

IBN DĀNIYĀL'S SHADOW PLAYS IN EGYPT: THE CHARACTER OF ṬAYF AL-KHAYĀL

Ahmed SHAFIK*
Universidad de Oviedo

BIBLID [1133-8571] 21 (2014) 117-136

Resumen: El personaje del emir Wiṣāl, héroe principal de la primera pieza dramática de Ibn Dāniyāl, no ha dejado de despertar el interés de los críticos. Sin embargo, nos parece que no se ha prestado una atención suficiente al de Ṭayf al-Jayāl, el otro protagonista, de modo que siguen sin aclarar diversos aspectos de la creación daniyālī. Por ello, empleando unas cuantas tradiciones folklóricas y literarias, nos detendremos en la figura de Ṭayf al-Jayāl para poder delinear mejor sus rasgos relevantes.

Palabras clave: Egipto. Época mameluca. Siglos XIII-XIV. Ibn Dāniyāl. Teatro de sombras. Personajes.

Abstract: The character of Prince Wiṣāl, main hero of the first dramatic piece by Ibn Dāniyāl, has not ceased to arouse the interest of critics. Nevertheless, it seems to us that a sufficient attention has not been paid to Ṭayf al-Khayāl, confidant of the hero, such that light still needs to be shed on diverse aspects of Ibn Dāniyāl's creation. For this reason, using a few folkloric and literary traditions, I will analyze the figure of Ṭayf al-Khayāl to better outline his relevant peculiarities.

Key words: Egypt. Mameluk period. Thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Ibn Dāniyāl. Shadow play. Characters.

* E-mail: anouralhouda@hotmail.com

ملخص: ما فتئ النقاد يهتمون بشخصية الأمير وصال، البطل الرئيسي في المسرحية الأولى لابن دانيال، إلا أننا نعتقد أنهم لم يهتموا بشخصية طيف الخيال، البطل الآخر في المسرحية، اهتماما كافيا، بحيث أن هناك جوانب مختلفة لهذه الشخصية لم يتم توضيحها بعد. ولهذا السبب نتوقف في هذا البحث عند شخصية طيف الخيال من أجل استقصاء أبرز مميزاتا من خلال مجموعة من التقاليد القولكورية والأدبية.

الكلمات المفاتيح: مصر، العصر المملوكي، القرنان الثالث عشر والرابع عشر، مسرحيات خيال الظل عند ابن دانيال، الشخصيات.

Ibn Dāniyāl (d. 710/1310) was an ophthalmologist from Mosul who settled in Cairo in the days of the Mamluk amir Baybars (r. 658-76/1260-77), jester and court poet during the reign of several sultans. He was also playwright and shadow play performer. In fact, he composed the earliest three shadow plays known to exist⁽¹⁾, and poetry in all genres. He is considered possibly one of the most culturally controversial figures of his time⁽²⁾.

Recent research, however, has taken a noteworthy turn in examining and exploring his work: not only his shadow plays have been widely examined⁽³⁾,

-
- (1) *Textos raros del teatro de sombras (Egipcio y Sirio, siglo XII al XX)*, recopil., est. y tr. (Antología) by A. Shafik, Madrid: Instituto Egipcio de Estudios Islámicos; Shafik, A., «*Dīwān kadas* y la revivificación del teatro de sombras en Egipto», *Anaquel de Estudios Árabes*, 25 (2014), pending publication.
 - (2) Corrao, F. M., *Il riso, il comico, la festa al Cairo nel XIII secolo*, Roma: Istituto per l'Oriente, 1996; ---, «Bābāt khayāl al-zill li-Ibn Dāniyāl», *Uyūn* 2 (1996), 18-30; Guo, Li, *The Performing Art in Medieval Islam. Shadow Play and Popular Poetry in Ibn Dāniyāl's Mamluk Cairo*, Leiden: Brill, 2012, pp. 3-100; Shafik, A., «Ibn Dāniyāl (646/1248-710/1310): poeta y renovador del teatro de sombras», *Miscelánea de Estudios Árabes y Hebraicos*, 61 (2012), 87-111.
 - (3) Badawī, M., «Medieval Arabic Drama: Ibn Dāniyāl», *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 13 (1982), 82-107 (aparece en *Three Shadow Plays*, pp. 6-30); *Three Shadow Plays by Muḥammad Ibn Dāniyāl*, ed. P. Kahle y D. Hopwood, Cambridge: E. J. W. Gibb Memorial Series, 1992; Corrao, F. M., «Ibn Dāniyāl's Shadow Plays, an Example of Cultural Tolerance in the Early Mamlūk Ages», *The Arabist: Budapest Studies in Arabic* (18) 1996, 13-28; ---, «The Culture of Laughter and the Anti-Heroes in Ibn Dāniyāl's *Ṭayf al-Ḥayāl* (XIII cent.)» en *Philosophy and Arts in the Islamic World. Proceedings of the Eighteenth Congress of the Union Européenne des Arabisants et Islamisants held at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven* (September 3-9, 1996), Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters. 1998, 123-133; Savioli, M., «Cultura scientifica e farsa popolare: *Ṭayf al-Ḥayāl* e *Pantagruel*, le Vicente di due eroi 'trasgressivi'»

but his poetry has begun to receive attention as well⁽⁴⁾. However, no serious attempt has been made to study the characters of his shadow plays, except a general approach of some of them, such as the matchmaker, Umm Rashīd, and Prince Wiṣāl, in the most elaborate play, *Ṭayf al-Khayāl*⁽⁵⁾.

1. The Plot of the play

The first of these three plays, *Ṭayf al-Khayāl* (The Shadow Spirit), is the longest and the most developed with regard to plot and characterization. After a short prologue offered by the Presenter, Ṭayf al-Khayāl is the first character to appear on the screen stage. He then turns to the audience and describes the various aspects of his past sinful living. He claims that he has now repented and has come to Cairo in search of his intimate friend Prince Wiṣāl. After introducing himself, Wiṣāl boasts profusely of his various amorous adventures with both sexes in a lengthy poem. In a vivid picture of princely court, Wiṣāl is

a confronto”, *Anali. Sezione Romanza*, XLIV/2 (2002), 641-686; Zargar, C. A., «The Satiric Method of Ibn Dāniyāl: Morality and Anti-morality in *Ṭayf al-Khayāl*», *Journal of Arabic Literature* 37, n.º 1 (2006), 68-108; A. Shafik, “La idea del teatro en el Medioevo islámico”, *Cuadernos del Minotauro*, 7 (2009), 75-105, pp. 99-105.

