī'" will suddenly recall the Persian city known for its carpets that, in the context of the *Arabian Nights* as perceived in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, thanks to the fame of the cycle of Aladdin, is directly linked to the idea of flying. Two textual references confirm our interpretation. In his monologue, Quffa affirms that the "رَحّ" "التبريزي", the *ruhḥ* of Tabrīzī, has brought him far away from Baghdad (AGT: 343). This utterance establishes a parallelism between *ruhḥ* and *ğanāḥ*. Thus, this last word is related to the semantic field of the flight. In the play's afterword, Farağ alludes to the meaning of "wing" affirming that 'Alī runs the risk that his wings might be broken (364).

Only 'Alī speaks of Ğabal Qāf, *dā'ir al-falak* and of jinn as if they were real (AGT: 241). Precisely, he believes that mathematics and magic is the same thing (290). Indeed, he cannot

distinguish reality from imagination and starts believing that the caravan exists (295, 315, 353), while his equivalent in the hypotext affirms the same, but just to his cousin. Parenthetically, at the beginning of the play, ‘Alī disputes and then leaves his servant Ṣawāb, whose name means “reason.” ‘Alī affirms that he leaves “the reason” because he does not love it anymore (241).

‘Alī’s fantasy is endless. This is well expressed by Quffa’s exclamation about the imaginary table:

قففة: أهذه المائدة لا تفرغ أبدا؟

علي: نسافر حتى نبلغ آخرها.

قففة: سأرى أين آخرها. (كأنه يتابع خشب المائدة حتى خارج الكواليس ثم يعود يعيث في ملابسه) لا آخر لها..

AĜT: 244

QUFFA: Will nothing exhaust this table of yours?

‘ALĪ: Let’s travel until we reach its far end.

QUFFA: I’ll find out where it ends. Makes as though he were tracing the edge of the table with his hand, until he disappears behind the scenes. He then returns, fumbling in its clothes. It’s endless.

ED: 314

And ‘Alī knows that the people’s fantasy is still more effective than his own:

علي: لا تهتم بالتفاصيل. اطلق لخيالك العنان تجدني عند آخر حد يبلغه تصورك. واعلم أن أحلام الناس ستساعدك لأنها سترافقك، وهي أقوى أجنحة من أحلامك مهما فعلت..

AĜT: 257

‘ALĪ: Never mind the details. Give free rein to your imagination and you’ll find me at the farthest limit it can reach. Learn that people’s dreams will help because they outstrip you, and no matter what you do, you’ll never be able to catch up with them.

ED: 318

As a master, ‘Alī is accultured. Moreover, he possesses the art of eloquence and knows how to teach it (AĜT: 256-257); he knows that words must be accompanied by gestures and even

explains to Quffa the right posture to keep while speaking (257)<sup>169</sup>. ‘Alī has many theories about life and especially about economy and society. He believes that richness must be shared amongst people (225) and he does not distinguish between what he owns and what is not his property. At the beginning of the play, he gives Quffa’s sandals to Ṣawāb (243). He steals Quffa’s money and offers it to the poor against Quffa’s will (264). ‘Alī does not even care who suffers between two poor persons. So, when Quffa confesses that he wanted to trick him and that he does not have sons crying at home, but that it was just a lie invented to move him to compassion, ‘Alī calmly affirms that he was not crying for him, but for another cobbler in his same condition who must exist somewhere in the world (245-6). Later, it becomes obvious for ‘Alī – like for his correspondent in the hypotext - to act as a rich tourist while he is penniless in a foreign country (255). However, ‘Alī distributes all of the money to the beggars because he cannot stand seeing them poor (274-5), while for his equivalent in the hypotext that act is motivated by a strategic plan of seeming rich. Finally, despite his free access to the king’s treasure, ‘Alī is satisfied with a piece of bread and an olive (308-9), which is something that Quffa makes fun of when he gets drunk.

Similarly, ‘Alī is not only confident, but he invites his beloved ones not to be afraid. Many times, he reassures his fearful companion (AĜT: 244, 249, 258, 261, 262, 295) and his princess (324). Conversely, ‘Alī enchants anyone close to him: Ṣawāb is scared of being infected by this pantomime (228), indeed he feels the pain when the whip hits him (240); the same happens to Quffa who, instead, is fascinated by this feeling (239, 246). In the eyes of his princess, ‘Alī might be “the king of a city,” “an amiable jinn in human form,” “a mighty prince from Baghdad” or “a beggar who was once a philosopher,” “as if he came from a different age, or descended from ancestors different than Adam and Eve” (AĜT: 317-8). The princess is not the only one who hesitates about the identity of her lover since the complexity of his character generates ambiguity. Thus, for instance, when ‘Alī smashes precious stones, like Ma‘rūf does in the hypotext, , only ‘Alī raises doubts about him being a thief:

المالك: هذا أما لص خطير جدا، وأما هو ابن عم خليفة بغداد نفسه.

AĜT: 285

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<sup>169</sup> Farāġ declared that ‘Alī’s abilities in speaking were inspired by his own father (Enany 2000, 173).

KING: This man is either a very sophisticated thief or the very cousin of the Caliph of Baghdad.

ED: 327

Whoever is close to him feels in an impasse (مأزق). This is the case of the vizier (AĜT: 322) and of Quffa (AĜT: 340). In the afterword, the description Faraġ provided of the two, and particularly of ‘Alī, emphasizes his ambiguity:

ولا أجدني أنسب وأحق يرسم الخط الفاصل في شخصية التبريزي بين المبشر والمحتال، أو بين الممثل  
والمجنون..

AĜT: 366

Perhaps I am not the most suited or indeed the person most entitled to draw the line between the reformer and the trickster, or the actor and the mad man, in al-Tabrīzī’s character...

ED: 350

‘Alī is more complex than a master. Likewise, Quffa is more than a simple servant. The name he has (Quffa) and the name ‘Alī uses to call him (Kāfūr) are the first sign of his temperament. Apart from the fact that both names come from the *Nights* (see III.2), the names Quffa and Kāfūr share a peculiarity. Both have a meaning as common names and both are related to the semantic field of wood. *Quffa* in Arabic means “coffin” and *kāfūr* means “camphor.” In the play, the allusion of *quffa* as “coffin” is confirmed by its opposition to *kāfūr* and also by the title of the version of the play in *‘ammiyya (Itnān fī ‘uffa)*. The name Kāfūr has been used for its meaning. “Kāfūr” is quoted in the Encyclopaedia of Islam to explain the meaning of *laqab*: “a good example of antiphrasis in the name of Kāfūr al-Iḥšīdī (kāfūr “camphor” being white and fragrant, whereas Kāfūr was a black eunuch, proverbially noisome and malodorous” (Bosworth 1997)<sup>170</sup>. Even though Quffa prefers to keep his name, and dislikes the name that ‘Alī assigned him, he often aspires to be something he is not. Quffa is a servant but he would like to marry the princess, because he has the money whereas ‘Alī does not. Quffa also aims at being “the biggest amongst the big” (AĜT: 337), “the king of the city,” “a prince” (341).

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<sup>170</sup> Enany brings a similar sample. Some of the characters’ names from *al-Ṭayyib wa al-šīrīr wa al-ġamīla* might have been chosen ironically and while also respecting a parallelism with the *Arabian Nights* which was, in that case as well, the hypotext of the play. Those names were also chosen to maintain phonetic intertextuality with the two characters’ prototypes in the *Arabian Nights* (Enany 2000, 197).

Certainly, Quffa is smarter than his equivalent in the hypotext. He calculates all possibilities before acting. For instance, when he first sees ‘Alī inviting him to eat where there is no food, he thinks about both possibilities: ‘Alī can be mad or ‘Alī can be a prankster, while his equivalent in the hypotext only thinks that the man likes to make fun of people (ALL: n. 43). Besides, Quffa is not only an uneducated servant. As a servant and a cobbler, he has qualities which distinguish him. If ‘Alī states that he learns from the sky, then Quffa understands the world by looking at the ground. So, when the vizier is in front of Quffa, he tells him that he is smart, and he can see that from the way he ties his shoes (AĜT: 291). Anyways, apart from being a servant and a cobbler, he cannot be anything else. That is ‘Alī’s statement when Quffa asks him to make him a king (341).

Similarly, when Quffa wants to marry the princess, ‘Alī replies that he cannot and that he should marry the maid instead. Quffa is not able to act without his master. Even when he wants to get drunk because ‘Alī made him upset, he still asks for ‘Alī’s help (343). This detail entails an immediate reflection about the immutable condition of the human being and about the relationship between master and servant. Quffa needs ‘Alī and this is evident. But ‘Alī needs Quffa, too. His follower is not only his accomplice. Quffa saves ‘Alī’s life. The complementarity of ‘Alī and Quffa have made some critics argue that they in fact constitute a single character (Rāġib 1986, 87).

More than anyone else in the play, and similarly to his correspondent in the *Nights*, Quffa has a keen sense of humour that allows him to defuse tense situations. For instance, when ‘Alī and Quffa plan how to present themselves in China, Quffa’s replies to ‘Alī’s serious instructions are hilarious:

قففة: لا أعرف ماذا أقول.

علي: ايهيه. ألا تعرف كيف تقول: أنا فقير وغلبان والجوع كافر ودموع العيال ورمد العينين وحياة العدم..

قففة: هذا أحفظه جيدا.

علي: صفات البؤس والشقاء. جرب صفات القوة السعادة. قل: أنا غني وكريم. عيالي أصحاب أقوياء..

قففة: أه. شحاذة الأغنياء يعني: عندي سفرة، فيها الكباب الذي ليس مثله عند الملوك، والفراخ المحشوة

بالفستق.. وبعدها دفقت أنا حق القافلة.

AĜT: 256

QUFFA: I won't know what to say.

'ALĪ: Come, come! You know how to go on about being poor and hungry, with unfed children and diseased eyes, and so on...

QUFFA: I know that very well.

'ALĪ: Those are the things that belong to misery and suffering. Why don't you try the things of happiness and power? Why not say: "I'm rich and generous; my children are strong and healthy?"

QUFFA: Oh, I see. You mean, beg the way the rich do. Go on about the kebab worth of a king's table and the chicken stuffed with pistachios... as long as someone pays in the end, as I did for the caravan.

ED: 318

Apart from the typical comic of the servant and the capacity to save himself from annoying situations which exists in the realm of the *Nights*, Quffa plays with his own competence as a cobbler, like when the vizier approaches 'Alī and 'Alī fools him saying that he possesses "the smallest part of the King's gem" and inside it there is a dangerous jinn:

الوزير: أعود بالله. كيف تعرف أنت هذه الأشياء؟

علي: أنظر في السماء شأن الفلكيين.

قفّة: أما أنا فأعرف الأشياء بالنظر إلى الأرض.. (ينقض على حذاء الوزير) سيد تبريزي أقرأ لك صفاته.  
ياه.

الوزير: (يتملص به)

قفّة: ده حويط بشكل.

الوزير: كيف عرفت أني حويط؟

قفّة: لأنك توثق رباطها بشدة. إن قاطع الطريق يستطيع أن ينتزع وركك ولا يستطيع أن ينتزع نعلك!

الوزير: أف من خسة الفاظك! أنت اسكاف؟!

قفّة: وأنت يا سيدي الوزير، كيف تعرف أنت هذه الأشياء؟

AGT: 291



VIZIER: God protect us! But how do you know these things?

‘ALĪ: I contemplate the sky like an astronomer.

QUFFA: As for me, I know things by looking at the ground. *He swoops on the Vizier’s shoes.* Master Tabrīzī, shall I read his character for you? Oh dear!

The vizier tries to break loose from his grip.

QUFFA: He’s very deep.

VIZIER: How do you know I’m deep?

QUFFA: From the way you tighten the strings; a bandit would sooner make off with your ghost than your shoes.

VIZIER: Watch your language, man! Are you a cobbler?

QUFFA, *with hidden mockery*: How does your Excellency know these things?

ED: 329

Despite the differences between this couple and their correspondents in the *Nights*, Faraġ affirms that his couple comes from the *Arabian Nights* and that he could not picture them living in a particular city at a specific time, as *dramatis personae*, weather fictitious or historical (363). However, referential elements are necessarily present in the construction of a character (Ubersfeld 1996 a, 96). In this case, ‘Alī and Quffa also recall other political master/servant based plays, as *al-Farāfir* (The Flipflaps, 1964, Yūsuf Idrīs) and *Mr Puntila and his Man Matti* (see Ḥusayn 1993, 212). Similitudes between the protagonists of the play and the immutable master/servant relationship of *al-Farāfir* could be noticed by the audience since Idrīs’ play was recent and very well known. As for Brecht, he was a main source of inspiration for the playwrights of those years in Egypt.

The double enunciation of the characters’ dialogues cannot be ignored. The characters of the *Nights* and the characters of the play refer to different declaratory frames within which they and the public communicate (see Maingueneau 2001, 142). In these regards, Farouk Abdel Wahab argues that the symbolism was sometimes so transparent in plays of that period that one critic coined the term “symbolic realism” to refer to their style (quoted in Enany 2000, 171). We have already seen how Faraġ’s previous plays could be symbolic. Referential elements outside the fictional fields could be found in the reality of the context of enunciation. The audience of 1968’s representation would not have ignored that ‘Alī, the utopist, looks like Nasser.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> Indeed, even if in this study we consider foremost the text of the play, we cannot ignore here the value and meaning of the representation. The character on the stage is a result of the intersection of two semiotic ensembles (textual and scenic) (Ubersfeld 1996 a, 96). ‘Alī’s way of speaking, together with his physical action and gestures could directly be compared to Nasser’s talks shown on television.

If ‘Alī represents Nasser, then Quffa, his follower, might represent his people; the Egyptian citizens with their aspirations which only a leader can content. These aspirations are sometimes too big for them and they feel disappointed when their leader refuses to satisfy them. On the other side, despite his complaining, Quffa/the people chose his leader and he follows him, confers power to him and loves him with his own free will.

### **3.3 Stereotypes from the *Nights*. Varying degrees of characterization.**

There is no doubt that ‘Alī and Quffa are the absolute protagonists of the play, but they are supported by a solid net of variegated characters. Many of them also have individual signs that do not appear in their equivalent of the *Nights*. For instance, for the role he embodies, the former servant of ‘Alī, Ṣawāb, corresponds to the Barmecide’s servitude in *The Tale of the Imaginary Table*. Contrary to the servants of the *Nights*, that are simple “hommes récit,” Ṣawāb discusses with ‘Alī and expresses his own opinions about his master’s behaviour (AĜT: 223-30). Then, if we look elsewhere in the *Nights*, a Ṣawāb exists. He is a companion of Kāfūr and he is a stereotype too.

Similarly, the princess who marries the stranger, even if her name is “the princess,” is not just a princess, like she is in *The Tale of Ma’rūf the Cobbler*. First, she chooses her husband, while in the tale, her father, the king, imposes the marriage on her. To be more precise, in the play, she chooses to marry him after she has seen him only once and she wants to marry ‘Alī against her father’s will. Second, she has peculiar traits individualizing her. For instance, she has a childish attitude: she interrupts her father, the king, twice while he is in a meeting (AĜT: 281-6), she cries when she is contradicted (281, 287) she is scared, and she speaks like a child (e.g., 339). She loves her father and his worried about his safety, while she is also against him to protect her husband from being discovered by the king and the vizier (321-333). She trusts her father’s comprehension, even when her request is impudent, e.g.: when ‘Alī has been exposed and is about to be killed, she states that she is going to her father and that she will scream at him (353-4). Moreover, she is the only character who understands ‘Alī’s philosophy and wishes that her people could as well. According to ‘Alī, “this provides a meaning to everything” (354). But even more than that, the princess has another peculiarity making her a complex character. The princess is a conscious character:

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References to reality are explored here (5).

الجارية: عجيبة! هذا والله أغرب مما في الحواديت.  
 الأميرة: قلت لك. كما في الحواديت. أحلى من الحواديت.  
 الجارية: حادثة عجيبة وحكاية مطربة غريبة. سيؤرخونها يا ستى في الكتب ويرويها الشاعر في القهوة.  
 الأميرة: (بلهفة) ويذكر اسمي في الحكاية يا دادة؟  
 الجارية: اسمك واسم أبيك واسم..  
 الأميرة: (بقلق). تجلس على الأريكة) أخشى أن يسميني الأميرة وينسى اسمي الحقيقي..  
 الجارية: لا لا لا. الشاعر يذكر الأسماء كلها.. هذه هي الأصول.  
 الأميرة: (تتمرغ بنشوة فوق الأريكة) واسم حبيبي.

AGT: 336

MAID: Amazing! This is even stranger than fiction.  
 PRINCESS: Didn't I tell you? It is like a story, lovelier than a story.  
 MAID: Unbelievable! They'll write about this in books, mistress, and poets will sing of these happenings to men in coffeehouses.  
 PRINCESS, *anxiously*: Will they mention my name in the story, nanny?  
 MAID: Your name, your father's name, your...  
 PRINCESS, *worriedly, as she sits on the sofa*: What if they just call me "the princess" and forget my real name?  
 MAID: No, no, no. Poets mention everybody's name. Those are the rules.  
 PRINCESS, *rolls gleefully on the sofa*: And my darling's name...

ED: 341-2

In commenting about being in a fictional narrative, she gives substance to the theme of illusion (see III.5). Moreover, she comments about herself being a fictional character, which causes a suspension of disbelief.

The king of the play is also different from the king of *The Tale of Ma'rūf*. Though, like the king of the *Nights* he is greedy, he is more a father than a simple king. When the princess interrupts his meeting with the merchants twice by calling him in an informal way ("psst, psst") and expresses her love for the stranger, he indulges her in a tender manner (AGT: 281-2, 285-6). Also, his interaction with the vizier is more developed since he criticizes him with irony (326-7), revealing their intimate relationship.

In both stories, the vizier is suspicious and urges the king to assure himself about the foreigner's identity (AGT: 292). Just as in the play, he is portrayed as a lover of the princess, who benefits from all situations to show his value to her and his care of her (322, 323, 328) and investigates

the case of 'Alī by testing both the strangers who make fun of him (289-90) and by examining the princess with standard questions (321, 322). His idiolect defines him better (see III.4).

The maid (الجارية), which the princess tenderly calls “nanny” (دادة) is an innovation. With her role as a confidant of the princess, which allows the public to know the princess' thoughts, she reminds us of the maid in the *Commedia dell'Arte*. She provides a parallelism to the master/servant dynamic and she acts as a female parallel to the princess. She has a simple logic and accepts, with humour, the princess' extravagancies (AĜT: 317). Globally, her intimate relationship with the princess, together with the affectionate father-daughter relationship and with the close vizier-king-princess relations, originates and affirms a familiar ambiance which is absent in the *Nights*.

Most stories from the *Arabian Nights* are partly or wholly situated in marketplaces and involve protagonists that are merchants or sons of merchants (Marzolph, Van Leeuwen 2004, 643). In the play, the merchant and the chief merchant are less defined than other characters, but they are still characters, while in the hypotext they are just stereotypes. The two merchants of the play are first enemies and then allies (AĜT: 259-65, 277 and 280) so they evolve. Besides, the chief merchant has more hope for the arrival of the caravan than the merchant, while the other one makes fun of the other (281). So, they are different from one another and they express opinions.

All the characters examined below, by their individuality, produce an *effect of reality* (Ubersfeld 1996 c, 103) which does not exist in the hypotext. Other characters in the play, instead, belong specifically to the theatrical fiction. This is the case for the beggars. A series of different beggars appears in the *Arabian Nights* (see Marzolph, Van Leeuwen 2004, 861). In the play, they are just stereotypes, but they act in group, making a chorus (see Ubersfeld 1996 c, 36), and this distinguishes them from any other beggar in the *Nights*. Indeed, the dialogue is divided in more sequences and different beggars in turn repeat a part of it or comment on it (AĜT: 265, 273, 275). Then, they continue repeating small portions of previous talks from the chorus (276-7).<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> The stage indications report “voices” without specifying who speaks in a chorus. We assume that it is the beggars since they stop to talk and then someone speaks as “voices”.

Characters are generally better depicted than their equivalent in the *Arabian Nights*, but many of them lose some of their features in the play. The plot is edulcorated and so are the characters. In the *Nights*,

Stereotypes are further used to depict characters with a social, religious, or ethnic affiliation, such as slaves, bedouin, black people, Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians. As a rule, these stereotypes are supplied with negative connotations: bedouins are often portrayed as robbers, black men as seducers of married white women, Jews as people acting for their own profit, Christians as drunkards, and Magians as magicians sacrificing Muslim believers for their dark rituals.

Marzolph, Van Leeuwen 2004, 710

In the play, the Kurd disappears (see III.2), as well as the proverbially generous Barmecide who loses his connotations, and becomes Tabrīzī.

One detail about Quffa seems to have been inserted just to increase intertextual pleasure. Why should Quffa enlist his brothers, if they were not known in the *Nights* for being one of the barber's brothers?

علي: من ضيعك؟

قفة: ثلاثة. أولهم قاض سحب رخصة أخي أبو الفضول الحلاق فصار علي أن أرتب له ما يعيش عليه، وثانهم أخ كسلان وصايح ومتغطرس اسمه بقيق لا بد أن أرتب له أيضا ما يعيش عليه.. هربت منهما وتركت البلد وقعت في الثالثة. والثالثة ثابتة! أنت!

AGT: 314

‘ALĪ: Who ruined you?

QUFFA: Three. The first is the qadi who took away the license of my brother Abū 'l-Fuḍūl, the barber, and so I had to provide for him. The second is another good-for-nothing, idle, arrogant brother, called Buqbuq; I have to provide for him too. I ran away from the two of them only to bump into the third, you, the worst of the three.

ED: 335

The pleasure of recognition becomes double Quffa's brothers are both protagonists of previous Faraḡ's plays taken from *The Tale of the Barber*. Indeed Abū 'l-Fuḍūl is the protagonist of *Ḥallāq Baḡdād* (1962) and Buqbuq is the protagonist of the homonymous play *Buqbuq al-Kaslān* (1965).

One main feature characterizes the protagonists of the play: they are a duo. This is an innovation from their equivalents in the tale, where there is not a complex net of characters. As a master/servant duo, they define each other through their opposite traits. The master is educated, has manners, he knows how to speak, while the servant is ignorant, is uneducated, does not measure his words.

The servant (Quffa) possesses one of the typical traits of the master: he has the capital, while the master is penniless. However, the two behave according to their prospective roles, so that 'Alī becomes a proper master because Quffa acts as his servant. Moreover, their condition is immutable. With these features, the isotope of the duo is deeply characterized by modern power dynamics, where new relations of master/servant are established according to parameters different from physical possessions and are fixed as an immutable condition for both.

More than that, 'Alī and Quffa have individualizing signs making them well round characters. The main feature of 'Alī, besides being a master without capital, is that he is a utopist. Different from the other illusionists from the *Nights*, he has a societal project based on his dreams of elimination of poverty through the redistribution of richness. Similarly, the servant Quffa, even he does not exercise his profession anymore, still thinks and acts as a cobbler and has a marked sense of humour.

Even secondary characters that do not possess a proper name are better depicted than their equivalents in the tales. The king is also a father and the vizier is more pedantic than the hypotext so that he becomes ridiculous. He is also closer to the princess and the king. These new relations, underlined by the presence of a *dāda*, create a familiar dimension within the play. Besides, the maid functions as the female counterpart of the servant. The princess has an unconventional childish attitude for being a princess from the *Nights* and she also acts as a lover, which makes her a singular character. The newly characterized king, vizier, princess, merchants and the *dāda* all serve the dramatic work in supporting the protagonists to make a theatrical net.

Once again, through his characters as well, Faraḡ plays with the intertextual dimension of the play. His characters have brothers in the tales of the *Nights* and in another one of his plays, and the princess jokes about her status as a princess in the tale. If the princess' mask falls in her metadramatic reflections, 'Alī's identity as a pure fictional character is doubtful too. In the context of production of the play, he recalls the Egyptian president of the time, with his

incantatory speeches and his utopian dreams. On the other side, his follower, Quffa, recalls the Egyptian people, who followed their president through a critical situation. Aside from their features on the stage, others can be attached to them as well to complete their identity through the references to reality.

#### 4. Restyling - A confluence of styles. Telling on the stage.

Faraġ stated that he was aware of the potential of the *Nights*' style if transferred to the stage (QUOTE!!). He admitted that he used some of its features for his plays inspired by the *Nights*, such as the language and the art of repetition (QUOTE!!). Another feature derived by the hypotext is the storytelling. Together with other metadramatic devices, the storytelling is certainly inspired by the tales of the *Nights*. As such, this study will begin with it (4.1). Then, it will focus on the language of the play compared to the language of the hypotext (4.2) and on the stylistic features characterizing both the *Nights* and the play (4.3).

##### 4.1 In a world of fiction. Playing and overplaying.

From the transformation of a tale into a play, we expect a dramatization, which is the formal passage from the narrative to the dramatic mode (see Genette 1982, 395-415). Interestingly, the narrative mode maintains an important presence in the play, even though a peculiarity of the dramatic genre is that it represents rather than narrates events, while a tale normally narrates (Debs 1993, 210).<sup>173</sup> On the other hand, as we have seen (III.1), the narration of the *Nights* makes recurrent use of the scene and so, many portions of it are ready for the stage. Indeed, the stories were conceived and presented as performances, provoking an immediate response from the audience. This was achieved by using various techniques which make the material particularly suitable for theatrical adaptation (Van Leeuwen 2005, 223). Storytelling is an essential part of the play for its recurrent presence and for its thematic implications. In the Arabic theatre of the sixties, Brechtian theories brought narrations to the stage. Faraġ's employment of the *Nights*' storytelling contributes to this trend.<sup>174</sup>

In 'Alī's palace, a trick is carried out. Before entering the castle, Quffa prepares for the play. He puts on a mask (he puts a cloth over his eyes) and repeats a speech, already made to play the part of the blind beggar. Meanwhile, inside the palace, reluctantly, Şawāb participates to his master's game, pretending to bring food out on trays. Like his equivalent in the hypotext, Quffa starts to partake at the imaginary table. The main difference is that, differently from the hypotext, the owner of the palace is not playing at all (AĠT: 223-241, III.2). Quffa also tries

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<sup>173</sup> We have to notice that, though the Epic Theater is a dramatic genre narrating rather than representing events, the prevalent narrative mode in this play cannot be relied to the aims and techniques of the Epic Theater, as it is meant to remind the spectator that the play is a representation of reality and not reality itself.

<sup>174</sup> See Faraġ 1990, 68 and here, Conclusion.



the part of the pharmacist, but, in its stead, he seems to perform the show of a *ḥāwī* (serpent-charmer; Lane 1923, 391-3); particularly when he describes what his antidote (theriac) is useful for and is made of:

قففة: أمشي إلى السوق وأضع سلالا كبيرة من حولي مغطاة بقماش تبرز من تحته رؤوس ثعابين مخيفة، ومعى أحقاق وأهتف: أنا حويس الحاوي الرفاعي. في هذه السلال أخذ الأجال، الثعبان الناشر مثل الأسد الكاسر. والهجام الحجام. والموت المطل واسمه الصل. وإيل لمن رآه في خراب البقاع ونشر له عرفه كالشراع، أو نهشه بعضبه على عصبه. في هذه السللة يا سادة الداھية المهلكة التي تدعى بالملك. وطيارة، والطفارة تسكن المهمة الأقر والبر الأغير ونفسها يحرق الحشيش الأخضر.. فسبحان من قهرها بهذا الترياق (كأنه يعرض الأحقاق) وشهر به فضل اندروماخوس في الأفاق. (حق آخر) هذا هو المخلص من المنهوش والكسور والعضاض والاعال والأمراض، ركبته لهذا الدواعي من قرص الأفاعي وأضفت إليه الفلفل الأبيض والأفيون والزنجبيل واستقرديوس واسطرخودس وفوتنج.

علي: (يضحك) كنت أعلم أن الصيادلة خطهم غير مقروء، ولكن يبدو أن نطقهم أيضا غير مفهوم.

AGT: 251-2

QUFFA: [...] I'd go to the market and place a number of big baskets all round me, covered with material, with the heads of terrible snakes seeming to stick out of them. I carried small boxes too, and I used to stand up and cry out: "I'm Ḥawīs, the sorcerer and snake-charmer. In this basket is the life-snatcher. He that slowly unfolds and is as deadly as a raging lion. He that swiftly strikes and swiftly retreats. The very death incarnate whose name is viper. Woe betide the man who meets him in the wilderness and sees him raise his crested head like a sail, before he bites into the vein. And in this basket, my good folk, is the stealthy destroyer known as the queen of death, sometimes as the flying one and the darter, she who lives in the barren wastes, whose breath sets fire to the green grass. Praise him who conquered her with this antidote. *As though showing the boxes.* And through it spread far and wide the fame of Andromachus. Holding up another box. Here is the healer of tears, fractures, bites, ailments, and diseases. I brewed it from mouse-ear, sea-onion, counter-poison, by adding white pepper, opium, and ginger, as well as galabanta dinka, varonitus sanitatum, and catadamus actatatum."

'ALĪ, *laughing*: I know doctors' writing's illegible, but I didn't know their speech was garbled too.

ED: 316-7

On a phonetic level, rhymes and assonances flow in the text together with enumerations which recreate the typical and the redundant style of a seller's speech. Few fine lexicons characterize the text, like the same word "theriac," but last words are invented and the chaotic whole of its ingredients gives evidence of the servant's pretension. Quffa's speech shows that he does not

have a solid education allowing him to keep the role of a pharmacist. The mention of the last dubious ingredients, with sophisticated and incomprehensible names, point to the importance of invention in an effective speech, according to the logic of the servant.

The master cannot do anything but laugh at these evidences, remarking that Quffa's words were incomprehensible. On the other hand, 'Alī can replicate a doctor's formal way of speaking which gains Quffa's appreciation (AĜT: 252). Since after his nomination by 'Alī, Quffa the cobbler is expected to play Kāfūr, the valet of the mighty prince 'Alī Ğanāḥ al-Tabrīzī, 'Alī instructs him on the words to use, the gestures, the intention of his words and Quffa rehearses under 'Alī's supervision, while 'Alī is already used to playing the part of the prince (256-8). Then, for a while, 'Alī and Quffa become spectators, since they go out of the stage and hide behind the curtain to attend the show organized by the two merchants: each of them instructs a beggar to obstruct the other's commerce (AĜT: 259-261). When the merchants and beggars' daily show is over, 'Alī and Quffa prepare to go back in. The duo gets ready, and they enter the stage in the proper moment, while Quffa provides the right décor for the theatricalization of 'Alī's power (AĜT: 263). Now, merchants and beggars become unconscious participants of the game 'Alī and Quffa attempt to persuade them (261-278).

At the same time, like the couple of young lovers in the Commedia dell'Arte, 'Alī and the princess play the role of the enamored. Since their meeting at the market, their actions are marked by exaggeration which is the typical feature of a love narrative. When 'Alī meets the beautiful princess, he wants to attract her attention, and so he overplays the part of the wealthy man tearing up clothes in the chief merchant's shop. Then, the princess plays the part of the girl who is annoyed by a stranger. In return, 'Alī answers with poetry:

الأميرة: أيها الشاب!

علي: (ينحني لها) غريت يا مولاتي يتمنى أن يخدمك بقلبه وبسيفه وبماله..

الأميرة: أتعرفني أيها الشاب؟

علي: نعم. أنت شمس النهار للمبصر، و عطر الزهرة للمحب، و لحن البلبل للشجي..

الأميرة: (لجارتها وهي تستند على ذراعها كأنها سيغشى عليها) عودي بنا إلى البيت..

AĜT: 269

PRINCESS: Young man!

‘ALĪ, *bowing to her*: A stranger, Your Highness, who wishes to serve you with his heart, sword, and fortune.

PRINCESS: Do you know me, young man?

‘ALĪ: Yes. You are the rising sun for him who can see. The flower’s scent for the enamored. The nightingale’s song for the melancholy.

PRINCESS, nearly swooning, to her maid: Take us home.

ED: 322

Interestingly, the princess knows she is the princess of a tale (AĜT: 336). She is not the only one who mentions tales and books; the first one is the new owner who takes ‘Alī’s estate. When ‘Alī tells him that he is going to Ĝabal Qāf, he answers that that place exists only in the tales (241).

‘Alī also tells stories. In an innovation of the hypertext, guided by his exaggerated fantasy, the utopist tells three stories in a row. One of them comes directly from the *Nights* (here, III.2). The two other stories are simpler and, like the first one, they perfectly suit the play: ‘Alī is presumably unaware that the king and the vizier are hiding in the room while the princess asks him to tell her if he is poor or not. He does not provide a direct answer. Instead, he tells her a tale of a poor man, which he narrates in the first person, so that at the beginning, it seems that he is going to tell his own story. However, the story then becomes comical and he enacts it in a way that it reveals itself as a tale. In the meantime, while he enacts the tale, he seizes a sword by the blade and strikes it on the curtains where the king is hiding. The king and the vizier presume that ‘Alī struck them by chance, and so they let the princess call and question him again, while they are hiding in a different place. ‘Alī comes out with another story and again he strikes the king. Again, they think that ‘Alī hit them by accident, and so they let the princess call and question him a third time. The sketch is performed a third time thanks to another tale.

Storytelling in the *Arabian Nights* is perceived as a useful craft, both in private and public gatherings (Marzolph, Van Leeuwen 2004, 661). The style of ‘Alī’s tales is deeply influenced by the hypotext. Set in a frame tale, the tales of ‘*Alī Ĝanāḥ al-Tabrīzī wa tābi‘uhu Quffa* and of the *Nights* share the same placement in the structure of the work. Similarly, ‘Alī’s three tales pose the same questions as the tales of the *Nights*, constantly creating doubts about the truthfulness of the narration (Chraïbi 2004, 10). Also, with his tales, ‘Alī practices the art of the interruption, typical of the hypotext (Ibid.).

Storytelling, in the play like in the *Nights*, can also have dialogic functions. The dialogue, namely the representation of a spoken communicative act in which the participants are in each other's physical presence, has been individuated by Richard Van Leeuwen as one of the fundamental narrative devices of the *Arabian Nights*. One of its features is the exposure of the participants. "Physical presence implies an increasing potential for contingency, incurred by direct confrontation, such as showing emotions, convincing the other with arguments, intimidating, seducing or deceiving the other" (Van Leeuwen 2015, 156). 'Alī's words already has this kind of dialogic power in his different equivalent in the hypotext. In the hypertext, where dialogue is plain form, 'Alī is empowered by several dialogues, deriving from his many equivalents, which makes him a superb deceiver who uses to tell to exert his influence.

Regarding the contents, 'Alī's word has a redeeming power as well, like the word of Shahrazad. Particularly, the cycle of tales to which the tale of the brothers of the barber belong to, namely the *Cycle of the Hunchback* (Chauvin 1899, 105), is also based on the same principle. After the death of his jester, the king will set free all the other suspects if one of them can tell a funnier story than the episode of the death of the hunchback. The motif of the ransom tale of the frame tale is recurrent in the *Nights*.

*The Tale of the Sack*, performed as the interlude of the play, is another framed story. Indeed, as a framed story, it refers to the framing of the story on the levels of structure (framing), theme (illusion), and various motifs (imagination, exaggeration, marvelous, a piece of bread and an olive. See Marzolph, Van Leeuwen 2004, 370-76). Within the widespread practice of playing within the play, Faraġ even supplements a puppet on the stage. When Quffa is drunk, he holds a 'Arāgōz and performs with it by changing his voice (AĜT: 243-245).

Metadramatic aspects of such practices are remarkable. Shakespeare's use of plays within the plays make critics regarding him as a Modernist. Pirandello emphasized this practice to reveal the everyday show each one plays in life. Brecht used it to distance the audience. The three great playwrights were Faraġ's models during his career. Besides, many Egyptian plays during the second half of the twentieth century contain dramatic characters' comments on literary and theatrical matters (Dawood 2014, 286). According to the modalities Faraġ used metadramatic devices, Pirandello's aim of displaying the everyday show that everybody enacts is the most evident aesthetic pursued in this play. However, even more clear is a desire to keep a style which is typical of the hypotext and which emphasizes the theatricality of the *Nights*, for an aesthetic

#### 4.2 A language from the *Arabian Nights*. Quoting the hypotext, playing the fiction.

The language used in the *Nights* has been defined as “Middle Arabic”, which is an intermediate, multiform variety of the Arabic language, characterized by the interference of the two poles (Classical and colloquial) on the linguistic continuum, and also by some other specific features (Lentin 2004, 434). Middle Arabic was used especially during the Middle Age as a versatile and familiar mean of expression suitable for a literature without great intellectual aims, but with an artistic inflate (Guillaume 2007, 570). The use of colloquialisms in Middle Arabic is submitted to norms: “some never occur, others are more or less standard colloquialisms, if one may say so, [...] they reflect, to a large extent, regional (koinic) usages” (Lentin 2016, 357).

