

*Anti-Coloniality in Ali Ahmad Bakatheer's Mismar Juha and Imberatoriyya fil Mazad<sup>1</sup>*

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**Abstract**

Ali Ahmad Bakatheer (1910-1969) wrote a number of plays which dealt with some of the nation's pressing issues. One of these issues is colonialism. He believed that the theatre can be used to address these issues, enlighten the masses to the dire consequences of colonialism, and awaken within them the call for liberation and anti-colonialism. Two of these plays serve to show the theme of anti-coloniality in his plays and are written in two different styles showing his originality and versatility. Those two plays, *Mismar Juha* (Juha's Nail) and *Imberatoriyya fil Mazad* (An Empire in Auction), address the issues of colonialism and awakening people to take an anti-colonialist stand. *Mismar Juha* addresses, in a comic matrix, the pretext the colonizer uses to enter, and then occupy a country, which is in this case, the Suez Canal, the nail they used to take over the whole country. While in *Imberatoriyya fil Mazad*, Bakatheer envisions the fall of the British Empire after the imagined "Delhi Conference", which actually took place as the Bandung Conference (1955) three years after the play was written. While *Mismar Juha* calls the Egyptians to realize the pretext the British use to justify their colonization of Egypt using a historical anecdote to comment on a contemporary issue, *Imberatoriyya fil Mazad* imagines the rise of the Afro-Asiatic nations to take an anti-colonial stand and free themselves of the yoke of colonialism.

Keywords: Bakatheer, Ali Ahmad; Anti-Coloniality; *Mismar Juha*; *Imberatoriyya fil Mazad*.

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## I. Introduction

Ali Ahmad Bakatheer (1910-1969), the Yemenite writer who lived most of his life in Egypt, wrote a number of plays which dealt with some of the nation's pressing issues. One of these issues is colonialism. He believed that the theatre can be used to address these issues, enlighten the masses to the dire consequences of colonialism, and awaken within them the call for liberation and anti-colonialism.

Bakatheer was born in Indonesia. He lived in Adan, Yemen, and in Saudi Arabia. He traveled to Egypt in 1934. He wrote poetry, and was influenced by Ahmad Shawqi,<sup>1</sup> and then he moved to write drama and novel. He was close to Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966) of the Muslim Brotherhood, and was almost arrested because of that in the nineteen forties. He continued publishing in the Ekhwan gazettes, *Al-Ekhwan Al-Muslimun* and *Ad-Da'wa*, until 1954.<sup>2</sup>

He became famous when the renowned Egyptian singer Umm Kulthum chose his novel *Salamah Al-Qiss* (Salamah the Priest) to turn into a cinematic film in 1944. In 1947, he met Zaki Tuleimat and Yusif Wahba, director of the National Egyptian Company for Acting and Music then. A year later he wrote *Sir Al-Hakim bi Amr Allah* (Secret of Al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah) which was acted by the National Egyptian Company. It was rerun in its 1953 season, and again for three seasons, 1953-1956.<sup>3</sup>

Not many of his plays were staged, and his relationship with the National Theatre ended with the end of the second run of his play *Mismar Juha* (Juha's Nail) in 1957. Few of his plays continued to be staged in other theaters, but when the number of staged plays, four from 1948 to 1957, and another four from 1985 to 1966,<sup>4</sup> is compared to the sum of his plays which is about one hundred of various lengths, then it is clear that he did not manage to have many of his plays staged. Some critics suggest that he was neglected because he was pro-Muslim Brotherhood when the regime was pro-Communist former USSR. None of the critics who wrote about Bakatheer celebrating his achievements referred to him influencing any other playwright during his lifetime or later on.

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<sup>1</sup> Ali Ahmad Bakatheer (n. d.), *Fan al-Masrahiyya min khilal Tajarubi ash-Shakhsiyya* (The Art of Theatre Through My Theatrical Experiences) (Cairo: Maktabat Misr), 5. Hence forward referred to as *FM*.

