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The American University in Cairo (AUC)

School of Humanities and Social Sciences (HUSS)

**Palestine Without Borders:
A Study of Arab and Western Voices in Theater**

Thesis Submitted to
Department of English and Comparative Literature

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
The Degree of Master of Arts

By: Bassem Mohsen
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Under the Supervision of
Prof. Steven Salaita

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ABSTRACT

Theater has always been perceived as a way to link different cultures together and bring them under one large domain. Regardless, the genre does not give the needed attention to works written in certain regions that may otherwise fall outside the consensus. One good example is Palestine and any works that deal with it as a setting. The first thing that comes to mind whenever the word “Palestine” is brought up is almost always of a political nature, having to do with the Palestinians’ national conflict with Israel. This thesis undertakes to amend this by probing into plays written by authors of both Arab and non-Arab descent so as to trace and examine how Palestine, along with its thematics, exists as a topic of interest to the world. The aforementioned tendency of politicizing Palestine has in turn led to a severe lack of accurate portrayal of Palestine and its people in Drama. As such, studying Caryl Churchill’s *Seven Jewish Children* (2009), Motti Lerner’s *The Admission* (2006), Ismail Khalidi’s *Tennis in Nablus* (2010), and Hannah Khalil’s *Scenes From 70* Years* (2018) shall serve as a means of filling some of the analytical gaps in the study of Palestine in modern theater.

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Palestine Throughout the Ages; History, Politics, and Theater

“Palestinian and Israeli narratives diverge over far more than the words that are commonly used for their respective national heroes, not least over the nature of the long and unresolved struggle between them over the same small territory on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean.”

(Black 22)

The epigraph above epitomizes the status-quo of conflicting and overlapping accounts of narratives that disclose the ideologies of both Palestine and Israel. Each side might present opposing views of the same happenings within the Palestinian territories. As such, it is important to note the historical differences that led to said narratives. For a work of art to be qualified as a true-to-life representation of the cause, it has to delve deep into the uncharted territory of divulging societal reverberations of the occupation rather than focusing on the political side of it, as most political writings usually do.

Ghassan Kanafani defines two types of literature prevalent in Palestine; one is written under the Israeli Occupation, and the other is all about life in exile. The first looks at history as its main driving force. The latter, however, is aimed at being explorative of the political ramifications of the occupation. Yet, they both propose identifying the consequences of being subjugated (Barbara 2). This thesis, therefore, shall explore how the West perceives Palestine through the eyes of four different authors and their works; Caryl Churchill’s *Seven Jewish Children* (2009), Motti Lerner’s *The Admission* (2006), Hannah Khalil’s *Scenes from 70 Years** (2018), and Ismail Khalidi’s *Tennis in Nablus* (2010).

Pertaining to Kanafani’s classification of Palestinian literature, *Seven Jewish Children* and *Scenes from 70* Years* simultaneously fall under the two categories as they both try to chronicle the history of the occupation and how the situation changed over the years. On the one

hand, *Seven Jewish Children*'s author Caryl Churchill explicitly unearths the destruction wrought by the occupation forces within the Palestinian lands. She includes in her play a rather short but inclusive history of Israel and its transgressions against Palestinians. The play foregrounds seven different periods and each features two parents talking to their child about Israel and Palestine. It starts with the parents lecturing their child on how to survive during the Holocaust and ends with them flexing their political and martial prowess in a graphical scene that sums up all the atrocities they committed. Hannah Khalil's *Scenes From 70* Years*, on the other, is an anthology of real situations encompassing all aspects of life in Palestine. What makes it different to *Seven Jewish Children* lies in the rather authentic nature of the play itself. It abandons all the grandeur of dramatic performance for the sake of attaining a veritable sense of realism and ingenuity. *The Admission* is closer to the first category that deals with the Israeli occupation. It is a testament to the ruthlessness of the Israeli occupation and, more specifically, during the massacre of Tantura village. *Tennis in Nablus*, though, is different in that regard as it may yet fall outside the above-mentioned classification; it is concerned with the British occupation of Palestine and its long-term ramification.

The four plays derive their importance from the fact that they all are reiterations of both recent and old struggles that Palestinian faced and still face. With that being said, theater has always been a part of Palestinian culture, and is seen as a way of showing resistance against the occupation and expressing personal identity and cultural individuality. The history of the Palestinian political theater has seen a plethora of groups and companies that took it upon themselves to make everyone aware of the Palestinian question. "There are five major companies currently working in the West Bank: Al-Kasaba Theatre and Ashtar Theatre in Ramallah;

Al-Rowwad and The Freedom Theatre in the refugee camps of Aida and Jenin; and Al-Harah Theatre in Beit Jala,” says Varghese (25).

One of the renowned theatrical groups is “The Freedom Theatre” founded by Juliano Mer-Khamis in the northern West Bank in 2006. It is worth adding that Mer-Khamis was assassinated right in front of his theater in 2011 (Hazou 406). If anything, this proves that no one is safe from the occupation forces’ merciless actions. Plays performed by the group were structured around the struggles of Palestinians and the brutalities they face on a daily basis.

This is not the only known theater that concerns itself with the status quo in Palestine. In addition to “The Freedom Theater”, there are also other older groups like the “Al-Kasaba Theatre” founded in 1970 in East Jerusalem and “Ashtar Theatre” founded by Edward Muallem and Iman Aoun in 1991 in Ramallah (Ashtar - Enhancing Creativity and Commitment for Change). Both groups also tackled political questions pertaining to Palestine in addition to controversial cultural issues such as Ashtar’s play entitled “Right Movement” revolving around the depiction of Palestinian women and unfair treatment they receive in the labor market.

Part and parcel of what makes this issue genuinely concerning lies with how Palestinian rights get violated to the point that it has become the norm. The normalization of these infringements by global organizations makes matters much worse. The UN, for instance, did not make steady or rather “consistent” developments pertaining to human rights and racism in certain global cases like the one presented here (Abu-Laban et al. 114). There can be no hope for seeing actual progress on the political stage without first introducing radical changes to how things work, which is why integrating politics within a global medium such as theater can be a sought-after change. Transitioning from written texts that merely state facts and information about any given political affair to live and actual representation on stage can help cement the

knowledge one has about that affair and even relate to it through true-to-life acting. Political essays may not yield the same feelings of connectedness --in terms of identifying with what one reads on a more personal basis-- that literature provides. Instead of looking at lifeless facts and data, we are presented with scenes that weave human emotions, facts, and even fiction into one large work of art that can portray even the smallest whims of the author.

Meanwhile, moving forward with the Palestinian cause can be overwhelming as one cannot remotely hope to resolve an issue that is heavily politicized and controversial without resorting to a different medium. As such, theater comes into play. Contrary to popular belief, theater has become a tool that -if utilized properly- can help in gaining deeper and invaluable insights into a plethora of political issues. Patterson argues that the political discourse in theater can be divided into two main categories: “reflectionist” and “interventionist”. As the name implies, the first is concerned with reflecting the political reality as is without any changes. The second, however, takes a more hands-on approach in dealing with politics. Instead of being dependent on the mirroring of reality, the author challenges and interprets current political trends (15). This brings one to the theatrical representations of Palestine. Surprisingly, they have been few and far between, and this makes it more interesting and rewarding to look at the four examples that will be addressed in the latter part of this thesis: Caryl Churchill’s *Seven Jewish Children*, Motti Lerner’s *The Admission*, Hannah Khalil’s *Scenes From 70* Years*, and Ismail Khalidi’s *Tennis in Nablus*. Each of these delves into certain aspects of Palestinian history, one that is fraught with wars and numerous attempts of colonization.

One way to look at it would be to properly ground and underline the difference between two clashing ideologies; Palestinian and Jewish Nationalism. Nationalism, in general, falls into two non-identical types, with the first being territorial or civic nationalism, which dictates that

people who share the same territory and citizenship must belong to the same nation without any regard for their ethnicity. The second type, ethnic nationalism, contradicts the first as it is more dependent on heritage, values, and historical affiliations that govern a certain nation. Civic nationalism is more prevalent in the West, whereas its ethnic counterpart is heavily associated with the East (Ghanem 11). Both Palestinian Nationalism and Jewish Nationalism have conflicting purposes and even rights.

At the heart of the conflict between Palestine and Israel lies this ideological war that is fundamentally unfair. When the *Nakba* (the expulsion of Palestinians from their homeland in 1948) happened, and hundreds of thousands of Palestinians became refugees, there was no one to support the legitimacy of the Palestinian State. A state was then founded to replace another that had been home to Arabs and even Jews. This new Jewish State resulted in the dispersion of Palestinians and the destruction of its centralized leadership. But, how does all this play into literature and, more importantly, theater?

Since Westerners are afforded better treatment, it can be difficult to question the integrity of a work of art written by a Western author. As discriminatory as it may sound, the same cannot be said for those who hail from the Arab World; this disparity happens by dint of all the political pressures and stereotypical representations that portray Palestinians in a false manner. By further inspecting the gap --one that can feel colossal-- it becomes evident that Palestine is not as well-represented in fiction and drama as it is in politics and political essays. While there is a fair number of Arab-American authors who tackled the situation of Palestine in their works, Western authors are not as many. Therefore, the main aim of this thesis is to fill this gap by examining the humanitarian side of Palestine as it is represented through dramatic and theatrical works. It is concerned with looking at how the West perceives the Palestinian question and the conflict itself.

It is of the utmost importance, when one deals with anything that pertains to Palestine, to distinguish between the politicized nature of such a controversial topic and the way through which it is perceived, especially when it comes to drama and theater. Looking at how certain Western authors, and even Arab ones, discern the ramifications of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict may prove to be quite tendentious due to the fact that the conflict in its entirety has always been political. War, with all its fronts and atrocities, is but a capacious arena for profiteering and greed. This idea has been engraved in the minds of all occupiers since time immemorial. Artists, fundamentally, come into play and thrive “Not in ratifying a peace treaty between Israel and Palestine, but in building the social and political connectivity that enables resolution” (Khoury et al. 1).

Both Palestine and Israel have been closely inspected as two entities existing on one land. Ever since the *Nakba*, the status-quo of Palestine has deteriorated when it comes to its economic, political, and social stature on the global stage. As Saloul believes, it is necessary to remember past occurrences and old stories that tie into the conflict itself (141). Whenever someone is oblivious to something as prominent as the Palestinian question, it becomes the sole responsibility of writers -whose authorial voice may thus be needed in understanding the dynamics of the issue- to make people aware of what is happening. The underlying difference between theater and any other genre involves its potential to bypass the kind of scrutiny and censorship imposed on genres of political nature. Consequently, resistance became an integral segment of Palestinian literature and theater.

Masalha suggests that the war itself has led to the establishment of a Jewish state that was to be nearly devoid of people with Arab origins. Additionally, it provided Zionist mentalities with the means and mandates required to get rid of all Palestinians living in the holy land.

(Catastrophe Remembered 1). With such implications, one cannot broach the subject of Palestine without looking back at the political repercussions of the occupation and its surrounding conditions. Politics, therefore, has to be taken into consideration when probing into the four plays. However, it is not only a matter of focusing on deconstructing the political tendencies in the plays, but also a way to understand how theater can give voice to misrepresented opinions within the conflict. The idiosyncratic nature of theater allows the discussion of topics that require careful handling of themes, issues, and details that may otherwise be misinterpreted. Theater acts as this apparatus one can use to gain a better understanding and a comprehensive overview of an issue; in this case, the question of Palestine. Performing a play on the conflict can facilitate the process of raising awareness about the cause; people can see history unfolding right before their eyes with many theatrical events to observe. Nevertheless, providing plays with authentic facts is a huge undertaking. Hence arises the need for texts written by authors who understand that representing a scrutinized nation is indeed imperative.

As Urian says, "The dispute over land was a central theme in plays written from the 1930s on and was rationalized as being the result of a systematic incitement by interested parties among the Arabs" (18). The state of Palestine cannot become dissociated from its history, one which ties well into the conflict with Israel. To this exact moment, military confrontations are sanctioned, and many Palestinians lose their lives in the process over a ruthless dispute in an attempt to claim territory. In that case, it may be worth mentioning how the Palestinian society is looked upon, whether in media or any other platform; Palestinians themselves are a fragmented people, most of whom have either decided against the notion of leaving their homeland behind or sought refuge in other countries. This means that there has always been some kind of an altercation or, rather, a territorial dispute and antipathy fueling a never-ending clash between two

peoples over land. This is where theater might become effective and applicable in taking this issue further. Not everyone will be interested in listening to news or reading overly-political articles and books, but when one inspects a live performance or reads the script of the actual performance, it becomes possible and even preferable to develop this personal connection with the characters and relate to the action itself.

