Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
Vol.8, No. 1, pp.54-70, January 2020
Published by ***ECRTD-UK***
ISSN: 2052-6350(Print),
ISSN: 2052-6369(Online)

REPRESENTATIONS OF THE WEST IN AL-TAHTAWI, AL-HAKIM, AND AWAD

Naglaa Abou-Agag
Alexandria University, Egypt
n.abdelhameed@alexu.edu.eg

ABSTRACT: *The paper investigates the representations of the West in three Egyptian texts written in Arabic. These are Rifa'a al-Tahtawi's A Paris Profile, Tawfiq al-Hakim's A Sparrow from the East, and Louis Awad's Memoirs of a Scholarship Student within the framework of the Postcolonial theories of Franz Fanon, Edward Said, and Homi Bhabha. Instead of a confrontation between the West and the East along the lines of Fanon and Said, the three texts reveal the possibility of a dialogue, enriching the attempt at introducing Modernity along European lines in Egypt which was made by Muhammad Ali in the early years of the nineteenth century. The dialogue, however, rests upon paradigms other than Bhabha's notion of Third Space. Hence, the three texts challenge the dichotomy devised by Fanon, the stereotypes identified by Said and the fluidity and vagueness of identity propagated by Bhabha.*

KEYWORDS: al-Tahtawi, al-Hakim; Awad, postcolonial theory; East/West relations, third space, modernization.

INTRODUCTION

The legacy of colonization is still alive in our globalized world of today with the political and economic hegemony of the United States and the power of its cultural industries bringing to mind the British Empire where the sun never sets. On the political level, Western powers led by the United States have been openly involved in events taking place in the Middle East over the past fifteen years starting with the attack of the Coalition forces on Iraq in 2003. This, in addition to the rise of terrorism and political Islamists, has brought about new forms of tension in East/West relations. In the West, fear and mistrust may sometimes be seen in the representations of Arabs and Muslims in the media and public discourse, whereas anti-Western sentiments flourish in Middle Eastern countries. In our complex context of globalization, which is characterized by interconnectedness as reflected in the fast and smooth movement of goods, people, money, cultural values, and political ideologies across the world through technology and World Trade Organization agreements, it is important to revisit East/West cultural relations and trace East/West encounters in texts that come from the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth. This will contribute to developing an understanding of the current position of each party, the mechanisms of cultural hegemony, and the notions of cultural identity. The present paper hopes to participate in the debate over how the West represents the East and vice versa

through examining images of the West in three Egyptian texts. These are Rifa'a al-Tahtawi's *A Paris Profile* (*Takhlis al Ibriz fi Talkhis Bariz*), Tawfiq al-Hakim's *A Sparrow from the East* (*Usfour mn Alsharq)*, and Louis Awad's *Memoirs of a Scholarship Student (Mozakerat Taleb Be'atha*). Henceforward, the English titles will be used in reference to the three texts. The theoretical framework used in the paper involves the notions of violence in Franz Fanon, the stereotype in Edward Said, and Third Space in Homi Bhabha.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Representation of the Occident in Arabic literature is an important theme in the work on Arabic literature, postcolonial studies, and cultural studies in both English and Arabic. In English. Rasheed El-Enany's *Arab Representations of the Occident: East-West Encounters in Arabic Fiction* (2006) provides a thorough study of encounters with the West over the precolonial period, the colonial times, and the postcolonial era; as well as encounters with America. El-Enany presents examples from all over the Arab world and reaches the conclusion that "Westernism is no longer a mode of otherness; it has so mingled with the self, been adopted, adapted and reproduced by the self to such an extent that the self has over generations lost trace of its otherly origins" (205). He describes Awad, for example, as being "a principal agent of regeneration, modernisation and secularisation in Egyptian culture in the second half of this century, and more particularly as a transmitter of the values of Western culture to his own" (El-Enany 75). Another attempt at providing a comprehensive analysis of East/West encounters is Samar Attar's *Debunking the Myths of Colonization: The Arabs and Europe* (2010). It refers to the work of a wide array of Arab writers such as Fadwa Tuqan, Taha Husayn, Tawfik al-Hakim, Yahya Haqqi, Tayyeb Saleh, and Emile Habibi. In her analysis of select texts by the aforementioned writers, Attar focuses on notions of colonization and domination within the framework of Fanon's theories. She devotes a chapter to the analysis of *A Sparrow from the East* in which she sees Muhsin as a "perplexed" Egyptian intellectual who clearly represents the opposite of the values of Western civilization, being a dreamer and incapable of understanding notions of time and place (Attar 90-2). Nasr Abu-Zayed examines the presentation of the West as having both bright sides and dark aspects in his article "The Image of Europe in Modern Egyptian Narrative". Some examples of relevant Arabic studies include *Sourat Al-Gharb fi Al-Adab Al-Arabi Al-Moaser* (*Image of the West in Contemporary Arabic Literature*) by Jean Naoum Tannous (2008), *Sourat Al-Gharb fi Al-Rewaya Al-Arabiyya* (*Image of the West in the Arabic Novel*) by Salem Al-Moawash (1998), and *Sourat Uroppa fi Al-Adab Al-Arabi Al-Hadeeth mn Taha Husayn Ila Tayyeb Saleh* (*Image of Europe in Modern Arabic Literature from Taha Husayn to Tayyeb Saleh*) by Kamal Abdelmalek and Mona Al-Kahla (2011). These works present an overview of East/West encounters in Arabic literature and highlight Western influences upon the development of the novel as a genre in the Arab world. They do not, however, place emphasis upon specific Arab countries.

