

# Carnival Logics of Khayal Al-Zill in Rashad Rushdy's *Behold! Behold!* (1965)<sup>1</sup>: A Semiotic Study

Marwa Essam Eldin Fahmi

College of Foreign Languages & Translation, MISR University for Science & Technology, Giza, Egypt  
[marwa.fahmy@must.edu.eg](mailto:marwa.fahmy@must.edu.eg)

**Abstract:** The poignancy of Rashad Rushdy's play *Behold! Behold!* (1965) lies in the revival of Khayal Al-Zill (Shadow Theatre) so as to expose subtly post-independence Egypt. My purpose is to analyze the theatrical presentation of *Behold! Behold!* within the framework of Bakhtin's carnival logics by shedding light on the conventions of Khayal Al-Zill. The use of Khayal Al-Zill can be explained in the light of the dynamic tension of what Bakhtin calls "centripetal" and "centrifugal" forces, i.e., center and periphery. Every language, Bakhtin notes "participates in the unitary language (in its centripetal force and tendencies) and at the same time partakes of social and historical heteroglossia (the centrifugal stratifying forces)" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 272). Khayal Al-Zill is "a centrifugal force" that seeks to undermine the "unitary" ambition of hegemonic authority. A "centrifugal force", therefore, is a tendency to express resistance against the "centripetal" tendency to decentre a "monoglossic language" and to reformulate histories. In this sense, the current study seeks to establish Khayal Al-Zill as a tool of resistance within the theatrical device of metadrama to dismantle oppression and injustice. Khayal Al-Zill is theatricalized in the manner of the Pirandellian play-within-a-play. It is dramatized in a deliberate reflexiveness to refer to itself. It functions as a powerful *subtext* to concretize metaphorically the political turmoil in post-independence Egypt. In other words, it registers the political abuse during the Mameluki era; an abuse which is echoed in the sixties under the leadership of the Nasserite regime.

**Keywords:** Metadrama – Shadow Theatre – Arab Theatre - Carnival Logics



## 1. Introduction

### Khayal Al-Zill: The Folk Theatre Reconsidered

In *Live Theatre in the Medieval Arab World* (1992), Shmuel Moreh writes that in Arabic lexicography, the noun 'khayal' means "figure" or "phantom" (Moreh, 1992, p. 123). He also pinpoints the historical development of this folk art saying that 'khayal' are "figures" moved by "a Shadow Player": "When the sight perceives the figures behind the screen, these figures are images which the Presenter moves so that their shadows appear upon the wall behind the screen and upon the screen itself" (Moreh, 1992, p. 124). By the eleventh century, the term 'khayal' had come to be paired with 'Al-Zill' [Shadow]. Moreh adds that the combination was adopted to describe a new type of entertainment originating in the Far East and it is generally assumed that 'Khayal' only acquired the meaning of 'play' as part of this expression. He concludes that "it is obvious that Khayal is synonymous with 'hikaya' or 'bábá' and that all three terms stand for live theatrical

<sup>1</sup> The current paper is adapted from my PhD. Dissertation entitled, *Post-Independence Drama from Utopia to Dystopia in Selected plays by Wole Soyinka and Modern Egyptian Dramatists*, submitted to the Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Arts, Cairo University, 2010, supervised by Prof. Amal Aly Mazhar, Panel Committee: Prof. Nihad Seleiha and Associate Prof. Naglaa Al-Hadidy.

performances" (Moreh, 1992, p. 124). In his study *Khayal Al-Zill* (1965), Egyptian Professor, Abdel Hameed Yunus, describes this folk art as "an indirect enactment" (Yunus, 1965, p. 9). He calls attention to this combination 'Khayal Al-Zill' which is "purely Arabic" and when it is added to the 'shadow', it implies a state of "contemplation" (Yunus, 1965, p. 11). He explains that in the everyday language both 'Khayal' and 'Al-Zill' may seem "synonymous", but this is not so in the Classical language: "Al-Khayal is a depiction while Al-Zill is the reflection of this depiction. Since Al-Zill is the pivotal artistic element, it is "linguistically correct to say Zill Al-Khayal not Khayal Al-Zill" (Yunus, 1965, p. 11).

A couple of years before, Egyptian critic Ibrahim Hamada published in 1963 his *Khayal Al-Zill Wa Tamthiliyyat Ibn Daniyal* which is the best study on this issue, yet it is "a somewhat defective scholarship and more damagingly by the ruthless omission of what Hamada regarded as obscene writing, without realizing that it is an integral part of the whole work, indeed of the whole genre" (Kahle, 1992, p. 7). Concerning the term, he refers to the fact that Ibn Daniyal entitles his Shadow Series or Episodes 'Tayf Al-Khayal'. In so doing, he links 'the seen' to 'the unseen' giving great importance to 'the reflected spot' on the screen. "This is an acceptable endeavor", as Hamada continues, "as the shadow is the desirable result in this type of art" (Kahle, 1992, p. 8).

In *Shadow Theatre and the Origin of the Arab Theatre* (1994), Syrian playwright Saadallah Wannus highlights the major features of Khayal Al-Zill as being a genuine "folk art in its content, stories, characters, folk in its direct relation with the spectators via the artistic power of improvisation reflecting the spectators' innermost workings" (Wannus, 1994, p. 9). Second, Wannus refers to the historical role played by Khayal Al-Zill in times of political upheaval to create a mood of release besides its fundamental role of entertainment, i. e., "though it is a temporary fantasy, it works perfectly to release the curbed indignation. It also celebrates communal voices to get rid of the shackles of oppression" (Wannus, 1994, p. 9). The Shadow Theatre –since Fatimid Egypt- has been "an appealing art because it always deals with moral, religious or historical themes, namely, it reveals the medieval allegorical habit of mind and the readiness of the cultured audience to see moral or religious lessons even in dramatic entertainment" (Kahle, 1992, p. 7). It is blended with an indigenous tradition to form a distinctive culture, a point noticed by Angela Hobart: "Shadow Theatre is deeply embedded in the social and religious life of the people and it is among the most important and evocative vehicles of this culture which it reflects" (Hobart, p. 13).

