

MURDER IN BAGHDĀD: A MODERN EGYPTIAN DRAMA OF AL-ḤALLĀJ BY Ṣ. 'ABD AL-ṢABŪR*

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"We are not to think of a martyr as primarily one who suffers for a cause, or who gives up his life for truth, but as a witness to the awful reality of the supernatural."¹

These words of Helen Gardner, in discussing *The Art of T. S. Eliot*, are no less apposite to the Muslim martyr Al-Ḥallāj than they are for her discussion of the figure of Becket in Eliot's play *Murder in the Cathedral*. It is of interest to students of the religious traditions that the figure of Al-Ḥallāj should engage the attention of Muslims today, particularly so when he appears as the central figure of a modern play, written by a distinguished literary figure and critic in Egypt. Like Becket, Al-Ḥallāj was a controversial figure in his own time, and subsequent interpretations of him have proved as diverse. The purpose of the present paper is chiefly to discuss the portrayal of Al-Ḥallāj in 'Abd al-Ṣabūr's play, but it will also note other aspects of the continuing interest in Al-Ḥallāj and suggest some of the literary influences that are to be seen in the play.

1.

Recent research into the times of Al-Ḥallāj has greatly illuminated the political events which dominated the trials of this mystic. If there is a received tradition about Al-Ḥallāj, it is that he was executed for saying "I am the Truth", that is, that he appeared to claim equality with God. However, the texts are not unanimous in their account of this phrase,² and a political analysis of the events behind the trial should convince us that this is a simplistic explanation of Al-Ḥallāj's condemnation and execution in 922.

Two major factors in the situation were the weakness of the Islamic Empire and the weakness of the Caliph. By the 870s of our era the Abbasid Empire had already suffered a succession of shocks, barely 120 years after the founding of the dynasty in Baghdād. In a number of areas of the Empire small semi-autonomous dynasties paying only token obedience to the Caliph had sprung up. Civil wars had already taken place, the capital had changed from Baghdād to Samarra and back to Baghdād and, as recent analyses show, there were regional economic conflicts and a serious breakdown in the central government.³ In the 870s the first major revolt against central authority took place in the area of southern Iraq, the revolt of the Negroes in the Zanj rebellion. Perhaps the most serious threat, however, was posed by the obscure group known as the Ismā'īlīs. These were Muslims who claimed allegiance to the seventh Imām in their tradition and repudiated the claims both of the more pacific Twelver Shī'īs and, of course, of Sunni Muslims. The Ismā'īlīs set up a whole system of underground agents and sought to subvert the state from within. They consisted of two groups. The Fāṭimids operating in the West captured the Tunisian citadel of Mahdia in 909 and conducted a raid on Alexandria in 919. It took two years to clear them from Egypt on that occasion

and they subsequently captured Cairo in 969 and set up a dynasty which lasted for 200 years. The eastern group was separate and was known as the Carmathians. In 905–6 they terrorised the border regions between Syria and Iraq and plundered the pilgrimage caravans. They raided Basra in 913 and 919. One result of this activity was the development of a “fear-psychosis” among the people of Baghdād, which, in part, explains the bitterness of the religious struggles at the time of Al-Ḥallāj’s trials in 909 and 921.⁴

The Caliph under whom Al-Ḥallāj was executed was Al-Muqtadir. He had assumed office in 908 upon the early death of his brother, and at the time of his accession was only 13 years old. The Caliph was obliged to rule through a regency council consisting of his mother, one of his uncles, and a number of high-ranking officers at court, chiefly the Vizier. The period was an exceptionally unstable one in terms of government and the office of Vizier changed hands no less than 15 times during the 24 years of his reign. The year 923 was thus very appropriately named “the Year of Ruination” by the historians and marked the “beginning of the end”, as the Abbasid Caliphate began to disintegrate. It succumbed to the Iranian Buyids in 946.⁵

