

The Merchant of Venice in Arabic

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Shakespeare's comedies are generally less well received in the Arab world than his tragedies, for reasons which space does not allow us to consider here. However, **The Merchant of Venice** is an exception; the play has been translated, staged and reviewed considerably. In my study, "Shakespeare in Arabic: A Bibliographical Essay", I have listed a dozen different translations of the play and cited numerous articles, critical reviews and commentaries on it. The play has also been performed, though intermittently, in some Arab countries, especially in Egypt, and there is a significant corpus of criticism dealing with it⁽¹⁾. Several reasons are proposed for the popularity of this particular comedy in Arabic. First, it has always been viewed in relation with the Arab-Jewish conflict. Arab writers, as will be explained later in the study, have appreciated the way Shakespeare delineates the Jews because they see Shylock as an incarnation of Zionism⁽²⁾. Second, in dealing with usury the play highlights Shylock's inhumanity in lending money with "usance", a practice that is, at least theoretically, forbidden in Islam. Third, the Jews are also depicted rather negatively in the Holy Quran; they are shown to be bearing grudge and hatred towards the Moslems⁽³⁾. Thus Arab writers and audiences find **The Merchant** a literary work that categorically condemns the Jews.

This paper intends to investigate the varied treatment of **The Merchant of Venice** in Arabic, commenting particularly on the depiction of Shylock

in Arabic drama. As such, the study will bring into focus two important aspects of the topic, namely the varied reception of the play in Arabic (i.e in terms of translation, performance and critical response); and the representation of Shylock in modern Arabic literature, especially in Arabic drama, in the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict. In considering the treatment of this particular play in Arabic drama, I will be extremely selective, focusing mainly on one representative work, that is, Ali Ahmed Bakathir's two-part play **The New Shylock** (Shayloukh al-jadid), an adaptation of Shakespeare's play. of course some other pertinent literary works in which Shylock figures will be cited in the course of the discussion. However, as the conception of Shylock in Shakespeare was originally influenced by the public attitude towards the Jews in the Bard's time⁽⁴⁾, so the treatment of the play in Arabic has likewise been conceived from a similar standpoint; that is, the image of the Jew in popular Arabic culture, which is not always complimentary, and of course the Arab-Israeli conflict over the complicated problem of Palestine.

It should be pointed out at this early stage of the study that the Jews have not always been misrepresented in Arabic literature, though historically they lived in Arab societies for centuries. A preliminary foray into Arabic formal literature written throughout the ages would hardly reveal any Jewish themes being significantly considered by Arab writers. Perhaps with the exception of some modern literary works in which the Jews appear rather negatively because of the embittered antagonism towards Israel, it is difficult to come across any body of literature showing that the Jews were systematically mistreated in Arabic belles-lettres⁽⁵⁾. Indeed as noted by scholars, the Arabs may justly claim that they never persecuted the Jews in the last fourteen-odd centuries following the dawn of Islam.

On the whole, the Jews enjoyed peaceful existence in Arab societies and at times contributed greatly to Arab public life⁽⁶⁾. In the words of one commentator, Arab-Jewish relations throughout history may be summed up as follows:

An important fact to remember is that contrary to popular belief, the Arabs and Jews have lived together in peace and harmony for hundreds of years. From the Spanish Inquisition down to the persecutions of Tsarist Russia, Jews fleeing from Europe found asylum, shelter and tolerance in the Arab and Muslem world. The best example of this peaceful co-existence of the Arabs and Jews was to be found in palestine itself prior to the emergence of Zionism⁽⁷⁾.

It is then only in this century, especially after the Balfour Declaration which was issued in 1917 and its repercussions on the Middle East that the Arabs begin to look at the Jews as foes⁽⁸⁾.

Confronted now with the Jews as nemies for the first time in history since the early days of Islam⁽⁹⁾, Arab writers find themselves in a fix - to depict the new conflict with the Jews, they look for literary Jewish prototypes in Arabic literature. Having realised the absence of any significant imaginative representation of the Jews in the Arabic literary heritage, Arab writers turn to other pertinent sources, namely English literary traditions vis-a-vis the portrayal of the Jews, and of course real-life experiences emanating from the painful Arab-Israeli struggle. Hence Shakespeare's **The Merchant** letters in the context of Arab-Israeli conflict.

Interestingly, Arab writers look at Shylock as a prototype of Zionist

zealotry, and interpret the play as and embodiment of what Zionism is really about. For instance, in an article entitled "The New Shylock" that came out in 1939, many years before the creation of the State of Israel, an Arab writer noted the affinity between the Zionist claim to Palestine and Shylock's demand to cut a pound of flesh from Antono in accordance with the law⁽¹⁰⁾. Later in 1964 another Arab reviewer commenting on a stage production of **The Merchant** in Egypt, suggested that the play should have been written by an Arab with an eye on the Arab-Jewish conflict⁽¹¹⁾. The follwing pages will be devoted to the consideration of the various aspects of the reception of the play in Arabic.

- II -

The first known translation of **The Merchant of Venice** in Arabic dates back to a 1992. It was done by khalil Mutran (1872 - 1949), an Egyptian poet and man of letters of Lebanese origin. Mutran translated the play for the use of the theatrical company of the celebrated actor-manager George Abyad; he also translated **Othello, King Lear and Hamlet** for The same purpose. Mutran's version of **The Merchant** held the Arab stage for decades despite its many defects which include omissions of whole scenes and passagess, compression of others, inaccuracies, and various other violations of the original text. These deficiencies are common in Mutran's other translations from Shakespeare, and they occurred because the poet used a French translation, probably one by Georges Duval⁽¹²⁾.

However, there is every indication that **The Merchant** first appeared in Arabic in the late nineteenth century, long before the appearance of Mutran's version. For example, M.Y. Najm claims that the play was performed in Egypt in 1885, though another critic is of the opinion that

the play was first translated into Arabic in 1892⁽¹³⁾. But it is difficult to verify these translations or to say with certainty that they ever existed. Both scholars have failed to give us sufficient details about them. In my view, the play could have been translated before 1922 by hack writers (and perhaps played by amateur groups), but the translation(s) was not circulated, and the MS. was probably lost. It was common practice in the early days of the Arab Dramatic renaissance for a foreign play to be translated or adapted for the exclusive use of a certain company that would refuse to publish it for fear of being plagiarised by rival theatrical troupes. Perhaps this was the case of the early translations of **The Merchant of Venice**.

Furthermore, in a review article entitled "Shakespeare in Egypt", published in **al-Hilal** (a widely circulating cultural magazine) in 1927, Tawfiq Habib makes no mention of any other versions of **The Merchant** beside Mutran's⁽¹⁴⁾. Later in 1967 in yet another similar study on the same topic Ahmed al-Maghazi cites two other early translations of the play that came out in 1922 and 1972, respectively by different translators⁽¹⁵⁾. More recently, in **Shakespeare in Egypt**, a full-length book investigating the reception of Shakespeare in Egypt from the beginning up to the early 1930's, Ramsis Awad has only one page devoted to the reception of the play. The author gives scanty details about the play and mentions only Mutran's translation which was occasionally used in amateur performances⁽¹⁶⁾. In view of what has just been stated, one may conclude that the play was rendered into Arabic in different versions, but for many reasons Mutran's translation remained the most popular⁽¹⁷⁾.