The present paper draws upon the views presented in the aforementioned books and articles but tends to see the three texts in an Egyptian context and not as part of a general Arab frame of reference. The three texts have been chosen because of the major influence their writers have on the development of Egyptian literature and culture and their contribution to the project of modernization. The paper views the three texts as contributing to the construction of one narrative; the narrative of Egypt's modernization project which started in the early years of the nineteenth century under Muhammad Ali. The narrative is made up of political dimensions such as dealing with the power of the Ottoman Empire, European interest in Egypt, and the British occupation of Egypt, and working towards independence; and cultural aspects exemplified in issues of identity.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The three Egyptian texts came as the direct result of immediate contact with the West over the period of a whole century. These are Rifa'a al-Tahtawi's *A Paris Profile*, written during his stay in France 1826 - 1831, Tawfiq al-Hakim's *A Sparrow from the East* written in1938 after his return from his three-year stay in France, and Louis Awad's *Memoirs of a Scholarship Student*, written in 1942 after he had come back from England where he had received his Master Degree in English Literature at Cambridge University. The book was published only in 1965.The three texts are seen within the framework of Franz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) and Homi Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* (1994), aiming to show how the three Egyptian writers in the three texts chosen for this study view the West within the historical conditions they belong to respectively. Instead of a confrontation between the West and the East along the lines of Fanon and Said, the three texts reveal the possibility of a dialogue, enriching the attempt at bringing about m in Egypt which was started by Muhammad Ali in the early years of the nineteenth century. The dialogue, however, rests upon paradigms other than Bhabha's notion of Third Space. Hence, the three texts challenge the dichotomy devised by Fanon, the stereotypes identified by Said and the fluidity and vagueness of identity propagated by Bhabha.

While al-Tahtawi's *A Paris Profile* belongs to the modernization project undertaken by Muhammad Ali in the early years of the nineteenth century, al-Hakim's *A Sparrow from the East* and Awad's *Memoirs of a Scholarship Student* come from the first half of the twentieth century; a period in which Egyptians were struggling with the presence of British forces in spite of Egypt's official independence in 1922. Although the three texts describe the West as the seat of modern civilization, they engage in a dialogue with Western culture that highlights its strength, sees its points of weakness, acknowledges cultural specificity, and moves away from stereotyping. This section outlines the theoretical framework, while the following section introduces the three writers and the cultural context they come from and finally moves to the discussion of the dialogue the three texts create with the West in which images of the West are depicted.

Fanon, Said, and Bhabha engage in critical analysis of the impact of colonization, each focusing on a particular aspect of it. When put together, their views offer a description of the nature and legacy of colonization that would stand as a theoretical framework for the analysis and the understanding of the three literary texts chosen in this study. Fanon's sharp divide between colonizer and colonized, Said's theory of the stereotypes, and Bhabha's notion of Third Space make up the theoretical framework according to which al-Tahtawi's *A Paris Profile*, al-Hakim's*A Sparrow from the East*, and Awad's *Memoirs of a Scholarship Student* are analyzed.

Fanon's worldview finds its origin in the historical context of the French occupation of Algeria which began in 1830 and lasted until 1962. Fanon saw the world as being made up of two distinct components: the colonized and the colonizer.

> The colonized's sector, or at least the "native" quarters, the shanty town, the Medina, the reservation, is a disreputable place inhabited by disreputable people. You are born anywhere, anyhow. You die anywhere, from anything. It's a world with no space, people are piled one on top of the other, the shacks squeezed tightly together. The colonized's sector is a famished sector, hungry for bread, meat, shoes, coal, and light. The colonized's sector is a sector that crouches and cowers, a sector on its knees, a sector that is prostrate. It's a sector of niggers, a sector of towel heads. The gaze that the colonized subject casts at the colonist's sector is a look of lust, a look of envy. (Fanon, 4-6)

This is a world in "a power struggle" (23), "compartmentalized" (15), and dominated by violence on the part of the colonizer, where the colonized lives in "a permanent state of tension" (16) which eventually leads to aggressiveness among the colonized people who are waiting for the colonizer to "let his guard down and then jump…on him" (16). In this historical condition, the colonized masses believe that independence can be achieved only through using force (33). "Violence can thus be understood to be the perfect mediation. The colonized man liberates himself in and through violence" (44). The paradigm suggested by Fanon, therefore, does not leave scope for dialogue nor for peaceful negotiations. This may be explicable in light of the atrocities the French committed in Algeria and the nature of the French occupation of Algeria. The French made Algeria a *département* of France in 1848, which means wiping out the possibility of independent Algeria. In spite of the modernization of agriculture and the economic prosperity of the privileged classes in Algeria, a strong sense of discontent prevailed among the educated and the peasants alike and a fierce war for independence broke out in 1954. Over the period of eight years the Algerians offered one million martyrs in this brutal struggle to free their country. In 1962 Algeria was pronounced an independent country. Most of the Europeans living in Algeria left but the influence of the French language and culture remains visible until today. Similarly, Fanon's description of the brutality of colonization and the violent struggle for independence remains influential as far as the understanding of the era of

colonization is concerned. In Tayyeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* (1966), violence is the mode dominating Mustapha Said's stay in London with two of the British women who get emotionally involved with him committing suicide and his murder of his wife in a scene loaded with sexual connotations and anger. Fanon's anger, similar to that of Mustapha Said, is worthy of serious investigation in our contemporary context when we look back at intersections with the West through texts written in Egypt over a whole decade and engage in a critical debate with the West. The paper aims to investigate the presence of the divide between the colonizer and the colonized in the three texts and whether or not anger is a dominant sentiment in these texts.