A particularity of the relation between the play and its hypotext is that portions of the hypotext are quoted in the play (see III.2). Instances of quotations are the scene of the imaginary table, ‘Alī’s theory about the appropriate behaviour of a foreigner in a city, the description of the caravan, the evaluation of the stone, the tale of the sack (the interlude) and the first story ‘Alī tells. Since change entails vocabulary and never rephrasing, and since suppression does not select words that can be grouped by linguistic choices, to compare the linguistic differences, below are reported the few lexical changes concerning the implicit quotations, while syntactic structures are not examined. As shown below, a group of changes is based on a colloquial equivalence:

الفراريح المحشوة بالفستق (ALL: n.43)

الفراخ المحشوة بالفستق (AĜT: 234)

Chickens stuffed with pistachios

خذ هذه القطيفة قبل أن ينزل منها الجلاب (ALL: n. 43)

خذ هذه القطيفة قبل أن ينسكب منها العسل (AĜT: 234)

Take this *quṭayfa* before the julep/molasses falls/drops

مرودان من لجين (ALL: n.331)

مرودان من فضة (AĜT: 302)

Two silver *mirwād*

Synonyms used by Faraġ “colloquialize” the language of the *Nights*. Indeed, فراخ is the common

word used in Egypt to mean “chicken,” while in *fushā*<sup>175</sup> it means “chick”<sup>176</sup>. *عسل* means “honey” in *fushā*, while it means both “honey” and “molasses” in colloquial Egyptian Arabic; here the context suggests that as the intention is “molasses.” Similarly, the verb *انسكب* collocates better with *عسل* than the more formal *نزل*. As for *فضة*, it is used both in *fushā* and in colloquial Egyptian Arabic, while *لجين* is just *fushā*.

Other changes can be explained according to various reasons, as the different context of the two texts:

وشباب يلعبون بالكعب (ALL: n.331)

And boys playing dice

وشباب يلعبون الكرة (AĜT: 303)

And boys playing football

In the context of reception of the play, kids are more likely to play football than dice. Conversely, playing football in the context of the *Arabian Nights* would be anachronistic, and so, maybe the sentence is more comical with the way Faraġ changed it. Like the choice of synonyms, the change can be interpreted as an adaptation to a new context of reception where the text of the play is intended for its double function which is communication between characters and between the characters and the audience.

Maybe Faraġ also wanted an immediate comprehension by the audience, as the following example illustrates:

وكر اكيوسباع (ALL: n.331)

And cranes and wild beasts

وطيور سباع (AĜT: 303)

And birds and wild beasts

Generally, *طيور* is easier to understand than *كراكي* since the first one denotes a class of animals (birds), while the second one is a species of birds. Conversely, *نمر* (leopard) is more specific than *سبع* that commonly means “lion,” but its general meaning is “beast of prey, predator:”

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<sup>175</sup> We will use the mention *fushā* to indicate both classical Arabic and modern standard Arabic, namely a not-regionalised variety independent from its temporal connotation.

<sup>176</sup> *فراريج* is the plural of *الفروج* (فرخ الدجاجة) (*Lisān al-‘arab* online).

سبع وأرنبيين

A beast and two hares (ALL: n. 331)

نمر وأرنبيين

A leopard and two hares (AĜT: 303)

However, the plural of سبع was used two lines above in the play. So, the change provides lexical variations and it is still a common word. Similarly, the substitution of دويرة with قصر and بيت varies the lexicon and avoids the strange diminutive of the word دار:

دويرة خراب وأخرى بلا باب (ALL: n.331)

A little ruined house and another one without door

قصر خراب وبيت بلا باب (AĜT: 303)

A ruined castle and a house without door

In another case, the author might have avoided blaspheme references:

مقصورة للكلاب (ALL: n.331)

A *maqṣūra* for dogs

عشة للكلاب (AĜT: 303)

A hut for dogs

عشة means “hut” both in modern standard Arabic and in colloquial Egyptian Arabic, while it has the general meaning of “tout arbre qui croît dans un mauvais terrain, qui a une apparence chétive et des branches minces” (Kazimirski 1860, 2-259). مقصورة, instead, has more meanings in modern standard Arabic than in *fushā*, but in none of case it means “hut”. In Classical Arabic it means “enclosed space”, but, as a name, it first indicates the *maqṣūra* of the mosque (Kazimirski 1860, 2-753) or a palace (Traini 1960, 1174). A *maqṣūra*, especially if associated with dogs, has ambiguous and ironical meanings with regards to religion which Faraġ generally avoided (III.2.4).

Most of the linguistic innovation can be interpreted as the author’s will to render the language of the hypotext more comprehensible for his audience. Such modifications are scarce and involve only the vocabulary. Despite they shift from the Middle Arabic towards the colloquial pole, the language can still be considered Middle Arabic, even if it does not present its typical syntactical marks distinguishing it from the Classical Arabic. In other words, “unmarked quotations” from the hypotext cannot be distinguished from innovation on a linguistic basis.

Thus, the integration of the tale into the play leads us to consider Faraġ's choice of the dramatic language. Quotes of a large part of the tale - though the quotations are not marked nor signalled – mean that the play reproduces the language of the hypotext. What ensues is that the language of the play in its whole resembles the language of the *Nights*: it is not classical Arabic, yet neither is it the colloquial.

Faraġ's use of the *Nights*' language for his plays is significant for at least two reasons. In fact, Middle Arabic has been defined as a language able to convey the dialogues with a certain ease that is often hard to achieve through Classical Arabic (Guillaume 2007, 570). This feature becomes particularly useful for the theatre. Moreover, Middle Arabic is not regionally limited as the colloquial would be and could perfectly serve the pan-Arab horizons of Faraġ's theatre. Commenting on the first play he wrote, Faraġ explained that, for his dramatic language, he took inspiration from the *Nights*, choosing a language that is not vernacular nor *fushā* nor a mix between them, but the words could be read both with the vernacular pronunciation and the classical. Besides, he adds that this is not his general theatrical choice, but the choice he thought was apt for that play, having been taken from a popular ancient tale (Faraġ [1964] 1992, 194-6).

In some ways, Faraġ's language is similar to the plain language that is neither colloquial nor *fushā* of which Tawfiq al-Ḥakīm speaks about in the explication to his play *al-Ṣafqa* (The Deal, 1956) as his third experiment after the use of the first and the second variety mentioned above (al-Ḥakīm [1956] 1988, 107 and Montaina 1973). However, Faraġ's peculiar ability in the dramatic effect is manifest in the language as well and he distinguishes it from Tawfiq al-Ḥakīm. Apart from the “language from the *Nights*,” the play includes the colloquial Egyptian Arabic, but just in limited situations. Departing from Myers-Scotton theory that codeswitching is part of the “communicative competence” of a speaker; it is the “innate faculty” which enables a speaker to assess different linguistic choices in different situations, Bassiouney assesses that codeswitching works between two varieties of the same language, not only between two languages (Bassiouney 2006, 15). With regard to his education and/or social status, one has more or less capacity in varying his register. So, the beggars of the play naturally use colloquial Egyptian Arabic (apart from repeating ‘Alī's words, in *fushā*):

الشحاذ الأول: (يعترض طريق الشبندر ويحاوره) حسنة لله يا سيدي. ربنا يخلي لك عيالك يا سيدي. ربنا  
يجعل استفتاحك قشطة يا سيدي.  
الشبندر: امش يا ولد. امش..



الشحاذ الثاني: (للتاجر) ايه ده؟ ربنا يهلك الظالم ويجعل استفتاحه زفت.

AGT: 260

BEGGAR 1, obstructing the path of the chief merchant: Give me alms, master, for the Lord's sake. May God keep your children! And bless this day for you!

CHIEF MERCHANT: Go away, boy! Go away!

BEGGAR 1, to the merchant: What sort of treatment's this? Have you no fear of God? He won't bless the unjust...

ED: 319

Note particularly the Egyptian word قشطة (cream) and its typical use in wishes (in which it means "good"). On the contrary, the merchants switch from the Middle Arabic they use with 'Alī or the king to Middle Arabic mixed with words of colloquial Egyptian Arabic when speaking to the beggars (see the example above and also the colloquial Egyptian Arabic برة instead of the standard برًا meaning both "outside", AGT: 264). For the same reason, generally, the maid and Quffa use a less formal register. For instance, the maid calls the princess with the typical colloquial Egyptian Arabic mention ست meaning "madam" (AGT: 336). Quffa often uses inappropriate language. For instance, when he plays the role of the servant of the mighty prince to introduce 'Alī to the merchants, he does not speak properly:

قفة: (يتعاضم ويتقدم من صاحب الخان) اسمع يا.. اقترب مني حتى أكلمك.

صاحب الخان: نعم؟! من يكون هذا أيضا؟

قفة: أعندك كرسي وثير، منجد بالدمقس الأحمر الغالي وفوقه شللتان مطررتان بخيط الذهب، ويصلح لجلوس ملك أو أمير؟

صاحب الخان: لم؟

قفة: ليجلس عليه سيدي.

صاحب الخان: ومن يكون؟

قفة: (مستهلا السؤال) هاه!. أتسأل يا لكعي. والله لأقتانك هذه الساعة وأدفع ديتك أيا كانت.

صاحب الخان: صباحك مثل وجهك.

(...)

قفة: آه. الغياث. (لصاحب الخان) أطلب منك الصفع يا سيدي. تشفع لي. آه (جانبا لصاحب الخان) سيدي

رجل جبار. بفلوسه. قتال. بفلوسه. سفاح على قدفلوسه. الرحمة!

صاحب الخان: (ينحني بعلي مرات) سيدي. اجعل ذنبه علي. لا تعكر دمك. بالله عليك يا سيدي. (جانبا الولد

رذيل، ولكن سيده أمير خطير..

QUFFA, *assumes a grandiose air and approaches the innkeeper*: You there... come here! I want to talk to you.

INNKEEPER: What? Now who is it?

QUFFA: Have you got a soft chair upholstered with the best red silk, with two cushions brocaded with gold? A chair fit for a king or a prince to sit on?

INNKEEPER: Who is he?

QUFFA, *shocked at the boldness of the question*: What? How dare you ask, your vile creature! I could kill you on the spot for this, and pay whatever your blood money is.

INNKEEPER: Clear off!

[...]

QUFFA: Help! *To the innkeeper*. Forgive me please, sir. Say a good word on my behalf. *Aside, to the innkeeper*. My master's a terrible tyrant, but he's so rich... he thinks he can kill and cut and maim because he's so rich. Mercy!

INNKEEPER, *bows 'Alī several times*: Forgive him, master. Don't upset yourself. I beseech you, master! *Aside*. The servant's a scoundrel, but his master's an important prince.

ED: 320

Quffa repeatedly uses the colloquialism فلوس, he adds the demonstrative هذه in the adverb of time before the word “hour” while the article before a word indicating time in Modern Standard Arabic has a demonstrative meaning. على قد is another very common expression in colloquial Egyptian Arabic, so it might be an hybridization of the two registers, like the ones individuated by Sasson Somekh (1993, 183-190) which acts as an influence of the colloquial variant in the character's imitation of Classical Arabic. لكعي is another overt colloquial Egyptian Arabic item and means “dawdler.” Occasionally, when he is facing a situation and feels scared or becomes upset suddenly, Quffa cannot control his tongue. In those moments, he uses words and expression from colloquial Egyptian Arabic, like: ده (this, AĜT: 248-9, 253, 291, 315), بقى (AĜT: 246), بس (just, AĜT: 257), النهارده (AĜT: 274), نهار أسود (bad day, AĜT: 285), يا سلام (wow!, AĜT: 290), اشمعنى (what does it mean, AĜT: 295), ما فيش فلوس؟ (there is no money? AĜT: 312), and also:

قففة: (جانبا) هذا الولد لا ينفع معه غير التهديد والابتزاز. (لعلي) يعني ما فيش؟! خلاص؟! طيب..! طيب..! (جانبا) أشرب له كاسين الأول..

AĜT:316

QUFFA, *aside*: It seems I won't get anywhere with this man unless I blackmail him. *To 'Alī*. So you don't want to pay? Alright! Just you wait! *Aside*. I'd better have a couple of drinks first...

ED: 335

Interestingly, every character, including Quffa until this moment, is prone to use the same register as the speaker. So, when they speak with 'Alī, they tend to use a high register and Middle Arabic. Quffa in this case changes the rules. While he speaks Middle Arabic with the public, he uses colloquial Egyptian Arabic to upset 'Alī. Similarly, in her childish attitude, the princess sporadically uses colloquial Egyptian Arabic, like the negation with the particle *مش*, and this happens when she is worried (AĜT: 292). Such use of the colloquial Egyptian Arabic can be seen as a moment of psychological honesty, when the speaker talks in his/her most natural manner (Stetkevych 1975, 160). At the same time, each discourse in a play is also a text, a part of the wider ensemble made by the text of the play (Ubersfeld 1996 c, 106 and 110) and colloquial Egyptian Arabic has been individuated as the language of the agitation and of the comic (*al-nukta*) (Fašwān, 83).

The use of colloquial Egyptian Arabic can be individuated both in intra-speaker and inter-speaker variations. The use of a linguistic variety is normally linked to the register, where field, tenor and mode in combination determine the nature of the register (Halliday 1985). Then, the vizier's immutable register is comical and characterizing of him. When 'Alī and Quffa make fun of him, he replies with:

الوزير: اف من خسة الفاظك! أنت اسكاف!؟

AĜT: 291

VIZIER: Watch your language, man! Are you a shoemaker?

ED: 329

And when the princess meanders on 'Alī's identity, the vizier keeps still, repeating the same sentence:

الأميرة: (بحماس) أبي. لعله شحاذ صحيح!

الملك: تضحكين!؟

الوزير: ألاحظت عليه شيئاً يدعوك لهذا الظن؟

الأميرة: (بحماس) أو لعله ملك من بغداد أو ملك من السماء أتى ليختبر أخلاقنا..

الملك: مفتش؟!!

الوزير: ألاحظت عليه شيئا يدعوك لهذا الظن؟

AGT: 321

THE PRINCESS, *passionately*: Father! Maybe he *is* a beggar.

THE KING: It's not funny!

VIZIER: Did you notice anything about him that made you think he might be?

THE PRINCESS, *passionately*: Or maybe he is a king from Baghdad or an angel from haven come down to test us.

THE KING: An inspector?

VIZIER: Did you notice anything about him that made you think he might be?

ED: 337

Moreover, repeated expressions belonging to a formal register interestingly bring him close to the Attaché in *Mr Puntila and his man Matti*:

THE ATTACHÉ: [...] And I was proved right. I think that's them arriving now. I'm a little tired, dear. Would you excuse me if I went up to my room?

Mr Puntila and his man Matti, Act I, Scene 2

Language typifying the characters' idiolects is another innovation from the hypotext. So, the king and 'Alī use exclusively *fushā*, except from the words طيب (AGT: 292), which means "good" in *fushā*, but it is a common interjection in colloquial Egyptian Arabic (meaning "all right," "very well," "o.k.", Badawi, Hinds 1986, 529) and يلا *yalla* (expressing encouragement to Quffa, AGT: 261), another widespread interjection meaning "come on" (Badawi, Hinds 1986, 964). Those two interjections act as "standard colloquialism" of Middle Arabic (Lentin 2015, 357). Another one is احنا in the place of نحن, in the king's exclamation: احنا في مصيبة! ("This is a disaster!" AGT: 322).

#### 4.3 From the realm of the *Nights*. Emulating the marvelous.

Together with the language, Faraġ stated that he tried to recreate the style of the *Nights*. Telling and identifiable quotes are certainly a close link with the hypotext, but other references to the "realm of the *Nights*" are obtained through the evocation of names and the emulation of stylistic tactics. For instance, even though Faraġ remarked that the *Nights* are not (only) stories of *hurāfa* (Faraġ 1989 12, 61), he took this peculiarity of the *Nights* as a feature of his play, too. *Hurāfa* is originally the name of a pre-Islamic listener and a transmitter of three fantastic tales. Later,

it became the term used for “entirely fictitious narrative, incredible occurrences that could never have happened in reality” (Marzolph, Van Leeuwen 2004, 612).<sup>177</sup>

*Hurāfa* is evident in the many mentions of magical or legendary places scattered throughout the text: Mount Qāf (AGT: 241), Baghdad, China, Iram, built by Šaddād Ibn ‘Ād, the palace of Khosrow Anuširwān, the city of Aswan and the Khorasan. Each of the mentioned places encloses a marvelous world.<sup>178</sup> For instance, “in fictional stories Mount Qāf is referred to as the limit of the inhabited world. It is the ultimate expression of remoteness, unattainable aims, and isolated places of exile” (Marzolph, Van Leeuwen 2004, 683). Made of green emerald with rocks supporting its earth, this fabulous place figures in several stories of the *Arabian Nights* (Ibid.). China is mentioned in the *Arabian Nights* as a remote empire and symbolizes the edge of the world with all the marvelous legends developed around it (see Marzolph, Van Leeuwen 2004, 522-3). Iram is a legendary city built by Šaddād Ibn ‘Ād who wanted to recreate a paradise on earth. Baghdad, the city of departure for the protagonists, and continuously mentioned during their trip, is among the most characteristic settings for the stories of the *Arabian Nights*. Like another Egyptian storyteller did before him, Faraġ uses it as a rich source of narrative conventions (see Marzolph, Van Leeuwen 2004, 486-7).

*Hurāfa* is also manifest in magic and superstitions. The jinn, the flying carpet, the *ruhḥ* (in English “roc”, a huge legendary bird which also appears in various tales of the *Nights* – see Marzolph, Van Leeuwen 2004, 694), the *dā’ir al-falak* (“rotating circles” of which, according to an ancient astronomic theory, the universe was composed) and the theriac (an antidote to poison made of dozens of different ingredients mixed together) are all mentioned in the play along with famous people from the (Persian/)Arabic heritage such as Omar al-Khayyam, Avicenna and Aristotle. Other names come from characters of the *Arabian Nights*: Sindbād the sailor, Quffa, Sawāb and Kāfūr.

Though many of the previous elements are to be included in a political resumption of the heritage, some of them seem more likely to be inscribed in a sort of a game Faraġ plays with the attentive reader/spectator. The recognition of links beyond the evident ones between the *Nights* and the play would certainly provoke pleasure. For instance, ‘Alī’s former servant’s name is Šawāb and the name -by which ‘Alī calls Quffa is Kāfūr; Šawāb and Kāfūr are

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<sup>177</sup> Recently, Aboubakr Chraïbi has used the idea of *hurāfa* to prove that the *Arabian Nights* can be defined as a Middle Literature (Chraïbi 2016, 62-3).

<sup>178</sup> On “the universe of marvels” in the *Arabian Nights*, see Irwin 1994, 178-213.

protagonists of two tales.<sup>179</sup> Besides, as has been seen, Quffa is the name of another brother of the barber of Baghdad. Significantly, Quffa quotes his other brothers (AĠT: 314).

Apart from specific references, the style of the hypotext in its whole is reemployed in the play. Merchants, kings, princesses and viziers are recurrent protagonists of the *Nights* and travel, commerce, and jewels are common themes which are all reemployed in the play whereas, at the structural level, repetitions, which are typical of the storytelling and of the *Arabian Nights*, are more recurrent in the play than in the tales. For instance, during the king's test of the foreigner's credibility, 'Alī smashes three stones instead of one, and when his wife, the princess, questions him about his status, he recalls three different tales. Despite its dramatic value, Faraġ admitted he took the "secret of repetition" from the *Arabian Nights*:

وقد استلهمت من ألف ليلة وليلة أيضًا سحر التكرار – تكرار الوحدات.. أنظر في فن الزخرف العربي، أنظر في الأرابيسك وفي الخط.. أنظر إلى تكرار الصورة بعد قلبها بحيث يتقابل منقار العصفورين المتماثلين في الزخرف الواحد.. أنظر إلى تكرار الجملة سواء كانت: "بلغني يا ملك الزمان.. " أم كانت "فسكتت عن الكلام المباح"، وما إلى ذلك في المقامات العربية أو غيرها.

Faraġ 1994, 60

The *Nights* inspired me the charm of repetition – repetition of modules... look at the art of the Arab decoration, look at the Arabesque in the writing... look at the repetition of the image after its overturning so that the beak of two symmetric birds meets in one decoration... look at the repetition of a line, like "It has reached me, O auspicious King" or "And Shahrazad perceived the dawn of day and ceased to say her permitted say" and similar from the *maqamāt* or other.

Hence, repetition is a stylistic dilatation of a specific feature of the *Nights* which was identified and used by Faraġ for theatrical purposes (on repetition, see Genette 1982, 372-78). But Faraġ went further. In a later rewriting of the *Arabian Nights*, *Rasā'il qāḍī Iṣbīliyya* (The Letters of the Qadi of Seville, 1975), the cohesion of the play is provided more by its repetitive structure – a series of letters of an old qadi all dealing with delicate case and ending with original solutions- than by its contents, since the themes are various. David Pinault has remarked how formal repetition provides unity in the stories of *The Barber's Six Brothers*, in which "the unity lacking at the thematic level is compensated by a consistent formal patterning" (Pinault 1992, 25). Pinault has also individuated "thematic patterning" in the *Nights* (Ibid., 22-3). The three

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<sup>179</sup> The tales of the First and of the Second Eunuchs, nights 52-54.

tales Faraġ unites in one story are first regrouped according to a thematic pattern (illusion). While the first and the third are united together, the second one (the *Tale of the Sack*) stays apart (in the interlude) and, like many tales in the *Nights*, is linked with the other part of the story by means of thematic patterning.

As for enumeration and exaggeration, typical of the tales of the *Nights*, they are skillfully employed in the play. The three tales Faraġ chose all present remarkable uses of these techniques. *The Tale of the Imaginary Table* enlists a quantity of delicious food in a “dramatic visualization” (see Pinault 1992, 25), namely with an abundance of descriptive details, which is quoted entirely in the play. *The Tale of the Sack* is almost totally constituted of lists of bizarre objects and animals and places and persons. Those lists are partially transferred into the interlude. As has been explored, a list of different precious cloths coming from various regions of the world is just briefly sketched in the tale. While the description of the tale leaves room for imagination, Faraġ fills that space by completing the list with precise references (see III.1.2, ALL: n. 986 and Lyons 2008, n. 992).

The overemphasis typical of the *Nights* is kept and underlined:

فعند ذلك قال: يا تاجر علي أن ابن بلدك لو أراد أن يحمل ألف حمل من القماشات المثلثة يحملها فقال له  
يحملها من حاصل من جملة حواصل هو لا ينقص منه شيء.

ALL: n. 986

‘Alī,’ said one of the merchants, ‘I can see that if this fellow countryman of yours wanted to transport a thousand loads of precious fabrics, he would be able to do it.’ ‘Alī told him: ‘If he took all that from a single one of his warehouses, it would still look full.’

Lyons 2008, n. 992

صاحب الخان: مولاي معه أحمال وأحمال من الأقمشة المثلثة.  
قفة: (جانبا لمن حوله) كلها أخذها من حاصل واحد من حواصله، وما نقص منه شيء.

AGT: 272-3

INNKEEPER: His Highness has brought loads and loads of expensive cloth with him. QUFFA, aside, to those around *him*: If he took all that from a single one of his warehouses, it would still look full.

ED: 323

Note that the exaggeration is made by Quffa, as it suits his character better than ‘Alī’s (see III.3).<sup>180</sup> ‘Alī’s fantastic description of the jinn is another example of the *hurāfa* linked to enumeration and exaggeration:

علي: هذا الجني عدة عسكريه اثنتان وسبعون قبيلة كل قبيلة عدتها اثنتان وسبعون ألفاً وكل واحد من الألف يحكم على ألف مارِد وكل مارِد يحكم على ألف عون وكلهم تحت طاعة جني واحد.

AGT: 290

‘ALĪ: And this jinn has at his command seventy-two thousand tribes, each numbering seventy-two thousand. Each of those controls a thousand *mārids*; each *mārid* controls a thousand ‘awns; all owing allegiance to one jinn.<sup>181</sup>

ED: 329

This description as well has been slightly adapted from the *Nights* where it corresponds to the self-description of the jinn Ma‘rūf finds (in the part of the tale whose plot is not used in the play):

وعدة عسكري اثنتان وسبعون قبيلة كل قبيلة عدتها اثنتان وسبعون ألفاً وكل واحد من الألف يحكم ألف مارِد وكل مارِد يحكم على ألف عون ولك عون يحكم على ألف شيطان وكل شيطان يحكم على ألف جني وكلهم من تحت طاعتي

ALL: n. 992

[...] seventy-two tribes [are] under my command, each numbering seventy-two thousand. Each of these controls a thousand *mārids*; each *mārid* controls a thousand ‘awns; each ‘awn controls a thousand devils and each devil controls a thousand jinn. All of these owe me allegiance.

Lyons 2008, n. 995

The unbelievable contents of the caravan (300 mules, 500 camels, 300 hundred guards, a hundred pieces of gold, precious stones, etc.) instead, do not come from the same emplacement. Indeed, Ma‘rūf does not provide such a complex list of his caravan.

قفة: أحب سيدي أن يطوف العالم للفرجة، فأخذ من بعض حواصله ما يكفي للنفقة أثناء السفر فكانت قافلته

<sup>180</sup> The mention of the caravan as an innovation from the hypertext is explained here, 5.

<sup>181</sup> On the jinn and the *mārid* in the *Arabian Nights*, see Irwin 1994, 205-6.



التي تتبعنا، وفيها ثلثمائة بغل، وكل بغل مواكل به مملوك يقوده، وعليها صناديق الذهب والمعادن المختلفة، وخلفها خمسمائة جمل كل مائة تحمل مائة حمل من قماش بلد مختلف.. أقمشة مصرية، وأقمشة شامية، وأقمشة عجمية، وأقمشة هندية، وأقمشة رومية، وحولها كلها ثلثمائة فارس للحراسة، وهم أفرس أهل زمانهم. وتأخرت القافلة لثقل أحمالها وبطء خطوتها، فلما سئم سيدي طول السفر أخذني وسبقنا لنتنظرها في مدينتكم.. ذلك أن سيدي عنده.. (يتوقف قليلاً).

AGT: 271-2

QUFFA: My master wanted to see the world, so he took from his possessions just enough to cover his travel expenses and loaded the money onto a caravan of three hundred mules, each led by a special salve and bearing a chest packed with gold and precious stones. Behind the mules came the camels. Five hundred of them, each hundred laden with a hundred of different fabrics: Egyptian, Syrian, Persian, Indian, Byzantine. All around them rode three hundred guards, the best to be seen on horseback. But my master was bored with the slow pace of the heavily laden caravan, so he took me along with him and we galloped fast to wait for its arrival in your city. My master has in his possession... *pauses for a little.*

ED: 323

However, we can suppose that this description has been inspired by the real caravan of Ma'rūf, the one created by the jinn of the desert:

(أمر معروف الأعوان) عبوا الذهب والمعادن كل صنفٍ وحده فعبوها وحملوها على ثلثمائة بغلٍ فقال معروف: يا أبا السعادات هل تقدر أن تجيء لي بأحمالٍ من نفيس القماش قال: أتريد قماشاً مصريةً أو شامياً أو عجمياً أو هنديةً أو رومياً قال: هات لي من قماش كل بلدةٍ مائة حملٍ على مائة بغلٍ

ALL. n. 993

[Ma'rūf gave instructions] that the gold and the various precious stones were to be packed separately. The chests were then loaded on to three hundred mules. Then Ma'rūf asked Abū 'l-Sa'ādāt whether he could fetch him bales of costly fabrics, and when he was asked whether he wanted these from Egypt, Syria, Persia, India or Rum, he said: 'Bring me a hundred bales from each of them, carried on a hundred mules.'

Lyons 2008, n. 996

Parts extracted from the *Nights* mix with innovation inspired from the *Nights* resulting in a successful emulation of the hypotext. And if Quffa's list was not long enough, voices echoing his speech imagine it still more wonderful since it ends in the luxurious Baghdad:

أصوات: قافلته أولها هنا وآخرها جمال باركة في بغداد..

VOICES: His caravan's so long, it's vanguard here while its tail's still in Baghdad.

ED: 324

\* \* \*

In *'Alī Ġanāḥ al-Tabrīzī wa tābi 'uhu Quffa*, playing a part, practicing one's skills as an actor, rehearsing, telling stories, speaking about tales, self-conscious characters and a character playing with a puppet to enact and express his remote feelings, are all elements scattered throughout the text. For such metadramatic devices and intrusions of narrations in the show, the hypotext is doubtless a source of inspiration. Moreover, the legacy of the play with the *Nights* naturalizes their presence in the play.

The result is that their introduction naturally inserts the play in the noble descendants of Shakespeare, Pirandello and Brecht, where metadrama enriches the play with self-reflection, reflection on the human masks and disruption with the fiction. In the meanwhile, narration of tales from the *Arabian Nights* is a revival of the tradition (if not the constitution of the category of heritage itself, see III.1). Similarly, the use of a puppet is also a direct introduction of authentic Arabic forms of theatricalisation on the stage, which totally combines with the creation of an identity for the Arabic theatre.

So, on one side the main narrator disappears and fiction from being narrated (in the hypotext) is now exposed, giving possibility to each character to (better) determine himself, then the effects of the narration are not completely erased, but they constantly appear in small parts played by characters.

If we look attentively at the style of the parts played that are implicit quotations, we will notice that their language slightly variates from the Middle Arabic of the tales, whereas different varieties of Arabic language appear in the play. For instance, Colloquial Egyptian Arabic appears in moments of psychological honesty of the characters. Also, idiolects develop outside the language extracted from the *Nights*. Then, while the overall language of the play is a Middle Arabic alternated with colloquial Egyptian Arabic, the firm Middle Arabic of the parts played subtly evoke the existence of a fictional script, directly borrowed from the hypotext.

Despite being "clear and simple" (Fašwān 2002, 86), Faraġ's language is a complex result of an able use of the theatrical means. Discourses of characters are considered in their double role

as interaction between characters and as a part of the text. The use of the Middle Arabic from the *Nights*, which Faraġ made as a conscious choice for this and his other plays inspired to the same hypotext,<sup>182</sup> allows the play to be understood by all who understand *fushā*, while the “fakeness” that such a language would entail is modulated by the means of the intertextual relation. Besides, it is variegated with the colloquial Egyptian Arabic which provides immediacy to the play and made it an “inimitable brand of Classical Arabic” highly appreciated until recent times by greater critics (Selaiha 1998).

Another close stylistic relation with the hypotext is the marvelous side that always recurs in the form of the *hurāfa*, the repetition, the exaggeration which are masterfully emulated both as formal and thematical patterns.

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<sup>182</sup> An exception, as mentioned above, is *Imān ft 'uffa*.

## **5. Refilling - Contemporary ideas. Proving through the past.**

With regards to the contents and the message delivered by the play, the illusion, dangers and the advantages connected to it are of main importance. The theme of illusion which is supported by the themes of the power of the word and representation which exist in the hypotext already have a different meaning in the play. Particularly, this study will focus in the difference between the effects of magic and illusion in the *Nights* and in the play (5.1). Secondly, attention will be drawn to the context of production of the play (5.2) and its bitter, universal, message delivered with humour (5.3).

### **5.1 False magic and real illusion. Playing words.**

In the play, like in the hypotext, the power of the word is one of the most essential motifs. The *Arabian Nights* is the story of a girl, Shahrazad, who saves her life by telling stories. The play is the story of a man, ‘Alī, who saves his life by telling stories. In the first case, Shahrazad escapes King Shahryar’s killing by enchanting and entertaining him with a series of tales. In the second case, ‘Alī escapes his poverty by enchanting and entertaining Quffa and all the persons he meets with numerous stories about himself. Due to the apt use of his word (*kalām*), ‘Alī can be a master, while Quffa cannot but be his servant, despite ‘Alī’s teaching. Thanks to the incantatory power of ‘Alī’s word, Quffa follows him in his travel, the merchants convince themselves that ‘Alī is rich, the princess falls in love with him and the king believes that ‘Alī owns a caravan. He never asks, but people naturally follow him.

Exactly like Shahrazad, ‘Alī saves himself thanks to storytelling. Thrice, he is questioned by the princess and each time he tells a story it allows him to escape the eventual condemnation by the king without lying to his princess. Storytelling used to postpone execution, with the aim of eventually evading it, is a recurrent element of the *Nights* is called the “ransom motif” (Marzolph, Van Leeuwen 2004, 688-89). The ransom motif in the tale is an innovation from *The Tale of Ma‘rūf*, but it is the main motif governing the frame story.

‘Alī is fully aware that words play a significant role. He knows that words express and support his ideas. This is well shown in the incipit of the play, when ‘Alī has a verbal fight with Şawāb because they do not agree on the meaning of their words (AĜT: 223). Then, ‘Alī teaches Quffa how to sell him “as if he were a jewel” (AĜT:256). The servant’s pertinent question is whether the word would be enough. ‘Alī answers that it should be confirmed by the action. Quffa insists

on asking what kind of action and ‘Alī replies: “liberal spending” (*karam*), even though he is penniless (258).

Words are the basis for ‘Alī’s game of illusion. The context differs, but the power of the word, in the hypotext like in the hypertext is still noticeably great. Just as in the *Nights*, the word is a powerful tool to create illusion, which is the main theme of the play. Indeed, Farāğ stated that he chose the three tales: of the imaginary table, of the sack and of Ma‘rūf the cobbler because the three protagonists of the tales have in common a natural inclination “to delude himself and others, in a very convincing manner” (AĜT: 361). Like in the hypotext, the wealthy owner of the palace fools his poor guest, so does ‘Alī with Quffa; like the Persian and the Kurd mislead each other about the content of the sack, so do the protagonists of the interlude; like Ma‘rūf misleads the merchants and the king with the description of his caravan, so do ‘Alī and Quffa.

The play relies on a remarked creative power of illusion:

Alī’s lie creates an illusion which is meant to produce a vision which is mistaken for reality. It is meant to shape this reality by producing what is coveted by those who are deluded, even if it does not materialize. In the episode of the invisible meal the illusion takes the place of food. The invisible meal characterizes the different functions of Alī and Quffa, the latter being connected with food and money, the former with the way the couple presents itself to the world outside. Alī is the master of the lie, responsible for turning Quffa’s ‘investment’ into a profitable representation, which not only deludes Quffa, but also the merchants, the vizier and the king.

Van Leeuwen 2005, 217

The characters’ feelings swing between hope and fear, as the dream created by ‘Alī provokes both. Hope for him is the greatest feeling one can experience. When he has just met Quffa, he first asks him if he has possessions in Baghdad. Quffa replies negatively and ‘Alī asks him if he has hope. To this question, Quffa replies affirmatively, so ‘Alī hugs him and states that they will live “without any fear” (AĜT: 244). Later, Quffa will affirm that before meeting ‘Alī he did not have hope (337). The motif distinguishing the merchant and the chief merchant is that the second one has hope, while the first one makes fun of him for his illusion (280-1, 283, 355). Drunk during the night at the market, Quffa as well will laugh at the chief merchant’s hope, “*amal ibn al-maġānīn*” (the hope of the mad people) (344). The princess knows that hope is fundamental in ‘Alī’s project (336). Finally, when ‘Alī is about to die, his only sorrow is that people no longer have any hope (352). In the play, hope fades away, while in the tale patience starts lacking, so that the focus on hope is peculiar to the play.