Truly the play has become the focus of interest ever since it entered the Arab world. Mention should be made in passing of three other

relatively recent translations, all done by writers who respectfully acknowledge the pioneering efforts of Mutran, but do not ignore his flagrant violations of the original source. These are by Mukhtar al-wakil, Amir Baheri and Mohammed Enani, all from Egypt. While Mutran used educated literary Arabic prose in all of his translations from Shakespeare including *The Merchant of Venice*, the others used verse, sometimes mixed with prose, following Shakespeare's text.

Amire Bahaeri uses traditional Arabic verse conventions (monorhyme, metric systems, hemistiches, etc.). He mainly renders into Arabic the meaning of the play, making omissions and alterations to adapt the original text to his use of classical versification. For instance, he squeezes Shylock's speech which begins with: "To bait fish withal, - if it will feed nothing else, it will feed my revenge;..." and ends with, "... The villainy you teach me I will execute, and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction" (Act III, scene i, lines 47-66)⁽¹⁸⁾ into eight lines of lofty classical verse, using high-flown, elevated diction, but leaving much to be desired. Shakespeare's rich imagery regrettably disappears in the translation. To sum up, Baheri's work is a versification of *The Merchant of Venice* inasmuch as the literal meaning, story, plot and characterization are concerned, but it is certainly far from being an accurate rendition of the original text.

The other two translators show much awareness of the difficulties besetting translating Shakespeare into Arabic. Both of them have experimented with modern versification forms (i.e free verse) which give them a freedom of expression as the occasion calls for in the original source. Both are also literary experts, professionally versed in the canon of Shakespeare - translating *The Merchant* is not their first

encounter with Elizabethan diction, for each has more than one translation to this vredit. And different as they are in matters of style, usage, structure, etc., both of them follow shakespeare accurately, making no deviations (i.e changes or omissions) except to surmount linguistic obstacles or differences. Commenting on his version of *The Merchant, Which is the most recent*, Enani refers to the previous translations, suggesting that his is a complete rendering of the original, free of the blunders and errors made by his other colleagues. He also claims to have made the Bard to "speak" in Arabic, by using a dramatic language that retains the intrinsic flavor of the Elizabethan diction⁽¹⁹⁾.

The various translations of *The Merchant of Venice* represent aspects of the endeavors of Arab writers to bring Shakespeare into the Arabic language. Over the years, efforts have been made to find the kind of verbal medium best suited for translating Shakespeare into Arabic. Admittedly, the gap between an early translation, say, Mutran's, and a more recent one (e.g Enani's) is significantly wide. However, one has to acknowledge the importance of each individual effort in developing Arabic drama, but more importantly in view of the position that Shakespeare has had in modern Arabic vritical studies⁽²⁰⁾. Whereas early translators worked with a literary form (drama) newly introduced into Arabic, later interpreters have enjoyed better opportunities of reading the Bard in the original and viewing some of his plays professionally performed in his native tongue⁽²¹⁾. Therefore later translations are bound to be more accurate and observant of the criteria of literary translation.

Though Shakespeare was first introduced into Arabic via the stage⁽²²⁾, it is still not possible to present a complete account of the stage productions of his plays in Arab countries, simply because such a record

has yet to be written. Arab writers dealing with Shakespeare or writing about the Arab theater have failed so far to produce a chronicle of this sort; the best they could do is to describe or comment on the performance of certain individual plays. Surprisingly all critical studies investigating various aspects of the reception of Shakespeare in Arabic have ignored this important topic, though they have tackled the translations and sometimes commented on the stage production of a certain play here and there⁽²³⁾. of course certain plays, especially Hamlet and Romeo and Juliet received better coverage than others. The least reviewed are the comedies. With the exception of *The Merchant of Venice*, all other comedies have been translated, but rarely performed or reviewed.

The play appeared sporadically on the Arab stage, especially in Egypt. As mentioned earlier, some commentators think that the play was probably performed in Egypt as early as 1885, though it is difficult to verify this piece of information. It has also been suggested that Mutran translated the play for the company of George Abyed, though an early review of Mutran's translation makes no mention of any stage production of the play was ever professionally staged about this time except for some amateur showings. Ramsis Awad is in support of this view, as he makes no mention of any production of the play except a couple of amateur productions in 1927 using Mutran's translation⁽²⁶⁾. Thus one may ascertain that *The Merchant* was not professionally staged before 1935.

Before this date plays in Egypt and elsewhere in the Arab world were mainly presented by private companies individually owned by actor-managers and business entrepreneurs. An average repertoire would generally include mangled translations, pirated copies and indigenous drama. The country simply lacked a national theater or stage, except of

course the Opera-House. However, in the early 1930's concerted efforts were made to set up a national theater troupe and the year 1935 witnessed the birth of the National Troupe, a state-sponsored company entrusted with promoting theater in Egypt. Khalil Mutran was appointed its first manager and he remained so for many years. Interestingly, the first season of 1935/36 featured among other plays, Mutran's translations of King Lear and The Merchant of Venice. Mutran made it a policy to present along with local drama some European plays translated into educated literary Arabic, such as his renditions from Shakespeare.

The extant reviews of those early productions of Shakespeare give us an idea about the way the Bard was interpreted on the Arab stage. For instance, the leading role of Lear was played alternatively on each other night by two popular actors, Abyed and a man named Aziz Id. The latter was reputed to be mainly fit for comic parts. The reviewers of the play commended Abyad's interpretation of the role of King Lear, but they all commented disparagingly on Id's characterisation of the king, suggesting that he made a travesty of the play⁽²⁷⁾. King Lear was immediately followed by The Merchant of Venice, with the leading role of Shylock being played by Zaki Tolaymat who later became a renowned theater director across the Arab world. Fattouh Nashati who played Bassanio in the same performance reported that the play was a great box-office success. Commenting on the way the play was conceived, he indicated that it was presented in such a way as to expose the "darkness" of man's soul, best exemplified in Shylock's demand to cut a pound of flesh from Antonio as a means of revenge. Nashati also pointed out that the playwright has given Shylock an opportunity to defend himself as well as the Jews of Medieval Europe against Christian persecution⁽²⁸⁾. It is clear from Nashati's commentary on this early production that the play

was not geared to the Arab-Jewish conflict which reached its peak in 1948, when the independence of Israel was officially announced.

The next most significant stage production of *The Merchant of Venice* was given again in Egypt in 1963/4/ using Mutran's version of the play the National Theater opened its season with the play. Unlike the 1935 production, this time we have ample details about the performance, especially as regards the way Shylock was portrayed. Influenced by the bitter enmity between Nasser's Egypt and Israel, Shylock was presented as a villain, a true representation of Zionism. The director of the show has quoted in the playbill a statement, allegedly ascribed to Nietzsche, to the effect that the Jews are people of hatred and vengeance, and he reminded his audiences of the satanic attributes of Shylock, the Jew⁽²⁹⁾.

In line with the political interpretation of the play, Arab reviewers condemned Shylock, viewing him as the harbinger of Zionism. For instance, one critic wrote that Shylock was the prototype of the heinous Zionists. He has just appeared in Cairo to remind (us) of these cunning and deceptive people (the Jews) so that (We) should not forget and become victims like Antonio. He adds that the Jews today fight Shakesperare, raising questions about his very existence because of the way he depicted them four-odd centuries ago. Another critic comments that the play exposes the vindictive nature of the Jews, which has remained unchanged throughout the ages. However, he adds that the play does not condemn all Jews. Jessica, shylock's daughter, for instance, behaves differently. She rebels against her father and whatever he stands for: prejudice, isolationism and fanaticism. And though Shakespeare does not express an opinion on the Jewish problem, his play speaks for itself. It invites the Jews to get out of their ghettos, to accept assimilation into their host societies, and to renounce ethnic segregation, hatred and narrow-

mindedness⁽³⁰⁾.

