



**THE REWORKING OF SHAKESPEARE'S *HAMLET* IN THE ARAB POLITICAL  
THEATRE AFTER 1970:  
A COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN ARAB *HAMLETS* IN POST-NASSERISM  
(1970-2009) AND THE PERIOD OF THE ARAB SPRING (2010- PRESENT)**

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To my beloved wife Amnah AbuMuqabel, and to my lovely daughters Orchid and Jasmine Abushalha:

“I know no ways to mince it in love, but directly to say ‘I love you.’”

*William Shakespeare, Henry V, Act 5, Scene 2*

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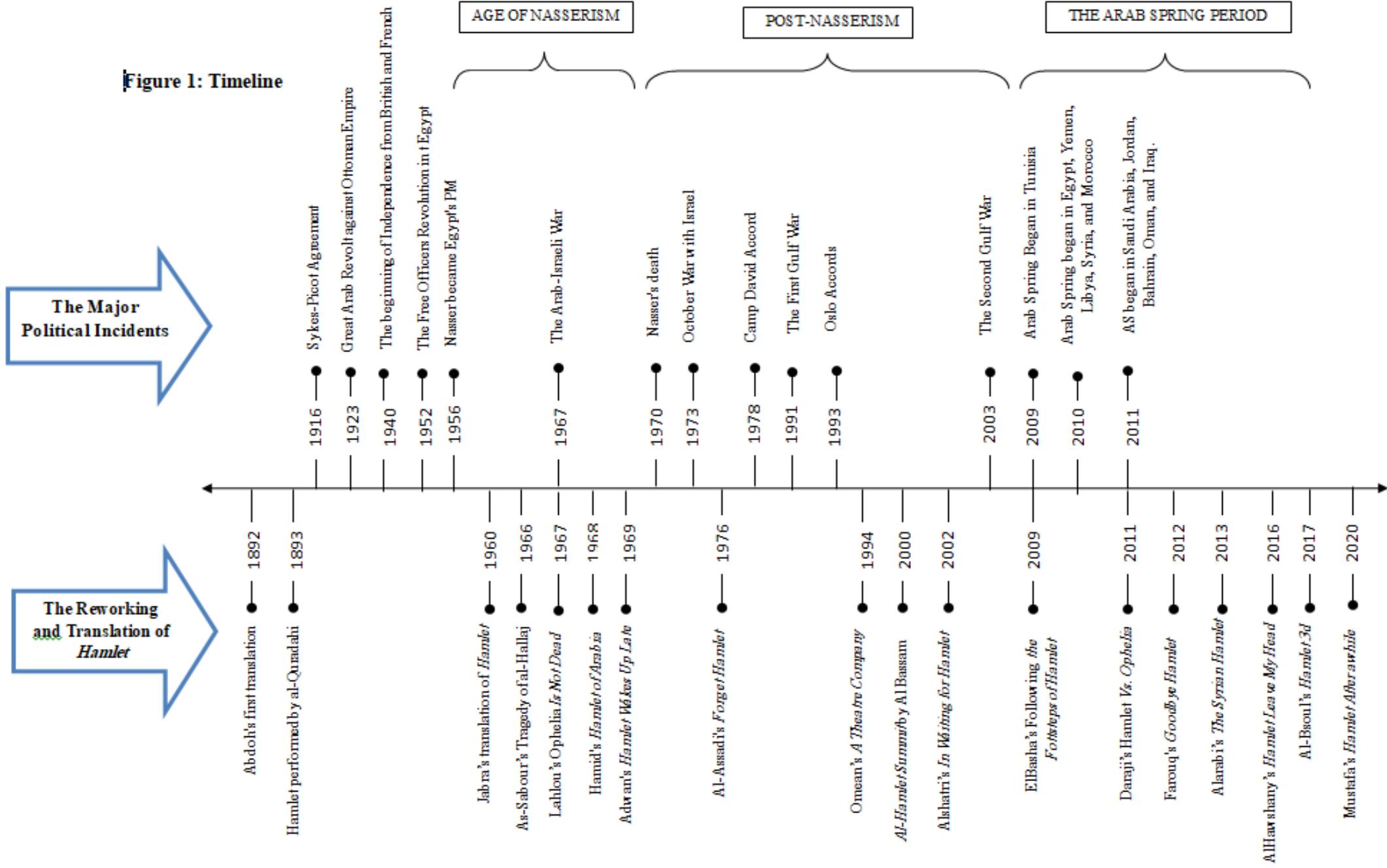
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**Table 1: The Most Popular Arab *Hamlets*.**

<b>The Work</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Language</b>
<i>Hamlet</i>	Tanius Abdoh	1892	Translation	Egypt	Arabic
<i>Hamlet</i>	Al-Quradahi Arabic Company	1893	Stage Performance	Cairo	Arabic
هاملت أمير الدنمارك ( <i>Hamlet: Prince of Denmark</i> )	Jabra Ibrahim Jabra	1960	Translation		
<i>Hamlet</i>	Hammed Jawad	1967	Rewriting	Iraq	Arabic
<i>Tragedy of al- Hallaj</i>	Saleh Abdel As- Sabour	1966	Rewriting	Egypt	Arabic
<i>Ophelia Is Not Dead</i>	Nabil Lahlou	1968 (staged in Marrakech in 1987 then at the Goethe Institute of Rabat in 1999).	Rewriting	Morocco	French Arabic English
<i>Hamlet of Arabia</i>	Sami Abdel Hamid	1969	Adaptation	Iraq	Arabic
<i>Hamlet Wakes Up Late</i>	Mamdouh Adwan	1976	Rewriting	Syria	Arabic English
<i>Forget Hamlet</i>	Jawad Al- Assadi	First staged in Cairo in 1994 under the name 'Ophelia's Window'. Translated by Margaret Litvin in 2000.	Rewriting / Stage Adaptation	Iraq	Arabic English
<i>A Theatre Company Found a Theatre and Theatred "Hamlet"</i>	Nader Omran	Translated into English by Joy Arab in 2000.	Rewriting	Jordan	Arabic English
<i>Al-Hamlet Summit</i>	Sulayman AlBassam	2002	Adaptation	Kuwait	Arabic English
<i>Fee Intezar Hamlet (In Waiting for...Hamlet</i>	Haider Abdullah Alshatri	2009	Rewriting	Iraq	Arabic
على خطى هاملت <i>Following the Footsteps of Hamlet</i>	Kamel ElBasha	2009	Adaptation	Palestine	Arabic
<i>Hamlet vs. Ophelia</i>	Evan Daraji	2011	Rewriting	Iraq	Arabic

<i>Goodbye Hamlet</i>	Mahmoud Farouq	2012	Adaptation	Egypt	Arabic
هاملت السوري <i>The Syrian Hamlet</i>	Urwa Al-Araby	2012	Adaptation	Syria	Arabic
<i>Hamlet 3d</i>	Abdu As-samad Al-Bsoul	2013	Adaptation	Jordan	Arabic
<i>Hamlet! Leave My Head (Hamlet Okruj Men Ra'see</i>	Written by Fahad ALHoushanei, and directed by Subhi Yusuf	2016	Adaptation	Saudi Arabia	Arabic
هاملت بَعْدَ جِين <i>Hamlet After A While</i>	Directed by Zeed Khaleel Mustafa	2020	Adaptation	Jordan	Arabic

Figure 1: Timeline





## Introduction

Shakespeare's *Hamlet* has widely been adapted and rewritten in different historical and cultural contexts. Since its appearance in the Globe Theatre between 1600 and 1601, the play has incited numerous critical responses, interpretations, translations, and adaptations. The result is "innumerable glossaries and commentaries"<sup>1</sup> that compel nineteenth and twentieth-century critics to allocate Hamletology as a separate discipline for the play. Jan Kott once said, "No Dane of flesh and blood has been written about so extensively as Hamlet."<sup>2</sup> The play was also popularized by the attempt in the nineteenth century and beyond to designate it as a universal myth equal to other myths. If one 'Hamletizes,' he /she is willing to "substitute words for deeds, to postpone indefinitely taking a decision and instead give way to reflection and endless reconsideration."<sup>3</sup>

Many critics attributed the play's cosmology to its ability to explore a mosaic of themes and subthemes like revenge, madness, procrastination, politics, love, and treachery, and no part in the play is devoid of philosophical, moral, political, religious, or aesthetic questions that have always intrigued humankind. The play's universality can additionally be accredited to the prince's competence, as R.A Foakes indicates, to "combine so many strong attributes with common weak ones."<sup>4</sup> If he can display heroic features and intellectual abilities, he appears as a character that is the "embodied emblem of irresolution, half-heartedness and doubt."<sup>5</sup> The dualism present in Hamlet's character rendered him a free-floating signifier taking on the subjects of the different receivers. Harold Bloom also sees that Shakespeare's ability to produce a unique genius in his play and make his character "more intelligent than we are and very dangerous to know"<sup>6</sup> is the rationale that turns the play into a "cosmological drama."<sup>7</sup> However, the reasons for the universality of the play are abundant and gathering them in one study is rather complex.

The worldliness of *Hamlet* is undoubtedly detected in the significant number of the reworkings produced for the play. It was reworked for different theatrical forms like comedy, tragedy, and melodrama and it experienced transgeneric and transmedial shifting when it appeared as a film, opera, ballet, poetry, fiction, cartoon, and painting. It absorbed

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<sup>1</sup>Jan Kott, *Shakespeare, Our Contemporary* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1964), 47.

<sup>2</sup>Kott, *Shakespeare, Our Contemporary*, 47.

<sup>3</sup>R. A. Foakes, *Hamlet Versus Lear: Cultural Politics and Shakespeare's Art* (Cambridge England: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 20.

<sup>4</sup>Foakes, *Hamlet Versus Lear*, 13.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Harold Bloom, *Hamlet*, ed. Brett Foster (New York: Bloom's Literary Criticism, 2008), xvi.

<sup>7</sup>Bloom, *Hamlet*, xii.

new linguistic, musical, and pictorial features peculiar to the host mediums, and its themes, settings, characters, and style encountered different levels of alteration like addition, contraction, extension, reversion, and remediating. The reworking of the play varied, but it was purposeful. It was done for commenting, cultural affinity, reinterpreting, reversing the point of view, and decolonizing a Western masterpiece. The new *Hamlets* fulfilled different political, artistic, commercial, and intercultural functions.