- (4) *Al-Mujtār min šī'r ibn Dāniyāl... ijtiyār Ṣalāh al-Dīn b. Aybak al-Ṣafadī*, ed. M. N. al-Dulaymī, Mosul: Maktabat Bassām, 1978; Guo, L., «Reading *Adab* in Historical Light: Factuality and Ambiguity in Ibn Dāniyāl's "Occasional Verses" on Mamluk Society and Politics» in *History and Historiography of Post-Mongol Central Asia and the Middle East: Studies in Honor of John E. Woods*. Ed. by J. Pfeiffer and S. A. Quinn, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2006, 383-403, pp. 385-87, 389-91; ---, L. Guo, “Mamluk Historical *Rajaz* Poetry: Ibn Dāniyāl's Judge List and Its Later Adaptations”, *Mamluk Studies Review*, 14 (2010), 43-62; ---, «Ibn Dāniyāl's 'Dīwān': In Light of Ms Ayasofya 4880» *Quaderni di Studi Arabi*, 5 (2010-2011), 163-76.
- (5) Kotzamanidou, M., «The Spanish and Arabic Characterization of the Go-Between in the Ligh of Popular Performance», *Hispanic Review* 48 (1980), 91-109; De Lama, V., «Un antecedente de Celestina a finales del siglo XIII: El teatro de sombras de Ibn Dāniyāl», en *Actas del Congreso Internacional de la Literatura en la época de Sancho IV (21-24 de febrero de 1994)*, coord. J. M. Lucía Mejías y C. Alvar Ezquerro, Madrid: Universidad de Alcalá, 1996, 399-413; Shafik, A., «Onomástica literaria y traducción: La motivación de los nombres propios en *Ṭayf al-Jayāl* 'Sombra de la Fantasía' de Ibn Dāniyāl (m. 710/1311)» en *Estudios de lingüística y tractología árabe*, coord. S. M. Saad, Madrid: IEEL, 2010, 151-225, pp. 178-187, 197-204.

reconfirmed as Mamluk governor with a burlesque deed of investiture produced by his secretary and completed with panegyric verses written by his poet. At this point, the Prince confides to his friend Ṭayf al-Khayāl his intention to marry and to lead a regular life. After the ceremony is over, he discovers that the woman he has married is extremely ugly and very old, a far cry from the beautiful girl promised to him by Umm Rashīd, the matchmaker. Wiṣāl then decides to punish Umm Rashīd and her husband, Shaykh ʿAflaq, but when the comical doctor, Yaḳṭīnūs, announces the matchmaker's death, Wiṣāl and Ṭayf al-Khayāl decide to go on pilgrimage to Mecca.

2. Carnival tradition

The trilogy of *Ṭayf al-Khayāl*, as it was depicted in several studies, is a highly penetrated carnival atmosphere⁽⁶⁾. It gains pre-eminence, in effect, about the end of the thirteenth century and the beginning of the fourteenth century, in a time of great festive activity. The almighty King Baybras had wrapped the court and all of Egypt in a cloak of severe austerity. The death of the king, in 1277, causes a complete change of scenery. In a certain sense, one witnesses an enormous *carnival atmosphere* during the Mamluk era⁽⁷⁾. It is not apparent but the Mamluk princes and those who surround them want to get distract themselves from the continuous external wars against the Mongols, as well as their perpetual struggle against each for power: attend parties and masquerades, parteciple in mockery. Emphasis is placed on the power of laughter, on the carnival madness. As to better express this change, the brilliant Mamluk kings engage in a series of constant festivities and masquerades: *al-maḥmal*⁽⁸⁾, *ʿīd al-*

(6) Molan, P. D., «Charivari in a Medieval Egyptian Shadow Play», *Studia Arabo-islamica Mediterranea (Al-Masāq)*, 1 (1988), 5-24; Monroe, J. T. y Pettigrew, Mark, F., «The Decline of Courtly Patronage and the Appearance of New Genres in Arabic Literature: the Case of the *Zajal*, the *Maqāma*, and the Shadow Play», *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 34, 1-2 (2003), 138-77, pp. 168-77; Shafik, A., «Onomástica literaria...», pp. 176-78.

(7) ʿAṣūr, S., *al-Muḥtamaʿ al-miṣrī fī ʿaṣr salāṭīn al-mamālīk*, El Cairo: Dār al-Nahḍa al-ʿArabiyya, 1992, pp. 195-226; Qāsim, Q. ʿA., *ʿAṣr salāṭīn al-mamālīk*, El Cairo: al-Hayʾa al-ʿĀmma li-Quṣūr al-Ṭaqāfa, 1999, pp. 287-310.

(8) It is a frame covered with yellow silk, forming a tent-like structure, it usually carries inside a copy of the Qurʾān or a prayer book and charms. The rulers of Egypt dispatched it annually to Mecca to accompany the pilgrimage caravan. See Meloy, J. L. «Celebrating the *Maḥmal*:

fawz 'feast of the Victory', known as *ʿīd al-maskhara* or *ʿīd al-masākhir* 'feast of the buffoonery', and other feasts directly related to the Nil, such as, al-Nayrūz, *ʿīd al-šahīd* 'feast of the martyr' and *wafāʾ al-nīl* 'Rise of Nil, etc'⁽⁹⁾. It seems that neither the two campaigns thrown by Baybars and, later, by Lajīn against vice, nor the jurists' condemnations could have any effect on the prohibitions of such festive display⁽¹⁰⁾.

The forms of expression of the public square and the popular festival through its entire system of disguises and buffooneries, of hierarchical changes, overthrows and degradations were on a par with the real power of the State⁽¹¹⁾. In his interesting study about Rabelais, M. Bakhtin affirms that the carnivalesque feasts: «have a characteristic logic, the peculiar logic of the "inside out" (*á l'envers*) of the "turn about" of a continual shifting from top to bottom, from front to rear, of numerous parodies and travesties, humiliations, profanations, comic crownings and uncrownings»⁽¹²⁾.