Yet despite the popularity of *The Merchant of Venice* and the varied treatment it has received in Arabic writings, the play does not generate voluminous critical literature the way *Hamlet*, for example, does. The criticism of the play is indeed meagre by all standards, and at best descriptive dealing mainly with the characterisation of Shylock and the political relevance of the play to the Arab-Israeli struggle. On the whole, Arab critics condemn Shylock and suggest that the dramatist presents him rather negatively because he wants to condemn through him the Jewish race. For many Arabs the play shows the vengeful nature of the Jew who has trapped his adversary into a legal pitfall in the hope of destroying him.

In contrast, some other Arab writers deny that Shakespeare harbors anti-semitic feelings in this play. For example, Khalil Mutran explains in the introduction to his translation that the play does not so much express the playwright's anti-Jewish attitude as it delineates Shylock's hatred of Christianity. Shylock never trusts the Christians or hides his hate for them. He hates to eat with them, though he can do business with them, because eating with the Gentiles is a taboo in his faith. More importantly Shylock rejects all pleas to spare the life of the Christian, i.e. Antonio. And throughout the play he refuses to assimilate into the Venetian society which is predominantly Christian⁽³¹⁾.

However, it should be noted that Shylock is not completely damned by all Arab critics. There are those who sympathize with him, indicating that the man "is more sinned against than sinning". They argue that Shylock has been persecuted by his Christian neighbours for no reason except that he is a Jew and a rich one. His cries are those of a wounded

animal that lashes back with vengeance at his tormentors. These critics agree with those Western reviewers who see Shylock as being prejudicially conceived by Shakespeare because of his religion, pointing out that the dramatist in this play is not free of anti-semitic feelings; he presents the Jew derogatively to please his audiences. The Merchant of Venice may not necessarily express Shakespeare's personal opinion of the Jews; perhaps he is sorry for Shylock as some scholars have suggested, but the play in the main is politically indicative of the public attitude of the time towards the Jews⁽³²⁾.

- III -

Though a host of Arab playwrights have treated various aspects of Arab-Jewish relations and diversely represented the Jews in drama,⁽³³⁾ none however has paid so much attention to the Jewish problem as Bakathir. He has considered the topic especially in relation to the Arab-Israeli struggle in a goodly number of his plays: The Chosen People (sha'bullah al-mukhtar); The Lost Torah (attoratul ze'iah); The God of israel (Ilahu Isra'il); The Worm and Snake (addudah wathu'ban); The Tragedy of oedipus (ma'sat udib)⁽³⁴⁾; and of course The New Shylock. In addition, six of his thirteen short plays, collected under the title Political Drama (al-masrah al-siyasi) are related to the Jews and Israel. However, it is only in The New Shylock that Bakathir draws on The Merchant of Venice, especially in depicting Shylock and the Jews.

Bakathir uses The Merchant of Venice as a starting point to write a propagandist play that deals with the Arab-Jewish conflict and puts the problem of Palestine into an Arab perspective. Commenting on the genesis of this particular drama the playwright suggests its theme occurred to him in 1944, a few years before the Jewish state was officially

established in Palestine. As an Arab writer sensing the imminent tragedy, the idea of the play dawned on him when he read once in a local newspaper about a certain Zionist activist who was quoted as saying in the British Parliament: "Give us our pound of flesh. We will not relinquish our right to it," alluding clearly to the Balfour Declaration in which the British Government made a commitment to create a national homeland for the Jews in Palestine. Bakathir immediately saw an affinity between the Zionist demand to implement the terms of the Balfour Declaration and Shylock's unswerving drive for the implementation of the law pertaining to the bond of flesh⁽³⁵⁾.

Bakathir's play presents the circumstances that paved the way for the creation of the Jewish state and highlights the struggle of the Arabs of Palestine against Zionist domination. In the characters of *The Merchant of Venice* the dramatist has only used Shylock to serve his political theme. In the play Shylock is the head of a Zionist organization that operates in Palestine during the Mandate period aiming at seizing Arab land and bringing into the country more Jewish immigrants in preparation for the inception of the Jewish entity. Obviously apart from borrowing Shylock from Shakespeare, Bakathir develops his play rather differently to deal with the complicated question of Palestine. Nowhere in part one of the drama do we find any affinities with the original source except for some subtle semblances that can only be discerned by the judicious comparatist. It is only in part two that Shakespeare's play is fully utilised—part two is entirely drawn from the trial scene of Act Four in *The Merchant*.

The New Shylock discusses the Arab-Israeli conflict and presents the question of Palestine from the stance of an Arab. In part One of the play, entitled "The Problem," the playwright presents an Arab view of the

conditions in Palestine during the British mandate. To begin with, British policies were set in such a way as to realize the Zionist strategic objectives, namely to displace the Arabs by seizing their land in order to accommodate the new Jewish settlers.

In the play, the Arabs are besieged both politically and economically. Having lost their political rights because of the mandate, they rely solely on the mandating power for protection from armed Zionist organizations ironically this mandating power is the same country that intends to turn their land into a Jewish homeland. They are also isolated from neighboring Arab countries, which are newly independent or still colonized. Palestine is also brought to distressing economic conditions that make living very difficult for the Arab population. Because of widespread poverty many destituted Arab families sell land to the newcomers, or borrow credit from Jewish money-lending agencies that would eventually foreclose upon their estates for failure of payment.

In the field of education the Jewish immigrants are allowed to have their own schooling system, whereas the Arabs are denied any quality education. The Zionists also manage to introduce Hebrew as a third language beside Arabic and English and to revive Jewish culture. The play demonstrates that British local administration discourages Arabic culture and intentionally neglects Arabic education in the hope of weakening the Arab presence in Palestine⁽³⁶⁾.

In the midst of such abject circumstances Bakathir introduces his Shylock. Because the playwright wants to draw a derogatory image of Zionism, he associates it with a notorious literary figure, that is, Shakespeare's Shylock who figures in the Arab public mind as a bloodthirsty villain whetting his knife to cut a pound of flesh from his

opponent despite all pleas for mercy. Bakathir stresses the vindictive nature of Shylock who unfortunately is revisiting the region as a Zionist invader, claiming that Palestine is his according to law. Interestingly, Bakathir's Shylock retains the cannibalistic traits and usury already noted by Edgar Rosenberg in his assessment of Shakespeare's Shylock⁽³⁷⁾. Cannibalism refers obviously to Shylock's insistent demand to cut the pound of flesh stipulated in the bond for no other reason except that he wants to satiate his desire for revenge.

It is this image of Shylock that appears repeatedly in Arabic literature written in the context of the Arab-Jewish conflict. For instance, in a poem entitled "The Return of Shylock" that came out in the aftermath of the Six-Day war in 1967, the Sudanese poet Mubarak Hassan al-khalifah presents Shylock as a blood-thirsty Zionist coming back to destroy human life and terrify children, all in the name of justice. The penning stanza of the poem goes as follows:

Have you come back, O Shylock
Carrying in your hands
the 'bond', To mock the justice of our age?
Have you come back, walking in darkness,
And on my land, To frighten our peace?
And to undermine what we have built/
Along the years of our struggle?
And to stretch your hands (both blackened),
In order to shade our sun
So to kill the dawn of our day?⁽³⁸⁾

True to the image of Shylock in English literature, Bakathir also shows Shylock as a loathsome monster whose physical features connote his evil intentions. The playwright describes him as follows:

Shylock is a short man in his sixties. He has a large glistening bald head, except for two tufts of white hair

on both sides. His big eyes shine like those of an owl, overshadowed by thick eye-brows. He has a narrow forehead covered with wrinkles. He is hollow-cheeked, and sharp-nosed with inflated nostrias. He is thin-lipped and his mouth is small. He keeps moving his jaws in a constant circular movement, as though he is chewing something. He has a white bushy beard, trimmed on both sides of the face. The lower part of his face resembles a semi-circle⁽³⁹⁾.