One of the important reasons, if not the most significant, that led to this excessive reworking of *Hamlet* is politics, particularly in the twentieth century when the world suffered the atrocities of the two destructive global wars and their longstanding political consequences. Hamlet, as a character, became an icon of suffrage and a witness of oppression, and his soliloquies, like “To be or not to be,” became a mantra that reflects people’s craving for liberation from the oppressive regimes. Hamlet, as a play, was injected with communist, Islamic, socialist, liberal, and radical ideologies. All used, banned, or abused the play for different political purposes, and all transferred the play’s political struggle between a throne usurper and a revolutionary hero to comment on their struggle against oppression. In Bulgaria, for example, *Hamlet* was rewritten by Nedyalko Yardanov in his *The Murder of Gonzago* (1988) to comment on the political suppression and the artistic censorship imposed by Dimitrov’s regime on artists and writers.<sup>8</sup> In Hungary, *Hamlet* was also adapted in Geza Beremenyi’s *Halmi* to reflect on Hungarians’ political tragedies in the 1950s.<sup>9</sup> In Egypt also, Mohammed Farouq’s *Goodbye Hamlet* (2012) is considered a profound contemplation on the political uprising against the Egyptian leader Hosni Mubarak. In Canada, Robert Gurik’s *Hamlet, Prince of Québec* (1981) talks about the national awakening in the civil quite revolution in the French-speaking province in Québec against the big influence of the Catholic church. Other examples like Heiner Müller’s *Hamletmachine*, Tom Stoppard’s *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* and *Dogg’s Hamlet, Cahoot’s Macbeth*, by the same writer, included political purposes in their cores. All the previous examples and others show the play’s capacity to adjust to different political contexts. Kott indicates that the play became like “a sponge ... it immediately absorbs all the problems of our time.”<sup>10</sup>

One of the geographical spots in which the play is numerous and variously reworked is the Arab World: The Middle East and North Africa (MENA.) After 1950, Arab playwrights

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<sup>8</sup>Ileana Alexandra Orlich, *Subversive Stages: Theatre in Pre- and Post-Communist Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria* (Budapest: CEU Press, Central European University Press, 2017), 23.

<sup>9</sup>Orlich, *Subversive Stages*, 125.

<sup>10</sup>Kott, *Shakespeare, Our Contemporary*, 52.

and stage directors produced more than twelve adaptations and rewritings: like *Ophelia Is Not Dead* by The Moroccan Nabil Lahlou (1968), *Hamlet Wakes Up Late* by the Syrian Mamdouh Adwan (1976), *Forget Hamlet* by the Iraqi Jawad Al-Assadi (1994), *The AL-Hamlet Summit* by the Kuwaiti Suleiman AlBassam (2002), *Following the Footsteps of Hamlet* by the Palestinian director Kamal El-Basha (2010), *Goodbye Hamlet* by the Egyptian Mohammed Farouq (2012), and *Hamlet After A While* by the Jordanian director Zead Kahleel Mustafa (2020). The play's journey in the Arab World may seem short compared to other regions: it started in the late nineteenth century when Tanius Abdouh translated the play into Arabic for the first time. Abdouh's translation received negative critical responses for the alterations he made in the language and the story. However, the play's existence and appearance on Arabic stages before the 1950s was insignificant, and this can be attributed to Abdouh's deformed translation on which all performances before 1950 relied. Another excuse is that theatre was not a major component of the Arabic artistic culture, and up to 1950, the main features of the Arabic theatre has not crystallized yet. Though some critics assumed that the Arabs knew few types of theatrical performances, like The Shadow Theatre, they did not know theatre in its Western shape until the 1850s when the Lebanese Marwan Annaqash brought theatre to the region from France. Another group believed that Arabs have come across Greek and Roman theatres in the sixth century. Still, because of the monotheistic Islamic culture that controlled the Arab region, Arab translators have ignored these dramas and focused on translating other philosophical and scientific aspects.<sup>11</sup> One of the well-known Arabic translations was for Aristotle's *Poetics* which had arrived to the West through Latin translations of the multiple Arabic versions and commentaries by Al-Kindi around AD 850 and Abu Bashir Matta in AD 932.<sup>12</sup>

One also cannot overlook the colonial and political factors that influenced the history and shape of theatre in the Arab World. For 650 years, Arab lands were colonized by successive colonial powers starting with the Ottoman Empire (1299-1923) and ending with British and French colonialism immediately after WWII. The British and French colonizers intended and managed to divide the Arab one land, controlled by the Ottoman Empire, by drawing borders and creating small countries. They formed Sykes-Picot Agreement by which the UK had an influence on Jordan, Palestine, Southern Iraq, while France had control over Southeastern Turkey, Syria, Lebanon and Northern Iraq. The division blocked

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<sup>11</sup>Mohammad Almohanna, "Greek Drama in the Arab World," in *A Handbook to the Reception of Greek Drama*, ed. Betine van Zyl Smit (Wiley-Blackwell, 2016), 366.

<sup>12</sup>Salim Kemal, "Arabic Poetics and Aristotle's Poetics," in *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, Volume 26, Issue 2, (SPRING 1986), Pages 112–123, <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjaesthetics/26.2.112>. 112.

development, subjugated Arabs, exploited natural resources, and lessened cultural and artistic prosperity. When the colonizers left, and most Arab countries gained independence around 1950, Arabs started a new political stage marked by optimism, freedom, and patriotism. They celebrated Pan-Arabism and expanded their cultural and aesthetic aspects.<sup>13</sup> This could not have happened without Jamal Abdel Nasser, the Egyptian leader (from 1956 to 1970), who revolted against King Farouq in 1952, and whose national beliefs, his dream of Arab unity, and his support for education and arts gave him great support in the region. The period, named later as Nasserism, became the heyday of Arabism and the renaissance of Arabic drama.

*Hamlet* was translated again by the Palestinian Jabra Ibrahim Jabra in 1960. The translation received wide popularity for its fidelity to Shakespeare's text, and it became a source for all the Arabic performances which came later. *Hamlet* was reworked in the Iraqi Hameed Jawad's *Hamlet* (1967) and Sami Abdel Hamid's *Hamlet of Arabia* (1969). These two playwrights laid the foundation of the Arabic *Hamlet* by creating an Arabian setting on the stage. Also, *Hamlet* became an icon of an Arabic hero who terminates the usurper Claudius, an image seen in Nasser's revolution against the colonizer. Nasser became "the figure most deeply and persistently associated with that slogan [To be, or not, to be]. The Arab *Hamlet* tradition, with its emphasis on collective political agency, responds directly to Nasser's anticolonial revolution."<sup>14</sup>

However, Nasser's national dream of uniting Arab countries and freeing Palestinian lands from the Israeli occupation came to its end after the Arab/Israeli War (1967), in which Israel invaded and seized Arab lands. As a result of that shocking defeat, Nasser resigned and died of a heart attack in 1970. The war's consequences shifted Arabic idealism, permeated by the Nasserists, to a new stage of harsh political realism. The Arab nationalists demanded from their Arab leaders a quick strike back to the 1967 War and an absolute vengeance for Nasser's dream. However, the Arab regimes responded to the demand with procrastination and indifference. In addition, Arabs were shocked by the Camp David Accord (1977) signed between Israel and Anwar Sadat, the successive Egyptian leader,

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<sup>13</sup>Arabism or Pan-Arabism is an ideology that preaches unification between Arab countries in North Africa and the Middle East, from the Atlantic Ocean to the Arab Sea. It was popularized as a national ideology in the age of colonialism, and promoted by the Nasserists and Ba'athists after the 1950s. See Florian Bieber, *Debating Nationalism: The Global Spread of Nations* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020), 92-97.

<sup>14</sup>Litvin, Margaret, *Hamlet's Arab journey: Shakespeare's Prince and Nasser's Ghost* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 33.

under American custody.<sup>15</sup> The accord was a thunderbolt to all Arabs who believed the accord would not return the occupied Arabic lands. It also paved the way for the Oslo Accords between Israel and the PLO (1993) and ‘Wadi Arabah Agreement’ between Israel and Jordan (1994.) Arab regimes, moreover, became autocratic, practised despotism, nourished divisions, deepened Western hegemony by military and oil agreements, and applied strict censorship on media and publishing houses. Arab youths suffered unemployment, less political representation, and a lack of hope. The period, Post-Nasserism (1970-2009), was marked by a sense of defeatism and the recession of Pan-Arabism.

A good number of adaptations and rewritings of *Hamlet* have intentionally been produced, but this time they were all dark reworkings, full of political symbolism and sarcasm. They became indirect critiques of the existing Arab regimes. Plays like Hakim Marzouqi’s *Ismail/ Hamlet*, Kazal al Majidi’s *Hamlet without Hamlet*, Jawad Al-Assadi’s *Forget Hamlet*, Mamdouh Adwan’s *Hamlet Wakes Up Late*, and Nabil Lahlou’s *Ophelia Is Not Dead* satirized the inaction of the Arab rulers who forgot their father Nasser. The ghost in these dramas is a symbol of the Nasser figure haunting the stage and demanding remembrance. Hamlet became a representation of the apathetic leaders and their pro-state intellectuals. He became an alcoholic who intoxicates his mind to forget the apparition in Adwan’s play, a detached and indifferent intellectual in Al-Assadi’s drama, and physically paralyzed in Lahlou’s work. The new Hamlets in Post-Nasserism became good-for-nothing characters, anti-heroic and devoid of nobility.

After 2010, *Hamlet* has been reworked differently. This time a sense of political hope accompanied the Arab Spring that started in 2010. The Arab uprisings started in Tunisia and succeeded to overthrow the oppressive regimes in Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Sudan, and Algeria. Other countries like Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Lebanon, Bahrain, and Syria had their springs, but the regimes have already suppressed them. Arab youths demanded political change, more political representation, fixing the corruption, and ending Western hegemony. Despite the loss of many lives and the massive displacement, the uprisings created a sense of unification, maintained hope, regained Arabism, and achieved political changes. This sense of hope is regained even in theatrical productions. Hamlet is rendered a hero in works like Haider Abdullah Alshatri’s *In Waiting for Hamlet* (2010) and Mahmoud Farouq’s *Goodbye Hamlet*. He became an image of the Arab youth who went down to the streets to

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<sup>15</sup>The Camp David Accord was signed between the Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and the Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin on 17 September 1978 after twelve secret meetings of negotiations in Camp David. Cited in Paul Eidelberg, *An American Political Scientist in Israel: From Athens to Jerusalem* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2010), 37.

end political oppression. Ophelia is dramatized as a tough female character in Evan Daraji's *Hamlet vs. Ophelia* to depict the image of the strong Arab women and their leading role in the revolutions. The sense of unification that replaced the previous division is clearly delineated in *Following the Footsteps of Hamlet* by the Palestinian Kamel El-Basha. In this adaptation, the chorus performs collective speech, dancing, and movement to preach solidarity among Arabs facing tyrannical regimes.