Said's *Orientalism* is concerned with the representation of the Orient in the work of Orientalists, reaching the conclusion that the West has established a set of images through which to view the Orient. These images describe the peoples of the Orient as having "disordered minds" (Said 38), as being "liars" (39), "irrational", "depraved" (40), "a subject race" (44), strange, different, and exotic (72); and inhabiting "the …silent and dangerous space beyond familiar boundaries….insinuating danger" (57). The Orient is believed to be "always the same, unchanging, uniform, and radically peculiar object" (98); a place where Europeans traded; a place "culturally, intellectually, spiritually *outside* Europe and European civilization" (71, italics in original). In short, the Orient is referred to in terms of a "primitive" state (120) within the structure of a colonizing project that aimed solely at serving the political and economic interests of European powers in Africa and Asia. Such representations of the Orient came through the study of ancient manuscripts and the accounts of European residents in the Orient and have acquired sanctity as part of the political discourse upheld by the West. As Said explains, these representations belong to a system of knowledge called Orientalism made up of "a set of references, a congeries of characteristics, that seems to have its origin in a quotation, or a fragment of a text, or a citation from someone's work on the Orient" (117). Such discourse does not give scope to the voice of the Orient and it offers ready-made generalizations for the understanding of East/West relations and the perception of Oriental characters in literary texts. The classic example is that of Aziz in E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* (1924). Studying representations of the West in al-Tahtawi's *A Paris Profile,* al-Hakim's *A Sparrow from the East,* and Awad's *Memoirs of a Scholarship Student* requires revisiting the set of images of the Orient developed in Western consciousness to understand how the West views how the Orient perceives itself and how it places itself in relation to the West. The paper proposes that the Egyptian characters in the three texts do not conform to the stereotypes created by Orientalism and therefore do not see European characters as superior and do not picture themselves as being reduced to an inferior primitive "human flatness" (Said 150).

Bhabha postulates a formula for understanding the relation between the colonizer and the colonized. His notion of Third Space is presented as a peaceful means of overcoming the historical condition of colonization and of dealing with cultural identity. Bhabha believes that whenever any two cultures come in contact with each other, a space of a peculiar nature

emerges into existence. “It is that Third Space, though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be approached, translated, rehistoricized and read anew” (Bhabha 37). According to the two examples Bhabha uses in his book, a long history of racial discrimination as in Nadine Gordimer’s *My Son’s Story* (1990) on the one hand and slavery as in Tony Morrison’s *Beloved* (1987) on the other may present the chance for the creation of such spaces and whatever operations or processes that take place within the boundaries of such spaces are used to understand the concepts of "culture", "cultural identity" and "nation" among others. Though the focus of the paper is not to challenge Bhabha's views on these concepts, it is important to show the function of these spaces and to investigate whether or not they may be used to account for the cross-cultural relations in the three Egyptian texts discussed in the paper. The aim of the paper, then, is to evaluate the journey of the Egyptian characters in the three texts into the West, France and England, in light of Bhabha’s description of “[t]hese ‘in-between’ spaces [which] provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood, singular or communal- that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself” (1-2). This notion of “Third Space” has brought about much critical commotion. It is seen as an attempt at achieving "a dynamic of equality between the First and the Third World in terms of representation" (Chakrabarti 11-12) as well as "a metaphor, and analytical tool, which primarily signifies a virtual space, not a physical room" (Fahlander 24). Therefore, exploring East/West cultural relations in al-Tahtawi's *A Paris Profile*, al-Hakim’s*A Sparrow from theEast*, and Awad's *Memoirs of a Scholarship Student* entails reference to Bhabha’s Third Space.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

The chronicles of modernity in Egypt may start with the era of Muhammad Ali who rose to power in 1805 after years of turmoil and within a context of international challenges exemplified in the French expedition to Egypt in 1798 and the British attack on Egypt in 1807. The three years of the French expedition (1798-1801) mark a turning point in the history of Egypt and its relation to European powers as well as the Ottoman Empire. Egypt realized the strategic importance of its location, the inability of the Ottoman Empire to defend it against attacks coming from Europe, the significance of its antiquities after the deciphering of the inscriptions on the Rosetta stone, and the huge gap between the state of affairs in Egypt with regard to education, science, and military power and the conditions in European countries. Throughout the reign of the Dynasty of Muhammad Ali, Egypt was involved in a major modernization project that started under Muhammad Ali as well as in political maneuvering to stave off European intervention in its affairs. The British occupation of Egypt which started in 1882 posed a most important challenge to the Egyptians who put up resistance to the colonizer that manifested itself in the 1919 Revolution, the negotiations for independence, the official declaration of the independence

of Egypt in 1922 in spite of the presence of British forces and officials in the country, and finally the 1952 Revolution and the end of British presence in Egypt in 1954.

The modernization project undertaken by Muhammad Ali comprised encouraging industry, establishing an irrigation network, introducing new agricultural crops such as cotton which later became of major economic importance, building an army and a navy along the lines of modern military powers, and developing education. Muhammad Ali founded schools of medicine, engineering, agriculture, languages, and teacher training as well as military and naval academies. This is in addition to sending a number of educational missions to Europe (El-Gemeiy). Throughout the nineteenth century Egypt witnessed a cultural and an intellectual awakening translated into the writings of Rifa'a al-Tahtawi (1801-1873) on his Paris years, Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti's ((1753–1825) investigation of Egyptian history and analysis of the impact of the French expedition on Egypt, Shaykh Hasan al-Attar's (1766–1835) encouragement of the study of modern medicine involving corpse dissection, Muhammad Abduh's (1849-1905) liberal judgments on issues such as eating meat slaughtered by Christians and his reforms of the administration and curricula at al-Azhar, and Ahmad Lutfi al-Sayyid's (1872-1963) translation of a number of Aristotelian works into Arabic and his views on the necessity of the assimilation of Western technical and educational patterns. These activities raise the question of where the seat of contemporary civilization resides. Clearly the French expedition to Egypt, which lasted only three years, had two major results. On the one hand, it shocked the Egyptians when they realized their land was coveted by foreign powers. On the other, it revealed the huge chasm between the West, represented in these three years by the French who came to Egypt with advanced weapons, a printing machine, scientists and writers, and knowledge in a foreign tongue; and the Eastern lifestyle seen in the education, military, and industrial activities under the Ottoman Empire.