Obviously the playwright's ghoulish description of Shylock befits a demon, and is suggestive of his satanic mission.

The new Shylock's other affinity with his Elizabethan prototype is in the practice of usury, a despised occupation in the Arab world. Though usury is prohibited in Islam, it has been practised on a wide scale in most moslem societies. However, the term 'usurer' (murabi) is generally insulting, as it denotes someone who is parasitical, taking advantage of the needs of the others. For example, in a poem censuring money-lenders in his native Jordan Mustafa Wahbi al-Tal derogatively associates them with Shakespeare's notorious usurer, Shylock:

Money-lenders are brothers of Satan

.....

O Shylock's group, whoever support's you Defames
rights, ethics and religion⁽⁴⁰⁾.

Bakathir's Shylock is also a money-lender, but for him money 'breeds' land. That is, he lends money to indigent Arab families hoping to confiscate their land. At first he behaves like a good philanthropist, giving loans to needy persons and Farmers. But he works with the local

authorities to create such conditions as would make it impossible for the Arabs to pay.

And like Shakespeare's Shylock, Bakathir's Jewish antagonist dominates the entire play. If he is not present in person, he is alluded to and talked about everywhere. In *The Merchant Shylock* appears in Act One, scene 3; Act Two, scene 5; Act Three, scene 1 and 2; and Act Four, scene 1 only, but his presence is very much felt in every scene, and he actually determines the sequence of events. Similarly Bakathir's Shylock shows up only in acts two and four of Part One, but he is also ubiquitous in the other two acts, though he does not appear physically. In the play he is a source of fear, and he is almost invincible.

Though Bakathir does not mention Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* as one of his literary sources, we still, discern a certain resemblance between the two works in depicting the Jew. We surmise that the Arab dramatist used Marlowe's play for at least two plausible reasons: first, his formal study of English literature at Cairo University could have included Marlowe, and probably some other Elizabethan playwrights. Second, since he is using Shakespeare's *The Merchant* as a term of reference, he must have looked at its Marlovian prototype, realizing Shakespeare's indebtedness to Marlowe in this particular work⁽⁴¹⁾. However, in the absence of any external evidence to verify this point, one has to examine Bakathir's text, especially his characterisation of the Jew to see if there is any resemblance between the two Jewish anti-heroes.

Indeed a scrutiny of *The New Shylock* reveals some sort of relatedness between Barabas and Shylock. Besides being villains practising nefarious activities to harm people around them, both are presented as heinous Machiavellians (or Machiavellists). Marlowe's play it is clear from the

outset that Barabas embodies the ethics of Machievellism. Two examples may suffice to illustrate the point. Barabas cheaply uses his only daughter, Abigail, whom he loves very much as a tool to destroy his enemies by playing her two lovers off against each other until they finally get killed. Later he uses her to poison the nuns. Similarly Bakathir's Shylock is shown as a ruthless antagonist who disposes of his enemies rather mercilessly. Like Barabas, he is always seen arranging business Transactions and conspiring to murder Arabs.

However, Bakathir's Shylock is not a replica of the two Elizabethan literary Jews. He is different in many ways. For instance, while Barabas and Shylock are alone in their endeavors, Bakathir's Jwe runs a Zionist organization and collaborates with the British local government of Palestine to fulfil the Zionist declared goals. He has got money in his coffers sent to him from international Zionist groups, supportive Western countries and from North America. He also heads a fearsome terrorist organization whose members have infiltrated the local police force, government agencies, the press and other departments of the local administration.

Bakathir's Shylock is also original in the sense that he does not have a daughter of his own loins. However, Rachel, the only Jewish female in the play who is a member of his organization, is looked at throughout the play as his daughter, for shylock often calls her so. The girl has been recruited to lure young Arabs into Shylock's trap. She knows that she is used as a sexual bait for 'horny' Arab youth. we realize in the course of the play that she has slept with many an Arab. khalil al-Dawwas, a young spendthrift who has sold his land to Shylock is one of her victims. Being assured that he has squandered his money on gambling and other

frivolities she drops him and begins looking for a new victim. This time he is a rich young land-owner, named Abdullah al-Fayyad. He swallows the bait and ignores the warnings of his uncle that Rachel is a Jewish 'slut' whose mission is to make him an easy prey to Shylock.

Incidentally, Rachel's depiction shows how Arabs generally think of Jews on the moral level. It is commonly accepted among the Arabs that the Jews would not hesitate to use prostitution, if it serves the cause of the children of Israel. For this reason the playwright presents Rachel as a promiscuous woman using her body in the service of the Jewish national aspirations. As mentioned earlier, she has copulated with Arab youths. Later we learn that she has accidentally become pregnant by Abdullah al-Fayyad, though she is betrothed to an Israelite. Shylock alleviates her fears by telling her that she has done her duties towards her own people. He reminds her that sacrifices are to be given for the sake of Israel: "There must be sacrifices, my lovely Rachel. The Jewish State can only be built by honest women like you. Building the Temple is not an easy job" (p.51).

Enough has already been said about Shylock. A word now should be mentioned in passing about the other Jewish characters. We have already commented on the role of Rachel in Shylock's enterprise. Shylock's other aides include Cohen, a lawyer who represents Shylock in the courts to strip indigent Arabs of their land for failing to honor their debts to Shylock. Jack is the head of land purchasing committees entrusted with the business of buying Arab land. Benjamin is the chief of Zionist propaganda in charge of promoting the image of Zionism in the Western media. Jozef leads secret Zionist groups responsible for carrying out political assassinations and the massacre of Arab citizens. And with fierce men like Zicknach in the local police force Shylock is cocksure to terrorize

the Arab population or commit political murders outside Palestine.

The playwright however does not condemn all Jews. In fact, he introduces a non-Zionist Jew, named Abraham who disagrees with Shylock and refuses to embrace the teachings of Zionism. Abraham speaks for the writer when he tells Shylock that Zionism will plague all Jews:

Abraham: A Jewish nation as such does not exist. It is just a myth!

Shylock (angrily): What do you say? a myth!

Abraham: Yes, a big lie invented by small minds like yours. The state of being a Jew is a religious one; it can never become statehood.

Cohen: The Jews were so, sir, until the Zionist Movement has come to make a nation of them.

Abraham: But this Movement will cause great miseries to the Jews. (pp. 66-67).

In the course of the play Abraham argues that the Jews have always been mistreated throughout the ages because they refused to assimilate into the societies with which they have lived for centuries. Instead they preferred to live in isolation behaving superciliously as the chosen people. Such conduct eventually led to the rise of anti-semitism in Europe and elsewhere. Abraham draws attention to the position of the Jews in the Arab world, indicating that because of the tolerance of Islam, they were never persecuted by the Arabs. Hence Zionism is to blame for the new conflict between the Jews and the Arabs in modern history.