In this context, a big masquerade is realized on the Egyptian New Year's feast of *Nawrūz*, in which, according to the Carnival rules, it represents the exaltation of the antithetical values, which can be enriched in the light of the Carnival-Lent relationship: that of the carnality, antithetic to the spirituality that

- The Rajab Festival in Fifteenth Century Cairo». in J. Pfeiffer; S. A. Quinn, & E. Tucker (eds.). *History and historiography of post-Mongol Central Asia and the Middle East. Studies in Honor of John E. Woods*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2006, 404-427, pp. 406-24.
- (9) Lutfi, H. «Coptic festivals of the Nile. Aberrations of the past?». in T. Philipp, & U. Haarmann (eds.). *The Mamlūks in Egyptian Politics and Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, 254-282.
- (10) Guo, L., «Paradise Lost: Ibn Dāniyāl's Response to Sultan Baybars' Campaign against Vice in Cairo», *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 121/2 (2001), 219-35; ---, «The Devil's Advocate: Ibn Dāniyāl's Art of Parody in His *Qasidah* No. 71», *Mamluk Studies Review*, 7 (2003), 177-209. For jurists' denunciations, see Ibn al-Hājj, *al-Madkhal ilā tanmiyat al-aʿmāl bi-tahsīn al-niyya*, Cairo: Maktabat Dār al-Turāṭ, 1992, I, pp. 283-313; II, pp. 2-26 y 46-60.
- (11) With reference to carnival feasts, see Caro Baroja, J., *El Carnaval (análisis histórico-cultural)*, Madrid: Taurus, 1965; Gaignebet, C., *Le Carnaval*, Paris: Payot, 1974; Marianne Mesnil, *Trois essais sur la Fête. Du folklores à l'ethno-sémiotique*, Bruxelles: Éditions de l'Université, 1974; *Formas Carnavalescas en el arte y la literatura*, ed. J. Huerta Calvo, Barcelona: Ed. El Serbal, 1989.
- (12) Bakhtin, M., *Rabelais and his World*, trans. H. Iswolsky, Bloomington: Indian University Press, 1984, p. 9.

takes immediately the relief in the Christian calendar⁽¹³⁾. To represent these two opposite principles, there was used the typical pair of the Arab *Maqāmāt*, which provides a precedent for Ibn Dāniyāl's Shadow Plays.

Though A. Buturović has correctly called attention to Ibn Dāniyāl's tendency to structure his protagonists in clear binary correlations, for the first play, she designed the pair Prince Wiṣāl and the matchmaker, Umm Rashid, with arguments based on political and erotic motifs⁽¹⁴⁾. However I would like to single out two interpretations that differ from Buturović's sensitive remarks. In one case, the three plays of Ibn Dāniyāl were organized according to an accurate creative technique (tone, style and language) very similar to the *Maqāmāt* genre of al-Hamadhānī (d. 395/1007) and al-Ḥarīrī (d. 516/1112). This suggests that the deep-seated literary pair of the *Maqāmāt* (student/narrator-teacher relationship) has profoundly influenced the creation of the main characters of the first shadow play (Ṭayf al-Khāyāl/narrator and confident-Prince Wiṣāl)⁽¹⁵⁾. In the second, *Ṭayf al-Khayāl* relies acutely on what M. Bakhtin describes as "grotesque realism", whose essential revel is the degradation, namely, the lowering of all the high and spiritual and ideal (values of Ṭayf) towards the material level, wantonness, sex, scatology and physical humor (image of Wiṣāl)⁽¹⁶⁾.

Ibn Dāniyāl, in fact, uses this festive carnival tonality in the first play of his trilogy, particularly when he draws the main characters, supporting on the jocular opposition of the feast of al-Nayrūz, which corresponds in a certain sense to the opposition between Carnival and Lent. In previous works, it has been indicated that the vigorous and insatiable Wiṣāl, mounting the nag, was a

-
- (13) Shafik, A., «Formas carnavalescas del Nayrūz en el Medievo islámico», *al-Andalus-Magreb*, 20 (2013), 217-49; ---, «Fiesta y carnaval en el Egipto mameluco», *Miscelánea de Estudios Árabes y Hebraicos*, 63 (2014), 189-208.
- (14) Buturović, A., «The Shadow Play in Mamluk Egypt: The Genre and its Cultural Implications», *Mamlūk Studies Review* 7 (2003): 149-176, pp. 166-68; ---, «Truly, This Land is Triumphant and Its Accomplishments Evident! Baybars's Cairo in Ibn Dāniyāl's Shadow Play» in *Writers and Rulers: Perspectives on Their Relationship from Abbasid to Safavid Times*, ed. B. Gruendler y L. Marlow, Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2004, 149-168, pp. 160-63.
- (15) Kilito, A. F., «Le genre 'séance': une introduction», *Studia Islamica*, 43 (1976), 25-51, pp.36-7; Monroe, James T., *The Art of Badī' AZ-Zamān al-Hamadhānī as Picaresque Narrative*, Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1983, pp. 22-5.
- (16) For the "grotesque realism", see Bakhtin, M., *Rabelais and his World*, pp. 19-20.

festive image of the-Nayrūz and assumed the characteristic of a carnival madman⁽¹⁷⁾. In the next pages, I will analyze the role of Ṭayf al-Khayāl in the plot for a better comprehension of this character.

3. The proper name: Ṭayf al-Khayāl

Few critics who have paused to contemplate the protagonist's name, however⁽¹⁸⁾, cannot overlook the relevance that the name reflects in the trilogy *Ṭayf al-Khayāl*, especially when considering its meaning for scholars of the Islamic Middle Ages: «The name serves as an allusion to the meaning, since meaning is present in the name»⁽¹⁹⁾.