The final difference between the hypotext and its rewriting is that, in the tale, a jinn creates a caravan out of nothing, so that magic saves Ma‘rūf and rewards the princess, the merchants and the king. In the tale, the same jinn was evoked by ‘Alī who also refers to other magical elements. Nevertheless, this magic is just stated and never appears on the scene. While the magical elements are not effective in the play, but they are in the hypotext, illusion is effective in the play while it was not in the hypotext. When Quffa is whipped by ‘Alī, he feels pain. Illusion hurts, Quffa was warned, but he became enchanted. In his afterword to the play, Farağ underlines how illusion is a relative matter:

ولكن الایهام الذي يمارسها الانسان بالبداهة وبكل ارتياح في تفاصيل كثيرة من تفاصيل حياته اليومية لا يخضع الحكم واحد أو صفة واحدة. الناس يصفه أحيانا بالموهبة الفنية القادرة، وأحيانا بالاحتيال أو بالجنون.. حسب غاية وقصد صانعه.

AGT: 362

This illusion, which people practice so naturally and without thinking in their daily life, is in fact multifaceted. We sometimes describe it as an artistic talent, sometimes as deception, or even madness, according to the intention of the practitioner, or rather what we make out to be the intention of his practitioner.

ED: 349

Though the topic of illusion exists in the hypotext, its meaning in the play is different. Accompanied by fear and hope, it causes a negative impact on the merchants and the king which is shown, while the positive effects on the poor people who received the money are not examined in the play but attracted the interests of two major critics of the play (e.g.: ‘Abd al-Qādir 1986 ب, 114 and Ṭāhir 2002 ب, 131 both underline the fruits of ‘Alī’s revolution for the poor). A substantial portion of the intended audience for the *Arabian Nights* must have been merchants (Chraïbi 2004, 6 and Marzolph, Van Leeuwen 2004, 643). They would get indirect satisfaction from the luck of their equivalents and maybe a warning too.

## 5.2 A precise utopia. Laughing at the crisis.

The context of production of the play is different from the tales of the *Nights*, and its message too. The illusions of the play represent the illusions on which power hierarchies and the distribution of wealth are based. A utopian trend had developed in the Arabic literature during

the end of the nineteenth century as a critical reflection on the projects of society.<sup>183</sup> The *Arabian Nights* had already been used as “territories of the utopia” (Deheuvels 2004, 350-64 and Deheuvels 2006, 220-30). Indeed, the play shows that utopian visions based on the promise of wealth, by giving hope and by speculating on the nature of human beings, disturbs the natural order of society. Such utopian visions are ideologies, which can change the state of things just by representing reality differently than the way it is (Van Leeuwen 2005, 218). Faraġ managed to magnify the impact of the illusions which already existed in the *Nights* to reflect the twentieth century man's apparent helplessness against the injustices of political and social repression (Debs 1993, 57). Indeed, the struggle for justice for the people is as old as history itself, and Shahrazad and her many heroes are its symbol:

(...) الانسان منذ ألف عام، حين صاغ حواديت "ألف ليلة وليلة"، وقبلها.. قبل أن يتمخض ذهنه عن الأفكار الاشتراكية وأفكار العدل الاجتماعي بمئات السنوات.. كان يحلم دائما – في جده وفي هزله – بالعدل المادي. (...) وقد صورت أن أحلام المؤلف الشعبي المبدع في "ألف ليلة وليلة" قد حلقت في سماوات العدل التي خلق فيها مؤلف حكايات "روبين هود" المنسوجة من خيوط الخرافة، والمطلوبة في الحقيقة.

AĠT: 367-68

(...) a thousand years ago when the human mind conceived the tales of the *Nights*, and even earlier, thousands of years before the birth of socialist thought, man had always dreamed, in his playful and sober moments alike, of social justice. (...) It is in my contention that the folk author of these tales from the *Nights* must have dreamed of justice, just as the author of Robin Hood did, since both story cycles are fiction, but desirable in reality.

ED: 351

The projection of his critical message into the past acted as a filter against censorship (Fašwān 2002, 55). However, it might also have enhanced the feeling amongst the audience that social justice is part of their political and cultural heritage, and not something that is created out of nothing nor imported from abroad (Van Leeuwen 2005, 223). What Faraġ achieved from the use of the fantastic mode is also to place reality under scrutiny (Debs 1993, 54). In the delivering

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<sup>183</sup> The utopia in *‘Alī Ġanāḥ al-Tabrīzī wa tābi ‘uhu Quffa* has been the subject of my contribution to the conference *Utopia 500 anni*, Università degli studi di Catania, SDS in Lingue e culture straniere, Ragusa, 14 december 2016, and will be published as “Alfred Faraġ e la carovana immaginaria: una commedia sul sogno nasseriano,” in *Decolonizzare l’Utopia. Cinque secoli di pensiero sovrano*, edited by S. Burgio, and S. Torre. Lugano: Agorà & Co.

of his new message, Faraġ knew the importance of the intertextual relation of his play with the tales that are typically fictions:

أتصور الإطار المناسب للمسرحية معتمدا على تأثيرات الحوادث الخيالية، سواء في الأداء أو في الحركة أو في الديكور والملابس أو في سائر المؤثرات الفنية. ذلك أن الإطار الواقعي، والمؤثرات الفنية الواقعية لا بد أن تحطم أجنحة "علي جناح التبريزي وتابعه قفة" وتهوى بها من السماء إلى الأرض. وعندئذ ستتحول هذه الخاطرة السحرية التي تستمد جمالها من طابع الحوادث الشعبية إلى مجرد قصة محتال واقعية ورخيصة.

AGT: 364

It appears appropriate that the atmosphere for this play should be drawn from the world of folktales, whether for presentation of character, movement, décor, costumes, or anything else. For a realistically inspired production will, to my mind, inevitably bring the play from its soaring heights, back down to earth. In that case, this charming fiction which derives beauty from its folktale character will turn into a realistic and tawdry story about a confidence trickster.

ED: 350

Certainly, in an Egyptian play dating from 1968, the utopian visions can be related to Nasser and his revolutionary message. The "confidence trickster" telling stories is a symbol of Nasserist propaganda and its use of stories to enchant the audience.<sup>184</sup> 'Alī's rhetoric is reminiscent of Nasser's rhetoric (AGT: 257); the correct posture to adopt when one speaks which 'Alī describes to Quffa is Nasser's posture (AGT: 258). Besides, a staging of the power accompanies 'Alī: 'Alī's entry is announced by his servant who also arranges a chair for him before he arrives. Significantly, Faraġ does not want to judge his hero:

ولعل التبريزي قد استثمر هذا الأمل بغير استقامة. أو لعل قفة استثمره بشطارة الكوميديان الشعبي ورخصته الشاملة ليعاقب الأغنياء ويغدق على الفقراء – ساخرا طول الوقت هو وصاحبه ممن حوله، يحيك المقابل ويقع في حبال مكائده.

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<sup>184</sup> Regarding that, it is interesting to notice that in the first year or two after the *débauche* of 1967, there were no difficulties to speak of it,

since the national resilience and the refusal to admit defeat, which expressed itself politically in the people clinging to the symbolic name and person of Nasser, expressed itself artistically in a series of dramas saying more or less the same thing in different terms: that Nasser brought ruin to the country because he was an idealist who entrusted the destinies of the Egyptians to a pack of rogues.

'Awaḍ 1975, 191



Possibly al-Tabrīzī exploited this hope in an unscrupulous manner or Quffa capitalized on it with the cleverness and unrestrained license typical of a folk entertainer who seeks to punish the rich and help the poor, poking fun all the time, together with ‘Alī, at those around them, until they finally fall victim of their own intrigues.

ED: 350

Alfred Faraĝ also refuses to judge whether the representation of a fake reality should be condemned or praised. Faraĝ interrupts his play in the moment right before the people learn that ‘Alī has no caravan. The scene freezes in a tableau, a static scene left in front of the audience. The public is left with a picture to analyze. What the play says is just a sort of “That’s all folks!”; fiction is over. But, *really*, is there no caravan? If hope is still in the audience, then they might imagine that a caravan could appear, as it *really* appears in the tale. From outside the stage, in the afterword to the play, the author warns us that the caravan will arrive:

القافلة. نعم ستجيء. وهي الجزاء العادل لجهاد الانسان في السلم والحرب والعمل ومواجهة المشقات. إنها  
الواحة الخضراء وراء الجبل. الأمل.

AĜT: 325

Yes, the caravan will come; it will be man’s fair reward for his arduous struggles in war and peace. It is the lush oasis behind the mountains; it is hope.

ED: 350

### 5.3 Human dreams. Always laughing.

Without a happy ending and with a bitter message, ‘*Alī Ġanāḥ al-Tabrīzī wa tābi ‘uhu Quffa* cannot be considered a comedy, but rather a play which makes use of various elements ultimately bringing fun to the topic at hand. Many comical situations recall the *Commedia dell’Arte*. Indeed, Faraĝ stated that for the interlude he took inspiration from it (Faraĝ 1990, 63) and in the representation of 1969, the two litigants are dressed as two clowns and one of them wears a patched jumpsuit, reminding us of Arlecchino’s dress. The atavistic hunger of the servant and the master’s pride; the scene of sublime love (*amor sublime*); the contrast terrestrial-celestial; the low level of the ridiculous embodied by Quffa, all recall the *Commedia dell’Arte*.

Various devices bring to the *comicità spicciola* (simple comic), such as mime recalling Zanni’s fights (like Quffa slapping ‘Alī at the beginning of the play, the imaginary but painful lashes,

the king's being beaten, 'Alī stealing money from Quffa's pockets, Quffa asking for help, 'Alī tearing his clothes up, 'Alī reminding Quffa of having beaten him). Disguises, masks and imitation were also used in the *Commedia dell'Arte* and appear in the play. Repetitions, innuendo and allusions are one of the main causes of the "puns," namely comic based on words. The first innuendo exists in the play's title and concerns the proper nouns of the protagonists, and many others are dispersed throughout the play,<sup>185</sup> like Quffa's insisting on the sensorial sphere in listing the food from 'Alī's imaginary table at the end of Scene 2 of Act I:

قففة: (في أقصى المسرح كأنه يخطب) أيها السادة، بدل الشجار، أسرعوا بالفطار. سيدي أضعفه وجوعه السفر. جيئونا بخبز رقيق أبيض، بياضه حقيقي يرى بالعين، وبيض مقلي في القشطة يسمع طشيشه بالأذن، وحمام مشوي نتأكد من وجوده بلمس اليد، والحلويات. لا تنسوا القطائف. سيدي يحبها محشوة بالفستق الذي تجرشه الأسنان فتجربه عن صدق وجوده في ثقة، (يصيح أعلى) والزلابية بالعسل الأبيض!

AGT: 277-8

QUFFA, *upstage, as though delivering a speech*: Gentlemen, instead of quarreling, serve us breakfast, and hurry; my master's hungry and faint from travelling. Bring us soft white bread; real bread which the eye can see. Eggs fried in cream whose hissing and spitting the ear can hear. Grilled pigeons whose meat the hand can feel. And dessert... don't forget the *quṭayfa*. My master likes it stuffed with pistachios; which, when crushed with the teeth, proclaim their reality beyond any doubt. *He shouts louder*. And *zalābiya* soaked in honey.

ED: 325

The comedy is made possible by the contrast between the nonexistence of the food and Quffa's insistence on the sight, the hearing and the touch. The feeling of reality is increased by the employment of Egyptian words, like "طشيش" (sizzling of hot fat by the addition of liquid, Badawi, Hinds 1986, 539) and the innovation from the food listed in the previous scene through a reference to the contemporary Egyptian culture, with the mention of the *zalābiya*<sup>186</sup>, which is highlighted by Quffa's louder voice.

<sup>185</sup> An unpublished study about humour in the play is my M.A. thesis (Potenza 2011).

<sup>186</sup> *Zalābiya* is a pastry made of pieces of dough that are deep-fried, then sprinkled with sugar, dipped in sugar or in honey-based syrup. The previous definition is taken from Salloum 2013, 92, where you can also find the recipe at the time of al-Ma'mūn. *Zalābiya* is not exclusive to contemporary Egypt, but it is a very common dish that certainly speaks to the audience.

Then, all the episodes based on the metadramatic, such as the princess who fears being remembered as such, ‘Alī telling and gesturing at the same time, Quffa playing someone else are a classical source of comic. Other comical expedients are those that place the spectator on a level with greater knowledge than the character, namely all the facts to which the spectator attends, but the character does not, such as the “asides,” Quffa’s pretending to be blind, and the sudden arrival of the vizier when Quffa and ‘Alī are talking after the meeting with the king. They all engender two levels of comprehension such as when a character speaks ironically with another character which does not follow the irony, while the public does. This is the case, for instance, of Ṣawāb repeating “on the big silver tray” being ironic to the fact that the tray does not exist, while ‘Alī affirms the contrary. Another case is when Quffa sadly repeats what ‘Alī says while he donates, and the public knows that ‘Alī is offering Quffa’s money.

Linguistic variances between the standard and the colloquial register bring entertainment to the play. Indeed, either because the register is specific to the social status of the characters who use it (Quffa and the maid; ‘Alī, the king, and the vizier) or because it contradicts it (the case of the princess who uses the colloquial register). Language can create a comic effect also because it signals the character’s emotions (see above, 4.2, the language as a moment of psychological honesty).

The *Arabian Nights*’ set creates a cheerful ambiance which quickly reminds us of the comic tales and of their virtue of being “light” (see Calvino 2012, 5-35). So, the reference to the *Arabian Nights* and its narrative world, its sense of irony, parody and subversiveness increases the comic effect of the play (see also Van Leeuwen 2005, 223). The play borrows from the *Nights* a particular type of comic, the *humour*, namely the attitude of looking for pleasure and finding it where (in principle) it does not exist (Jardon 1988, 124). Apart from being linked by the theme of illusion, the three tales Faraġ chose for his play are governed by the motif of humour (El-Shamy 2006, 412-3). The humour of the *Arabian Nights* has been interpreted as a reflection of the entertainment culture of the bazaar, or the middle and lower strata of Muslim urban society. This conclusion is based on the fact that the humorous characters are usually those with an inferior position in the social hierarchy (see Marzolph, Van Leeuwen 2004, 594).

Faraġ’s play has that “timeless humour,” something that is humorous to all people under all conditions, like Quffa’s suffering from the imagined whip or ‘Alī answering that calamities never come alone. Humour makes everybody laugh at man’s misfortunes, at the man that by nature deceives himself. The theme of the caravan and of disappointed hopes is not only the

deeper basis for the comic in the play, but it allows for a liberating act because the audience laughs at their own misfortunes.<sup>187</sup>

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In the hypertext as well as in the hypotext, words are powerful. Like in the *Nights*, ‘Alī uses his mastery with words as a ransom motif that allows him to escape from declaring the painful truth to the king and the vizier and, in the meantime, they avoid him lying to his princess. But ‘Alī’s words are also the core of the representation he manages to deliver to the people he meets. Playing with words, he creates an illusion that has a real impact on reality. Since the idea of a rich caravan allowed the merchants to give him money that he redistributed among the poor, merchants lose a large part of their fortunes, while beggars could open their shops. Then, while in the tale a caravan appears due to magic, in the play magic is just mentioned and is not effective. Finally, the only effective element producing a social revolution is illusion itself.

This illusion works on people who hope. While in the hypotext the merchants and the king start to lose their patience when the caravan does not arrive, their equivalents in the play start to lose their hope. And ‘Alī knows how important hope is for his project. For him, the people losing hope is the worse aspect of the tragic situation that he faces, even worse than his own death. Being magnified, in the hypertext the theme of the illusion acquires completely new meanings of social revolution connected to the people’s aptitude. Through the fantasy created by the “tale,” the author wants his audience to see “traditional” issues that interested past societies like they might interest present ones. The intertextual relation acts as a proof of the reliability of the message.

In the context of production of the play, the dream of a caravan imagined by a charismatic “master” enchanting all the people with his revolutionary ideas and who becomes the prince of the town would certainly remind one of Nasser’s propaganda and his ideology. Significantly, Farağ did not want to judge his hero or to provide a proper end to his play. The caravan does not appear, but it always might. That is what someone holding on to hope would think, like the characters of the play do.

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<sup>187</sup> Note that Brecht’s play *Mr Puntilla and his Man Matti* contains a “timeless humour” and a “socially based humour,” which selects the audience laugh (since it is against a particular group). See Brecht’s “Note and Variants” of the play (Brecht 2007, 120).

The message of the play is bitter, and the play cannot be defined as a comedy, while its comical aspect is highly developed. This happens because Faraž takes advantage of humour. Creating a general comical situation based on immediate puns and on the cheerful realm of the supernatural evoked by the *Nights*, Faraž is able to insert some situations in which characters laugh at their own misfortunes. Laughing at these situations for the audience is a liberating act which indirectly makes them laugh at their own disgraces.

### Final remarks on Chapter III

The first play Farağ which wrote using the *Nights* as its hypotext was *Hallāq Bağdād* in 1962. Farağ wrote this play in singular conditions, since he was incarcerated from March 1959 to February 1963, during one of the periodic victimization campaigns on the so-called “communists”. For this reason, Farağ was especially attached to the play (Amin 2008, 9). It was also the play that established the author’s fame (El-Enany 2000, 176). In the final notes to the play, the author explained that the plot of *Hallāq Bağdād* came from two tales, *The Tale of the Barber of Baghdad* from the *Arabian Nights* and a tale from al-Ġāhiz’s *Kitāb al-maḥāsin wa al-aḍḍād*. More specifically, the play consists of two parts: “Yūsuf and Yāsmīna,” inspired by the *Arabian Nights* and “Zīnat al-Nisā’,” inspired by the *Kitāb al-maḥāsin wa al-aḍḍād*. The barber is present in both parts of the play and links the two. He is an inquisitive character who sacrifices himself to defend those whom he meets and are in trouble. The set of the play is clearly suitable to the *Arabian Nights*: “an imaginary Baghdad” in “the fifth or sixth century of the Hijra or as you like” (Farağ [1962] 1992, 9). Apart from the location, the plot and inspiration for the protagonist of the play, from the *Nights*, Farağ took language and storytelling, which are an essential part of the play, both for its recurrent presence and for its thematic implications (see Potenza 2016 a).

In an interview, Farağ expressed his happiness about the representations of *Hallāq Bağdād* inside the prison, “as the audience in prison understood the subtext much better, for it compared them to Abū ’l-Fuḍūl. They too had meddled with the Egyptian government on behalf of the Iraqi communists and were punished for it” (Amin 2008, 10). For them, it must have been clear that Abū ’l-Fuḍūl was representing them as subjects looking for democracy and that the Caliph, who is an innovation from the hypotexts, represents their president, Nasser. Years later, Farağ himself emphasizes that through this play he wanted to express his discontent with regards to Nasser’s manoeuvres in matters of culture and freedom of expression (Farağ, 1994 ũ, 5). The comparison between the Caliph and Nasser is evident during the final scene of the play, when the Caliph appears genuinely surprised by the repressive nature of his regime, made up by his assistants. There, Farağ “thinly disguised his *cri de cœur* for democracy, addressed to Nasser” (El-Enany 2000, 175-81). At the same time, he distanced Nasser from “the excesses and the abuses of his regime” that is an attitude “typical of communists who suffered from their impact” (Khalifah 2017, 39).

Shortly after, Farağ wrote a second play taking inspiration from the first part of *The Tale of the Fifth Brother of the Barber* (n. 31-2). The fifth brother of the barber spent his inheritance on

glassware to sell and make money from its commerce. He immediately started to imagine how his life would be once he became wealthy. His imagination brought him into a day dream. Completely absorbed in his fantasies, he started to move and act until the moment when, dreaming of kicking his wife the princess, he accidentally kicked his glass, breaking it all. He started to cry and a woman, upon seeing his grief, had her servant give him a purse full of gold money. The tale then continues with the protagonist going through bad fortune. After many adventures, he turned up poor, banned from Baghdad and with his ears cut. At the end of the story, his brother the barber took care of him. Entitled *Buqbuq al-Kaslān* (Lazy Buqbuq, 1965), it is a one-act didactic play exalting work against reverie. For this short play, Faraġ selected the first portion of the original tale, namely the part that is functional to his didactic purpose. He took the first segment of the plot, with the lazy man destroying the glass during his daydream, then he introduced an innovation: instead of the rich woman compensating his misfortune, a rich man wants him to be chased. Finally, the message is made clear by a chorus (obviously an innovation from the tale) addressing the audience at the end of the play and inviting them to consider the “picture shaped by the great popular composer of *A Thousand and One Nights* one thousand years ago.” (Faraġ [1965] 1992, 216). The moral statement, which is supported by the *turāt*, marks the bad behaviour of the *kaslān*. Through Faraġ’s rewriting, the tale from the *Nights* has become a didactic play to be performed in a socialist context.

After *‘Alī Ġanāḥ al-Tabrīzī wa tābi ‘uhu Quffa* (1968), the following play from the *Nights* was *Rasā’il Qādī Iṣbīliyya* (The Letters of the Qadi of Seville, 1975). The structure of the play recalls the embedded narrative of the *Arabian Nights* since the play is constituted of three letters embedded in a frame story created by two letters. The prince of Seville writes to the old qadi asking him about some of the cases he solved so that they can be an example for the forthcoming qadis. The qadi communicates his acceptance through a letter. Then, he writes three letters, each one anticipated by the previous. The stories are represented on the stage, after a brief introduction by the qadi.

In the foreword to this play, “A trip to *A Thousand and one Nights*,” Faraġ explained that the *Arabian Nights* are universal. Indeed, they are loved by readers and writers alike. They have inspired many works of art from literature, cinema, and theater to television. Tales from the *Arabian Nights* fascinate everyone, regardless of the age, the geographical origins and the time. The tales have an extraordinary side and a realistic one, with facts that are like ours, even in our modern era. This, according to the writer, is the secret behind the *Arabian Nights*. This is the secret that pushed Faraġ to write *Ḥallāq Baġdād*, the first play that he had written is in the

format of the *A Thousand and one Nights* tales. Despite the link of the play to the *Arabian Nights*, Faraḡ warned the reader to approach the play in a different spirit than if he was reading one of the *Arabian Nights*' tales and reminded the reader that the he (the writer) was contemporary to the reader, in that they lived the same life (Faraḡ 1975, 6).

Each letter of the play encodes a precise reference to the reality. The first letter "The Land" deals with questions of ownership, "The Vultures" discusses the speculations allowed by the law and "The Market" raises questions about the ethics of economics. These stories could possibly exist in the *Arabian Nights*, but their political aim is evident. As for its plot, in the article "Alf layla wa anā" (The *Arabian Nights* and I), Faraḡ explained that:

فالحكايات الثلاث أو الرسائل الثلاث لا أصل لها في (ألف ليلة وليلة)، وإنما تتألف من عناصر قصصية من (ألف ليلة) وظفتها في حكايات جديدة بأسلوب (ألف ليلة)، فكأنها حكايات منسية من (ألف ليلة وليلة)، أو كأنها من الليالي التي سقطت في النسخة المصرية من (ألف ليلة).

Faraḡ 1994 ب, 400

[...] the three tales, or the three letters, do not have their origin in the *Arabian Nights*, but they are composed of narrative elements that I have employed in new tales, in the same style, as if they were forgotten tales from the *Arabian Nights*, or if they were nights that got lost from the Egyptian version of the *Arabian Nights*.

The letters resemble the tales of the *Nights*; they emulate them. The narrative mode is very much present as the characters often tell stories to each other. These narrations intertwine with the development of the events.

In their narrations, the characters use mimicry, rhymes, repetitions, jokes, questions and all of the typical repertoire of a good storyteller. In one of the stories, Faraḡ even includes Goḡā (Ġuḡā), a popular character from the Mediterranean region's oral tradition (on Ġuḡā, see Corrao 1991). He also included a part of a tale of the *Nights* (the first letter contains an unmarked quotation from the *Arabian Nights*, *The Tale of the Second Calendar*, n. 13-14), which is certainly an intertextual game for those who can recognize it.

'*Alī Ġanāḡ al-Tabrīzī wa tābi 'uhu Quffa* was still on Alfred Faraḡ's mind in 1991, when he wrote its version in colloquial Egyptian, *Itnīn fī 'uffa*. In the foreword to the play Faraḡ declared that, since the play had worked in other languages (German and English), he thought it would work in colloquial, too (Faraḡ 1991, 11). Globally, the play is a translation of his masterpiece, but the interlude of the sack is deleted, and two hilarious scenes are added. *Itnīn fī 'uffa* did not



have the same success as the former play. As for the intertextual relation with the *Nights*, it is reduced because of the use of a different language. Indeed, quotations from the *Nights* are translated as well into colloquial Egyptian Arabic. Certainly, the failed project of an attempted Arab union must have induced Faraġ to write in Egyptian more than in *fushḥā*, as his latter plays, written in colloquial Egyptian Arabic, show. Interestingly, Quffa does not mention anymore his brothers, presumably because the plays they were protagonists of (*Hallāq Baġdād* and *Buqbuq al-Kaslān*) were about thirty years old when *Itmīn fī 'uffa* was written, and intertextual relationships between the plays would not have spoken to the audience. All the other references are kept. The stage directions are generally more accurate, either because they are more detailed, or because they give clearer instructions. Now that 'Alī speaks Egyptian, the difference between his servants and him is less evident. Despite the language they speak, Quffa comes from Baghdad and finds 'Alī in Tabrīz, then, like in the original, they both go to the far East. The new name attached to Quffa (Kāfūr) creates a new joke: when Quffa wants to say to the king that 'Alī has no caravan, the king asks him who is he, Quffa answers that he is Quffa, and the king replies that Quffa is not the name of 'Alī's servant (Faraġ 1991, 125). The princess is provided with more space and so, she is better characterized than the princess in *'Alī Ġanāḥ al-Tabrīzī wa tābi 'uhu Quffa*. Particularly, she has clear political positions; for instance, she is still convinced of the importance of imagination for the country's benefit, and in this play, she clinches that just before she leaves with 'Alī and Quffa (Faraġ 1991, 136), like in the original play, with 'Alī and Quffa, while the people of the country hope that a caravan will arrive.

The play *al-Ṭayyib wa al-širrīr wa al-ġamīla* (The Good, the Bad and the Beautiful Woman, 1994) is closely linked with *'Alī Ġanāḥ al-Tabrīzī wa tābi 'uhu Quffa* at a point that a full appreciation of it is not possible without knowing the second one (El-Enany 2000, 199). Similar to *'Alī Ġanāḥ al-Tabrīzī wa tābi 'uhu Quffa*, the hypotext (*The Tale of Abū Qīr the Dyer and Abū Sīr the Barber*) is expurgated from religious references and modified to serve the play's message. For instance, it starts in *medias res*. This is also a sign that the tale must be known to the audience. The major difference from the hypotext is the insertion of the character of the Beautiful Woman, who acts as the wife of the Bad and which makes the title of the play resemble to Sergio Leone's film *Il Buono, il Brutto, il Cattivo* (The Good, the Bad and the Ugly, 1966). The opposite duo this time is taken from the hypotext, while the characters of the play present different names than their equivalent's, but they keep an assonance with them (see El-Enany 2000, 197 and also 'Aṭīya 2002 b). Once again, the message is political: Faraġ uses the *Nights* to show how the Bad always existed and how it still exists in the nineties in the form of

widespread disvalues (see Faraġ's foreword to the play, p.3, 'Abd al-Ḥamīd 2002 ١, 235 and 'Abd al-Ḥamīd 2002 ٢).

Faraġ's last play taken from the *Nights, al-Amīra wa al-ṣu'lūk*, (The princess and the Pauper, 2002), as we have previously mentioned, is the last play Faraġ wrote. In the play, a copyist, Ḥasan, is wanted by the police because he modifies the books he copies. His friend the bookseller warns him and invites him to exchange his clothes with a beggar so that he may hide. Ḥasan, disguised as a pauper, goes looking for fortune in the market. There he starts working for the butcher when the princess arrives and decides to take him with her. The princess has been divorced by her husband Ṣaqar, who first has betrayed her with a maid and now the princess wants her revenge by marrying a pauper. Scared that the princess wants to kill him, while he is being brought to the castle, Ḥasan asks his friend the bookseller to say to the police that they will find him in the castle. Ṣaqar knows of the wedding and goes to the castle: he is jealous and wants his wife back, but she disagrees. He promises to kill the groom. The police arrive to catch Ḥasan, but the princess insists in concluding her wedding by spending the night with him. The police accept, and their guards surround the palace. The princess has a plan: her maid pours some drugs in the beverages so that the guards sleep all the night long and, in the morning, Ḥasan will have been able to escape through one of the seven secret doors which lead to various places in Cairo. She explains to Ḥasan that she wants to divorce him because she loves Ṣaqar. He explains to her that, through books, he has learnt that love cannot be based on a principle of equivalence, while he really loves her. She decides to keep him as her husband and to pay his ransom. She brings him in front of the doors and tells him to choose. Ḥasan chooses the seventh door and finds himself in the court. Nobody believes the story of the princess and the castle since that is the story of princess Zumurrud; it was a real story that happened two and a half before. Ḥasan deduces that maybe he was sleeping. During the trial, the bookseller advocates for Ḥasan declaring that it is the demon of the writing who writes at this place, so Ḥasan cannot be guilty. The qadi accepts this theory and proclaims Ḥasan's absolution. Ḥasan still does not believe that he was just dreaming and wants to go to the ruins of the castle. From outside, voices invite people in the streets to go away. The princess Zumurrud is there followed by a crowd. All the actors join the company in an ambiance of joy.

*Al-Amīra wa al-ṣu'lūk* is a love romance. However, the theme of justice is prominent once again. While Ṣaqar and the princess are not able to reason, a wise qadi is there to compensate for that. He proclaims Ḥasan's innocence, but he is also present during the wedding claiming that the princess is free to choose her husband. The blurred boundary between fiction and reality

is another main topic. The qadi tells Ḥasan the story of Zumurrud claiming that it is what really happened. However, the story he tells is a type of fiction which combines History, with the names of real characters and places, some aspects of the story of Zumurrud in the *Arabian Nights* as well as invention. In the meantime, the story of the qadi is linked with the adventure Ḥasan has lived/dreamt. At the end of the play, Ḥasan's fantasy completely mixes with reality, while during it, it is not clear whether we are watching his stories materialize or we are seeing his dream.

The main parts from two scenes are tales read by Ḥasan while he is writing them Both start with the classical formula of the *Nights* slightly modified:

حسن: ولما كانت الليلة المائة قالت شهرزاد.. بلغني أيها الملك السعيد ذو الرأي الرشيد أن الأمير أبو الذهب  
خرج مع حاشيته الصيد، (...) وعندما صاح الديك فسكتت شهرزاد..

Faraġ 2003, 31-3

HASAN: And when it was the one-hundredth night, Shahrazad said, "It hath reached me, O auspicious King, whose opinion is wise, that the prince Abū 'l-Ḍahab went out hunting with his servants, [...] and when the rooster crew, Shahrazad ceased saying ...

The one-hundredth night told by Ḥasan, as well as the night two-hundredth, are not tales of the *Nights*. However, they contain motifs existing in the *Nights*, namely, a man's seduction by a jinn disguised as a beautiful girl, the existence of many doors, the warning to the protagonist to not open one of them and to ignore them while the owners of the palace are away. Both tales are thematically linked to the plot of the play. As for the plot of the play in its whole, it closely reminds us of *The Tale of Zumurrud*. Indeed, the princess of the play is also called Zumurrud.

The main process regulating the rewriting seems to be roles' overturning. While in the hypotext Zumurrud is sold at the market, in the play, she chooses the man she wants to bring in her palace; in the tale, 'Alī Šār is drugged and she is kidnapped, this time, Zumurrud has her hosts drugged. The motif of the love-revenge affecting the other sex is the same as the frame tale of the *Nights*, but it is inverted. This time the woman takes revenge on the husband's adultery. If, in the hypotext, Zumurrud was already a driving force, displaying more strength of character and resourcefulness than her male counterparts (see Marzolph, Van Leeuwen 2004, 564-66), in the play, she is even more powerful.

While disguise is a device used in the tale of Zumurrud as well, here it reminds us more closely of the famous *Tale of the Sleeper and the Waker*, in which the caliph Hārūn al-Rašīd drugs the

poor Abū 'l-Ḥasan and has him dressed as a caliph. Another reference to the *Nights* in their whole might be the experimental structure of the play which is made up of ten short acts and does not provide intervals between them (see the author's afterword to the play, *The theatrical interval*, 79-80).

In the last of Farāğ's plays inspired to the *Nights*, the modalities of the rewriting still vary. Merchants and markets, beggars, friends, qadis and judged, princesses and maids, castles, masks, fiction and reality, are always protagonists of the world of the *Nights*. However, this time, after Farāğ has spent many years exiled in London and has recently come back to Cairo, exile becomes a motif of his work: Ḥasan the copyist/writer disguises as a beggar because he does not want to leave his city, and Cairo, with the many historical places mentioned or displayed (Sūq al-Ḥalīlī, Rhoda Island, the Nile, Giza) is for the first time a real set of a play derived from the *Nights*. And, in his last play, for the first time, the intellectual protagonist escapes his punishment for his free work.

Like a storyteller, in the seven plays inspired by the *Nights*, the author has used the tales as "an outline of the story on which he could embroider" (Irwin 1994, 59). From the play that established his success (*Ḥallāq Baġdād*, 1962) until his very last play (*al-Amīra wa al-ṣu'lūk*, 2003), he could experiment with new choices, both in the relation with the hypotext and in the structures of the hypertexts, for his narrative strategies. A common point to all these works is their "weightless gravity" (see Calvino 2012, 25) to which the world of the *Nights* with its cheerful ambiance has certainly contributed to.

Acting like a kaleidoscope, the rewriting of the *Nights* mixes and reflects elements of the hypotext generating patterns. The plot of the tales is fragmented and resettled through constantly variated strategies, characters are recomposed into dramatic combinations, stylistic features of the tales become integrant part of the stylistic and thematic aspects of the hypertext, while Classical Arabic, thanks to its former employment in the tales and to some innovations by the playwright, loses its alienating effect. The new patterns of these plays present the cheerful ambiance of the *Nights* which frames issues relevant to the present and is supported by the trustworthiness of the tradition.

## CONCLUSION

In the afterword to his masterpiece *'Alī Ġanāḥ al-Tabrīzī wa tābi 'uhu Quffa*, Faraġ invited the audience not to inquire about the caravan because that would have been like cruelly splitting open the breast of a beautiful tropical bird in order to describe its heart (Faraġ [1968] 1992, 364). What this study wanted to do is precisely that. Plays have been dissected into the smallest pieces possible. And this was claimed to be done for a good reason. As a matter of fact, the study of the rewriting within Faraġ's plays has enabled us to draw various kinds of conclusions. On the one hand, we can better understand the plays and retrace some of the trends in Faraġ's production. On the other, we can also elaborate on a new perspective of the hypotext.

Like a kaleidoscope, Faraġ's rewriting reflects existent materials which recombine to produce changed patterns; the new, complex image, no matter how different it may be from the other images that the kaleidoscope can create, is made of the same materials plus some elements borrowed from the contemporary reality. Since creations derived from rewriting processes are made out from a variety of reflected materials, the resultant image is multilayered, according to what the observer sees. During every reading, the play manifests a pattern that changes for other receptions and so, layers of images superpose and alternate every time the plays is received. Since the hypotext is mirrored in the play, it is shown according to the play's intent. However, the reader will also see the text in its original form, as he previously knows it before watching the play. His perception of the hypertext will be mitigated by the hypertext's reception in this new context. The kaleidoscope effect's multifunctionality has been retraced in the three kinds of rewritings analyzed.

Parts 1 of each chapter have respectively shown how the rehabilitation of some Egyptian History's moments (the rewriting of History), the settlement of new positive system of values to a famous Arabian legend and its inclusion into a literary genre (the rewriting of the *sīra*), and the use of the *Arabian Nights*' tales act as proof of the validity of the message of the play, reinvest the Arab heritage (تراث) and contribute to the boosting of the nationalist Arabic spirit. This is visible in the subject, the hypertext's choice and in its commentary, whether in the paratext (particularly, title and foreword) of the play or in essays of the author. Texts from the Arab heritage are the ones Faraġ considered "*scriptible*," namely the ones he accepted "to write (rewrite), desire, and move forward as a force in this world" which is his own world (Barthes 1970, 10). The treatment of such materials within the hypertext, together with the sensible use of key words like *turāt*, *malḥama*, *ša'bī* and *sīra*, demonstrate how Faraġ was involved into the

role of the intellectual serving the cause through his engagement in the reappraisal of the heritage. As typically occurs with the Arabic novel, Faraġ provides a new understanding of heritage.<sup>188</sup> The approach to the heritage differs according to the genre of the hypertext. In any case, “Faraġ’s attitude to tradition is far from acquiescent; it is one of deep and searching critical questioning rather than complacent endorsement” (Selaiha 1990). A critical perspective is particularly clear in the rewriting of History.