Before concluding the discussion of Part One something has to be said, though briefly, about the non-Jewish characters in the play. the

playwright intends to present heroes and villains sharply opposed to each other. Shylock and his cronies are the villains of the piece and they are depicted rather derogatively. The heroes are those Arabs (Moslems and Christians) and non-Zionist Jews who realize the imminent danger of Zionism engulfing their native land, and therefore stand up together in a united front to fight against it. The dramatist delineates them as a working team despite their divergent religious and ethnic backgrounds. We have already seen how Abraham quarrels with Shylock and stresses his loyalty to the Arab nation. The mayor of Jerusalem, a Christian, and his brother, the police chief, join the 'mujahideen' (holy fighters) to fight Zionist guerrillas in Palestine. Even Abdullah al-Fayyad who has forfeited his land to Shylock, on being misled by Rachel, finally enlists in the armed resistance movement in atonement for his wrongs against his people and country.

- IV -

The playwright also suggests that the Arabs of Palestine are not alone in their struggle against Zionism. He involves Egypt in the conflict; he introduces Egyptian characters-Nadiyah, Abdullah's fiancée and her family. Later in the play they will visit Jerusalem on their way to Lebanon and join the other Arab characters. Abdullah is forgiven, especially because of his relation with the Jewish log, since he now feels sorry for his past misdemeanor. Nadiyah is to play a more significant role in the second part of the play, when like Portia of *The Merchant of Venice*, she is disguised as a male lawyer to represent the Arab League in the international tribunal held to solve the 'problem' of Palestine.

Bakathir seems to believe that the crux of *The Merchant of Venice* is the trial scene in Act Four in which Shakespeare exposes Shylock's

vindictiveness and thirst for revenge. Though Shakespeare gives Shylock an opportunity to argue quite convincingly with his Christian opponents, the play at large does not necessarily suggest that the Jew is justified in pursuing his quest for revenge to the very end, since Antonio has now fallen into his hands. The audiences are made to sympathize with Shylock to some degree. However, in Act Four the playwright uncompromisingly shows Shylock for what he is, i.e., a blood-thirsty monster driven by hate and the spirit of vengeance to destroy his adversary. For instance, he has been offered many times the amount of his loan, and also begged to forgive Antonio. Dressed as a male lawyer Portia appeals to his sense of humanity, and also reminds him of the quality of mercy. But what is his reply?.

My deeds upon my head! I crave the law,
The penalty and forfeit of my bond. (p.58),

Therefore, the Arab Dramatist refuses to accept that Shylock's behavior is justifiable in the context of his environment, especially that he has been persecuted by his predominantly Christian community. Shylock is treated badly because of what he actually is- a miser, a villain and a loner. For example, the only persons closely related to him, his daughter and his servant leave him because they could not endure living with him any longer. Eventually Shylock is defeated by the same law which he has been craving to use against his enemy.

Significantly entitled the 'resolution' the second part of The New Shylock draws on the trial scene of Shakespeare's comedy. It is in this part that Bakathir uses the English play significantly, treating the bond of flesh in juxtaposition with the Balfour Declaration. Like Shakespeare who puts Shylock on trial to expose him to audiences and to show that

the Christians after all are not so fanatical as Shylock think them to be, Bakathir also tries his Jew in a court of law to reveal the fallacy of the Zionist claim to Palestine based on the Balfoure Declaration. The Arab playwright wants Shylock defeated in a court of law. Hence an international tribunal is in session trying to find a just and lasting settlement to the problem of Palestine. The trial eventually turns into an indictment of Shylock (and of course of Zionism which he represents); he is exposed as worse than his literary namesake, Shakespeare's Shylock. But while Shakespeare's trial takes place in the space of Act Four only, Bakathir writes a full-length play that can be treated separately from the first part.

In the play the bond of flesh is mentioned by Shylock which he uses interchangeably with the Balfour Declaration: "We want the pound of flesh which you've promised us." (p.143) Throughout the play the bond of flesh is juxtaposed with the promise made in the declaration and the entire play refutes its legality. indeed Mr. Sordoz, the British representative in the tribunal, disapproves of Shylock's term of reference, reminding him that his statement may as well boomerang on him, for after all, when carefully read, Shakespeare's play condemns Shylock just for asking the same thing.

This last remark provokes Bakathir's Shylock to an onslaught on Shakespeare's Shylock whom he dismisses as the product of a Christian fanatic and a figment of a sick-minded poet prejudiced against "the chosen people". Shakespeare's play shows how Jews have been mistreated throughout history' hence it is high time that the injustices towards them be rectified by allowing them to establish their own national home in the land of their ancient ancestors. Shakespeare's Shylock is justified in a

way in demanding the pound of flesh because it is the only means for him to take revenge on his enemies, Antonio and the Christian community which have always persecuted his race. Antonio has done him all sorts of wrongs: he has spat on him in public and kicked him in the back; he has called him a dog; and above all, he has thwarted his financial transactions by lending money without charging interest. Besides, Antonio has been fully aware of the legal consequences of the contract which he has signed freely.

In response to Shylock's special interpretation of the bond of flesh, Mr. Sordoz explains that *The Merchant of Venice* suggests that Antonio is 'forced' to borrow money from Shylock because of unexpected circumstances. It just happens that when Bassanio applies for the loan Antonio does not have 'cash' in his coffers; he has invested his money in overseas mercantile ventures. To please his bosom friend, Antonio agrees to borrow from Shylock, the banker, whose profession is clearly money-lending. Harboring ill-will towards the merchant, the Jew takes advantage of Antonio's 'need'. He agrees to give him the money, but at the same time he asks for the pound of flesh as a surety in the hope that Antonio could default for any reason. That would be Shylock's golden opportunity to met out vengeance on him, being fully aware of the implications of the bond in the context of the Venetian judicial system which he knows very well.

By the same token, Great Britain issued the Balfour Declaration in 1917 because of the War, especially because the country badly needed Jewish support in its campaign against Germany. But exactly like Shylock, the Zionists took advantage of the international situation, especially when the declaration was ratified by the League of Nations,

and they worked to fulfil it. Mr. Sordoos reminds Shylock of the end of his literary namesake when he refuses peace, and cautions him of a similar fate.

Indeed Bakathir's Shylock is very stubborn and determined in refuting the arguments of his opponents. Like the Elizabethan Shylock he is outspoken, glib and not without a forceful argument. He is familiar with Shakespeare's play, especially the loopholes in Shakespeare's delineation of his Jewish character. He rejects the way Shakespeare depicts the Jew, indicating that Shylock is not a true representation of the Jews. A true Jew would not be easily cheated in the court by a quibble of the law. Since Antonio has already agreed to the content of the bond, then he in effect forfeits his life, even though this is not directly stated in the document. Besides, a true Jew would not care to cut a piece of flesh from the body of his enemy, because it is just useless and a waste of money. Instead he would have sued Antonio in more advantageous ways. In the light of this special reading of the bond of flesh in the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict Shylock then interprets the Balfour Declaration as follows: the Jews have every right to have Palestine as their homeland. But it is also in accordance with the declaration that the Jews dominate the Arab world, because any Arab supremacy would eventually lead to the demise of the Zionist enterprise.