Cultural life flourished in Egypt throughout the nineteenth century and in the early years of the twentieth with the establishment of schools and colleges along the lines of European institutions, the publication of a number of newspapers and magazines, and the interest in art and the theater. Fouad I University was inaugurated in 1908 and women were allowed to join in 1934. Many of the college graduates, men and women alike, in the early years of Fouad I university were granted scholarships to pursue graduate studies in Europe as Awad's *Memoirs of a Scholarship Student* shows. Journalism and art movements also thrived at the time. The following examples help create a picture of the cultural and intellectual life in Egypt towards the end of the nineteenth century. The first newspaper in Egypt was *Al-Waqa*'i`a *al-Masriya* (*The Chronicles of Egypt*). It appeared in 1828 in Turkish and Arabic upon the order of Muhammad Ali. Later it was issued only in Arabic when al-Tahtawi became its editor-in-chief. Yaqʿūb Ṣarrūf and Fāris Nimr published two newspapers in Egypt: the daily *Al-Muqaṭṭam* (1889-1952) and the monthly *Al-Laṭāʾif* (1886-1896). *Al-Ahram* was founded in 1875 by the two Lebanese brothers, Beshara Takla and Saleem Takla. In 1900 Mustafa Kamil founded the daily *Al-Liwāʾ* and in 1914 Salama

Moussa started his short-lived weekly magazine *Al-Mustaqbal.* This is in addition to some newspapers in English and French such as *The Egyptian Gazette* and *Le Progrès Egyptien*.

On the intellectual level, the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth witnessed the birth of political ideology in Egypt. The National Party was created by Mustafa Kamil holding the view that Egypt should look up to Western Liberalism as an example while keeping amicable relations with the Ottoman Empire, which he believed was an ally for Egypt in its struggle against the British occupation. *Al-Wafd* party was formed by Saad Zaghloul and his friends who took it upon themselves to demand negotiations with the British to discuss the independence of Egypt. They had been consequently exiled for a short period of time before they were called back home and became involved in politics after the 1919 Revolution, forming *Al-Wafd* party and running for parliamentary elections. In addition to the focus on independence from Britain, "Egyptian nationalism was moulded by (…) two circuits of loyalty: an allegiance based upon a pan-Islamic identity, and an Egyptianist allegiance centered upon a territorially defined state" (Mondal 142). Pan-Arabism was also contemplated at the time and the prominent figure associated with this movement was Ahmad Lutfi al-Sayyid, while pan-Islamism was celebrated by Jamal al-Din al-Afghani who believed that resisting colonization in the region would only be possible through the union of all Islamic countries. Therefore, all political ideologies formed at the time viewed the British colonizer as a foreign power whose presence in Egypt had to be resisted and eventually terminated. The intellectual and political scene in Egypt in the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth did not form a Third Space with the British playing a role in the formation of strategies of selfhood and nationhood in Egypt along the lines Bhabha describes. The three spaces the Egyptians dealt with in this regard were the Egyptian, the Arab, and the Islamic. Western civilization remained to the Egyptians at the time a more advanced civilization with reference to education, science, and industry but on the ideological and political level, the presence of the British was clearly foreign.

Al-Tahtawi, al-Hakim, and Awad are three influential figures in Egyptian literary and intellectual life whose accounts of exposure to the West may offer an idea about where Egypt stands within the context of colonization and later postcolonial studies. Though written after the French expeditions to Egypt had long retreated and at a time of establishing a strong independent state under Muhammad Ali, *A Paris Profile* brings to mind the three years of French presence in Egypt. Yet, it views France in a different light as it describes social, cultural, and political aspects as seen through the eyes of the Egyptian narrator who is living in France at the time of writing the text. *A Sparrow from the East* is also set in France but during the early years of the twentieth century when Egypt was struggling with the British occupation. Though the French is not the colonizer in this text, *A Sparrow from the East* engages critically with European civilization at large. Finally, *Memoirs of a Scholarship Student* is set in England and the narrator is conscious of the

colonizer/colonized relations. Put together, the three texts present Egyptian images of the West within a time frame that covers a whole century.

Rifa'a al-Tahtawi (1801-1873), an outstanding translator and author who was one of the first Egyptians to discuss notions of East/West cultural relations during his stay in Paris as a spiritual leader of a group of Egyptian students sent on an education mission to France. In 1826 al-Tahtawi arrived in France where he spent five years in which he learnt French, received a university degree, did some translations from French into Arabic, and completed his book *A Paris Profile*. A few years after his return to Egypt, he became head of the newly established School of Languages in Cairo, currently known as The Faculty of Alsun, Ain Shams University. In 1841 he was appointed supervisor of the translation bureau, where he translated and supervised the translation of many books in a number of disciplines. Khedive Abbas I, who ascended the throne in 1848, was not comfortable with Western influences and he sent al-Tahtawi to Khartoum in the Sudan, where he became a school teacher. Al-Tahtawi returned to Cairo when Said succeeded to the throne in 1854. Al-Tahtawi remains an important figure in the history of intellectual and social life in Egypt because of the account of European life he gives in his *A Paris Profile* since it is the first detailed description of aspects of life in the West and it may be used to study East/West relations at the time of the major project undertaken by Muhammad Ali to bring about modernization in Egypt.