Opposition to the teaching of Al-Ḥallāj came not only from the Court, where he was accused of being a Carmathian,⁶ but also from three groups of religious thinkers and from the canon lawyers. Al-Ḥallāj was accused by the hard-line fundamentalists, the followers of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, of heresy, that is, of making blasphemous statements. We have evidence that this group could be stirred up very easily over a number of issues⁷ and one of the canon lawyers came from this group and demanded the death penalty in 909, but was disappointed. His successor in 922 was influential in obtaining Al-Ḥallāj’s death. The second group consisted of the Shi’is, who objected to Al-Ḥallāj on the grounds that he preached total equality as far as eligibility for the office of Caliph was concerned. The Shi’is were continually lobbying for power in the Government, as “the traditional opposition party”.⁸ Finally, the Ṣūfīs rejected Al-Ḥallāj because he chose to reveal what they regarded as the secrets of the mystic way so that all could share in them. This point comes out dramatically in ‘Abd al-Ṣabūr’s play, as we shall see, when Al-Ḥallāj relinquishes the cloak traditionally worn by the Ṣūfīs in favour of an ordinary patched, or common, cloak.

2.

The playwright whose work we are considering, Ṣalah ‘Abd al-Ṣabūr, has woven many of these themes into his play in what is a very moving portrayal of Al-Ḥallāj. ‘Abd al-Ṣabūr was born in 1931 in one of the provinces of Egypt and was educated at the University of Cairo. At the time of writing this play he was literary editor of the powerful Cairo newspaper, *Al-Ahrām (The Pyramids)*, which is the organ of the ruling party. His play won an Egyptian State Prize in 1966.

Like many of his fellow Arabs ‘Abd al-Ṣabūr has been greatly influenced by Western writers. A recent bibliography of translations into Arabic shows the extent to which Arabic versions of English plays and poetry are available,⁹ and it is interesting to record that works may be available in Arabic before they are published in English.¹⁰ ‘Abd al-Ṣabūr has himself said that of Western poets he has been influenced most by T. S. Eliot,¹¹ and he has published a translation of Eliot’s *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*.¹² Eliot’s influence in the Arabic-speaking world began in 1946, when an influential article was

published in Cairo. The period of most intense discussion of his work was the late 1950s and early 1960s, as Arabs were attracted by the much freer forms of his verse, in contrast to the severe rigidity of the classical style of Arabic poetry. *Murder in the Cathedral* appeared in an Arabic translation in 1958, while other works to have been translated include *The Waste Land*, *The Hollow Men*, and *Ash Wednesday*, sometimes in more than one version.¹³

When we speak of Arab writers being influenced by their English (or French) counterparts it is important to examine what we mean by this statement. The common ground between the two groups, Arab and European, is the interpretation of human experience and events. What divides them is a fundamental difference in culture and history. We should thus not expect to find themes transported wholesale from Europe to the Middle East. What we do find is a common attempt to express insights in allusions to past history and literature and, as has been indicated, a common reaction against the formal conventions of past ages. The new verse is freer and richer, including "every variety of diction". It shows a new sensitivity to language, a new "auditory imagination".¹⁴

These remarks apply especially to *Murder in Baghdad*. We do not find in this play a repetition of the Church versus State theme that we find in Becket's confrontation with the King, for, as we have seen, the events are rather more complex. Al-Ḥallāj, one may suggest, is rather the scapegoat offered to distract the populace of Baghdād from the inadequacies of the Vizier's policies. Ḥāmid, the Vizier, appears in the chronicles as foul-mouthed and rapacious and his downfall occurs as he overreaches himself after five years in office.¹⁵ At several points in the play Al-Ḥallāj speaks of justice, condemning the actions of the Vizier, and it has been suggested that these passages reflect 'Abd al-Ṣabūr's own interest in socialism.¹⁶ The common features employed by Eliot and 'Abd al-Ṣabūr include the effective use of a chorus and a style of language, the sermon in one case, rhetoric in the other, which springs directly from the religious tradition of the author.