<sup>2</sup> Abeer Salamah (n. d.), *Al-khurug 'an al-nas, fi 'ilaqat Bakatheer bilmasrah ilmasri* (Departure from the text, On Bakatheer's relationship with the theatre), Bakatheer Website, retrieved from <http://misrelmahrosa.gov.eg/UserDir/pdf/paksiir.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

Bakatheer believes that a dramatist may also be a nationalist and this is the reason he gives for choosing historical materials for the plots of many of his plays. Through history, he claims, he can show and comment on the present problems that afflict the modern society, especially the Arab society under colonialism. The fact that he uses folklore, legend and history to critique colonialism makes him emblematic of the generation that followed the prominent Egyptian writer Tawfiq Al-Hakeem. He also states that he began writing comedy only after he realized the political dangers that threaten our Arab nation, especially colonialism which controls the fates of people. His anger against colonialists and their Arab tails lead him to begin writing comedies.<sup>5</sup> This combination of comedy with serious political argument could be described as avant garde rather than a defect as some critics may claim. It was also his way of getting his revenge at the colonizer.<sup>6</sup>

Bakatheer wrote around seventy political one act plays which he published in different magazines and newspapers and then in a book, *Political Theatre*<sup>7</sup>, in addition to many other plays. Two of these plays serve to show the theme of anti-coloniality in his plays and are written in two different styles showing his originality and versatility. Those two plays, *Mismar Juha* (Juha's Nail) and *Imberatoriyya fil Mazad* (An Empire in Auction), address the issues of colonialism and awakening people to take an anti-colonialist stand. *Mismar Juha* addresses, in a comic matrix, the pretext the colonizer uses to enter, and then occupy a country, which is in this case, the Suez Canal, the nail they used to take over the whole country. While in *Imberatoriyya fil Mazad*, which, ironically, was censored and banned from production in 1953, (to which Bakatheer objected in a letter sent to Anwar As-Sadat on 20 Feb, 1953 in which he said, “this nationalist patriotic play addresses the disadvantages of colonialism artistically in a comic way especially in this era, the era of the glorious revolution”,<sup>8</sup>) after the revolution foretold in *Mismar Juha*,<sup>9</sup> Bakatheer envisions the fall of the British Empire after the imagined “Delhi Conference”, which actually took place as the Bandung Conference (1955) three years after the play was written, a conference which demonstrated a common front against colonial rule and demanded rapid decolonization.<sup>10</sup> The Third World nations decided to free themselves and sell the indebted dying British Empire to the British themselves showing benevolence the colonizer did not show them before. Both plays call for action against the colonizer, and thus are anti-colonial.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> *FM*, 39, 40, 44, 27, 28.

<sup>6</sup> Bankole Ajibabi Omotoso (1972), “Ali Ahmed Ba-Kathir, A Contemporary Conservative Arab Writer – An Appraisal of His Main Plays and Novels” (phd diss, Edinburgh University, 78.

<sup>7</sup> *FM*, 28.

<sup>8</sup> Salamah, endnote #26.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>10</sup> Dietmar Rothermund (2006), *The Routledge Companion to Decolonization* (London and New York: Routledge), 47.

<sup>11</sup> “One of the ironies of postcolonial studies is that colonial discourse analysis began with several theorists who studied colonialism in the Arab world: Albert Memmi (in Tunisia), Frantz Fanon (in Algeria), Edward Said (in the Levant). However, the work of those critics led to the development, in the 1980's and 1990's, of a sophisticated theoretical apparatus that rarely takes Arabic literary and cultural production into

Bakatheer's plays are influenced by his readings of Ahmed Shawqi and William Shakespeare. His nationalist feelings were keen and found echoes in Shawqi's plays. Some of his characters, like Juha, resemble Shakespeare's fools, like Feste in *Twelfth Night*, which he translated parts of into Arabic.<sup>12</sup> Like Shakespeare's fools, Juha uses his wit and humor to save himself more than once. Echoes of Shylock can also be seen in the Jewish characters in *Imberatoriyya fil Mazad*. Therefore, it is not odd that Bakatheer uses his plays to counter colonialism and utilizes the theatre to awaken people to take a stand against the British occupier.

## II. *Mismar Juha* (1949)<sup>13</sup>

Bakatheer responds to the suffering of his people at the hands of the colonizers and the anger it causes in him by making Juha and other characters in this play symbols of the duality of the colonizer and colonized in the entire Arab world.<sup>14</sup> Zaki Tuleimat quotes Bakatheer: "the nail is the pretext, or cause the colonizer hammers in every country he colonizes to justify his stay. The nail in Egypt is the Suez Canal!"<sup>15</sup> Bakatheer uses Baghdad's occupation in the thirteenth century to represent British colonialism. Juha works for the occupiers as a judge even as he attacks the state. In the play, the perfidy of colonialism is represented in the ruse of the nail, and in exposing the ruse Juha challenges colonialism.