With theater providing access to other societies --and always being perceived as a way to link different cultures together and bring them under one large domain--, one can turn this overly political topic into something different that may be more appealing and accessible to audiences around the world. Theater gives the artist the platform needed to voice their opinions. On the topic of political theater, not all plays engage directly in politics. Some plays, like David Hare's *Stuff Happens* (2004) revolving around the Iraq War, are political to the core. Other plays may not foreground politics as much. Therefore, the state of the Palestinian cause calls for unorthodox solutions due to how tricky the discussion of Palestine in theater ends up becoming. It is imperative to understand that, as readers and surveyors hoping to get a broader overview of the cause, the first thing that comes to mind whenever "Palestine" is brought up is almost always stereotypical, having to do with the strife rampant in the nation. It is necessary, when dealing with this conflict in theater, to be quite cautious so as to correctly and accurately demonstrate what goes on behind the scenes and what goes on in the lives of Palestinians. The setting itself is vehemently volatile as we will get to see in the four plays. When it comes to the conflict, the side someone is born into decides how others perceive them, think of them, and what is expected of them. If they are Palestinian, then they will be destined to live a life of suffering under the occupation. This is where Critical Race Theory comes into play. But before focusing on how it ties into the Palestinian discourse, it has to be properly grounded and explained. The framework

itself was created in the 1970s as a way through which one can closely address certain areas that proved to be problematic when it comes to civil rights, ones that could not otherwise be accepted. The issues outlined in this framework revolve around race and ethnicity and how they are entrenched within society itself (Delgado and Stefancic 4). As for applying that to Palestine, it involves checking and examining how the aspects of race, identity, and ethnicity affect the structure of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Israeli government, for one, has been criticized for maintaining a network of social, racial, and political inequality within the occupied lands, and this ranges from forced displacement of Palestinian landowners to rigorous checkpoint inspections conducted on a daily basis throughout the lands. As such, making visible said atrocities is why utilizing the framework becomes a necessity.

In addition, it is vital to understand how race and nationality affect how both Palestinians and Israelis are situated within the political spectrum. It paves the way for people to understand the repercussions of policies and legislation with regard to the lives of the Palestinians. If one takes this and applies it to the four plays in this thesis, it will become clear that origins, nationality, language, skin color, gender, and race all have a direct effect on how someone is treated. This will be mentioned in the upcoming chapters where the characters of each play are analyzed.

Having mentioned the necessity of jumping to other platforms to make the Palestinian case before the entire world, theater can make this even more plausible with how accessible and, perhaps, polemical it can simply be. Another core problem is that Arabs, in general, are always perceived within the rather stern context of terrorism as opposed to how Westerners or non-Arabs usually are depicted, and the idea that “not all Arabs are terrorists and not all terrorists are Arabs” should be emphasized (Alsultany 26, 27). In terms of theater, the genre does not focus

on works written in regions that are seen as part of the canon; the Arab regions are given as much attention as they should be. One thing to note, here, is how the image of Arabs is presented within plays that deal with the Palestinian setting (Urian 19). This is simply reliant on whether the playwright in question is writing from a “peace-seeking” perspective or one that supports the warmongering attitude of the occupation forces. Breaking free from such deeply entrenched beliefs and stereotypes becomes imperative and may require a well-developed change in the discourse pertaining to the portrayal of Palestinians and Arabs as a whole, and only then will this widespread false image cease to exist.

The reason one may have to resort to past events or previous occurrences is that they are crucial to the development and the creation of discourse about the issue in question (Lerner, “The Playwright and the Historian” 91). By looking at certain events in Palestinian history -one of great importance like the *Nakba* and its aftermath as mentioned in almost all texts revolving around Palestine- you can shift the focus back to Palestine and how grave the situation is in the occupied lands. Politics, once again, become the center of the Palestinian question, and this presents us with more underlying problems.

In essence, Saloul mentions that “The cultural transmission of the memory of *al-Nakba* often takes place orally through oral performances and commemorative practices in fragmentary moments that give texture to the fabric of everyday life” (175). Studying the *Nakba* is necessary to correctly assess the situation in Palestine. The annihilation of Palestinian society in 1948 was merely the tip of the iceberg, with countless Palestinians losing their homes and all of their most basic rights as citizens. As a matter of fact, the destruction that followed the displacement of Palestinians and the infringement upon their rights can still be seen, up to this point, in the day-to-day interactions and dealings between both Palestinians and Israelis. The entirety of

literature that first and foremost foregrounds the setting of Palestine has to have some scraps of conversations or discourses that, in a way, are *Nakba*-related. Keeping the memory of the catastrophe, as painful as it may be, is the main purpose of theatrical performances created to shed more light on the Palestinian issue. One such play is “Returning to Haifa” which is based on Ghassan Kanafani’s novel of the same name, and it follows the story of two Palestinians who got displaced after the *Nakba* and, once they return to their original home years later, they find that their home has been occupied by an Israeli family. What makes the Palestinian question a cause of international concern is that many other indigenous peoples and tribes also share the same burden of being silenced and having their own culture and society dismantled or eradicated right before their eyes (Masalha, *The Palestine Nakba* 88).

Palestine, after the *Nakba*, was but a land ripe for the taking, with nearly almost everyone with Palestinian origins being granted refugee status in other countries (Masalha, *Catastrophe Remembered* 1). The issue, as a result, pertains to the discriminatory attitude adopted by people who are biased regarding the Israeli mandate in colonizing the state of Palestine. Being denied even the most basic of rights, such as the right of return, makes it clear that the laws and policies in place are not in favor of the ordinary Palestinian citizen. In order for Palestinians to have a glimpse of hope, their voices have to be taken seriously.

David Jefferess discusses the concept of resistance in tandem with postcolonial attitudes:

The idea of ‘resistance’ provides a primary framework for the critical project of postcolonialism. Resistance is a continual referent and at least implicit locus of much postcolonial criticism and theory, particularly in terms of the analysis of the failure, or deferral, of liberation in Africa, South Asia, and the Caribbean. On the one hand, this

emphasis upon resistance limits the purview of (post) colonial experience, in that it denies any other kind of life to the people doing the resisting.

(Jefferess 3)

This leads one back to Postcolonialism and the effects of the occupation on Palestinians. For Palestine, Postcolonialism has never been eradicated. It is a part of Palestinian history as the region itself has a long history of colonialism that starts with the Ottoman Empire and goes all the way to British colonization and the current Israeli occupation. Israel sought to eradicate Palestinian identity and culture as will be seen in plays such as *Seven Jewish Children*. Some impediments, that came into existence as the direct result of colonial attitudes, are quite formidable in how they turn indigenous peoples into occupied and oppressed ones. As European Jews were driven to the brink of extinction, they started calling for a movement that planted this need to return back to the Holy Land. This movement had no regard for the Arabs living there or even the Jews with whom Arabs peacefully co-existed for generations. Zionists even referred to Palestine as a “land without a people” (Halper 17, 18). This critical insight may help in lending a well-needed momentum to the theatrical representation of Arabs in general and Palestinians in specific. And resistance, regardless of enormity, takes one back to the idea of postcolonial perspectives dictating that people are not allowed to have control over their own lives. (Jefferess 3). Should they ever hope to exist within this colonial society, they would have to get to grips with the totalitarian system in place.

“Palestinian critique is marked for a vigilance against its alleged racism and bigotry towards Jews, which marks it out for further hostility even from within anti-racist marginalized spaces,” Ayash adds (3). When an Arab or, more specifically, a Palestinian author decides to condemn the atrocities wrought by the occupation forces in their own country, they get shunned

and ostracized. Not only do they lose the right to express their own opinion, but they get accused of being anti-Semitic as well. The jarring conclusion here is that Palestinians are not afforded the same treatment as their “supposed” Israeli counterparts who claim to be mantling the role of peace-seekers. Such scrutiny over the Palestinian discourse raises a number of questions. Is it possible for someone to have the audacity to denounce an entire people simply because they want their unheard voices to be heard? Would someone allow the atrocities, the human rights violations that happen on a daily basis, and the countless attempts to silence their voices to go unchecked? Are Palestinians and Israelis on equal footing? All these questions are entirely valid given that, as of now, all critiques seem to be created at the expense of Palestinians and their cause.

This kind of racial discrimination is not exclusive to Palestinians only. Many other groups are marginalized and looked down upon. Jews in European countries were hampered by racial discrimination when put in comparison with white, Christian Europeans (Ayyash 3). It should be noted that every colonizer may be subjected to a certain form of colonization in one way or another. The two types of Jews that will be seen within the four plays are the ones who lived in peace alongside Arabs and those who migrated from all over Europe to Palestine and were all for taking Palestine for themselves. Now, the first category was overpowered by the second, the Zionists, to be more specific. Jews who lived in Palestine, the ones belonging to the first category, could not veto the decisions taken by the Zionists. European Jews, despite being persecuted at the hands of the Nazi regime, did not mind doing the same thing to other people. This line of thought may seem strange at best, but it is definitely something worth considering and reflecting upon. Hopefully, this may yield better insights into the core of the Palestinian issue. As will be seen in the next chapter, not all Jews agree with the current state of affairs in

Israel and the way it oppresses Palestinians. Motti Lerner, for one, is a Jew whose plays were rejected by the Israeli State on more than one occasion. This means that you do not have to belong to a different country to disagree with the politics of your homeland.

As a way of rejuvenating awareness and renewing people's interest in the Palestinian cause, different authors have decided to take up the cause and discuss it within their own plays. Apart from the fact that some plays, like Lerner's *The Admission*, were heavily criticized due to the nature of how they broached the subject, authors have to tread very carefully so as to avoid getting their plays criticized and even banned from certain countries. Historically speaking, the topic has always been of a turbulent nature on account of the false portrayal of life under the occupation.

The four works to be discussed in this thesis were selected due to the different tones and degrees of emphasis -pertaining to Palestine- that were adopted, and all of which try to evince a different, insightful point into the dynamics of Palestine through the genre of theater. Despite the sheer number of books and essays dedicated to the Palestinian question, there is a shortage of dramatic works, especially by non-Arab authors, which should give a realistic account of the conflict and life under the occupation.

Theater, as a result, has to come into play to level the field and strike that sort of balance required to make the Palestinian case a global priority, once again. The chosen plays make a strong argument about the representation of Palestine in theater, whether in the Arab World or outside of it. The four authors give substance to revealing undisclosed information about Palestine as an overarching theme in theatrical works. Churchill's *Seven Jewish Children*, on the one hand, explicitly provokes a sense of anger over the horrors that Palestinians go through under the occupation. Lerner's *The Admission*, on the other, is all about condoning specific

actions by the occupation while doing so through the eyes of an Israeli academic who stops at nothing to uncover the truth behind a massacre, and a Palestinian family composed chiefly of passive members who only care about advancing their own interests; Lerner, therefore, takes it upon himself to showcase hidden sides of life under the occupation. Chief among them is a morally gray area that exists as part of the conflict. Khalil, for example, presents situations from the lives of Palestinians and their daily interactions with Israelis in a way that shows how war may affect the powerless on both sides, whereas Khalidi, in his “tragipoliticomedy” (Khoury et al. 93), satirizes the conflict through a historical inspection. The term itself refers to Khalidi’s employing aspects from drama, comedy, and politics; his work is one that relies on the feelings and emotions that may thus be invoked by tragedy, the humorous nature of comedy, and the realistic settings provided by political narratives.

The next chapters are solely dedicated to giving a detailed analysis of the four plays and their authorial stances with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, along with the representations of Arab Palestinians and Israelis within each. Aiming to fill in the gaps, one will probe into the four plays in an attempt to focus on the Western outlook with regards to Palestine.

The second chapter, entitled “Palestine in the Western Theater” is concerned with the Western theatrical perspective when it comes to Palestine. Churchill has seen fit, in *Seven Jewish Children*, to write this short narrative as a response to the Israeli attack on Gaza in December 2008, the massacre known as “Operation Cast Lead.” While this may come as a surprise, when Churchill decided to chronicle this monstrosity happening in the occupied lands, she gave all readers a license to reproduce the play under the condition that no one should ever turn this into a commercial project (Clements 357, 358). This move makes it easy to circulate the core message of the Palestinian cause to people who may not be aware of the minute details of the conflict.

Lerner, on the other hand, shows the decades-long physical and metaphorical repercussions of the massacre of Tantura that took place in 1948. As a Jew, his words carry more weight in the West. He knows that his own country violated countless rights when they decided to occupy Palestine on baseless grounds.

The third chapter, entitled “Arab Voices and Palestine” explores the stances Arab-American authors adopt vis-à-vis Palestine. For the first play, Khalil sets forth to recount various situations, spanning over two-thirds of a century, that took place in the occupied Palestinian lands. As for the second, Khalidi foregrounds history and calls attention to the British colonization of Palestine in the year 1939 during the Arab Revolution. The fourth chapter, entitled “Theatrical Overview: Palestinian Horizons on Stage”, compares, side by side, the four works and wraps up the arguments raised in each chapter. Characters, stage directions, techniques, and authorial voices are contrasted.

The thesis, thus far, is focused on seeing how the Western outlook on the conflict may or may not have the same influence on the global stage. Can Western authors provide us with the same intricate details about the conflict as Arab authors do? Can they provide an unbiased account of the conflict? Does the author’s nationality affect their description of the war? All these questions will be worth highlighting.