Shylock is challenged by his Arab opponents as well as by Abraham, representing the non-Zionist Jews. First, Mikha'il Jadd who represents the Arabs of Palestine rejects any analogy between the bond of flesh and the Balfour Declaration, saying in effect that while Antonio owns what he gives away, that is his body, the British Government does not have the right to turn Palestine into a Jewish home simply because the country is not a British dominion⁽⁴²⁾. Second, surprised by the similarity between

Bakathir's shylock and Shakespeare's Shylock, the Arab representative draws attention to the way the Bard has depicted the Jews, showing them to be people of deception, cunning and vindictiveness. This new Shylock happens to be worse than his literary namesake; armed with gunpowder and money, he invades Palestine displacing its legitimate people who have done the Jews no harm throughout the ages.

Meanwhile Bakathir emphasises once more that the conflict is not between Arabs and Jews as such, but rather between the Arabs and Zionism. Abraham who has already challenged Shylock in part one denies that all Jews are of the same opinion as Shylock. Here in this part as well Abraham voices the views of non-Zionist Jewish groups who denounce Zionism as a totalitarian world organization that seeks to control the lives of all Jews⁽⁴³⁾.

Realizing that Shylock has failed to convince the judges of the justice of his case, Cohen, Shylock's legal adviser, raises the Biblical and historical rights of the Jews in Palestine. Again this point is completely refuted by the Arab representative who argues that if Cohen's claim is to be accepted, then the Arabs may as well ask for their historical rights in Spain which their ancestors ruled for eight centuries. Cohen then points to the persecution of the Jews throughout history, which reached its apogee in Nazi Germany. He adds that the Jews are alienated because they do not have a national identity of their own. Therefore it is doing them justice to let them establish their own state in the land of their forefathers. However, the Arabs play down this point, arguing that the Jews belong to the societies hosting them. And as to the feeling of alienation, the Jews are to blame for this, because they have opted to lead a separate life and refused to integrate themselves with the communities with which

they have been living for ages. Besides, such a feeling of isolation has never been experienced by the Arab Jews who enjoyed peaceful life in the Arab countries until the emergence of Zionis.

Various suggestions are proposed to solve the Jewish problem. For instance, the judges propose to use the 1939 white Paper as a basis for a settlement. However, both opposing parties, the Arabs and Jews, reject it for differing reasons. The Arabs view it as a violation of the sovereignty of their national land, because it allows more Jewish immigrants to pour into the country. The Zionists interpret it as a curb on the flow of Jewish immigrants delimiting the number of Jews in Palestine⁽⁴⁴⁾. This would be short of fulfilling the ultimate goal of establishing the Jewish national home in Palestine. Then the judges note that as it is impossible for the Jewish state to survive in Palestine because of Arab opposition and the limited natural resources of the country, the Jews may be given a place in Australia or Uganda as there are vast areas of unpopulated lands to accommodate them⁽⁴⁵⁾. They remind Shylock that without economic assistance from the USA and some other Western countries the Zionist project would have failed long time ago.

Like his Elizabethan namesake, Shylock rebuffs all moves for peace. He refuses to compromise, insisting all the time that the Jews are entitled to establish their own state in Palestine in accordance with the Balfour Declaration. Shylock's intransigence and determined refusal to budge from his initial position is reminiscent of Shakespeare's Shylock who has turned down all pleas for mercy and rejected all offers in lieu of releasing Antonio from his bondage. He is also reminiscent of the Elizabethan Jew because he is constantly demanding the full implementation of the lawm⁽⁴⁶⁾. His replies bring to one's mind the

answers that Shakespeare's Shylock gives when asked to forgive Antonio; he says that he wants what is his according to the law.

The debate reaches a dead end, and the court can only hope that the Arabs will do something to break the stalemate. A young lawyer named Faysal surprises everybody by announcing that the Arab League which he represents is willing to give the Zionists a chance to try their enterprise, but at the same time he warns that such an action is not in the best interest of the Jews. He explains that the Jewish state will not be able to support itself economically, and the Arabs may choose to impose economic sanctions against it. Ungratefully Shylock interprets Faysal's commentary as implying a threat and he rejects the idea of a trade embargo. He vows that the Jews will fight all through, as they are now armed. Finally all parties concerned acquiesce in allowing the Zionists to establish their state in Palestine, being fully aware in advance of the adverse consequences of such a resolution on the entire region.

Later Faysal reveals "his" true identity; surprisingly "he" turns out to be Nadiyah, dressed as a man! This shows how much Bakathir has been influenced by *The Merchant of Venice*. He Follow Shakespeare not only in delineating Shylock but also in using some of his dramatic techniques such as the role Portia has played in deflecting Antonio's dilemma and defeating Shylock. In Part One Nadiyah is betrothed to Abdullah, the young Arab spendthrift who deserts her after falling in love with the Jewish girl. In Part Two Nadiyah wearing a male costume represents the Arab League. The playwright has already thrown out hints to make her subsequent role plausible. For instance, she has been introduced as a keen law student following the example of her uncle, Arabi Pasha, The renowned Egyptian law expert.

The playwright tries to emulate his original source since he initially

sets out to write a play modelled on that of Shakespeare. Faysal's (Nadiyah's) acquiescence in Shylock's demands is reminiscent of Portia's approval of Shylock's claim. At first she confirms his right to the pound of flesh, and that pleases him. Then she dashes his hopes for revenge when she reminds him:

*... if thou dost shed On drop of Christian blood, thy lands
and goods Are (by the laws of Venice) confiscate Unto
the state of venice. (p.62)*

In The New Shylock Faysal-Nadiyah makes a similar dramatic reversal in the course of the conflict when he/she announces to everyone's surprise that the Arabs can live with a Jewish state being set up in Palestine.

However, the Zionist enterprise does not work. Seven years have elapsed since the founding of the Jewish state. Having realized that it is impossible for the Jewish state to survive in the midst of Arab opposition, the Zionists finally decide to dismantle their political entity and assimilate in the Arab countries. They now want the international tribunal to mediate with the Arabs to accept them as ordinary citizens. Shylock remains the same old antagonist of the piece. Like Shakespeare's Shylock he is brought into the court to be humiliated and defeated. He lives long enough to see his hopes and aspirations come to nothing. Mikha'il Jadd notes that the Jews have failed to absorb the lesson expounded in The Merchant of Venice. They call Shakespeare fanatical and sickminded, but they do not realize the wholesome remedy he has offered them in his play; that is, the Jewish problem can be solved if the Jews assimilate in their hosting societies.

In The Merchant of Venice the dramatist contrasts Shylock's vindictiveness with Christian charity. While Shylock refuses to be

reconciled with Antonio and insistently pursues his demand for the pound of flesh, the Christians show do they? much mercy to the Jew. The Duke saves his life. But there is a price for Christian charity; Shylock has to lose everything and is forced to embrace Christianity. Bakathir is greatly indebted to his Elizabethan mentor; not only does he seek to see Shylock defeated, but he also wants to see him humiliated and punished. The Arabs stipulate certain conditions in order to accept the Jews. These include the following: (a) banning Zionist activities in Palestine; (b) paying reparations to the Arabs of Palestine; (c) confiscating Zionist industries and properties in Palestine (d) considering Zionism a criminal organization; (e) demolishing Tel Aviv; and (f) expelling all Zionists from Palestine.

Obviously such ideas reflect Arab wishful thinking at a time when the Arabs believed that the destruction of Israel was nigh. Besides, in the playwright's opinio, these demands are minimal for punishing the Zionist Movement. After all, the Arabs are still so generous as to allow the Jews to remain in the Arab world and to treat them as ordinary citizens, provided that they do not do anything detrimental to the development of Arab countries. In addition, Nadiyah-Faysal suggests that the international community agrees to safeguard the human rights of the Jews against any form of racial or religious persecution.