Technically speaking, Shadow plays are performed with figures cut from leather and held by sticks against a back-lit canvas screen. The audience –sitting in front of the screen- see only the shadows of the figures. The man who moves the figures speaks or sings the text just as through the moving figures are speaking or singing (Kahle, 1992, p. 4). In his article, "Behold! Behold!", Egyptian critic Muhammad Barakat levels an attack against Kamal Yaseen, the director of the play. He says that Yaseen failed to make a perfect "employment of the technique of lighting and its function was reduced to be a mere tool to light the whole theater during the performance of the play and it was switched off while the Khayal Al-Zill was in progress" (Barakat, 1966, p. 422). This entails another failure regarding the performance of Khayal Al-Zill which was directed on stage by Salah Al-Saqaa. Barakat adds that he prefers if "Al-Saqaa would have directed the scenes of Khayal Al-Zill using its well-known technique that dwells on the use of dummies instead of making the real actors human dummies" (Barakat, 1966, p. 423).

The second point I seek to raise is what I see as a limitation in *Behold! Behold!*. I mean Rushdy takes only the external artistic frame of Khayal Al-Zill with its flexible, rhyming language and the short introduction in which the Presenter or Master (Al-Rayyis) briefly explains his intention of acting the 'bábá'. He neglects other important conventions pertaining to the art of Khayal Al-Zill, i. e., to make the best use of the buffoonery which is a dominant genre. Levity is associated with "good literature" (al-adab al-ali) and not to a cheap or inferior writing" (Kahle, 1992, p. 11) as always exhibited by a character known as Tayf Al-Khayal:

**Tayf Al- Khayal:**

Greetings, gentlemen, may you continue to live in prosperity and happiness, you must learn that each character has a likeness to it, and although the proverb says that 'those of law rank may have merit nowhere to be seen in high society', yet each genre has its own method underlying every shadow (Khayal) a truth is to be found. In levity there is relief from the toil of seriousness and ill luck is a foil that sets forth good fortune. (qtd. by Kahle, 1992, p. 11)

In my contention, the dramatic value of the genre of buffoonery is that it can be enmeshed with M. M. Bakhtin's extensive analysis of the carnivalesque which aims at assaulting officialdom and dismantling hierarchies. In *Early Arabic Drama* (1988), M. M. Badawi writes that "one of the conventions of Khayal in Ibn Daniyal's age is that its characters are drawn from the lowest strata of society. In this respect, it is primarily a comic art" (Badawi, 1988, p. 14). Yet, Rushdy pays little heed to this convention that can level his play to its highest degree of being a carnivalesque. It seems that he was influenced by Professor Hamada's views concerning what he believes to be obscene and offensive as mentioned before. This is similar to what occurred to the sixteenth century French writer Francois Rabelais and deconstructed by Bakhtin's studies. Rushdy is not successful in deploying the farcical conventions to highlight the public mockery which is considered to be a very essential aspect to attack a ruthless power. The normal ordinary people have the creative energy to construct a non-constraining performance which can be a political mockery set against a ruler like the Turkish Suliman Agha whose unjust sentences increase the suffering of the Egyptians as exemplified in *Behold! Behold!*. The significance of Khayal Al-Zill's conventions is reinforced by the words spoken by the Presenter who claims that "Khayal is a literary art that can be appreciated only by ahal al-adab (men of letters), that is not a mere entertainment or past time, but is a mixture of seriousness and levity and that it requires some intelligence to see the point of it" (qtd. by Kahle, p. 13).

In this sense, Khayal Al-Zill can be approached with what Bakhtin terms as carnival culture which is defined as being "non-official" seeking to deconstruct systems of domination. "Carnival culture involves", as Bakhtin explains, "the temporal suspension of all hierarchical distinctions and barriers among men and of the prohibitions of usual life" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 15). Thus, it can be expressive of resistance, that is, carnival and its accompanying components represent a theory of resistance, a theory of freedom from all domination: "Carnival is the place for working out a new mode of interrelationship between individuals. People who in life are separated by impenetrable hierarchical barriers enter into free and familiar contact on the carnival square" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 123). In a word, Khayal Al-Zill is a zone which escapes from state control by dwelling upon wit and buffoonery, conventions which can be a way to deconstruct rulers who claim to be deities.

**2. Theorizing Khayal Al-Zill: An Evocative Theatrical Signifier of Resistance****2.1 Carnival "Theatrics"**

Within the paradigm of *Post-colonial Drama* (1996), carnival is "a medium of the multivoiced or polyphonic spirit which effectively opposes monologic orders" (Gilbert & Tompkins, 1996, p. 83). This is derived from Bakhtin's notion of 'polyphony' that seeks to undermine 'monologic' authoritative voice owing to the fact that the polyphonic spirit operates as a site of insurgency. In my contention, the use of Khayal Al- Zill can be explained in the dynamic tension of what Bakhtin calls "centripetal" and "centrifugal" forces, i.e., center and periphery. Every language, Bakhtin notes "participates in the unitary language (in its centripetal force and tendencies) and at the same time partakes of social and historical heteroglossia (the centrifugal stratifying forces)" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 272). If this notion is applied, I can safely say that Suliman Agha expresses a "unitary language" that represents the center of conformity. On the other hand, Khayal Al-Zill is " a centrifugal force" that seeks to undermine the "unitary" ambition of hegemonic authority. A "centrifugal force",

therefore, is a tendency to express resistance against the "centripetal" tendency to decentre a "monoglossic language". In this sense, Saeed, the director of the series of Khayal Al-Zill, reinterrogates history.