The story of Juha and his famous nail is well-known in Arab folklore. Juha sells his house on the condition that he keeps a nail in the wall and that he may check on it periodically. The credulous buyer agrees and Juha visits the nail annoying the buyer to the degree that the latter gives the house back to Juha for nothing. This is roughly the outline of Bakatheer's plot. However, he makes radical changes to the story to make it more suitable for his purposes.

The story as it is is problematic because Juha works for the colonizer as Qathi al-Quthat (Judge of Judges, or Chief Judge). So, a conniving figure (who symbolizes the English) invades a merchant's home through a ruse. Juha gives his house away to Hammad, his nephew, who in his turn sells it to a merchant with the condition of keeping a nail in the wall. Juha, as chief judge, was able to move the people to revolt against the colonizer by exposing the colonizer's pretext through the law suit between Hammad and the merchant.<sup>16</sup>

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account." Waïl S. Hassan (2002), "Postcolonial Theory and Modern Arabic Literature: Horizons of Application," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 33, no. 1, 45.

The analysis of Arabic literature through and after colonialization will certainly shed new light on it and open horizons for new studies of this literature.

<sup>12</sup> *FM*, 8.

<sup>13</sup> Ali Ahmad Bakatheer (n. d.), *Mismar Juha* (Juha's Nail) (Cairo: Maktabat Misr). All quotations are from this edition and will be given parenthetically henceforward. The translation from Arabic into English is the researcher's.

<sup>14</sup> Zaki Tuleimat (n. d.), "We Are All Juha", in *Mismar Juha* (Juha's Nail) (Cairo: Maktabat Misr), 5, 6.

<sup>15</sup> Tuleimat, 7.

<sup>16</sup> *FM*, 56.

The play has two plots. The main plot is political: Juha's struggle with the colonizer; the sub-plot is social: Juha's struggle with his shrewish wife. Both plots are resolved at the end: the colonizer is forced to leave, and Juha's wife is forced into reconciliation with her husband.<sup>17</sup>

The events of the play take place in Al-Kufa and Baghdad sometime in the past when Iraq was under occupation. It opens showing the Kufa mosque where Juha preaches as Sheikh. From the beginning, Juha's negative attitude towards the state is clear as described in the words of his enemies who work for the colonizer: "Abou Safwan: May Allah curse him ... he receives his money from the state with his hand then he instigates people against it with his tongue." (9) Abou Safwan and his followers intend to try to expose Juha as an impostor:

Juha: (looks around at the people with the rosary in his hand then he looks at those in the front row scrutinizing them and smiles broadly then coughs after people quieten and says) I see new faces never seen in our gatherings before, did they think, I wonder, that we are having a feast?

(People wink at each other smiling).

Obad: (embarrassed by the people's looks at his followers) Don't we have the right sayyidi al-sheikh to listen as others to your preaching? (11)

Juha understands what those three intend and plans to foil their attempts and he actually succeeds. Abou Safwan, another sheikh, proposes to debate with Juha to expose the latter's ignorance. Juha agrees pretending to be afraid of debating, thus dragging Abu Safwan where he wants him to be:

Abu Safwan: Whom Allah prefers, a thankful rich or a patient poor?

.....  
Juha: The thankful rich.

Abu Safwan: How do you prove it?

Juha: Because he doesn't exist these days. There are more thankful poor than troubles, and their number is known only by Allah.

(Laughter) (16)

Juha's intelligence and humour is established in the onset of the play even before he begins to speak immediately recognizing Abu Safwan and his followers as colonialist lackeys and foils their attempts. However, things do not go well always.

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<sup>17</sup> *FM*, 37.

The Wali arrives and reprimands Juha for his humour in the mosque where people should show respect and veneration. Juha's humour and intelligence does not help him this time. The Wali, who works for the colonizer, seems to have kept an eye on him and is aware of his attempts to instigate people against colonization:

The Wali: What did you say in the Eid speech, you head of corruption?

Juha: Head of corruption! Allah forbid, sir ... this is an honour a simpler preacher like me does not deserve no matter how he corrupts, only those high officials deserve it as they grew tyrannical and corrupted the country!