In Shakespeare's play Shylock submits to the decisions of the Duke. Surprisingly he does not kill himself, though he forfeits his money and is forced to renounce his faith. However, Bakathir's Shylock finds it difficult to accept the Arab conditions. Being in no position to reverse the course of the events, he becomes desperate and collapses in the court. Cohen accepts the Arab demands. Later a messenger announces that

Shylock has committed suicide. All feel sorry for the incident, but they also breathe a sigh of relief, and with this *The New Shylock* comes to and end.

- V -

It is clear that Bakathir expounds in his drama his conviction that the Balfour Declaration upon which the Jewish state has been set up is basically devoid of any legal or historical justification. By juxtaposing the bond of flesh with the Balfour Declaration Bakathir intends to stress these points: first, he draws up an ugly image of Zionism by associating it with the notorious Shylock who has been depicted rather negatively in English drama. Of course *The Merchant of Venice* is not as provocative or controversial in Arabic as it has always been in English. The play is generally accepted as an anti-Jewish drama, and the antisemitic feelings it generates are not without some justification in view of the inhuman conduct of Shylock. Second, by correlating the Balfour Declaration with the bond of flesh the Arab writer suggests that it is cruel and irrational to seek to implement it-in both situations the law is fallaciously used to victimize others. In addition, Bakathir shows the fallacy of such deeds of law-Shakespeare's Shylock is defeated by the same law he has worked towards fulfilling. Bakathir's Shylock is also defeated in a similar manner. Third, despite the political realities contradicting what is proposed in the Arab play, the playwright is optimistic that the Jewish state in Palestine would at best survive for a few years before it eventually disintegrates, especially when the Arab economic boycott against Israel is put into effect. The end of the play fulfils the dramatist's high expectations; true to the proposed thesis of the play the Zionists dismantle their nascent state and accept to assimilate in the Arab societies. Again by treating the

Zionist enterprise in conjunction with Shylock's hopes of destroying Antonio, the writer somehow anticipates its failure exactly as Shylock's quest for revenge has already failed to materialize.

The Merchant of Venice has been viewed by a host of critics as an anti-semitic drama that has for many centuries set up the stage image of the Jew as a subject of ridicule and buffoonery. Jewish writers argue that despite Shakespeare's humane projection of Shylock, showing him to be mistreated by his Christian society, the play regrettably remains a literary example of the practices of anti-semitism in England and elsewhere throughout the ages⁽⁴⁷⁾. In view of the political background of Bakathir's play, especially the bitter Arab-Israeli conflict, one may not necessarily describe The New Shylock as anti-Jewish. Indeed Arab writers writing about the Jewish problem point out that the Jews have always lived in harmony with Arab people. They argue that the Jews have rarely been persecuted or misrepresented in Arabic literature all through the ages until the rise of Zionism. Bakathir makes this point very clear in his play; while he attacks Shylock as a spokesman of Zionism, he presents a non-Zionist Jew, Abraham, who disapproves of the Zionist ideology. Like many other Arab writers, Bakathir considers Zionism a racist political organization that aims to colonize Palestine and dominate the Arab world. Therefore, viewed from this perspective, The New Shylock is a propagandist drama written with the popular ugly image of Shakespeare's Shylock in mind to highlight the danger of Zionism to the Arab world.

NOTES

1. Mahmoud Al-Shetawi, "Shakespeare in Arabic: A Bibliographical Essay," to appear in Bulletin of the Documentation and Humanities Research Centre (University of Qatar) 5 (1993).
2. Mohammed Baqir Twaij, "Shakespeare in the Arab World," diss. (Northwestern University, 1973) 355 - 357. See also Kamal K. Nadir, "Shakespeare and the Arabic Speaking Audience," diss. (University of Birmingham, 1958) 212 - 213.
3. The treatment of Jews in the Holy Quran has been examined in many studies in Arabic, such as the following: al-Sayyed Rizq al-Tawil, Bany Isra'il fil-koran (The Children of Israel in the Holy Quran) (Cairo: Dar Al-Ma'arif, n. d.); and Sabir Ta'imah, Bany Isra'il Bayna Naba' al-Koran wa-Khabar al-Ahd al-Qadim (The Children of Israel in the Holy Quran and the Old Testament) (Beirut: Alam al-Kutub, 1984).
4. The treatment of Shylock in English literature, especially drama was investigated in many studies. See, for example: H. Michelson, The Jew in Early English Literature (New York: Herman Press, 1972); M. J. Landa, The Jew In Drama (Port Washington, N. Y: Kennikat Press, Inc., 1968); H. R. S. Van Deer Veen, Jewish Characters in Eighteenth Century English Fiction and Drama (KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1973); David Philipson, The Jew in English Fiction (Cincinnati: R. Clarks, 1977); Sol Liptzin, The Jew in American Literature (New York: Bloch Publishing Company Inc., 1966); and Harold Bloom, ed., Shylock (Chelsea House Publishers, 1989).
5. Studies in this area are generally meagre and insufficient, considering the corpus of Jewish literature written in Arabic and the Arab-Jewish

relations throughout ages. This topic has yet to be fully investigated in a separate study.

5. Studies in this area are generally meagre and insufficient, considering the corpus of Jewish literature written in Arabic and the Arab-Jewish relations throughout ages. This topic has yet to be fully investigated in a separate study.

6. Ample evidence may be drawn from different sources by Jews and others to highlight the position of the Jews in the Arab world and to ascertain that they always enjoyed peace in Arab societies, See, for example: Rabbi Benjamin of Tuleda, "The Wandering Jew," *The Spirit of the East*, Gerald de Gaury and H. V. F. Winstone, eds. (London: Quartet Books, 1979) 1-13; Natalie Gerardi, trans. *The History of Anti-Semitism*, vol. 2 by Leo Poliakov (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974) 3 - 147; and S. D. Goitein, *Jews and Arabs* (New York: Schocken Books, Inc., 1966).

7. Bharat Bhushan Gupta, *Arab-Israeli Relations* (New Delhi: Ashish Publishing House, 1978) 4.

8. The Balfour Declaration came in the form of a letter from Lord Balfour, the British Foreign minister, to the Anglo-Jewish banker, Rotschild, a leader of the Zionist Movement, to the effect that the British Government was committed to fulfil the national aspirations of the Jews by helping them to establish their state in Palestine.

9. Barakat Ahmad, *Muhammad and the Jews: A Re-Examination* (Now Delhi: Vikas Publishing House pvt., ltd., 1979).

10. "Shailuk al-Hadith," (*The new Shylock*) *al-Thaqafah*, no. 12 (March 1939): 1 - 3.