Palestine in the Western Theater

Seven Jewish Children

Caryl Churchill does not shy away from exposing the absolutely horrifying acts perpetrated by the occupation forces as part of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. What is most peculiar about the play is that instead of having an author with Arab origins discussing the cause, there is an author championing the case in its entirety without attending to the global outrage that may come out of such vivid articulation. Palestine, as it were, exists as a continuation of issues mostly related to justice and human rights. Many other regions that have been subjected to similar tendencies include Native America and Algeria, for example. It may prove difficult to bring up the topic of Native America without reassessing its history, one that is founded upon this stigma of not adhering to the normative of being white. Ethnic racism and the superiority of the white man are what drove this forward. It has been extensively ascertained that a great number of white supremacists gravitate towards identifying people strictly based on their looks and physiognomy. As a result, they are forcefully excluded from the normative or rather the American classification of being white. Algerians, on the other, faced a great deal of discrimination as they had almost all their basic rights retracted. Their freedom of speech was limited, women were not given enough recognition, and journalism was at its worst. The two cases bear a great resemblance to the Palestinian issue.

As for the play itself, *Seven Jewish Children* identifies the Palestinian state as a country on the precipice of annihilation. Through Churchill's authorial lens, one comes to understand the necessity of making visible the discrepancies subsisting within the framework of the conflict as such. The occupation forces try to hide the fact that what they are doing contradicts the human rights for which they call. Felton-Dansky adds that "Through these internecine struggles,

Churchill's adult voices decide which facts their daughter must remember, which interpretive glosses she must internalize, in order to become a citizen in command of her national and religious heritage" (158). The character being addressed is a young girl, one with whom everyone -who reads the play- can identify. It is a girl who is becoming aware of what is happening around her. The play starts with a Jewish perspective, an observation of the Holocaust and its aftermath. Instead of going right into the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, we get introduced to a point back in history when the state of Israel did not exist. During the said phase, Jews were subjected to genocide under the Nazi regime. Why would Churchill deem it important to start the play in this peculiar way? Any colonizer may, at some point, have undergone a period during which they were colonized, which in turn makes them internalize the concept of colonization. Such universality facilitates the process of revealing the case to the West; everyone who reads the play can have an authentic glimpse of the historical timeline necessary to grasp the cause.

It may sound strange to see that the girl in question is not actually there. But it is not just her; all children mentioned in the forthcoming parts do not physically appear. This can seem like a good way to make people identify with these absent characters as readers or viewers -in terms of an actual performance- would be able to put themselves in the shoes of these unknown characters as if they were the ones being addressed. Churchill opens up the play on these imperatives, these commands given to a child by their parents. The first child is lectured on the Holocaust, a time before the establishment of the Israeli State.

The reiteration of the imperative voice (Tell her - Don't tell her) is key to understanding the moral issues of the entire play and even the conflict itself. The child is being manipulated and brainwashed only to seek self-preservation. The Israeli parents in this sequence are pushing for more of a streamlined system of reward and punishment; if the girl follows what they say, then

she will be rewarded for her good behavior. Is it only that, though? No. They are adamant about concealing the truth and replacing it with their own twisted version of the story. Her survival is reliant upon her cooperation and willingness to do anything to stay alive. The child has to imagine that she is “in bed” (Churchill 1) but she cannot sing in order not to give away her location. What is interesting about this is that children are always cheerful by nature; they are innocent, and they cannot grasp heavy concepts such as war. What is being presented here is the complete opposite, a paradoxical action that compels children to lose their innocence in order to survive.

As confused as the child may be, she has to take on a role that is not suited for her. The parents are asking a child to dismiss the atrocities to which she might bear witness. In essence, the older generations are weaving an intricate plot for the succeeding generations to follow; all the other parties are not to be trusted. Going along the same lines of self-preservation, the parents go for this idea of “us” vs. “them” which, more or less, falls under the category of Edward Said’s “Othering.” The concept itself is that there is always this unbridgeable gap between two different cultural groups, with one group holding dominance over the other. The “us” classification takes precedence over the less important, inferior “them.” In the play, this racist distinction made by the parents becomes noticeable. The ideology is that they raise these children, these younger generations, and focus their attention on the idea of surviving no matter what, no matter what consequences their actions may have on other people’s lives. To the girl in this sequence, the “men” in her “game” are bad, and in order for them to leave her alone, she has to hide and keep living because it is “her story.” The emphasis on this kind of self-righteousness can be seen even more clearly in the next sequences.

Once again, a new child is addressed in the second sequence, but the ideology remains untouched. The parents keep jumping back and forth between the imperatives “Don’t tell her” and “Tell her”. However, this time, instead of going through this pretend-it-is-not-real phase, as has been witnessed in the previous sequence, the audience is presented with a negative imperative at the beginning of the sequence. Now, the State of Israel exists, and the parents are trying to distort the truth and replace it with falsified statements. Such sentiment can be depicted in lines that say, “Don’t tell her what they did” and “Tell her there are still people who hate Jews” (Churchill 2). This shift from the implicit forcing of children to avoid others and only care about their own survival to this explicit process of instilling fear and hatred towards others -first the Nazis and then Palestinians- marks a rather important change in the attitude of Jews. They are slowly turning into colonizers. Consequently, the parents in all sequences take turns giving pieces of advice to the children. In this sequence, one can see through the conflicting advice the parents end up giving. On the one hand, one parent is more inclined towards lying and manipulating the truth in order not to scare the child. This can be depicted in how one of the parents seems to favor using euphemistic diction such as “died” instead of “killed”. On the other, the second parent does not mind taking a rather aggressive route while lecturing the child; they are making sure that the child knows their family members were “killed” (Churchill 2) but no matter what, they will always be proud of her.

By approaching the third sequence, the audience gets a better understanding of the radical ideology adopted by the parents. While the previous parents were all advocating and paving the way for the same idea --the Jews’ justified mandate for occupying the Palestinian lands-- the current ones take a somewhat religious route this time. The Palestinian, or rather the “Holy Land”, according to them, was God-given, and they are only repossessing what is originally

theirs. While this has to be taken with a grain of salt, they are essentially raising a new generation that does not know anything about the implicit Zionist ideology and disinformation they are getting fed.

Without any doubt, this facilitates the entire process of land occupation. They will no longer have to spend time and effort to maintain this kind of truth twisting if they have a new generation that has been raised on ideologies that deem other peoples' lands fair game. Thus, the need for expounding a solid argument about territorial expansion in a land they do not own becomes obsolete. On that account, some people may start pondering the real reason behind why Palestinians will never be able to officially recognize the existence of a Jewish State living on their own land. This brings one to the concept of Jewish Nationalism, the idea that Jews should be in control of other countries. As Rodinson and Chiari believe, when a nation starts to seek to build up its nationalistic ideology through militant means and the subjugation of other nations, then it becomes reprehensible and, therefore, must be stopped. They also go on about the Jews proposing the creation of a single state for Jews (18). This kind of colonial mentality is a direct result of decades of brainwashing and manipulation that painted Palestinians as second-class citizens, people who live on land to which they do not have a right. Unfortunately, this ideology proliferated to the point that the new generations in Israel may not even be acquainted with basic facts about the conflict and how it started; they do not know the true origins of the conflict.

Addressing the aforementioned ideology head-on is a must, with its necessity deriving from the fact that many countries on the global stage tend to forget that this land belongs to the Palestinians. In the play, this can be seen in the line "Tell her about Jerusalem" (Churchill 3). By putting a great emphasis on the religious discourse, it becomes effortless to convince new generations to follow in the steps of Jewish Nationalism. When you eradicate certain hard truths

about your nation in favor of fabricated ones and solely focus on a biased discourse, you are essentially raising a new generation of zealots and oppressors who will stop at nothing to protect their own self-preservation, even if at the expense of others.

The discourse of the occupation becomes, within the fourth sequence, apparent and clear because they start making a case -albeit a false and distorted one- of Palestinians being mere “Bedouins” (Churchill 3) who have no right to the land they are claiming to be theirs. They are erasing their identities, their past, and hence their non-existent future. Alongside the Zionist mentality Churchill inspects throughout the play, she means to take a stern stance against unacceptable practices adopted by the Israeli regime. Chief among these is the tendency to refer to Palestinians as nomadic and barbaric people who were not civilized before the arrival of the Jews. As for the sequence at hand, the two parents often give conflicting advice to the child, yet they seem to share the same desire to eliminate anything and anyone for the sake of their own survival. In doing so, they are justifying the atrocities committed and the countless people killed or maimed in this futile race for survival and domination. The scale of the dilemma, the racial discrimination, and the unjustified territorial domination call for a rather deep examination of the place itself with reference to postcolonial practices.

As Said inherently believed, “If there is anything that radically distinguishes the imagination of anti-imperialism, it is the primacy of the geographical in it”. He also touches on the idea of “geographical violence” and militant tactics (225). Through these tactics, the nation in question is brought to heel and eventually becomes more of a vassalized state rather than one with the right of self-determination. When you ask questions about territory and land, you have to know that part and parcel of the issue with Palestine and Israel has to do with how the second

invalidates the first's right to the land. Thus, the imperialistic domination of Palestine is done by means of erasing the Palestinian identity and history, as seen in Churchill's play.

Anna Bernard elaborates on the technicalities Churchill implemented in her play:

Seven Jewish Children is less gentle with its audience. Churchill responds to the demand for a theater of witness by removing the figure of the victim – ostensibly the female Jewish child, but also the Palestinian – from the stage. Instead of the testimony of a real person, we are presented with a highly stylized and allusive account of Jewish and Israeli history over the past century, as unnamed and indistinguishable European and Israeli Jewish adults argue about what to tell the unseen child about the world around her.

(Bernard 170)

Advocacy of the cause can be gained by tracing the above-mentioned colonial tendencies in the play. As mentioned in the quote above, the unnamed characters -who are talking to a figure that does not exist on stage- can be played by anyone and can use any lines presented in the play's script. This gives the creators of the performance the power to shape the narrative in a way that would serve the cause. In the fourth sequence, one can also see the parents explicitly commanding the child not to deal with the Palestinians. The first half strictly focuses on replacing the Palestinian identity with the Jewish one through this condescending act of demolishing an entire culture, identity, and population, as is the case with words like “bedouin, deserts, dates, and tents” (Churchill 3). The second part of the sequence, starting from line 10, moves along the lines of veiling the truth that Arabs used to live in these lands since time immemorial. One thing to note here is that the parents, once again, provoke Jewish Nationalism and colonial practices -with a propensity for domination and violence that will become clearer in

the next sequences- through the conflicting voices and points of view we see raised in this sequence.

At one point, they are telling the child “to be careful” and not “to be frightened”. The same happens as well with different pieces of advice; “Tell her again this is our promised land” and “Don’t tell her they said it was a land without people”, ending with “Tell her maybe we can share” and “Don’t tell her that” (Churchill 3, 4). Now, these last lines mark the beginning of a new sequence, one in which both parents agree and do not have any conflicting thoughts. And that is the most noticeable thing about the fifth sequence. As short as it is, consisting only of six lines, this sequence marks a shift in the tone of the parents as they start to care less and less about what others may think of what they have been up to. The process of replacing Palestinians with Jews as owners of the land has already taken place, and nobody was able to stop it. Not only are they celebrating their prowess and “how big” their army is, but that they have finally claimed the land as their own as well (Churchill 4).

Churchill, then, captures the essence of the invasion in the sixth sequence, where she makes an attempt at looking things over from the perspective of an Israeli who is determined to establish their own rule within the land they have recently occupied. The lines in which they focus on beautifying what they are doing like “Tell her it’s our water, we have the right”, “Tell her we’re making farms in the desert”, and “Tell her we’re building towns in the wilderness” (Churchill 4, 5) all refer to the same thing: justifying their acts of domination and colonization.

However, these “positive” acts are there to mask the heinous truth of subjugating an entire nation, bringing it to its knees, and bending it to their will. This can be easily picked out when looking at lines such as “Don’t tell her it was knocking the house down”, “Don’t tell her the boy was shot”, “ Don’t tell her about the olive trees”, and “Tell her we kill far more of them”

(Churchill 4, 5) which prepare the audience for the culmination of the play in which the terrorizing tendencies of Israel become explicit, clear, and undeniable.

The last sequence is a testament to the atrocities committed by the occupation forces on a daily basis. As one can see, the balance has shifted in favor of the Israelis. By comparing the first and seventh sequences, the audience can come to the conclusion that having been subjected to a certain amount of suffering does not give you the right to subjugate others in return. What starts as a play showing the suffering of Jews, ends with a note heavily criticizing the senseless killing and imperialist approaches favored by the Israelis. From here, it is mostly self-praising and proud remarks about how they are the ones in control now. The ending of the play is extremely graphic and brutal and shows how vile colonization truly is. The parents are now reveling in the bloodthirsty acts their nation has committed. With strong-worded lines such as “Tell her about the family of dead girls” and “Tell her I laughed when I saw the dead policemen” (Churchill 6). We, as an audience, can vividly imagine this diabolical scene of suffering, agony, and anguish. This is the peak of colonial devastation.

On the subject of colonialism, Said says, “Neither imperialism nor colonialism is a simple act of accumulation and acquisition” and that “Both are supported and perhaps even impelled by impressive ideological formations that include notions that certain territories and people require and beseech domination, as well as forms of knowledge affiliated with domination” (9). Imposing restrictive directives and ideologies that have no legal grounds to back them up, as is the case with the occupation, can be understood as more of a centralized attempt at spreading specific ideologies, e.g., Jewish Nationalism, while following the traditional, known ventures of a colonizer and their bids to power and territorial domination. Having mentioned both the past and future, Churchill’s verbatim-like portrayal of the conflict

serves as a way to chronicle the rise of a colonizer. The inevitability of replacing one colonizer with another cannot be stressed enough, and that is what happened in this case. The Jews did not have a country to call home, and despite being targeted in the past under Nazi rule, they did not think twice before invading Palestine. Could this have been avoided, however? The answer is no. It was bound to happen as this colonial cycle cannot be broken easily.