*Hamlet's* journey in the region post-1970: the periods of Post-Nasserism, and Arab Spring, can be framed in two points. First, the presence of *Hamlet* in the Arab World is purposefully political, and it is rather hard to fathom the Arab *Hamlets* in isolation from the political situations that occurred in each period. Secondly, Arab *Hamlets* are loaded with communal rather than particular messages; they can resonate in all Arab countries and express most Arab political concerns. Saying that, the attempt to generalize the political function of the Arab *Hamlets* on the entire Arab World, which consists of twenty-two countries, is not erroneous here. The Arab World has always been grasped as a homogeneous entity, and Arab countries shared many geographical, religious, political, linguistic, cultural and historical commonalities.

The Arab World generally refers to the Arab-speaking countries located between the Atlantic Ocean in the West and the Arabian Sea in the East. These countries were grasped as one land without borders before the Sykes-Picot Agreement in 1924.<sup>16</sup> They followed a central state and paid their taxes to one Caliphate who governed the regions as one land. Arabic is the official language in most of these countries, and it became a defining feature for the ethnicity of Arabs. After the division, Pan-Arabism was adopted as a national ideology that aspired to untie Arab countries again, and immediately after the colonization began to end, Arab countries created the Arab League with six Arab countries on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of March, 1945. Later, the twenty-two Arab countries joined the League. It is concerned with the political updates in the region, economic cooperation, and common defence. It convenes annually to issue joint decisions concerning all political parameters. Arabs also shared many elements of their culture. It gained its aspects from Islam that formed Arabic traditions, values, costumes, and art fourteen hundred years ago. These facts and others made it possible to generalize many issues in the Arab World, including politics. The

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<sup>16</sup>A secret correspondence between Britain and France to replace the Ottoman Empire in the Arab region. Arab lands were divided by Sikes-Picot line. The southern part (Jordan, Palestine and Southern Iraq) was under the British control; while the North part (southern part of Turkey, Syria and Lebanon) was seized by France.

existence of *Hamlet* in Arabic political theatre can also be swept and understood within the common political changes that occurred in the entire region.

The dissertation's significance comes out of the need to allocate a critical base to the Arab *Hamlets*. The number of adaptations and rewritings produced by Arab playwrights and stage directors after 1970, and the lack of a detailed critical and analytical framework necessitate this study as I believe. The critical responses about Arab *Hamlets* are insignificantly humble. Two critical responses were made by non-Arab writers, i.e. Margaret Litvin in her seminal book *Hamlet's Arab Journey*, where she deals with Arab *Hamlets* before 2002, and Graham Holderness' article 'Arab Shakespeare' which tackles *Hamlet* in a broad sense. The Jordanian Mahmoud Al-Shetawi is the only Arab critic whose short article 'Hamlet in Arabic' became the primary resource for all later studies about the play in the region. Other responses to the plays appeared in some critical collections, but in a brief way too.

Saying that, the dissertation is a detailed analysis of the Arab *Hamlets*, and it is a continuation of Litvin's book. It assumes its significance in the belief that studying the journey of the play in the Arab World after 1970 will help understand the political atmosphere in the region, and will help the reader to understand the history of the Arabic political theatre, hoping this study will add something to Hamlet's heritage worldwide.

The nature of the study is a comparative one. It compares and contrasts the reworkings of *Hamlet* in two political periods. It also tries to answer the following essential questions: Why and how *Hamlet* is reworked in the Arab region after the 1970s? In what aspects the reworking of the play is similar and different in Post-Nasserism and Arab Spring? How can the play help understand the region's political situation, and how it was impacted by the political atmosphere? The dissertation focuses on eleven main stage adaptations and rewritings produced in the two periods to achieve its objectives. It analyses the political aspects, allegories, and symbols in each work and reads them against the political realities. The study relies on stage performances, interviews, reviews, videos, magazines, reports, newspapers, primary and secondary resources. Moreover, and since the critical background produced by Arab critics about the play is modest, the study relies heavily on Western critics and theorists of theatricality like Brecht, theorists of adaptations like Hutcheon and Sanders, psychoanalysts like Freud and Lacan, post-colonialists like Said, and feminists like Spivak. Other Western philosophers and critics like Plato, Aristotle, Foucault, Nietzsche, and Coleridge, will be referred to from time to time.

The first chapter offers a theoretical background. It starts with defining adaptation and rewriting and highlights the main similarities and differences between the two practices. The second part briefly traces the reworking and critical responses for the play in different times. It tries to answer why the play received all that attention since the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Then, the chapter deals with some examples of the political *Hamlets* produced in different regions, especially Europe. This should help envision the Arab political *Hamlets* within an international concern that always tries to use the play for political reasons. The last part narrows down the discussion to the play's journey in the Arab World, the translation, and the performative and textual reworkings by Arab dramatists.

Chapter two is a profound analysis of four main Arab *Hamlets* produced in Post Nasserism. The first subchapter is about the aspect of anti-heroism in Mamdouh Adwan's *Hamlet Wakes Up Late*. This part shows how Adwan's play mocks Anwar Sadat's Camp David Accord with Israel. The second Subchapter deals with the crises of Arab intellectuals in the Arab World, particularly in Iraq and under Saddam Hussein's oppressive regime. In the third part, the dissertation deals with the Moroccan Nabil Lahlou's *Ophelia Is Not Dead* as an example of the Moroccan authority's censorship applied on artists and playwrights. The last subchapter tackles the 'War on terrorism' that shaped the political atmosphere in the Middle East after 2001. It reads Suleiman AlBassam *AL-Hamlet Summit* as a stage performance that aims to decolonize Western terms like 'Islamic Terrorism' and Islamophobia.

The third chapter is concerned with the reworking of *Hamlet* in the Arab Spring. The first work is *In Waiting for Hamlet* by the Iraqi Haider Abdullah Alshatri. This rewriting bears similarities in its structure to Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. The story revolves around two characters waiting for Hamlet, who will liberate them from political oppression as soon as he comes. The second subchapter deals with the theme of unification and solidarity in *Following the Footsteps of Hamlet* by the Palestinian Kamel El-Basha. The stage performance employs the chorus, which collectively acts as one body and performs one death, to catch the spectators' consciousness about the necessity to end the divisions created by Arab regimes previously. After that, the chapter tackles the theme of artistic freedom in two stage performances: *Hamlet! Leave My Head* by the Saudi Fahad ALHoushanei and *Hamlet After A While* by the Jordanian director Zead Kahleel Mustafa. The two plays summarize the longing of Arabs for the freedom of speech restricted in Post-Nasserism. The last part is a profound analysis of the new political role of Arab women in the Arab Spring. It shows how women unprecedentedly fought for social changes and political

representation. It reverses cultural misconceptions, like virginity, from Ophelia's perspective in Evan Daraji's *Hamlet vs. Ophelia*.

The conclusion summarises the differences and similarities between reworking *Hamlet* in the two political periods. It zooms in four contrastive themes: division vs. solidarity, anti-heroism vs. heroism, censorship vs. freedom of speech, and the passive vs. the active political role of Arab women. Finally, the conclusion designates the study's limits and maps out its recommendations for upcoming studies.

**Chapter One:**  
**Literature Review**

## 1.1. Defining Terms

### 1.1.1. Adaptation

Works of literature have frequently influenced each other since the appearance of literature itself. Many different literary aspects have been borrowed in Euripides and Aeschylus from other sources like Homer's works. These literary influences can occur in different disguises like parodies, allusions, pastiche, prequels, sequels, commentaries, appropriations, or adaptations, and they can serve different tasks like borrowing, updating, reversing, mimicking, refashioning, re-evaluating, etc. These transforming practices are various, but they are factual and habitual. In his forward to *Palimpsest*, Gerald Prince indicates that "any text is a hypertext, grafting itself onto a hypotext, an earlier text that it imitates or transforms."<sup>17</sup> Roland Barthes once said: "any text is an intertext."<sup>18</sup>

Despite these intertextual practices that accompanied the appearance of literature, the attempt to define adaptation and distinguish it from other previous transcoding practices came in the late twentieth century. The demand to define what is an adaptation and what is not was incited by the appearance of many filmic adaptations based on literary texts. The percentage of the adapted literary works in Hollywood cinematic industry reaches up to 30% of the total number of movies produced by the filmmakers.<sup>19</sup> These high numbers of cinematic adaptations aroused the necessity to categorize them and distinguish them from other types of films. Nevertheless, the attempt to define adaptation and draw its borders was not an easy task. This difficulty, as Linda Hutcheon accentuates by saying "adaptation is actually very difficult to define,"<sup>20</sup> can be attributed to the fact that adaptation, first, entails both a process and a product at the same time, and second, because of the nuances between adaptation and other forms of influence. Another issue, which added more complication to the definition of the term, is the argument about the authorship rights that occurred in post-Romantic times. The defendants of originality, a post-romantic term that gives the author the right to possess his work, envisioned adaptation as infringement and encroachment on other's property. Virginia Woolf imagined films as predators that "fell upon their [sic] prey with immense rapacity, and to

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<sup>17</sup>Gordon Slethaug, *Adaptation Theory and Criticism: Postmodern Literature and Cinema in the USA* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 192.

<sup>18</sup>Cited in Julie Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation* (London: Routledge, 2016), 2.

<sup>19</sup>John Ellis, "The Literary Adaptation," *Screen*, 23, no. 1 (January 1982): 3-5, <https://doi.org/10.1093/screen/23.1.3>, 3 (accessed January 24, 2019).