11. The 1964 stage production of *The Merchant of Venice* in Egypt was conceived with a view on the Arab-Israeli conflict. Reviewers noted the relevance of the play to the situation in the Middle East. *Twajj* 357 - 358.
12. Suheil B. Bushrui, "Shakespeare in the Arab World," *the Middle East Forum* (Spring 1971): 55 - 64.
13. Nadir 72.
14. Tawfiq Habib, "Shakispir fi Misr," (*Shakespeare in Egypt*) *al-Hilal*, part 2, vol. 36 (1927): 201 - 204.
15. Ahmed al-Maghazi, "Shakispir fi al-Masrah al-Misri," (*Shakespeare on the Egyptian Stage*) *al-Masrah*, no. 40 (April 1967): 42 - 52.
16. Ramsis Awad, *Shakispir fi Misr (Shakespeare in Egypt)* (Cairo: al-Hai'ah al-Misriyah al-Amah lil-kitab, 1986) 106.
17. Various factors contributed to the popularity of Mutran's translation. These are: (a) Mutran's celebrity as a poet was an asset to the literary value of his translation; (b) He translated the play into educated literary Arabic prose, highly appreciated by the "priests" of 'fusha' Arabic and school teachers; (c) He worked closely with men of the theater especially George Abyad for whom he translated Shakespeare; and (d) He was the manager of the Egyptian Troupe, a subsidised theater company whose repertoire included some of his translations.
18. William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, ed. John Russell Brown (London: Methuen and Co., Ltd., 1977) 47 - 66. Subsequent references will be cited within the text.
19. Mohammed Enani, trans. Introduction, *Tajir al-Bonduqiyah (The Merchant of Venice)* (Cairo: al-Hai'ah al-Misriyah al-Amah lil-Kitab, 1988) 5-36.

20. The reception of Shakespeare in Arabic has been considered in several academic studies in English. For an update on this matter see my forthcoming article "Shakespeare in Arabic: A Bibliographical Essay".

21. Shakespeare is often presented in his native tongue by visiting English stage companies touring mid-eastern countries. See Mahmoud Al-Shetawi, "Shakespeare in Arabic: An Overview," *New Comparison*, no. 8 (Autumn 1989): 114-126.

22. M. M. Badawi, "Shakespeare and the Arabs," *Cairo Studies in English* (1964): 181 - 196.

23. Though the reception of Shakespeare in Arabic was examined in several dissertations presented in USA and British Universities and also in many other articles in English, no attempt has yet been made to compile a checklist of the stage productions of his plays in Arab countries.

24. The reviewer mainly praises the translation and stresses the importance of Shakespeare, but he makes no mention of any performance of the play given by Adyad. The review appeared in *al-Muqtataf*, vol. 60, no. 5 (May 1922): 499-500.

25. Su'ad Abyad, *Jurj Abyad wa al-Masrah al-Misri fi Ma'ata Amm* (George Abyad and the Egyptian Stage in A Hundred Years) (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif, 1965) 199.

26. Awad 106.

27. Fattouh Nashati, *Khamsouna Aman fi Khidmat al-Masrah, Part One* (Fifty Years in the Service of the Theater) (Cairo: al-Hi'ah al-Misriyah al-Amah lil-Kitab, 1973) 93-96.

28. Nashati, Part One, 96-99.

29. Fattouh Nashati, *Khamsouna Aman fi Khidmat al-Masrah, Part Two (Fifty Years in the Service of the Theater)* (Cairo: al-Hai'ah al-Misriyah al-Amah lil-Kitab, 1971) 219-220.

30. For a summary of the critical response to the stage production of the play in the local press, see Nashati 219-225.

31. Khakil Mutran, Introduction, *Tajir al-Bonduqiyah, 8th ed.* (The Merchant of Venice) (Beirut: Dar Marun Abud, 1974) 7-17.

32. A summary in English of the critical reaction to the play is given in Twaij 355-365.

33. The Arab-Israeli conflict as depicted in drama is considered in Samih Mahran, *al-Masrah Baina al-Arab wa Isra'il* (Cairo: Dar Sine' lil-Nashr, 1992).

34. The relevance of *The Tragedy of Oedipus* to the question of Palestine is considered in Mahmoud Al-Shetawi, "Oedipus Rex and Islamic Belief-System," *International Journal of Islamic and Arabic Studies* IV, no.2 (1987): 15-29. A biographical note on Ali Ahmed Bakathir (1910 - 1969) is in order. Born in Singapore to expatriate Arab parents, the young Bakathir received his formative education in his native country, Yemen. After completing high school, he joined Cairo University in 1934 to study English literature. He worked as teacher in Egypt for the rest of his life. Bakathir is a versatile man of letters. His literary oeuvre is varied and voluminous; he is a poet and novelist of some note. His drama is also colorful and diverse, consisting of more than fifty plays that deal with a wide range of topics" history, and social and political themes. For more information about Bakathir and his treatment of the Jews, especially with reference to *The New Shylock*, see Adnan M. Wazzan, *al-Yahud fi Masrahiyat Shakspir wa Bakathir* (The Treatment of the

Jews in the Plays of Shakespeare and Bakathir) (Jeddah: al-Dar al-Sa'udiyah lil-Nashr wa al-Tawzi', 1990).

35. Ali Ahmed Bakathir, Fann al-Masrahiyah min Khilal Tajarubi Al-Shakhsyah, 3rd ed. (The Art of Drama Through My Own Experience) (Cairo: Maktabat Misr, 1985) 43 - 44.

36. The political statements of the play are commonly treated in many Arab historical documents relating to the conditions of Palestine under British Mandate. See Mohammed Abdel-Ra'ouf Salim, Nashat al-Wakalah al-Yahudiyah li-Filastin, 1922 - 1948 (The Activities of the Jewish Agency for Palestine) (Beirut: al-Mo'asasah al-Arabiyyah lil-Dirasat wa al-Nashr, 1982).

37. Edgar Rosenberg, "The Jew in Western Drama: An Essay and a Checklist," in Edward d. Coleman, The Jew in English Drama (New York: New York public Library and KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1970).

38. Mubarak Hassan al-Kalifeh, "Awdat Shailukh," (The Return of Shylock), al-Katib, no. 77 (August 1967): 136 - 137.

39. Ali Ahmed Bakathir, Shailukh al-Jadid (The New Shylock) (Cairo: Maktabat Misr, n.d.) 45 - 46. Subsequent references will be cited within the text.

40. Mostafa Wahbi al-Tal, "To the Usurers," in Richard L. Taylor, trans., Mustafa's Journey: Verse of Arar; Poet of Jordan (Irbid: Yarmouk University Press, 1988) 94.

41. Shakespeare's indebtedness to Marlowe in delineating the Jew is noted by scholars. See for example, Landa 64 - 65; and Rosenberg 14 - 19.

42. In refuting the legality of the Balfour Declaration Arabs argue that Great Britain does not own Palestine to give it away to the Jews.

43. Coincidentally Bakathir's non-Zionist Jew voices the concerns of many Jews apprehensive of the Zionist Movement, viewing it as a totalitarian organization that seeks to control the Jews and regulate their lives within its rigid dogmas. See Elmer Berger, *Memoirs of an Anti-Zionist Jew* (Beirut: The Institute for Palestine Studies, 1978). Bakathir seems to be aware of anti-Zionist opposition among the Jews themselves.

44. In 1939 the British Government issued an official statement of policies, better known as the White Paper, regarding its position towards the question of Palestine. For details see Salim 239.

45. Incidentally Argentina, Uganda and other places were proposed as alternatives for Palestine at the first Zionist conference held in Basle, 1897. However, the Zionists finally settled on Palestine because they recognised it as a powerful legend to unite all Jews. See Hani Al-Raheb, *The Zionist Character in the English Novel* (London: Third World Centre for Research and Publishing, Ltd., 1981) 13.

46. Interestingly in Wesker's *The Merchant*, a redaction of the *Merchant of Venice*, Shylock opts for the law which he sees as the only guarantee to safeguard the rights of Jews living in dispersion.

47. Both Arnold Wesker and Charles Marowitz are of this opinion. See Arnold Wesker, *Preface, The Merchant* (London: Methuen, 1981) xli-lx; and Charles Marowitz, *Introduction, The Marowitz Shakespeare* (New York and London: Marion Boyars, 1978) 21 -23.