The East has always been perceived as the other, the uncultured and uncivilized part of the world, which should, henceforth, be tamed and controlled by its civilized masters. This, of course, was particularly apropos of Edward Said's *Orientalism*, in which he details the so-called portrayal of the East and its subsisting relationship with the West, its cultured counterpart. The drastic continental juxtaposition between the East and the West is reflected in the treatment they both are given. The West consists of these powerful and culturally progressive countries whose influence stretches far beyond their border, and they all make up the normative, the Occident. As for the East, the Orient, or the exoticized side of the world, it is seen as the Other, one that is far-removed from the Occident. The disparity exceeds geographical positions and is entrenched in cultural stereotypes about the two sides, and the superiority of the Western culture becomes prominent. The same applies to Churchill's play which concerns itself with the ongoing conflict between Palestine and Israel, one that is heavily reminiscent of the way Edward Said focused on colonialism. The impact of the play can thus be seen in its rather large popularity in many theaters around the globe (Clements 358). As a Western author, she has the credibility to raise this controversial topic without having too many restrictions imposed on her; with that freedom, she creates these imaginary situations that reflect real-life events happening in Palestine. This ideology leads back to the concept of "us" vs. "them. Arabs were mostly referred to as the ones ranking at the lowest end of the cultural and scientific spectrums, and Westerners held more

sway and influence over audiences, especially the non-Arabs. While the mentality is completely wrong and biased, it has to be mentioned. In addition to this line of thought, many people falsely associated Arabs with religious fanaticism and terrorism, and these assumptions in turn hurt the credibility of Arab authors. It is always refreshing to see Western authors like Churchill championing controversial causes in the Middle East.

The Admission

For Motti Lerner, bringing into being an entirely new narrative revolving around an actual event was his own technique in approaching the Palestinian question. Deriving its significance from the 1948 massacre of the Palestinian Tantura Village, the play, taking place in the village of Tantur, -the concealed equivalent of Tantura- combines the imaginary with the real. The massacre itself resulted in the death of over 200 Palestinians and was not declared a massacre due to political reasons. The real incident took place on May 22nd-23rd, 1948, when separate regiments of Israel's Alexandroni Brigade stormed the village of Tantura and killed hundreds of innocent civilians. The village was part of a list of villages sanctioned for capture by the UN (The Tantura Massacre 5). Choosing such an event to be the inspiration behind the play could have probably been done so as to make the current situation in Palestine materialize and come to life in a medium with global outreach. As previously mentioned in Churchill's play, Israel's past and present are both enshrouded in colonial tendencies. Its people were once subjugated and are now the ones doing the subjugation. Lerner, as such, is "more interested in the residual layers of guilt, fear and psychic pain on all sides of the conflict than it is in laying out a hard-nosed exposé" (Marks). The play foregrounds different kinds of people, some who are trying to uncover the truth about the massacre and others whose best interests lie in burying it.

The main characters belong to two families that have rather provocative motives. The Israeli family procures contrasting ideologies. Colonel Avigdor, the family patriarch and the one commander who is behind the massacre, is hoping to keep the truth about the massacre buried, whereas his son, Giora, stops at nothing to make sure the truth comes to light. At the other end of the spectrum, there is the Palestinian family whose head, Ibrahim, has a similar mentality to that

of Giora. As for the son, Azmi, he only wants to live his life, which is why he does not want his father to keep pushing for the truth to come out.

The first thing to notice about the play is that it is being reenacted out of Giora's mind, giving anyone who might decide to make a new production a relatively easy way of assigning actors on stage. As seen in the prologue, Giora is trying to climb up to the hill of Tantur but fails, and this is because of his war injuries during his time in Lebanon. Before delving into the play itself, one should point out that, regardless of his eagerness to find the truth, Giora himself has killed a number of people during his service in the army in Lebanon. Scene 1 presents a short-lived harmony between the scion of the Jewish family, Giora, and the elder son of the Palestinian one. Starting the play with talks about a loan given by a Jew to an Arab foregrounds the ideological war existing between the two peoples. Avigdor hopes to buy the family's consent to build a new establishment on Tantur's land by helping them out in numerous situations; Avigdor funded Azmi's restaurant and his sister Samya's academic career. At the same time, the scene marks the beginning of the conflict, Azmi is seen going right away into the political repercussions of the *Intifada*. Mentioning how "the entire *Intifada* " is on their heads and then asking whether or not someone "hanged a flag here," (Lerner 15) proves that not all Arabs are interested in the cause itself. Despite being an Arab who spent his life on this land, he only cares about his well-being. After that, the audience gets introduced to more of Avigdor and Ibrahim, and they start discussing the development plan for Tantur, the village that got wiped out in 1948. When we come to think of it, we will see that the scheme to build a new city on a land with such bloody history, one that bore witness to a genocidal attempt, is met with heavy resistance from Ibrahim due to his past as one of its old inhabitants.

The scene ends when “Ibrahim stabs Avigdor in the shoulder before Azmi and Samya pull him away” (Lerner 18). To illustrate more on that, we look at the heated discussion between Ibrahim and Avigdor that ended with the latter getting stabbed. The tension between the two families arises as Ibrahim takes us back to his past in Tantur and the massacre he witnessed. Even after all these years, the wound of seeing his home destroyed is still there. It becomes established, from the very beginning, that Avigdor’s help is not out of mere kindness; he hopes to gain the family’s trust to build a new settlement without any issues. This conflict resembles how a lot of Zionists try to gain the trust of other people while, at the same time, they seek to get rid of Palestinians living on this land. It is compelling to see the manner in which people deal with each other when their beliefs and ideologies are threatened. Both Ibrahim and Avigdor tend to use words in Arabic and Hebrew when addressing each other. Words like “Allah y’atik el a’aafi” and “L’chaim” (Lerner 16) are used by Avigdor and Ibrahim in the same situation. Regardless of how they both give their best at cultural assimilation, they cannot lay the past to rest. Let us take, for example, Avigdor’s reply when asked for an actual reason behind building a settlement in Tantur. He says, “People need homes”, and Ibrahim’s painful remark on the earth not letting him “dig there”, makes the matter even worse (Lerner 17). Lerner focuses, here, on how Israelis want to make a land for themselves by force. Such actions would result in the displacement of an entire community of people.

In scene 3, Giora and Samya continue the same heated ideological debate that was first brought up by Ibrahim about the truth of his claims pertaining to the massacre of Tantur. Speaking of, the aim of that debate is to raise awareness about the current situation in Palestine. While we may be dealing with a decades-old setting and a massacre that happened more than 70 years ago, Lerner projects his message into this mockup of the massacre. The argument between

Giora and Samya escalates and ends with Samya reiterating how he cannot “agree to ending the occupation” (Lerner 22). One question to ask here would be how is it possible for someone to live alongside someone else whom they see as an enemy and inherently believe they should be dominated? That is what is happening here. The impetus behind this is, of course, political, social, and economic. The occupation forces use religious discourse as a mandate, a justification for war and occupying the Palestinian lands (Kaufman-Lacusta 6).

In scene 5, the perspective is shifted back to Azmi, who wants to disregard all the claims his father has been making. He is against the *Intifada*, the resistance, the demonstrations, and everything that points back to the massacre (Lerner 24). Being reliant on other people to help you get what you want, especially when these people may have been directly involved in the deaths of your countrymen, can be problematic. And when confronted with the fact that he is being “a coward” (Lerner 25), he defends his position by saying how he dedicated his life to helping his family. Lerner sheds light on this kind of distorted mentality, people who may believe what they are doing is right but, as a matter of fact, they could not be any more wrong. However, the real reason as to why he has been adopting this mentality will be discussed later on. The most crucial point in this scene is when Ibrahim talks about the day of the massacre. He makes the audience or the readers relive what he has been through and the constant state of fear he had to endure because of what he saw. As it happens, the stage directions provided in the text denote the hardships a regular Palestinian has to power through while watching their homeland drift into someone else’s ownership. This shall also be discussed in detail in the fourth chapter.

The previously-mentioned debate about Avigdor’s purported denial of his involvement in covering up the war crimes is brought up, once again, when Azmi says to Giora: “Well, you can sleep tight. He’s right. I’m not sure anything did happen” (Lerner 28). Giora is not convinced

that his father is innocent. Deep down, he knows that he is guilty, and that is why he believes Ibrahim and his claims. It may seem strange that a Jewish believes the word of an Arab over his own father's. Could this be because he is an academic, someone with the tenacity to find the truth? In terms of the argument itself, there were no real drastic changes. The same determination to get to the truth, and the same inclination -on Azmi's side- to have this matter dismissed altogether. We see a Jewish man who believes that these claims might turn out to be true, whereas his Palestinian counterpart is totally against it having a grain of truth. Not all people are interested in finding the truth, especially if this kind of truth will end up hurting their business. In that case, Avigdor and Azmi are alike.

Giora starts making a connection between Ibrahim's claims and his father's account -the one his mother has been trying to falsify- of the massacre of Tantur. He says, "I don't understand. You shot seventy people to calm down the others? Couldn't you shoot up in the air? Aim at their feet? I've also been surrounded by mobs a few times. Seventy people aren't killed by stray bullets" (Lerner 32). According to what Avigdor has mentioned, he, as a commander in the Israeli Army, could not stop his soldiers from killing unarmed and defenseless Palestinian citizens. All he is trying to deny is the number of people killed, but does he deny the act itself? No, and that is where the problem lies. Killing and violence, of course, begets killing; you would not just stand still while your countrymen are getting slaughtered by the occupation forces. And that is the conclusion Giora has reached; there is an actual justification for what happened to his legs. Despite what happened, Ibrahim was willing to let this go under the condition that Avigdor stops the construction of the new settlement. He committed a genocidal act and still wants to steal the land from its rightful owners. Being unable to garner this kind of support on his own,

Avigdor resorts to making people like Azmi believe they are expendable and that they owe their lives and futures to him.

Many, therefore, tend to think of themselves as second-rate citizens who should not be worthy of anything. Azmi diminishes his self-worth in this quote, “He knows I’m a tiny little Arab and he’s a big Jew. And no court will defend a tiny little Arab against a big Jew. If you were a tiny little Arab you’d know it” all because of him being an Arab (Lerner 36). This, as a result, complicates things. He believes he will never be able to beat a Jew. How can you make others consider helping you and take up your cause when you, yourself, do not?

Azmi then reveals what he has been feeling all along:

I’m not afraid. I’m looking to see which way the wind blows. I know what happened in Tantur. I know everything. They killed. Not just there. Everywhere. And those they didn’t kill, they expelled. From every city. From every village. We won’t forgive it the rest of our lives. But I’m also not going to talk about it. (To Ibrahim) And you’re not going to build any memorial here. Because I’m thinking of you. And her. And about the kids she’ll have.

(Lerner 37)

Many Palestinians carry these hidden feelings towards the occupation forces. It seems that it is not uncommon for many people, like Azmi, to hide their anger and fear only for the sake of their own survival. Should they make it known that they condemn all their doings and deeds, they will find themselves without shelter and food at best and probably might even lose their lives in the process. While choosing to hide your pain from the rest of the world may make you seem oblivious to the cause, you are also protecting yourself and others from a life of hardships and certain death. Azmi, wanting to avoid succumbing to the same fate as his deceased countrymen,

decides to keep everything locked deep down in his heart and accepts the grant given by Avigdor to fund his restaurant.

Not only does he reveal all of that, but he also teaches Giora a lesson about humanity and how his father, like many other ruthless warmongers, thought he could buy the people's silence and use his vast resources to do whatever he deems fit. After that scene, he kicks Giora out and makes it known to everyone else that he has not forgotten a thing about the massacre. He knows exactly what transpired all around him. What happened in this scene resembles a wake-up call to everyone in the Arab family. For the first time in decades, they are the ones holding power over the Jews.

Lerner, through Neta, Giora's fiancée, raises the issue of overly zealous Jews who do not care about anything except for their own gains, as seen in this quote: "If they had expelled more, there wouldn't be an intifada today. If they had killed more, maybe their war would have been the last war. If you had killed more, you wouldn't have been injured" (40). After everything has become as clear as it could ever be, Neta starts planting these seeds of doubt inside his head with such brutality and viciousness.

It goes without saying that Neta represents a large number of people who adopt this Zionist stance and do not care about the lives that might go to waste in the process. She is not trying to hide what she feels about the war. In fact, she calls for more needless killing, massacres, destruction, and never-ending violence. Justifying the horrible acts done in the name of self-preservation and survival has become the go-to place for almost all colonizers. Giora's manipulative family was the reason behind his eagerness to dig deeper and find the truth, the one that has been falsified for almost 30 years.