A Paris Profile is published in three volumes; the first explains the rationale behind sending education missions to Europe at the time, recognizing this as part of Muhammad Ali's modernization plan for Egypt and conceding that in the early nineteenth century the West excelled in the sciences and the art of war. Al-Tahtawi's view of his contemporary historical moment comes within a comprehensive understanding of the history of human civilization. He refers to the times of the Arab civilization during the Abbasid Caliphate which witnessed the flourishing of arts and sciences (al-Tahtawi 69). In the modern era, the West is more advanced and more skilled in science, industry, and the art of war and therefore receiving education in the West to contribute to the vision of Muhammad Ali had of modernizing Egypt is necessary (al-Tahtawi 70-1). The first volume also describes the journey to France in detail and provides al-Tahtawi's general impressions upon arrival at Marseille and then Paris. He writes about table manners, unveiled women, clean and wide streets, the structure of the city of Paris, and the greenery seen everywhere in French cities. The second volume provides a detailed account of the life and manners of the French, their food, their means of entertainment, and the position of women in society. The third is devoted to the description of the logistics of the education mission as well as the branches of knowledge the Egyptian students studied in France. It explains the procedures the students have to follow, the reports they should write on their progress, and the examinations al-Tahtawi took before going back to Egypt in which he submitted twelve translations for evaluation. It also includes a section on the history of France at the time which gives a detailed account of the downfall of Charles X. Indeed, *A Paris Profile* may

be considered "the most comprehensive study of the education mission sent to Paris in 1826" (Allam, Luqa & Badway, "Introduction" 9). In general the book may be seen as offering a formula for the shift towards modernization where no dichotomy is seen between Islam and the modern manifestations of civilization expressed in the humanities, science and industry.

Tawfiq al-Hakim (1898- 1987) is one of the most important contributors to the foundation of modern Egyptian theater in the twentieth century. His play *Ahl al-Kahf* (1933; "*The People of the Cave*") secured him fame as a prominent dramatist. The play draws upon the Christian and Islamic story of a group of young men who hid inside a cave outside the city of Ephesus and is basically concerned with notions of time and survival. This was the first of a number of plays which introduced his notion of the "theatre of ideas" in prose Arabic texts. These include *Shahrazād* (1934), based on *The Thousand and One Nights, Al-Malik Udib* (1939; "*King Oedipus*"), *Pijmalīyūn* (1942; "*Pygmalion*"), and *Sulaymān al-Ḥakim* (1934; "*Solomon the Wise*"). Al-Ḥakīm's dramatic output stands in contrast to the light comedies of the end of the nineteenth century and early years of the twentieth in Egypt. The seriousness of his themes may be compared to those of Ahmad Shawqi in his verse plays. Al-Ḥakīm, however, wrote only in prose and incorporated colloquial Egyptian in his plays as well as his autobiographical novel, *Yawmīyāt nāʾib fī al-aryāf* (1937; *The Maze of Justice*), which is a satire on Egyptian bureaucracy. Many of his plays and books were translated into French and English.

Sparrow from the East tells the story of Muhsin, a graduate student in Paris during the interwar period who gets involved with a French woman who turns out to be using him to make her boyfriend jealous. Later in the novel this short love story which leaves Muhsin heartbroken is likened to the exploitation of the riches of the East which takes place through colonization. The woman symbolically represents Europe and Muhsin stands for the East. This comes as part of long conversations between Muhsin and a Russian worker he befriends in which they discuss the meaning of life, man's dream of creating a utopia on Earth, the impact of religion on man's worldview, and East/West relations. The shortcomings of Western civilization are voiced by the Russian friend and Muhsin approves, though he sometimes puts in an objection or a comment. Apart from these intellectual debates, the details of everyday life in the novel stress the universality of the human experience with regard to human feelings, death, and meeting the basic necessities of life. This is clear in the description of the funeral Muhsin attends with Andrea at the beginning of the novel, the passion for music, the intricate maneuvering of courtship, and economic hardship. The novel ends with the Russian friend, on the verge of death after long being ill, advising Muhsin to go back to the East, which he sees as the origin of human values and the place of happiness.

Louis Awad (1915-1990) an Egyptian intellectual, novelist, critic, and university professor whose contributions to the intellectual life in Egypt include his defense of using colloquial

Egyptian in writing literature and his two-volume book *Tarikh al-Fikral-Masry al-Hadeeth* (first published in1969; *History of Egyptian Modern Thought*) in addition to literary texts. Awad had a government scholarship to pursue graduate studies upon graduation from Fouad I University before the Second World War. When he returned to Egypt, he was involved in the activities of a Marxist literary circle and contributed to their endeavor to chart a comprehensive reform plan for Egypt in the period from 1945 to 1950. His novel *The Phoenix* (*al-Anqa*) reflects this orientation. On the literary level, Awad believed in experimentation and innovation. In a volume of poetry, *Plutoland*, he introduced free verse forms to Egyptian literature and presented a scathing attack on traditionalism. Awad's unwavering critical stance continued after the 1952 revolution. As a consequence, he was forced to resign his position at Cairo University in 1954. In 1960 Awad became the literary editor at the newspaper *al-Ahram*. His writings in *al-Ahram* made him one of the leading opinion-makers and intellectuals in Egypt. From the mid-1970s through the 1980s he was consultant for *The Journal of the American Research Center* in Egypt, a prestigious highly esteemed journal among graduate students and researchers. Awad is still an influential literary figure whose attempt at writing literature in colloquial Egyptian is worthy of serious attention since it raises issues of the connection between literature and everyday life and the use of Colloquial Egyptian Arabic in literature. *Memoirs of a Scholarship Student* is also significant as a detailed analysis of the responses of an Egyptian student to living and studying in England during the British presence in Egypt. His *Tarikh al-Fikral-Masry al-Hadeeth* (*History of Modern Egyptian Thought*) is of special interest in the examination of the intellectual scene in Egypt in the second half of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth.