Like the carnival, the aspiration of Khayal Al-Zill is to uncover, undermine, and even destroy the hegemony of any ideology that seeks to have the final word about the world. Khayal Al-Zill encompasses a process that can advocate new voices that can be realizable in a dialogic interaction. The marginalized within non-carnival time not only gain a voice during carnival time, but they also say something about the ideology that seeks to silence them. In other words, Khayal Al-Zill acts as a motivation during the carnival time to create "a form of human social configuration" that "lies beyond existing social forms" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 280). This is in contrast to Al-Ashry's opinion that the "excessive use of Khayal Al-Zill has weakened the play's structure which appears incoherent and with no dramatic harmony" (*The Modern Thinking Magazine*, Feb., 1966). On the contrary, Khayal Al-Zill –within the carnival logics– is not reducible to terms such as anarchic, nor irresponsible, it is a tactic that can be implemented and sustained wherever there is a dominant ruling regime.

Khayal Al-Zill is used as a "challenge" to the totalized hierarchized, closed systems of political thought. The Egyptians rely on this art to defy their unbearable conditions as being marginalized, "off-center" (Hutcheon, 1988, p. 114) - to borrow Hutcheon's word - a result of the historical/political upheaval. In this perspective, the poetic of "*transgression*" is very useful in the context of resistance since it challenges a "*totalizing*" view of history. Seen in this light, totalitarianism is viewed as terroristic, and it leads to periods of great suffering and violence. What Khayal Al-Zill seeks – as what Post-modernism embodies– is *heterogeneity* not homogeneity as manifested in Agha's and his cousin the Turkish judge's tough and inhuman verdicts. The Egyptians rebel against the ruler's oppressive policy which is an appraisal of the unified subject with illegitimate ideology of marginalization. Therefore, Khayal Al-Zill offers a new meaning to history which is put under erasure to weaken uniformity and fixity. Moreover, the deployment of Khayal Al-Zill –within the post-independence context - brings to the fore Selmon's words: "history is a discourse which is culturally motivated and ideologically conditioned in the present" (Selmon, 1989, p. 55). Thus, Khayal Al-Zill is an enactment which has a special function in post-independence society for being an effective strategy through specific system of communication – aural, visual and kinetic.

## 2.2. Role Playing

Metadrama is broadly defined as drama that is "self-referential" and "self-reflexive". According to Richard Hornby, in *Drama, Metadrama and Perception* (1959), metadrama is "drama about drama" (Hornby, 1959, p. 31). Similarly, James L. Calderwood writes that metadrama is a discourse about "dramatic art itself –its materials, its media of language and theatre, its generic forms and conventions, its relationship to truth and social order" (Calderwood, p. 5). In *Metadrama: A New View of Dramatic Form* (1963), Lionel Abel states that metatheatre is a convenient name for the quality or force in a play which challenges theatre's claim to be simply realistic, to be nothing but a mirror in which we view the actions and sufferings of characters like ourselves (Abel, 1963, p. 59). Abel continues that metatheatre begins with sharpening our awareness of the unlikeness of life to dramatic art, it may be by making us aware of life's uncanny likeness to art to illusion, the theatricality (artificiality) which the conventional dramatic realism would hide (Abel, 1963, p. 60). Being defined as "drama about drama", the definition can be extended beyond the conventional play-within-the-play to all forms of theatrical self-reference, under which are subsumed "role playing", "forms of self-conscious reference to dramatic convention and other plays" (Ringer, p. 7).

In *Behold! Behold!*<sup>2</sup>, Khayal Al-Zill is theatricalized in the manner of the Pirandellian play-within-a-play. As a theatrical device, it is dramatized in a certain deliberate reflexiveness, a tendency to refer to itself. It functions as a powerful subtext to concretize metaphorically the political turmoil in post-independence Egypt. In other words, it registers the political abuse during the Mameluki era; an abuse which is echoed in the sixties under the leadership of the Nasserite regime. The characters/actors in Khayal Al-Zill are signifiers of a vocal expression of resistance that is –to use Gilbert's and Tompkins's description- "multiplied by the power of a numerous voice of a chorus, reinforcing both vocal number and volume" (Gilbert & Tompkins, p. 194). Khayal Al-Zill also provides an important structural element which breaks the flow of the principal action on the stage punctuating moments of deep feeling. This is theatrically exhibited in the warning refrain said by the café boy: "Oh my Goodness! Oh my Goodness! Save us from what we do not know / Save us from the evil people" (*Behold! Behold!*, p. 142). This refrain can act as "a mnemonic device by which the moral and political lessons of the action could very much in the manner in which the Greek chorus draws the lessons of the events of the play" (Esslin, p. 90) to use Esslin's words.

In addition, Saeed, by being the schemer of Khaled Ibn No'maan's *bábá*, is the playwright/director-within-the-play, thereby, he is in power to direct the course of the action or in Gilbert's and Tompkins's terms, he "disperses the viewer's gaze and this refracted play-within-a-play, thus, has the potential to activate a considerable resistant energy" (Gilbert & Tompkins, p. 251). In a word, the essential dramatic principle of metadrama is the theatricality of the theatre commenting on its own activity that is self-reflexive. Consequently, this theatrical mode encourages the audience to imagine what happens on stage to be real while being aware of the fact that it is purely imaginary for entertainment. The story of Ibn No'maan can be explained in the following words as being dramatized "in a theatrically innovative way [in which] the interplay between viewer and spectacle show[s] that reality consists of not only what happens but also how it is seen" (Italics mine, Gilbert & Tompkins, p. 250). The definitive feature of theatre, therefore, is the illusion of creating one's own enunciative conditions. I mean that the source of meaning –as exhibited in the enactment of *khayal Al-Zill*- is located in the actors, the scripter, the sceneographers, etc. thus, the referential illusion of theatre is: "is in the affirmation of the theatricality of the representation" (De Toro, p. 33). This foregrounds the "double nature of theatre: it exists as a real and concrete fact on the stage (there are actors, objects, words) but at the same time all of this is negated, for all that is found on the stage is a sign of a sign, a referential simulacrum" (De Toro, p. 30).