<sup>20</sup>Linda Hutcheon, *Theory of Adaptation* (Taylor and Francis, 2014), 15.

this moment largely subsists upon the body of its unfortunate victim.”<sup>21</sup> Whether Woolf is singling out cinematic adaptations in her description or even other forms of textual adaptations, the practice was objected and fiercely refused by her. Other critics, who were less prejudiced toward adaptations, tended to categorize them as “minor and subsidiary, and certainly never as good as the original.”<sup>22</sup>

The difficulties in defining and defending adaptations did not prevent some writers from providing a suitable and comprehensible definition for the term. Daniel Fischlin and Mark Fortier define adaptation as a process that “includes almost any act of alteration performed upon specific cultural works of the past and dovetails with a general process of cultural recreation,”<sup>23</sup> Linda Hutcheon defines the term as “an announced and extensive transposition of a particular work into a new text,”<sup>24</sup> and Julie Sanders expanded the definition in a whole comprehensive paragraph when she said:

Adaptation can be a transpositional practice, casting a specific genre into another generic mode, an act of re-vision in itself. It can parallel editorial practice in some respects, indulging in the exercise of trimming and pruning; yet it can also be an amplificatory procedure engaged in addition, expansion, accretion, and interpolation. Adaptation is frequently involved in offering commentary on a source text.<sup>25</sup>

It can be inferred from the previous definitions that adaptation, in its essence, is a tripartite procedure that includes hypotext, process, and hypertext. The hypotext is any previous work that existed before the hypertext. It could be of a proximate popularity that the receivers of the adaptation can recognize its source work and set out points of similarities and departures between the source and the target text. The comparison and contrast practised by the receiver generate a sense of pleasure. Hutcheon indicates in her introduction that “part of this pleasure, I want to argue, comes simply from repetition with variation, from the comfort of ritual combined with the piquancy of surprise.”<sup>26</sup> However, it is impossible to deny the fact that the pleasure goal can be achieved by recognising the differences and the similarities, but even when the source text is sometimes unknown, the

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<sup>21</sup>Virginia Woolf, *Selected Essays*, ed. David Bradshaw (Oxford: OUP Oxford, 2008), 173.

<sup>22</sup>Hutcheon, *Theory of Adaptation*, xiv.

<sup>23</sup>Daniel Fischlin and Mark Fortier, eds., *Adaptations of Shakespeare: An Anthology of Plays from the 17th Century to the Present* (London: Routledge, 2014), 4.

<sup>24</sup>Hutcheon, *Theory of Adaptation*, 7.

<sup>25</sup>Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, 18.

<sup>26</sup>Hutcheon, *Theory of Adaptation*, 4.

hypertext can still generate this pleasure the time we grasp the adaptation as an autonomous artistic work that can be judged separately from its source text.

Another point of argument concerning the hypertext is the question of whether all texts are adaptable or not. While both Hutcheon and Sanders are less concerned with answering such question, Deborah Cartmell, in his book, *A Companion to Literature, Film, And Adaptation*, allocated a whole chapter to answer it under the title “Adapting the Unadaptable.” Cartmell, talking precisely about the film adaptation, says:

When I was asked to write on ‘unfilmable’ books– books that simply were too complex to be adapted to film –I was reluctant... There’s actually no such word in the dictionary...if a book released that is popular, if there is enough name recognition for the book , Hollywood will find a way to film it.<sup>27</sup>

Cartmell believes that every literary book can be cinematized in a way or another. This applies to textual rewritings also. No book ever written can be caveated from the adapters or rewriters, and all literary works can be reworked.

The process itself is also called adaptation. It is a concrete and close practice of transformation, shifting, transfiguration, editing, alteration and reworking. It entails extraction, addition, reversion, replacing, or salvaging for a previous text. The process is described by Hutcheon as a “repetition but without replication.”<sup>28</sup> It is not slavish copying, but it is a re-crafting. The process is also acknowledged and announced; this is perhaps what distinguishes adaptation from other embedded practices parodies, allusions, pastiche, etc.

Furthermore, adaptation is limitless. It covers trans-mediality; a drama can be turned into opera or ballet. It can be transgeneric, like adapting an epic into a novel, and it can signify “a shift in ontology from the real to the fictional, from a historical account or biography to a fictionalized narrative or drama.”<sup>29</sup> The adaptation of Malcolm X’s biography into a film by Spike Lee and played by Denzel Washington in 1992 is an example of shifting a biography into a film.

Moreover, adaptation is deliberate and purposeful. It has an artistic drive of making a prior work more relevant and more comprehensible to the new receivers through the

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<sup>27</sup>Deborah Cartmell, ed., *A Companion to Literature, Film, and Adaptation* (Chichester, West Sussex, UK: John Wiley & Sons, 2012), sec. 23.

<sup>28</sup>Hutcheon, *Theory of Adaptation*, 176.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid, 8.

process of “proximation and updating.”<sup>30</sup> In other cases, adaptation might contradict and offer a revised ideological point of view like what happened in most of the postcolonial and feminist adaptations of Shakespeare’s works. Take, for example, the reworking of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* by the Canadian Margaret Clarke in her adaptation, *Gertrud and Ophelia* (1993), in which the play is adapted from a feminist perspective as writing back to the patriarchal subjugation of the women in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*.<sup>31</sup> Both characters tell the stories left untold in Shakespeare’s play. However, the reasons for adaptation vary, they might be artistic, political, commercial, or intercultural, but they do not intend to steal or survive on the body of their victims as Woolf said. They are governed by their producers’ noble goal, i.e. “to provide some very specific clues to a text’s possible meanings and its cultural impact.”<sup>32</sup>

The hypertext is defined as a text that “has its own aura, its own presence in time and space.”<sup>33</sup> It is neither a copy nor a replication but a new text with close similarities and differences from its source. It is a “derivation that is not derivative – a work that is second without being secondary”<sup>34</sup> The product has many purposes: it can be a commentary on the source text, a reinterpretation of it, an extension of its story, or it can counter it, criticize its theme and reverse its story. It is an autonomous product that can be valued and interpreted alone, and its “fidelity to the adapted text should [not] be the criterion of judgment or the focus of analysis.”<sup>35</sup> The fidelity criticism was a critical orthodoxy in dealing with adaptation before, but the question of fidelity became a cliché in postmodernism. Nothing is called good or bad, close or far, faithful/non-faithful adaptation. Sanders says: “It is at the very point of infidelity and departure that the most creative acts of adaptation and appropriation take place.”<sup>36</sup>

The inclination to deal with all shapes of reworking (textual, cinematic, fiction, etc.) as homogeneous practices under the umbrella term of adaptation is erroneous. Not all reworkings are adaptation, for the term adaptation signifies transmedial and transgeneric processes while other types of reworkings, like rewriting, do not entail transmedial shifting. Another example is when Sanders differentiates between two types of reworking,

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<sup>30</sup>Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, 19.

<sup>31</sup>Kailin Wright, *Political Adaptation in Canadian Theatre* (Montreal, Kingston, London, Chicago: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2020), 66-85.

<sup>32</sup>Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, 19.

<sup>33</sup>Hutcheon, *Theory of Adaptation*, 6.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup>Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, 20.

i.e. adaptation and appropriation. For Sanders, “adaptations and appropriations can vary in how explicitly they state their intertextual purpose.”<sup>37</sup> The appropriation is different in its tendency to be less implicit and more embedded practice than adaptation which is usually an announced and acknowledged procedure. It is hard, but not impossible, to tell which precursor text is appropriated since the author did not announce that, and most of source text’s aspects like the names of characters, the story’s chronology, and the title are not the same. For example, Sławomir Mrozek’s *Tango* can be included within Sanders’ definition of appropriation. It reflects the inner struggle of a Polish intellectual called Arthur, who struggles to return his corrupted family to the traditional values and morals, especially his mother Elonora who has sexual affairs with Edek, a family friend. Arthur keeps contemplating about how the social values are declining instead of finding a way to avenge his father, Stomil. He keeps delaying his revenge till Edek kills him at the end. Perhaps, it is not impossible for the audiences to connect Arthur to Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, Elonora to Gertrude, Ala to Ophelia, and Edek to Claudius, but it needs a good knowledge of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* before seeing or reading the play, so that one can infer the connections between the two texts. It is not clear if Mrozek announced his wish to appropriate *Hamlet* or not. He wants the audience to discover that perhaps.<sup>38</sup>

### 1.1.2. Rewriting

Rewriting signifies textual reworking, rephrasing and rewording of a previous text in a new text. It is different from adaptation in that it does not include transmedial shifting, but it maintains the same textual medium and depends on the written language more than the visual or the oral found in other shapes of reworking like cinema, stage performances, painting, or opera.

The proliferation of cinematic adaptation of literary texts raises the discussion about the differences between the textual and the visual. George Bluestone, for example, differentiates between the two mediums in his seminal book *Novels Into Film* without any attempt to prioritize the textual over the visual or vice versa. Each medium, as he indicates, has its own particular characteristics. Bluestone believes that when a novel is adapted into a film, it loses many linguistic aspects since the picture will replace much linguistic description found in the novel. While a literary text, like the novel, tends to be conceptual, the film is perceptual. The language conceptions are translated as images into

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid, 2.

<sup>38</sup>Sławomir Mrozek and Daniel C. Gerould, *The Mrozek Reader* (New York: Grove Press, 2004).

our cognition and mental thinking when reading the novel, while the image in the film is mainly perceived by our physical senses. The screen lessens the semiotic signs, limits the metaphorical, and reduces the symbolic power of language. It also affects the mental states described linguistically in the texts, such as dreams, memories, feelings, stream of consciousness, which the image is incapable of rendering completely. It can show the character thinking, but it is not an easy task to present his/her inner thoughts on the screen. It requires multi movement of the camera from one corner into another to reflect the character's thoughts. This shortage in presenting the mental states can also be attributed to the fact that a literary text tends to be discursive, full of description and verbiage needed to deliver the image. At the same time, a film is economic in the sense that it depends on camera editing, selection and ignoring unnecessary details. The film is more spatial, it relies on a story made by the transition from one space to another and shot editing made by the camera, but the literary text is temporal, depends on time duration to convey the story.<sup>39</sup>

Moreover, the film compresses the real time found in the text. For example, the film shows a character crossing the street in a few seconds by using different camera angles from the side walk and from across the street, while it needs many words to describe that in the novel. In addition, literary texts can achieve a specific density since the reader can stop or start reading, skip, go back, and proceed to other parts. He can determine his own pace of reading. The film viewers are restricted and bounded by the time duration of the film. The differences between the two mediums are many and each practice of reworking needs different skills and efforts.