Faraġ denied truthfulness to official accounts and decided not only to fictionalize them or to complete them, but he modified them. He claimed to rebuild the events giving a possible (historical) explanation to a fake story that had been perpetrated until present providing counter-narratives of the hypotexts pretending to be truer than “truth”. Thanks to different narrative techniques that assert Faraġ’s hypothesis, such as a wide overview over the events (featuring more than the *incredible fact* for the murder of Kleber) or changing the perspective (as he did for Lane’s account of the *taĥbīẓa*), the playwright imagined a new story.

Providing the historical plays with an ideology, Faraġ belongs to that generation of writers who narrativized (instead of narrating) their time and space, giving the reader no possibility to rethink or reinterpret by themselves (see Mehrez, 10). Of the *Sīrat al-Zīr Sālim*, Faraġ did not accept the system of values it stands on. As a legend, the *sīra* might have been misunderstood and so his play illustrates a *sīra* without vengeance as the main motif, and yet still retains the same overall plot. Moreover, supernatural facts are substituted with realistic details and anachronisms from the source are eliminated. Faraġ’s play proves that the *sīra* can still exist without these negative aspects.

Similarly, in the rewriting of the stories of the *Arabian Nights*, magic is often evoked, but it is no longer effective. Nevertheless, the rewritings of the tales transfer their wise lessons about life and (only) moral fantasy. Particularly, in the case of *‘Alī Ġanāḥ al-Tabrīzī wa tābi‘uhu Quffa*, fantasy is shown to have real consequences. In virtue of the considerate treatment of the hypertext, the heritage is reshaped and rehabilitated. Historiography is provided with new facts making Arab History more glorious and the legend is subject to new interpretations which makes it more honorable, and stories from the *Nights* are used for their didactic purpose.

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<sup>188</sup> “Heritage (*turāṭ*), which encompasses religion, philosophy, history, science, art, architecture, archaeology, folklore and literature, has come to serve the hallmark of post-colonial Arab identity. The Arab novel revives, incorporates and interrogates this heritage, simultaneously manifesting a new understanding of its own past.” (Ouyang 2013, 225).

As a memory machine, theatre is the site for the recollection, re-elaboration, and contestation of readily available cultural material, and for the production of new, and newly adaptable, ideas out of established ones (Laera 2014, 3). In the rewriting of History, where former official narrative is overturned to produce a counter-narrative, the new understanding of the past is achieved through contestation of History. Faraḡ popularized the Arab History via his perception and re-imagination of it. On the contrary, heritage coming from literature was already popular. In these cases, Faraḡ's rewriting allows for a wider audience as it borrows known works and subjects and makes them more accessible. Therefore, the rewriting of the *Nights* and the rewriting of the *sīra* help in the democratization of its theatre. And so, in some cases, Faraḡ popularized the content. In other cases, he used well known content to popularize his own work.

In his rewriting of the heritage, Faraḡ took advantage of the dramatic potential of the *sīra* and the stories of the *Arabian Nights* – which contain several common elements - and exalted it. Plots, characters, coups de scène, direct speeches were ready material suitable for the stage that Faraḡ employed in his creations. Storytelling techniques, which are a main feature of both the tales and the epics, are used by Faraḡ to underline the power of the word which becomes an integrant part of the contents of the plays. Moreover, storytelling transferred to the stage is reminiscent the epic trend (Faraḡ 1990, 68).

The employment of the dramatic potential of a certain part of the *turāṭ* is functional to demonstrate the existence of the *tamasruḥ* (theatricality) in Arab indigenous dramatic forms. Plays issued from the *turāṭ* contribute to the creation of an authentic Arab theatre and to the Nationalist propaganda. As for the language, if Faraḡ could use an “inimitable brand of Classical Arabic” (Selaiha 1998) without generating the typical alienation caused by the use of this language instead of the colloquial Egyptian Arabic then it is because those plays are issued from famous works written in Classical Arabic. Another function of the rewriting is that the plays could (and can) be shown in all Arabic-speaking countries which reflects the Nasserite ideal of a single Arab nation encompassing all Arabic speakers.

Enabling an abstraction from the content of the hypotext, all rewriting becomes a tool to encode political ideas. The most evident feature of the rewriting of the *Nights* is the existence of a political message framed in a cheerful ambiance. Nevertheless, the rewriting of History and the rewriting of the *sīra* as well contain political messages dealing with the conduct of the man confronted with situation of injustices. Those situations can be easily related to conditions relevant to the time of production of the play because they generate images that, like in an anamorphosis, seen from a new perspective – namely, the new context - contain meanings that

are different from those of the original text, while the image is the same of the hypotext (see Compagnon 1979, 278-9).

It is known that after 1952 the autonomy of the Egyptian cultural field was minimal (Mehrez 2008, 16-17) and Faraḡ himself was a victim of “the unpredictable boundaries of the political game” (Ibid.). Masking messages behind existent stories could be a useful strategy to maintain some freedom of expression. As censorship tries to base something “dans l’antériorité (ou simplement d’admettre qu’elle s’y fonde), c’est-à-dire à entrer dans un processus de régression infinie ou à arrêter celui-ci de manière arbitraire,” (Ferrié 2000, 58) likewise, the author bases his ideas in a past narrative, which is filled with new meaning.

For instance, brought to the stage, the new story of Sulaymān is charged with symbolism that elevates it to encompass universal meanings. Armed with a powerful intelligence and a knife, Faraḡ’s Sulaymān looks for justice against the unfair - though legal – domination to achieve freedom from it. His murder symbolizes the legitimate act of resistance against injustice. At the same time, some references suspend the historical dimension of the play to mirror its context of enunciation. Moreover, the common narrative depicts Sulaymān as a fool, and the public knows that. Fighting the ruler might be interpreted as an actual proposition because similitudes between Kleber and some aspects of Nasser’s rule are clear. Analogous reflections concern also the other plays we analyzed in detail.

Past, legendary or fictive worlds derived from the hypertexts enable Faraḡ to express his thoughts on delicate matters, such as authoritative ruling. Indeed, Faraḡ was aware of the political engagement (التزام) that he had to take as an intellectual of post-1952 (Faraḡ [1957 b] 2009, 57). Additionally, he declared that the generation of the fifties and the sixties could say whatever he wanted in his play, either directly, or through symbols and metaphors (Faraḡ [1999] 2009, 99). In reality, for the better, they could only express their ideas indirectly. “Most of the writers in the 1960s worked under the wing of the State. The State returned the favor by extending its support to them and producing their own works as long as they tended not to contradict the cause of the State, even upholding it at times” (Ramly 2008, 79-80). “Those who were imprisoned under Nasser tend to say that they were arrested for political reasons, not for what they wrote, and that they enjoyed great freedom of expression in literary writing,” (Stagh 1993, 63). Rewriting was a good strategy to avoid censorship, and to avoid admitting its existence. However, it had to be used with caution. Since the beginning of his career, with the ban of *Suqūt fir ‘awn* (performed in 1957), Faraḡ must have learnt that rewriting alone could not shelter him from the censorship’s attacks.



At first glance, the play, with its exaltation of the *turāt* and the employment of classical Arabic, is a clear expression of the direct and unconditional support to the propaganda within the climax of Arab Nationalism during the fifties and the sixties (see Hourani 2002, Ch.24). The contents of the plays - emerged as innovations from the hypotexts – instead, reveal to be moderately critical to the political situation. Nationalism is supported in the form, while the message of the play provides food for thought on the complex relationship between intellectuals and the establishment. Like other intellectuals, Faraḡ was dealing with theories such as socialism and planned economy, with no direct attack to the President, and was avoiding denouncing the lack of freedom and democracy (see Gervasio 2001, 347). It is undeniable that, like many other leftist activists, Faraḡ “abdicated to the role of critics of the power and preferred an attitude between mild support and auto-censorship” (Ibid.). When judging the work of Egyptian writers during the fifties and the sixties, one has to consider the *ra’īs*’ charismatic power: he was the symbol of the Arab revolution and of the fight of Zionism and imperialism.

However, attentive analysis of literary works reveals that authors that were not aligned had expressed their disapproval to Nasser’s politics through metaphors, symbolism and allusions (Ibid., 348 and Khalifah 2017). Within that context, the dominance of the nation-state has to be considered as the structuring episteme for various groups of writers (see Ouyang 2013, 144 and 225). Certainly, Faraḡ did not completely conform to the political propaganda. The author must have been aware that “Egyptian society consisted of three pyramidal strata: the ruling classes who were the satisfied masters, the intelligentsia who were the subdued rebels, and the masses who were the silent sufferers. Only the latter believed that the *ra’īs* was the savior, that one day their suffering was going to come to an end, and that prosperity was at the end of the road that was leading to the liberation of Palestine and to Arab (for some), Islamic (for most), unity” (Semaan 1979, 50). Indeed, Faraḡ’s incipient career was at risk because of the obscure meaning of *Suqūt fir’awn*, he was incarcerated for four years because he was accused of supporting communism, only for a while did he accept being included in the machinery of the state, and then finally, he left Egypt. For his opposition to the régime from within it, he must be considered as an intellectual, free enough from the duties of the official thought (أديب, see Ruocco 1991, 14-5). Representation of power in Faraḡ’s works is not always positive and rewriting gave him some freedom to express his ideas on the human condition, accomplish his didactic, rectifying middion while being able to disregard of the political context.

Since the stories of the plays is already known and they are only reconstructed on the stage, the stories are not the focus of the plays. Instead, by contrast with their hypotext, alterations and

new symbolic meanings would attire the attention of the observer. Continuities and ruptures with the hypertext produce meaning. New meaning can be attached to issues relevant to the time of production of the play. Nevertheless, Faraĝ's plays provide reflections which are valid independently of the context of reception and would recall different situations of reality to different readers. Indeed, the critics have interpreted the messages of the plays in diverse ways. For instance, 'Alī is a dream vendor: his image can be attached to Nasser, but also to any politician who promises utopian worlds. Furthermore, rewriting allowed Faraĝ a cathartic exercise. In *Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī*, as well as in *Ḥallāq Baġdād*, the protagonist's intellectual struggle for justice can be seen as a mask to Faraĝ's engagement as an intellectual and so, through the play, he defies despotic attitudes. The plays become performative utterances since, through them, Faraĝ is really fighting overwhelming power.

Justice has already been shown to be a recurrent theme in Faraĝ's plays (El-Enany 2000). This study demonstrates that a need for justice also regulates the choice of some of the play's subjects because its rewriting sometimes criticizes the way a fact had been treated or discussed in previous texts:

En effet, le postulat de la primauté de l'interdiscours a pour conséquence de décentrer l'instance auctoriale, en lui enlevant tout caractère de point d'origine, et de souligner le fait que tout discours suppose un travail permanent sur ses frontières.

Boutet, Maingueneau 2005, 26<sup>189</sup>

This is the case of the plays rewriting History, which substitute the distorted truth of official historiography with another view which proclaims to be truer. Similarly, the choice of *sīra* of al-Zīr Sālīm and the substitution of its values are aimed at bringing justice to the legend that, according to Faraĝ, could not be based on a bloody principle. Conversely, a decentration of the authorial instance serves also Faraĝ's plays in dissociating his message from the words of his play.

The study of rewriting has enabled us to understand that theatre for Faraĝ was a privileged platform to show truth. Embodied experiences could show the opposition between illusion and reality and the relativity of truth. On the stage, the historians' third-person narration can be

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<sup>189</sup> A similar conclusion is achieved by Compagnon 1979, "la dénotation d'une proposition n'est pas toujours sa valeur de vérité ; dans le cas d'une proposition qui est la citation d'une proposition, la dénotation est la proposition citée elle-même (87)."

contested through a reenactment. Similarly, in *al-Zīr Sālim*, the legend of the intertribal war must be shown in order to be comprehended since the narration of the singular might be fake. Indeed, Su‘ād’s ambiguous prophecy is the cause of the war in the play and ‘Alī’s stories, in *‘Alī Ğanāḥ al-Tabrīzī wa tābi ‘uhu Quffa*, reveal to be fictions.

Since one of the main aims behind Faraġ’s rewriting was to dismantle the authorial voice of the hypotext, when it exists, it is contrasted through stylistic choices creating polyphony. The language of the play *Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī* includes different registers and styles. Modalities of expression vary according to the role attached to the character (e.g.: the chorus) or to the function of the dialogue (e.g.: the French), but also provides sounds of contemporary reality (e.g.: Sulaymān, sheikh Sādāt). The inclusion of some words in French, the language of the *other*, is also a sign of multiplicity. With a chorus claiming to be a narrator, a plural voice opposes to Ğabartī’s. A double stage allows a double narration and direct comparison between them, while play-within-the-play constantly breaks the narration to reveal reality. Furthermore, Sulaymān speaking Hamlet’s words and enacting Saladin charges the story with referential intertextual voices widening and validating them, while in Ğabartī’s account the inclusion of documents of the trial serves in defining and detailing the facts.

The multiplicity of voices replaces Ğabartī’s single vision with a more democratic representation of the story, where different voices have the right to speak and bring new materials to deconstruct the hypotext. For his play, Faraġ chooses a narrative mood contrasting the linear narration of historiography. Several scenes come in succession; some actions overlap through the use of a double stage. Intertextuality too, works as an extra standpoint giving voice to further fictional instances. Moreover, polyphony through the normal internal multi-focalization in theatre is contrasted and outlined by a chorus acting as an omniscient narrator and reminding of the authorial voice of historiography. Similarly, since plays issued from the *sīra* as well as from the tales of the *Nights* integrate some stylistic features of their hypotext in the play - like storytelling - the style of all these plays is hybrid.

The new features of the protagonists of the rewritings allow us to delineate a portrait of Faraġ’s hero. Sometime before and after 1967, Arabic Literature produced many heroes affirming that the individual alone is master of his own existence, even if he is against the social values of the group (Vauthier 2007, 124).

From a mercenary, Sulaymān becomes a free being, capable of deep reflection. Indeed, it is not by chance if he impersonates the valiant Saladin, another historical myth. Amongst the

historical characters of the play, Sulaymān distinguishes himself for being the only one provided with self-consciousness and self-confidence. His excessive presence in the play contributes to creating a certain place for him in the narration; a place that History has not given to him. Only regarding to the extra-textual context and to the hypertext of the play, the absolute leading role played by the hero - which has been seen as a negative aspect of the play - can be understood. His character competes with the image History has left of him. Sulaymān, the hero of the play, redeems his equivalent in the past and is an example of good behavior in the present to improve future in general. With his new features, he is a contemporary hero.

As for al-Zīr, his desire for vengeance does not stand up to the new values required for a hero. And so, Sālim is no longer an “orthodox tribal hero” (Lyons 1995, 1, 97). Instead, like Sulaymān, he is the one “searching for total justice, the justice that we understand, but we cannot apply” (‘Abd al-Qādir 1983, 96). His nephew Hağras shares with him the glory of heroism and steals the status of protagonist from his uncle. Less extreme, but still upstream, from a marginal figure in the hypertext, Hağras becomes the incarnation of positive values of the good ruler. Certainly, “mythologized history is everywhere” (Fisch 1984, 13). Accordingly, heroism and mythification are fundamental aspects of the rewriting of History; on a minor scale, they concern the protagonist of the legend and do not exist at all in tales. A remarked feature of Farağ’s History is that it is a narrativized past and no freedom of interpretation is being offered to the reader.

Linked to the theme of heroism is that of madness. Sulaymān and Sālim’s madness emerges as a clear feature in this study because it is an innovation from the hypotexts and it is a distinctive trait of the new characters. Also, ‘Alī Ğanāḥ al-Tabrīzī cannot be said to be a sane person since he does not distinguish reality from fantasy. The difference between Sulaymān and Sālim and ‘Alī Ğanāḥ al-Tabrīzī is that the first ones possess reason (عقل). Simply, in a society where justice is not applied, the human who reasons and is brave becomes mad, and he is a hero. In this narrative, the idea of madness is not diametrically opposed to reason (see Ouyang 2013, 77-103). If in the hypotexts those characters had strange behaviours that make other characters think of them as fool or crazy, in the plays they become mad. As we have said, this feature applies specifically to the Modern literature. ‘Alī Ğanāḥ al-Tabrīzī, instead, does not possess capacity to reason.

The study of rewriting has also allowed us to detect the treatment of the topic of religion. The transposition of religious elements into the plays undergoes singular transformations. For instance, like in *‘Alī Ğanāḥ al-Tabrīzī wa tābi’uhu Quffa*, Farağ erases the negative

characterization by ethnic affiliation which is typical of the *Nights* (see Marzolph, Van Leeuwen 2004, 710) and the Kurd disappears only to be substituted by a generic litigant, similarly, the play *al-Ṭayyib wa al-širrīr wa al-ğamīla* (The Good, the Bad and the Beautiful Woman, 1994) - which is closely linked with *‘Alī Ğanāḥ al-Tabrīzī wa tābi ‘uhu Quffa* to a point where unless one knows the second one, a full appreciation is not possible (El-Enany 2000, 199) and that is derived from another tale of the *Nights* (*The Tale of Abū Qīr the Dyer and Abū Sīr the Barber*) - is *expurgated* (see Genette 1982, 330-31) from the episode in which the Bad (*Abū Qīr* in the tale), jealous of the fortune of the Good (*Abū Sīr*), denounces him as a Christian spy who wants to poison the king by applying a depilatory paste (see Marzolph, Van Leeuwen 2004, 75-7). This time, Farağ erases the religious stereotype of the Christian who threatens Muslims’ lives.

The religious element is present in *‘Alī Ğanāḥ al-Tabrīzī wa tābi ‘uhu Quffa* also in formulaic expressions (such as “بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ”, God willing) characterizing the low social status of the maid. Moreover, the thirty dirhams Quffa gains for denouncing ‘Alī reminds us of the thirty coins given to Judas for Christ’s betrayal. Indeed, ‘Alī waits for his sentence in the square of the town with his arms tied to two parallel sticks making a horizontal axe similarly to Christ on the cross (Farağ [1968] 1992, 347). This detail is evident in the representation of 1969, directed by ‘Abd al-Raḥīm al-Zarqānī. In the play *al-Zīr Sālīm*, the hypotext supplies Farağ with a perfect environment to discuss the matter of the good ruler independently from the religious matter, since no religious (Muslim) ruler is possible in the pre-Islamic context of the *sīra*. In the meantime, it does not call for a debate about the reason why he did not choose a religious ruler as the good one.

Additionally, while Farağ provided his Sulaymān with deep reflection, though he is an al-Azhar scholar, his moments of reflection are never linked to Islam. As a matter of fact, in the play, he is compared to Saladin. Saladin embodies law and justice against religious war. His fight is against the economical profits of the West (Eddé 2008, 581-2). Besides, it is easy to see certain elements which recall Hamlet (see Litvin 2011, 113). For his aiming at attaining justice disregarding reality, Louis ‘Awaḍ has seen in Sulaymān “a strange mixture of Joan of Arc – who had voices crowding her head - and Hamlet – who was filled up by questions and a quest for truth between contradictions of the existence and life” (‘Awaḍ 1966). We have already noted how far this character is from his description in the report of the trial quoted by Ğabartī (I.3.1). Also, none of the historical religious characters, the sheikhs Šarqāwī and Sādāt, are depicted by means of spiritual life, but sheikhs are taken as representative of different modalities of using political power.

Clearly, in Faraġ's plays religion is not taboo since it is not avoided as a cultural reference. However, religion as a particular system of faith and worship, is never placed at the center of a play, nor does it become a conflictual issue. Religion is never the belief in and worship of a superhuman controlling power, especially a personal God or gods. On the contrary, it is exclusively a pursuit or interest followed with great devotion. And this pursuit always deals with the political.

In the confrontation between the hypertext and the hypotext, some intertextual references jumped before our eyes because they clearly come from texts other than the major source. For instance, as we have mentioned above, both Sulaymān and Sālim recall Hamlet and, in many ways, *al-Zīr Sālim* and *Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī* remind us of Shakespearean plays. Indeed, we can consider that Shakespeare deeply influenced Faraġ's work since he even wrote a study about the great English playwright (Faraġ 2002). We can also remark Pirandello's influence in many instances, most of all in *Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī* and especially in *Sulaymān masks'* play, where we underlined also an allusion to the "embellished old lady" (see I.4.4). Similarly, Brecht affects Faraġ's work, both through allusions as well as in more general ways. In Act I of *Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī*, there is a direct reference to Brecht's *Caucasian Chalk Circle* (1943-1945). *Dā'irat al-tibn al-Miṣriyya*, (The Egyptian Hay Circle, 1979) rewrites an account by Edward Lane, but the title of the play is reminiscent of Brecht's *Caucasian Chalk Circle* and indeed Faraġ's play is also set in a village where people struggle with authoritative power.

In *'Alī Ġanāḥ al-Tabrīzī wa tābi'uhu Quffa*, many additions are certainly taken from *Herr Puntila und sein Knecht Matti* (Mr Puntila and his man Matti, 1940). For instance, in the incipit of the play, 'Alī and Ṣawāb's discussion about time is similar to Puntila and his waiter's conversation. The beggar "from the *Nights*" appears for the first time in the play standing behind the door of the palace, like Matti in Brecht's play. Many other similarities have already been underlined (III.2.5). The presence of allusions adds to the contents of the play and can also be ascribed to a strategy provoking pleasure to the reader from the identification of the allusions which are out of the context of the hypertext; namely, the pleasure of perceiving the rupture with the hypertext. A similar effect is obtained with allusions to singular details the hypertext, such as the temporal incongruity of the *sīra* (II.2.4) and the endless tales of the *Nights*, through abundant overplaying (III.4.1 and Final remarks to Chapter III).

As for the debated impact of Brechtian theories on Faraġ's theatre, our author seemed to have clear ideas about it:

المسرح العربي اتجه إلى الملحمية بتأثير التراث وخاصة ألف ليلة وليلة، فهو أقرب إلى سرد الحكايات منه إلى تركيز الموقف. وتأثرنا في هذا المجال كان بالقصة العربية وليس ببريخت. وإذا تشابه توجهنا مع نظرية بريخت، ولكن توجهنا جاء من باب ألف ليلة.

Faraġ 1990, 68

The Arabic theatre addressed to the epic trend under the influence of the tradition and particularly of the *Arabian Nights*. Indeed, it is closer to storytelling than emphasizing the attitude. In this field, we were influenced by the Arabic tale and not by Brecht. Our tendency resembles Brecht's theory, but ours came from the door of the *Arabian Nights*.<sup>190</sup>

Many studies have engaged in the definition of Brecht's influence on Faraġ's work. Muhammad Mustafa Badawi speaks of "somewhat Brechtian techniques" (1987, 179). For Nehad Selaiha, in *al-Zīr Sālīm*, Faraġ attained a "delicate balance" between Brecht and Shakespeare and the Greek (Selaiha 1990). Lozy uses one of Faraġ's plays to show that "the influence of Brecht on Egyptian theatre has not gone much beyond theoretical and rhetorical enthusiasm" (Lozy 1990, 71), a thesis on the influence of Brecht on the Arabic theatre highlights formal devices that might have been taken from Brecht, like the role of the chorus in *Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī* (Rašīd Bū Ša'īr 1983, 122), the importance of the storytelling in *Alī Ġanāḥ al-Tabrīzī wa tābi'uhu Quffa* (Ibid., 123), and Ġalīla's narrative function in *al-Zīr Sālīm* (Ibid., 127). Another study consecrated to the epic trend in Faraġ's theatre remarks epic trend's formal and substantial elements in many of his plays (Faṭḥ Allāh 1998).<sup>191</sup>

From our study, what results is that, even if the structure of the plays we have analyzed do not correspond to any feature of the hypertext, they cannot be attached to the Brechtian trend. For instance, the recollection of dispersed testimonies surrendered to Haġras' hearing in the form of tableaux in the play within the play in *al-Zīr Sālīm* recalls the episodic structure which Brecht wanted in his epic theatre to interrupt the plot's flow. However, a comparison with its hypotext affirms Pirandello's value of the device of the play within the play in *al-Zīr Sālīm*, while the rapid serial presentation of scenes exists also in the Expressionist theatre and in Absurdist theatre as well (e.g.: Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm's *Yā Tāli' al-šaġara*). Likewise, the temporal shifts in

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<sup>190</sup> See also Faraġ 1990, 70 and 105.

<sup>191</sup> (Faṭḥ Allāh 1998, 209.) "Faraġ used all his theatrical devices in the epic form to deliver an idea or a topic which is epic dialectic."

*al-Zīr Sālim* serve to alienate Hağras from any emotional involvement in the events in the same manner Brecht provokes his audience to partake in the action (Debs 1993, 314).

However, while Brecht's theory is based on a philosophical concept and on a particular ideology, Farağ's has no such clear grounds and his fragmentary reemployment of Brecht's alienation techniques do not have the same theoretical basis of challenging the old theatre (El-Sayyid 1995, 168). An accurate study of the rewriting in *Ġarāmiyyāt 'Aṭwa Abū Maṭwa* (*Abū Maṭwa's adventures*, 1985), a two-act play, from Brecht's *The Threepenny Opera* (1928) would reveal that in Farağ's play, epic devices are eliminated. And if Brecht advocated for avoiding catharsis of the audience and permit the so-called "alienation effect," namely "distancing or estrangement whereby the spectator is able to maintain a critical detachment and see the familiar anew" (Chambers 2002, 18), Farağ built plays which captivated the emotions of the public. Certainly, from the fifties on, Brecht was known and appreciated in the Egyptian theatrical panorama as well as by Farağ (see Youssef 2014). However, as we have already mentioned, Farağ's plays are not based on a philosophical concept nor on a particular ideology (El-Sayyid 1995, 168, II.5).

Farağ's rewriting, instead, has some similarities with Jean Anouilh's rewriting and Farağ himself signaled that Anouilh influenced him in a significant and broad way (Farağ [1998] 2002, 30). Indeed, both authors use hypertextuality as a constituent part of their work. Though, Anouilh is more inclined to rewrite plays - such as Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (*Roméo et Jeannette*, 1945), Molière's *Dom Juan* (*Ornifles ou le courant d'air*, 1954), Sophocles' *Antigone* (1944) and *Oedipus* (*Oedipus*, 1978) - while Farağ mainly rewrote texts from other genres than drama.<sup>192</sup> Most of Anouilh's rewriting actualized (relocated an old source to more recent times) old narrations, while Farağ changed values, transformed the characters, but did not touch at the space-time setting. Moreover, Anouilh mainly alluded to texts or quoted them (see Knight 1995),<sup>193</sup> while Farağ's hypertextuality has a massive and visible character, is intentional and declared. The two playwrights are comparable in the way they rewrite History.

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<sup>192</sup> Farağ only rewrote a drama once, it was *Ġarāmiyyāt 'Aṭwa Abū Maṭwa* (*Abū Maṭwa's adventures*, 1985), a two-act play, from Brecht's *The Threepenny Opera* (1928), which is an adaptation of John Gay's *Beggar's Opera* (1728). Differently from the rewritings here analyzed, he resettled the play in a new context (see here, Introduction) and the rewriting of the play was an adaptation of Brecht's play, a *nove sed non nova*.

<sup>193</sup> Jean Anouilh stated, "Je vous distrayais le soir en vous racontant des histoires comme à des petits enfants, voilà tout. Et le pélican, la science s'est aperçue que c'était une légende et que ce n'était pas ses tripes qu'il distribuait généreusement à ses petits, mais tout simplement de vieux poissons (ou de vieux poisons) régurgité." *Le Figaro*, 20 November 1972.



For instance, *L'Alouette* (1953), which rewrites Jeanne d'Arc's story from Michelet's *Histoire de France* reinterprets the heroine's adventure and adds to it references to the contemporary reality (see Bernard Beugnot 2007 II, 1363-68), like Faraž does in his rewritings of History. Likewise, *Becket ou l'honneur de Dieu* (1959) depicts the conflicts between King Henry II and Thomas Becket with some historical inaccuracies and provides the play with an interpretation of the story.<sup>194</sup> *Pauvre Bitos, ou le dîner des têtes* (1956), instead, has a more intricate relationship with History. It settles just after the Liberation of France in 1944 and characters reenacts each a protagonist of the French revolution. Beside referring to the contemporary reality, Anouilh's plays are characterized by continuous interferences of present references with the past of the story. However, allusions to Shakespeare, Brecht and Pirandello to construct the meaning of the play are practices of hypertextuality that find similarities in both of them.

In rewriting, Faraž activates dramatic potentiality within the literary genre of the hypotext. Rewriting triggers a questioning about the dramatic potential of the hypotext as well as about other aspects such as its style or contents. The *Arabian Nights* confirm their aptitude of being transposed to the stage as well as the immediacy and universality of their language. Moreover, they prove to be dismantlable ("sgangherabili", see Conclusion of III.2). The *sīra* confirms its adaptability to new contexts and the value of al-Zīr as a myth, which can be relocated and transformed.

In the rewriting process, the playwright emerges as the demiurge. On the basis of Aristotelian teaching, it is acknowledged that fantasy plays an important role in the creative process. Fantasy allows the artist to combine independent images to form new ones and to create something that has not existed before. Like a proper artist and intellectual, Faraž crafts works through his kaleidoscope rewriting, that, for their complexity and revolutionary aim, far from being merely copies of a preexistent text, will always have something new to show.

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<sup>194</sup> Regarding *Becket*, when asked why he chose to rewrite something existing instead of writing something new, Anouilh replied that creations had cost him stress (interview with Claude Sarraute, *Le Monde*, 1<sup>st</sup> November 1966).

## APPENDIX

### Ġabartī's account of the murder of General Kleber that Alfred Faraġ quotes in the foreword to the play *Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī*

وفي ذلك اليوم أعني يوم السبت وقعت نادرة عجيبة وهو أن ساري عسكر كليبر كان مع كبير المهندسين يسيران بداخل البستان الذي بداره بالأزبكية فدخل عليه شخص حليبي وقصده فأشار إليه بالرجوع وقال له ما فيش وكررها

فلم يرجع وأوهمه أن له حاجة وهو مضطر في قضائها فلما دنا منه مد إليه يده اليسار كأنه يريد تقبيل يده فمد إليه الآخر يده فقبض عليه وضربه بخنجر كان أعده في يده اليمنى أربع ضربات متوالية فشق بطنه وسقط الى الأرض صارخًا فصاح رفيقه المهندس فذهب إليه وضربه أيضًا ضربات وهرب فسمع العسكر الذين خارج الباب صرخة المهندس فدخلوا مسرعين فوجدوا كليبر مطروحًا وبه بعض الرمم ولم يجدوا القاتل فانزعجوا وضربوا طلبهم وخرجوا مسرعين وجروا من كل ناحية يفتشون على القاتل واجتمع رؤسائهم وأرسلوا العساكر الى الحصون والقلاع وظنوا أنها من فعل أهل مصر فاحتاطوا بالبلد وعمرؤ المدافع وحرروا القنابر وقالوا لا بد من قتل أهل مصر عن آخرهم ووقعت هوجة عظيمة في الناس وكرشة وشدة انزعاج وأكثرهم لا يدري حقيقة الحال ولم يزلوا يفتشون عن ذلك القاتل حتى وجدوه منزويًا في البستان المجاور لبيت ساري عسكر المعروف بغيط مصباح بجانب حائط منهدم فقبضوا عليه

Ġ: 149

Translation from Philipp and Perlmann 1994, 180-1.

On that same day, Saturday, an amazing event occurred. Kleber, the commander in chief, was walking with his chief engineer in the garden of his home in Azbakīya. A man from Aleppo entered the garden and walked toward him. Kleber made a sign to him to withdraw, and repeated several times *mā fīš*. But the man did not leave and intimated he had some matter that needed attention. As he approached Kleber, he stretched out his right hand, and ripped the general's abdomen. Screaming, Kleber fell to the ground. His companion, the engineer, shouted for help. Then the attacker turned upon the engineer, struck him also repeatedly, and fled.

The soldiers who stood guard outside the gate heard the engineer's shouts, rushed in, and found Kleber on the ground, dying. They did not find the assassin but sounded an alarm. The soldiers spread out in all directions to search the assassin.

The French chieftains met. Thinking that this assassination was an act of the people of Cairo, they dispatched soldiers to the fortresses and citadels, had the city surrounded, the

cannons loaded, and projectiles brought in. They said: “The people of Cairo must all be wiped out.”

The people became anxious and agitated. Most of them did not know what had really happened.

The search for the murderer continued until he was found hiding near a ruined wall in the nearby garden known as Ġayṭ Miṣbāḥ.

### **Plot of the play *Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī***

#### **ACT ONE (23-53)**

- (1) The chorus sets the play in Cairo in April 1800. Particularly, it narrates the harsh events following the second unsuccessful rebellion by the Egyptians against the French invaders who were led by General Kleber.
- (2) Three town criers reveal the atrocities committed by the French and the overwhelming taxation imposed on the people. (\*Ġabartī)
- (3) Some young Azharite revolutionaries discuss their reaction to the defeat. They have a plan to inculcate the people with the spirit of revolt, to help the afflicted persons and to demoralize the French through circulars. The revolutionaries decide to distribute pamphlets until they can regain their strength.
- (4) While a ball is held at the French Governor's palace in Cairo, Sulaymān, who is in Aleppo, proposes his friend Maḥmūd to take the role of Saladin when confronting Richard the Lionheart. Sulaymān then informs his mother of his wish to travel to Cairo to continue his studies at al-Azhar and says farewell to his friend Maḥmūd before leaving. During the ball, Kleber discusses the necessary measures to undertake in order to punish sheikh Sādāt.
- (5) Outside Sādāt's home, a battalion of French soldiers request that he follows them.
- (6) Meanwhile, at the Egyptian border, Sulaymān is questioned by French guards about the purpose of his visit to Cairo. As he is carrying a knife, the guards refuse his entry. A fellow student from al-Azhar, Sa'd, happens to be crossing the border as well and intervenes to help Sulaymān. He suggests they take the road through the desert instead.
- (7) In the countryside, a French colonel is giving orders to his second lieutenant on how to frighten off the inhabitants in the area so that they can take what they want.
- (8) Sa'd and Sulaymān come across a girl who is crying. When asked by Sulaymān about the cause of her tears, she explains that her father has refused to share the inheritance that her mother left for both of them. Against Sa'd's pleas to move on, Sulaymān offers to help the girl by writing a petition against her father.
- (9) The girl leads Sa'd and Sulaymān to her father, Ḥiddāya, who is a highwayman. They are introduced to the thief while he is robbing the poor of their money and belongings. A heated confrontation occurs between Sulaymān and Ḥiddāya until the latter orders his men to hang the intruder. Once again Sa'd saves his friend and forces him to leave.
- (10) The Chorus comments on what has been shown.

#### **ACT TWO (57-93)**

- (1) Sa'd and 'Alī, two Azharite students, are secretly distributing leaflets outside a French soldiers' tavern at night. 'Alī is caught by the soldiers while Sa'd flees the scene.