Rushdy introduces the actors Abdel 'Aal/Sayed as a set of simulacra through the use of 'like' or 'look like' structure in the character dramatization. Ibn No'maan is seen to be a 'look like' referent in the real world of the main play. In this respect, Elizabeth Wright, in her *Postmodern Brecht: A Representation* (1989) argues that the V-effect "[i]nvolves problematizing the very activity or reference by playing on the inherently dialectical structure of perception, conscious against unconscious, eye against gaze, symbolic against imaginary. In postmodern art everything is subject to V-effect" (Wright, p. 96). By producing a V-effect in the audience through the use of simulacra, Rushdy manages to enforce the claim that automatic and habitualized self-referentiality of the simulation of real characters in society brings an end to any unified viewpoint.

Finally, the opening stage direction shows that the action of the play is set in the Mameluki era, yet the events of the play operate within the notion of timelessness. Indigenous theatre –as epitomized in *Khayal Al-Zill*- avoids "fixed diachronic structure" (Gilbert & Tompkins, p. 140) to loosen any hegemonic control as well as to displace singular authority. The technique of political projection creates a dual time frame; the declared time (Mameluki period) and the concealed one (Post-independence period). This duality makes of the performance is a political endeavor to rehistoricize post-independence Egypt so as to empower resistance.

### 3. The Theatricality of the Play-within-a-play: A Sign-System of Dismantling Injustice

The opening scene depicts a typical Mameluki public square in Cairo; Saeed's oriental café, a court and Abu Al-Maaty's and his brother Sayed's house which will be converted into a shrine by the masses to get divine blessings and finally there is Abdel 'Aal's barber shop. The Mameluki period –as a spatio-temporal sign- is evoked in the stage direction. The prefatory stage direction achieves what Elam believes to be "the securing of attention through the apparent 'tellability' of the initial information" (Elam, p. 89). Scene one opens with Saeed's words that set the tone of the whole play:

**Saeed: Behold! Behold! / Watch the wonders /Once upon a time/In the old age  
(Behold! Behold!, p. 123)**

Hence, "Once upon a time" is a verbal signifier of the dialectical relation between history and text. It is the possible dramatic world which enables us to understand the real world.

Saeed's prologue to his new *bábá* of Khaled Ibn No'maan, the honest merchant, sets two time levels: the present of the play which is the Mameluki period and the past of the play which encompasses the story of Ibn No'maan and the two time levels represent the past to the real audience. The two time levels are meant by Rushdy to create a contrast between two nations; the Egyptians who refuse to surrender to the callous rule of the Turkish judge who has replaced the Egyptian one, Othman Hamza. On the contrary, Ibn No'maan's people let him down and submit their souls to a despot. Within this rationale, Rushdy's choice of this historical period is very apt to project a lawless modern age which is an echo of the old one. The present of the play and that of its past as exhibited in the story of Ibn No'maan highlight the fact that "theatre is the discourse of *hic et nunc* which is forever in the present. Even when events take place in the past, they present themselves in the present; in the form of performative action [that is because] theatre always states that *we are in the theatre* and that one is dealing with *a reality transformed into a sign*, with a referential simulacrum or a sign that is being transformed into reality. This is what is special about the present tense in theatre" (De Toro, p. 26).

Saeed's story-telling is a signifier of the play's "macrostructure" (Pfister, p. 200), to use Pfister's word, which is determined by events rather than actions. Such "narration mediation" is regarded as "second-hand information- that is- a report whose purely verbal quality makes it much less vivid and objective" (Pfister, p. 204). To refute such a definition of story-telling, Khayal Al-Zill is established as a linking theatrical device to give more vividness to the episodic theatrical events in the two time levels according to the principle of juxtaposition. In *Theatrical Nights* (1987), Professor Seleiha differentiates between narration and story-telling: "Within the narrative structure, the character is in complete submission to the text since it controls his role, hence, he becomes an object not a subject to its internal structure. On the other hand, the actor/story-teller formula is meant to make both the actor and the audience history-makers inside and outside the paradigm of story-telling in which they are viewers and participants" (Seleiha, 1987, p. 15). She adds that story-telling creates "two unique structures on stage, two remarkable emotional moods since the audience's theatrical reception is divided between two stories, one in the present and the other in the past" (Seleiha, 1987, p. 14).

While Saeed is seen distributing the dramatic roles to play the *bábá*, a messenger enters the stage to announce Suliman following words: "Without khayal and art/ Men would be like mice inside their holes" (*Behold! Behold!*, p. 209). Egyptian Professor Gaber Asfour refers to the fact that *Behold! Behold!* is distinguished by what he calls "the effective response function": "Khayal Al-Zill directs the behavior and the response of the audience in an effective and direct way. This unconsciously encourages he/she to make certain *comparisons*. This function can be linked to that of drama as stated in Aristotle's concept of imitation. Thereby, the aim of the Khayal Al-Zill is not

to imitate reality as it is, but to imagine it through the use of a motion picture" (Italics mine, Asfour, p. 64).

Saeed's words: "Behold! Behold! / Man's oppression of his fellow brother / Indeed, everyone is in this country no other but Khaled Ibn No'maan" (*Behold! Behold!*, p. 195) verbalize the plight of Ibn No'maan whose destiny is determined by a ruler who grants or abolishes liberties as he wishes. When Ibn No'maan is under the ruler's protection, he is respected by everyone and when he is no longer a member of the ruler's entourage, he is let down by his folks. Saeed's *bàbà* parallels in reality – the present time of the play- the episode of the honest merchant, Bakr Rashwan who has been acquitted by the court; yet, the unjust Turkish ruler gives his order to detain him. At this point, the two time levels move simultaneously to expose a chronic state of injustice and oppression. Structurally speaking, the enactment of Khayal Al-Zill runs throughout the play in a disconnected performance in accordance with the real events in the present time level. Rushdy deliberately creates such interrelated spatio-temporal levels to universalize the motif of oppression.