Still, to take Bluestone's difference between the linguistic addressing the cognition and the film addressing the senses for granted is incorrect, for many exceptions are always valid. Bluestone's formalistic comparison sparked much counterargument by pro-film critics, like Ralph Stephenson and J. R. Debrax in their *Cinema as Art*, Keith Cohen in his *Film and Fiction: The Dynamics of Exchange*, J. Dudley Andrew in his *Concepts of Film Theory*, to mention a few, who believe that the image can still provoke mental processes as well. While, Howard Mancing, however, prioritizes the image over the metaphorical language in term of vividness to the perception, saying:

Our mental images during the reading process are never as precise and detailed as our perceptual experiences: seeing is more vivid than imagining. Actually being there is more

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<sup>39</sup>George Bluestone, *Novels into Film* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 1-44.

vivid, immediate, and intense than imagining being there.<sup>40</sup>

Mincing's observation is true to some extent, and the image might be more vivid in playing on our momentarily perception than the impression. This is not to say that language in a novel or dramatic text can be less vivid, but each medium has its methods in provoking our imagination and cognition. The argument about these structural differences can be extended more, but what matters most here is the fact that reworkings, whether cinematic, textual, or others, are not the same in terms of the process and the product, and dealing with them under one term, i.e. adaptation, needs to be rethought.

Another controversial difference between adaptation and rewriting is the goal of the adapter and the rewriter behind reworking a previous work. Not all adaptations are concerned with ideological reinterpretation and bringing a new meaning to the hypotext; many adaptations are made for updating and reintroducing a prior work to new audiences located in a new space or time. Rewriting is more generally concerned with ideology, and the new meaning is generated when the rewriter uses a different paradigmatic axis, the selection of words, and a syntagmatic axis, a combination of words and sentences, in his operation.<sup>41</sup> Every time this process is repeated, it will include selection, combination, and omission of words and sentences and bring a new meaning to the text. If meaning, as Saussure indicates, is conventional and relational, i.e. generated by the word's relationship to other words within the same linguistic system,<sup>42</sup> then the rewording will create another relationship that will generate new meaning, therefore rewriting essentially signifies a new meaning and a new perspective.

Moreover, adaptation is more concerned with the aesthetic and artistic side. The receivers come to see how the adapter skilfully transferred a text into a film or painting. The rewriting is more involved with ideology. This does not deny that adaptation can sometimes be guided by the adapter's belief and perspective, nor is rewriting less artistic than adaptation. Both are shaped by a mosaic of cultural, ideological, artistic and medial paradigms, and both keep in mind the type of addressee. Still, rewriters are more constrained because they want to bring a new meaning to the previous text. This is what differentiates rewriting from translation or rewriting for simplification. It "signifies a form

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<sup>40</sup> Howard Mancing, "See the Play, Read the Book," in *Performance and Cognition: Theatre Studies and the Cognitive Turn*, ed. Bruce McConachie and F. Elizabeth Hart (Routledge, 2006), pp. 189-206, 197.

<sup>41</sup> Keith Green and Jill LeBihan, *Critical Theory and Practice: A Coursebook* (London: Routledge, 1996), 4.

<sup>42</sup> Peter Brooker, *A Glossary of Literary and Cultural Theory* (London: Routledge, 2017), 257-258.

of displacement rather than the exact transfer or reiteration of meaning.”<sup>43</sup> It is a re-using of a prior text constrained by the rewriter’s point of view, ideological stands and cultural aspects. It is a relativizing of an old text to the new addressee’s socio-political concerns. Adaptation is usually reinforcing the author’s previous perspective in a new way.

Also, rewriting is adopted by feminists and post-colonialists in their writing back to patriarchal and colonizing metropolitan texts. It carries oppositionality and paradoxicality more than reusing and relativizing. The post-colonialists traced how the discourse of power deployed in textuality more than the oral. Textuality is always seen as a civilized characteristic of the Empire in opposition to the oral and performative aspects of the colonized culture. Chris Tiffin and Alan Lawson say that the “imperial relations may have been established initially by guns, guile and disease, but they were maintained in their interpellative phase largely by textuality.”<sup>44</sup> The colonized subjects are incorporated in this linguistic system of representation, and the use of the same system of representation by the post-colonialists is an affirmative process that aims to fight back to the Empire's textuality. The textual rewriting tries to speak back to Eurocentric ideas, deconstruct the imperial language, and de-hierarchize the Western hierarchies in colonial textual discourse. Salman Rushdie abbreviated that in one of his article titles as “the Empire Writes Back with a Vengeance.”<sup>45</sup>

Rewriting in the feminist and post-colonial context became a space of ideological clashes between the colonizer and the colonized, the patriarchal and matriarchal. It is, as Bright Molande describes, a “resisting response.”<sup>46</sup> Julia Kristeva also conceived rewriting as a paradoxical enterprise in which “the destruction of the old position and the formation of the new one”<sup>47</sup> happens. It is carried out by the difference of the motives which results in a different perspective. Roland Barthes says, “to write ... (to rewrite) is, to desire, to put forth as a force in this world of mine.”<sup>48</sup>

Accordingly, the use of the word ‘adaptation’ and ‘rewriting’ will vary in the discussion of the Arabic *Hamlets* in this dissertation. Adaptation is used here to refer to all visual

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<sup>43</sup>Aysun Kiran, “A Conceptual Discussion of Rewriting as a Tool for the Translation (AI) Turn,” *Curr Res Soc Sc.* <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/download/article-file/825723>, 88 (accessed April 10, 2020).

<sup>44</sup>Chris Tiffin and Alan Lawson, *De-Scribing Empire: Post-Colonialism and Textuality* (London: Routledge, 1994), 3.

<sup>45</sup>Cited in John Thieme, *Postcolonial Con-Texts: Writing Back to the Canon* (London: Continuum, 2001), 3.

<sup>46</sup>Bright Molande, “Politics of Rewriting: What Did Achebe Really Do?,” *Journal of Humanities*, 18, (2004): 38-51, 38.

<sup>47</sup>Cited in Molande, “Politics of Rewriting,” 39.

<sup>48</sup>As cited in Molande, “Politics of Rewriting,” 42.

elements, stage performances or any trans-generic reworkings. While; the use of the term ‘rewriting’ will be limited to the textual dramas produced by Arab and non-Arab rewriters.

## 1.2. Reworking *Hamlet* in Space, Time and Medium

### 1.2.1. The Scope of Reworking *Hamlet*

*Hamlet* is probably the most reworked literary work in the history of literature. The play had transcended and overstepped all geo-historical boundaries and undoubtedly became transcultural. This undeniable fact is manifested in the various reworkings, the multiple critical responses, the numerous translations in several languages, and the multitude of scholarly works composed for and about the play. These “innumerable glossaries and commentaries” demanded that world critics allocate ‘Hamletology’ as a separate discipline particular for the play.<sup>49</sup> Apart from that, the play’s aptitude to reflect different aspects of human psychology, like madness, postponement, meditation, etc., ranked it alongside the top universal myths. In the nineteenth century, Hamletism was coined to mark any individual who “substitute[s] words for deeds, [postpones] indefinitely taking a decision and instead give way to reflection and endless reconsideration.”<sup>50</sup>

Concerning the reworkings, the play frequently reappeared in different forms of theatrical and non-theatrical productions. It was restaged as a comedy in Paul Rudnick’s *I Hate Hamlet* (1991), reworked for the Theatre of the Absurd in Tom Stoppard’s *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (1966), and modified to suit the Traditional Karagoz Shadow Theatre in Ayhan Hulagu’s *Dream of Hamlet* (2021).<sup>51</sup> The play also attracted brilliant moviemakers like Lawrence Oliver in his seminal movie *Hamlet* (1948) and Kenneth Branagh in his cinematic adaptation *Hamlet* (1996). The play also was reworked as a novella in Alan Gratz’s *Something Rotten* (2007), a poem in Richard Brautigan’s ‘The Rape of Ophelia’ (1970), opera in Hermann Reutter’s *Hamlet* (1980), and even cartoon as Jon Favreau did in his *The Lion King* (1994) – and the list is endless. Through this transmedial change, the play disparately absorbed new features that are peculiar to the host mediums.

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<sup>49</sup>Kott, *Shakespeare, Our Contemporary*, 47.

<sup>50</sup>Foakes, *Hamlet Versus Lear*, 20.

<sup>51</sup>Karagoz, in Turkish means “Black Eyes,” referring to Turkish Gypsies, is a popular form of shadow puppet theatre, widely present in Turkey in the fourteenth century. It was named after the main puppet character, Karagoz. By employing shadows, the main idea behind it is to evade human impersonification attributed to Allah, the God in Islam. Cited in Beth Osnes, *Acting: an International Encyclopaedia*, ed. Sam Gill (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2001), 172.

The play has been exposed to slight or extensive processes of reworking, salvaging, extension, extraction, reversion, and remediation that impacted its core themes, settings, and characters. These alterations diversified: some were rather dramatic that notably impacted the basic structure and the sequence of the original story, while other changes were minor. For instance, the story is reversed in the theatrical rewriting of the Syrian Mamdouh Adwan's *Hamlet Wakes Up Late* (1978). It begins from the last scene in Shakespeare's play when Hamlet demands Horatio to tell his story as he is dying. After the death of Hamlet, Horatio takes the audience back in time to all the past incidents that happened before Hamlet's death. The audience can see the story from the perspective of Horatio, who pinpointed that Hamlet was anti-heroic, corrupted, and apathetic to the murder of his father. This change in the chronological order of the story had a theatrical and political necessity. It allowed Adwan to mock the corrupted Ba'ath regime ruling Syria at that time.

In *15-minute Hamlet* by Tom Stoppard (1976), the play has been reduced and abridged to a 15 minutes comic performance. Hamlet's speeches were excessively cut to few lines like his "too too solid flesh" speech which is epitomized in ten lines, and his famous soliloquy of "To be, or not to be" was cut into two lines: "To be, or not to be/ that is the question."<sup>52</sup> In Nedyalko Yardanov's *The Murder of Gonzago* (1988), only the play within the play in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is reworked. The central characters in the play are the actors who visit Elsinore to act *The Murder of Gonzago*, but they end up acting in Hamlet's *The Mousetrap*, by which he intends to "catch the conscience of the king."<sup>53</sup> The plot is discovered, and the actors were interrogated and tortured by a medieval torturing machine. The play carries political messages in that it comments on the artistic censorship applied in Bulgaria by Georgi Dimitrov's communist regime between 1946 and 1949.<sup>54</sup>

On other occasions, the story of *Hamlet* was extended and taken beyond Shakespeare's last scene. Lee Blessing's sequel comedy, *Fortinbras* (1991), recounts the incidents after Hamlet's death when Fortinbras entered the stage to find the dead bodies scattered all over the stage. Horatio tells him the story, but Fortinbras objects that Horatio can tell the true story to the Danish. Instead, he would change this story and mobilize the Danish to fight Poland with him. He ordered Horatio to tell the Danish about a Polish spy sent by the Polish king to destroy the entire Danish royal family. The spy sabotaged the fencing match

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<sup>52</sup>Richard Preiss and Deanne Williams, eds., *Childhood, Education and the Stage in Early Modern England* (Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 250.