Memoirs of a Scholarship Student first appeared in print in 1965 after being lost for a number of years. The manuscript was rejected by censorship twice in 1944; the first time because it was written in colloquial Egyptian the second because of reference to the British at a time of war (Awad, Introduction, 23-5). Disappointed and unwilling to edit or to rewrite his book, Awad ignored the manuscript only to discover some time before 1947 that it was lost. He forgot about it until he was contacted by someone who found it and published parts of it and finally the full manuscript was restored to Awad twenty years later. The edition used in this article is published in 2001 with introductions by the author and the keeper of the manuscript. *Memoirs of a Scholarship Student* gives a detailed account of the journey to Europe, the experience of the narrator as a student in England, his trips to France, and the journey back to Egypt. The book shows part of the formative years of a leading figure in Egyptian cultural and literary life.

The three Egyptian texts have colonization as part of the historical context in which they are produced. *A Paris Profile* brings to the Egyptian reader a picture of life in the country which attempted to colonize Egypt in 1798. Therefore, French customs, traditions, cultural phenomena, and institutions are seen in the text as foreign in spite of the celebration of the positive aspects of Western civilization as being associated with education, scientific

development, industrialization and modernization in general. *A Sparrow from the East* and *Memoirs of a Scholarship Student* are written during the British occupation of Egypt, and though the first is set in France and the latter in England, they are concerned with the presence of the British in Egypt and the colonial project at large. Muhsin mentions that he wrote patriotic songs for the revolutionaries in the 1919 Revolution (al-Hakim 20). Though he was enthusiastic about the revolution, he could not bear to see the injured British soldier while the revolutionaries were killing him during the commotion that took place at the time (21). He also states that his father lost his job for sticking to the law and ruling against the wishes of British officials in a case over which he was presiding (36). Along the same lines, Awad writes that the British were the natural enemy for the Egyptians in politics because of the presence of their colonizing forces on Egyptian soil (143).Yet, the focus in all three texts is on the description of images of the West from the perspective of Egyptian characters living and studying in the West. When put together, the three texts see bright sides to Western civilization as well as dark faces. The bright sides cover realms such as education and art, whereas the dark faces are exemplified in a war that devastated Europe, economic hardships in the interwar era, and the exploitation of the natural resources of peoples and nations of other parts of the world within the framework of Imperialism. Hence, the three texts do not place themselves up against colonization along the lines of Fanon, nor they wander aimlessly in a space of negotiations, creation, and recreation following the pattern described by Bhabha. They are also free from the straitjacket of the stereotypes Said defines. The three characters in the three texts are clear about the critical distance they enjoy when they discuss the West.

The three central characters in the three texts go to the West for reasons related to education. In al-Tahtawi's text, the narrator, al-Tahtawi himself, is sent to France as spiritual and religious head of a group of Egyptian students on scholarship to France to study a number of different disciplines. While in France, al-Tahtawi learnt French, attended university, mingled with the French and worked on the translation of some French books dealing with physics, the history of Egypt and Syria, geography, customs and traditions of nations, natural rights of man, mythology, and health (al-Tahtawi 217). Upon the return of the education mission, the School of Languages was established in Cairo, later known as the Faculty of Alsun (Faculty of Languages), Ain Shams University. The specialists who received degrees in France in other disciplines contributed to Muhammad Ali's project for the modernization of Egypt in their respective fields. Al-Tahtawi mentions Abdy Afandi who specialized in politics and administration and Mustapha Mukhtar Afandi who excelled in military sciences and others (217).The central character in al-Hakim's text, Muhsin, is pursuing graduate studies in France and Awad, who narrates the events in his autobiographical text, is on a government scholarship to England to receive an MA in English literature. In Awad's *Memoirs of a Scholarship Student* there is an account of the different kinds of scholarships students were awarded at the time, ministry scholarships and university scholarships, and a description of some of the grantees, male and female students sent to France and England. Then, the narrator focuses on his experience as a

graduate student in England. Awad describes the meeting with the registrar (184), the rules students have to observe at Cambridge (206), the colleges at Cambridge University (196), his dissertation in English poetry (156), and his determination that nothing would distract his attention while studying (175). The studious hardworking students, the narrator included, in *A Paris Profile*, the open-minded graduate student who is familiar with the philosophies and the arts of the West, and the ambitious and serious young men and women on their way to Europe in *Memoirs of a Scholarship Student* do not fit the image of the Orient typically conveyed in the work of Orientalists as Said states in *Orientalism*.

Interest in European art and literature is clear in *A Sparrow from the East* and *Memoirs of a Scholarship Student*. Art is, as Abu-Zayd postulates is the only bright aspect of the West in *A Sparrow from the East* (639). Muhsin does not give details on the educational system in France but focuses on art and culture, describing the statues, the museums, the music, and the opera concerts, which he views as the manifestations of the "grand Western civilization which has spread over the world" (al-Hakim 29). The opening scene in the novel evokes Romantic notions of this civilization depicting Muhsin contemplating the fountain at the *comédie-française* square in the rain and then the statue of De Musset. The lines engraved on the base of the statue, "Nothing makes us great but a great pain" creates for Muhsin the notion of the universality of human emotions when he comments that "even here they know this" (11). Muhsin makes it a point to go to an opera concert and spends a lot of effort to dress right although he has no financial means to buy the appropriate costume. He buys an upper front part of a shirt and ties it around his body under the jacket in order to look properly dressed for the occasion (29). Along the same lines, Awad expresses appreciation of Western culture on more than one occasion in *Memoirs of a Scholarship Student*. He states that he wants to go to England to see all the places he has read about in literature (Awad 33). He also describes his visits to Paris and his interest in museums, streets, and buildings; an interest he has developed while reading French literature in Arabic (83-4).