Within the semiotic perspective, *Behold! Behold!* is a *micro* sign and Khaled Ibn No'maan constitutes one of its *macro*-sign. Being a pivotal sign, Ibn No'maan's semiotic *transformability* is under study. On stage, Ibn No'maan is an iconic sign of his role as an actor, but within the socio-economic dimension, he is an indexical sign of an oppressed merchant. In his suffering, he becomes a symbolic sign in representing man's grief and sadness. He, finally, is a manifestation of a metatheatrical sign within the implied reference to "We are all Jamal Abdel Nasser", which is an implicit echo of "Indeed, everyone is in this country no other but Khaled Ibn No'maan". Thus, the play-within-the-play technique is designed to force the audience to link by parallelism or contrast, what they see and hear on stage with what is going on in the world at large.

The vitality of the story-telling as actualized in Saeed's *bàbà* is due to the fact that it creates such a parallelism between the presentness of the play and its pastness as manifested in the Khayal Al-Zill. Whenever the events become very tense, Saeed summons his troupe to act their theatrical roles. The dramatic strength of the story-teller lies in the way Saeed revises or rethinks history. This is in opposition to Egyptian critic, Bahig Nassar's assumption that "the use of the story-telling style has reduced Rushdy's play to a radio series" (Nassar, 1966, p. 399). In describing the story-telling's presentational style, it has no knowledge of the fourth wall: that metaphor for the separation of communication and art which renders art meaningless. Rather, it reminds us to recreate the theatrical act and to recreate meaning afresh each time. In the play, the story-teller is a signifier of communal consciousness and it is central to the preservation of the group's culture. Being a social commentator, the story-teller's mode of performance is meant to reinvestigate taken-for-granted discourses. From the point of view of reception aesthetics, the act of story-telling within the enactment of Khayal Al-Zill can be regarded as an act of reading which can be understood as a type of concretization or interpretation that the director [Saeed] or spectator [the inner and the outer ones] carries out.

Agha's severe punishment of those who play Khayal Al-Zill. However, Saeed's "strong and firm voice" (Stage direction, p. 125) is challengeable: "it is not over and if so, Agha won't have feared our Khayal Al-Zill" (*Behold! Behold!*, p. 125). This emphasizes the important role of Khayal Al-Zill to release repressive feelings and to act as a tool to inflame indignation and to fight injustice. The significant role of Khayal Al-Zill is mouthed by Saeed in the

### 3.1. The Ibn No'maan/Abdel 'Aal Interplay of Roles

The expository scene sets the close relationship between Abdel 'Aal and Ibn No'maan, that is, the Egyptian barber's role -in Saeed's *bàbà*- is the enactment of Ibn No'maan's character. As the events in Khayal Al-Zill progresses, Abdel 'Aal gets emotionally involved more and more till he reaches the state of complete identification with the character he enacts. Abdel Aal's enactment in the play-within-the play technique highlights the process by which theatre presents itself as

something real, but at the same time *says* that is a sign, a simulacrum, an illusion. On this point, De Toro explains that "Denegation is the very essence of theatre. It can work in two ways: a) by means of mimetic illusion [and] this is 'realist' theatre or; b) by means of rupture with mimesis (the sign refers to itself –non-realist theatre)" (De Toro, p. 88). The second way is in question as manifested in Saeed's Khayal Al-Zill of Ibn No'maan's *bábá*. This form of *denegation* is "the sort of reproduction that declares itself as artificial, fictive and theatrical" (De Toro, p. 88). Khayal Al-Zill theatre –as shown in the analysis- is based on the idea of theatricality and reflexive nature of the sign that actually creates itself. The relation I aim at establishing is between the notion of *denegation* and theatre *referentiality* as manifested in the use of Khayal Al-Zill as a metatheatrical technique. *Denegation* is the referential illusion, a sign that is transformed into reality. The performance sign –as incarnated in Khayal Al-Zill- presents itself as real in the stage production, when in fact it is not. In his identification or enactment of Ibn No'maan's role, Abdel 'Aal creates a referential illusion, or rather, a *simulacrum* of a referent.

Ibn No'maan's aborted attempts to clear his name drive him to sell his goods for free to bring the clients back, an act that back fires:

**The Head Soldier: You distribute unpaid stolen goods. Close the shop**

**Khaled: [While throwing him out of the shop]. Oh people!**

**This is unfair ... Unfair ... Unfair. (*Behold! Behold!*, p. 183)**

Abdel 'Aal's enacted scene is repeated in the present time level of the play, echoing the same words he has said in Khayal Al-Zill:

Abdel 'Aal: Oh Merciful God! Oh Merciful God! A small infant cries on his mother's shoulder. He falls down and the mother screams loudly while the soldiers are rapping her. The people are present watching the scene with their eyes wide open, yet they disappear and the woman dies. Oh people! Unfair ... Unfair .... Injustice is now everywhere. Really, everyone is no other but Khaled Ibn No'maan in this country. (*Behold! Behold!*, p. 185)

In another enactment, Ibn No'maan decides to build a fence so as to imprison himself within it to avoid people's wickedness. Saeed narrates how by accident Ibn No'maan kills the Waaly's son without being aware of this fact:

**Khaled: I killed him ... They will kill me.**

**Saeed: Don't be afraid / No harm will be inflicted on you /**

**They have already killed you / Injustice begets injustice /**

**Evil begets evil. (*Behold! Behold!*, p. 202)**

The soldiers randomly arrest a number of innocent people and Ibn No'maan cannot accept to inflict injustice upon poor and guiltless people:

**Khaled: [Screaming and saying loudly] I killed him. I say I killed him**

**The soldiers: [Looking at him saying] A mad man. Shut up you mad man ...**

**a mad dog. (*Behold! Behold!*, p. 203)**

At this intense moment of the story-telling, the enactment stops because Iwaz Bek's procession arrives and the soldiers arrest the poor bakers who do not abide by the cold hearted orders to submit the baked bread to the State Treasury, an act which enrages Abdel 'Aal who shouts hysterically: "This is unacceptable ... he is not a judge ... he is a criminal" (*Behold! Behold!*, p. 204). The events reach its zenith when Abdel 'Aal is overwhelmed by powerful feelings to kill Iwaz Bek. He seizes the opportunity when he is summoned to shave Iwaz Bek's beard. Abdel 'Aal is seen carrying a razor blade with spots of blood and vociferously says: "I killed him ... I killed him" (*Behold! Behold!*, p. 206). The court keeper, Khalil, comments that "the scene is here and there and everywhere Ibn No'maan is always there" (*Behold! Behold!*, p. 206). Abdel 'Aal's insistence to

confess his crime drives "Khalil to realize what has happened taking from his hands the stained-blood blade throwing it inside the court" (Stage direction, p. 206):

**Khalil: Well done Ibn No'maan / You're a truly man / Despite what  
You've suffered / Despite the injustice you've experienced /  
You've behaved as a human being. (Stage direction, p. 206)**

These words are an embodiment of metadrama which is a mode of self-reflexiveness. In Khayal Al-Zill, Abdel 'Aal is an internal actor in the inner play of Ibn No'maan, that is, he stands for role-playing-within-the-role which indicates that an actor, in addition to his actual role, can assume further roles. Khalil represents the internal audience who feels the blurring line between art and life as manifested in addressing Abdel 'Aal as Ibn No'maan. This metatheatrical approach focuses on the performative aspect of drama: "performative text" by which Ringer means "the cumulative effect of this interaction of author, actors and audience" (p. 10). In this respect, a play-within-the-play "disperses" the center of visual focus so that the "viewer's gaze" is split. Thus, it could be inferred that Khalil's doubled vision provides "a way of revisioning the entire spectacle as the audience watches the play and the play-within-a-play at the same time as it watches the actors watching the inner play" (Gilbert & Tompkins, p. 250).

### 3.2. The Ibn No'maan/Sayed Madness

From the outset of *Behold! Behold!*, the relation between Abu Al-Maaty and his brother Sayed is a signifier of oppression and subjugation. Abu Al-Maaty tempts his brother to join the group of buffoons whose lives depend on begging and seeking the Waaly's donations. Hypocrisy is the key element in their act to feign madness and to play the roles of blessed/righteous men who are summoned every now and then to the ruler's palace to foretell the future and to please him as well.

The stage direction depicts a group of buffoons – "seven men at least each one beats on a drum and all wear large bizarre hats with different styles and colors and holds a rattle. Some put on women's wear while, others dressed in sackcloth" (*Behold! Behold!*, p. 136) and they are all seen shaking their bellies and heads in a ritualistic manner. This description is typical of a carnival mode defined as "theatrics of rant and madness" (Italics mine, Boje, p. 440). In this feast of fools, gender distinction is suspended as exemplified in wearing women's clothes. The "theatrics" of madness is typical buffoonery in which the features of grotesquerie are dominant. Yet, Rushdy –as referred before- is not successful in manipulating this carnival "theatrics" properly to enhance the mode of resistance in order to degrade, ridicule and vilify men of authority. This opinion embarks on the fact that Shadow Plays have manifested "a tendency to employ crude methods to raise an easy laugh and to use obscene gestures and words, they were often satirical in intent; designed to point out the excesses and shortcomings of society at times emphasizing the injustice of those in power and the helplessness of the poor and hard-pressed peasant" (Badawi, 1987, p. 3). In the play, this group of fools is portrayed in a negative way to provide a subtext to Sayed's insanity which is an inevitable result of humiliation and subjugation:

**Buffoon 1: It has been said that Agha likes fools. We, then  
have decided to make ourselves mad with some  
tricks ... this is our story and we're on our way  
to his palace to entertain him.**

**Abu Al-Maaty: You mean do be like you?**

**Buffoon 1: That sounds reasonable. The Waaly likes fools.**

**Abu Al-Maaty: Right. Does it appeal to you brother Sayed?**

**Do you like to play the role of a fool?**

**Sayed: Why not? I 'm a fool. (Italics mine, *Behold! Behold!*, p. 140)**

It seems that playing the role of a fool is a reasonable escape from the oppression of authority. This tactful policy dismantles the conventional view of a fool who is a silly person with little intellect or with no reason. In this context, foolery is counterfeited for entertaining the Waaly with jests or antics postures. They exploit buffoonery instead of being exploited by a callous ruler. This is a signifier of mental power to mock society where they need to survive: "the fool is most frequently an enemy of the didactics" (Goldsmith, 48), "amoral, Janus-like figure who lives in ambiguity, not the clear win-or-lose conflict of the psychomachia" (Danby, p. 333) and by his sustaining vision and imagination, he continually tries to "recreate the world by averting potential horror with kinetic folly" (Willeford, p. 99).

Accordingly, Rushdy's contradiction lies in his endeavor to use the buffoons -within the motif of madness- as tools to foreshadow Sayed's deteriorated mental state which occurs at the end of the outer play. Yet, the play ends with the triumph of the buffoons who are able to unite the Egyptians' will in order to create one firm power to escape the Waaly's unfair taxes and severe punishments. The carpenters, the blacksmiths and the women join the buffoons' procession headed by Abu Hedaya chanting:

**We're the beggars  
Hungry and thirsty  
We're the poor  
We're the miserable  
In dire need  
And have nothing to eat.**

(Behold! Behold!, p. 232)

"This is not only a collective song", as Mahmoud Amin Al-Alim writes, "but it is one of the play's dramatic situations, an action in the play" (Italics mine, Al-Alim, 1966, p. 408). This state of resistance reaches its climax when both soldiers, Hasaneen and Weka, decide to join the group:

**Hasaneen: These buffoons are not mad. They're liars, cheaters,  
deceivers. I'll arrest them.**

**Weka: No. They're true, clever men. (Behold! Behold!, p. 273)**

Weka confronts Hasaneen that he has to submit some of his domestic property and animals to the Waaly otherwise his head will be chopped. At this point, Hasaneen –with two other soldiers- join the procession chanting the national song of buffoonery. My point is that Sayed's madness can be manipulated in a much dynamic manner to be expressive of revolution and resistance. That is because by virtue of being non-conformists, "the fools and clowns have long practiced symbolic resistance to the statuesque" (Schechter, p. 10). Thus, Sayed can be used as a weapon for socio-political attack and in playing the role of a buffoon; he is expected to show a much resilient attitude.