Avigdor then reveals the truth about the massacre:

Yes. We rampaged through the streets. Between the courtyards. Yes. I got swept away by my soldiers. I couldn't control them. Yes. I couldn't stop either. Yes. We shot those who hid in their houses. Yes. Those who were just throwing stones. Maybe even some women and old men who just peeped from their windows. Yes. Those who were trying to get away. But even so, it was a battle. Not a massacre.

(Lerner 43)

Avigdor finally acknowledges all the war crimes he and his soldiers committed against defenseless Palestinians. The gory description of the crime and the remorseless attitude he admits to have adopted, reflect actual horrors that took and still take place in the Palestinian lands. While this scene takes place right before the epilogue, this father-son ideological debate sums up the entirety of the action. As for the ending itself, we see a new establishment replacing the village of Tantur. The way the play ends attests to the necessity of resistance regardless of the end result.

Finally, why did Lerner decide to write this play in the first place? The characters, throughout the play, had their ulterior motives revealed to us. We have an Arab family head who wanted to unearth the truth, whereas his son saw it best to hinder this kind of investigation. However, the opposite happens with the Jewish family; the patriarch does not want anyone to get to the truth, while his son -fueled by his curious nature as an academic and the time he spent in Lebanon where he witnessed the brutality of war- wanted to get the full picture. Does that mean that Lerner's message was that there might be people from both sides of the conflict who are more alike than we may seem to understand? That might be the case, for he is an Israeli author writing about the occupation.

Arab Voices and Palestine

Scenes from 70 Years*

Being born to a Palestinian father and an Irish mother may have had a major impact on Khalil's writings. Instead of taking a step back to look at the machinations of war and its mainstream effects, she makes use of her background as a Palestinian to give us a deep cognizance of the ordinary Palestinian citizen and the hurdles they come across. Unlike more orthodox plays, this is a collection of jumbled scenes and situations where each -albeit short- could stand as its own short play detailing a very realistic aspect of Palestinian life. Khalil goes back and forth between the stories and adds more information as we get introduced to more characters and narratives. Within these short stories, the structured inequality between Palestinians and Israelis becomes clear for the duration of the entire play. When it comes to Palestine, not all situations and stories have to be political, and that is exactly what Khalil hopes to show. The play focuses in its entirety on scenes that explicitly and directly deal with stories and narratives that showcase interactions between people belonging to both sides of the conflict. Due to the sheer number of stories that span 70 years of the conflict, not all scenes will be engaged, and others may be briefly mentioned for the sake of consistency.

From the very beginning of the play, a palpable sense of bias can be felt with each character. No matter what their job, gender, or background is, they all go through the same circumstances with almost little to no difference. Something to notice about the play is how the title reflects the history of the entire conflict through words and utterances that resonate with each and every Palestinian who lives on the verge of death in every single moment of their lives. The version mentioned in this thesis is an updated version of *Scenes from 68 Years* which Khalil keeps updating for the sake of reaching a fully-realized chronicle of life under the occupation.

There are more recent versions of the play. However, this is the most updated version available to the public. This, therefore, is what makes theater different from other genres. Each year, Khalil adds more stories to her own dioramic chronicle of the war, representing another period in this never-ending dilemma. This shows yet another unique aspect of theater because you can simply add more to your play and have different performances that are not carbon copies of one another.

While the composition of backgrounds is different, there is a sense of universality that ties all stories and situations together. Khalil seeks, with that kind of cultural fusion, to leave no stone unturned and evaluate as many aspects of Palestinian life as possible. She even longs for that day when the number of years associated with the title stays “fixed” -once Palestine becomes free again- and that true and authentic representation of Arabs becomes the norm (Khoury et al. 50). Before taking on the burden of writing a play that encompasses almost the entirety of the conflict, Khalil sought to deconstruct the mundanely stereotypical representations of Arabs rampant in current media platforms (Khoury et al. 49). It is unfortunate that most representations focus on the mainstream idea of Arabs being terrorists. Combatting such widespread disinformation became the main focus of many of Khalil’s plays, starting with *Palestine: Plan D*, her first play about Palestine, all the way up to this play, whose purpose is to give a glimpse into lesser-known facts about the conflict.

The first scene features a minimalistic stage that shows almost nothing except for the actors who are to appear shortly. There is no lighting on the stage, everything is dark and eerie. There are no props seen on stage. However, the sound of a “body turning in a bed” is heard with a slight sigh signifying stillness (Khalil 51). Up to this point, the world is peaceful and calm. One moment later, the sound of soldiers kicking the door down and raiding the house is heard. This is when things start changing; it is the moment that marks a new state of fear and anxiety. The

aesthetics may not hold much importance here, but the sound makes up for it, and what matters is the situation that gets introduced -or built upon- in each separate scene. It is worth mentioning again that the play does not move chronologically. The scenes are not even numbered, which is interesting, to say the least, as this gives the production team the space and freedom required to tackle the scenes in any order they see fit.

Starting with a reference to the political state of the country, the inhumane treatment of Palestinians, and the way their rights get violated is meant to be an attention-grabber for the audience and a means of sending a strong message to those who keep defending the occupation forces. The scene, as gathered from the stage directions and taking place in the year 2010, mainly relies on sound effects to make it more real and plausible. While Khalil could have started her play with other less horrific scenes, she chose this one to make a statement and proclaim that life in Palestine is always plagued with the horrors of war. We see soldiers unlawfully breaking into a house full of civilians. They keep shouting without even thinking about the family or the child they may be scaring. The moment one of the soldiers knows that they are filming this horrendous action, they become unhinged and keep shouting, “IS HE STILL FILMING”, “WHO THE FUCK IS FILMING”, and “PUT THAT FUCKING CAMERA DOWN OR I’LL SHOOT YOU” (Khalil 52). The language used here is quite peculiar, to say the least. The words, the diction, the cursing, the shouting and yelling at innocent civilians, and the firm orders thrown around without second thoughts, without any regard for the children or the neighbors who may be listening in out of fear and desperation, are all there to prove the above-mentioned violations. It is mentioned in the scene that the audience do not know whether or not the screaming child is actually inside the house. This does not make much difference as the child cries and screams when he/she hears everything. Using such language on stage may prove to be problematic and could lead to some

harsh criticism from the audience or professional critics and this is due to the fact that it is a theatrical work after all. However, it may have been necessary to display the monstrosities of the occupation forces through the use of this language. Despite its fleeting length, the scene shows the brutality of the occupation forces; they did not want their wickedness to be filmed and revealed to the entire world. With politics seeping into people's daily lives, this is done to break into the play and raise the issue of inequality and racist attitudes against Palestinians.

The second scene takes place in 1948, the year during which the play starts. On the surface, it looks like a rather innocent scene where a father praises his son. However, the boy is injured, and it is implied in another scene on page 63 that he wants to take up arms against their enemies. It is fascinating that even children are aware of what is happening around them and want to have an active role in fighting for their rights. The ambivalence towards Palestinians can be attributed to the colonial mentalities mentioned before. While we may be able to find a humanized version of the occupation forces in future scenes that solely depict dealings between Palestinians and Israelis, Khalil still decided to start -in this version at least- with these two pieces of narrative so as to highlight the brutality of Israeli soldiers.

In the following scene that takes place in 2003, on page 53, we get to witness a very simple interaction -a humorous one, in fact- between a Palestinian shopkeeper and an Israeli soldier sitting atop of a tank. The diction utilized here is informal, simple, and funny. We are not dealing with explicit politics, but rather the political subtleties instead. We have two ordinary people from both sides; the shopkeeper who is trying to make a living and a lowly soldier who is expected to follow orders. During their conversation, the soldier adds, "Sorry mate, I'd help if I could - but I'm just a lowly Turai - a Private" (Khalil 53). He is admitting that he holds no power; he cannot help the shopkeeper even if he wants to. That is not the norm, though. Not all

people can put their differences aside and see the human side within each. And that is exactly what will happen in the continuation of this scene.

With that being said, being accustomed to getting thoroughly questioned and having one's own personal belongings checked on almost a daily basis is nothing to be happy about. Nearly every Palestinian is subjected to the same humiliating treatment, and the soldier, in the continuation of the previous scene on page 55, is the perfect example of that. She does not care about the reason for which these people are trying to pass the Huwara checkpoint. The Bluehatchback Man -who is trying to deliver goods to the shopkeeper- and the Woman were both denied entry. For the latter, though, it was more heart-wrenching, as it turns out she is a student who is trying to see her elderly parents. In spite of having the papers required, the soldier reneges and stops her. Borders or checkpoints play an integral role in the lives of Palestinians. They always find themselves bombarded with questions at checkpoints that always lead to humiliation. Khalidi adds, "at each of these barriers which most others take for granted, every Palestinian is exposed to the possibility of harassment, exclusion, and sometimes worse, simply because of his or her identity" (Khoury et al. 2).

Perhaps the importance of the play can be attributed to its amalgamation of the political and the social; it is a conjunction of political and social circumstances. The audience gets exposed to one part that is heavily political and another that is related to the social side of Palestinians and their lives under the occupation. The scene on page 60, taking place in 1992, highlights ordinary citizens in a group outing that has nothing to do with the war raging on around them. This "group of women sit on a rug outside, they have a bag with food in it and are sharing a picnic," (Khalil 60) and want to live as normally as possible. These women are trying to go on about their lives as any normal person would. When you live in a besieged country, it

becomes nearly impossible to live normally. So, you have to adapt to the situation accordingly. One might wonder what is special about this scene. The answer, as simple as it sounds, is nothing; there is nothing special about hoping to have a glimpse of how any ordinary human being lives. The simplicity of their needs is more than enough to bring the discussion about Palestinian rights to an end. Palestinians are asking for the most basic rights, and their resistance is built on regaining these rights.

Harlow says that “Resistance narratives by contrast display the historical and social context which produced such symbols or images” (85). This is why it is imperative to dig into the social context of the conflict, maybe even more so to dethrone current misconceptions about Palestinians. Arabs, on the one hand, are often misrepresented and narrowly defined in such a manner that makes approaching anything that relates to Arabs always volatile and controversial. Aspects like post-war societal changes are not actually explored to their fullest degree. The center of attention is always political, and politics barely scratches the surface of what is truly happening.

On the other hand, and when it comes to Jews, not all Jews are Zionists. However, many lack the courage or the information needed to voice their disagreements and concerns because if they decide to do otherwise and go against the consensus, they might as well be sealing their own fate. Others may choose to follow what these Zionists say because they are oblivious to what the Israeli State is doing, and this is problematic (Rodinson and Chiari 20). A good example of this line of thought can be seen with the friendly soldiers that were mentioned in the previous scenes. They are not aggressive; they do not mean to harm the civilians. Yet, they cannot do anything to bring about a real change. They accept all the lies and the disinformation they are being fed without checking how authentic they are first. Unfortunately, if someone tries to deconstruct the

information they are receiving from the Israeli State or even the media, it will not end well for them.

Amar-Dahl explores the origins of Zionism and the Jewish State:

Israel is a product of Zionism. The Jewish state originates in Jewish nationalism that emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century in Europe. In the course of the secularization and formation of national states that was taking place in Western Europe, the religiously hued, old Christian hatred towards Jews assumed racist features, turning into virulent anti-Semitism. At the same time, efforts to achieve real emancipation for European Jews were failing. Consequently, as new approaches to a resolution seemed to be called for, the Jewish people themselves took up the “Jewish question.”

(Amar-Dahl 1)

Referring back to the views of Amar-Dahl, the nation in its entirety was built upon the concept of Jewish Nationalism, that all Jews come first. To put it more simply, Jews had to make sure that they remain uncontested, even if that meant taking up the mantle of the oppressors in turn. It is always about preserving one nation, one people, at the expense of expendable others. By going into the political ramifications of the conflict, we understand how difficult it may be to completely disregard or even marginalize politics and direct our attention to other social issues. It is not an exaggeration to say that politics is mixed with everything that pertains to Palestine and the conflict itself.

In the scene that takes place in 2005, where a Palestinian decides to see his former house one last time, Khalil writes, “The resident looks at the Man who stares back – he doesn’t smile, nor does he frown. He wears a blank expression on his face. The Resident considers this face” (54). Losing one’s homeland is a thing, but seeing someone living inside your own house as if it

was never yours, is a different story altogether. The pain of loss is doubled, and nothing can heal that. Despite being the original owner of the house, the man is not seen uttering any words; he just nods whenever the translator asks or says anything; everything else is said or rather filtered through the translator. A melancholic feeling emerges out of this scene because of how realistic it is. The original landowners are turned into mere guests, guests who need to ask for permission to be allowed inside. This house, as such, is a microcosm of Palestine itself.

During the scene that continues the previous one, Khalil, through the voice of the Jewish resident, says, “This is the end of the journey started by my grandmother. And now we, she, can have peace. It’s like it was built for us. A Home” (65, 66) The provocative attitude of the resident coupled with the unequivocal sense of entitlement of many Jews in the play seem to take us back to the idea of Jewish Nationalism. Jews were desperate to build a home for themselves, regardless of the repercussions. The resident does not believe they did anything wrong; he inherently believes that this microcosm, this house was up for the taking, waiting for its rightful owners to claim it. It is ironic to see the ending of this scene where the roles are reversed. The owner becomes a guest and is given memorabilia, a tile of his old house.