The Iraḡi character has a compound name: Ṭayf al-Khayāl. The author has used the literary tradition and means «The Shadow Spirit», which has certain scope, as we shall see. The name has classical aura as a leitmotiv of early Arabic poetry, truly eponymous, since it has given the title to the play. Ṭayf al-Khayāl, who has the same name as in the first play, after which the book is titled, is presented as a pun on a cliché of love poetry that refers to the phantom visit of the beloved in the lover's dream. The poet Ibn ʿAbd Banī Ḥaṣḣas recites:

*A khayāl visited me at night and moved about,
But when it moved about, it was only a flash*⁽²⁰⁾.

And also is used as the term for the shadow play itself. See, for example, the initial verses:

*This our shadow-play is for people of rank, of pre-eminence
and generosity, for people of good education,*

(17) Shafik, A., «Onomástica literaria y traducción...», pp. 185-6.

(18) Shafik, A., «Onomástica literaria y traducción...», pp. 187-192; Sublet, J., «Nom écrit, nom dit: les personnages du théâtre d'ombres d'Ibn Dāniyāl», *Arabica*, XLIV, 4 (1997), 545-52, pp. 547-48.

(19) Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, Beirut: Dār al-Ṭibāʿa wa-l-Naṣr, 1956, entry (*s/m/ā*).

(20) Jacobi, R., «The *Khayāl* Motif in Early Arabic Poetry» *Oriens*, 32 (1990), 50-64, p. 56. See also Jacobi, R., «Al-Khayālānī: A Variation of the *al-Khayāl* Motif», *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 27 (1996), 2-12.

*containing all manner of gravity in its jesting,
rich in beauty and causing amusement.*

[...]

*I gave him the title (tarjamtahu) of Ṭayf al-Khayāl,
Whose back is crooked liked the rising moon⁽²¹⁾.*

Although the title does not contain the name of the main character, Prince Wiṣāl, the choice of Ṭayf al-Khayāl presents, in a sense, the theme illustrated by the play, as if it was an idea that should be represented dramatically: *The world is a fading shadow (al-dunyā ḡill zāʿil)*⁽²²⁾. In the same sense, Ibn Sūdūn al-Bashbaghāwī recites:

Time does not continue in the same state.

*For they have likened it to a shadow play (khayāl ḡill) that is
presented⁽²³⁾.*

Ibn Dāniyāl, moreover, has resorted to the name of a rhetorical figure to insist on the poetic dimension and the artistic height of the shadow play (*Khayāl al-ḡill*), oft criticized in his time:

*You wrote to me [...] remembering that the shadow-play has
become burdensome for the hearer, and that men's minds have
turned from it because of its repetitions. And you asked me to
compose something of this type, which would be original, for the*

(21) *Three Shadow Plays*, p. 1; Kahle, P., «The Arabic Shadow Play in Medieval Egypt (Old Texts and Old Figures)», *Journal of the Historical Society of Pakistan*, April (1954), 85-115, pp. 98-99.

(22) For this meaning of evanescence, al-Jurjānī, *Asrār al-balāga*, ed. H. Ritter, Istanbul: Government Press, 1954, p. 107. In the Koran 25:45: «Have you not seen how your Lord stretches out the shadow (*al-ḡill*)?», *The Holy Qurʾān, translation and Commentaries*, Istanbul: Acar Matbaacilik, 2003. See also Moreh, S., «The Shadow Play (*Khayāl al-ḡill*) in the Light of Arabic Literature», *Journal of Arabic Literature* 18 (1987), 46-61, pp. 47-52; Shafik, A., «A vueltas con el teatro de sombras: *al-ʿĀšiq wa-l-maʿšūq*, una obra olvidada del siglo XIX», *Revista del Instituto Egipcio de Estudios Islámicos*, 38 (2010), 137-174, pp. 141-46.

(23) Moreh, S., «The Shadow Play...», p. 52.

figures on the puppet-box⁽²⁴⁾.

Returning to the aforementioned opening verses of the play, the edition of P. Kahle shows *tarjamatahu* 'to be entitled, to give a title', while other manuscripts (B and C) have *tarjamahu* 'recount, narrate'. L. Guo and S. Mahfouz preferred the later term:

*The narrator of our shadow play is Ṭayf al-Khayāl, a witty,
humorous hunchback*⁽²⁵⁾.

These versions are closer to the right development of the plot, and it is affirmed with another verse cited by Ṭayf al-Khayāl:

*And I stand here before you —to tell you what
I have seen*⁽²⁶⁾.

If we accept this reading, Ṭayf al-Khayāl would become the *real narrator* of the play⁽²⁷⁾. This role is clearly perceived particularly when he narrates situations in which the speech appeals to the viewer's mental representation (*khayāl*) and not to the actual performance of the event. In all his criticism of the harsh measures adopted during the reign of Baybars, Ṭayf al-Khayāl recovers memories of things past which depicted this change: «I found those traces were wiped out, and the places of their enjoyment joyless, the marks effaced, the punishment falling on the blunderer»⁽²⁸⁾. Another function of the narrator, despite not being indispensable, he is an objective observer of the play and stands outside of the fictional universe to comment on the play and give the

(24) *Three Shadow Plays*, p. 1; Kahle, P., «The Arabic Shadow Play...», p. 98.

(25) In the critical apparatus of *Three Shadow Plays*, p. 119; *Theatre from Medieval Cairo. The Ibn Dāniyāl Trilogy*, tr. and ed. by S. Mahfouz and M. Carlson, New York: Martin E. Segal Theatre Center, 2013, p. 5. Similar translation in Guo, L., *The Performing Art*, «It is the Phantom I grant the role of narrating the story», p. 158.

(26) *Three Shadow Plays*, p. 3; Kahle, P., «The Arabic Shadow Play...», p. 100.

(27) Entry «Narrator», see Pavis, P., *Dictionary of the Theatre: Terms, concepts and analysis*, trans. by Ch. Shantz, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998.

(28) *Three Shadow Plays*, p. 4; Kahle, P., «The Arabic Shadow Play...», p. 102.

audience an interpretation that might be from the author. Such is the case of the prologue of Ṭayf, which I will to discuss later.

In dramatic terms, Ṭayf al-Khayāl is the secondary character in whom the protagonist confides his secrets and reserved declarations, he advises him and guides him. He is, in fact, the “shadow” and “confidant” of Prince Wiṣāl, following him in every moment of the play. He lacks a very exact and quite definite image, since he is nothing more than a support and sonorous echo that normally should not endure any tragic conflict and should not make any decision. Ṭayf al-Khayāl is clearly designated as a phantasmagorical prolongation of Wiṣāl, a creature who is figuring out his scruples and his repentance⁽²⁹⁾.