The finale of the play is an echo of the known dramatic Greek technique of *deus ex machina*, i.e., the ending is abrupt and it lacks the necessary dramatic organic unity. Rushdy seems to be only contented with the combination of the closing scenes of the inner play and the outer one in which Egyptian Judge Othman Hamza announces the Sultan's order to dismiss the callous Waaly, then, all the characters on stage address the real audience inviting them to sing to celebrate the triumph of justice: "Behold! Behold!/ The difference between / Injustice and fairness / Light and beauty / Who sets this difference / It is you and us" (Behold! Behold!, p. 246). The finale is just a national song, an inflammatory one, in which the real audience takes part.

Like Saeed's *bábá*, Sayed's play-within-a-play ends tragically. The cruel bother imprisons Sayed in room preventing him from getting outside and to live naturally as any normal human being. Gradually, Sayed is regarded by the populace as a Sheikh whose prayers perform miracles. The point is that there is no retreat and whenever Sayed shows rejection, he is scolded and threatened by his wicked brother whom he calls "a merciless devil" (Behold! Behold!, p. 195):

**Abul Al-Maaty: You'll have no dinner this night.**  
**Sayed: I'm tired. I feel ill.**  
**Abul Al-Maaty: If you sleep again while you're working, you'll have no breakfast.**  
**Sayed: I'm tired, ill, ill. I want to go out. I need air.**  
**Abul Al-Maaty: Ok! There is no dinner, no breakfast, no air.**  
**Sayed: Oh God! I want to stop it.**  
**Abu Al-Maaty: No one forces you to be a fool. (*Behold! Behold!*, p. 180)**

In this confinement, he is deprived of his freedom till he loses his mind as he wishes to put an end to this feigned madness. He is moved by the punishment inflicted upon the fruit seller who is sent to the madhouse to execute the severe order passed by Iawz Bek:

**Sayed: [Calling]: You, poor man ... You, poor man ... They're going to put you in the madhouse. You'll spend the rest of your life as a prisoner ... Prisoner .... Mad ... You'll never see the light again .... (*Behold! Behold!*, p. 189).**

Sayed's mental deterioration is echoed in Saeed's ba'ba'. The enacted scene is that the one which depicts an accusation of insanity which is leveled against Ibn No'maan by the soldiers: [Some passers-by drop their ears hearing the word "mad" as if it were a speaker ... they whisper 'mad' ... walking toward Ibn No'maan]

**Khaled: Am I mad?**  
**The Soldier: [In a loud voice] Mad ... Mad ... Mad.**  
**The masses: [Repeat with the same pitch] Mad ... Mad.**  
**[They walk toward him –some run away – the others attack him.]**  
**Some: Go away. He is a mad.**  
**Others: Catch him. He is a mad.**  
**Khaled: [Running in utter astonishment] Am I mad? This is unfair.**  
**(*Behold! Behold!*, p. 192)**

While the performance is in progress, Sayed appears on stage:

**Sayed: [A sarcastic long laugh] Behold! Behold! man's oppression to his fellow brother.**  
**[Pointing to himself]**  
**I wish I were a donkey. I wish I were Ibn No'maan to put an end to my miserable situation. Is it fair to spend all my life in prison while my brother is the guard.**  
**Oh people! This is unfair. Unfair**  
**(*Behold! Behold!*, p. 195)**

By the end of Ibn No'maan's story, Sayed's wishes become true

**Sayed: I am a donkey ... I am a donkey [Braying].**  
**Abu Al-Maaty: Poor man. You're like Khaled Ibn No'maan.**  
**(*Behold! Behold!*, p. 283)**

In this scene as depicted by Rushdy, Sayed's voiced utterance "I am donkey" is amplified when he brays. He, thus, produces an artificial sound which becomes a sign of degradation. The iconicity of Sayed's body and voice do not abide by the cause-and-effect relationship which bounds the signifier and the signified. In his deteriorated state mental state, Sayed personifies the disjunction between signs and meanings, namely, in losing his sanity [signifier], he subsequently loses the most basic

vestiges of his identity [signified]. In a sympathetic tone, Abul Al-Maaty sets an affinity between his brother and Ibn No'maan, a link that reveals a dialogic tension between the two levels of performance in which one mimics and reflects the original, hence, refracting the entire text's meaning.

#### 4. Conclusion

The originality of deploying Khayal Al-Zill lies in its dramatic potentiality to produce the motif of oppression through the use of parallel and contrasting scenes in order to illustrate the tone of paradox theatrically. The frequent employment of analogies and simulacra constitute the cornerstone of the narrative. It freshens and stimulates the audience's experience of the text; hence it creates the defamiliarizing effect. This theatrical analogy, therefore, achieves a system of cross-referencing between the microcosm of the stage and the macrocosm of present political events that take place in the outer play. The affinities - set throughout the outer play between Abdel 'Aal and Ibn No'maan on the one hand and that between Sayed and Ibn No'maan - profoundly challenge the habitual tendency of readers. By breaking the narrative linearity, the repetitive/structural comment "Everyone is no other but Khaled Ibn No'mann in this country" shatters the dramatic illusion and the audience (both the inner and the outer ones) are drawn more and more into trying to figure out how the different dramatic parts fit together. This is the very embodiment of metadramatic theories characterized by the conscious effort to blur the boundaries between the actual and the imaginary. Consequently, repetition becomes a source of textual power, i.e., this type of repetition in text stands as " a textual energetic " or " a kind of thermo dynamic plenum" (Brooks, p. 123) to borrow Peter Brooks's description. In blurring distinction between the original and the copy, the copy may have taken over "to make the reader realize by what strategies he is deceived into mistaking art for reality" (Imhof, p. 24), an endeavor in a dramatic writing in general and in metafiction in particular.