- (2) ‘Alī is brought to prison.
- (3) After being notified of the incident, Kleber threatens to hang all of the people. The news of ‘Alī’s death while being interrogated by the French before the court hearing and a public sentence angers Kleber as he lost the possibility for carrying out a public demonstration of his power.
- (4) Sulaymān goes to al-Azhar and confesses to three of his friends about his decision to kill General Kleber. They object to his thoughts and accuse him of madness, while Sulaymān accuses them of cowardice. To stop them from worrying, Sulaymān pretends he was joking to test their nerves.
- (5) Sulaymān and Muḥammad (another Azharite student) discuss the possibility of leading a rebellion without force.
- (6) The three Azharite friends are discussing the possibilities of Sulaymān's madness when he enters and tells them he went in search for work at the General's palace.
- (7) In the market place, Ḥiddāya and his daughter talk about the several types of robbers, and how for each type there is another that can beat him. Sulaymān and his friend Muḥammad are passing by when the first one notices Ḥiddāya. He begins to shout accusations against the robber, attracting the attention of the French soldiers, who take Ḥiddāya to prison. Muḥammad hurries his friend to leave, but Sulaymān refuses to depart without the robber's daughter.
- (8) Muḥammad tries to convince Sulaymān that it would be better if he took the girl to stay with some of his friends, but Sulaymān does not take his advice and he insists sheikh al-Šarqāwī must take her into his house. According to Sulaymān’s logic, because that is what the sheikh has taught his students, that is what should happen.
- (9) The chorus delivers a commentary on who Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī is.
- (10) Sulaymān, the girl, and Muḥammad arrive at Šarqāwī’s house. The sheikh asks Sulaymān many questions about the girl as Sulaymān introduced her as his sister. The sheikh is uncomfortable with Sulaymān's answers and suspects that there is something dangerous behind his student’s vagueness. After Sulaymān’s angry reaction, Šarqāwī’s decides to expel Sulaymān from al-Azhar.
- (11) As soon as Sulaymān, the girl, and Muḥammad leave Šarqāwī’s house, the girl runs away. Muḥammad asks Sulaymān why he attacked the sheikh, but Sulaymān does not provide a clear answer and is now occupied with saving the girl, since he thinks the French soldiers might corrupt her.
- (12) Sulaymān is being questioned by the Chorus about the reasons behind his actions so far.
- (13) Sulaymān's forecast about the girl come true: she is caught by two French soldiers while trying to steal their food.
- (14) Sulaymān visits sheikh ‘Abd al-Qādir seeking advice about what he has done to Ḥiddāya and consequently to his daughter. The sheikh does not satisfy Sulaymān's curiosity on how to execute justice in this case and Sulaymān leaves in disappointment.
- (15) Fully made up, the girl appears alone.

### **ACT THREE (97-123)**

- (1) Muḥammad, Sa’d and Miṣbāḥ are discussing the danger Sulaymān is posing to their underground tactics. They debate what action they should take next. They hesitate between hiding Sulaymān or forcing him to leave Cairo.

- (2) Muḥammad goes to Sulaymān with the hope of finding out the truth about this matter. Their conversation is interrupted by a mask-maker. Surprisingly, Sulaymān is able to act according to each mask's character.
- (3) Sitting on a hill, Muḥammad and Sulaymān talk. Muḥammad suggests to his friend that to go back home. Sulaymān accepts, but proposes to Muḥammad that they have some fun first.
- (4) Muḥammad returns to his friends 'Abdullāh and Aḥmad to update them on his talk with Sulaymān. They suggest that Muḥammad stay by Sulaymān's side until they secure his departure on the next caravan leaving Cairo.
- (5) At al-Sādāt's house, Sulaymān asks the sheikh's wife whether her husband felt pain while he was being punished by the French. He leaves the scene saying that it is he, Sulaymān, who bears the pain of his esteemed teacher.
- (6) While Sulaymān is searching for a place to hide from his friends, he notices the girl in a French café. He tries to drag her away, but the French soldiers kick him out.
- (7) Sulaymān goes to a waste mound where he is alone and contemplates the events he has encountered since his arrival to Cairo. He concludes that the city is no longer familiar and rests indifferent to him.
- (8) Another ball is held by the French at General Kleber's house.
- (9) Ḥiddāya strikes a deal with the French. Instead of punishing him, they will appoint him as a tax collector.
- (10) Ḥiddāya enters a French café with the intention of collecting taxes from the proprietor when he notices his daughter entertaining the French soldiers. Both father and daughter exchange their news about the money each of them now earn. However, when Ḥiddāya realizes the change in his daughter he tries to voice his disapproval but to no avail. The girl makes it clear that he should be the last person to speak about moral behaviour.

#### **ACT FOUR (127-157)**

- (1) In his office, Kleber discusses the scheduled execution of seven French officers and soldiers accused of disobedience. The General wants to go ahead with the execution claiming it is a price to safeguard their commercial benefits.
- (2) Sulaymān enters the café where the girl works and kidnaps her in front of the French soldiers and takes her to a place where they can talk. He learns the truth about Ḥiddāya and how he helped improve his life. Sulaymān demands the girl to redeem her soul and let him find her a decent job. The girl refuses. While she is trying to free herself from Sulaymān's clutch, two French soldiers appear and take the girl back.
- (3) He takes her away and leads her to al-Sādāt house where she is left with the sheikh's wife.
- (4) In a long monologue, Sulaymān contemplates about killing Kleber.
- (5) Muḥammad and Sulaymān's other friends are looking for him throughout Cairo.
- (6) In the General's palace garden, waiting by a tree for Kleber to appear, Sulaymān speaks again to the chorus about the decision he has taken to kill Kleber. Kleber also converses with the chorus about the possibility of being killed by a knife.
- (7) Kleber's friend Ġābilān approaches Kleber and Sulaymān too. Ġābilān recognizes Sulaymān since he had asked for charity some days before and tells Kleber to be careful. However, Kleber does not even remember him and maintains that nobody in Cairo has

weapons anymore. So, he let him come closer and Sulaymān stabs both. Kleber gets killed, while Ğābilān is blessed.

- (8) A messenger informs sheikh Miṣbāḥ and his friends about what has happened: Sulaymān has killed Kleber and has been captured by the soldiers. A special court will be established the day after in order to judge him.
- (9) At the hospital, Ğābilān tells the new general Menou that before dying Kleber had said something to his killer. And the latter had answered him. He is sure about that and thinks that it is quite strange. Menou orders him to never tell anyone that story.
- (10) The chorus comments on the play by giving a final statement about judgment and justice.

### **Plot of Qiṣṣat al-Zīr Sālim**

**Genealogical excursus.** In the ancient time, there were four brothers: Muḍar, Iyād, Anmār and Rabī'a. The Tubba' kings of Yemen descend from Iyād, while Rabī'a and his half-brother Murra rule the tribes of Bakr and Taġlib, along the Syrian border. Amongst Rabī'a's five sons are Kulayb and Sālim, known as al-Zīr, while his daughter, Asmā al-Dībā', is married to Murra's son Hammām. Amongst Murra's other sons are Ğassās and Sultān, while his beautiful daughter, Ğalīla, is betrothed to her cousin, Kulayb. (1-3)

**King Tubba' Ḥasān's invasion.** The despotic ruler of the Yemenis was advised by his vizier that Rabī'a and Murra rival him in power and summons his army. He moves against Damascus and executes Rabī'a, after which Murra submits. After hearing of the beauty of Ğalīla, Tubba' demands that she is given to him as a bride (5-10). Murra is forced to agree to this, but Kulayb is advised by the saintly (*al-'ābid*) Nu'mān to attack him by smuggling men into his palace concealed in the chests that Ğalīla is to take with her. (10-13)

**Fake marriage and Tubba''s murder.** Kulayb accompanies the bridal party, dressed as a jester in furs, with mules' tails dangling from his hair. Murra is advised by a diviner who reads the sand (*al-rammāl*) that men are hiding in the chests, but the slaves cannot find them (13-14). A female diviner knows exactly where the men hide, but she decides to help the Banū Qays instead of telling Tubba' about the trap (14-15). 'The jester' is asked to perform in front of Tubba', who is persuaded to remove his warning device. Kulayb uses a wooden sword in his dance and asks for Tubba''s sword. Tubba' is reluctant to give this to him but eventually agrees after Ğalīla has started to seduce him. It is only when Kulayb has the sword in his hand that Tubba' realizes who he must be. He then asks for mercy, but Kulayb repeats that he has to kill him as he has to avenge his father, Rabī'a. At this point, Tubba' speaks twice. First, he asks for one hour in order to tell what happened in the past and what will happen in the future, giving a prophecy that says that Kulayb will be killed by Ğassās, the son of Murra, and al-Zīr will spread the war all over the country. He foretells the coming of the prophet Jesus and then Muhammad, the different prophets, the Omayyad, then the Abbasids and then the coming of Gog and

Magog (19-21). Kulayb asks him to tell about his father's assassination. Then Kulayb kills him (22).

**Kulayb marries Ğalīla**, who asks him to have a splendid palace built for her. 'Umrān, the cousin of the dead Tubba', leads an army to avenge him but, after a confrontation with Kulayb, he is killed by the latter (23-25).

**Ğalīla against al-Zīr and al-Zīr against the lions.** Sand divination warns Murra's sons that al-Zīr will be a source of danger to them. They approach their sister, Ğalīla, who promises to have him killed (26-27). She tells Kulayb that he tried to dishonor her (27-8). Ğalīla tells Kulayb he must kill his brother in a way that people will not talk, so she suggests to Kulayb to invite al-Zīr to go hunting. In this occasion, al-Zīr saves Kulayb from a lion and in another occasion, in which Kulayb leaves him in a well, he saves his brother again, this time from being crushed by horses (30). Ğalīla then pretends to be sick. She maintains that only the lioness' milk can save her. So, she asks al-Zīr to fetch the milk of a lioness for her (31). He takes the milk and goes back to the castle. Ğalīla is angry (32). This time, Kulayb pretends to be sick and asks for water from the Lions' Well. Al-Zīr collects the water, then rides back to the castle on a lion that has killed his donkey (33-5). He finally retires to the Lions' Well for three years (36).

**Su'ād, alias Ḥarb.** Tubba' had a sister. When she was young, Su'ād, also called Ḥarb (war) was an amazon who would only marry a man who could defeat her in a duel (36). Her husband, Sa'd had later gone blind and she had ruled in his stead (37). Su'ād comes to avenge her brother. She meets Ğassās and he welcomes her when she tells him she is a poetess and wants him to protect her special camel scenting of musk (37-8). In the meanwhile, Kulayb had asked al-Zīr to take over the chieftainship of the Banu Taġlib, saying that he was growing old but al-Zīr refused (39-40).

**Kulayb's murder.** Ğassās allows Su'ād to let her camel pasture in Kulayb's vineyard. As the camel is damaging the garden, Kulayb orders the gardener to kill her. Su'ād wants Ğassās to kill Kulayb. Ğassās sends a message to him, but this is intercepted by Su'ād who substitutes it with an insulting poem. Kulayb then has his messenger beaten. Once Ğassās sees him, he wants to kill Kulayb even though his family is against his will. When Kulayb is riding his horse close to his castle unarmed, Ğassās hits his back with his spear. Right after, Ğassās repents his actions, upon his request, brings Kulayb some water, then runs away towards his camp. One of Su'ād's slave joins Kulayb and reveals Su'ād's trick. Helped by the slave, Kulayb writes with his own blood on a plate stone two poems addressed to his brother al-Zīr asking him to never have peace with the sons of Murra. Upon Kulayb's request, the slave finishes him. He then brings to his mistress a tissue soaked in Kulayb's blood, then she disappears. Ğassās is proud of his crime, while Murra blames him for the dangerous consequences his action can have on al-Zīr reaction. The

sons of Murra send a servant to fetch Hammām, one of their brothers, who as usual is with al-Zīr at the Well of Lions. (-49)

**The first part of the war.** Al-Zīr allows Hammām to return unharmed, but later kills Hammām's son Šaybān, his own nephew who was offending him (49-53). Murra gathers a conspicuous army which he divides into three divisions but is defeated in a battle that lasts three months. Nu'mān warns al-Zīr that a dream has revealed that he will suffer seven years' of misfortune. Ğassās also has a dream which is interpreted with the meaning that if he can succeed in taking al-Zīr's horse he will be victorious (60). Ğassās attacks Kulayb's palace while al-Zīr is absent. He breaks in, kills the grooms and takes al-Zīr's horse (61). Al-Zīr's younger brother dresses as a groom, meets Ğassās, manages to take the horse and rides it to a place where al-Zīr has laid an ambush against Banu Murra's knights. He gives the horse back to al-Zīr who kills all the knights with his shouts (63). Al-Zīr is in the habit of riding to Kulayb's grave to ask whether he is yet satisfied with the vengeance. After some years of war, a man hides in Kulayb's grave in order to reply when al-Zīr asks if enough vengeance has been taken. Al-Zīr pulls the man out by the beard, then he spears and rewards him. (65-69). Ğassās now asks the king of Abyssinia for help, but al-Zīr disguises himself as a poet, visits the king's camp and kills him, after which the king's men and the Ğassās' followers fight each other at night in confusion (69-71).

**Under Ḥakmūn's protection.** Al-Zīr is advised again by Nu'mān to stop the fighting for seven years, again. Unexpectedly, he is captured while drunk and he is brought to his sister al-Ḍibā' (71). Instead of killing him, she puts him in a chest and floats him out to sea and makes the sons of Murra believe she has burned him (75). Fishermen find al-Zīr and their king, the Jewish Ḥakmūn, orders them to save him. After the king's doctor heals him, al-Zīr presents two contradictory stories regarding his identity so Ḥakmūn first sends him to prison, then employs him to look after his horses. There, al-Zīr looks after two strong, and extraordinary horses born from a mare and a water-horse, al-Aḥrağ and Abū Hağlān. A Christian king attacks Ḥakmūn's city and, on the prompting of his daughter, Hind/Ester, he asks al-Zīr for help. Al-Zīr's help is decisive in overcoming the attack. Al-Zīr now reveals his identity and is allowed to go back to the Banu Murra. Ḥakmūn gives al-Zīr his favorite horse and all the weapons he needs (82). This horse, however, is taken from the ship in his absence by Murra himself, who gives it to Ğassās. Al-Zīr must return to Ḥakmūn's city to fetch its foal, then he approaches Ğassās (83).

**The second part of the war.** A peace proposal brought by Murra's son, Sulṭān, is rejected by Kulayb's daughter, Yamāma (84-92). In the fight that follows, al-Zīr is thrice trapped in concealed pits. His horse leaps out of the first two, and he is rescued from the third, where Murra is killed (93-94). Al-Zīr kills Šaybūn, the other son of his sister al-Ḍibā', after having told him repeatedly to desist (96-99). Hammām fights al-Zīr in order to



avenge his son. Al-Zīr is not aware of the adversary's identity which he will only discover when Hammām is dying. Al-Diba' forgives him and moves to his place.

**News of al-Ġarū.** When Kulayb died, Ġalīla was pregnant with Haġras, called al-Ġarū who first grew up with Banu Murra, and was loved by his uncle Ġassās. When he was fifteen years old, he quarreled with his cousin 'Aġīb (104-105) so, he left his uncle's house and went to live with Munġid, who was one of his father's uncles, the only one who escaped Kulayb's revenge after they all submitted to Tubba'. Haġras grew up believing that his father was Šālīs, a son of Murra killed by al-Zīr. Munġid treated him as a son. Now Ġalīla and Haġras go back to the Banu Murra to fight al-Zīr (110). In the meantime, a diviner informs al-Zīr about someone of his parentage who will kill Ġassās (110).

**The end of the war.** Haġras is given Ġassās' horse, which was formerly al-Zīr's. (111). When asked by her uncle about her brother's existence, Yamāma reveals that her father Kulayb once showed her a way to recognize if someone is from the family. It consists in throwing an apple at him three times. If he manages to cut the apple in two halves all three times, then he is from the family (112). Haġras passes the test and Yamāma tells him of his true identity. Haġras claims to hear an explanation from his mother (113). The day after, he joins al-Zīr persuaded that he must kill his uncle Ġassās (114). It is agreed that he should pretend to wound al-Zīr, who carries a bladder filled with blood. Ġassās, who has had an ominous dream, dismounts to kill him, and is himself killed by Haġras. The war had lasted for forty years (116).

**An epilogue** covers the adventures of al-'Aws, the nephew of Malik bin al-Haġras and the death of al-Zīr (128).

### **Plot of the play *al-Zīr Sālim*<sup>195</sup>**

#### **ACT ONE (171 – 205)**

- (1) In the hall of the throne, Murra (King of the Bakr and Ġalīla's father), invites her daughter's son, the nineteen-year-old Haġras, to take the throne formerly belonging to his dead father Kulayb, king of Bakr and Taġlib. Haġras is reluctant as he first wants to know the reason behind the blood feud linked to the throne. Quick accounts of previous facts amplify Haġras' curiosity about the past. Characters start reenacting some of the previous events.
- (2) Ġassās is jealous of his cousin and brother-in-law, King Kulayb, while the last one expresses his happiness about his family and his possessions. Sālim, Kulayb's brother, enters wielding a sword in his hand. Ġalīla warns him that no one can carry weapons anymore. Then she complains to her maid that her husband is not upset with his brother.

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<sup>195</sup> Note that the scenes in the play are not numbered. The numeration is useful for our study.

- (3) In another part of the stage, in Sālim's room, inside the royal palace, Sālim has fun drinking and reciting poetry with his companions. They reenact the adventure of Sālim killing a lion in the Lions Well. A girl, Sālim's jester 'Aġīb and Sālim play some tricks. Suddenly Sālim goes away. Haġras comments on the scene.
- (4) In the palace's garden, Sālim is now acting out an imaginary fight with Kulayb. They love and respect each other, despite their differences: Sālim loves partying while Kulayb is the king and must behave properly in his role. Aside from this, Ġalīla tells her maid she is scared that her baby might not be a boy.
- (5) Sālim and 'Aġīb play some jokes. The girl confirms that she is a female jinn from the Lions Well. Sālim menaces her in the exact moment she has gone away and Ġalīla has entered the room, so that, unconsciously, Sālim menaces Ġalīla.
- (6) Upon Ġalīla's pressure, Kulayb chases Sālim away from the town for one year.
- (7) Haġras accuses his mother of being the cause of the clash while she maintains that the conflict had started before, due to the murder of Ḥasan al-Tubba'.
- (8) It is the day of Ḥasan and Ġalīla's marriage. Ġalīla asks for her jester to enter, who is Kulayb in disguise. Then, Ġalīla wants the chests with her clothes and the doors to be shut down. While Ġassās and Sālim come out from the baskets, Kulayb and Ġalīla lock the doors. Kulayb tells Ḥasan he is there to avenge his father. Ḥasan first tries to save himself offering his realm and his possessions, then he blows out the candles with the aim of spreading evil. Indeed, when the light is on again, Ḥasan is dead and it is not clear whether he has been killed by Sālim or Ġassās. Kulayb was far from the throne. Under Ġalīla's pressure, they agree that Kulayb, her future husband, will be the king.
- (9) Ġassās complains to his brother Hammām that he should have been entitled to the throne instead of Kulayb while Hammām tells him to be cautious. They go out and Su'ād, Ḥasan's older blind sister, and her husband Sa'd, who accompanies her reluctantly are in front of the castle. Ġassās arrives. Su'ād provokes him. She says that she came to warn the king as the stars told her that Ġassās is the one entitled to the throne since he killed Ḥasan. Ġassās reveals his identity and Su'ād asks him for protection in exchange. With the pretext of wanting a grape, she enters the garden. The gardener calls for help while Ġassās tells him to calm down. Kulayb and his young daughter Yamāma arrive. Kulayb chases Su'ād, while Ġassās protects her. The two men fight and Kulayb becomes seriously injured. Ġassās runs away while Kulayb asks Yamāma to bring him some water. Ġalīla arrives and, before dying, Kulayb invokes his brother Sālim, asking him for vendetta.
- (10) Sālim is informed about his brother's death.

## **ACT TWO (209 – 242)**

- (1) In the hall of the throne, Su'ād wants to express her reasons and Haġras allows her. She insists that the Ġassās is the guilty one, not her, who acted because of the pain for her brother's murder. Haġras states that Ġassās was the cause of the war, but Murra defends him since they had proposed an agreement with Sālim.
- (2) In the same hall, Sālim sits on the throne and Yamāma sits on his left while everybody is present (except for Ġassās). Murra asks for peace. Sālim lets Yamāma answer instead of him. She wants her father alive. Despite Murra's consistent offers and Ġalīla's attempts to convince her daughter, Yamāma and Sālim decide that until Kulayb is dead, the war will be on. Ġalīla is chased away from the palace.

- (3) Alone, Ğassās reflects on how he has killed his cousin and has become an enemy of his own people when his brothers arrive and inform him that the war has started and he has been appointed to the chief by their father, Murra.
- (4) A battle begins.
- (5) Asmā, Sālim's sister and Hammām's wife, cries for her husband's death. She swears a vendetta to her brother who has killed him. Soldiers (in the present) comment.
- (6) In a place without precise references, Sālim talks with a figure similar to Kulayb. Kulayb is indifferent to all proposals from Sālim to satisfy him. But he says some enigmatic words about the throne to him.
- (7) Ğassās fears Sālim as if he was a devil. Asmā goes to her father singing strange words.
- (8) In the desert, Ğalīla visits her little son, Hağras, whom she has entrusted to Munğid. Ğalīla makes sure her son is safe and leaves Kulayb's sword to Munğid's servant.
- (9) Addressing the stars, Sālim asks Kulayb if he is satisfied after he has killed a thousand people from the Bakr. Yamāma is with him. Ten years have passed. Now is time to kill the children.
- (10) Amongst Sālim's army, a messenger says that Sālim has killed his own nephew, the son of Asmā, that Asmā has come out with her dead child in her arms, has accused Sālim and told him to be careful of his other nephew, Kulayb's son. In his palace, Sālim sends a messenger to the Bakr to tell Ğalīla to meet the in the Big Valley the after; the two alone. People and soldiers comment on the events.
- (11) In the Big Valley, Sālim obtains Ğalīla's confession: she has a son, but she will not tell him where he is.
- (12) Sālim alone with the stars meditates about absolute justice and life.
- (13) In the Bakr's houses, Ğassās asks his brother Sulṭān and some of his men to kill Sālim.
- (14) In front of Sālim's tent, Sālim's soldiers leave Ğassās' men and Sulṭān enters the tent and comes out carrying Sālim's body as they are not able to understand what is going on and act. 'Ağīb realizes that Sālim is not in the tent anymore.
- (15) The four men bring Sālim to Asmā's tent. Ğassās orders his men to leave Sālim to her so she can kill him while they go fighting his men. Asmā is compassionate. 'Ağīb arrives and Asmā leaves Sālim to him.
- (16) In a tent in the desert, al-Ḥakīm the doctor, heals Sālim, who will sleep for seven years and will have forgotten everything.

### **ACT THREE (245 – 283)**

- (1) Characters from the present comment. The army speaks as a chorus.
- (2) Ğassās wants his son Zayd to marry Yamāma. Murra and Ğalīla oppose his plan. Ğalīla says the throne is for her son. Ğassās has known from the stars that only the sword of his victim would kill him, and he is confident as he has collected all of the swords. He does not know, though, that Ğalīla had given Kulayb's sword to Hağras. He promises Ğalīla that after the bridal party she will be dead.
- (3) Ğalīla is worried about the future.
- (4) Sālim wakes up after seven years. Since he has lost his memory, 'Ağīb makes him believe the two of them work together as a poet and a jester.
- (5) Hağras while in the desert hears some party sounds coming from the town and wants to join it whereas his servant tries to stop him. Some of Ğassās' knights are looking Hağras. Sālim protects the young man by killing one of the soldiers, while the others run away.

Hağras gives him his sword to show his gratitude. Hağras goes towards the town. Sālīm and ‘Ağīb go too as Sālīm sees the party as a good opportunity for them to work.

- (6) Hağras meets Yamāma who is hiding close to her father’s tomb. After some exchanges, they discover that they are brother and sister. Three knights from the Bakr surround them and find out that the boy is Kulayb’s son. Hağras faces them.
- (7) In the hall of the throne, Ğassās orders to show him all his richness together with what formerly belonged to Kulayb. Zayd does not want to marry Yamāma. While the party has started, Sālīm enters and plays the jester, then Ğassās recognizes his sword. Sālīm gets his memory back and kills Ğassās. The guard enters with Hağras and Yamāma. Hağras asks Sālīm if he is satisfied now.
- (8) Final comments, mostly from Hağras, about power. Now he will take the throne.

### **Plots of the tales from the *Arabian Nights***

#### ***The Tale of the imaginary table* (n. 43-44)**

The tale portrays a rich man's derisory treatment of a passing visitor motivated by greed for the host's generosity.

The sixth brother of the barber was a poor beggar. One day he entered a splendid mansion. Upon learning that his unexpected guest was a hungry beggar, the wealthy owner insisted the beggar share his dinner. He invited him to wash his hands before the meal, but there was no water and the host was only performing the act of washing his hands. The incident developed further when the host called his attendants to bring in the food. Many servants entered making as though they were carrying in dishes laden with food and placing them on the table. Thinking his host must be fond of jokes, the poor man joined the play. Then he surprised the host by striking his neck. When the host asked the beggar the reason behind this action, the beggar answered that it was because of the wine, which caused the loss of his manners. The host enjoyed the extent of his guest's humour upon his trick. Subsequently, real food was brought in and a long companionship started between the two men. After twenty years, the host died, and his property was confiscated by the Caliph.

Then, misadventures started. The beggar fled the city for his life and while roaming in the desert he was seized by a band of Bedouins and subsequently imprisoned. Every day he was tortured and asked to pay ransom for his life. One day, the chieftain's wife, after repeated attempts to lure him, finally triumphed in her seduction. While she was sitting on the beggar's knee, the chieftain entered the tent and, with his knife, castrated him and cut off both his lips. He was then carried to a barren hillside and left there to die.

#### ***The Tale of the Sack* (n. 331)**

Two men fall victim to a strange delusion that they own a small sack containing the entire world. One day, as ‘Alī was sitting in his shop, a stranger came and began to bargain for certain goods. Suddenly he reached for a little bag and walked away with it as if it was his. ‘Alī stopped him and tried to get his bag back but to no avail. It was suggested that the two of them head to the qadi to resolve the matter. When asked who was the owner

of the bag, the stranger immediately claimed its ownership as he had lost it the day before and found it the same day on 'Alī's counter. The qadi told the stranger to list the contents of the bag. The stranger mentioned objects, animals, riches, palaces, garments, people and many more items. The qadi then posed to 'Alī the same question. Astonished by the stranger's response, 'Alī then listed similar items but on larger scale than his counterpart before him. When the stranger heard 'Alī's testimony, he cried out, adding more objects to his list. 'Alī was enraged by his opponent and he too added more items. Finally, the qadi checked the contents of the bag and extracted a little orange peel and some olive stones. 'Alī at this moment abandoned his claim over the bag insisting that this one must belong to his opponent.

### *The Tale of Ma'rūf the Cobbler* (n. 982-1000)

Ma'rūf is a poor and honest cobbler from Cairo. His wife was wicked. She asks Ma'rūf for a dessert with some honey. He finds it only with molasses, so she did not accept the neighbors' attempt at reconciliation and instead makes a complaint to the qadi. After many misadventures, Ma'rūf escaped from his cruel wifethanks to a jinn who brought him to a far country. There, he met 'Alī, an old neighbor from Cairo who decided to help him. Following 'Alī's advice, Ma'rūf donated the money 'Alī had given to him to the poor and pretended to be rich and awaiting his caravan. According to 'Alī's plan, suddenly gifts and loans poured down on him from merchants avaricious of his fortunes and generosity. However, the cobbler kept distributing the money to the poor. As expected, with time, the creditors' patience began to fade. 'Alī alerted Ma'rūf, but the latter replied seriously that all debts would be settled once the caravan arrived. Scared about Ma'rūf's reaction, 'Alī advised his fellow merchants to approach the king and let him deal with the matter. The greedy king, after hearing the merchants' story, decided to befriend Ma'rūf. Upon his vizier's warning, he tested Ma'rūf's knowledge on the value of a stone. Ma'rūf passed the test by throwing away the stone disdainfully, crushing it underfoot and claiming it was hardly worth the price of a thousand dinars, which was the exact value the king had paid for the precious stone. Convinced of the visitor's wealth, the king offered him his daughter's hand in marriage and free access to his coffers. Ma'rūf nearly emptied the king's coffers, spending enormous amounts for the marriage and donating to the poor and yet the caravan did not arrive. Again, the vizier convinced the king to test Ma'rūf on his real identity through the princess. Asked by the princess, Ma'rūf confessed his whole story to her. Instead of reporting it to the father, she decided to save him. They agreed on a plan. The best thing to do for Ma'rūf would be to flee the city and send her news of his location. The following day, the princess told her father that a letter had arrived to Ma'rūf informing him that the caravan had been delayed after an attack by a band of Bedouins. Consequently, Ma'rūf took off to hasten the arrival of the caravan. While the cobbler journeyed in the desert, he accidentally found a huge treasure and a jinn who provided him with even more richness. So, he actually came back to the city

with his caravan. After many other adventures, Ma'rūf ruled as king happily ever after until his death.

### **Plot of the play 'Alī Ğanāḥ al-Tabrīzī wa tābi'uhu Quffa**

#### **ACT I**

(1) The garden of al-Tabrīzī (223-246). In the fine garden of his house, 'Alī Ğanāḥ al-Tabrīzī discusses imagination with his servant Ṣawāb. Within a few hours this prince is about to lose his palace, since through an abundant extravagant life-style and generous hospitality, he has lost his entire inheritance.

Quffa, a passing cobbler, arrives begging for food. He listens to 'Alī and Quffa's talk about food and (mis)understands that they are about to eat, so he enters the palace. The prince welcomes this stranger and orders Ṣawāb to layout a most lavish banquet for their lunch. The servant, convinced of his master's madness, due to his loss of fortune, complies with the request.

As there is no food anywhere in the house and all the cooking utensils and serving dishes have also been sold, the servant only pretends to serve the meal. Quffa fears his host's madness, but afterwards enjoys the game. He even improvises a euphoric state resulting from the fine imaginary wine he drank and strikes the prince. The prince becomes angry. With the imaginary meal, an imaginary whip is brought to 'Alī who hits Quffa, who is amazed since he actually feels from the lashes on his back. As soon as the new proprietor arrives, al-Tabrīzī decides to depart on a journey to a distant land. Quffa has developed a special liking to this strange prince and accepts to accompany him.

(2) The market (247-278). 'Alī and Quffa arrive in a city in the far East where they are struck by its phenomenally poor population. This, for 'Alī, is an indication of great wealth held by an affluent minority, so he decides to pretend to be a wealthy tourist awaiting the arrival of his rich caravan with his servant. 'Alī discovers Quffa has a hidden purse containing his life's savings. He confiscates the money and gives it to the poor. This strange performance prompts the city's rich merchants to lend 'Alī money in the hope of doubling their reward when the caravan arrives. 'Alī accepts their offers and keeps distributing the money to the poor.

(3) The throne room (279-298). News of 'Alī's generosity soon reaches the king who is also deceived into believing 'Alī's presumed claim to abounding wealth. 'Alī succeeds in the passing the knowledge of valuable stones test. The king, against his vizier's objection who wants the princess to himself, offers 'Alī his daughter's hand in marriage and the keys to his coffers.

#### **INTERLUDE**

The sack (301-304). Two men undergo a trial in front a qadi and an audience. Both of them claim to have ownership of a bag. Since the bag is there, the qadi orders both to describe what is inside it so he can understand who the real owner is. Each of them declares the presence of enormous properties inside the bag. They start with a couple of

stylets, then increase the dimensions of the objects until they state that castles and animals are inside. Finally, the qadi opens the bag. Inside there is a piece of bread and an olive.

## ACT II

(1) The house of al-Tabrīzī (307-342). Quffa claims his part of the treasure. ‘Alī answers with philosophical arguments about the value of things, then he reassures Quffa that he will pay him back when the caravan arrives. At his point Quffa’s patience runs short and he begins to drink wine. Suspicion of ‘Alī’s actual circumstances arises when the caravan fails to arrive, and the massive loans are left unpaid. The princess confesses her doubts to her maid. The vizier persuades the king to make the princess inquire about her husband’s real situation. However, ‘Alī, instead of answering her questions, tells some unrelated whimsical stories. The king, who was spying on ‘Alī, gets injured. Meanwhile, Quffa has become drunk. Neither ‘Alī nor the princess manage to calm him down.

(2) The market at night (343-346). Alone and drunk, Quffa reflects confusedly about his state. When he meets a soldier, he asks him to bring him to his superior claiming that something menaces the king.

(3) The market in the day (347-360). ‘Alī has been brought in the main place and is waiting for his death sentence. Indeed, for a significant reward of thirty dirhams Quffa has confessed their story to the king. However, moved by pity and his special love for ‘Alī, Quffa rectifies the situation by disguising himself as a messenger from ‘Alī’s caravan coming to inform his master of its long-awaited arrival. In this confusion of happiness and apologies from the debtors, ‘Alī, Quffa, and the princess, who chooses to remain with her husband, escape from the city.

### **From the Arabian Nights, n. 331, *The Tale of the Sack***

قال القاضي: في أي شيء جئتما؟ وما قضية خبركما؟ فقلت: نحن خصمان إليك تداعينا بحكمك تراضينا فقال: أيكما المدعي؟ فتقدم الكردي وقال: أيد الله مولانا القاضي إن هذا الجراب جراي وكل ما فيه متاعي وقد ضاع مني ووجدته مع هذا الرجل. فقال القاضي: ومتى ضاع منك؟ فقال الكردي: من أمس هذا اليوم وبت لفقده بلا نوم. فقال القاضي: إن كنت تعرفه فصف لي ما فيه؟ فقال الكردي: في جراي هذا مرودان من لجين وفيه أكحال للعين ومنديل لليدين ووضعت فيه شرابتين وشمعدانين وهو مشتمل على بيتين وطبقتين وملعتين ومخدة ونطعين وابريقين وصينية وطشتين وقدرة وزلعتين ومغرفة ومسلة ومزودين وهرة وكلبتين وقصعة وقعيدتين وجبة وفروتين [وبقرة وعجلين وجمل]<sup>196</sup> وناقطين وجاموسة وثورين ولبوة وسبعين ودبة وتعلبين ومرتبة وسريرين وقصراً وقاعتين ورواقاً ومقعدين ومطبخاً ببايين وجماعة أكراد يشهدون أن الجراب جراي. فقال القاضي: ما تقول أنت يا هذا؟ فقلت إليه: يا أمير المؤمنين وقد أبهتني الكردي بكلامه فقلت: أعز الله مولانا القاضي أنا في جراي هذا دويرة خراب واخرى بلا باب ومقصورة للكلاب وفيه

<sup>196</sup> Our edition, contrarily to others, amongst which the text from Calcutta edition Lyons translated, do not include in the list “وبقرة وعجلين وجمل” (a cow with two calves, a camel) that are mentioned in the play (see further).

للصبيان كتاب وشباب يلعبون الكعاب وفيه خيام وأطناب ومدينة البصرة وبغداد وقصر شداد بن عاد وكور حداد وشبكة صياد وأوتاد وبنات وأولاد وألف قواد يشهدون أن الجراب جرابي. فلما سمع الكردي هذا الكلام بكى وانتحب وقال: يا مولانا القاضي إن جرابي هذا معروف وكل ما فيه موصوف في جرابي هذا حصون وقلاع وكراكي وسباع ورجال يلعبون بالشطرنج والرقاع وفي جرابي هذا حجرة ومهران وفحل وحصانان ورمحان طوبلان وهو مشتمل على سبع وأرنبيين ومدينة وقربيتين وقحبة وقوادين شاطرين ومخنث وعلقين<sup>197</sup> وأعمى وبصيرين وأعرج وكسحين وقسيس وشماسين وبطريق وراهبين وقاض وشاهدين وهم يشهدون أن الجراب جرابي فقال القاضي: ما تقول يا علي؟ فامتلاً تغيظاً يا أمير المؤمنين وتقدمت إليه وقلت: أيد الله مولانا القاضي. وأدرك شهرزاد الصباح فسكتت عن الكلام المباح.