However, the three texts engage critically with Western civilization and show the dark sides of Western civilization stressing the colonial interest in overseas countries and the economic difficulties European countries are experiencing after WWI. In *A Paris Profile*, al-Tahtawi draws comparisons between France and Egypt or on a more general level between the West and the Orient and reaches the conclusion that the West is more advanced in areas such as science, city planning, education, and the military and different in the realm of politics (76). He also finds similarities between the French and the Arabs in general with reference to notions of morality and freedom (390-3). Yet, al-Tahtawi stresses the foreignness of some of the customs and traditions in the West such as the freedom their women enjoy (153), their lack of belief in destiny (154), and their racial views (155). Similarly, Muhsin in *A Sparrow from the East* exposes the greediness of the West and describes how it covets the resources of the East and how it exploits the peoples of the Orient in the same way Mademoiselle Suzie uses him to make her boyfriend jealous (al-

Hakim 133-4). To achieve this end, rivalry between European countries led to WWI and to accepting violence as a mode of living. The young Jeannot pretends while playing that he is fighting the Germans and his grandmother is happy he does this (al-Hakim 32). Muhsin is sure that German mothers will encourage their children to play war as well (al-Hakim 33). However, put together, European countries have colonial interests in the East. The long discussion of East/West cultural and political relations between Muhsin and his Russian friend reveals this (al-Hakim 188-192). The novel ends with the Russian friend's insistence that Muhsin should go back to the East, the land where human civilization began and where values are still alive (al-Hakim 190). The dedication at the beginning of the novel to al-Sayyeda Zaynab, the mosque of the granddaughter of the Prophet in Cairo, reflects the writer's respect for Eastern values and spirituality. It is believed in Egyptian popular culture that al-Sayyeda Zaynab has the power to offer help at times of crisis, to protect people, and to respond to prayers. However, though the overall message in the novel seems to stress the materiality of the West and to celebrate the spirituality of the East, there is Muhsin's reservations about the disintegration of the ideals of the East due to the influence of Western civilization. In the East the epitome of heroism for the younger generation is Mussolini (al-Hakim 191). The problem does not lie in the gap between the West and the East but rather in the domination of modernism which has led to WWI and the tensions in the interwar era where a figure like Mussolini is associated with power and future dreams of glory. Fascism at the time was one means of dealing with the inner conflicts of modernism. The rise of fascist ideology represented a threat to the liberal environment where the values of Western civilization may survive. Along the same lines, *Memoirs of a Scholarship Student* adopts a critical tone, though in a comic way, in its description of the West. In general, the British are seen in the book as difficult to deal with on the human level because of their silence and their strict rules of privacy.

The economic situation in Europe after WWI is seen in the two texts, *A Sparrow from the East* and *Memoirs of a Scholarship Student* as severely affecting people's lives. In *A Sparrow from the East*, the economic difficulties France had to deal with after the Great War forced the young people to work for long hours in return for very little, made it impossible for older people such as Muhsin's landlord to find jobs, and required young women such as Mademoiselle Suzie to leave their hometowns and move to Paris looking for a source of income (al-Hakim 28-9). Awad is equally aware of the challenges Europe is facing in the interwar era. He comments on Hitler's annexation of Czechoslovakia in a conversation with an Englishman, though the English rarely discuss politics, saying that Chamberlain should have attacked Germany and forsaken the policy of appeasement (Awad 110-1). Therefore, the three texts present the dark aspects of Western civilization at the time. The three characters through whose eyes the Egyptian reader sees the West do not place themselves in the slot designed for them by the West or by Postcolonial theorists. They are neither the angry violent fighters Fanon writes about nor are they the backward lazy eccentric inhabitants of these exotic places Orientalists describe as Said postulates. In

addition, they are grounded and clear about their cultural identity and are not trapped in Bhabha's Third Space.

The three characters in the three texts represent points of contact with the West within the project of modernization in Egypt. The project of modernizing Egypt started with Muhammad Ali's decision and responded to political needs at the time. The gap between Egypt and the West, which became apparent and dangerous with the French invasion of Egypt in 1798, led to what is known in Arabic as the *Nahdah* (the awakening) (Patel 13). Organizing education missions was one of the means of establishing contacts with the West and therefore contributing to bringing about modernization along European lines. The students and officials sent abroad were chosen by Muhammad Ali himself and the progress reports describing their performance were addressed to him (al-Tahtawi 297). Muhammad Ali also sent letters to the students in France encouraging them to be serious and studious (al-Tahtawi 295). Therefore, the voice in *A Paris Profile* may speak for the educated section of the Egyptian society at the time and for the head of state as well. The book may also be seen as providing a formula for modernization that comprises institutional and legal reform, devising a tax system, and development of a political structure based upon an institution that allows the people to have a say. Later, a Parliamentary system, though members are appointed not elected, is instated in Egypt in 1829 under Muhammad Ali called *Majlis al-Mashoura* (Council of Consultancy) (Awad, *Tarikh*, 8). Muhsin and Awad belong to a later stage where education has already been established as an aspect of modernity in Egypt and a university along the lines of European universities has been opened in Cairo and where the modern predicament has already been an issue of investigation after the Great War. Middle class families as well as the aristocracy viewed education as important. Muhsin's family sent him to France to pursue graduate studies, like al-Hakim himself, and Awad received a university scholarship. Both writers belong to the Egyptian middle class in general. Attar questions Muhsin's role as representative of all Egyptians and claims that little is known about him in the novel (92). The issue of representation is difficult to discuss as there is no set of criteria that would be used to determine if a character is representative of his nation or his culture. Therefore, the same question would be raised with reference to all characters in all literary texts. However, there is enough evidence in the novel that Muhsin stands for a number of aspects in Egyptian culture. On the political level, he is part of the struggle against the British occupation. On the social level, he belongs to the Egyptian upper middle class. His father is a judge; a government official whose financial status, like all government employees, depends upon his position. Though this is the case, he sticks to the law and rules against the wishes of British officials at the risk of losing his job. The financial issue is considered by his mother but she also realizes that it is much more important for her husband to rule as the law dictates (al-Hakim 36). Awad comes from an upper Egyptian village and like many Egyptians at the time he moves to Cairo for university education. The large number of grantees Awad meets on the ship heading to Europe and the older students he meets in Paris and in London reflects a general tendency in Egypt at the time to maintain academic