#### References

- [1] Abel, Lionel (1963). *Metatheatre: A New View of Dramatic Form*. New York: Hill & Wang.
- [2] M. M. Badawi, (1982). "Medieval Arabic Drama: Ibn Daniyal". *Journal of Arabic Literature*. Vol. 13.
- [3] M. M. Badawi, (1987). *Modern Arabic Drama in Egypt*. Cambridge: Cambridge U P.
- [4] M. M. Bakhtin, (1981). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Austin: Texas U P.
- [5] M. M. Badawi, (1984). *Rabelais and His World*. Helen Iswolsky (trans.). Bloomington: Indiana U P.
- [6] Boje, David (2001). "Carnavalesque Resistance to Global Spectacle: A Critical Postmodern Theory of Public Administration". *Administrative Theory & Praxis*. Vol. 23, No. 3, April 2001. pp. 431-458.
- [7] Brooks, Peter (1984). *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- [8] Calderwood, L. James (1971). *Shakespearean Metadrama*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- [9] Danby, John (1961). "The Fool and Handy Danby". *Shakespeare: Modern Essays in Criticism*. Leonard F. Dean (ed.). New York: oxford U P.
- [10] De Toro, Fernando (1995). *Theatre Semiotics: Text and Staging in Modern Theatre*. John Lewis (trans.). Frankfurt: Madrid.
- [11] Elam, Keir (1984). *Shakespeare's Universe of Discourse: Language-Game in the Comedies*. Cambridge, Cambridge U P.
- [12] Esslin, Martin (1987). *The Field of Drama*. London: Methuen.

- [13] Gilbert, Helen & Tompkins, Joanne. (1996). Postcolonial Drama: Theory, Practice, Politics. London & New York: Routledge.
- [14] Goldsmith, Robert Hills (1963). Wise Fools in Shakespeare. East Lansing: Michigan State U P.
- [15] Hobart, Angela (1987). Dancing Shadows of Bali: Theatre & Myth. Bali: Bali U P.
- [16] Hornby, Richard (1959). Drama, Metadrama and Perception. Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell U P.
- [17] Hutcheon, Linda (1988). A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction. New York: Routledge.
- [18] Imhof, Rudigar (1986). Contemporary Metafiction: A Study of Metafiction in English since 1939. Heidelberg.
- [19] Kahle, Paul (1992). Three Shadow Plays by Muhammed Ibn Daniyal. Cambridge, Published & Distributed by the Trustees of the E. J. W. GIBB MEMORIAL.
- [20] Moreh, Shmuel (1992). Live Theatre and Dramatic Literature in the Medieval Arab World. Edinburgh, Edinburgh U P.
- [21] Pfister, Manfred (1988). The Theory and analysis of Drama. Cambridge: Cambridge U P.
- [22] M. Ringer, (1998). Electra and the Empty Urn. Metatheatre and Role Playing in Sophocles. Chapel Hill & London: North Carolina U P.
- [23] Schechter, Joel (1985). Clowns, Politics and Theatre. New York: Theatre Communication Group.
- [24] S. Selmon, (1989). "Reading for Resistance in Postcolonial Literature". A Shaping of Connections: Commonwealth Studies Then & Now. H. Maes-Jelined K.H. Petersen & A. Rutherford (eds.). Sydney: Dangaroo.
- [25] Willeford, William (1969). The Fool and his Scepter: A Study in Clowns and Jesters and their Audience. Evanston, IL: Northwestern U P.
- [26] Wright, Elizabeth (1989). Postmodern Brecht: A Representation. London, New York: Routledge.

## المراجع العربية:

١. العالم ، محمود أمين (١٩٧٨) . " اتفرج يا سلام. المصور. ١١-٢٢-١٩٦٦. اتفرج يا سلام ، القاهرة: الهيئة العامة للكتاب.
٢. العشري ، جلال (١٩٧٨) . " اتفرج يا سلام": رأى في كتاب. مجلة الفكر المعاصر. اتفرج يا سلام ، القاهرة: الهيئة العامة للكتاب .
٣. بركات ، محمد (١٩٧٨) . " اتفرج يا سلام". الاذاعة . ١-٢٢-١٩٦٦. اتفرج يا سلام ، القاهرة: الهيئة العامة للكتاب .
٤. حماده ، ابراهيم (١٩٦١) . خيال الظل و تمثيلات دانيال . القاهرة: الهيئة العامة للكتاب .
٥. رشدي ، رشاد (١٩٧٨) . الاعمال الكاملة (الجزء الثاني): رحلة خارج السور ، اتفرج يا سلام . القاهرة: الهيئة العامة للكتاب.
٦. صليحة ، نهاد (١٩٨٢) . أمسيات مسرحية . القاهرة: الهيئة العامة للكتاب .
٧. عصفور ، جابر (١٩٨١) . الاحياءية و الاحياءيون . القاهرة: محاضرات أداب القاهرة .
٨. ونوس ، سعد الله (١٩٩٤) . خيال الظل و أصل المسرح العربي . دمشق : منشورات وزارة الثقافة .
٩. نصار ، بهيج (١٩٧٨) . " اتفرج يا سلام". الجمهورية . ٢٠-١-١٩٦٦. اتفرج يا سلام ، القاهرة: الهيئة العامة للكتاب .
١٠. يؤنس ، عبد الحميد (١٩٩٥) . خيال الظل . القاهرة: الدار المصرية للتأليف و الترجمة . المكتبة الثقافية ، العدد ١٣٨ .