قالت: بلغني أيها الملك السعيد أن العجمي قال: فامتلت غيظاً يا أمير المؤمنين وتقدمت إليه وقلت: أيد الله مولانا القاضي أنا في جرابي هذا زرد وصفاح وخزائن سلاح وألف كبش نطاح وفيه للغنم مراح وألف كلب نباح وبساتين وكروم وازهار ومشوم وتين وتفاح وصور وأشباح وقناني وأقداح وعرائس ومغاني وأفراح وهرج وصياح وأقطار فساح وأخوة نجاح ورفقة صباح ومعهم سيوف ورمح ملاح وقوس ونشاب وأصدقاء وأحاب وخلان وأصحاب ومحابس للعقاب وندماء للشراب وطنبور ونايات وأعلام ورايات وصبيان وبنات وعرائس مجليات وجوار مغنيات وخمس حبشيات وثلاث هندية وأربع مدنيات وعشرون روميات وخمسون تركيبات وسبعون عجميات وثمانون كرديات وتسعون جرجيات والدجلة والفرات وشبكة صياد وقداحة وزناد وإرم ذات العماد وألف علق<sup>198</sup> وقواد وميادين واصطبلات ومساجد وحمامات وبناء وتجار وخشبة ومسمار وعبد أسود ومزمار ومقدم وركبدار ومدن وأمصار ومائة ألف دينار والكوفة مع الأنبار وعشرون صندوقاً ملأه بالقماش وخمسون حاصلاً للمعاش وغزة وعسقلان من دمياط إلى أصوان وإيوان كسرى وأنو شروان وملك سليمان ومن وادي نعمان إلى أرض خراسان وبلخ وأصبهان ومن الهند إلى بلاد السودان وفيه أطال الله عمر مولانا القاضي غلائل وعراض وألف موس ماض تحلق ذقن القاضي إن لم يخش عقابي ولم يحكم بأن الجراب جرابي. فلما سمع القاضي هذا الكلام تحير عقله من ذلك وقال: ما أراكما إلا شخصين نحسين أو رجلين زنديقين تلعبان بالقضاة والحكام ولا تخشيان من الملام لأنه ما وصف الواصفون ولا سمع السامعون بأعجب مما وصفتما ولا تكلموا بمثل ما تكلمتما والله إن من الصين إلى شجرة أم غيلان ومن بلاد فارس إلى أرض السودان ومن وادي نعمان إلى أرض خراسان لا يسع ما ذكرتماه ولا يصدق ما ادعيتماه فهل هذا الجراب بحر ليس له قرار أو يوم العرض الذي يجمع الأبرار والفجار. ثم إن القاضي أمر بفتح الجراب ففتحه وإذا فيه خبز وليمون وجبن وزيتون ثم رميت الجراب قدام الكردي ومضيت.

Adapted translation from Lyons 2008, n. 295-6

<sup>197</sup> See note 163.

<sup>198</sup> See note 163.



The qadi asked why we had come, telling us to explain the case. I said: ‘We have come to you as litigants with opposing claims and are content to accept your arbitration.’ ‘Which of you is the claimant?’ the qadi asked. At that, the Kurd went forward and said: ‘Master, this bag and its contents are mine. I lost it and then found it in the possession of this man.’ ‘When did you lose it?’ the qadi asked. ‘Yesterday,’ replied the Kurd, ‘and I spent a sleepless night because of its loss.’ ‘As you have recognized it, describe what is in it,’ the qadi told him. The Kurd said: ‘In it there are two silver kohl sticks, together with kohl for my eyes, a hand towel in which I placed two gilt cups and two candlesticks. There are two tents, two plates, two spoons, a pillow, two leather mats, two jugs, a china dish, two basins, a cooking pot, two clay jars, a ladle, a pack needle, two provision bags, a cat, two bitches, one large bowl and two large sacks, a gown, two furs, [a cow with two calves, a camel], two she-camels, a buffalo, two bulls, a lioness and two lions, a she-bear, two foxes, a mattress, two couches, a palace, two halls, a colonnade, two chairs, a kitchen with two doors and a group of Kurds who will bear witness to the fact that this is my bag.’ ‘What have you to say?’ the qadi asked me. I had been flabbergasted by what the Kurd had said and so I went forward and said: ‘May God honour our master the qadi. There was nothing in my bag except for one little ruined house and another one with no door, a dog kennel and a boys’ school, with boys playing dice. It had tents and their ropes, the cities of Basra and Baghdad, the palace of Šaddād ibn ‘Ād, a blacksmith’s forge, a fishing net, tent pegs, girls, boys and a thousand pimps who will testify that the bag is mine.’ When the Kurd heard what I had to say, he wept and sobbed. ‘My master the qadi,’ he said, ‘this bag of mine is well known and its contents have been described. In it are fortresses and castles, cranes, beasts of prey, chess players and chessboards. There is a mare and two foals, a stallion and two horses, together with two long spears. It also has a lion, two hares, a city and two villages, a prostitute with two villainous pimps, a hermaphrodite, two good-for-nothings<sup>199</sup>, one blind man and two who can see, a lame man and two who are paralyzed, a priest, two deacons, a patriarch and two monks, a qadi and two notaries, and these will bear witness that this is my bag.’ ‘What have you to say, ‘Alī?’ asked the qadi and, bursting with rage, I came forward and said: ‘May God aid our master the qadi.’

Morning now dawned and Shahrazad broke off from what she had been allowed to say. Then, when it was the two hundred and ninety-sixth night, SHE CONTINUED: I have heard, O fortunate king, that ‘Alī said: I came forward bursting with rage and said: ‘May God aid our master the qadi. In this bag of mine is a coat of mail, a sword and stores of weapons. There are a thousand butting rams, a sheep-fold, a thousand barking dogs, orchards, vines, flowers, scented herbs, figs, apples, pictures and statues, bottles and drinking cups, beautiful slave girls, singing girls, wedding feasts with noise and tumult, wide open spaces, successful men, dawn raiders with swords, spears, bows and arrows, friends, dear ones, companions, comrades, men imprisoned and awaiting punishment,

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<sup>199</sup> See note 162.

drinking companions, mandolins, flutes, banners and flags, boys, girls, unveiled brides and singing slave girls. There are five girls from Abyssinia, three from India, four from al-Medina, twenty from Rum, fifty Turkish girls and seventy Persians, eighty Kurdish girls and ninety Georgians. The Tigris and the Euphrates are there, together with a fishing net, flint and steel for striking sparks, Iram of the Columns and a thousand good-for-nothings and pimps. There are exercise grounds, stables, mosques, baths, a builder, a carpenter, a plank of wood, a nail, a black slave with a fife, a captain and a groom, cities and towns, a hundred thousand dinars, Kufa and al-Anbar, twenty chests filled with materials, fifty storehouses for food, Gaza, Ascalon, the land from Damietta to Aswan, the palace of Khosrow Anushirwan, the kingdom of Solomon and the land from Wadi Nu'mān to Khurasan, as well as Balkh and Isfahan and what lies between India and the land of the Blacks. It also contains – may God prolong the life of our master the qadi – gowns, turban cloth and a thousand sharp razors to shave off the qadi's beard, unless he fears my vengeance and rules that the bag is mine.' The qadi was bewildered by what he heard the Kurd say. 'You seem to me to be two ill-omened fellows or else two atheists who are trying to ridicule qadis and magistrates with no fear of rebuke. No one has ever described or heard of anything stranger than what you have produced, or spoken the kind of things that you have said. By God, not all the land from China to the tree of Umm Ġaylān, from Persia to the land of the Blacks or from Wadi Nu'mān to Khurasan would be big enough to contain all the things that you have mentioned. Your claims are incredible. Is this bag of yours a bottomless sea, or the Day of Resurrection on which the just and the unjust will be gathered together?' He then ordered the bag to be opened and when I did this, in it were a piece of bread, lemons, cheese and olives. I threw it in front of the Kurd and went off.

### From the interlude of the play

**الأول:** سيدي. في جراي هذا مرودان من فضة ومكحلة من الذهب. ومنديل لليدين. وكنت وضعت فيه شرابتين مذهبتين وشمعدانين. وفيه أيضا ملعقتين وطبق واحد ومخدة. وابريقين وصينية وطشت وزلعتين ومغرفة وقصعة وامرأة قعيدة أجرى عليها وجبة وبقرة لها عجلين وجملا وناقنتين وجاموسة وثورين وسبع وتعليين ومرتبة وسريرين وقصرا وقاعتين ومطبخا وبابين وجماعة من أصحابي ومرابي يشهدون أن الجراب جراي.

**القاضي:** مهما كان الذي تقول، فلا بد أن نسمع خصمك.

**الثاني:** (مغتاظا) أعز الله مولانا القاضي. أنا ما في جراي هذا إلا قصر خراب وبيت بلا باب وغشة للكلاب. وفيه للصبيان كتاب وشباب يلعبون الكرة وفيه خيام للعسكر وقصر شداد بن عاد وكور حداد وشبكة صياد وبننت حزينة وألف

فارس من أصحابي، يشهدون أن الجراب جراي.

**الأول:** (بيكي) يا مولانا القاضي، إن جراي هذا معروف وكل ما فيه موصوف. في جراي هذا احصون وقلاع، وطيور وسباع ورجال يلعبون الشطرنج. وفي جراي حجرة ومهران ورمحان طويلان وهو مشتمل

على نمر وأرنبيين ومدينة وقريتين وأعمى وبصيرين وقسيس وشماسين وقاض (مفتح العينين) وشاهدين يشهدان أن الجراب جرابي.

**القاضي:** (للثاني) أعدمك ما تضيف أنت؟

**الثاني:** (يزداد غيظاً) أيد الله مولانا القاضي. أنا في جرابي هذا زرد وصفائح وخزائن سلاح وفيه للغنم مراح وبساتين وكروم وأزهار وتين وتفاح وصور وأشباح وقناني وأقداح وعرائس ومغاني وأفراح وهرج وصياح وأصدقاء وأحاباب وأصحاب ومحابس للعقاب وندماء للشراب وطنبور ونايات وأعلام ورايات وصبيان وبنات وجوار مغنيات وقداحة وزناد وإرم ذات العماد وخشبة ومسمار ومقدم وركبدار ومائة ألف دينار وايون كسرى أنو شروان، وأسوان وخراسان. وفيه أيد الله مولانا القاضي ألف موسى ماض تذبح أهل البهتان..

**القاضي:** (يتقدم ليتناول الجراب يفحصه من الخارج) قضية نحس وخصمان زنديقان. هل هذا الجراب بحر بلا قرار أن هو كوكب جديد سيار.. (يضع يده فيه ويخرج شبيئين الواحد بعد الآخر ويعلنهما) كسرة خبز. وزيتون.

AGT: 302-4

Translation of the previous extract, from ED: 332-3

LITIGANT 1: Sir, in this bag of mine are a gold container for kohl, and two silver kohl sticks; a hand towel; two golden cups; two candlesticks; two spoons; one dish; a pillow; two jugs; a china dish; a basin; two clay jars; a ladle; one large bowl; one crippled woman I give one meal a day to; a cow with two calves; one camel and two she-camels; a buffalo; two bulls; a lion; two foxes; a mattress and two couches; a palace with two halls; a kitchen with two doors, and a bunch of friends and a usurer who will all testify that the bag's mine.

QADI, to LITIGANT 2: Whatever you say, we must also listen to your opponent.

LITIGANT 2, *resentful*: May God give you health and strength, Your Honour! In this bag of mine, there's nothing but little ruined house and another one with no door; a dog kennel and a boys' school, with boys playing football; tents for soldiers; the palace of Šaddād ibn 'Ād; a blacksmith's forge; a fishing net; a sad girl; and a thousand knights, friends of mine; who'll testify that the bag is mine.

LITIGANT 1, *crying out*: Your Honor, this bag of mine's known to everyone; and nothing in it's a secret to anyone. In this bag of mine there are forts and citadels; birds and lions; men playing chess; one room, two ponies; two long spears; a tiger and two hares, a city and two villages; one blind man and two who can see; one priest and two deacons; one open-eyed qadi and two witnesses who'll testify that the bag's mine.

QADI, to LITIGANT 2: Do you have anything to add?

LITIGANT 2, *more resentful*: The Lord give you His aid, Your Honor! In this bag of mine there are a coat of mail, swords and stores of weapons.; grazing land for sheep; orchards; vines, flowers; figs and apples; pictures and statues; bottles and drinking cups; brides, singing girls and wedding feasts with noise and tumult; friends, dear ones and comrades; men imprisoned and awaiting punishment, drinking companions, mandolins,

flutes, banners and flags, boys, girls, singing women; a flint and a fire steel; Iram of the Columns; a plank of wood and a nail; a vanguard and an army on horseback; a hundred thousand dinars; the palace of Khosrow Anushirwan; Aswan and the Khurasan; and, God save your Honor; a thousand sharp razors to slaughter who make false claims.

QADI: *stands up, steps forward, picks up the bag and examines it from the outside: An ill-fated case and a pair of godless plaintiffs. Is this bag a bottomless sea? Or a new planet traveling through space? Dips his hand into the bag and brings out two things in succession, naming them as he does so. A piece of bread... and an olive.*

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## Summary in French

### Résumé substantiel

L'effet kaléidoscope.

La réécriture dans la production dramaturgique d'Alfred Farağ comme stratégie multifonctionnelle pour une création à plusieurs niveaux.

### Introduction

L'étude de l'effet kaléidoscope dans les ouvrages d'Alfred Farağ (1929-2005) naît de la volonté d'explorer un phénomène répandu dans la production du dramaturge égyptien, un phénomène qui n'a jamais été défini en tant que tel : la réécriture. En effet, plusieurs pièces de cet auteur sont nées de la transformation d'un texte préexistant. Les réécritures ont des traits communs qui permettent à l'auteur d'atteindre des objectifs différents, comme le réinvestissement du patrimoine arabe par la reprise de textes classiques ou historiographiques et de provoquer l'intérêt d'un vaste public attiré par des sujets connus et appréciés et encoder des messages politiques. La réécriture permet également de questionner la potentialité dramatique de l'hypertexte et, généralement, son contenu et son style. Pour ces raisons et pour plusieurs d'autres qui ont été mises en évidence au cours de cette étude, la réécriture est définie comme une stratégie multifonctionnelle.

La réécriture donne lieu à une création à plusieurs niveaux. Une pièce qui réécrit un texte préexistant rappelle certainement le premier texte dans sa forme originelle. Le texte originel est le premier niveau de la création. En même temps, la pièce est un ouvrage nouveau et autonome. Les différences entre les deux textes forment un différent niveau de sens qui impose une attention sur les aspects créatifs de la pièce et sur les aspects modifiés de l'hypotexte. Par ailleurs, les niveaux se multiplient puisque les hypotextes ne sont pas des images fixes. Au contraire, elles changent selon les différentes réceptions dans le temps et l'espace aussi bien que selon la réception individuelle de chacun de nous. La réécriture fournit aussi une nouvelle image de l'hypotexte puisqu'elle affecte sa réception. Comme un kaléidoscope, la réécriture produit constamment des images en disposant et reflétant de manière différente les éléments qui composent l'hypotexte ; elle crée un effet kaléidoscope.

Cette étude permet une approche visant à discerner le procédé de création des pièces nées de la réécriture pour mieux les comprendre. Elle permet également de retracer et définir des lignes communes qui caractérisent le théâtre de Farağ et, plus en général, le théâtre arabe. Parallèlement, l'étude des particularités de la réécriture comme stratégie narrative dans la

production dramaturgique de Faraĝ peut servir d'exemple pour approcher un texte dramatique quelconque né d'une réécriture.

Quant à la réécriture, c'est un concept ample. Si l'on considère le sens du mot « réécriture », on sera d'accord sur le fait qu'il s'agit d'un texte réécrit à partir d'un autre texte. Dans cette étude, nous allons considérer la réécriture comme « une pratique consciente, volontaire, et de fait souvent annoncée, affichée par son auteur » (Gignoux 2005, 113 et 116) ; cela veut dire que notre idée de réécriture implique un caractère massif et visible pour le récepteur, une intentionnalité de la part de l'auteur et l'auto-déclaration (dans le texte ou dans le paratexte) du procédé.

Dans de telles conditions, le lecteur est censé bénéficier du jeu de l'hypertexte :

La nature du plaisir dramatique engendré par un théâtre fondé sur l'imitation : l'intérêt ne naîtra pas de la découverte d'une intrigue et de personnages radicalement nouveaux mais de la reconnaissance d'un sujet fermement ancré dans la tradition et la mémoire collectives. Ce sont donc les combinaisons nouvelles qui doivent retenir le spectateur et le lecteur.

Piegay-Gros 1996, 117

Les théories sur l'intertextualité s'allient à celles sur la réception. Il est évident que la réception de l'intertexte varie d'un lecteur à l'autre selon « son encyclopédie », c'est-à-dire, ses possibilités de remplir les non-dits du texte par ses propres connaissances (voir Eco 1998, 67 et 70). Au cours de cette étude, nous allons considérer les deux réceptionnaires des textes : le lecteur/public de la pièce et Faraĝ en tant que lecteur de l'hypotexte. En effet, le *ré-écrivain* est tout d'abord un lecteur et sa réception de l'hypotexte influence énormément son propre ouvrage. La réception de l'hypotexte de la part de Faraĝ ainsi que de la part du lecteur/public de la pièce ne peut pas être sans médiation. Des expériences indirectes de l'hypotexte que l'auteur a vécues, telles que des films, des pièces de théâtre, des représentations et des débats accompagnent le texte ou peuvent le précéder.

Invité à un travail d'identification, le public réagit parce qu'il reconnaît immédiatement l'intention et les effets de la référence à l'hypotexte. Le sens est saisi dans les zones où il s'altère « parce que produire du sens ne se réalise que par transformation d'un sens établi dans des discours déjà-là » (Peytard 1993). La lecture vise à remarquer les fractures plutôt que les congruences, l'instabilité plutôt que l'invariance (Peytard 1999). Nous allons étudier « la



réécriture qui modifie » ; « partant d'un texte premier, elle accepte l'altération et tend vers l'altérité » (Domino 1987).

Puisque des procédés analogues ont lieu pour des réécritures d'hypotextes du même genre littéraire, cette étude se divise en trois parties, chacune traitant la réécriture d'un genre littéraire différent : l'histoire, la légende et le conte. Chaque partie aborde avant tout des aspects de l'hypotexte, y compris sa réception dans le contexte de la réécriture. Ensuite, les deux textes sont comparés sur le plan du récit, des personnages, du style et des contenus.

Les ouvrages de Farağ analysés en détail sont *Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī* (Sulaymān l'Alepin, 1964) puisque cette pièce est la seule réécriture de l'histoire qui prend comme hypotexte une source en arabe (*'Ağā'ib al-āṭār fī 'l-tarāğim wa al-aḥbār*, Merveilles biographiques et historiques, 1806 de Ğabartī), *al-Zīr Sālim* (al-Zīr Sālim, 1967) - réécriture de la *sīra* homonyme – puisque c'est la seule pièce dérivée d'une légende et *'Alī Ğanāḥ al-Tabrīzī wa tābi 'uhu Quffa* ('Alī Ğanāḥ al-Tabrīzī et son valet Quffa, 1968), qui est la troisième des sept réécritures des *Mille et une Nuits* et qui montre les nombreuses tendances que Farağ va suivre pour ce type de réécriture.

### **Chapitre I. Les aspects privés de l'histoire. Le passé rencontre le présent.**

Farağ a choisi de réécrire des faits historiques du passé dans trois cas. La première fois ce fut au début de sa carrière, avec *Suqūṭ Fir'awn* (La chute du pharaon, 1955). Apparemment, cette pièce affronte le dilemme d'Akhenaton : doit-il être un bon roi ou doit-il rester cohérent à sa croyance religieuse ? Néanmoins, la pièce traite des problèmes de guerre et de paix quand l'Égypte était encore en guerre contre Israël et le mot « pharaon » dans le titre pouvait pousser le public à penser à son président, Nasser. De même, *Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī*<sup>200</sup>, s'installe pendant l'expédition française et décrit l'assassinat du général Kléber par Sulaymān l'Alepin. En même temps, elle adresse un message contemporain lié au présent. Une troisième pièce, écrite quelques années plus tard, *Dā'irat al-tibn al-Miṣriyya* (Le Cercle de Paille égyptien, 1979), met en scène la représentation qui faisait partie des célébrations à l'occasion de la circoncision du fils du Pasha Muḥammad 'Alī, comme elle fut recensée par Edward Lane dans *The Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (1836). Dans cette pièce, les acteurs semblent conscients du fait qu'ils peuvent avoir un rôle révolutionnaire au sein de la société.

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<sup>200</sup> Les références à la pièce seront indiquées comme « Farağ [1964] 1989 », puisque 1964 est l'année d'écriture de la pièce et 1989 est l'année de l'édition à laquelle on renvoie.

Toutes les critiques de la pièce *Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī* se réfèrent à son hypotexte ou, plus généralement, à l'histoire, avant de déplacer leur attention sur la pièce. Par exemple, Louis 'Awaḍ, qui voit la pièce comme « un bel échec », résume une partie de la narration de Ğabartī dans ses premières informations ('Awaḍ 1967, 366). Faraġ lui-même, dans la préface de sa pièce, cite le récit de Ğabartī et se plaint de la pénurie d'informations que les livres d'histoire rapportent sur Sulaymān l'Alepin (Faraġ [1964] 1989) et commence une série de commentaires sur le personnage et sur la façon dont il a été traité par l'histoire.

*Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī*, qui comprend quatre actes et 45 scènes, s'ouvre avec la présentation d'un chœur qui situe les événements au Caire en avril 1800 en évoquant les mesures prises par les Français guidés par le général Kléber après la deuxième révolte des Egyptiens. Trois crieurs révèlent les atrocités des Français contre les Egyptiens. Entretemps, des révolutionnaires azharites discutent sur leur réaction à la défaite. Ils ont un plan pour instaurer un climat révolutionnaire et décident d'aller distribuer des tracts. Pendant un bal qui a lieu dans le palais du gouverneur au Caire, à Alep, Sulaymān joue le personnage de Saladin face à Richard Cœur de Lion en présence de son ami Maḥmūd. Ensuite, il prend congé de son ami et informe sa mère de son départ imminent. Pendant le bal, Kléber discute des mesures à prendre pour punir le cheikh Sādāt. Devant la maison de ce dernier, un bataillon de soldats français l'invite à le suivre. A la frontière égyptienne, des soldats français interrogent Sulaymān sur le but de sa visite au Caire. Vu qu'il possède un couteau, les soldats l'empêchent d'entrer et il suit une route dans le désert grâce à l'aide d'un étudiant azharite. Les deux hommes rencontrent une jeune fille qui pleure. Sulaymān veut à tout prix l'aider et la suit. En réalité, la jeune fille lui a tendu un piège et les emmène chez son père, le brigand Ḥiddāya, qui est en train de voler des gens. Sulaymān essaie de les sauver, mais, menacé de mort par Ḥiddāya, l'ami azharite l'oblige à fuir.

Dans le deuxième acte, les étudiants azharites affichent des tracts au dehors d'une taverne fréquentée par des soldats français. L'un d'entre eux, 'Alī, est pris et mis en prison. Kléber reçoit la nouvelle que 'Alī est mort avant le procès et s'énerve puisqu'il aurait voulu utiliser sa sanction comme symbole de la répression. Sulaymān prévient ses amis qu'il veut tuer le général Kléber. À la suite de leurs reproches, il feint la plaisanterie. Ils s'interrogent sur sa santé mentale. Entretemps, Ḥiddāya et sa fille se sont rendus au Caire. Sulaymān est avec son ami Muḥammad quand il les voit. Pour prendre soin de la fille, Sulaymān la conduit chez le cheikh Šarqāwī. Mais ce dernier ne fait pas confiance à Sulaymān, jeune aux manières brusques et les chasse. La jeune fille s'enfuit. Comme Sulaymān l'avait prévu, elle est arrêtée par deux

soldats français pendant qu'elle cherchait de la nourriture. Elle apparaît sur scène toute seule, maquillée, à la fin du deuxième acte. Maintenant elle s'appelle Marguerite.

Les étudiants azharites amis de Sulaymān discutent de ce qu'il faut faire pour que Sulaymān soit inoffensif. Il vaut mieux l'éloigner du Caire. Muḥammad reste avec lui pour le surveiller avant son départ, mais Sulaymān s'éloigne. Il va chez le cheikh Sādāt et interroge sa femme sur l'état de santé du cheikh. Pendant qu'il cherche un endroit où se cacher, il tombe sur la fille de Ḥiddāya qui travaille comme serveuse dans un café fréquenté par les soldats français. Ḥiddāya est embauché comme collecteur des impôts. Il rencontre sa fille et il est déçu de ce qu'elle est devenue, mais elle ne veut plus écouter les discours de son père.

Au cours du quatrième acte, Sulaymān entre dans le café, enlève la jeune fille et l'emmène chez la femme du cheikh Sādāt qui l'accueille. Les amis de Sulaymān le cherchent, mais à ce moment-là il est dans le jardin du général Kléber et qu'il attend pour le tuer. Kléber rentre avec son ami Ğābilān. Un messenger informe le cheikh Miṣbāḥ que Sulaymān a poignardé Kléber. Un tribunal spécial sera formé pour le juger. A l'hôpital, Ğābilān, blessé par Sulaymān dit au nouveau général en charge, Menou, qu'avant de mourir Kléber dit quelque chose à son assassin et ce dernier lui a répondu. Menou ordonne à Ğābilān de ne jamais parler de cela à personne. Le chœur commente la pièce avec un avertissement adressé aux juges qui agissent selon la justice et non selon la loi.

Les interventions du chœur sont fréquentes. Il commente les événements du premier acte et les actions de Sulaymān au deuxième acte et il interroge Sulaymān et Kléber. Les monologues de Sulaymān sont nombreux ainsi que ses réflexions partagées avec d'autres personnages sur l'état des choses au Caire. Des scènes qui montrent les Français qui dansent et qui discutent sur les interventions à effectuer aux égards des Égyptiens interrompent la narration principale centrée sur Sulaymān.

Quant à la narration de Ğābartī sur l'assassinat de Kléber, elle se limite à résumer le « fait incroyable » en quelques lignes. Kléber se promenait avec son ingénieur en chef (Protain) dans son jardin in Azbakīya quand un homme d'Alep entra dans le jardin et marcha vers lui, s'approcha et le poignarda. L'ingénieur cria au secours et l'agresseur le blessa puis s'enfuit. Les gardes trouvèrent Kléber mourant, et donnèrent l'alarme. Une réunion des chefs français se tint pour envoyer des soldats partout dans la ville du Caire, menaçant d'exécuter des gens puisqu'ils pensaient que la population cairote était coupable, mais l'assassin fut retrouvé à côté du lieu du crime. Ensuite, vu que l'historien admire les mesures prises par les Français, qui

n'ont pas agi par vengeance mais ont constitué un tribunal pour évaluer le criminel, il reporte les actes du procès qui avaient déjà été traduits et distribués par les Français eux-mêmes.

La narration de Ğabartī a suscité le dédain de Faraĝ qui n'a pas accepté que l'historien traite Sulaymān comme un criminel et que cette image soit conservée jusqu'à l'époque où la pièce a été écrite. Faraĝ était choqué du fait que le Musée de l'Homme à Paris expose le crâne de Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī avec une plaque qui le décrit comme « l'assassin du Général Kléber ». Faraĝ ne pouvait pas accepter que Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī, un possible symbole de la rébellion du peuple arabe contre l'occupation occidentale, soit traité de cette façon.

Niant la vérité du récit de Ğabartī, Faraĝ proclame vouloir l'intégrer avec des informations complémentaires, comme le passé de Sulaymān, et aussi de le modifier. Grâce à cette perspective critique, il a voulu, dans son ouvrage, aspirer à reconstruire les événements tout en donnant une possible explication (historique) d'un récit fondé sur le faux.

Plusieurs tendances ont traité l'histoire de façon différente et pour des raisons différentes. L'approche historique de Faraĝ est proche de celle de 'Alī Aḥmad Bākaṭīr, connu surtout pour ses drames historiques. Avec ce dernier, Faraĝ partage un usage du passé pour mieux le définir, outre à se constituer comme une métaphore du présent. Cela s'applique aux trois pièces que Faraĝ a écrit à partir des récits historiques.

Dans tous les trois cas, il est nécessaire d'analyser la réécriture de l'histoire du héros/assassin pour prendre en considération les trois niveaux de réalité qui forment notre conscience quand nous sommes en présence d'une pièce historique : *primo*, les matériaux historiques que la pièce dérive de ses sources et que l'écrivain décide de reconstituer ; *secundo*, les conventions théâtrales dans lesquelles ces matériaux sont repris, et *tertio*, le sens de continuité historique que l'auteur donne à ce segment du passé qu'il a théâtralisé. En outre, cette étude ne peut pas considérer l'influence de notre situation présente dans l'interprétation de l'ouvrage (Lindenberger 1975, 10).

S'il est simple de noter la partialité du récit de Ğabartī, il est moins facile de définir comment l'image de Sulaymān avait évolué quand Faraĝ l'a reçue. Une analyse précise devrait tenir compte des produits culturels (de la littérature, des émissions de télévision, de la presse), des livres d'histoire, des programmes scolaires, des monuments, dans une approche comparative qui comprend un ensemble de pays (arabes ou non). Par exemple, le crâne de Sulaymān exposé au Musée de l'Homme de Paris influença la réception de Faraĝ de l'acte de Sulaymān. Ainsi, l'interprétation de l'histoire dans le contexte de Faraĝ a dû l'influencer. Par

conséquent, la vision que Farağ a de l’histoire a pu influencer ses lecteurs/spectateurs. Et elle pourrait les (voire, nous) influencer encore aujourd’hui.

Au niveau du récit, la première différence c’est que la pièce de Farağ ne se focalise plus sur les conséquences de l’assassinat de Sulaymān, et donc son procès et sa punition, mais l’attention du spectateur est déplacée sur les raisons qui auraient pu le pousser à l’action. La pièce allonge le temps de l’action en quarante jours – en y ajoutant l’exposition de faits du passé sous forme d’analepse – et l’espace à la ville d’Alep, au Caire et au chemin entre les deux villes.

Le récit du chœur et les proclamations de crieurs exposent la pièce dans un contexte de coercition pour les Égyptiens, tandis que l’hypotexte- à travers le rapport du procès – attirait l’attention sur les actes de bienfaisance des Français à l’égard des Égyptiens rebelles. Quant aux mesures sévères suivant la révolte, chez Ġabartī, elles sont soulignées ailleurs que dans le récit de l’assassinat.

Des événements qui concernent Sulaymān établissent un passé nouveau pour le protagoniste qui nie tout lien avec les Ottomans afin d’affirmer sa propre initiative et sa présence constante parmi les membres d’al-Azhar. Dans ce cas, des données complémentaires fournies par la pièce nient les rares informations que l’hypotexte procure. Au cours de la pièce, les Français sont libres d’agir à leur gré ; au contraire, les étudiants et les cheikhs d’al-Azhar sont constamment réprimés. Cette opposition marquée entre les oppresseurs et les opprimés est une innovation de l’hypertexte qui sert à démontrer le besoin de protection d’al-Azhar (et justifier la fausse déclaration de Sulaymān pendant le procès). De même, le cas du brigand Ḥiddāya qui est embauché par les Français, et de sa fille qui se prostitue pour les Français, met en lumière les effets négatifs de la présence française sur la population égyptienne. La pièce se termine par un échange bizarre entre Sulaymān et Kléber. L’architecte Ġābilān (جابيلان)- qui correspond à l’architecte Protain de l’histoire – quand il se trouve encore à l’hôpital, affirme avoir vu Kléber parler à Sulaymān, pendant que ce dernier le poignardait :

جابيلان: وسمعت صوت صديقي العظيم يقول له بنبرة ساحرة: "لقد أجبتي!" قال له: "أجبتي"، كأنما كانت بينهما مسألة. سمعت بأذني ولا تعوزني الجرأة لأقسم على ذلك. لقد "أجبتي!" قال له. أجابه!

Farağ [1964] 1989, 156

ĠABILAN : J’ai entendu la voix de mon grand ami lui dire sur un ton charmant : « Tu m’as répondu », comme s’il y avait un différend entre les deux. J’ai l’ai entendu. Je l’ai

entendu de mes oreilles et le courage ne me manque pas pour le jurer. « Tu m'as répondu », il a dit. Il lui a répondu !

Le général Menou ordonne à Ğābilān de taire ce fait. Le chœur assure la fiabilité du récit. Un halo de mystère entoure la pièce et laisse un point d'interrogation sur la narration que l'historiographie nous a laissée. Comme l'auteur l'a déclaré dans la préface de la pièce, questionner l'histoire qu'il a réécrite était le but de la pièce, laquelle veut aussi fournir les raisons personnelles de l'assassinat et établir une narration fidèle à la réalité. Selon Faraĝ, des raisons politiques et les modalités par lesquelles les déclarations avaient été obtenues (par la torture) ont dû contrefaire l'histoire.

Alors, grâce à son aperçu global, la pièce établit un « contre récit » de l'hypotexte. Elle devient une sorte de miroir brisé où les éléments reflétés sont le fruit d'un choix et déforment l'image originelle (voir Macherey 1966, 142). L'image produite par le miroir veut être plus vraie que « la véritable » image (fournie par l'*Histoire* de Ğabartī).

En ce qui concerne les personnages, Sulaymān est une présence constante dans la pièce et, selon Nehad Selaiha, cela fait de lui un point faible de l'ouvrage (Selaiha 2004). Contrairement à l'hypotexte, où le nom « Sulaymān d'Alep » est répété par les autorités françaises jusqu'à devenir le nom par lequel tout le monde l'identifie, la répétition du nom dans la pièce par le protagoniste même représente son auto-affirmation. Un nom banal affirmé avec une telle force est chargé d'une importance que l'histoire lui a niée. Une autre différence entre le Sulaymān de l'hypotexte et celui de la pièce est que le deuxième est fou parce qu'il agit selon une logique qui va au-delà des contingences, tandis que le Sulaymān de l'hypotexte a été transmis par l'histoire comme un idiot. D'ailleurs, Sulaymān (de la pièce) est le seul personnage qui comprend tous les autres. Il fait preuve de cette capacité quand il interprète fréquemment d'autres personnages.

Les personnages secondaires sont structurés de façon à exalter les qualités du protagoniste. La définition la plus appropriée de Kléber est « l'ennemi de Sulaymān » ; Kléber est un némésis de Sulaymān. En effet, Sulaymān représente la justice absolue et Kléber la tyrannie. L'importance que la narration accorde à Sulaymān et à Kléber est renversée par rapport à l'hypotexte ainsi que les qualités attribuées à Sulaymān et à Kléber. Muḥammad, l'un des accusés au cours du procès, n'est pas vraiment représenté dans l'hypotexte, tandis que dans la pièce il est l'ami le plus proche de Sulaymān qui nous permet de connaître les pensées les plus profondes du protagoniste. Son rapport avec Sulaymān rappelle le rapport entre Hamlet et Horatio. Ḥiddāya, de son côté, représente la contrepartie du protagoniste. Arnaqueur qui profite

de la crise provoquée par les Français négligeant la morale, Ḥiddāya n'est pas à l'opposé du protagoniste – comme Kléber, l'ennemi – mais il manifeste l'absence du sens de la justice qui est, au contraire, le trait spécifique de Sulaymān. Dans l'hypotexte, il y a une trace des bandits qui menaçaient les voyageurs, mais les traits de Ḥiddāya en font un personnage taillé pour exalter le protagoniste dans la pièce.

Les protagonistes historiques, c'est-à-dire les autres personnages qui sont nommés dans la chronique et qui gardent un rôle dans la pièce, maintiennent les caractéristiques de base qu'ils ont dans l'hypotexte. Ils peuvent être regroupés en trois classes qui distinguent trois réalités différentes au sein de l'histoire : les Français, les azharites accusés de l'assassinat et les cheikhs. Les Français sont les généraux Dugua et Menou ainsi que l'architecte Protain, ami de Kléber et témoin de l'assassinat. Les accusés, que l'hypotexte montre seulement pendant le procès, sont mieux définis dans la pièce, qui les montre avant l'assassinat. Les cheikhs d'al-Azhar présentés dans la pièce sont Sādāt et Šarqāwī. Les deux représentent deux façons d'agir différentes.

Tout comme dans l'hypotexte, Sādāt est dépeint comme une victime des mesures coercitives françaises. Le cheikh est souvent mentionné par les étudiants d'al-Azhar et par Sulaymān. Dans une scène au sens prégnant, la femme du cheikh évoque le moment où son mari a été battu devant elle par les soldats français. Cet épisode est rapporté par Ğabartī, aussi. Faraġ exalte sa valeur en l'insérant dans le contexte de l'assassinat de Kléber. Šarqāwī, au contraire, est vu comme un exemple négatif de cheikh d'al-Azhar. Si le président du Diwan français n'avait pas gagné la sympathie de Ğabartī, qui le dépeint comme un parvenu (Raymond 1998, 38), sous la plume de Faraġ il devient un personnage qui refuse d'aider Sulaymān, le héros de la pièce.