When the film of Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* was first shown at the Venice Film Festival some observers were wryly amused that members of the audience had come expecting a detective thriller.¹⁷ They were, one surmises, rather disappointed with the highly stylised and reflective drama that they watched. *Murder in Baghdad* is no less stylised and reflective than Eliot's drama. Unlike the majority of Arabic dramas it is set in two Acts. Whereas Eliot's drama opens with an Act wholly devoted to the motif of suffering and is directly addressed to the understanding, the scene in *Murder in Baghdad* opens with the figure of a man hanging from a tree trunk. Al-Ḥallāj is dead and three strollers enter, a merchant, a peasant and a preacher. The peasant asks the merchant whether he knows why the old man was executed, and by whom. He says that he does not but that they both might learn the details from the preacher. The merchant is in search of an interesting story that he might tell his wife,

For she loves a bit of chatter at table.¹⁸

The peasant is just curious, while the preacher would be glad

If there were a moral to his story,

A moral that would stir the emotions of the public,

For my mind is barren

And I can't find a subject

For my sermon this Friday . . .¹⁹

They decide to ask a crowd of people. The crowd, speaking in chorus, declare that they had been paid to shout 'Heretic! Heretic!' The bolder spirits had been placed in the front row, those with soft voices and the hesitant ones had been placed in the back.

But front and back,
They gave us each a pure gold dinar,
Shiny, never touched before.²⁰

Finding no satisfaction in this answer the three turn to a crowd of *Ṣūfīs*, also speaking in chorus. Through the *Ṣūfīs* the three learn that it was *Al-Ḥallāj's* hope that his words might be perpetuated by his death:

He who kills me shall enter Paradise,
For with his blade he would complete the cycle;
With the blood he draws from the veins
He would succour
The wilting tree I planted with my empty words.
Life would course through it; its branches would grow tall

And fruitful, and in times of famine, green,
Laden with fruit, regardless of seasons or time.²¹

The *Ṣūfīs* are thus implicated in his death and they say that they will go and bury his words

Bury them in the furrows that the peasants plow,
And hide them among the merchants' wares.

They will conceal them and record them

And weave them into songs and poems.²²

Finally, *Al-Ḥallāj's* close friend *Shiblī* appears on the stage, bringing a rose and lamenting the death of his fellow. He laments his own cowardice when facing the judges. He, too, he says, killed *Al-Ḥallāj* by his weakness.

The scene of the execution sets the scene for the whole play, so that the remainder is concerned with how the event took place, portraying a series of flashbacks.

Act One, Scene Two, opens with *Al-Ḥallāj* conversing with *Shiblī*. It is the year before *Al-Ḥallāj's* first trial, after the return of *Al-Ḥallāj* to *Baghdād* in 908. It is the period of the *Carmathian* raids on the caravans. In *Murder in Baghdad* it is also the period shortly after the accession of the young Caliph, and *Al-Ḥallāj* is lamenting the evil which he finds in the world:

The poverty of the poor;
The hunger of the hungry . . .
Listen, *Shiblī*!

Evil has conquered God's world.²³

In one of the more moving moments of the play *Shiblī* seems to tempt *Al-Ḥallāj* and make him question the omnipotence of God. Who is responsible, he asks, for all that happens? Injustice, he first replies, answering his own question. But then he turns to deeper evils, death, disease, pain, leprosy, lunacy, blindness, deafness.

Who put us in this world as prisoners,
To choke when we drink and strangle when we eat?²⁴

Was it, he asks,

The dead who are alive

the assassins, the liars, traitors, kidnappers and fornicators, the tax collectors, usurers, and tavern-keepers

All this disgusting swarm? Say who, say who!