<sup>53</sup>Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, II. ii. 567-568.

<sup>54</sup>Orlich, *Subversive Stages*, 23.

by poisoning the swords. This story, as Fortinbras believes, will grant him easy acceptance as the new king among the Danish and will make him the saviour of Denmark from Poland.<sup>55</sup>

The play's central themes (revenge, treachery, and madness) and subthemes (love, friendship, loyalty, etc.) were also exposed to some changes. While many adapters tried to maintain the same themes, others zoomed in particular themes or added extra themes. In *Hamlet's Father* (2008), a novella by Orson Scott Card, Hamlet cannot sympathize with his father's death as he knows the sexual crimes his father committed by molesting Laertes and Horatio when they were children.<sup>56</sup> Hamlet believes that Claudius is a far better monarch, and it appears later that he is not the real murderer of King Hamlet, but the real killer is Horatio, who killed the old king in revenge for the latter's sexual crime. Card added a theme of homosexuality to his work. He made it clear that he could not identify with the theme of revenge in the play. Card said: "I have little interest in a dithering hero; nor am I much inspired by revenge plots."<sup>57</sup>

Other adaptations prioritized other characters and marginalized Hamlet. For instance, Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* brings Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to the front as the main characters. Hamlet was given a minor role and seldom present on the stage. In Margaret Clarke's rewriting, *Gertrude and Ophelia*,<sup>58</sup> both Gertrude and Ophelia are the main characters. Clarke granted her heroines a chance to speak up against the male dominance prevalent in Shakespeare's play.

Other features and characteristics were added to Hamlet by the rewriters for their purposes. For example, he is an alcoholic who intoxicates his mind to forget the ghost's orders in Adwan's *Hamlet Wakes Up Late*, he is morally deteriorated in Geza Beremenyi's *Halmi*,<sup>59</sup> and over-cynical in Paul Rudnick *I Hate Hamlet* (1991). He became 'Mohamlet' in Cristina Gottfridsson's drama *Mohamlet* (2006), 'Haider' in Vishal Bhardwaj's cinematic adaptation, *Haider* (2014), and 'Arthur' in the Polish Sławomir Mrożek's theatrical appropriation, *Tango* (1964).

Other adjustments occurred in the setting. Most of the shuffling in time happens in film adaptations, like when Lawrence Oliver pulled out many scenes from the play to fit the

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<sup>55</sup>David M. Bevington, *Murder Most Foul: Hamlet Through the Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 211.

<sup>56</sup>Orson Scott Card, *Hamlet's Father* (Burton, MI: Subterranean Press & Hatrack River, 2011).

<sup>57</sup>Marvin Kaye, ed., *The Ghost Quartet: An Anthology* (New York: Tor, 2008), 300.

<sup>58</sup>Wright, *Political Adaptation in Canadian*, 60.

<sup>59</sup>Orlich, *Subversive Stages*, 125.

two-hour time duration of his film *Hamlet*.<sup>60</sup> In terms of place, the play's location in Elsinore was reintroduced differently in Michael Almereyda's movie *Hamlet* (2000) when the story took place in modern New York City, and the characters are driving luxurious cars and living in postmodern flats. In *The Prince of the Himalayas*, a film written and directed by the Chinese Tsering Dorje and Sherwood Hu (2006), the actions occur outdoors in ancient Tibet, a place that is greatly different from Elsinore.

### 1.2.2. Why *Hamlet*?

With all these discrepancies in dealing with Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the question of why the play has succeeded in transcending and surpassing its own time and geography has attracted many critics. Kott, for instance, designated the political theme in the play as a key attribute to the proliferation of Shakespeare's masterpiece. He believes that because the play immediately responds to and "absorbs all of the problems of our time,"<sup>61</sup> it received wide popularity in the twentieth century. Other critics focused on the humanitarian side of Shakespeare's prince. R.A Foakes, for instance, attributed this fact to Hamlet's ability, as a character, to "combine so many strong attributes with common weak ones."<sup>62</sup> If he can display heroic features and intellectual abilities in one aspect, he could appear as a character who "embodied emblem of irresolution, half-heartedness and doubt" from another aspect.<sup>63</sup> These so-many-sided attributes allowed Hamlet to take on the recipients' various characteristics and become a free-floating signifier that might resemble anyone. He became a universal paradigm covering different sides of human anxieties.

Hamlet, as Foakes believes, became an excuse for humans who "have potentials, but fail to live up to their ideal of themselves, or fall short for the achievements they hope for."<sup>64</sup> The image of the ordinary people "addicted to melancholy and sickened by the world around [them]" and the picture of "a nobly striving but ever shipwrecked character,"<sup>65</sup> as Herman Melville defines Hamletism, has always been connected with the image of Hamlet, who, disregarding his nobility and genius, contemplates self-slaughter to "end the heartache and the thousand natural shocks."<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>60</sup>Samuel Crowl, *Screen Adaptations: Shakespeare's Hamlet: The Relationship between Text and Film* (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2014), 29- 45.

<sup>61</sup>Kott, *Shakespeare, Our Contemporary*, 52.

<sup>62</sup>Foakes, *Hamlet Versus Lear*, 13.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid, 14.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid, 20.

<sup>66</sup>Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, III. i. 62-64.

Harold Bloom sees that Shakespeare's ability to produce a unique genius in his play and make his character "more intelligent than we are and very dangerous to know"<sup>67</sup> is the rationale that allows the play "to turn into a cosmological drama."<sup>68</sup> By this declaration, Bloom says that Hamlet's ability to demonstrate self-consciousness, absolute genius, unattainability, and his ability to move the audience to identify with him are the main reasons behind his popularity. Bloom says:

We read to reflect and to be reflected. ... You can make of the play 'Hamlet' and the protagonist pretty much what you will, whether you are playgoer or reader, critic or director, actor or ideologue; push any stance or quest into it and the drama will illuminate what you have brought with you.<sup>69</sup>

The attempts of Kott, Foakes, and Bloom to understand the worldliness of Shakespeare's play are only the tip of the iceberg. Shakespeare has excelled in producing a masterpiece that combines all significant juxtapositions, like love vs. hatred, war vs. peace, madness vs. reasonableness, loyalty vs. betrayal, appearance vs. reality, and determination vs. procrastination. This reflects the brilliance of the Bard. Even the assumption that Shakespeare has drafted his play from a pre-existing dramatic texts, *Amleth* that was written in 1200 AD by the Danish historian Saxo Grammaticus or *Ur-Hamlet* by Thomas Kyd,<sup>70</sup> is considered an enhancement for Shakespeare's brilliance, if not as an inventor, then as an adapter and a rewriter who, with his acuteness and prodigy, restored a raw material, poured it in a new shape, and reintroduced it to the universe. The result is a great legend, "the Mona Lisa of literature," as T.S Eliot once described.<sup>71</sup>

### 1.2.3. Tracking Hamletology in Brief (From 17<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> Century)

#### *The Seventeenth Century*

After its production in the Globe Theatre between 1600 and 1601, Shakespeare's *Hamlet* has appealed to many seventeenth-century playwrights and stage critics. Part of the critical comments questioned the play's precursor versions that had influenced Shakespeare to rewrite this masterpiece, especially that the Elizabethan audiences were

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<sup>67</sup>Bloom, *Hamlet*, xvi.

<sup>68</sup>Bloom, *Hamlet*, xii.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid, xvii.

<sup>70</sup>Myron Stagman, *Shakespeare's Greek Drama Secret* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), 129.

<sup>71</sup>Ulrich Broich, *Britain at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001), 187.

already familiar with the story at that time.<sup>72</sup> James Shapiro recently wrote, “[i]n terms of plot, *Hamlet* is Shakespeare’s least original play.”<sup>73</sup>

The play was produced in three different versions. The First Quarto (Q1), *The Tragical Historie of Hamlet Prince of Denmarke*, is described as the shortest version of the play and was published as a printed text in 1603. The Second Quarto (Q2), published in 1604, is double in length and is considered the first fullest and best text of the play. The First Folio is believed to be collected in 1623, after Shakespeare’s death. These versions incited later critics to highlight the differences and similarities between them.<sup>74</sup>

The play gained immediate popularity among playwrights in the seventeenth century. There were many references to the play in other theatrical texts at that time. In *Eastward Ho!* (1605) by Ben Jonson, George Chapman, and John Marston, a satirical reference to *Hamlet* was noticed. Gertrud asks her son, “Hamlet, Are you mad?”<sup>75</sup> Another influence of the play was seen in *In Sir Thomas Smithes Voyage and Entertainment in Rushia* (1605) when the author described a Russian family’s usurpation of power as “a first, not no second to any Hamlet.”<sup>76</sup>

After the reopening of theatres when the monarchy was restored in 1660, *Hamlet* was one of the most performed dramas on the Restoration stages. Thanks to William Davenant, who directed four performances for the play and had a significant role in the play’s popularity at that time. However, Davenant made many language changes as he believed that the play “[is] too long [to] be conveniently acted”<sup>77</sup> and was full of impious language that needed to be cleaned up to suit the sensibility of the audience. He cut Polonius’s advice to Laertes, most of Laertes’s advice to Ophelia, and other long speeches except for “To be, or not, to be.”<sup>78</sup>

The play also experienced a critical assault by some neo-classicists like John Evelyn, who wrote in his *Diary* (1661) that the play “began to disgust this refined age.”<sup>79</sup> Such critics observed the play’s divergence from the classical unity and linguistic decorum

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<sup>72</sup>Dominic Head, ed., *The Cambridge Guide to Literature in English* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 478.

<sup>73</sup>Cited in Bloom, *Hamlet*, 41.

<sup>74</sup>William Shakespeare, *Arden Shakespeare Third Series Complete Works*, ed. Ann Thompson et al. (London, UK: The Arden Shakespeare, 2021), 317. For the differences and similarities see John Jowett, *Shakespeare and Text: Revised Edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 104-105.