Ibn Dāniyāl is served again from the Carnival tradition to portray Ṭayf al-Khayāl. This character, opposite and complementary to Prince Wiṣāl, has the characteristics of a *Lenten being*. Since the beginning of the book, the author presents a grotesque image about his physique. In fact, he represents him under the guise of a hunchback in a paradoxical picture: «Oh Ṭayf al-Khayāl, oh perfection of symmetry! A humpbacked figure appears...»⁽³⁰⁾.

After that, el Presenter (*al-rayyis*) addresses him in a burlesque panegyric poem:

*I swear by the beauty of your seductively upright figure,
Oh peerless of the Amirs of all crooked men,
[...]
His shoulders drawn down, hump-backed, looked like a man
who is afraid, who has been slapped⁽³¹⁾.*

Bodily deformation is a recurrent motif in medieval Arabic literature. Two famous examples are found in the *Arabian Nights*⁽³²⁾ that had a near final corpus in the time of Ibn Dāniyāl. The first one, an uninhibited wag and intelligent

(29) See Pavis, P., *Dictionary of the Theatre*, entry «Confidant».

(30) *Three Shadow Plays*, p. 1; Kahle, P., «The Arabic Shadow Play...», p. 99.

(31) *Three Shadow Plays*, pp. 1-2; Kahle, P., «The Arabic Shadow Play...», pp. 99-100.

(32) *The Thousand and one Nights = Alf layla wa-layla: from the Earliest Known Sources*, Arabic text edited with intr. and notes by M. Mahdi, Leiden: Brill, 1984, I, pp. 280-89. About the word *maskhara*, see Moreh, S., *Live Theatre and Dramatic Literature in the Medieval Arab world*, Edinburg: Edinbur University Press, 1992, pp. 56, 59, 72-3, 98, 109.

hunchback (*insān aḥḍab khalīf kayyis*) who was associated with «fun, amusement and drinking companionship (*li'ib wa-ḍaḥk wa-munādama*)» and «the Chinese king's companion and jester (*ṣāḥib malik al-Ṣīn wa-maskharatuh*)» in the tale of “The hunchback, jester of the Sultan of Casagr”; the second, he appears as a fool for being cheated by a beautiful housewife in the tale of “The hunchback tailor”⁽³³⁾. The uncanny appearance of the hunchback not only reflects compassion, but also evokes jock and jest. According to al-Jāhiz: «The plebs believe that the one who suffers from an abnormal curvature in the back, the hunchback, his penis gets longer and his lust increases, and he is funny and clever»⁽³⁴⁾. This physical feature of Ṭayf al-Khayāl is, in some sense, related to the erotic dimension of his friend, Prince Wiṣāl, whose name means *amorous union*. It should be noted that in the Roman carnival, hunchbacks and disabled persons were part of the street shows⁽³⁵⁾. On account of these physical features, the author compares him with the *ṣafā'ina* ‘salp-takers or slapstick buffoons’, who swarm the palaces and the popular festivals of the Muslim Middle Ages⁽³⁶⁾. The show performed by Ṭayf al-Khayāl was a dance traditionally allied with the shadow theatre, as he says: «Before my dance in this play»⁽³⁷⁾.

4. Peculiarities of Ṭayf al-Khayāl

Ṭayf al-Khayāl becomes, in a certain way, a symbol of abstinence and austerity. Everything related to him acquires such features. The author specifies these qualities as the play develops, as it evokes his misery, for example, when

(33) *The Thousand and one Nights*, I, pp. 349-54.

(34) Al-Jāhiz, *Kitāb al-burṣān wa-l-irjān wa-l-ṣimiyān wa-l-ḥawlān*, ed. 'A. S. Muḥammad Hārūn, Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1990, 404-11, p. 409.

(35) Badawī, M., «Medieval Arabic Drama...», p. 20; Boiteux, M., «Carnaval annexé. Essai de lectura d'une fête romaine», *Annales, Économies. Sociétés. Civilisations*, t. 32 (1977), 356-380, p. 363.

(36) Al-Tifāṣī, *Nuzhat al-albāb fī mā lā yūjad fī kitāb*, ed. J. Jum'a, Londres: Riyād al-Rayyis, 1992, pp. 51-61; Moreh, S., *Live Theatre*, pp. 10, 46-48, 52-53, 60, 66, 70, 72, 79, 128, 131, 139-40; Shafik, A., “*Hikāya* ‘imitación’ y términos afines del arte de la representación a la luz de la literatura árabe”, *al-Andalus-Magreb*, 17 (2010), 157-186, p. 162.

(37) *Three Shadow Plays*, p. 2; Kahle, P., «The Arabic Shadow Play...», p. 100.

Prince Wiṣāl asks him for money:

*Hey, my master Ṭayf al-Khayāl! [...] May you take me as your valet
and slave provided that you lend me some money?*

Ṭayf al-Khayāl gives him a fart and says:

I have not eaten a bite of food for three days

[...]

Prince Wiṣāl addresses Ṭayf al-Khayāl:

*But, tell me. Where is your money? What happened to your
furniture? What has become of your clothes?*

*[The hunchback Ṭayf al-Khayāl becomes restless and starts
lamenting his poverty in verse]⁽³⁸⁾.*

In carnivalesque terms, the opposition between Carnival and Lent corresponds to the contrast between fat and skinny⁽³⁹⁾, a typical Carnival comic couple, illustrated respectively by Prince Wiṣāl with his grotesque opulence and Ṭayf al-Khayāl with his acute poverty.