En conclusion, Sulaymān émerge comme le héros incontesté de l'histoire. Puisque la loi n'exécute pas la justice, il vit une réalité qui est incompatible avec son caractère. Ainsi, dès le début de la pièce, il est destiné à une fin tragique. Son destin, qui est le fruit de son hybris, ne lui offre pas de catharsis ; voilà pourquoi cette fin tragique n'est pas montrée dans la pièce. Son portrait ne pouvait être plus différent du fou « assassin du général Kléber » dont le procès est cité par Ğabartī seulement pour montrer la supériorité française en termes de justice. La raison de sa présence constante dans l'hypertexte est à rechercher dans l'absence d'un portrait de Sulaymān dans l'hypotexte.

Sur le plan du style, plusieurs des procédés narratifs utilisés par Faraġ conduisent à une « démocratisation de la narration » (Meyer 2001, 9). Quand Ğabartī a écrit son *Histoire*, il avait plus de sympathie pour les Français que pour les Ottomans. Par sa pièce, Faraġ a voulu

remplacer la vision singulière de Ğabartī par une représentation plus démocratique de l'histoire, dans laquelle plusieurs « voix » ont le droit de parler.

Avec ses différents registres, styles et choix (arabe ou français) la langue de la pièce est variée. Contrairement à l'hypotexte, les modalités d'expressions se différencient selon le rôle donné au personnage ; c'est le cas de la langue sophistiquée du chœur. Mais la langue sert aussi à faire écho à la réalité contemporaine, comme dans les mots « Nous sommes magnanimes dans la victoire et persévérants dans la défaite » utilisés par le cheikh Sādāt (Farağ [1964] 1989, 41) qui rappellent la rhétorique nasserienne.

Le point de vue multiple est inhérent au théâtre et il est obtenu par les différents personnages sur la scène. Toutefois, dans *Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī* un chœur proclame être le narrateur. Le chœur est à la fois un narrateur multiple puisqu'il est fait d'une pluralité d'entités et l'interlocuteur privilégié du protagoniste. Garant avec le public de la vérité dans la pièce, sa voix s'oppose à celle du narrateur de l'hypotexte – Ğabartī – lequel, au contraire, narre l'histoire selon son propre point de vue et ignore les états d'âme de Sulaymān.

Un autre exemple de polyphonie dans la pièce est l'utilisation rationnelle de la scène. Au début de la pièce, une double scène permet deux narrations simultanées qui sont directement comparables grâce à leur proximité et à l'espace temporel partagé. D'une part, les actions de Sulaymān se déroulent sur un plateau qui est petit, mais qui est placé au centre de la scène. Les actions des Français, au contraire, se déroulent sur le plateau principal. Ainsi, la lumière éclaire la partie de la scène où les actions se passent. L'utilisation de la scène reflète l'existence d'une double tribune : une partie est pour les étrangers et l'autre pour les natifs.

Le jeu de rôle récurrent rend un effet de « personnages qui échangent leurs voix » qui augmente la polyphonie de la pièce. Sulaymān, Kléber et Ḥiddāya sont capables d'emprunter la voix des autres. Dans ce jeu, Sulaymān est un champion. Il interprète lui-même dans le futur (comme juge de Kléber), son ennemi (imitant Napoléon) et sa contrepartie (Ḥiddāya). Dans la pièce, il sait interpréter des rôles différents, tandis que dans l'hypotexte son point de vue même était ignoré.

Quand Sulaymān utilise les mots de Hamlet, son histoire se charge d'une voix intertextuelle référentielle (Litvin 2011, 113). De même, quand Sulaymān joue Saladin au début de la pièce, la voix puissante de ce dernier en tant que mythe s'insère dans cette narration. Dans les deux cas l'économie de la pièce est sauvée puisque le renvoi est éloquent. L'intertextualité dans la pièce est utilisée sous la forme de références qui agissent comme une deuxième voix



qui amplifie et valide les actions de Sulaymān. Bien au contraire, dans le cas du récit de Ğabartī, l'inclusion de documents du procès sert à définir et détailler les faits.

Maintenant il sera clair que *Sulaymān al-Halabī* ne veut pas seulement mettre à jour une histoire. La pièce réécrit l'histoire avec des connotations nouvelles. Ainsi, d'une part l'image de l'hypotexte avec la chronique transparait derrière la nouvelle histoire suggérée par l'hypertexte ; d'autre part, la nouvelle histoire de Sulaymān dans la pièce est chargée d'un symbolisme qui lui donnera une valeur universelle. Grâce à la raison et le poignard, Sulaymān va à la recherche de la justice face à la domination légale mais injuste qui devient un symbole de légitimation de toute lutte contre des régimes dictatoriaux.

D'autre part, la pièce fait des références à des réalités spécifiques. Comme dans le théâtre épique, des références intertextuelles brisent l'illusion de la fiction. Il s'agit, par exemple, de l'allusion au *Cercle de craie caucasien* au moment où, au début de la pièce, Maḥmūd demande à Sulaymān s'il a rêvé de juger à qui appartient l'enfant disputé entre deux mères (Brecht 1954, Faraĝ [1964] 1989, 37). Il existe aussi une référence à Thomas Paine par la mention de son nom (Ibid., 129) qui entraîne une réflexion plus ample sur les révolutions.

La lutte contre le gouverneur peut alors être interprétée comme une prise de position actuelle puisque les similitudes entre Kléber et Nasser sont multiples. Par exemple, quand Kléber est appelé « le gouvernant de la colonie » (Faraĝ [1964] 1989, 40 et 142), des critiques y ont vu une claire référence au président égyptien Nasser (Badawi 1987, 175 et Selaiha 2004).

Deux réalités sont jouées sur la scène : la première est le passé revu et révisé et l'autre est le présent. Le passé est modifié pour rencontrer le présent, tandis que la pièce essaie d'affecter le passé par sa nouvelle vision de l'histoire. Faraĝ a voulu explorer le moment particulier de l'histoire de la première confrontation entre l'Ouest colonial et l'Est ; une confrontation qui a continué jusqu'au moment de l'écriture de la pièce. L'histoire de Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī a été utilisée pour combler la rupture entre le passé et le présent (El Hadi 1993 in El-Sayyid 1995, 172).

La bataille intellectuelle contre le tyran est un exercice cathartique pour Faraĝ qui métaphoriquement, au moyen de son personnage, tue les positions despotiques de Nasser. La pièce est aussi un acte performatif puisque, grâce à sa pièce, Faraĝ est *vraiment* en train de combattre Nasser. Jusqu'à présent, la pièce transmet une image de Nasser qui est soumis à la critique des intellectuels. La pièce « dit et agit » en même temps.

Toutefois, le cadre intellectuel est celui que Nasser a construit. La vision que Farağ a de l'histoire est adoucie par les directives culturelles de son temps. Et si Farağ critique les systèmes d'oppression parce que leur justice est décidée par les hommes politiques et l'histoire pourrait perpétrer un mensonge, il agit à l'intérieur du système idéologique qu'il critique et, ce faisant, il le nourrit.

## **Chapitre II. Une légende pour un public contemporain. Renverser les valeurs.**

En 1967 Farağ a écrit sa pièce *al-Zīr Sālim*, qui a été mise en scène la même année au Théâtre National du Caire. A ce moment-là, Farağ était le premier directeur de la Division de la Culture des Masses (*al-Taqāfa al-Ġamāhīriyya*) et avait introduit la tradition de la Tente-Théâtre d'al-Husayn (*Surādiq al-Ḥusāyn*), une tente érigée dans le quartier d'al-Husayn dans laquelle des représentations théâtrales et folkloriques, dont la *Sīra Hilāliyya*, étaient mises en scène tous les soirs de Ramadan.

La relation hypertextuelle entre la pièce et son hypotexte est affichée dans le titre lui-même de la pièce, *al-Zīr Sālim* étant le protagoniste de la *sīra* homonyme qui relate la guerre d'al-Basūs entre les tribus cousines des Bakr et des Taġlib. La *sīra* commence à partir d'un excursus généalogique ; ensuite elle raconte la rupture de la paix causée par l'invasion du roi Tubba' Ḥasān ; celui-ci veut se marier avec Ġālīla, épouse promise de son cousin, le roi Kulayb ; ces deux derniers s'organisent pour tuer Tubba' Ḥasān et pouvoir se marier. La stabilité des Bakr et des Taġlib est à nouveau mise en danger par les frères de Ġālīla qui convainquent leur sœur de se débarrasser du frère de son mari, *al-Zīr*, qui pourrait être une source de danger pour leur famille.

Ġālīla essaie à plusieurs reprises de le faire tuer, mais *al-Zīr* est extrêmement fort, au point de battre même des lions mains-nues. Finalement, *al-Zīr* décide de s'éloigner du palais de son frère et va vivre au Puits des Lions. La sœur de Tubba' Ḥasān, Su'ād, appelée aussi Ḥarb (guerre), se rend au palais de Kulayb pour mener la vengeance du frère. Par une série de pièges, Su'ād mène Ġassās à tuer Kulayb qui, avant de mourir, avec son sang, écrit un poème sur une pierre à son frère *al-Zīr* : il ne doit pas accepter la réconciliation avec ses cousins. La guerre entre les cousins commence. *al-Zīr* tue tous ceux qui font partie de la famille de Ġassās, soutenu par sa nièce Yamāma qui s'oppose à sa propre mère, Ġālīla. Entre-temps, cette dernière a caché son fils, Haġras, qui vit avec un oncle sans connaître sa vraie identité, loin des intrigues du palais. Après une guerre de quarante ans - dont les aventures sont narrées dans la *sīra* - Haġras découvre qu'il est le fils de Kulayb, tue son oncle Ġassās et met fin à la guerre.

Dans la préface de la pièce, Faraġ affirme qu'al-Zīr est « le protagoniste de la *sīra* étrange (غريبة) qui inspira au remarquable auteur populaire inconnu son épopée (ملحمة) *al-Zīr Sālim* » (Faraġ [1967] 1989, 161). Le mot *sīra* est mentionné trois fois dans les six pages de la préface. Toutefois, les versions éditées des aventures d'al-Zīr Sālim incluent rarement le mot *sīra* dans leur titre, tandis que la mention courante est *qiṣṣa* (conte, histoire)<sup>201</sup>. D'ailleurs, *sīra ša'biyya* est l'appellation arabe moderne des récits héroïques qui, dans les manuscrits, sont désignés indifféremment par les mots *sīra* ou *qiṣṣa* (Heath 1997, *Sīra ša'biyya*).

Compte tenu du fait que Faraġ lui-même utilise le terme *qiṣṣa*, mais dans son sens général d'« histoire » (Faraġ [1967] 1989, 161-66), le choix d'appeler *sīra* celle qui est généralement connue comme *Qiṣṣat al-Zīr Sālim* constitue une prise de position par rapport à la définition du genre de l'ouvrage. En effet, l'un des buts de la pièce est la reprise et la systématisation du *turāt* (tradition/héritage) et l'ouvrage de Faraġ contribue à la définir une conception naissante et à laquelle il fallait donner un contenu.

La transmission de la *sīra* par Faraġ suit les modalités classiques de la transmission des *siyar*. Pour assurer l'existence du récit de la *Sīra*, Faraġ sélectionne la version à transmettre. Dans son cas, il choisit une version tardive, la plus répandue en tant que texte imprimé dans l'Égypte de son époque.

Toujours dans la préface de la pièce, Faraġ affirme de ne pas accepter l'idée qu'un texte transmis pendant des siècles soit fondé sur la vengeance. Cette attitude face à la reprise des aventures d'al-Zīr Sālim rappelle la reprise des mythes au théâtre. Le mythe, en tant que « simple énoncé narratif » (Vasseur-Legangneux 2004, 29), est isolé de sa narrative spécifique et réimplanté ailleurs, dans une nouvelle narration qui se propose d'isoler ses actions du thème de la vengeance.

La pièce reprend dans ses grandes lignes le récit de la *sīra*. Elle s'ouvre avec l'ancien roi Murra qui veut nommer son neveu Haġras roi des Bakr et des Taġlib. Contrairement à l'hypotexte, le jeune Haġras s'oppose à la volonté de son grand-père : avant de devenir roi, il veut d'abord connaître les causes de la guerre fratricide qui a éclaté au sein de sa famille. La plupart du récit se développe comme une « pièce dans la pièce » qui montre des épisodes du passé liés par des rapports logiques et des commentaires du jeune Haġras. Celui-ci, après s'être assuré de la vérité des faits, décidera de prendre le pouvoir. La pièce donc est construite comme

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<sup>201</sup> Pour une liste des titres, voir Gavillet Matar 2005, 25-32.

une enquête sur le passé. Le récit cadre règle l'ordre des événements du récit intérieur qui montre les témoignages dont Hağras a besoin pour se décider à devenir roi. L'importance que la pièce accorde aux commentaires est une innovation de la *sīra*. La nouvelle histoire d'al-Zīr se déplace de l'action à la réflexion, du « faire » au « penser ». La pièce prend la forme de l'enquête et en fait son motif principal, ce qui était absent dans l'hypotexte.

Dans le nouvel ordre imposé par l'enquête, les événements acquièrent un sens nouveau. De même, excision et condensation, ainsi que des allusions au récit de la *sīra*, ne produisent pas une équivalence de sens avec l'hypotexte qui est caractérisé par des digressions. Par rapport à son hypotexte, le récit de la pièce est un *digest*, « un récit parfaitement autonome, sans référence à son hypotexte, dont il prend directement l'action en charge. [...] le *digest* raconte à sa manière, nécessairement plus brève (c'est la seule contrainte), la même histoire que le récit ou le drame qu'il résume, mais qu'il ne mentionne et dont il ne s'occupe pas davantage » (Genette 1982, 346).

Comme la réduction d'un texte ne peut être que quantitative (Ibid., 321), le procédé de diminution des aventures produit une nouvelle image de la *Sīrat al-Zīr Sālim*. De même, les équivalences pour la scène contribuent à la création d'une image nouvelle de la *sīra*. Autrement dit, réduit à son *digest*, le récit de la *Sīra* est une nouvelle version de la *Sīra* qui peut être commentée dans le récit-cadre. Le récit-cadre alors a une fonction primaire dans la pièce, tandis que le récit de la *Sīra* lui est subordonné. Il s'ensuit que, par la pièce, la catégorie même de *sīra* est mise en question.

Quant aux personnages, la plupart d'entre eux dans la pièce a le même rôle que dans la *Sīra*. Toutefois, ils subissent une modernisation. La première preuve évidente de cette transformation est le choix de leur prénom au lieu de leur surnom, par lequel ils sont normalement identifiés dans la *Sīra*. De même, leurs comportements sont attribués à des situations critiques qu'ils ont vécues et les personnages sont reconstitués comme des fous cliniques. Cette innovation est à reconduire à des tendances modernes en littérature. Quand les nouveaux traits des personnages se combinent à des personnages théâtraux connus pour leur folie, les différences avec les correspondants dans l'hypotexte deviennent nettes. Par exemple, Yamāma dans la pièce n'accepte pas la mort de son père car elle était présente quand Ğassās l'a tué et cet événement l'a choquée. Al-Zīr de la pièce a des traits qui le rapprochent de Hamlet. Les personnages sont clairement fous.

Au contraire de la *Sīra*, où des gouvernants existent mais ne sont pas définis comme tels, un groupe de personnages de la pièce présente des particularités dans la façon dont ils

gouvernement ou ils conçoivent le pouvoir. Le caractère turbulent d'al-Zīr est mis en exergue pour souligner son inaptitude à gouverner ; de même, son frère Kulayb est plus lié à sa famille qu'à son peuple ; le roi Ġassās est dessiné comme un tyran et Murra est le symbole d'une autorité ancienne et désormais impuissante. Hağras, au contraire, est l'homme démocrate qui décide après avoir pris conscience de la situation et après avoir écouté la volonté des autres. Tout en gardant le rôle qu'ils avaient dans l'hypotexte, les personnages de la pièce raisonnent comme des hommes modernes.

De nouveaux personnages apparaissent. Ils sont taillés pour la scène. Il s'agit de la confidente et du messenger, du chœur, du bouffon et des « hommes immobiles » (des soldats qui n'arrivent pas à agir). Tous ces personnages font référence à la tradition théâtrale et affirment l'appartenance générique de la nouvelle *sīra*. De plus, ils se reconduisent à des mouvements théâtraux contemporains (comme le théâtre de l'absurde et le théâtre épique) et ce-faisant ils confirment la modernité de la pièce.

Sur le plan du style, la première opposition que Farağ a établie en réécrivant la *Sīrat al-Zīr Sālim* est le choix de la langue : l'arabe classique. Son opposition avec le moyen arabe de l'hypotexte et avec la langue réelle qui aurait été parlée dans le contexte d'al-Zīr révèlent les raisons idéologiques du choix de Farağ. Tout d'abord, il faut considérer l'engagement de l'auteur dans le projet panarabe. Deuxièmement, contrairement à l'hypotexte, la langue de la pièce varie selon les personnages. L'arabe classique est le fondement linguistique de la pièce, mais des variantes fournissent les idiolectes. Des dialogues tellement poétiques qui ne peuvent pas appartenir aux personnages (Badawi 1987, 179) produisent la *suspension of disbelief* (suspension d'incrédulité).

Le principal procédé méta-dramatique est la mise en scène d'événements passés. Ces « petits tableaux » qui reproduisent le passé rappellent les poèmes de l'hypertexte qui, eux aussi, fournissent un aperçu direct des événements en opposition au reste de la narration, en prose et conduite à la troisième personne. Toutefois, la raison de la mise en scène de la pièce est différente de celle des poèmes de la *sīra*. Ce choix est nécessaire parce que la narration personnelle n'est pas véridique ; c'est une importante innovation par rapport à l'hypotexte. En opposant un style nouveau, qui enrichit le réalisme et, en même temps, le défait ponctuellement, la pièce réclame ses besoins nouveaux dans le but de décortiquer la fiction et exalter la recherche de vérité.

Le contenu de la pièce gravite autour de sujets qui sont tous des innovations de l'hypotexte. Pour cette raison, à travers leur opposition à l'hypotexte, ils ont un impact sur la

pièce dont le titre –rappelons-le – est le même que la *sīra* (*al-Zīr Sālim*). Conflit, folie, justice et gouvernement sont des thèmes développés au cours de la pièce ainsi qu’une combinaison typique des utopies nationalistes. Dans ce sens, le sujet peut être facilement historicisé. À l’intérieur du mouvement épique, l’historicisation des événements fournit au public le contexte pour les juger et comparer le passé et le présent de façon constructive (El-Sayyid 1995, 186).

Hağras représente le bon gouverneur qui agit selon la raison. Directement et indirectement, il invite constamment le public à apprécier son comportement. Ses attitudes positives parmi des personnages négatifs pourraient inviter le public à l’imiter. D’ailleurs, tout comme le public, Hağras aussi, est en train de regarder une pièce qu’il va commenter et il va réagir par rapport à ce qu’en aura appris.

De son côté, al-Zīr ne veut plus accomplir une vengeance aveugle. Au contraire, il veut que la justice soit faite. Sa requête impossible à satisfaire le mène à une victoire également impossible. Vouée à l’avenir, la pièce ne donne pas d’ampleur au conflit du protagoniste de la *sīra* qui perd aussi sa propre valeur tragique.

Le public ne doit pas s’interroger sur la mission d’al-Zīr (Debs 1993, 321). Les attentes qui vont au-delà des lois naturelles sont importantes dans l’histoire car elles alimentent le combat et instaurent la révolution du système. Ce qui importe c’est que l’action s’élève à partir de l’ambition de vaincre sur un système fixe (qui peut être la nature, le destin ou une nation). Dans ce sens, l’espoir est à la base du changement radical des questions sociales et politiques. Les efforts de Farağ dans cette pièce aboutissent à un appel pour aux hommes à adhérer à l’idéalisme et à agir pour l’amélioration des conditions sociales et politiques grâce à l’usage de la raison.

### **Chapitre III. Des pièces amusantes. Encadrer le politique dans les *Mille et une Nuits*.**

‘*Alī Ğanāḥ al-Tabrīzī wa tābi ‘uhu Quffa* (‘Alī Ğanāḥ al-Tabrīzī et son valet Quffa) a été écrite en 1967 et mise en scène en 1968.<sup>202</sup> C’est l’une des pièces de Farağ les plus étudiées. Elle a été traduite en anglais et en allemand et mise en scène à Berlin en 1986 (Debs 1993, 401). Environ vingt-cinq ans après l’avoir écrite, Farağ en écrivit une version en dialecte égyptien.

‘Alī Ğanāḥ al-Tabrīzī est un homme extravagant qui, par une vie luxurieuse et son hospitalité généreuse, a dilapidé son héritage et Quffa, un pauvre savetier, qui va mendier chez

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<sup>202</sup> Les références à la pièce sont données comme « Farağ [1968] 1992 ».

‘Alī. ‘Alī accueille l’étranger et ordonne à son serveur, Ṣawāb, de préparer un banquet pour leur repas. Le serveur, persuadé que la folie de son maître est due à la perte de sa fortune, répond à la requête. Comme il ne reste plus de nourriture et les ustensiles de cuisine et les assiettes ont été vendus, le serveur fait seulement semblant de servir le repas. Quffa a peur que son amphitryon soit fou, mais il joue le jeu. Il improvise un état d’euphorie causé par le vin imaginaire qu’il a bu et frappe ‘Alī. Ce dernier est furieux. Il se fait apporter un fouet imaginaire et frappe Quffa qui s’étonne d’éprouver de la douleur. Quand le nouveau propriétaire arrive s’emparer du palais de ‘Alī, ce dernier décide de partir pour un voyage dans une terre lointaine.

Quffa a développé une certaine amitié pour cet étrange personnage et accepte de le suivre. Ils arrivent dans une ville dans l’Extrême Orient où ils sont surpris par la pauvreté de la population. Pour ‘Alī c’est un signe de la grande richesse possédée par une minorité. Alors il décide de faire semblant d’être un riche touriste qui attend l’arrivée de sa caravane avec son serviteur. Grâce au pouvoir de l’imagination de ‘Alī, tout le monde le croit et même le roi fait confiance à ‘Alī. Il le laisse se marier avec sa fille et il lui donne libre accès à son trésor. Des suspicions sur ‘Alī apparaissent. Les jours passent, sa caravane n’arrive toujours pas et ses dettes ne sont pas payées. Quffa, qui n’a pas reçu de bienfaits pour son service à ‘Alī, et qui avait lui-même financé leur voyage, avoue la vérité aux soldats du roi et fait arrêter ‘Alī. Quand Quffa voit ‘Alī qui attend sa sentence de mort sur la place de la ville, il lui a fait pitié. Pour le sauver, il se masque et affirme d’être l’un des serveurs qui accompagnent la caravane de ‘Alī. ‘Alī est libéré et les deux, accompagnés de la princesse qui veut suivre son bien-aimé, laissent la ville en fête pour l’arrivée imminente de la caravane.

Comme l’auteur l’a déclaré dans la préface de la pièce, il s’est inspiré de trois contes des *Mille et une Nuits*, notamment le conte de la table imaginaire (nuits 43-44), le conte du sac (nuit 331) et le conte de Ma‘rūf le savetier (nuits 982-1000). Le conte de la table imaginaire représente le piètre traitement d’un mendiant qui est invité à manger à la table d’un homme riche. Aucun repas n’est mis sur la table, mais l’amphitryon fait semblant de manger. Alors l’invité fait de même. L’hôte apprécie l’esprit de ce dernier et de la vraie nourriture est servie. A partir de ce moment-là, les deux deviennent amis. Après vingt ans, le maître meurt, la propriété est confisquée par le calife et l’homme vit des mésaventures qui le conduisent à une mort atroce.

Le conte du sac a pour protagonistes deux hommes qui déclarent, tous les deux, être propriétaires d’un même sac. Pour décider qui d’entre les deux dit vrai et lui attribuer son bien, le qadi les interroge sur le contenu du sac. Les deux mentionnent d’abord des objets, puis des

animaux, des groupes de personnes et des villes entières en disant que tout cela se trouve dans le sac. Le qadi le fait ouvrir et n'y trouve que la peau d'une orange et des noyaux d'olive. Ce conte est repris dans l'entracte de la pièce.

Quant à Ma'rūf, c'est un pauvre savetier du Caire maltraité par sa femme. Un djinn l'aide à s'enfuir d'elle et le conduit dans une ville lointaine. Là-bas, Ma'rūf retrouve un ancien voisin qui lui donne des conseils pour obtenir de l'argent. Suivant les conseils de son ancien voisin, Ma'rūf dit aux marchands qu'il attend sa richissime caravane. Alors, il reçoit de l'argent des marchands qui s'attendent à ce qu'il leur en rende davantage à l'arrivée de la caravane. Le roi même, en dépit de l'avis de son vizir, donne sa fille en épouse à Ma'rūf et lui permet d'accéder librement au trésor. Les jours passent, le trésor est presque vidé et de la caravane il n'y a toujours aucun signe. La princesse, à laquelle Ma'rūf a dit que la caravane n'existe pas, organise un plan avec lui. Il s'éloigne de la ville et le lendemain la princesse dit au père que son mari a dû partir parce qu'il a reçu une lettre lui annonçant que sa caravane a été attaquée par une bande de bédouins. Dans le désert, le savetier trouve un trésor et un djinn qui crée une caravane pour lui. Alors, il peut rentrer dans la ville avec sa caravane. Après plusieurs aventures, il devient roi et vit heureux jusqu'à sa mort.

L'inspiration aux *Nuits* est manifeste dans six autres des pièces de Farağ dont deux sont antérieures à *'Alī Ġanāḥ al-Tabrīzī wa tābi'uhu Quffa*. Ce sont *Ḥallāq Baġdād* (Le Barbier de Bagdad, 1964) et *Buqbuq al-Kaslān* (Buqbuq le paresseux, 1965). Les deux pièces réécrivent des contes du même cycle du conte de la table imaginaire. Les autres réécritures dramaturgiques des *Mille et une Nuits* sont *Rasā'il Qāḍī Iṣbīliyya* (Les lettres du Qadi de Séville, 1975), *al-Ṭayyib wa al-širrīr wa al-ġamīla* (Le bon, le méchant et la belle, 1994), *al-Amīra wa al-ṣu'lūk* (La princesse et le pauvre, 2002) et *Itnīn fī 'uffa* (Deux dans un coffre, 1991), qui est une version de *'Alī Ġanāḥ al-Tabrīzī wa tābi'uhu Quffa* en dialecte égyptien. La réécriture des *Nuits* dans autant de pièces et dans un rapport de continuité dans le temps signale un intérêt particulier de l'auteur envers ce texte.

D'ailleurs, d'importantes relations intertextuelles entre le théâtre arabe à l'italienne et les *Mille et une Nuits* existent depuis la naissance du théâtre arabe. Tout d'abord, le théâtre arabe naissant exploitait la portée divertissante des *Mille et une Nuits* dans les comédies musicales. Ensuite, dans les années trente, tout particulièrement avec le théâtre de l'esprit de Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm, les *Nuits* devinrent une base utile de contenus connus sur lesquels le dramaturge pouvait insérer ses réflexions philosophiques. Au moment où, pendant les années soixante, le théâtre arabe était en quête d'une identité, les *Nuits* y apportèrent de la théâtralité



et pour que ses racines plongent dans le patrimoine arabe. En même temps, le contexte et le contenu issus de la fiction traditionnelle permettaient aux dramaturges de cacher des idées politiques et des messages contemporains.

Alfred Farağ était bien conscient des liens entre le théâtre arabe et les *Mille et une nuits*. Il appréciait le recueil de contes et les différents ouvrages qui en dérivent. Par exemple, il admirait le théâtre de Tawfiq al-Ḥakīm et ses pièces issues des *Mille et une nuits*. De plus, il était impliqué dans les questions auxquelles le théâtre égyptien faisait face pendant les années cinquante. L'une de ces questions était la langue.

Alfred Farağ comprit qu'une pièce tirée des *Mille et une Nuits* et située dans le monde des *Nuits* pouvait en emprunter aussi la langue. La langue des *Nuits* allait par la suite être définie comme « moyen arabe », mais Farağ avait déjà compris que c'était une langue directe, plus facile que la *fushā* et qui pouvait être comprise par un public arabe vaste. Cette langue pouvait également servir à l'identité arabe de son théâtre.

Notre auteur comprit aussi que l'usage de l'héritage des *Nuits* avait un impact sur ce dernier. L'apparition d'ouvrages anciens sur la scène les transformait en tradition ; de cette façon, ils devenaient des classiques de la culture arabe. Les sept pièces que Farağ a écrites à partir des *Mille et une nuits* ont certainement contribué à la relance des contes, et pas seulement de leur contenu, mais aussi des personnages, de la langue, des motifs et du style. Les trois contes que Farağ cite comme sources de '*Alī Ḡanāḥ al-Tabrīzī wa tābi 'uhu Quffa*' ne sont pas les seuls qu'il utilise pour sa pièce. Un apport narratif contribue plus ou moins directement à la constitution du récit de la pièce. L'hypotexte de la pièce est le recueil dans son intégralité. Les trois contes sont utilisés dans leurs parties centrales, qui sont focalisées sur le thème de l'illusion, le thème de principal de la pièce.

Nombreux détails de ces contes sont transférés dans la pièce, tandis que certains d'entre eux sont fragmentés pour qu'ils acquièrent un rythme théâtral. Intégrés dans l'hypertexte sans aucun signal, ce sont tous des citations implicites des *Nuits*. Cette pratique manifeste d'un côté l'aptitude des *Nuits* d'être mises en scène et, d'autre part, l'habileté de Farağ à sélectionner des parties de l'hypotexte à intégrer dans l'hypertexte qui reste uniforme. Au contraire, d'autres parties du texte sont supprimées pour expurger la pièce de certaines idées racistes ou des préjugés religieux ou qui rappellent le sexe ou encore des parties comiques basées sur la déformité physique que l'auteur considère inappropriées. Par cette expurgation, il semble que Farağ a voulu garder dans sa pièce une morale que les éléments susmentionnés auraient compromise.

Certaines innovations contribuent à l'unité de l'hypertexte. Insérées dans la narration, elles sont si bien intégrées qu'elles pourraient facilement sembler du matériel des *Nuits*. Quelques innovations viennent de sources très distantes des *Nuits*. Par exemple, la pièce absorbe de *Maître Puntila et son valet Matti* (Brecht, 1940) la relation maître-valet qui est absente dans l'hypotexte, et l'attribution au maître de la capacité de créer des illusions.

Des contes que Farag ne mentionne pas, sont intégrés subtilement dans la pièce. Insérées dans la pièce comme « intégrations-absorptions », ces citations lui fournissent de la substance narrative. Tout comme les subtiles différences entre les contes et le récit de la pièce, elles créent un jeu de reconnaissance pour le lecteur qui est invité à les découvrir.

Globalement, le récit de la pièce peut être vu comme une image issue d'un kaléidoscope. Plusieurs morceaux qui viennent des *Nuits* se recomposent ensemble pour créer une autre image : une nouvelle histoire. Ces parties de contes, petits ou grands, se mélangent, prennent un nouvel ordre, sont mélangés aux innovations et ils peuvent toujours être identifiés comme des éléments des *Nuits*. Cette caractéristique de garder leur reconnaissabilité peut être attribuée à la « sgangherabilità », un concept élaboré d'Umberto Eco qui veut dire littéralement « qui peut être sorti des gonds » et, par translation « ce qui est démontable » et qui caractériserait des ouvrages tels que la Bible, *Hamlet* et la *Divine Comédie* lesquels peuvent être démontés et cités à l'infini grâce à leur complexité structurale, au nombre de leurs personnages ou à la fusion imparfaite de leurs sources (voir Jachia 2006, 61).<sup>203</sup>

La caractéristique principale des protagonistes de la pièce est qu'ils sont un couple, 'Alī et Quffa. Le couple est une innovation par rapport aux contes des *Mille et une Nuits* où nous ne trouvons pas un système de personnages si complexe. Puisqu'il s'agit d'un duo maître-valet, 'Alī et Quffa se définissent l'un par opposition à l'autre. Le maître est instruit, poli, sait bien parler, tandis que le valet est ignorant, impoli et ne mesure pas ses mots.

Ce qui est étrange c'est que Quffa, le valet, a un trait caractéristique du maître : il possède le capital, tandis que le maître est sans le sou. Toutefois, les deux se conduisent selon leur rôle et comme Quffa se fait valet de 'Alī, ce dernier devient un maître à part entière. En outre, leur condition est inaltérable car Quffa n'a pas la capacité d'agir sans le guide d'un

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<sup>203</sup> La «sgangherabilità» des *Mille et une Nuits* fait l'objet de mon intervention « Alfred Farag's *Arabian Nights*. A constant experimentation in the Arabic drama », au cours du colloque *Les Mille et une Nuits : Sources, transformations et liens avec la littérature, les arts et les sciences (II)*, INALCO (CERMOM, ANR MSFIMA) et L'Université d'Harvard (CMES), Paris, 9-11 Décembre 2015, à paraître dans les actes du colloque.

maître. Avec ces caractéristiques, leur isotope du duo est fortement influencé par les dynamiques du pouvoir moderne par lesquelles les relations maître-valet sont établies selon des critères au-dehors de la richesse. L'immutabilité de la condition humaine est mise en question.

De plus, 'Alī et Quffa ont des signes individualisants qui font d'eux des personnages ronds. L'aspect caractérisant 'Alī, à part que c'est un maître sans capital, c'est qu'il est utopiste. Contrairement aux trompeurs des *Nuits*, 'Alī a un projet sociétal fondé sur ses rêves d'élimination de la pauvreté par la redistribution de la richesse. De son côté, Quffa, quoiqu'il n'exerce plus son métier de savetier, pense et se conduit toujours comme s'il était savetier et il a un sens de l'humour marqué.

Les personnages secondaires, bien qu'ils ne possèdent pas un nom propre, eux aussi sont mieux définis que leurs équivalents des contes. Le roi est montré dans son rôle de père. Le vizir est plus pointilleux que dans l'hypotexte, au point d'en devenir ridicule. Il est également plus proche de la princesse et du roi. Ces relations nouvelles, soulignées par la présence d'une *dāda* (nounou), créent une dimension familiale dans la pièce. Tout en étant la contrepartie féminine de Quffa, la nounou forme avec la princesse un couple maître-valet féminin parallèle au couple principal. Quant à la princesse, elle a une attitude enfantine inconventionnelle pour une princesse des *Nuits*. De plus, la princesse et 'Alī forment un couple d'amoureux. Les marchands sont aussi mieux peints que dans l'hypotexte et ils se définissent grâce à l'opposition entre l'un et l'autre sur leur espoir à propos de l'existence de la caravane. La nouvelle caractérisation du roi, du vizir, de la princesse, des marchands et de la nounou sert à la fiction dramatique qui peut ainsi compter sur des systèmes de personnages.

Une nouvelle fois, au moyen des personnages aussi, Farağ joue avec la dimension intertextuelle de la pièce. Les frères de Quffa sont à la fois des personnages des *Nuits* et des pièces *Hallāq Baġdād* et *Buqbuq al-Kaslān*, tandis que la princesse s'amuse de son statut de princesse d'un conte. Le masque de la princesse tombe dans ses réflexions méta-dramatiques et l'identité de 'Alī comme personnage purement fictif est mise en cause. Dans le contexte de production de la pièce, il ressemble au président égyptien de cette époque-là, avec ses discours incantatoires et ses rêves utopiques qui venaient d'être déçus. Le valet Quffa rappelle le peuple égyptien, qui a suivi son président jusqu'à la situation critique actuelle. Alors, outre leurs caractéristiques sur la scène, par des références à la réalité, d'autres aspects peuvent leur être attribués pour compléter leur identité.

Des techniques méta-dramatiques sont régulièrement employées dans *'Alī Ġanāḥ al-Tabrīzī wa tābi 'uhu Quffa*. Par exemple, à plusieurs reprises, les personnages jouent un rôle,

s'entraînent pour améliorer leurs compétences d'acteurs, révisent leur rôle, racontent des histoires, commentent des contes. Quelques-uns manifestent leur conscience d'être des personnages et Quffa joue avec un 'Arāgōz qui se fait porte-parole de ses sentiments profonds (Faraġ [1968] 1992, 243-245).