Who transposed us from our first innocent bliss to this overflowing bordello?²⁵

Al-Ḥallāj rebuffs Shibli for tempting him to disbelieve in God, a temptation analogous to Becket's in *Murder in the Cathedral*, but Shibli only wants him to recognise the realities around him and urges him to find a way to salvation, the Ṣūfī path. This, he emphasises, must be a secret once he has found it. Al-Ḥallāj, however, refuses to keep the Ṣūfī way a secret and, in a symbolic gesture, discards the traditional cloak of the Ṣūfīs, given him at his investiture by his master, Amr al-Makkī. If the Ṣūfī cloak is a barrier between him and the common people then it must go. He will henceforth preach openly in the streets and salons of Baghdād to whoever will listen to him.

In this scene Al-Ḥallāj is warned by a friend and disciple that he is suspected by the authorities.

They say,

“This man slanders the Sultan

And stirs up the people to hatred.

The judge asks me to convey his plea to you

That you should be discreet.”²⁶

Al-Ḥallāj answers that he is preaching justice but his disciple responds that he is accused of sending word secretly to those who hope to seize power and urges him to escape to the provinces. Al-Ḥallāj replies

Is there so much justice and contentment in Khurāsān

That he whom injustice has struck down should go there?²⁷

and expresses his determination to go forward to his death. Unlike Becket in *Murder in the Cathedral*, Al-Ḥallāj is not tempted to seek the right act for the wrong reason. The itinerant preacher figure of Al-Ḥallāj is dissimilar to the statesman Archbishop and Chancellor. Al-Ḥallāj's motive in seeking his own death is that he may thereby become one with God in the final act of devotion and consummation.

I intend therefore to perfect my love of God,

To lose my identity in His . . .

I shall walk in God's path

In a godly manner, until I perish.

He will then extend His hand and take me away from myself.²⁸

‘Abd al-Ṣabūr has refashioned Al-Ḥallāj's words here:

Between Thou and me there is an “I” which oppresses me;

Then take away by Thy “Thou” and “I” which is between us.²⁹

Becket cannot seek martyrdom for its own sake, but for Al-Ḥallāj martyrdom is the culmination of the Ṣūfī way, the final attainment of his personal ambition, and thus intensely legitimate and desirable.

In Act One, Scene Three, Al-Ḥallāj goes into the market place to preach. Unlike *Murder in the Cathedral*, the action of *Murder in Baghdad* takes place in a number of locations. In the market place Al-Ḥallāj declares his message of the love of God and condemns the corrupt practices of society. These practices are

Murder, demagoguery, theft,

Betrayal, flattery, anger,

Aggression, tyranny:

These are the citizens of poverty's realm, the battalions of Satan, its Vizier.³⁰

Twice in five lines he invokes the figure of a Vizier as a symbol of corruption and as an agent of Satan or the devil. He is attacking a poverty of the spirit explicitly but his words, surely, are also to be read as an attack upon the injustices of the regime. In spite of such an excellent pretext for his arrest in the play, his arrest comes when it does in this scene through an attempt to trap him in theological debate. A law officer says:

Excuse me, my good Shaykh. Does God have two eyes

With which He looks in the mirror?³¹

Al-Ḥallāj is now committed to public discussion of his thought and he appears to deliver himself into the hands of the judiciary by his remarks. He speaks of the intense relationship of lovers, meaning the relationship between God and himself.

Do you not know that love is a secret between two lovers?

It is a relationship which, if made public, defiles our honour;

For when the Beloved gratified us with union, we had delight . . .

But we had made a covenant that I should keep the secret

Until I lie in my tomb, silenced by death.³²

The law officer reacts as expected, charging him with heresy. Al-Ḥallāj hesitates, wondering whether he is not being led to his downfall through pride, but then says that he cannot leave these words unspoken. He announces in public

I loved Him who is just

And He gave to me exactly as I gave to Him.³³

A group of Ṣūfīs who are nearby protest that this is but the delirious statement of a man whose heart is overflowing, recalling Al-Ghazālī's defence of Al-Ḥallāj and others.³⁴ One calls on the crowd to defend Al-Ḥallāj, saying that the latter has been tricked by the law officer and that he is being arrested solely because of what he has said about poverty. Al-Ḥallāj submits to arrest on the grounds that he has betrayed the secret of his divine love and urges his followers not to fight for him. The final word in the First Act belongs to the prudent preacher:

Wise is he who holds his tongue,

Who speaks no ill of anyone or anything —

Anyone or anything at all.³⁵

The second Act is roughly the same length as the first. In the first Scene Al-Ḥallāj is in prison, preaching to two prisoners. They rail at him and taunt each other with obscenities. Al-Ḥallāj, as the accounts testify, remains calm in the face of such provocation, even when the Guard is called in to quell the disturbance. The Guard accuses Al-Ḥallāj of fomenting trouble and strikes him brutally, again and again. Al-Ḥallāj's patience in the face of this brutality amazes the Guard and causes him to beg for Al-Ḥallāj's forgiveness. For Al-Ḥallāj, however, this brutality is the reassurance he needs.

Had I not been imprisoned, beaten, and tortured,

How would I have believed that You keep the covenant of love?³⁶

The prisoners are moved at what has taken place and question him. Al-Ḥallāj disclaims that he is another Messiah. He does not have the ability to raise dead bodies (as did Jesus), but only to rekindle the dead souls of the living. How does he do this, asks a prisoner. With words, replies Al-Ḥallāj. The second prisoner talks at length about the futility of words, even the words of Jesus, when his mother was dying of poverty. He urges Al-Ḥallāj to try to escape, tempting him to take to the sword as a means of putting right the wrongs that he

sees. Al-Ḥallāj again feels a moment of doubt and self-questioning, but as the scene closes the Warden enters, to lead Al-Ḥallāj to his trial. Al-Ḥallāj is reassured by this event for it now seems to him that God has chosen this path for him.

The final scene in the play takes place in court. It is here that 'Abd al-Ṣabūr has taken most liberties with the historical events in his search for an effective means of presenting the drama of the trial. As has been stated, Al-Ḥallāj faced not one but two trials, at each of which two judges from the religious courts assessed his case. The judges were those from the jurisdictions of East and West Baghdād and on the occasion of the second trial they were convened by the Vizier Ḥāmid in his capacity as "assessor of misdeeds". His concern was to seek a formal declaration in religious law that Al-Ḥallāj's actions merited condemnation and execution, so that he might proceed against him accordingly. However, in both trials the judges assessing his case were divided, one condemning him and the other declaring that he was unable to pronounce on his case. 'Abd al-Ṣabūr has minimised the part played in the second trial by the Vizier and, further, has placed together on the bench one judge from each of the trials, in spite of the fact that the lenient judge, Ibn Surayj, died in 918, before the second trial began in 921. Additionally in the play, a third judge assists the other two rather than acting as a substitute for one of them, as the historical accounts record.

One further point may be briefly noted. Whereas in the play Al-Ḥallāj is condemned for his theological views, for "the manner of his belief in God"³⁷, in the historical accounts it is clear that a pretext was used by the Vizier for Al-Ḥallāj's condemnation. Al-Ḥallāj had suggested that it was legitimate for a man to make a "pilgrimage of intention" in his own home, putting on the pilgrimage garments and making the circumambulations about his own room rather than journeying to Mecca. This was used by the more severe of the two judges in the second trial as an adequate pretext for his condemnation. The second judge wished to suspend judgement until the matter had been clarified. During the second judge's temporary absence from the court, the Vizier seized upon the first judge's condemnation and coerced the substitute judge into agreement.