<sup>75</sup>Bloom, *Hamlet*, 42.

<sup>76</sup>*Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>77</sup>Sophia B. Blaydes and Philip Bordinat, *Sir William Davenant: An Annotated Bibliography, 1629-1985* (New York: Garland, 1986), 65.

<sup>78</sup>Cited in Bloom, *Hamlet*, 44.

<sup>79</sup>Cited in Claude C. H. Williamson, *Readings on the Character of Hamlet: Compiled from over Three Hundred Sources*. (Place of publication not identified: Routledge, 2010), 1.

adopted by the neo-classicists at that time, and many negative comments around the play were associated with the general negative comments against Shakespeare, who himself diverted in all of his plays from the classical high style and nobility of characters as they thought. Other critics defended Shakespeare's genius in breaking the classical norms of unity. Dryden defended Shakespeare by saying: "who with some errors not to be avoided at that age had undoubtedly a large soul of poesy even of our nation."<sup>80</sup>

### *The Eighteenth Century*

Most of the early eighteenth-century criticism around the play was foregrounded by the neo-classicists' vision of literature, but this time around the play itself. It received negative comments by critics like Voltaire, who believed that the intention of the play to break the classical traditions of the tragedy, particularly in terms of unity and decorum, made the play "a vulgar and barbarous drama, which would not be tolerated by the vilest populace of France, or Italy."<sup>81</sup> In 'The Preface to Shakespeare' (1765), Samuel Johnson also indicated that Shakespeare showed "little regard to poetical justice, and may be charged with equal neglect of poetical probability."<sup>82</sup> Despite these comments, the play was praised by critics like George Farquhar, who commented on some of Shakespeare's plays including *Hamlet*, in his 'Discourse Upon Comedy' (1702), as these plays "have long been the darling of the English Audience, and are likely to continue with the same Applause."<sup>83</sup> Thomas Hanmer in 'From Some Remarks on the Tragedy of Hamlet Prince of Denmark' (1736), said: "The tragedy that is now coming under our Examination, is one of the best of his Pieces, and strikes us with a certain Awe and Seriousness, of Mind."<sup>84</sup>

In the Eighteenth century, the play became more popular in England through playwrights like Thomas Betterton and John Philip Kemble. Also, *Hamlet* was played for the first time by female actresses such as Fanny Furnival, who played the role at Smock Alley Theatrem in Dublin in 1741, and Sarah Siddon, who played this role in Worcester in 1775.<sup>85</sup> One of the remarkable eighteenth-century reworkings of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* was by the British David Garrick in 1742. Garrick did unprecedented massive alterations

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<sup>80</sup>Cited in Brian Vickers, *William Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage Volume 1, 1623-1692* (Routledge, 2009), 14.

<sup>81</sup>Arthur F. Kinney, ed., *Hamlet: Critical Essays* (New York: Garland, 2001), 26.

<sup>82</sup>Philip Smallwood, ed., *Johnson Re-Visioned: Looking Before and After* (Lewisburg: Bucknell Univ Press, 2009), 119.

<sup>83</sup>Williamson, *Readings on the Character of Hamlet*, 4.

<sup>84</sup>Cited in *Some Remarks on the Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* (London: W. Wilkins, 1736), 4.

<sup>85</sup>Tony Howard, *Women as Hamlet: Performance and Interpretation in Theatre, Film and Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 38-39.

in his performance. From these changes, he eliminated the death of Ophelia, the murder of Gertrud, the fencing scene between Hamlet and Laertes, and the whole scene at the graveyard. In one of his messages to Sir William Young, Garrick announces to Young his deliberate alteration saying: "I had sworn I would not rest till I had rescued that noble play from all the rubbish of the fifth act."<sup>86</sup> Garrick's uncommon practice at that time evoked many critics to condemn his changes. James Boaden negatively comments on Garrick's *Hamlet* that "all is written in a mean and trashy common place manner, and, in a word sullied the page of Shakespeare and disgraced the taste and judgment of Mr. Garrick."<sup>87</sup> Boaden's hostility to Garrick's play came when the question of originality mattered a lot, and adaptation, as uncommon literary practice at that time, was only conceived as open theft and a flagrant encroachment upon the authorship right.

The period also observed more translations for the play in different languages. Pierre Antoine de La Place translated the play into French in 1745, Don Ramon de la Cruz into Spanish in 1772, Francis Kazinczy into Hungarian in 1794, and Stanislaw Trembecki into Polish in 1788. These translations inspired more performances in Europe and granted the play more popularity.

### ***The Nineteenth Century***

At the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Romantics brought a critical shift by focusing on Hamlet's inner world more than the whole play. Hamlet's intellectual qualities and psychological problems that caused his procrastination to avenge his father were scrutinised for the first time. In his *Wilhelm Meister*, translated later by Thomas Carlyle (1778), Goethe was perhaps the first to focus on Hamlet's psychological insights as a reason for his hesitation to act when he said: "Amazement and sorrow overwhelm the solitary young man."<sup>88</sup> Samuel Taylor Coleridge also interpreted Hamlet's delay as a corollary of "his thoughts and the images of his fancy," which "are far more vivid than his actual perceptions."<sup>89</sup> According to Coleridge and other Romantics, Hamlet's over-valued intellectuality, eminent sensibility, and ideal perceptions of the world hindered his actions to take revenge.

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<sup>86</sup>Cited in Jonathan Croall, *Performing Hamlet: Actors in the Modern Age* (London: The Arden Shakespeare, 2019), 7.

<sup>87</sup>Kalman A. Burnim, *David Garrick, Director* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1973), 154.

<sup>88</sup>Bevington, *Murder Most Foul*, 115.

<sup>89</sup>Williamson, *Readings on the Character of Hamlet*, 220.

The Romantics conceived Hamlet as a prototype and a mirror to reflect on their own psyche. Coleridge once said, "I have a smack of Hamlet myself, if I may say so....,"<sup>90</sup> and William Hazlitt emphasized Hamlet's inner conflict as a prototype for all humanity when he once said: "It is we who are Hamlet...whose powers of action have been eaten up by thought."<sup>91</sup>

The Romantics' delving deep into Hamlet's psychological world aroused the discussion around other characters in the play. Ophelia comes next to Hamlet in enticing nineteenth-century critics. Anna Jameson, in *Characteristics of Women* (1832), said: "Poor Ophelia! ...Oh, far too soft, too good, too fair to be cast among the briars of this working-day world, and fall and bleed upon the thorns of life!"<sup>92</sup> Another attraction to Ophelia's character was observed in John Everett Millais' painting in 1852. Millais adapted Act 4, Scene 7 from Shakespeare's play where Ophelia is floating in the water and singing before her death.

The play also reached to other European countries late-eighteenth century through translations like Georg Scheutz's translation into Swedish (1820), Alessandro Verri into Italian (1815), Michal Bosy into Slovakian (1830), and Oiveira Silva into Portuguese (1835).

Another remarkable interpretation of *Hamlet* happened at the end of the century, when Sigmund Freud, in 'The Interpretation of Dreams' (1900), interpreted Hamlet's delay in killing Claudius in the sphere of Oedipus Rex. This interpretation incited much of the psychoanalytical criticism around Hamlet's character at that time. Freud believed that "Hamlet is able to do anything – except take vengeance on the man who got away with his father and took that father's place with his mother, the man who shows him the repressed wishes of his own childhood realized."<sup>93</sup> In other words, Freud believed that Hamlet possessed sexual desires towards his mother, which his dead father repressed, and his delay to kill Claudius is driven by his gratitude for Claudius for killing his rival father. Hamlet's failure to condemn Claudius's desire towards Gertrude at the beginning is because he unconsciously could not condemn his desires towards his mother. Freud's interpretation of Hamlet's procrastination was controversially debated by many critics in the next century.

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<sup>90</sup>Philip Goldstein, *Reception Study: From Literary Theory to Cultural Studies*, ed. James L. Machor (New York: Routledge, 2009), 80.

<sup>91</sup>Williamson, *Readings on the Character of Hamlet*, 46.

<sup>92</sup>Cited in Bevington, *Murder Most Foul*, 26.

<sup>93</sup>Robert W. Rieber, *Freud on Interpretation: The Ancient Magical Egyptian and Jewish Traditions* (New York, NY: Springer New York, 2012), 50.

### *The Twentieth Century*

Freud's psychoanalytical interpretations of *Hamlet* prevailed at the beginning of the twentieth century, but not until the 1920s, when WWI resulted in many political crises in Europe and other regions. The political atmosphere enforced itself on critics to re-read the play in the political domain. Hamlet's hesitation and internal struggles, Hamletism, were marginalized, and he reappeared again as a hero and intellectual problematized by restoring justice. The German theatre practitioner Bertolt Brecht, in his 'Short Organum on the Theatre' (1948), and who had his own view about how "theatre should stand up robustly for the interest of its own age," believed that *Hamlet* should mainly be read as a political play in the twentieth century. He wrote:

I read the plot as thus: It is an age of warriors. While the latter's son Fortinbras is arming for a fresh war the Danish king is likewise slain: by his own brother. The slain king's brothers, now themselves kings, avert war by arranging that the Norwegian troops shall cross Danish soil to launch a predatory war against Poland. But at this point the young Hamlet is summoned by his warrior father's ghost to avenge the crime committed against him. After at first being reluctant to answer one bloody deed by another, and even preparing to go into exile, he meets young Fortinbras at the coast as he is marching with his troops to Poland. Overcome by this warrior-like example, he turns back and in a piece of barbaric butchery slaughters his uncle, his mother and himself, leaving Denmark to the Norwegian.<sup>94</sup>

Brecht's political reading is not extraordinary in that period, but most of the reworkings emphasized the ability of the play to regenerate itself in different political contexts, especially after the 1950s, when a sense of nihilism and meaninglessness, caused by the wars, prevailed worldwide. *Hamlet* was reworked in Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* to reflect on that feeling of nihilism. Neither of the two characters in the title know why Claudius has called upon them, they have no clue to their near or far future, and they spend the whole first scene flipping a coin meaninglessly arguing about the law of probability. Later, a group of tragedians show up and offer them a free show for a play named '*Hamlet*.' When the two characters ask them why performing a tragedy, the actors reply that 'bloody tragedies' are the only things they know how to act at that time.<sup>95</sup> Also, in the postmodern era, the play grasped new ways of dramaturgical techniques from the postmodern theatre. Attila Kiss comments on one of the Hungarian postmodern

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<sup>94</sup>Cited in Andy Lavender, *Hamlet in Pieces: Shakespeare Reworked: Peter Brook, Robert Lepage, Robert Wilson*, (London: Nick Hern, 2008), 35-35.