.....  
The Wali: Shut up ... by Allah if it were not your old age I wouldn't have only deposed you. And if the ruler knew what you did he would have you beheaded!

Juha: (quietly) the ruler! What do you mean by the ruler? Our great Sultan Allah supports him? Or the one his soldiers occupy the country? (27, 30)

Angered even more, the Wali orders Juha to be imprisoned. Juha is happy because this means that he will escape his wife's fury. (30) Hearing this, the Wali orders him to be sent to face the wrath of his wife.

The first act shows Juha's humour and intelligence which serves to save him from prison although it does not save him from losing his job. It also shows the conflict between Juha and the public on the one hand, and the colonizer and his followers, like the Wali, Obad, Abou Safwan, and the rest, on the other.<sup>18</sup>

Act two moves to Juha's simple home in Al-Kufa. Juha is afraid of his wife who rebukes him for losing his job. She is also worried that no one will marry her daughter now since he is without a job. (43) Juha recommends his nephew, Hammad, as a suitor, but his wife objects because he is a farmer. (43) Hammad arrives and suggests that his uncle should move to the countryside and work in farming, (45) but Um Al-Ghusn tells Juha that he will bring disaster to all like the last time he worked as a farmer and brought locust. (46) Juha is displeased with this, no sooner his wife speaks than the bells strike warning of the approach of locust (47) and the act ends.

The act juxtaposes Juha of Act One, the humorous intelligent man who manipulates all around him, with a new Juha, helpless before his shrewish wife. The plot goes parallel to the main plot and will be resolved only after the main plot does.

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<sup>18</sup> Muhammad Abdulla Husein (1998), *Thahirat al-Inthithar fil Masrah An-Nathri fi Misr Until 1973* (The Phenomenon of Waiting in The Egyptian Prose Theatre Until 1973) (Cairo: The Egyptian General Book Board), 425.

In Act Three, Juha has become Chief Judge in Baghdad. As soon as the act begins, we see Juha confused: “Allah I’m confused: am I blessed and should thank, or in an ordeal and should ask for forgiveness?” (50) Juha takes the Glorious Quran, opens it and reads this verse: “And he/ Amongst you that turns to them/ (For friendship) is of them”. (Surat Al-Ma’ida, 54) Juha is facing a moral dilemma: he spent his life so far trying to defend his country and people against the colonizer, and now he works for the same colonizer.

In the middle of his thoughts, Abdul-Qawi visits him. Abdul-Qawi is the foreign ruler’s clerk, but, like Juha, his true loyalty is to his people and country. He tells Juha that the Sultan wants to meet him in secret. Juha is embarrassed as to how he could meet the Sultan while working for the colonizer. (57)

From the dialogue between them, we know that the farmers rose against the Wali after the locust invasion and that Juha and Hammad, his nephew, led this rising. (59) The Wali, however, did not know that Juha was working with Hammad. So, Juha insured the fulfillment of the farmers and rid the country of the reign of the minister Alqama who oppressed the farmers. (59)

Hammad arrives and tells Juha that he has found a new plan to help them drive the colonizer out of the country. As he unfolds the details of the plan to his uncle, we find out that Juha has thought of the same plan. (76) They agree and swear to carry out the plan:

Juha: Give me your hand (he takes Hammad’s hand) swear by Allah, Hammad, that you will go with me on this path until the end despite all the harm and oppression that may befall us.

Hammad: (smiling) And will you marry me Maimoona afterwards?

Juha: Yes.

Hammad: I swear by Allah. (76-77)

Act three prepares the ground for the plan which will result in driving the colonizer out of the country. It also further develops the struggles in the play: the struggle between the colonized and the colonizer, and struggle between Juha, Maimoona, and Hammad on the one hand, and Um Al-Ghusn who never stops trying to find her daughter a rich husband, on the other. Both struggles are against oppression, when universal, external, the colonizer’s, and the other more domestic, Um Al-Ghusn’s.<sup>19</sup>

Act Four takes place in Diwan al-Qatha’, the courthouse, where Juha and his two assistant judges preside. The foreign ruler and his clerk Abdul-Qawi are also present. Hammad and his adversary, Ghanim, enter. The foreign ruler wants the case which lasted seventy days to end, (99) and suggests reconciliation. (89)

The two adversaries enter and as soon as Hammad pronounces his refusal of reconciliation, voices of the crowds rise calling, “Remove your nail, Hammad!” (90) The foreign ruler is angered and those who shouted are sent out of the courthouse. (90) He also says that what Hammad did led rioters to instigate the masses. (96)

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 432.