'Abd al-Ṣabūr's device enhances rather than impairs the dramatic effectiveness of the court scene. To have presented the trials in a manner faithful to their records would have dragged out the play unnecessarily. Additionally, 'Abd al-Ṣabūr is making a protest about the theological rigidity of the period in which the play is set, and perhaps about that of his own period. In the drama the judges exchange jokes with each other as they wait for Al-Ḥallāj to be led in, heightening the contrast between themselves and the prisoner. The hanging judge, Abū 'Umar, immediately charges Al-Ḥallāj with sedition and will hardly give him a moment to reply before he cites the words of punishment prescribed by the Qur'ān.³⁸ Ibn Surayj, the lenient judge, interposes with a plea that Al-Ḥallāj be heard and the three judges quarrel amongst themselves. Finally, Al-Ḥallāj is given the opportunity to state his views and he speaks about his relationship of love for God.

Love and you will be saved.

You will be rich in your beloved;

You will become the praying and the prayer.

You will become the Faith, the Lord and the Mosque.

So I loved until I fell in love.

I saw by Beloved . . .

And I lost myself in Him.³⁹

Ibn Surayj dismisses these words as the expression of a private vision and turns to the political question. Did Al-Ḥallāj incite the people? The latter replies that he preached about the poverty of vision he found in the people, not the poverty of their material goods.

Poverty is not the longing of the hungry for food and the naked for clothing;

Poverty is the soul oppressed;

Poverty is the use of deprivation to humiliate men,

To kill love and plant hatred.⁴⁰

Abū 'Umar takes this as a direct indictment of the Caliph and condemns Al-Ḥallāj, but at this point a messenger brings a letter of pardon from the Caliph on the political charges and requests the judges to examine Al-Ḥallāj on his beliefs. Ibn Surayj protests that the court has no jurisdiction over these, saying that the court is trying to trap Al-Ḥallāj by any means it can. He resigns his potion and leaves the court.

In the final moments of the play there is a poignant encounter between the judges and the close friend of Al-Ḥallāj, Shibli. Shibli has the chance to speak on behalf of his friend but he is too cowardly to use the opportunity. He leaves the court a broken man for, as a former holder of high office, he might have influenced the verdict. "I am the one who killed you," he had announced at the beginning of the play.⁴¹ Abū 'Umar then turns to the poor and charges them to deliver their verdict. "Heretic! Heretic!," they chant, and Abū 'Umar claims that it was not the State or the judges who pronounced sentence but the people.

Go tell the people:

The people judged Hallāj.⁴²

As in the historical accounts of the trial, a crowd of witnesses take the blood of Al-Ḥallāj upon themselves.⁴³

The play thus ends on a note of ambiguity. Who was truly responsible for the death of Al-Ḥallāj? Was it the crowd, the judges, the Ṣūfis who felt that their secret had been betrayed, the Vizier with his makeshift policies, or the conservatives in theology? Or was Al-Ḥallāj determined upon this course from the beginning, for he says in the market place of Baghdād

Go you and warn my friends that I

Am embarked on the seas, and my boat is shattered.⁴⁴

Al-Ḥallāj, in this saying and in the saying

Slay me, my faithful friends, for in my death is my life.

My death will be my life, and my life is my death.⁴⁵

clearly points towards the final consummation of his love for God.

The role that Al-Ḥallāj sought was to be "a witness to the awful reality of the supernatural". His example continues to inspire many Muslims, notably those who face imprisonment and torture for their faith.⁴⁶ The publication of 'Abd al-Ṣabūr's play, and that of a Tunisian playwright whose work is rather more radical than 'Abd al-Ṣabūr's⁴⁷, together with the publication of a completely new edition of Al-Ḥallāj's poetry,⁴⁸ are some indications of a remarkable revival of interest in Al-Ḥallāj in the Muslim world. His heroism in the face of theological bigotry on the one hand, and repressive politicians on the other, seems to speak to many situations today. But perhaps the most significant statement came from the (Sunni) Cairo theological college, Al-Azhar, during the Muslim year A.H. 1379 (1595-60 A.D.). Dr. Muḥammad Ghallāb, writing in the official journal, described Al-Ḥallāj as one of the most

pious and virtuous Muslims, whose execution was a denial of justice as his trial was greatly influenced by human passions. All Muslims, he wrote, have a duty to take his side and to defend his cause in every way possible.⁴⁹ With this declaration Al-Ḥallāj is finally restored to his rightful place, after centuries of condemnation.