The jumbled nature of the play embodies the chaotic nature of life itself in Palestine. In addition to war-ridden places and unequal treatment of Palestinian citizens, we see scenes that seem and feel light-hearted, we see people trying to make do with what they have. Underneath the war and its complexities, there is this simplicity of ordinary people living their lives in these harsh conditions. Making sure that voices from both sides are heard was done to show that while not everyone may be in favor of continuing the war, there are people who do not want it to end and subside in order to promote their Zionist agenda. To conclude, the main point of the play, I believe, is not to take sides or incriminate one over the other, but rather to explicate how identity,

equality, racial differences, and even basic human rights are tackled in the context of the conflict between Palestine and Israel.

Tennis in Nablus

Unlike the previous three plays, Ismail Khalidi's *Tennis in Nablus* adopts quite a peculiar stance about Palestinian struggles near the first half of the 20th century. According to Khalidi, the play itself takes inspiration from an old historical incident where Palestinians were shackled and forced to act, as degrading and humiliating as this may sound, as ball boys for members of the British authorities. The reason behind choosing the year 1939 as the exact date for this play was that Khalidi wanted the American audience, most of whom were not even aware that Palestine existed before 1948, to be exposed to the situation more closely and vividly (Khoury et al. 95). The comic and satirical attitude through which Khalidi approaches the question of Palestine encompasses much of the controversy surrounding the topic, starting from how Palestine was perceived by other countries to how global powers such as the British Empire had a hand in all current struggles. Similar to that of Khalil's situation, Khalidi's origins as a Palestinian American provide him with more insight and access to knowledge of both the Palestinian question and the American attitude when it comes to how it is assessed. Khalidi is also interested in raising a number of issues and questions that plague the Arab World in general.

From the very beginning, it is apparent that Khalidi aims to bring issues of race and identity to light through humor. By making this comparison in this quote, "Who would have known that such a dark elegant purple orb was related to the fat lumpy white potato, eh?" (Khalidi 97), he outright brings up the issue of race, and metaphorically shows that even when both species are part of the nightshade family, they are not treated the same way. One way of interpreting this is that he could be referring back to the never-ending conflict between the whites and people of color, Arabs and non-Arabs, with the first being looked at as exotic and eccentric, and the other as the wealthier and civilized counterparts. It is an implicit, satirical remark about

racial inequality after all. The rest of the conversation between the Palestinian old rebel Waleed and the soldier is humorous as well as interesting. It turns into an absurd interaction between an Arab rebel and a soldier who believes himself to be a figure of authority. The prologue embraces the absurdity of life under colonial rule.

Subsequently, the tone Khalidi employs in scene one is a combination of sarcasm and seriousness. Through the voice of the rebel Yusef Al-Qudsi, Khalidi presents his own view concerning colonialism in his account of the British as colonizers who are “after the sun” and “want to conquer everything south of their dreary little island” (Khalidi 100). Not all people are staunch supporters of the Palestinian cause, though. As has been the case in *Scenes from 70 Years**, Tariq, Yusef’s nephew, is an example of self-righteousness and tenacity. The first impression about Tariq is that he comes off as this flexible Palestinian businessman whose resourcefulness and mentality have completely blinded him to what his countrymen are facing. At first, he deals with Jews to make unimaginable profits, even if it means disregarding his own people. This urges one to delve deeper into the general representation of Arabs on the global stage.

In scene two, this was heard on the radio in Tariq’s office, “And from Palestine, British Commanders hailed the success of anti-terrorist measures against the ‘Arab Revolt’, which has raged on since 1936” (Khalidi 101). Now, the way Arabs are perceived is, at the very least, questionable. Creating stereotypes and making them applicable to an entire people has always been a tool that colonizers resort to since time immemorial. In order to officially legitimize the attempts of colonizing a nation, the colonizer has to act as if they are doing the world a favor. In this case, the British are ridding the world of terrorists and this in turn gave them the legitimacy required to colonize Palestine for almost 30 years. Instead of referring to people who are fighting

for the liberation of their country as rebels, they had quite a few names associated with them, names such as “terrorists, insurrectionists, brigands, marauders, robbers, and gangs” and even the “inflamed mob” were common. This affectation was meant to garner the support of all other countries, and it does not stop there. Almost all the non-British were insulted and reduced to mere “brutes”, “wogs”, and “ugly specimens” (Hughes 15).

Racial discrimination was at its peak during the Arab Revolt. Jews were put in a higher status when compared to Arabs, and this definitely shows in the play as well. Despite being Palestinian himself, Tariq, at the beginning of the play, shows no interest in being involved in Arab politics. And even when Reggie, one of Tariq’s acquaintances, makes a comment about Arabs and how “Not all Orientals” are “the same” (Khalidi 102), Tariq does not even try to refute this racist remark. Despite his silence, it is clear that he, like many other Palestinians, is hiding something appertaining to his true allegiance. This can be seen by inspecting his actions during the same scene; he tries to read an Arabic newspaper and an English one at the same time. He is shattered between two worlds, two conflicting identities; the British identity, the one that made him a successful businessman, and the Palestinian identity to which he originally belongs.

Such actions may require one to pose some questions as to how this kind of fragmented identity works. Race and identity are both determined by certain factors that fall under political and social attitudes. The point being is that this rather peculiar duality or identity fragmentation comes from the long-standing conflicts and clashes between the East and the West. Khalidi burrows into this by building up the character of Tariq as someone who is unsure of his loyalties; he does not know to which side he belongs. While at first, he may seem like a pretentious businessman whose main goal is to make as much money as possible, this simple act proves otherwise. He may seem unable to defend his powerless countrymen, but he is not religiously

defending the British either. Rather than living as a powerless Palestinian, he thought that, through his assimilation into British culture, he would be able to rid himself of his old identity that kept shackling him.

It would be difficult, or rather impossible, to pinpoint his identity now. When a man thinks he belongs not to one country but two, it causes a lot of confusion in his own mind with regard to his true identity. Being Palestinian, however, means that his fortune and wealth are always threatened. He postulates that being in possession of the means required to live a life of luxury and peace is enough to live in this world. But, he knows, deep down, that he will never be seen as an equal, as a fully-assimilated member of the British community. The life of an ordinary Palestinian is always harrowing, degrading, and traumatizing, which could be the reason why he turned to that life in the first place. This is to escape the constraints of his identity, and this idea will be refined in the latter scenes of the play.

Khalidi then, through the portrayal of Yusef, makes a distinction between Arab Jews with whom they had no quarrels and the Zionists whose ambitions were built on the idea of carving their own patch of land and building it upon the corpses of thousands and thousands of the indigenous population of Palestine. He says that the Jews they are currently dealing with are “Europeans” that are “fighting side by side with the British Empire”. As for the ones they lived in harmony with, these were Arab Jews and not Zionists (105). This explicit comparison is necessary to have a full understanding of the history of the conflict itself. If someone defends the occupation and makes the case of Palestinians being anti-Semitic, this line of thought can be used to refute that. If we look at the history of Palestine, we will know that the term “Arab” used to refer to a great number of people belonging to all different religions and sects. The problem, thus, was never with Jews or the idea of finding a solution to co-exist, but rather it was with

Zionists who wanted to totally eliminate the original Palestinian State and replace it with their own.

Later on, when Tariq says that these “European” Jews are his business partners, Anbara, Yusef’s wife, adds that “They’re building a country right on top of ours” (Khalidi 105). Again, the aforementioned issue is being reiterated and reaffirmed. It is not coexistence. It is outright and explicit thievery, one that many countries chose to disregard entirely. While being confronted with these hard truths, Tariq tries to dismiss them to the best of his ability. Once he sees with his own eyes that he cannot help his uncle, his perception changes.

As previously mentioned, the concept of nationalism differs from one nation to the other, and the two conflicting types have their own supporters who champion their ideals. In this situation, Tariq calls for a quite different type of nationalism, “rational nationalism” as he says (Khalidi 107), one that he believes is aimed at approaching matters with a more collected and rational mindset devoid of any personal feelings or emotions. I believe this can be attributed to the way he originally thought things were, he looked at his countrymen as mere thugs and cannot be trusted with holding intellectual discussions with the British. While his first impression of Palestinian Nationalism may have been utterly misplaced, the point he makes can definitely be applied to Jewish Nationalism that is bound to come in the following years. Instead of founding a state on top of a long-standing one, they could have at least tried to look for a more peaceful solution. Nevertheless, the ethnonationalistic nature of Zionists cannot be stressed enough. This ideology espouses the creation of a nation based on ethnicity and race. Anything that does not fall under that is heavily excluded from the normative.

It is indeed clear that Khalidi is not focusing on the founding of a Jewish State, but rather on the implications that led to it. If the idea that Palestinians are not civilized enough to have the

right of self-determination kept persisting, then this would eventually become the norm. In simple terms, it will pave the way for succeeding colonizers to have a pretext for invading Palestine. This is exactly what happened; Jews were given precedence over Palestinians and, in time, became the sole owners of the land.

The brilliant conversation Khalidi concocts and the powerful sentiment in this quote, “We’ll be the foreigners soon enough and your business partners will be the citizens,” (111) in Act 1 Scene 5, between Yusef the rebel and his brainwashed nephew Tariq, is an acute representation of a conflict that brews inside many Palestinians who may appear to be indifferent to the cause. It starts with Yusef chastising his nephew in quite a humorous manner and goes all the way to this point in which he makes an effort to explicitly topple the fallacious beliefs that linger within Tariq’s own mind. Despite his reputation as a powerful Palestinian businessman, he was imprisoned alongside his uncle. And this was definitely a shocking thing to happen to him; Tariq, like many who follow in the same footsteps, believes money and power to be the solution that can put them in an equal position to that of a British. Internalizing suffering and humiliation is also another angle we have to consider, here. Near the end of the scene, Tariq makes a provocative remark saying how Arabs “need to be ruled” until they learn “how to behave” (Khalidi 112). What kind of manipulation are we talking about here if Arabs themselves internalize the concepts upon which colonization was built? And breaking free from such faux pas is not thus simple, after all. By addressing the issue of internalizing colonial biases, Khalidi hopes to unearth the truth behind those who may seem uninterested in the political cause itself.

As for the British, they had no issues dealing with Jews as long as they served a purpose in their longstanding ventures and ambitions. In spite of that kind of disposition, they still have a conspicuous suspicion towards them as they cannot know for sure where their true allegiance

lies. The General himself does not trust them, nor is he fond of them, believing them to be troublesome and “not as simple as the Arab” (Khalidi 114). Near the end of the conversation, he almost insults Hirsch the Jew by comparing the servants to being as shifty as a “pack” of Jews (Khalidi 115). Curiously enough, this thought-provoking declaration was made right after the General decreed that Yusef shall be made his own “ball boy” which would both send a message to all other Arabs and serve as a physical and emotional humiliation for the Arab rebel himself. This is heavily reinforced in Act 2, Scene 2, when Yusef mentions the relationship between the British and the Jews and how they “look down on them and fear them at once” because they believe them to be “plotting to rule the world” (Khalidi 120). The question is, how would that classification affect the conflict between Palestine and Israel? The play may not explicitly mention the relationship between Arabs and Jews, but what happens here can be treated as a precursor to the conflict. Arabs were treated as fodder in this war; their lives did not hold much value if compared to the Jews. According to what Khalidi may be on to, Jews, to the British, were a threat. And in order to contain that threat, they were given free rein to do as they please in Palestine, ultimately resulting in establishing the State of Israel. Another important point that needs to be clarified is that some may start referring to Arabs as anti-Semitic haters of Jews. Nothing of the sort is true. Afterwards, Tariq defends Jews saying that “Not all of them think like that” and Yusef replies that “the ones that matter do” (Khalidi 121). This straightforward statement ends this entirely futile accusation.

In order to contextualize the above-mentioned conversation, we have to understand what happened to Tariq in jail. Right before Hirsch’s visit, Yusef makes a remark that Tariq does “not oppose them when they speak of us as trash to be disposed of” (Khalidi 124). Afterwards, Hirsch visited Tariq in jail and brought him papers detailing his release. The discussion between both

made visible the real ambitions of Jews. The Jewish State is now on the verge of becoming a reality, and, to Tariq, that definitely seemed like a nightmare in the making. Hirsch, like many Jews, may not have had any ill-will towards Arabs, but he could not voice his disagreement. Silence, in this exact occurrence, begets violence and war. This makes no difference because the ones in power will simply go with what plans and strategies they devise, believing that all Jews out there are championing the cause and the creation of a Jewish State. I believe that Hirsch may, deep down, be quite supportive of the creation of the State. He does not explicitly say this, but if we take a look at the way he mentioned that Palestine will “look like Paradise. Even to the non-zionists” since they have no place to call home, it may lead to some suspicions about where he stands. According to his own reasoning, he is not a Zionist, but he still is in favor of the new Jewish State. Ironically, that makes him a Zionist, even if he does not yet realize it. Zionism, by definition, refers to Jews who wished to consolidate their presence in Palestine and make it their permanent home by replacing the actual Palestinian State.