When Hammad and Ghanim return, the people in the court have already begun to realize the greater significance of this case and they start calling out: “Owner of the nail, remove it,/ From the home of the free, it is not yours!” (99) The foreign ruler accuses Juha of orchestrating the whole thing. Juha replies that he only spent seventy days in the case, while other cases took seventy years and are still unsolved. (99)

The call for reconciliation is repeated, but Hammad refuses still. Finally, at the climax of the play, Juha seizes the chance and cries out: “Damn you, you see the small nail and you don’t see the big one! This is its owner among you ... tell him to remove it or remove with your own hands.” (103) The foreign ruler sends Juha to prison and orders Hammad and Ghanim to be brought before him dead or alive. (103)

Muhammad Abdulla Husein argues that there is a clear similarity between the struggle over the nail with the struggle with the colonizer over the Suez Canal and the 1936 treaty. The Suez Canal is the nail Britain wants to keep in Egypt to justify its presence. He also argues that Bakatheer might be influenced by Brecht who uses a historical incident to comment on contemporary issues in his Epic dramas.<sup>20</sup>

In Act Five, Juha is in jail teased and tortured by Obad and Hureiq whom he used to ridicule in Al-Kufa. (111) The foreign ruler enters and threatens Juha with death. Juha says that he is not afraid because he hopes that his death will be the death of colonization. (116) A letter is delivered to the foreign ruler announcing that all colonization troops are to withdraw within six months. (125-126) The army and then the people revolt against the colonizer who withdraws instantly and Juha is released from prison. (132)

Back to Juha’s new humble home where the events of Act Six take place. Abdul-Qawi plans to have Maimoona marry Hammad and tricks Um Al-Ghusn into believing that he wants her for himself. The play ends with Hammad marrying Maimoona, and Juha reconciled to Um Al-Ghusn, as if Bakatheer wants to say that all types of colonizations are over.<sup>21</sup> While the main plot ends in Act Five, the sub-plot ends in Act Six the trick by which Abdul-Qawi ends the feud between Um Al-Ghusn and Juha, Maimoona and Hammad is alluded to at the end of this Act.

The play is clearly anti-colonial and is also almost a prophesy because it was written in 1949, three years before the 1952 revolution which led to the liberation of Egypt from colonization.<sup>22</sup> It also clearly shows Shakespeare’s influence on Bakatheer, an influence he himself acknowledges.<sup>23</sup> The mixture of comedy and serious action in the play, the two plots running parallel to each other, and the stock caricature characters, like the Wali, Abu Safwan and Obad and Bakatheer’s ridicule of them, bring back to mind plays like *Twelfth Night* and *The Merchant of Venice* which Bakatheer read and was influenced by.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 433, 435.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 440.

<sup>22</sup> Abdullah At-Tantawi (n. d.), “Al-Masrah As-Siyasi lada Bakatheer” (Political Theatre of Bakatheer), *Ar-Rafid*, n.p.

<sup>23</sup> *FM*, 7.

<sup>24</sup> *FM*, 8, 49.



### III. *Imberatoriyya fil Mazad (1952)*<sup>25</sup>

On the title page of the later additions of this play, Bakatheer writes: the Delhi Conference this play prophesied took place as the Bandung Conference (1955), three years after the play was written, as stated earlier. Unlike *Mismar Juha*, the play is purely the product of Bakatheer's imagination. It predicts the fall of the British Empire through depicting the relationship between the families of Labour M.P. John Toilman, and their revolutionary son Henry, and Conservative M.P. Sir Edward Stately.

This play shows clearly Bakatheer's animosity not only towards British colonialism, but also towards Jews. He clearly stated this in the speech he delivered in the Arab Writers' Conference held in Baghdad in April 1969 and published in *Al-Adab Al-Beirutiyah* (May 1969). His feelings are the result of the establishment of the state of Israel which was opposed by almost all Arabs and caused feelings of hatred towards Jews. He gave expression to this in many plays the first of which is *Shylock Aj-Jadeed* (The New Shylock) in 1944. He wrote many plays expressing these feelings, including *Imberatoriyya fil Mazad*.