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Notes

*The work discussed is: Ṣalāḥ 'Abd al-Ṣabūr, *Murder in Baghdad (Ma'sūt Al-Ḥallāj)*, translated by Khalil I. Semaan, Leiden: Brill, 1972 (Arabic Translation Series of the *Journal of Arabic Literature*, Vol. I), cited henceforth as *M.B.* The Arabic title of the original is "Tragedy of Al-Ḥallāj, a verse play" (Beirut, 1965).

1. Helen Gardner, *The Art of T. S. Eliot*, London: The Cresset Press, 1949, p. 133.
2. The form *Anā al-ḥaqq*, "I am the Truth", occurs in the *Tawāsiḥ*, VI. 23 and the *Diwān*, ed. Massignon, p. 75-6, ed. Al-Shaibi, p. 242-3. Variants are reported in the poetry but these are of less interest than the striking variant *Arā al-ḥaqq*, "I behold the Truth", located in three MSS. of the *Tawāsiḥ* by P. Nwyia (*Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph, Beyrouth*, vol. XLVII, 1972, p. 208). Nwyia finally opts for the traditional reading *Anā al-ḥaqq*, reported by Al-Ghazālī and many others.
3. M. A. Shaban, *Islamic History: A new interpretation. 2. A.D. 750-1055 (A.H. 132-448)*, Cambridge: C.U.P., 1976, and E. Ashtor, *A Social and Economic History of the Near East in the Middle Ages*, London: Collins, 1976, chaps IV and V. Ashtor, *op. cit.*, p. 176 notes that Iraqi dinar was depreciating.
4. D. Sourdel, in *Cambridge History of Islam*, ed. P. M. Holt, A. K. S. Lambton and B. Lewis, Vol. I, Cambridge: C.U.P., 1970, p. 136. See also Shaban, *op. cit.*, p. 128-35 and 152-4, with Ashtor, *op. cit.*, p. 160-7.
5. Shaban, *op. cit.*, p. 152. Ashtor, *op. cit.*, p. 172-7 gives data on the economic decline while a vivid translation from the chronicles has been prepared by E. Schroeder in *Muhammad's People: A Tale by Anthology*, Portland: Bond Wheelwright, 1955 — see p. 444-520 and 582-93 for the Caliph Al-Muqtadir.
6. On account of family connections and because his disciples were suspected of being Carmathian agents.
7. Shaban, *op. cit.*, p. 144, 152, 156. For the economic status of this group see Ashtor, *op. cit.*, p. 154: "The supporters of the ultra-orthodox Hanbalite theologians were predominantly the poor . . ."
8. Shaban, *op. cit.*, p. 126; Ashtor, *op. cit.*, p. 154: "The rich merchants in Western Baghdad and elsewhere were Shiites."
9. *Journal of Arabic Literature*, vol. VII, 1976, p. 120-50.
10. M. M. Badawi, *A critical introduction to Modern Arabic Poetry*, Cambridge: C.U.P., 1975, p. 1.
11. Khalil I. H. Semaan, "T. S. Eliot's Influence on Arabic Poetry and Theater," *Comparative Literature Studies*, Vol. 6, 1969, p. 488, note 8.
12. Cairo, 1971; see *J.A.L.*, vol. VII, p. 130.
13. *J.A.L.*, vol. VII, p. 129-30 and 148. On the influence of Eliot see especially the detailed work of S. Moreh, *Modern Arabic Poetry 1800-1970: The Development of its Forms and Themes under the Influence of Western Literature*, (Studies in Arabic Literature, 5), Leiden: Brill, 1976, chap. VII and the sensitive comments in Badawi, *op. cit.*
14. Gardner, *op. cit.*, p. 35 and 5. See also Badawi, *op. cit.*, chap. 6, and the analyses in Moreh, *op. cit.*