Well known is that eroticism plays a relevant role in the theatre of Ibn Dāniyāl. The loves of the heroes lead, indeed, in carnal acts of all kinds, which cause a series of very suggestive scenes that they're sometimes even shown as pornography⁽⁴⁰⁾. This emphasis on the erotic pictures also concerns numerous popular festivities. In fact, eroticism is one of its most notorious dimensions. It corresponds to the festive assertion of biological vigour, essential renewal of body and nature⁽⁴¹⁾. While there are many particulars relating to the sexual adventure of Prince Wiṣāl, always eager to satisfy their carnal appetites, the life of Ṭayf al-Khayāl is accompanied by suffering and loneliness. For this reason he exclaimed overtly, in one occasion:

*Pooh! Faugh! I am still in the prime of my youth,
But due to my wretched life I wish I would die and be*

(38) *Three Shadow Plays*, p. 35; *Theatre from Medieval Cairo*, pp. 53-54.

(39) Gaignebet, C., «Le combat de Carnaval et de Carême de P. Bruegel (1559)» (*Annales. Économies. Sociétés, Civilisations*, t. 27, 1972, 313-45, p. 340.

(40) *Three Shadow Plays*, pp. 7-8.

(41) Bakhtin, M., *Rabelais and his World*, p. 9.

buried in a grave

[...]

Nonetheless, I will bear the whips and scorns of time patiently,

But, alas! I am the brother of the wretched of the earth

Whether I endure time's calamities or not⁽⁴²⁾.

The omnipresent eroticism of Prince Wiṣāl is diluted and gives way to the ethereal attitude of Ṭayf al-Khayāl. His confrontations with the more mundane forms of love and with new conquests is conspicuous by its completely absence, which confirms his austere essence. The painful reality of Egypt after the Mamluk Sultan Baybars' campaign against vice reinforces the devout attitude of Ṭayf al-Khayāl, especially when one of his friends apologizes for not being able to keep him amused in the way in which he is accustomed. Since then Ṭayf has lost interest and energy to continue the old habits, and he finally recites an elegy lamenting on Satan's death. All of these factors lead him to do «penance for these practices»⁽⁴³⁾, and to thus acquire a reflexive and broader creative capacity thanks to the power of imagination (*Khayāl*). The dissolute life that he led only exists in his memories, and not as a nostalgic outlook on old times. In other words, the change that occurs in Ṭayf al-Khayāl means that the hero is already willing to abandon his past and to submit to the social and ethical code of the society.

He is now prepared to brilliantly pronounce the inaugural speech of the shadow play:

Know that every person has a likeness and it is said in the proverbs: One find in the dustbins what is lacking in the foodbags. Every shadow image (idea) has behind it reality, and every manner a method. Jests are recreations from the dullness of gravity, and so misfortune is similar to happiness. At times one tires of the beautiful, and finds delicious the ugly [...]. What does it matter to you when they say: that is ugly, when everything is in its own way beautiful⁽⁴⁴⁾.

(42) *Three Shadow Plays*, pp. 35-6; *Theatre from Medieval Cairo*, p. 55.

(43) *Three Shadow Plays*, p. 4; Kahle, P., «The Arabic Shadow Play...», p. 102.

(44) *Three Shadow Plays*, p. 4; Kahle, P., «The Arabic Shadow Play...», pp. 100-01.

His words already take us to a conception of reversible and complementary principles which, on the one hand, refer to the Sufi tradition⁽⁴⁵⁾, and on the other hand, to the Lenten Ṭayf al-Khayāl and the carnival Wiṣāl, using the technique of the upside-down world⁽⁴⁶⁾. As a matter of fact, Ṭayf al-Khayāl is capable of being a thoughtful man, is very knowledgeable and can give deep reflections and comments. The following two verses of his autobiography depict his idea of affliction:

*But I hope my misfortunes will turn into good fortune as the
one who said,
“After black clouds, clear weather.”*

*The glory of the full moon is in its rotation,
And the purest and freshest water is that which runs⁽⁴⁷⁾.*

Finally, he certainly would not miss the chance to close the play with a moral about the ephemeral nature of life:

*Every mortal will die,
At his hour of death he has no deliverer, no savior.*

*Man’s life, no matter how long it might seem,
With the alternation of day and night, is still very short⁽⁴⁸⁾.*

(45) For example, see Ibn ‘Arabī says that there is no pre-eminence between superior and inferior as far as God is concerned, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 2002, I, p. 506 and II, pp. 479, 512; ---, *Kitāb kaṣf al-ma’na ‘an sirr asmā’ Allāh al-ḥusnā* intr., tr. y notas de P. Beneito, Murcia: Editorial Regional de Murcia, 1996, p. 152. With reference to the Sufi terminology in *Ṭayf al-Khayāl*, *Three Shadow Plays*, pp. 39-40. For short discussion of it, Zargar, C. A., «The Satiric Method of Ibn Dāniyāl...», pp. 87-88.

(46) For this concept, *L’image du monde renversé et ses représentations littéraires et paralitéraires de la fin du XVI^e siècle au milieu du XVII^e*, ed. J. Lafond and A. Redondo, Paris: Vrin, 1979.

(47) *Three Shadow Plays*, p. 36; *Theatre from Medieval Cairo*, p. 55.

(48) *Three Shadow Plays*, p. 53; *Theatre from Medieval Cairo*, p. 84.

The opposition between the two heroes is also highlighted by the contrasting features of the popular image of Prince Wiṣāl and the erudition of Ṭayf al-Khayāl. The Mamluk emir says that he has fully fledged among «Dakūsh and Diktash, and Kamūz and Milkāsh», obviously people of non-Arab backgrounds, possibly from Banū Sasān, namely, vagabonds and beggars⁽⁴⁹⁾. Even when he demonstrates his knowledge of the traditional Arab horses, he does it from the perspective of the Mamluk conception⁽⁵⁰⁾. Instead, Ṭayf al-Khayāl demonstrates an impressive knowledge of the Arabic poetry. It is quite normal that he may draw the attention of Prince Wiṣāl about the parodic deed of investiture, recited in verse and prose, when the poor Prince does not know what to believe, whether it's a mockery or not:

When he has finished the Qaṣīda, Ṭayf al-Khayāl laughs.
The Amīr Wiṣāl (becoming suspicious): Did you see anything
insulting in that poem?
Ṭayf al-Khayāl: It looks as if Surra Ba'r, the literary gentleman,
hasn't been paid enough, so his address has come out badly.
The Amīr Wiṣāl: That is apparently the case...⁽⁵¹⁾

It is natural, therefore, that Ṭayf al-Khayāl was aware of the medical knowledge of the Greeks, particularly Galen and Hippocrates, a famous pair of Greek doctors on whose learning the Arab scientists relied greatly⁽⁵²⁾.