The play aims at satirizing the British Empire through characters representatives of both leading parties, as well as Sir Circle (Churchill whose lumpy body is ridiculed for being 'circular'), the British Prime Minister. The action begins in Toilman's house where a party is being prepared for his marriage anniversary. His friend and rival from the Conservative party Stately is invited. Toilman tells his son Henry that the Labour Party won two circles. Henry accurately tells his resenting father that the Labour Party will not win because the "upper hand", i.e. the Jews in Britain, do not want the Labour Party to win. (5) From the beginning of the play, Bakatheer emphasizes the role the Jews play in British politics, a point that will be emphasized repeatedly again in the play.

Toilman is satirized for being a miser and want to buy a secondhand suit from a tailor, Gordon, and wants his Jewish friend, Cohen, to help him get the suit for the lowest price possible. (8-9) However, he twists the facts to play the role of a philanthropist:

Gordon: It [the suit] is very cheap, sir.

Toilman: No ... we M.P.'s must share the hardships of the people, so that we become models.

Cohen: Do you see, Mr. Gordon? Britain has the right to be proud to have a great M.P. like Mr. Toilman.

Toilman: Not at all, Mr. Cohen. In fact, all Labour MP's are like that. (10)

Clearly, Cohen mocks Toilman's feigned populism which is only a cover for his miserliness, but the latter misses the point entirely which makes the satire more poignant.

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<sup>25</sup> Ali Ahmad Bakatheer (n. d.), *Imberatoriyya fil Mazad* (An Empire on Sale) (Cairo: Maktabat Misr). All quotations are from this edition and will be given parenthetically henceforward. The translation from Arabic into English is the researcher's.

Toilman also argues with his wife over buying cake and sweets for the party and tells her that her tea is enough. (21) Henry buys these things but Toilman is still angry as he considers his son's money to be his. (23) His miserliness is emphasized more when the fat Stately sits at a chair and Toilman asks for his chair to be replaced:

Stately: (moves in his chair and it creaks loudly) I think this chair is weaker than the first.

.....  
Toilman: Don't worry my friend ... if you insist on wrecking the chair, then do ... it's an only chair.

Stately: An only chair?

Toilman: Yes, he has no brothers to moan him, unlike the other which has five.  
(34-35)

But this gives Stately the chance to ridicule Toilman and accuse him of being a bad politician. (35) The argument turns into a fight when the news of the victory of the Conservative Party arrives and the act ends with the two on the ground shouting "Hail, Circle" and "Down with Circle". (44) Muhammad Abdulla Husein argues that this fall symbolizes the fall of the British Empire.<sup>26</sup> Bakatheer depicts Toilman as a miser who brings about comedy as well as shows the conflict between the two leading parties in the weakened British Empire after WWII.<sup>27</sup>

Act Two takes place in Stately's mansion in a London suburb. He is having a party celebrating the victory of his party. The guest of honour is Circle. The act introduces Circle as a Zionist drunkard. It also introduces the Delhi Conference resolution which leads to the auctioning of the British Empire.

Henry criticizes Circle and calls him a foolish vain person who believes that he will save the Empire. He also adds that he might be the one who will finish it off. (52) Once again, his speech comes true as the victory of his party will coincide with the fall of the Empire.

General Robert, General of the Middle East troops, announces to Circle that the Delhi Conference decided to liquidate the British Empire. Circle responds with ridicule and drinks more wine:

Circle: (mocking) Is that true, General Robert?

Robert: Yes, Mr. President.

Circle: And that's why you flew from Egypt to us?

Robert: Yes.

Circle: You wanted to cover up your failure by making up this story?

Robert: Sir, I didn't make this up.

.....  
Circle: (interrupting) We have nothing to do with the Delhi Conference or any other! We have to finish with Egypt! (turns to the bar) Damn you, you kept me from drinking! (drinks several glasses nervously)  
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<sup>26</sup> Husein, 323.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 318, 321.