En même temps, la narration de certains des contes des *Mille et une Nuits* entraîne la reprise des ouvrages classiques, voire la constitution même d'un répertoire de classiques. De la même manière, un 'Arāgōz sur la scène y introduit des formes de théâtralisation qui se combinent parfaitement avec la création d'une identité spécifiquement arabe de la pièce.

Donc, si d'un côté le narrateur du conte disparaît et la fiction des contes s'expose, en donnant la possibilité à chaque personnage de (mieux) se déterminer, de l'autre côté les effets de la narration ne sont pas complètement effacés, mais ils apparaissent constamment dans de petits rôles joués par les personnages.

Si on regarde attentivement la langue des *impli-citations* (voir Gignoux 2005, 44-5) des contes existants dans la pièce, on notera que leur langue est seulement légèrement différente du moyen arabe des contes, tandis que différentes variétés de la langue arabe apparaissent dans la pièce. Par exemple, dans des moments d'honnêteté psychologique les personnages s'expriment en arabe égyptien (Stetkevych 1975, 160). De plus, des idiolectes se développent en dehors de la langue prise des *Mille et une Nuits*. Alors, globalement la langue de la pièce est du moyen arabe alterné à l'arabe égyptien, mais le moyen arabe pur des *impli-citations* évoque l'existence d'un scénario issu d'un monde fictif, celui des *Nuits*.

Bien que « simple et claire » (Fašwān 2002, 86), la langue utilisée par Faraġ est le résultat complexe d'utilisation habile des moyens théâtraux. Elle signale que les discours des personnages sont considérés dans leur double rôle d'interaction entre les personnages et comme partie d'un texte. L'utilisation du moyen arabe des *Nuits*, que Faraġ a choisi pour cette pièce et pour d'autres, permet que la pièce soit comprise par tous ceux qui comprennent la *fushā*. L'impression d'« artificialité » que la *fushā* procure est modulée au moyen de la relation intertextuelle. En outre, la *fushā* est interpolée par l'intervention de l'arabe égyptien qui procure immédiateté au texte et fait de la langue la « marque inimitable d'arabe classique » (Selaiha 1998). Ce qui est, encore de nos jours, apprécié des critiques.

Le merveilleux qui se manifeste sous la forme de la *hurāfa*, de la répétition et de l'exagération, magistralement émulées en tant que motifs avec des fonctions à la fois formelles et thématiques, est aussi à attribuer à une reprise du style de l'hypotexte.

Sur le plan du contenu, dans la pièce tout comme dans l'hypotexte, le thème saillant est le pouvoir des mots. Quand 'Alī conte des histoires au lieu de répondre aux questions du roi et du vizir, il utilise sa maîtrise de la parole pour ne pas leur déclarer la douloureuse réalité et ne pas mentir à sa princesse. Comme il se passe souvent dans les *Nuits*, le verbe est « un sauveur » (voir « ransom motif », Marzolph, Van Leeuwen 2004, 688-89).

Les mots de 'Alī sont également au cœur de la représentation de la réalité qu'il livre aux personnes qu'il rencontre. Grâce aux mots, il crée une illusion qui a un impact réel sur le monde. L'idée de la riche caravane amène les marchands à lui donner de l'argent qu'il redistribue aux pauvres ; les marchands perdent une grande partie de leurs biens, tandis que les mendiants peuvent faire du commerce. Et si dans le conte de Ma'rūf une caravane apparaît par magie, dans la pièce la magie est mentionnée mais elle n'existe pas. L'illusion est la force qui crée la révolution.

Cette illusion agit sur les personnes qui ont de l'espoir. Tandis que dans l'hypotexte les marchands et le roi perdent leur patience car la caravane n'arrive pas, leurs équivalents dans la pièce commencent à perdre l'espoir et 'Alī sait que ce dernier est important pour son projet. Pour lui, la perte d'espoir est l'aspect le plus négatif de la situation tragique à laquelle il se confronte, pire même que sa propre mort. Exalté davantage dans l'hypertexte par rapport à l'hypotexte, le thème de l'illusion acquiert un sens tout nouveau qui se lie à la révolution sociale. Grâce à la fantaisie existante dans le conte, l'auteur de la pièce veut que son public voie des questions « traditionnelles » qui ont intéressé les sociétés du passé et qui pourraient intéresser la société qui lit ou qui assiste à la pièce. La relation intertextuelle fonctionne comme la preuve de la fiabilité du message de la pièce.

Relié au contexte de production de la pièce, le rêve d'une caravane imaginée par un « maître » séduisant, qui enchante les gens avec des idées révolutionnaires, évoque la propagande de Nasser et son idéologie. Farağ n'a pas voulu pourvoir un jugement sur son protagoniste ni donner un vrai final à sa pièce. La caravane n'apparaît pas, mais elle pourrait toujours apparaître, du moins c'est ce que tous ceux qui ont de l'espoir pensent, et ils peuvent être les personnages de la pièce, tout comme des personnes réelles.

Le message de la pièce est amer. Alors, même si l'aspect comique est assez bien développé, elle ne peut pas être définie comme une comédie. En effet, cette pièce est chargée d'humour. Dans une ambiance légère créée par un comique immédiat, des calembours et par le monde léger des *Mille et une Nuits*, Farağ insère des situations où les personnages rient de leurs

propres malheurs. De même façon, le public qui rit des malheurs des personnages rit aussi de lui-même. Le rire devient alors un acte libérateur.

La réécriture des *Mille et une Nuits* était pour Farağ une pratique récurrente. Ses sept pièces inspirées des *Nuits* se chargent toutes des critiques sociales supportées par la fiabilité de la tradition. Dans la pièce qui a assuré son succès, *Hallāq Bağdād* (Le Barbier de Bagdad, 1964), la reprise des *Mille et une Nuits* est un prétexte pour dénoncer les injustices qu'ont subies les intellectuels comme Farağ qui se trouvait en prison quand il a écrit sa pièce. Dans *Buqbuq al-Kaslān* (Buqbuq le paresseux, 1965), l'histoire du personnage des *Nuits* devient une pièce didactique qui exalte le travail opposé à la rêverie, dans un contexte de production socialiste. Le message de la pièce est explicité par un chœur qui, pour clôturer la pièce, invite le public à considérer « l'image créée du formidable auteur des *Mille et une Nuits*, il y a mille ans. » (Farağ [1965] 1992, 216). La morale de la pièce est supportée par le patrimoine (*turāt*). De même, la pièce *Rasā'il Qāḍī Iṣbīliyya* (Les lettres du Qadi de Séville, 1975) met en scène des contes qui, pour leur récit et la manière dans laquelle ils se suivent, pourraient très bien être issus des *Mille et une Nuits* pour traiter des questions telles que la propriété, la spéculation autorisée par la loi et l'éthique de l'économie basée sur l'argent. *Itnīn fī 'uffa* (Deux dans un cercueil, 1991) est une version de '*Alī Ġanāḥ al-Tabrīzī wa tābi'uhu Quffa* en arabe égyptien et donc elle en reprend les mêmes principes au niveau du contenu. *Al-Ṭayyib wa al-ṣirrīr wa al-ğamīla* (Le bon, le méchant et la belle, 1994) utilise un conte des *Mille et une Nuits* (*Le conte du teinturier Abū Qīr et du barbier Abū Sīr*) pour démontrer que le Mal a toujours existé. *Al-Amīra wa al-ṣu'lūk* (La princesse et le pauvre, 2002) réécrit le conte de Zumurrud, mais, dans la pièce, la justice devient le sujet dominant.

La réécriture des *Nuits* dans autant de pièces et dans un rapport de continuité dans le temps exprime l'intérêt particulier de l'auteur pour ce texte. Si le message de ces ouvrages est toujours lié à la politique, leurs aspects formels, au contraire, varient puisqu'ils s'inspirent de façon différente de l'hypotexte. Le personnage du barbier de Bağdād, tiré des *Nuits* est l'axe de la pièce qui s'articule en deux parties dont le protagoniste est toujours le barbier, même si la deuxième partie est tirée du *Kitāb al-Maḥāsin wa al-Aḍḍād* d'al-Ġāḥiẓ. Le conte de Buqbuq est recoupé pour ne laisser dans la pièce que la partie fonctionnelle à son propos didactique. Le récit de *Rasā'il Qāḍī Iṣbīliyya* est obtenu par l'émulation des *Nuits*, comme l'auteur l'explique dans son article « Alf layla wa anā » (Les Mille et une Nuits et moi) :

فالحكايات الثلاث أو الرسائل الثلاث لا أصل لها في (ألف ليلة وليلة)، وإنما تتألف من عناصر قصصية من (ألف ليلة) وظفتها في حكايات جديدة بأسلوب (ألف ليلة)، فكأنها حكايات منسية من (ألف ليلة وليلة)، أو

[...] les trois contes, ou les trois lettres, n'ont pas leur origine dans les *Mille et une Nuits*, mais ils sont composés d'éléments narratifs que j'ai utilisés dans des contes nouveaux, dans le même style, comme s'ils étaient des contes oubliés des *Mille et une Nuits*, ou s'ils étaient des *Nuits* qui se sont perdues de la version égyptienne.

Dans *al-Ṭayyib wa al-širrīr wa al-ğamīla*, le personnage de la belle est inventé pour prendre la place de la femme du méchant et supporter le contenu de la pièce.<sup>204</sup> Dans *Itnīn ft 'uffa*, la langue s'éloigne de l'arabe des *Mille et une Nuits*, bien que les citations des contes soient restées telles quelles. Les allusions à d'autres contes par les noms des frères de Quffa sont effacées. Ainsi, cette nouvelle version de *'Alī Ġanāḥ al-Tabrīzī wa tābi 'uhu Quffa* est plus éloignée des contes que son hypotexte. Dans la dernière pièce que Farağ a composée, *al-Amīra wa al-šu 'lūk*, tout en prenant le conte de Zumurrud come hypotexte, il y intègre plusieurs motifs récurrents des *Nuits* qui ne font pas partie de ce conte. De plus, dans la pièce, l'un des personnages écrit des contes nouveaux des *Mille et une Nuits*.

## Conclusion

La réécriture chez Farağ est un procédé qui prend des formes différentes selon le genre de l'hypotexte ; il s'agit donc d'une stratégie multifonctionnelle qui donne lieu à une création à plusieurs niveaux de lecture. Le réinvestissement du patrimoine est un aspect commun à toutes ces pièces. Par la réécriture, des épisodes de l'histoire égyptienne sont réhabilités, ainsi que la *sīra*, qui devient le porteur de valeurs réputées positives dans la société de réception de la pièce (justice, lutte pour la justice) et les *Mille et une Nuits* dont le pouvoir fascinateur est reporté sur les pièces.

Dans chaque pièce, le lecteur peut retrouver l'ouvrage originel (qui revient à son esprit) et sa nouvelle image représentée dans la pièce. L'utilisation du *turāt* dans l'Égypte des années soixante a la fonction de contribuer à l'idée du nationalisme arabe parce qu'il concourt à la création d'un répertoire de classiques constitué d'ouvrages arabes et parce qu'il s'accompagne de l'emploi d'ouvrages à haute potentiel dramatique, qui sert à démontrer le *tamasruḥ* (théâtralité) dans des formes dramatiques indigènes. De plus, la reprise d'ouvrages connus tels

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<sup>204</sup> Avec ce troisième personnage, le titre de la pièce se rapproche du titre anglais du film réalisé par Sergio Leone *Il Buono, il brutto e il cattivo* (The Good, the Bad and the Ugly ; en français, *Le Bon, la Brute et le Truand*, 1966).

que les contes des *Mille et une Nuits* et la *sīra*, servent à démocratiser le théâtre. Le but de la réécriture de l'histoire semble plutôt le contraire : familiariser le public, grâce au théâtre, avec des possibles expressions du passé qui diffèrent des écritures existantes.

Le contenu des réécritures semble aller au-delà de l'apparence véhiculé par le réinvestissement du *turāṭ* et l'utilisation majoritaire de la *fushā* au lieu du dialecte égyptien qui s'insèrent pleinement dans la rhétorique panarabiste. Le contenu des pièces, qui émerge comme une innovation de l'hypotexte, se révèle modérément critique de la situation politique de l'époque. Le nationalisme est supporté dans la forme, tandis que le message des pièces contribue à la réflexion sur la complexe relation entre les intellectuels et l'apparat du pouvoir.

Sans attaquer personnellement le Président, Faraḡ traitait des théories comme le socialisme, et du pouvoir mis en place, tout en évitant de dénoncer directement le manque de liberté et de démocratie. Sans doute, comme d'autres intellectuels, Faraḡ « abdiqua le rôle de critique du pouvoir et préféra une attitude entre le support modéré et l'auto-censure » (Gervasio 2001, 347). La critique se réalise grâce à la métaphore, le symbole et l'allusion. Dans ce contexte, la prédominance de l'état-nation doit être considérée comme l'épistème structurel pour plusieurs groupes d'écrivains (voire Ouyang 2013, 144 et 225).

Certainement, Faraḡ était fasciné par Nasser, mais il devait être conscient du risque que sa carrière courait si ses pièces étaient ambiguës, même s'il déclara que la génération des années cinquante et soixante pouvait dire dans ses pièces tout ce qu'elle voulait, directement, par des symboles ou des métaphores (Faraḡ [1999] 2009, 99, voir aussi Stagh 1993, 63). Il avait été confronté au pouvoir de la censure à cause d'une de ses premières pièces mise en scène, *Suqūṭ Fir'awn*. Malgré l'attaque des critiques sur la forme de la pièce, c'était l'échec du pharaon qui était clairement affiché dans le titre qui posait un problème lors de sa mise en scène. Pour son opposition à l'idéologie du régime, avec ses attaques camouflées dans ses pièces, les années passées en prison, son refus de travailler à nouveau pour *al-Ġumhūriyya* après sa sortie de prison, et, en même temps, pour son engagement immuable et la charge de rôles importants dans l'apparat étatique, Faraḡ doit donc être considéré comme un véritable intellectuel (أديب), voir Ruocco 1999, 14-5), assez libre des contraintes du pouvoir officiel.

La réécriture a dû lui être utile pour peindre le pouvoir avec une certaine liberté, malgré les mesures restrictives du contexte politique. Malgré son appartenance au champ intellectuel égyptien, qui était réglé par une active censure, Faraḡ arrive à encoder dans ses pièces des messages politiques invitant le public à des réflexions qui concernent le régime politique de



l'époque. Dans ce sens, sous les traits de la propagande du régime, la réécriture cache des idées pouvant aller à l'encontre du régime.

Comme le récit des pièces est déjà connu, et qu'il est seulement reconstitué sur la scène, les altérations et le nouveau sens attire l'attention du lecteur. Permettant une abstraction du contenu de l'hypotexte, toute réécriture devient un instrument pour coder des idées politiques.

L'aspect le plus évident dans la réécriture des *Nuits* est l'existence d'un message politique encadré dans un milieu léger. La réécriture de l'histoire et la réécriture de la *sīra* contiennent, elles aussi, des messages politiques sur le comportement de l'homme face à des situations d'injustice. Si ces situations peuvent facilement rappeler le moment de réception de la pièce, c'est parce qu'elles génèrent des images qui, comme dans une anamorphose, vues d'une autre perspective – c'est-à-dire le contexte nouveau - montrent un sens qui diffère de celui du texte originel, tandis que l'image est la même que l'hypotexte (voir Compagnon 1979, 278-9).

En effet, le postulat de la primauté de l'interdiscours a pour conséquence de décentrer l'instance auctoriale, en lui enlevant tout caractère de point d'origine, et de souligner le fait que tout discours suppose un travail permanent sur ses frontières.

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C'est le cas des pièces qui réécrivent l'histoire et qui remplacent la vérité déformée de l'historiographie officielle par une autre vue qui se déclare plus vraie. De même, le choix de la *sīra* d'*al-Zīr Sālim* et la substitution de ses valeurs veulent rendre justice à la légende qui, selon Faraḡ, pourrait ne pas se fonder sur la vengeance. Au contraire, le décentrement de l'instance auctoriale sert aux pièces de Faraḡ pour dissocier son message des paroles de ses pièces.

Le nouveau sens peut être lié à des questions significatives au moment de la production de la pièce. En même temps, les pièces de Faraḡ suscitent aussi des réflexions qui sont valables au-delà du contexte de production de la pièce car elles portent aussi sur des thèmes universels tels que la justice.

La justice a été montrée comme un sujet récurrent dans les pièces de Faraḡ (El-Enany 2000). Cette étude a permis de dévoiler que le besoin de justice régit le choix de certains hypotextes puisque l'un des buts des pièces est de critiquer la façon dont un fait avait été traité.

L'étude de la réécriture nous a permis de comprendre que le théâtre était pour Faraḡ une plateforme privilégiée pour montrer la vérité. Des expériences « incorporées » pouvaient montrer l'opposition entre illusion et réalité ainsi que la relativité de la vérité. Sur la scène, la

troisième personne de la narration historiographique peut être contestée par la reconstitution du fait. De la même façon, *al-Zīr Sālim* montre le « vrai récit » de la *sīra* parce que la narration en première personne qui caractérise l'hypotexte n'est pas fiable.

En effet, l'un des buts des réécritures de Farağ était de démonter la voix de l'auteur de l'hypotexte, quand celui-ci existe ; cela est particulièrement vrai dans la réécriture de l'histoire où la narration officielle est contrastée par des choix stylistiques qui créent de la polyphonie. Malgré cela, Farağ *narrativise* les faits, c'est-à-dire, la vision de l'histoire qu'il donne à voir est chargée de sa propre interprétation et ne donne pas au spectateur la possibilité de les interpréter.

En particulier, les personnages subissent une relecture qui leur attribue des nouvelles caractéristiques permettant d'établir le portrait du héros selon Farağ. Un héros qui est « maître de son existence, même si elle est en contradiction avec les valeurs dominantes du groupe. » (Vauthier 2007, 124). Sulaymān, qui était un mercenaire, devient un être libre, capable de réflexions profondes. Et ce n'est pas le hasard s'il imite Saladin. Parmi les autres personnages de la pièce, Sulaymān se distingue pour être le seul doué de conscience de soi et de confiance en soi. Sa présence excessive dans la pièce contribue à créer une place pour lui dans la narration : la place que l'histoire ne lui a pas donnée. C'est seulement en étudiant la réécriture que cet aspect de la pièce peut être pleinement compris. Son personnage défie l'image que l'histoire a créée de lui pour devenir un héros contemporain. Al-Zīr, avec son désir de vengeance n'est plus conforme aux valeurs du nouveau contexte d'énonciation. Du héros tribal orthodoxe (Lyons 1995, 1, 97), il devient, tout comme Sulaymān, celui qui « cherche la justice totale, la justice que nous comprenons, mais que nous ne pouvons pas appliquer. » ('Abd al-Qādir 1983, 96).

Lié au sujet de l'héroïsme, celui de la folie émerge comme un aspect important dans les réécritures de Farağ parce qu'il s'agit d'un trait propre aux personnages des réécritures. La folie de Sulaymān et de Sālim est une innovation de la pièce, ainsi que la folie de 'Alī Ğanāḥ al-Tabrīzī. La différence entre Sulaymān et Sālim et 'Alī Ğanāḥ al-Tabrīzī c'est que les deux premiers, tout en étant fous, sont doués de la raison (عقل). Tout simplement, dans une société dans laquelle les lois ne rendent pas justice, l'être humain qui raisonne et qui est courageux, devient fou, et par ce fait, c'est un héros. Dans ce genre de narration, l'idée de folie n'est pas diamétralement opposée à celle de raison (voir Ouyang 2013, 77-103).

À la suite de la comparaison entre l'hypertexte et l'hypotexte, des références intertextuelles sont très évidentes parce qu'elles ne proviennent pas de l'hypotexte. Par exemple, Sulaymān et Sālim ressemblent à Hamlet et, pour plusieurs raisons, *al-Zīr Sālim* et

*Sulaymān al-Halabī* nous rappellent des pièces shakespeariennes. Shakespeare a sûrement été une source d'inspiration pour Faraġ, qui lui dédia une étude (Faraġ 2002). Pirandello et Brecht, eux aussi, ont influencé Faraġ. A part les allusions susmentionnées, on peut aussi avancer des conclusions sur l'impact des théories brechtiennes sur le théâtre de Faraġ. Le dramaturge paraît avoir des idées claires à ce propos et affirme que le théâtre épique arriva dans le théâtre arabe grâce à l'influence du *turāṭ* et, tout notamment par la narration des *Mille et une Nuits* laquelle, portée sur la scène, ressemblait au théâtre épique (Faraġ 1990, 68, 70 et 105). Plusieurs critiques ont débattu sur la tendance épique chez Faraġ (par exemple, Rašīd Bū Ša'īr 1983, 122-3 et 127 ; Badawi 1987, 179 ; Lozy 1990, 71 ; Selaiha 1990 ; Debs 1993, 314 ; El-Sayyid 1995 et Faṭḥ Allāh 1998). Par cette étude, qui nous a permis d'encadrer les procédés dramatiques, nous avons pu remarquer des influences de l'Expressionnisme et du théâtre de l'absurde dans plusieurs procédés stylistiques qui pourraient être attribués au théâtre épique. Et, dans aucun cas, ces procédés se basent sur les mêmes idées philosophiques et la même idéologie que Brecht (El-Sayyid 1995, 168).

Au contraire, la réécriture chez Faraġ présente plusieurs similitudes avec la réécriture de Jean Anouilh. Et Faraġ lui-même a signalé qu'Anouilh l'avait influencé profondément et amplement (Faraġ [1998] 2002, 30). En effet, les deux auteurs utilisent l'hypertextualité comme une partie constituante de leur travail. Anouilh avait plutôt tendance à réécrire des pièces – comme *Romeo and Juliet* (*Roméo et Jeannette*, 1945), *Dom Juan* (*Ornifles ou le courant d'air*, 1954), l'*Antigone* de Sophocle (1944) et *Œdipe* (*Œdipe*, 1978) – et la plupart de ses réécritures actualise des narrations anciennes, tandis que Faraġ en a changé les valeurs et transformé les personnages, mais il n'a pas touché à l'encadrement spatio-temporel.<sup>205</sup> De plus, Anouilh faisait surtout allusion à d'autres textes ou il les citait (voir Knight 1995), tandis que l'hypertextualité de Faraġ a un caractère massif et visible et elle est intentionnelle et déclarée. En revanche, les deux dramaturges sont comparables pour leur façon de réécrire l'histoire. *L'Alouette* (1953) et *Becket ou l'honneur de Dieu* (1959), par exemple, réinterprètent de façon originale des événements historiques et les rendent actuels, tout comme Faraġ fait dans ses réécritures de l'histoire. Dans d'autres pièces d'Anouilh, comme *Pauvre Bitos, ou le dîner des têtes* (1956), le présent et le passé se mêlent, ce qui n'existe pas dans les pièces de Faraġ. Les deux auteurs

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<sup>205</sup> Une fois seulement Faraġ a réécrit une pièce. C'était *Ġarāmiyyāt 'Aṭwa Abū Maṭwa* (*Les aventures de Abū Maṭwa's adventures*, 1985), une pièce en deux actes, dérivée de *L'Opéra de quat'sous* (Brecht, 1982), qui est, à sa fois, une adaptation de *The Beggar's Opera* (John Gay, 1728). Faraġ a adapté la pièce, en lui donnant un contexte nouveau.

partagent aussi un goût pour la citation faite d'allusions, surtout à Shakespeare, Brecht et Pirandello qui contribuent à créer le sens de leurs pièces.

D'autre part, la réécriture de Farağ active la potentialité dramatique contenue dans le genre de l'hypotexte. La réécriture déclenche un questionnement sur la potentialité dramatique de l'hypotexte ainsi que sur d'autres de ses aspects, tels que son style et son contenu. *Les Mille et une Nuits* confirment leur aptitude à être transposées sur la scène. Elles témoignent également de leur immédiateté dans la communication d'un message et l'universalité de leur langue et elles font preuve d'être "sgangherabili" (démontables). La *sīra* confirme son adaptabilité à des contextes nouveaux et la valeur d'al-Zīr comme mythe qui peut être remis dans une nouvelle narration et subir des transformations.

Dans le procédé de la réécriture, le dramaturge émerge comme démiurge. Sur les bases de l'enseignement aristotélique, on sait que la fantaisie joue un rôle important dans le processus créatif. La fantaisie permet à l'artiste de combiner des images indépendantes pour former des images nouvelles et ainsi créer des choses qui n'existaient pas auparavant. En tant qu'artiste et intellectuel, grâce à une réécriture kaléidoscopique, Farağ a créé des pièces lesquelles, par leur complexité et leur but révolutionnaire, loin d'être des simples copies d'un texte préexistant, pourront toujours s'enrichir d'interprétations différentes.

## Summary in Italian

### L'effetto caleidoscopio.

#### La riscrittura nelle opere drammaturgiche di Alfred Farağ come strategia multifunzionale per una creazione stratificata.

Molte opere del drammaturgo egiziano Alfred Farağ (1929-2005) sono riscritture di testi preesistenti. Tre sono le riscritture di testi storiografici. Una pièce risulta dalla riscrittura della leggenda di *al-Zīr Sālim* e ben sette sono le riscritture delle *Mille e una Notte*. Queste pièce hanno delle caratteristiche simili a seconda che riscrivano testi storiografici, la leggenda o i racconti delle *Mille e una Notte*. Analizzata come strategia letteraria, e cioè in seguito ad un accurato confronto del genere letterario, dell'intreccio, dei personaggi, dello stile e dei contenuti delle pièce (ipertesti) con i loro testi di partenza (ipotesti), la riscrittura emerge come un sistema variabile e multifunzionale che permette una creazione stratificata e che, per questo, funziona come un caleidoscopio.

Tutte le riscritture di testi che hanno come oggetto eventi storici trattano alcuni fatti privati della storia, che la storia non ha raccontato. I fatti passati sono resi in modo che non soltanto assomigliare al presente, ma venirci incontro. In particolare, il "vecchio" testo è rinnovato attraverso la rappresentazione teatrale per avere rilevanza nel presente. Nella trama delle pièce che riscrivono la storia, si può notare l'interesse verso il contesto in cui si è svolto il fatto e un'interpretazione ben determinata delle ragioni che hanno scatenato l'evento. I protagonisti dell'evento diventano personaggi positivi, mentre negli ipotesti erano classificati come incapaci, incoscienti o volgari. Al punto di vista autoriale della narrazione storica si sostituisce una polifonia creata da vari elementi quali il punto di vista dei diversi personaggi, la variazione linguistica, la ripartizione della scena e l'intertestualità. Simbolismo e performatività diventano due aspetti importanti della nuova opera.

La riscrittura della leggenda si distingue perché i valori dell'opera originale sono sovvertiti. La drammatizzazione della leggenda riabilita il patrimonio culturale arabo. La trama dell'opera teatrale è spezzettata in frammenti riordinati secondo la curiosità di Hağras - nipote di al-Zīr che nella leggenda compare solo alla fine della vicenda - in cerca della verità sul conflitto che coinvolge da decenni la propria famiglia. Lo spietato al-Zīr Sālim diventa un combattente coraggioso in cerca della verità assoluta. Vari personaggi rappresentano modalità diverse di governare e il comportamento violento di molti di essi è motivato dal vissuto di ognuno. Pur mantenendo gli stessi ruoli della leggenda, molti personaggi sono quindi vittime di conflitti

psicologici esaminati come tali solo nell'epoca moderna. La ricerca della verità impone una struttura atipica alla pièce che si compone di ben 45 scene. Nella leggenda, in occasioni importanti, i personaggi si esprimono in prima persona attraverso la poesia. Nell'opera teatrale, invece, la verità è assicurata soltanto dall'osservazione del passato che viene inscenato dai personaggi. Il nuovo contenuto dell'opera si focalizza sulla politica. Dalla leggenda si passa alla realtà quando le riflessioni sul modo di governare e sulle ragioni assurde all'origine una guerra ricordano da vicino la questione palestinese.

La riscrittura dei racconti delle *Mille e una Notte* è stata una costante nella produzione drammaturgica di Alfred Farağ. L'autore compose la prima fra tutte le riscritture delle *Mille e una Notte*, *Ḥallāq Bağdād* (Il barbiere di Baghdad, 1963), durante la reclusione nella prigione di al-Wāḥāt al-Ḥāriḡa. Nell'opera, che venne messa in scena per la prima volta all'interno del carcere, Farağ inserì una denuncia della mancata libertà di espressione degli intellettuali. *Buqbuq al-Kaslān* (Buqbuq lo sfaccendato, 1965) è la drammatizzazione di uno dei racconti del barbiere di Baghdad. La pièce in un atto contiene un chiaro messaggio socialista che esorta al lavoro. *‘Alī Ġanāḥ al-Tabrīzī wa tābi‘uhu Quffa* (‘Alī Ġanāḥ al-Tabrīzī e il suo servitore Quffa, 1968) assembla in modo omogeneo la trama di tre racconti delle *Mille e una Notte*. I due protagonisti, anch'essi ispirati a due personaggi delle *Mille e una Notte*, sono trasformati in una coppia servitore-padrone in cui il secondo assomiglia molto al presidente del tempo, Nasser, e con quest'ultimo condivide simili idee utopiche. *Rasā'il qāḍī Iṣbīliyya* (Le Lettere del Qadi di Siviglia, 1975) è un'opera teatrale composta da quattro racconti concatenati, proprio come quelli delle *Notti*. Anche l'ambientazione è ispirata ai racconti delle *Notti*. La trama dell'opera è per lo più originale, mentre il messaggio è attuale e invita a una riflessione sugli aspetti negativi del sistema economico capitalista. *Itnīn fī 'uffa* (Due in un sacco, 1991) è una versione in arabo egiziano di *Alī Ġanāḥ al-Tabrīzī wa tābi‘uhu Quffa*. Di essa riutilizza la trama, i personaggi e i temi. Solo il rapporto con l'ipotesi è leggermente variato proprio per la distanza linguistica imposta dall'utilizzo del dialetto. *Al-Ṭayyib wa al-ṣīrrīr wa al-ḡamīla* (Il Buono, la Bella e il Cattivo, 1994) riprende *Il racconto del tintore Abū Qīr e il barbiere Abū Sīr* aggiungendo il personaggio della Bella e una riflessione sul Male, che è sempre esistito. L'ultima opera di Farağ, *al-Amīra wa al-ṣu'lūk* (La principessa e il povero, 2002), si ispira al racconto di Zummurud, ma dà preponderanza al ruolo della donna e instaura un gioco meta-testuale con le *Mille e una Notte*.

Tutte le riscritture delle *Mille e una Notte* sono delle pièces allegre che mascherano un messaggio politico. In particolare, il reinvestimento del patrimonio attraverso le *Mille e una Notte* ha varie

funzioni. Innanzitutto, fornisce allo spettatore un soggetto noto e questo può invogliarlo ad andare a teatro. Poi, permette che l'utilizzo dell'arabo classico non appaia estraneo nei dialoghi. Il reinvestimento del patrimonio e l'utilizzo dell'arabo classico sono certamente da inserire nella propaganda panaraba promossa dal regime e messa in pratica da molti intellettuali. E proprio per questa ragione, l'utilizzo dei racconti delle *Notti* funge bene da maschera al contenuto politico dell'opera che si dimostra talvolta critico nei confronti del regime. La trama dei racconti è utilizzata in vario modo nelle differenti opere. In alcune, sono citate ampie parti di racconti, mentre altre opere emulano la trama delle *Notti*. I personaggi delle opere teatrali sono più elaborati dei loro corrispondenti nell'ipotesto. In generale, in queste pièce, la narrazione è molto presente.

La multifunzionalità delle pièce derivate dalla riscrittura consiste innanzitutto nel reinvestimento del patrimonio al fine, da una parte, di contribuire all'ideologia panaraba e, dall'altra, di inserirvi delle idee politiche che sicuramente non avrebbero passato il valico della censura se espresse in modo diretto. La riscrittura di Farağ ha anche la funzione di rimodellare il patrimonio storico-culturale arabo: la riscrittura della storia mostra nuove interpretazioni dei fatti passati; la riscrittura della leggenda ne mette in questione i valori e li sostituisce con valori nuovi; e la riscrittura delle *Notti* rimuove il comico basato sui pregiudizi religiosi o razziali e dalla magia considerata come reale, così che una nuova immagine dell'ipotesto si affianca a quella già esistente. Personaggi estrapolati dalla storia o dalla leggenda vengono reinterpretati e consegnati al pubblico come eroi affinché questa nuova immagine si consolidi e sostituisca la precedente.

Lungi dall'essere una mera imitazione del testo preesistente, l'opera teatrale derivata dalla riscrittura è una creazione complessa. In essa agiscono l'interpretazione dell'ipotesto da parte dello scrittore e del pubblico e l'interpretazione dell'opera teatrale da parte del pubblico. La ricezione del pubblico è quindi doppiamente variabile poiché in contesti diversi cambia la sua percezione sia dell'opera teatrale che del suo ipotesto. Come un caleidoscopio, la riscrittura riconfigura continuamente l'aspetto dell'ipotesto creando immagini complesse e pur sempre esteticamente piacevoli.

Plusieurs pièces du dramaturge égyptien Alfred Farağ (1929-2005) réécrivent des textes préexistants. Se caractérisant de façon différente selon le genre textuel de son hypotexte, la réécriture se révèle une stratégie variable. Une comparaison entre les genres, les récits, les personnages, le style et les contenus des hypertextes et des hypotextes montre que les pièces réécrivant l'histoire se focalisent sur des aspects privés et font ainsi que le passé se mêle à des questions d'actualité ; la réécriture de la *Qiṣṣat al-Zīr Sālim* subvertit les valeurs de la légende en les adaptant aux goûts du public ; tandis que les pièces dérivées des *Mille et une Nuits* encadrent des questions politiques dans une ambiance ludique.

Réinvestissant le patrimoine arabe, ces réécritures soutiennent le panarabisme. En même temps, elles encodent des critiques à l'encontre du régime de l'époque. De plus, la réécriture d'Alfred Farağ remodèle le patrimoine arabe : elle pourvoit l'histoire d'interprétations nouvelles et positives, adapte les valeurs de la légende et gomme le pouvoir effectif de la magie ainsi que le comique basé sur des préjugés religieux ou raciaux des contes des *Nuits*. Les personnages tirés de l'histoire et de la légende sont réinterprétés et livrés au public comme des héros. En plus d'être multifonctionnelle, la réécriture produit une création à plusieurs niveaux. Soumise à une double réception (celle de l'hypotexte seul et celle de l'hypertexte dans son ensemble), sa perception est complexement variable. Comme un kaléidoscope, la réécriture replace des éléments pour composer des dessins constamment variables au regard du spectateur qui forment l'esthétique de ces ouvrages.

Alfred Farağ, théâtre égyptien, réécriture, intertextualité, *turāt*, patrimoine, *Mille et une Nuits*, *sīra*.

Several of Alfred Farağ's plays rewrite preexistent texts. As each play presents distinctive features depending on the genre of its hypotext, rewriting is a variable strategy. A comparison between the literary genres, the plots, the characters, the style and the contents of the hypertexts and their hypotexts reveals that plays rewriting History focus on private aspects of the events and make the past reflects issues relevant in the present; the rewriting of the *Qiṣṣat al-Zīr Sālim* subverts its original values adapting them to the contemporary audience's taste; and plays based on the *Arabian Nights* frame political issues in cheerful atmospheres.

All the plays derived from the rewriting reinvest the Arab heritage and most of them are written in Classical Arabic, and so they contribute to foster the pan-arabist ideology. In the meantime, they contain political ideas which could be expressed because they were encoded through the rewriting. Alfred Farağ's rewritings also reshape the socio-cultural Arab heritage providing History with new, positive interpretations of the events, substituting the values of the legend and erasing the effective power of magic and the comic based on racial or religious prejudices from the tales of the *Nights*. Similarly, characters taken from History or legend are reinterpreted and delivered to the audience as heroes. Besides being multifunctional, rewriting also produces a multilayered creation. Affected by a double reception (of the hypotext and of the hypertext in its whole), its perception complexly variates. Like a kaleidoscope, the rewriting resettles elements to compose ever-changing viewed patterns shaping the aesthetic of such works.

Alfred Farağ, Egyptian drama, rewriting, intertextuality, *turāt*, heritage, *Arabian Nights*, *sīra*.