The scene where the carnival tradition receives a major leading role is that relating to the appearance of the matchmaker's husband, Shaykh ṢAflaq. In his

(49) Guo, L., *The Performing Art*, pp. 24-31; Bosworth, C. E., *The Mediaeval Islamic Underworld: The Banū Sāsān in Arabic Society and Literature*, Leiden: Brill, 1976.

(50) *Three Shadow Plays*, pp. 29-43; For the relevance of horsemanship for the Turkic, «Faḍl al-turk» in *Rasā'il al-Jāhiz*, ed. ṢA. S. Muḥammad Hārūn, Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1964, 1-86, pp. 70-73. See also Haarman, U., «Arabic in Speech, Turkish in Lineage: Mamluks and their Sons in the Intellectual Life of Fourteenth-Century Egypt», *Journal of Semitic Studies*, 33/1 spring, (1988), 81-114, p. 82; Shafik, A., «El caballo en textos literarios del Medievo islámico», *Revista del Instituto Egipcio de Estudios Islámicos*, 40 (2012), 39-55.

(51) *Three Shadow Plays*, p. 18; Kahle, P., «The Arabic Shadow Play...», p. 114.

(52) Shafik, A., «El saber médico en las obras literarias: el caso de la trilogía de Ibn Dāniyāl», *Revista del Instituto Egipcio de Estudios Islámicos*, 39 (2011), 15-48, pp. 32-5.

friendship with Prince Wiṣāl, Ṭayf al-Khayāl is a quiet, wise and sharp man. After the failed marriage of Wiṣāl, the Prince wants to take revenge on Umm Rashīd and her husband Shaykh ʿAflaq for arranging his married to a monstrously hideous woman, who is already a grandmother. But Ṭayf asks him to forgive him due to his status as an outlander: «Repent sincerely to God! Forget about Sheik ʿAflaq. He is a foreigner in the country»⁽⁵³⁾. He further urges, to take pity on him, pleading his old age: «This old man is not to blame. Do not flog a corpse. An old wound is not painful. He is a feeble, old man, cross-eyed, almost half blind»⁽⁵⁴⁾.

Nevertheless, we are in full carnivalesque game, which in an entertaining way gives free reign to the use of parody and allows for transgressing social codes. The hierarchies, the charges and the rules established by the dominant groups are parodied. In this context Ṭayf al-Khayāl is entirely reversed.

The role played by the jester is well known. This Carnival madman is notorious in the palace beside the prince as a person who subverts the official truth and reveals the hidden realities. As he dominates the art of the speech, between jokes and antics, he can tell a lot of truth and really highlight the scourges of the princes and courtiers⁽⁵⁵⁾. For example, the deed of investiture (*al-taqīd*) and the panegyric ode which the jocular secretary read on the occasion of the investiture of Prince Wiṣāl are nothing more than a parody of an official Mamluk decree that comically depict dignitaries and officials of the court: their honorific titles, position, duties and obligations⁽⁵⁶⁾.

In this context, the first to be burlesqued by Ṭayf al-Khayāl is Prince Wiṣāl, parodic image of the Mamluk sultans, when Ṭayf gives a humorous description of Wiṣāl's severity, in a warning to Umm Rashid to stop evoking his friend's past in a bad way:

If the Prince hears you talking about him in such a manner, he will slap you on your face. These days he is not that kind of buffoon

(53) *Three Shadow Plays*, p. 42; *Theatre from Medieval Cairo*, p. 65.

(54) *Three Shadow Plays*, p. 45; *Theatre from Medieval Cairo*, p. 69.

(55) See Lever, M., *Le sceptre et la marotte-Histoire des Fous de Cour*, Paris: Fayard, 1983; Dols, Michael W., *Majnūn: Madman in Medieval Islamic Society*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992, pp. 349-65.

(56) Monroe, J. T. y Pettigrew, Mark, F., «The Decline of Courtly Patronage...», pp.168-77.

you used to know. He is mightier than the Pharaoh. Circumstances have altered his nature and he has mended his ways. He struts in his place like a furious tiger, terrorizing and threatening. He can send anyone to jail for the least offense and free prisoners from prisons as he pleases. His hand is always on his dabous [cudgel or club] ready for brandishing⁽⁵⁷⁾.

The author has scornfully used the character of Ṭayf al-Khayāl to amplify his critics against the debasement of the dominant ideology. In making such mockery, the discreet Ṭayf has suddenly become a fool in the company of Prince Wiṣāl, head of the court. He becomes a true jester in the princely mansion, in which he concocts several amusing acts for entertainment. The so-called narrator, Ṭayf al-Khayāl, now participates in the action and assumes the role of the hero.

Ṭayf al-Khayāl, therefore, accepts the game, and assuming his role as jester, he parodies not only the religious rituals and official titles, in a more shameless and merry way, but also the most erudite person. In a sense, he doesn't hesitate in turning the religious authorities, representatives of the official and canonical culture, into an active element of mockery and transgression.

Insofar as the *Maqāmāt* is concerned, he uses an inversion of the prophetic traditions (*ḥadīth*). Ṭayf invents a funny speech while he refers to Shaykh 'Aflaq, in which he summons forth the well-established structure of *ḥadīth* that always begins with words like "related, said, cited, etc". Such as in the following passage:

Popular books by renowned, wise, and eloquent writers, God bless them and protect their fortunes and success, have cited him as "Yaḳfīn al-Dawla" [the Nation's Fool Pumpkin], and "Fashūsh al-Hīla" [Empty Saucepan] Abā al-Mudaflaq 'Inz al-Dīn 'Aflaq. May God hide his sins, and bless his testes. He is one of those who have not been acquainted enough with intellect and understanding. [...] He read the Holy Qur'an with the exception of "Half of the Holy Qur'an" and the parts of the Holy Qur'an from Sūrat An-nās

(57) *Three Shadow Plays*, p. 23; *Theatre from Medieval Cairo*, p. 36.