links with Europe. Another aspect worthy of attention is that the grantees come from different cities and governorates in Egypt, which shows the spread of higher education though there was only one university in the country. Families would send their children, male and female alike, to Cairo to receive university education. The journey to Europe in al-Hakim and Awad reveal aspects of the crisis Modernism has faced after WWI.

CONCLUSION

The three Egyptian texts, al-Tahtawi's *A Paris Profile*, al-Hakim's*A Sparrow from the East*, and Awad's *Memoirs of a Scholarship Student* do not present a confrontation between East and West. Though the three texts address the Egyptian reader, being written in Arabic, they do not place themselves as political polemics presenting the West as just the colonizer or the schemer. Egypt enjoyed cultural and academic connections with both France and England and was not just a satellite country adopting the language and the culture of the colonizer. As a matter of fact, Egypt kept Arabic as its official language in spite of the existence of well-established foreign schools and a large number of foreign communities throughout the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth. This allowed for the evaluation, discussion and openness seen in the three texts, which is evidence enough of independence of thought and worldview. Hence, the tenets of Postcolonial theories are irrelevant to the analysis and understanding of Egyptian literature.

References:

Abdelmalek, K & Al-Kahla, M. (2011) *Sourat Uroppa fi Al-Adab Al-Arabi Al-Hadeeth mn Taha Husayn Ila Tayyeb Saleh* (*Image of Europe in Modern Arabic Literature from Taha Husayn to Tayyeb Saleh*), Madarek, Beirut.

Abu-Zayd, N. (2000) "The Image of Europe in Modern Egyptian Narrative". In Theo D'Haen and Patricia Krus (eds.) *Colonizer and Colonized*. Amsterdam, Rodopi B.V., Atlanta CA, pp. 627-643.

Al-Hakim, T. (1985) *A Sparrow from the East* (*Usfour mn Alsharq)*, Maktabet Masr, Cairo.

Allam M., Luqa A. & Badawy A. (1993) "Introduction". *A Paris Profile* (*Takhlis al Ibriz fi Talkhis Bariz*), *Al-Hayaa Al-Masreya Al-Amma llketab*, Cairo, pp.3-56.

Al-Moawash (1998) *Sourat Al-Gharb fi Al-Rewaya Al-Arabiyya* (*Image of the West in the Arabic Novel*), Moassaet Al-Rehab Al-Hadeetha Lltaba wa Al-Nashr, Beirut.

Al-Tahtawi, R. R. (1993) *A Paris Profile* (*Takhlis al Ibriz fi Talkhis Bariz*), *Al-Hayaa Al-Masreya Al-Amma llketab*, Cairo.

Attar, S. (2010) *Debunking the Myth of Colonization: The Arabs and Europe*, University Press of America, Lanham.

Awad, L. (2001) *Memoirs of a Scholarship Student (Mozakerat Taleb Be'atha*), Ketab al-Helal, Cairo.

--- (1983) *Tarikh al-Fikral-Masry al-Hadeeth* (*History of Egyptian Modern Thought*), Vol. 2, *Al-Hayaa Al-Masreya Al-Amma llketab*, Cairo.

Bhabha, Homi, (1994) *The Location of Culture*, Routledge, London & New York.

Chakrabarti, S. (2012) "Moving Beyond Edward Said: Homi Bhabha and the Problem of Postcolonial Representation", *Interdisciplinary Political and Cultural Journal*, Vol. 14, No. 1, pp 5-21.

El-Enany, R. (2006) *Arab Representations of the Occident: East-West Encounters in Arabic Fiction*, Routledge, New York.

El-Gemeiy, A. (2005) "Educating Egypt", http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/Archive/2005/766/sc2.htmJune 6, 2019.

Fahlander, F. (2007) "Third Space Encounters: Hybridity, Mimicry and Interstitial Practice", in Per Cornell & Fredrik Fahlander (eds.), *Encounters/Materialities/Confrontations: Archaeologies of Social Space and Interaction*, Cambridge Scholars Press, Newcastle, pp. 15-41.

Fanon, Frantz, (1963) *The Wretched of the Earth*, Translated by Constance Farrington, Grove Weidenfeld, New York.

Forster, E. M. (2011) *A Passage to India*, Hodder & Stoughton; Digital original edition.

Gordimer, N. (2012) *My Son's Story*, Picador, New York.

Mondal, A. A. (2003) *Nationalism and Post-colonial Identity: Culture and Ideology in India and Egypt*, Routledge Curzon, New York.

Morison, T. (1998) *Beloved*, Plume Books, New York.

Patel, A. (2013) Arab Nahdah: The Making of the Intellectual and Humanist Movement, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh.

Said, E. W (1979) *Orientalism*, Vintage Books, New York.

Salih, T. (2009) Season of Migration to the North, NYRB Classics, New York.

Tannous, N. (2008) *Sourat Al-Gharb fi Al-Adab Al-Arabi Al-Moaser* (*Image of the West in Contemporary Arabic Literature*), Dar Al-Manhal, Beirut.