15. For versions of the chroniclers' accounts of Ḥāmid see Schroeder, *op. cit.*, p. 471–91. Ḥāmid b. Al-'Abbās was his full name and his career is outlined in D. Sourdel, *Le vizirat 'abbāside de 749 à 936*, Damascus, 1959, p. 413–26. He had been a tax farmer and proved an inept choice as Vizier. The rewards of tax farming were enormous; his monthly salary was between five and seven thousand dinars but on his death (? by poisoning) in 923 2.2 million dinars were confiscated from his estates. By contrast, an unskilled labourer earned 1½ dinars per month. A year before Al-Ḥallāj's execution the price of grain rose sharply, a rise which was attributed to Ḥāmid's manipulations, according to popular rumour.
16. Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of N. Carolina Press, 1975, p. 76–7. Hilary Kilpatrick, *The Modern Egyptian Novel*, London: Ithaca, 1974, p. 12, speaks rather of "social realism".
17. Grover Smith, in *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Murder in the Cathedral*, ed. David R. Clark, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1971, p. 39–40.
18. *M.B.*, p. 3.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
25. *Ibid.*
26. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 18; the regime of the Samanids may be alluded to here as an enlightened dynasty loyal to Baghdad.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
29. D. P. Brewster, *Al-Hallāj: Muslim Mystic and Martyr*, Christchurch: University of Canterbury, 1976, p. 47.
30. *M.B.*, p. 28.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 29.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 30.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
34. *Ibid.*; Al-Ghazālī, *Mishkāt Al-Anwār* ("The Niche for Lights"), trans. by W. H. T. Gairdner, Lahore: Ashraf, 1952, p. 106–8.
35. *M.B.*, p. 34.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 44.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 72. For the chronicles see Schroeder, *op. cit.*, p. 541–54; a short reconstruction is given in Brewster, *op. cit.*, p. 18–21; the fullest account of this and other aspects of Al-Ḥallāj's life is L. Massignon, *La Passion d'Al-Hosayn ibn Mansour Al-Hallaj*, Paris, Geuthner, 1922 and new edition.
38. *M.B.*, p. 59; Sura 5:33 (Pickthall), 5:37 (Arberry).
39. *M.B.*, p. 66.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 69.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 9; Schimmel, *op. cit.*, p. 77–80.
42. *M.B.*, p. 75.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 74; Brewster, *op. cit.*, p. 33–4.
44. Brewster, *op. cit.*, p. 28.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 35.
46. Schimmel, *op. cit.*, p. 73–7, with Badawi, *op. cit.*, index: Ḥallāj. Iqbal's *Javīd-Nāmā*, in which Al-Ḥallāj figures, was translated by A. J. Arberry (London: Allen and Unwin, 1966).
47. See R. Caspar, "Mystique musulmane, Bilan d'une décennie (1963–1973)", *IBLA: Revue de l'Institut des Belles Lettres Arabes* (Tunis), p. 91–2 for a discussion of the two plays. The Tunisian author Al-Madani published his play in 1973 and presents a Ḥallāj for the contemporary world. Three different actors

present three aspects of Al-Ḥallāj, a "Ḥallāj of the people" who is a wool carder seeking to found a trade union, a "Ḥallāj of liberty" who is a revolutionary allied to the Carmathians, and a "Ḥallāj of mysticism" who struggles against a religious establishment.

48. *Sharḥ Diwān Al-Ḥallāj*, edited by Kāmil M. Al-Shaibī, Beirut and Baghdad: Al-Nahda, 1973. The editor is Professor of Islamic Philosophy at the University of Baghdad and dedicates his work (a fifteen year labour of love) to the memory of Louis Massignon.
49. Caspar, *loc. cit.* Caspar's review of the place of Al-Ḥallāj in the contemporary Muslim world complements that of Schimmel. Ghallāb's remarks occur in *Majallat al-Azhar*, vol. 31, p. 841-8.