Next, the General makes his allegiance known to everyone. He says he is “neither anti-Arab, nor anti-Jew, but simply, utterly and eternally pro-British” (Khalidi 128). Making such a bold statement requires a deep look into colonialism. The General seeks to better the position of the British Empire through what he may see as bickering between two inferior powers. Should the British be able to benefit from Arabs and Jews tearing themselves apart over land disputes, then nothing else would please him more. In that scene (Act II, Scene 7), he dresses up as Hitler at a party that hosts a number of Jews. The way things are, he does not care whether or not this may upset his Jewish guests. He knows they hold the power over both Arabs and Jews, and no one would question their actions. The General, thus, is the embodiment of colonial tyranny and pride.

The General's maniacal display of power does not simply end with his theatrics with Jews. When he ordered the execution of Yusef, he wanted to make it known to everyone that nobody stands in the way of the British Empire and its prowess. This, here, is the peak of agony. A figure of the rebellion has been obliterated and humiliated even in death as the General "insists the Arab watch his tennis match. From the balcony" (Khalidi 131). In addition to being the "ball boy" of British authorities in his life, his dead corpse bears witness to another tennis match. Like many other Palestinian rebels, he was not afforded honor or dignity, not even in death. The colonizer aims to set an example for everyone else by putting the body of a dead rebel on display throughout this grim tennis match. This match epitomizes the morbidity of war. The issue is not Yusef losing his life, but rather his country, history, and identity. The General, or the typical colonizer, revels in seeing their power cemented through these heinous acts of terrorism. This would be the best time to reverse the roles, to ask questions about who the real terrorist is. Is it a man who dies while defending his own homeland? Or a warmonger who kills and destroys without mercy to obtain something that never belonged to them?

To conclude, the title of the play suggests that the entirety of the action itself is an apparatus through which we get a more complete picture of the humiliation Arabs have to endure under foreign rule. It is all there to build up to that point in the play at which we firsthand experience the true purpose behind this then-elusive tennis match. The war that is being fought here is not simply one that is merely physical; it is cultural, emotional, and mental as well. A war that ought to be fought on as many fronts as one can imagine.

Theatrical Overview: Palestinian Horizons on Stage

Theater, as seen in the previous chapters, can be a powerful tool for getting certain truths to the public. The four authors, no matter how different or similar their techniques are, were all heading towards the same direction, vouching for the same cause. It is not only the work itself that matters, however, as the authors themselves and their own set of beliefs and ideals contribute as much to the cause in question. Each of the four authors has a certain background and message that pushed them to write the play in the first place. What makes works written by Arab authors informative has to do with authors having enough knowledge about Palestine to present authentic data to their audience. They know more about Palestinian identity and history, which can be quite useful in interpreting the conflict (Khalidi 12).

Interpreting the ideological stances of the text author, therefore, is as important as criticizing the text. Said believed that the critic's "worldliness" is "just as fundamental as the worldliness of the text" (Ashcroft and D.P.S 30). The thoughts and experiences the author brings into their own text may well be worth inspecting, for you can get an overarching view of what compelled the author to write in the first place. It is, therefore, crucial to understand how each author thinks.

Starting with Western authors, both of them were shunned due to their pro-Palestine political stances. Having seen the global inaction and negligence towards Palestine, Churchill decided to write her piece on the conflict and the history of Zionism, while exposing herself to an uncontrollable backlash in the process. It is worth mentioning that Churchill was set to receive the 2022 European Drama Award, but it got retracted because the Award Jury deemed her play "anti-Semitic" ("Cancellation of Award"). Similarly, Lerner's life had a direct effect on his writing. Being a former army officer, he himself had witnessed firsthand the brutality of wars.

During the 1973 war, he was a captain in the Israeli Army and was wholeheartedly against wars to the point that he rallied a number of students and protested against wars. As a result of his stance on Israeli politics, most of his political views were dismissed (Hoffman). When someone gets heavily involved in something as brutal as a war would be, they usually become desensitized to things involved, like human suffering. Nonetheless, Lerner was the complete opposite; he was always against wars and killing innocents for profit or personal gains.

Meanwhile, the Arab authors had their own take on colonization as well. Khalidi mentions that he “came upon a passage in a book by an Israeli historian in which he documents an instance of Palestinian prisoners chained at the feet and used as ball boys for the tennis matches of the British authorities” (Khoury et al. 95). Wanting to inspect the reverberations that came to be associated with the British colonization of Palestine, he lays the groundwork for his play by recreating the aforementioned instance that attests to the fact that colonization is never a door to progression as colonizers want people to believe. Lastly, Khalil decided to probe into the lives of Palestinians so as to make sure their stories become known to everyone ignorant of the cause. Her main aim is to deconstruct this stereotypical idea about Arabs. A great number of Arabs are looked down upon and perceived as terrorists who threaten the well-being of the country in which they live. As such, her play is concerned with taking a step back to examine the lives of ordinary Palestinians and disprove these outrageous claims. Their stories, she believes, are “full of pathos, drama and dark, dark, wry humor,” and worthy of admiration (Khoury et al. 49).

Churchill, for one, was one of the staunch supporters of Palestine. This kind of support, coupled with her decision to write *Seven Jewish Children*, caused quite an uproar within the global stage and earned her a good deal of infamy along the way. Seeing how Palestine was

doomed to be occupied with the preemptive attacks on Gaza in 2008, entitled “Operation Cast Lead,” she was compelled to write this piece as an answer to the atrocities committed in Palestine. It is by no means an ordinary play. The children, the primary characters, are not foregrounded; they are not meant to be physically visible, but the value they add to the theatrical performance is massive. The children could well be the readers or the audience themselves, as they are the ones being addressed by the parents in each scene. In this case, the fourth wall may actually be broken. There is nothing that makes the audience removed from the action and this, indeed, helps with the message Churchill is trying to convey.

In all different kinds of plays, the behavior of characters and their interaction with one another can actually invoke a rather edifying insight into their character development on stage or reflect a controversial issue away from the work’s premise. For Churchill and Khalil, they both employ the same technique of not naming their characters. They are more concerned with the scenes and the implications of the action itself. Nothing is more important than articulating life under the occupation.

Churchill’s characters are not fixed. There are three characters in the play, and they may get replaced in every sequence. She specifically mentions that “The characters are different in each small scene as the time and child are different” (1). Of course, this is only applicable to a live performance. As for the text itself, the characters change every sequence. We have an older generation of Jews in the first sequence, which would probably go all the way back to the Holocaust. In the seventh sequence, however, we get to see the current generation of Jews advocating pure Zionism. The absent child does not detract from the actual message. In fact, she adds to it. Instead of relying on the physical interaction between the characters, what we have is a more intellectual exchange of ideologies between a plethora of parents belonging to different

generations and the audience. The reason she chose not to show an actual child is because she wanted to create this connection between the parents and the audience as they become an integral part of the performance. This opens up more ways of tackling the Palestinian issue. Rather than focusing on the character of the child or children, for that matter, in the play and the way they develop and grow within the play's timeline, their absence leaves everything else up to the audience to interpret. Do the children resemble succeeding generations of Jews, or are they merely the same people but presented in different eras? Of course, Churchill mentions that they can either be played by the same actors who keep rotating between the characters or by different people altogether. Again, this means there is no correct answer, and each theatrical production may do things differently. The parents themselves, in almost all seven sequences, conform to some kind of confirmation bias, and this can be clearly seen in lines like "Tell her we're going home", "Tell her it's the land God gave us", "Tell her they're Bedouin", and "Tell her this wasn't their home", all the way to "Tell her we're entitled" (Churchill 2-5). All these examples trace this inclination towards a certain truth they are propagating. The idea behind the concept of confirmation bias is that you are essentially looking at evidence to bend and manipulate the truth to suit your own agenda.

Absent characters require a certain, delicate handling by the author because they may weaken the structure of the play if done incorrectly. By looking at the silent children in the play, we will find that they are directed towards a certain ideology, which prompts these innocent children to think like their Zionist parents. Following a pattern of directives, Churchill mostly relies on "Tell her" and "Don't tell her" to document the dogmatic changes and transformations the Jews went through. As seen in the first sequence, they once were a colonized group of people who lacked the means to fight the Nazis. The parents in the first sequence were far from being

the brutal colonizers mentioned in the last sequence; they were only trying to protect the next generation, saying, “Don’t tell her they’ll kill her” (Churchill 1). Yet, the generational gap is quite large and can no longer be bridged. What started as a simple wish for survival and not succumbing to death eventually turned into grim and dark desires to colonize, enslave, and destroy. The drastic difference between both lines of thought begs the question of whether or not it would be possible to undo such a transformation. The first generation of Jews was colonized and went through harsh conditions under the Nazi regime. Still, instead of becoming empathetic about other peoples, they became the enemy they thought they swore to defeat. By inspecting this gap, Churchill wanted to kill any attempts at using the concept of confirmation bias to support baseless claims and accusations about Palestinian supporters being anti-Semitic. The controversial widespread idea of anti-Semitism, however, -that often gets thrown around without even thinking about what it entails- means that one has to make sure it is properly defined in its context before haphazardly using it. Anti-Semitism is defined as a certain degree of hatred or discrimination towards Jews. That is not where the issue lies, though, because there is also another term which is anti-Zionism. What happens is that people usually mistake one for the other. They think that an attack on Zionism is an attack on Jews, which could not have been further from the truth. The four authors, including Churchill, in fact, are condemning the Zionist mentality and not the Jews themselves, and that makes a huge difference. If the authors are indeed prejudiced against Jews, then how is it possible that some Jews, like Motti Lerner, harshly criticize the colonial practices of Israel in their works? As for Lerner, Is he anti-Semitic? Is he attacking himself? Of course not. Their intention is to call out particular practices that have been hailed as attempts to defend the homelands of the Jews when, in fact, they are nothing less than disguised and extreme violations of human rights, the one they claim to champion.

Khalil, in a similar regard, implements the same formula of nameless characters. Nothing is known about the characters. Their names, backgrounds, and ages do not matter. What matters the most is their identity and what set of beliefs they follow. All the characters are nameless except for two, Rula and Nadia, who appear in three different scenes. Rula first makes an appearance in the scene on page 54 and is further introduced on page 69 where she gives the audience a strong soliloquy. As the only named characters in the entire play, there has to be a valid reason as to why she specifically chose these two girls to be the ones known to the audience. The first scene in which they both were mentioned does not show much in terms of character background except that they are both cousins, and that the other girl does not live in Palestine but somewhere in the West. With that being said, Rula's humorous remark about Palestine "being ahead of the West in something" (Khalil 55) is quite saddening, and the sentiment itself has a profound meaning. Imagine someone living in a war-ridden country, and all they came to know and understand revolves around the status-quo of that country; everything, to them, is politicized. The pain, therefore, of living in a fragmented world, one that does not support your country, can be rather unbearable.

In the next scene, the character of Rula is fleshed out with her inner thoughts being laid out in front of us, and the audience gets immersed into her own innocent world. Her soliloquy breaks the fourth wall between the characters and the audience when she, herself, says, "There's no audience. Or is there? Maybe I'm being watched" (Khalil 69). She keeps anxiously mumbling and talking to herself while making simple remarks about the rather non-intelligent people in the library and how nerve-wracking it is for her to talk to her cousin who resides "on the other side of the world" (Khalil 69). Like all Palestinians, she has her own dreams and unique ways of expressing herself, which can be done through writing or even thinking out loud and uttering her

own thoughts. It is clear that she thinks like a rebel, a young freedom fighter whose main weapon is rhetoric. In her own mind, she weaves intricate plans revolving around Palestinian *tahrir* or freedom.

At the end of the scene on page 69, the country in which her cousin lives is revealed; it is England. In the next scene on page 81, the difference between the two countries is heavily stressed. The two young women have different perspectives when it comes to almost everything. Rula's first reaction to Nadia's flat is innocent; she was bedazzled by how "lovely and clean" it looks (Khalil 81). Rula appears to be scared and anxious about meeting her cousin who lives in London. They are both geographically and culturally far from each other. It seems that Nadia is assimilated into British culture, whereas Rula somewhat clings to her origins. Rula's mixed feelings about the West manifest themselves in her words in the previous scenes as well as this one; at first, she seemed melancholic about living in Palestine while her own cousin, probably, leads a much better life abroad. Yet, she confessed that she hates Shakespeare and does not like his works, which could be an indication of her true feelings towards Western culture.

The first thing that may come to mind, because of how eager and anxious Rula was in the previous scenes, is that she is looking for a way out, a reason to leave her life in the Palestinian lands behind. That is not the case. As strange as it turns out to be, she was only asking whether it was possible for her to get Nadia's old phone; it is such a simple request that does not involve much from her cousin. She does not ask for much, nor does she wish to leave her country, and this one request gives us an idea of how life under the occupation is. Something else to notice, here, is that she said her father thinks it is "safer" for her to cover her face whenever she goes out. Is it about concealing her identity? This illuminating conversation does not end here as we see Rula kindly extending an invitation to her cousin to come and stay with them. Her reply is

quite interesting as she says, “I want to—but my mom says it's too danger- she stops herself” and then adds, “It’s too expensive” and the connection goes down (Khalil 83). Life in the Palestinian lands is difficult as it is. Here, in this short line of thought, the generational gap is expressed. On the one hand, there are these two young women who live in different parts of the world. One has her life revolving around the political state of her country, and the other -who may yet be influenced by her mother- does not truly understand how life in Palestine is. On the other, and while we may only have these two characters on stage, there is also the absent character of the mother. As mentioned in the previous chapters, a considerable number of Palestinians sought refuge in other countries. Nadia’s mother could be one of these people who decided to leave everything behind in Palestine because of its volatility. Some people who belong to the newer generations born outside of Palestine may not know much about their homeland. Consequently, this may cause them to be desensitized to what is currently happening over there. It is unclear if that is the case, though; we do not have any information about Nadia’s background or her mother’s. It is all speculation at this point, but maybe that is precisely why Khalil did not mention anything about their parents, because it is up to the audience to interpret that. Not to mention the abrupt ending to the conversation, which raises a couple of questions. Did Nadia do that on purpose only for the sake of avoiding a confrontation with her cousin about the state of Palestine? Or did it happen accidentally? Again, we do not know.