[Mankind] to Sūrat Yāsīn. He mastered the art of buffoonery and like an herbalist he studied nature by licking the earth until he discovered that rubies are extracted from onyx...⁽⁵⁸⁾

In this context, it is necessary to add that the evoked atmosphere points out that Ṭayf, the court jester, knows how to build a scene, to create an air of comedy, evoke certain attitudes and, similar to the puppeteer, manipulate the characters as if they were dolls.

Once again, making use of certain themes and topical behaviours that he acquired from the picaresque tradition of the *Maqāmāt* and the tradition of humorous causes that exists in popular festivities, he quotes a dramatic monologue composed for ‘Aflaq by the court poet, in which the old man bitterly complains about his evil-tempered and depraved wife and cites instances of his folly and cuckoldry in a vicious and ridiculous manner. Ṭayf al-Khayāl recites:

I complain to the wālī [governor] of buffoonery, fornications and butt;

He who has become a city of ignorance,

And on his head has the cuckold’s horns that look like a ship’s masts.⁽⁵⁹⁾

Popular parodic courts, burlesque imitation of the common justice, are organized in order to reproach the reprehensible acts of the relationship between the spouses, especially those relating to sexual conduct (marital infidelity, impotence of the husband, lightness of women, etc.)⁽⁶⁰⁾. It can be called “court scene” whose source can be found in *al-Tabrīzī*, written by al-Ḥarīrī⁽⁶¹⁾. In this

(58) *Three Shadow Plays*, pp. 41-2; *Theatre from Medieval Cairo*, pp. 69-70.

(59) *Three Shadow Plays*, p. 47; *Theatre from Medieval Cairo*, p.72.

(60) Bercé, Y-M., *Fête et révolte des mentalités populaires du XVIe au XVIIIe siècle*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1976, pp. 37-38 ; Van Gennepe, A., *Manuel de folklore français*, tome premier; III: *Cérémonies périodiques cycliques*. 1: *Carnaval-Carême-Pâques*, Paris: Éd. A. et J. Picard et Cie, 1947, p. 919.

(61) *Maqāmāt: Šarḥ maqāmāt al-Ḥarīrī*, ed. y com. Y. al-Baqā‘ī, Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Libnānī, 1981, pp. 303-10. For the interpretation of the verses, see Guo, L., «Self-mockery as a Genre in Mamluk Satiric Poetry: Ibn Dāniyāl on His Estranged Wife and Midlife Crisis», *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, 32 (2006), 269-85.

maqāma appear a judge, an usher and the litigants (the man and his wife), whose purpose is to laugh at the fools. The reading of the judgment usually gives way to a carnival ritual known as the French *charivari* or the Hispanic *cencerrada*⁽⁶²⁾.

In the same vein, the final part of ṢAflaq's scene conveys another critical message. In it we find a parody of the physicians during the Mamluk regime. Ibn Dāniyāl want to put the emphasis on their incompetence. The doctor is one of the characters that comes out with frequency in the masquerades of Carnival⁽⁶³⁾. Shaykh ṢAflaq looks back sorrowfully on the wild sexual adventures of his sinful youth, throws harsh criticism against the physician Yaḡfīnūs, whose medical care proves useless. However, Ṭayf al-Khayāl reacts at once and says humorously:

Do not insult the physician Yaḡfīnūs. To us, he is an eminent physician as Galenus was to the ancient Greeks. The great physician Yaḡfīnūs made an operation on the penis of Duḡmāsh who was best known by his nickname "Ma'īn [the one Possessed by the Evil Eye of Envy]." Duḡmāsh's big penis cramped and shrank from the weariness of coupling until it became hardly visible⁽⁶⁴⁾.

This is the festive atmosphere that dominates throughout the scene and appears especially in the playful interventions of Ṭayf al-Khayāl. Profound thoughts and divine wisdom have progressively faded into coarse buffoonery. It is a clear indication that a transformation has taken place in the hero. Within this technical carnival of the upside down world, Ṭayf al-Khayāl, characterized by his discretion and prudence, is transforming morally. The Lenten Ṭayf becomes a carnivalesque character and part of Prince Wiṣāl's kingdom of madness. But such radical change would mean an abandonment of the essence of the character

(62) Caro Baroja, J., *El Carnaval*, pp. 192-93; ---, «El Charivari en España», *Historia* 16, V/47 (1980), 54-70; Margolin, J. C., «Charivari et mariage ridicule au temps de la Renaissance», *Les fêtes de la Renaissance*, ed. J. Jacquot, Paris, CNRS, 1973-75, III, 567-601, p. 596; Molan, P. D., «Charivari in a Medieval Egyptian Shadow Play», pp. 17-21.

(63) Van Gennep, A., *Manuel de folklore français*, pp. 916 y 920; Varagnac, A., *Civilisation traditionnelle et genres de vie*, Paris ; Michel ; 1948, pp. 78-88.

(64) *Three Shadow Plays*, p. 49; *Theatre from Medieval Cairo*, p. 76.

and will result in a mere duplication of the Prince's figure. Should the antithetic pair disappear, and the high-class and popular perspectives of reality as well, all that remains is the popular perspective. So, before this growing trend comes to an end, Ṭayf al-Khayāl, aware of the progressive derangement of his being, takes refuge in repentance in order not to return to his old habits, as he points out at the end of the play:

I repent to the Almighty God seeking forgiveness. God protect us from these attributes. I seek refuge in Allah, the Forgiver of all sins, from all evils, from committing the sins of the dwellers of hellfire. Repentance is better for us. It is a shame for one to preach what he does not perform. The return for God is better for us⁽⁶⁵⁾.

5. Conclusions

Ṭayf al-Khayāl is, essentially, an entertainment play, written about the festive atmosphere of hilarity that permeated in the Mamluk period at the end of the thirteenth century and the beginning of the fourteenth. Ibn Dāniyāl, therefore, develops the character of Ṭayf al-Khayāl from the viewpoint of a fun combination of folkloric-literary traditions and contemporary historical realities. Using parody, the author calls into question the governmental system of the dominant groups, within the framework of a transitional world upside down.

(65) *Three Shadow Plays*, p. 53; *Theatre from Medieval Cairo*, p. 84.