Send all our naval fleets and air force to Egypt! Destroy its cities and villages with bombardment and bombs [...] no safety for Israel as long as Egypt exists. (67-77, 69)

The act ends with Circle collapsing drunk. Abdulhakeem Az-Zubeidy states that Circle's attitude is ironic because he neither feels the dangers around him, nor the imminent dissolution of the Empire.<sup>28</sup>

The events of Act Three take place in Stately's country Mansion. Both the Toilmans and Stately's are there. The parliament session is adjourned because Russia supports the Delhi Conference. Henry says that the USA will support the conference as well:

Henry: Russia's support of the conference made me certain the USA will do to.

Stately: Is that a thing to say?

Henry: Wait Sir Stately, let me explain it to you. The USA has two choices: supporting the conference like the other nations or war. Will it choose war to save Britain which all the countries of the world decided it should be liquidated? (78)

The news arrives that the USA supports the conference and Henry is right as usual.(80) Meanwhile, Circle enters disguised as a woman because rebels have taken over the government through revolution. The rebels arrive at Stately's mansion and arrest both Stately and Toilmans. Toilmans tells them that Circle is hiding and is arrested. (89-90) Toilmans's miserliness continues even after he is arrested:

Toilmans: No, no, take my wallet.

Gertrude: You might need money there [in prison].

Toilmans: No, the prisoner does not have to spend anything. (92)

He is too miserly to give his safe key to his wife fearing that she might spend money. He bids his wife farewell with these words: "Goodbye, Gertrude. Dear, spend only as much as you need." (93)

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<sup>28</sup> Abdulhakeem Az-Zubeidy (n. d.), "Fil Mufaraqa in Imberatoriyya fil Mazad" (On Irony in Imberatoriyya fil Mazad), retrieved from <http://www.odabasham.net/print.php?sid=1959&cat>.

In Act Four, we see Toilmán and Stately in prison. All the possessions of the former British government officials are confiscated to enable the British to buy the island which was auctioned along with all its military assets. Selling the naval force is an ironic twist on the Empire which once ruled the seas.<sup>29</sup> The Third Block, as Bakatheer calls the Afro-Asiatic countries which finally gained their independence, refused the sale of the British isles to anyone other than the British themselves. This causes bitterness in Toilmán and Stately:

Toilmán: What a shame and what a disgrace! The countries which were once our colonies decide our fate today.

Henry: We are lucky that the Third Block exists. Without it, the British people and the people of the Empire would have become slaves for the Americans and Russians.

Stately: What did it do?

Henry: It objected our sale fiercely, and said that this violates the Delhi Charter which forbade colonization in all its forms. (106)

As far fetched as this is, it expresses Bakatheer's vision which came true three years after the play was written. However, the Bandung Conference did not achieve such results.<sup>30</sup> Fa'iq Mustafa Ahmad says that Bakatheer offers an idealistic solution to national issues as if the solution fulfills the dreams of the middle class to which he belongs, and which ensures the rise of this class without any future risks.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Husein, 329.

<sup>30</sup> Yet, the world today is still under the control of neo-colonialism, which manifests itself in the guise capitalism, globalization, and cultural imperialism to influence a country, in lieu of either direct military control or indirect political control, i.e. imperialism and hegemony. See Jean-Paul Sartre (2001), *Colonialism and Neocolonialism*, trans. Azzedine Haddour, Steve Brewer and Terry McWilliams (London and NY: Routledge).

<sup>31</sup> Sami Khashaba (1972), *Qathaya Mu'asira fil Masrah* (Recent Issues in Theatre) (Baghdad: Ministry of Mass Media), 30.

#### IV. Conclusion

Anti-colonialism is the political struggle of colonized people against the specific ideology and practice of colonialism. It signifies the point at which the various forms of opposition become articulated as a resistance to the operations of colonialism in political, economic and cultural institutions. It emphasizes the need to reject colonial power and restore local control.<sup>32</sup> Thus, Bakatheer's plays are clearly anti-colonial as they are cultural expressions of the desire to gain independence.

While *Mismar Juha* calls the Egyptians to realize the pretext the British uses to justify their colonization of Egypt using a historical anecdote to comment on a contemporary issue, *Imberatoriyya fil Mazad* imagines the rise of the Afro-Asiatic nations to take an anti-colonial stand and free themselves of the yoke of colonialism. These two plays are unique in that one predicted the decolonization of Egypt, while the other the Bandung Conference which led to the decolonization of many colonized countries worldwide.

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<sup>32</sup> Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (2007), *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* (London and New York: Routledge), 11-12.

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