On the other side of the equilibrium, we have the characters devised by both Lerner and Khalidi. Their characters do substantially grow and develop throughout the play’s lifespan. These are characters whose motives change to reflect their current ideologies and state of mind. Both sides of the conflict are presented in a manner that studies the historical circumstances of the occupation and the colonial aspects involved.

For Khalidi, unlike Churchill and Khalil, the development of his characters is explicit and can be easily recognized. The perfect example of which is Tariq. Blinded, at first, by the allure of money and stature as a businessman working alongside the British, Tariq did not believe in aiding the rebels. Tariq, over the course of the play, sees actual change in his character. Rather than being against Palestinian rebels, he becomes one of them and transitions into a symbol of rebellion along with Yusef. Many people -like Tariq- who are against the Palestinian resistance only do so because they might be ignorant of certain aphorisms about the conflict. In order to get a better understanding of Tariq, it is important to mention that the British colonization may have caused a certain animosity between Arabs and Jews who used to share the same land without any complications. Hirsch, the Jew, does not appear to have any kind of loathing regarding Arabs. In fact, he used to appreciate being an acquaintance of Tariq and tried to bail him out. Deep down, however, he was brainwashed into believing the land to be the sole property of the Jews, and that it is their God-given homeland. The point of change in Tariq's personality takes place when he discovers that his vast fortune cannot protect him from British forces. It only takes a single moment of realization to understand that things do not work the same way Tariq predicted; his "rational nationalism" does not exist in this world of colonial mentalities. Once he saw them for what they actually were, he stood by his uncle and accepted his role in the rebellion.

Lisa Mullenneaux suggests that Tariq, when faced with such truth, shows his true colors and embraces the rebel spirit his uncle has possessed:

As the play begins, we see how this conflict is tearing apart the Al Qudsi family. Yusef is fighting for independence, his nephew for the best business deal he can get from the Brits or Zionists. But when the two are forced to share a jail cell, Tariq, the "rational nationalist," quickly realizes that to his governors he's just a dirty Arab who can be

ordered to fetch their tennis balls. This shock brings him closer to his uncle, who has blamed Tariq for wanting to sell the family land.

(Mullenneaux)

Lerner does things differently in relation to how he poses his characters within the structure of the play. The play covers nearly 40 years of conflict between Arabs and Israelis. The main focus of the play is the massacre of Tantur and its aftermath which drives the plot forward. To begin with, there are two sides, and each is represented by one family. Avigdor's is a well-established family with vast resources simply because of Avigdor's past life as a commander in the Israeli army. Colonel Avigdor is a staunch supporter of the Israeli army; he does not believe there is anything that could tarnish their reputation. His son, Giora, is a lecturer at the University of Haifa, whose curiosity or rather keenness on finding the truth made him go against the wishes of the family head, his father. The same thing happens with the Arab family. There is a father, Ibrahim, who is weary of the other side, suspicious of their motives, and bitter because of the old animosity that came into existence as a result of his witnessing one of the worst and earliest massacres in the history of the conflict. The son, Azmi, who owns a newly-opened restaurant, does not take after his father, not during the first scenes, at least. He gives the impression that he is absorbed into his own world, and that the only thing he cares about is survival, which is why he used to seize every opportunity to make his father stop his personal war against Avigdor. His sister, a lecturer at the University of Haifa as well, used to be in a relationship with the soon-to-be-married Giora. Both siblings owe the success of their careers and ventures to Colonel Avigdor, the one person upon whose commands countless innocents were shot dead. Everything that happens in the play has a reason. By going deeper into the play, we can find that not all characters in the play develop and grow, and this, I believe, is

intentional. For Ibrahim's family, we have Ibrahim whose stance does not particularly change over the course of the play. In fact, he has always been the same ever since he witnessed the atrocities committed by Avigdor's men during the night of the massacre all the way back in 1948, but he starts to lean towards making peace with Avigdor near the end. In the very first scene, Ibrahim explicitly and firmly attacks the notion of digging and constructing a new village to replace the old one, crying about how "It's forbidden to build there" (Lerner 17). Ibrahim's firm refusal can be affiliated with the need to protect the identity of his homeland. The village of Tantur and what happened there are part of the Palestinian identity. Consequently, by erecting this new village or city, they are erasing traces of decades of blood spilling and suffering, which is the only thing many Palestinians, like Ibrahim, would give their lives to stop. Going back to his rather strong ties with his homeland, he starts as this rebel who fears nothing, yet he ends up as this defeated and broken old man because Avigdor's lawyer threatened him.

In terms of stage directions, they exist with varying degrees. Churchill is not interested in focusing on stage directions, and this makes room for flexibility and freedom in producing new performances of the text. The precise directions she gives at the beginning of the play all have to do with the choice of actors themselves. She addresses that no children are to appear on stage, adding that "the speakers are adults", and that the parents are different in each scene and could be played by "any number of actors" (1). These directions, therefore, are the only ones Churchill has decided to provide. The reason she did not add strict rules might be because she wanted to make it as universal and adaptable as possible. If aspiring producers are given permission to adapt the play the way they see fit, it would make it easier to spread awareness about Palestine and the transgressions taking place in the Palestinian lands. In fact, this may lead to new renditions of the play, which could include more thought-provoking messages.

Khalil employs stage directions in a different way; she has an abundance of directions written before each scene. However, they mostly serve as an extension of the scene itself, a way to describe the setting. Before each scene, she gives explicit descriptions of what goes on stage. In the first scene, she mentions what the lighting would be like, for example, with the scene taking place in complete darkness. The audience can then hear someone sighing and turning their body on a bed. Afterwards, the mumbling of voices and some footsteps can be heard, along with a strong smash on the door, signifying that the house in which the scene takes place is being broken into by some unknown forces. Another different usage of stage directions can be seen on page 54 where Khalil describes an old house that is “well kept”. It may seem difficult to showcase an actual house on stage, and the description of the house is being limited as much as possible, but these directions serve as an introduction to each tale to which we are presented.

For the first time, the stage directions act as part of the narrative rather than merely being precursors to the plot on which the scene is built. Additionally, this is indicative of the upcoming changes in the scene, it prepares the audience to make them anticipate what might be happening shortly after this scene. The three scenes about the people waiting in line, doing nothing, are unique in this regard. They are stage directions that turn into actual scenes. They simply begin with them waiting and waiting, and eventually progress into actual scenes. The first scene -on page 67- that features these people takes place in 1960 and has nothing much in terms of an actual narrative. We see a “long queue” of people doing nothing but smoking and anticipating something to happen. A couple of scenes later, we see them reappear on stage doing the exact same thing but with a slight modification as one of them is heard humming and whistling “Umm Kulthum’s Fakarouni”, which, to put it mildly, is quite interesting. Umm Kolthoum has always been perceived as an icon of all Arabs and their culture; her songs are known all over the Arab

World. But why would Khalil include it at this exact moment? I believe that hearing this in the background would make the audience, the Arab audience, feel included within the narrative.

It is clear by now that these scenes are not related to one another. Rather than considering the play as having one coherent plot, the play basically serves as more of an anthology of stories that tend to shed more light on fixed angles pertaining to Palestine and Israel. The scenes may have a follow-up that elaborates on the story itself with additional information and characters. Yet, there is one scene that kept reappearing between other scenes. The group of people from 1960 appeared three times exactly where they are being shown sitting around and doing nothing; they are simply existing. In the three instances they were mentioned, there is little to no difference in what they are doing except for minor additions. In the scene they were first mentioned, they were only waiting. In the second, one of the actors on stage starts humming a song by Umm Kulthoum, whereas in the third one, it unfolds into an actual story. The story on page 83 itself is rather short and to the point. It deals with the ramifications of the occupation on both the political and non-political aspects of Palestinian life. The main character of this scene is someone we know nothing of. His name is Saeed, and he wants to have a passport issued so he can leave the country. The officer in charge wants him to shorten his full name, and Saeed is rather hesitant about doing so. He has every right to be. This act is a subtle attempt at erasing one's identity. Instead of having your full name known to everyone -or your history and identity in this case- you are forced to shorten it and shed a large part of your identity and history. What is even worse is that he had to comply with the officer's orders. To put it simply, if you want to live your life as a Palestinian then prepare yourself for the worst, and get ready to dismantle your own identity.

Lerner's stage directions are also implemented in a similar fashion to that of Khalil's. His scenes mostly begin with an elaborate description of the place in which said scene is set. The most important one in terms of stage directions is the prologue. The scene is described as follows: there is a hill quite far away from the stage with dust hovering around. Next, the sound of Avigdor's bulldozers is heard and followed by the first appearance of Giora on stage while climbing up the hill using his crutches. He ultimately falls, light goes out, and the sound completely stops. So, what we can gather from this is that sound and lighting can immensely help in bolstering the level of immersion into the action. It is difficult to create a hill on a stage, but this can be imagined using the proper sound effects and lighting with minimal usage of props. The prologue, therefore, introduces the audience to the calamity we will be seeing in the play; establishing a new village that would end up replacing the village of Tantur. During other scenes, there are some directions embedded within the actions the characters do. In scene 1, for example, we see Ibrahim "exploding" after getting angry about the prospect of seeing his beloved village getting demolished and eradicated (Lerner 17). The stabbing of Avigdor at the end of scene 1 is another example of stage directions done right. There is no dialogue during this specific part of the scene, there is only the elaborate action of the stabbing followed by a blackout. Actions, in this case, are better than words. A producer with a vivid imagination can make this scene as gruesome and emotional as it can be and send a strong message about the Palestinian anger and hatred towards the occupation.

All scenes follow the same technicality of providing the audience with vivid pictures of what is happening on stage. The play's culminating directions in the last scene are very similar to the ones seen in the first one. But this time, the action is both preceded and succeeded by stage directions. Since this scene takes place up on the hill, as in scene 1, the action is repeated; Giora

tries to climb the hill and decides to dig in the soil, but of course, his futile attempt does nothing. This may indeed resemble the Greek Myth of Sisyphus. Sisyphus is a king who tries to cheat death, and as a result, the Greek gods decree that he should be punished for all eternity. This eternal pain he goes through to keep holding that gigantic boulder until he reaches his destination at the mountain's peak resonates with how Giora tries to stop the demolishing of the village. We see Giora trapped in this arduous journey of his, this debacle, and his pursuit of the truth. Akin to Sisyphus, he fails and does not reach his goal in the end. This rumination is futile. No matter what he does, he is destined to fail in this regard. The play ends on this gloomy and dark note because it is not Giora's fault to begin with. It is the fault of those who decide not to take action against the colonizer. Here, the play does not provide us with a perfect situation where there is an actual betterment of the character's fate or plot line in general, it is just there to make us understand how gigantic and colossal the issue is. The dead-end the characters reach in this play is a wake-up call to everyone who hails colonialists as saviors of the world.

Khalidi makes use of the stage directions the same way Khalil and Lerner do in their plays. The prologue's stage directions may not be as significant to the plot as they were in the case of Lerner, but they are definitely important to the overall progression of the action. Again, the stage is dark, with a donkey-drawn cart treading on a path, and then a rifle being charged is heard in the background. This is done so as to lay the foundations for a play set during a war or in a country plagued by warfare. In scene 1, the placement of props, as mentioned in the stage directions, is rather vital because it gives us more information about the characters, information that the characters themselves do not provide us with. Yusef Al Qudsi's house is described as one that has seen its share of colonization. There is a typewriter used to establish correspondence between the rebel forces, and an Ottoman sword referring back to the Ottoman rule of Palestine

that ended after World War I. More actions are described in this scene as well, ranging from Yusef's disguise to his taking the sword as he sits down. Unlike Lerner's implementation of stage directions in the last scene, we see only a few mentioned here. The most illuminating of which is the sound of protests. People are protesting the execution of their rebel leader and this should show in the sound effects used on stage. However, the focus in this scene is shifted to the conversations held by the characters themselves and their emotional stances. Tariq, Anbara, and Waleed are all paying their respects to their fallen family member and comrade. The ending does not provide a solution to the issue of colonization, but it pays homage to all those who gave their lives for the preservation of their nation and its independence.

Finally, by analyzing four different plays about Palestine and its place on the global stage, the thesis shows the effect of theater in lessening the rather difficult nature of Palestinian politics and the convoluted repercussions of war on the lives of Palestinians. Authors do not have to adhere to a certain identity to support the cause. The four authors hail from different backgrounds and ethnicities, and they all have their own unique way of divulging the hardships of warfare. What they have in common, however, is the way they show their unconditional support of Palestine.

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