<sup>95</sup>Cited in Arnold P. Hinchliffe, *The Absurd*, (London: Routledge, 2018), 85-86.

experimental adaptations of *Hamlet* by the Hungarian Gábor Bódy. The stage is a real dramatization and intersection of Hamlet's brain where all characters are acting in his mind. The stage is full of symbols that represent his brain's cells and veins. This adaptation utilized postmodern anatomical techniques in the theatre to depict Hamlet's stream of consciousness.<sup>96</sup>

It is not only in Europe *Hamlet* was considered a political play. The play became transcontinental and was taken further to comment on political crises in Asia and Africa. *The Usurper of State Power* by the Chinese Gu Wuwei is a political mocking of the power used by Yuan Shikai, who struggled to restore the monarchy.<sup>97</sup> In the Middle East, Arab playwrights also utilized the play to comment on the political crises in the region after 1970. Some of these political rewritings and adaptations were satirical of the Arab regimes that oppressed their nations. In works like Kazal al Majidi's *Hamlet without Hamlet*, Jawad Al Alssadi's *Forget Hamlet*, Mamdouh Adwan's *Hamlet Wakes Up Late*, and many others, the play was reworked to reflect on the oppression Arabs faced under their oppressive Arab regimes.

The century also witnessed the cinematic adaptations for the play by filmmakers like Lawrence Oliver in his black and white film *Hamlet*, 1948. The film paved the way for later cinematic adaptations like Franco Zeffirelli's *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* (1991), Kenneth Branagh's *Hamlet* (1996), Michael Almereyda's *Hamlet* (2000), and many others. These adaptations brought many alterations to Shakespeare's text regarding its story, characters, and setting. The story has undergone several eliminations, cuttings, and extractions to fit the typical time duration of movies. Three of these films stick to the two-hour show time, while Branagh's film, which displays more fidelity to the original text, was almost four hours, making the movie tedious for the audience.

### ***The Twenty-first Century***

Even in the new millennium, the play kept appealing to many critics and stage directors. One of the significant re-readings of the play is by Margreta de Grazia in her critical work *Hamlet without Hamlet*. De Grazia turned all the previous focus on Hamletism on their heads, believing that much emphasis has been mistakenly put on Hamlet the character more than *Hamlet* as a whole play. She believes that focusing on Hamlet's physiological side distracted the critics from the play's central theme, i.e., the

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<sup>96</sup> Kiss Attila, *Double Anatomy in Early Modern and Postmodern Drama* (Szeged: JATEPress, 2010).

<sup>97</sup> Bevington, *Murder Most Foul*, 145.

political struggle to retain one's own right of his throne inheritance and his title to be the king of Denmark. If the play is read as a one-piece work, Hamlet's psychological problems will result from his disinheritance of the throne. For example, his mother's marriage is less significant as a psychologically damaging factor than preventing his rights to the throne. De Grazia says:

It was not sharper vision that brought Hamlet's complex interiority into focus. Rather, it was a blind spot. In order for Hamlet to appear modern, the premise of the play had to drop out of sight. The premise is this: at his father's death, just at the point when an only son in a patrilineal system stands to inherit, Hamlet is dispossessed – and, as far as the court is concerned, legitimately.<sup>98</sup>

Stephen Greenblatt's *Hamlet in Purgatory* is another seminal book produced at this time. Greenblatt focuses on the ghost of King Hamlet. The play, at its core, is about the desire of the dead to speak to us and our desire to speak to them. Greenblatt started his book by giving a historical background for the term 'purgatory' and its rise and fall in Catholic and Protestant England. Greenblatt also discusses how the dead always requires remembrance. The ghost demands revenge, but it also asks for remembrance when he orders his son, "ADIEU, adieu, Hamlet. Remember me!"<sup>99</sup> Greenblatt also indicates that *The Mousetrap* has another significance. It has been acted in memory of his father.

The play kept reappearing through cinematic and theatrical reworkings even at this time. *Hamlet XXI Century* is a Russian TV screen series by the director Yuri Kara produced in 2009. The series preserved the plot except for showing the characters acting in 21st-century scenery: like the nightclub in which the king and Queen marry, the killing of Polonius by Hamlet who blows him away on his yacht, and the car racing between Hamlet and Laertes that replaces the fencing match. Another cinematic adaptation is *Ophelia*, written by Semi Chellas and directed by Claire McCarthy in 2018. The story is told from the perspective of Ophelia, a romantic character who tries to rescue her beloved Hamlet from Claudius. After discovering the murder by Claudius, Ophelia informed Hamlet about the murder and promised to help him avenge his father. When Ophelia informs Claudius that she knows about his crime from Mechtild, a healer living in the forest who happened to be Gertrude's sister and Claudius ex-lover, Claudius gives the order that Ophelia must be jailed and persecuted. Ophelia informs Hamlet that she will fake madness and escape to

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<sup>98</sup>Margreta De Grazia, *Hamlet without Hamlet* (Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 1.

<sup>99</sup>Cited in Stephen Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 205.

a convent where she will wait for him. Hamlet is killed while Ophelia lives peacefully in the convent and decides to write the story from her perspective.

Arab adaptors and rewriters also reworked the play to comment on one of the significant political incidents in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, i.e. The Arab Spring. The uprisings incited many playwrights and stage directors to use the play to comment on Arabs' aspiration for freedom. Mahmoud Farouq's *Goodbye Hamlet*, performed by Egyptian university students in 2012, shows the director and the characters searching for a suitable character that can play the role of the hero Hamlet, who can terminate the usurper king. The play is full of political allegories to the Egyptian Spring in which Egyptian youths revolted against Hosni Mubarak's regime. The revolutionary Hamlet, the characters search for, is an icon of heroism and bravery not found in any person.

All the previously mentioned examples are humble attempts to decipher the journey of *Hamlet* through time and grasp its expansive receptions in the different languages and cultures. Nevertheless, it is somewhat erroneous to acclaim that a particular study like this can comprise all the reworkings, the criticism, and interpretations produced for and around the play. I find it more doable in this dissertation to restrict the discussion to tracing the play's journey in the Arab World after 1970. I assumed and want to prove that the best way to grasp the Arab *Hamlets* is by reading them regarding the political incidents in the region, hoping this study will add something to the heritage and global journey of Shakespeare's play.

### **1.3. Reworking *Hamlet* in Different Political Contexts**

Shakespeare's *Hamlet* has constantly been thrust into political conflicts by different playwrights and stage directors. This fact is evinced by the abundant number of political *Hamlets* produced in variable ways to serve as commentaries on political oppression or as reflections on people's aspiration for freedom. The German nationalist Ferdinand Freiligrath, in 1844, started one of his poems by the "Deutschland ist Hamlet" (translated as Germany is Hamlet) to criticize and castigate the inaction of his German people in facing the Napoleonic rule at that time.<sup>100</sup> The Russian Arthur P. Mendel once said that Hamlet, after Stalinism, became "a brother in-arm" in the Soviet society and "an assault on

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<sup>100</sup>Michael Hattaway, Boika Sokolova, and Derek Roper, eds., *Shakespeare in The New Europe*, (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 78.

the remnants of that dreadful era.”<sup>101</sup> R. S. White mentions how Hamlet became a Polish prince whose “famous question, ‘To be, or not to be,’ became Polish because the Poles understood it as a burning political issue, ‘To fight or not to fight’ for the country’s independence from usurping rulers.”<sup>102</sup> Margaret Litvin believes that “following Hamlet’s Arab Journey,” or what she calls the Arab prince, “helps clarify one of the most central and widely misunderstood preoccupations of modern Arab politics.”<sup>103</sup>

The insistence to import the English prince, own him, then export him in a new shape to the world by those adapters came out of the fact that Hamlet has always been politically grasped as “the catalyst for opposition, whether as active freedom fighter or as resistant intellectual, the kind of character who is ‘ever-now’ in the world of politics.”<sup>104</sup>

Perhaps, no period has witnessed the proliferation of the political *Hamlets* more than the twentieth century, and, perhaps, no playwrights produced such plays more than the Europeans. These two inferences are attributed to the fact that Europe was undoubtedly the incubator of the fiercest wars and political rifts in the last century. The play, for example, has been banned in Russia, from 1932 to 1954, as a result of its political content that contravened the communist tenets at that time. Zeltiņa Guna and Sanita Reinsone said that Josef Stalin “hated *Hamlet* as a play and Hamlet as a character,”<sup>105</sup> Stalin’s belligerent attitude towards the play is credited to his objection to the play’s themes of “politics, spying, exile, imprisonment, death, fate, suicide, etc. that held up an unflattering mirror to the world of the Great leader,”<sup>106</sup> or as Arthur Mendel said that “Stalin liquidated *Hamlet*” because “there was no place in the closed society for one who questioned and vacillated.”<sup>107</sup> Though Stalin never publicized his opinion about the play officially, after he attended a performance by Nikolai Akimov in 1932, he left the theatre unsatisfied with the show, and that incident was enough to limit the play’s appearance in Russia during that time.

After the death of Stalin, *Hamlet* gained immense popularity on the Russian stages and in the Russian minds as it started to correspond to the new mood of society, reflecting an

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<sup>101</sup> Arthur P. Mendel “Hamlet and Soviet Humanism,” *Slavic Review*, 30, no. 4, (December 1971): 733–747, 734. [https://doi.org/https://www.jstor.org/stable/2493845?seq=2#metadata\\_info\\_tab\\_contents](https://doi.org/https://www.jstor.org/stable/2493845?seq=2#metadata_info_tab_contents). (accessed May 24, 2020).

<sup>102</sup> R. S. White, *Avant-Garde Hamlet: Text, Stage, Screen*, (Fairleigh Dickinson University, 2017), 46.

<sup>103</sup> Margaret, *Hamlet’s Arab Journey*, 2.

<sup>104</sup> White, *Avant-Garde Hamlet*, 48.

<sup>105</sup> Zeltiņa Guna and Sanita Reinsone, *Text in Contemporary Theatre: The Baltics within the World Experience*, (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Pub., 2013), 31.

<sup>106</sup> Tiffany Ann Conroy Moore, *Kozintsev’s Shakespeare Films: Russian Political Protest in Hamlet and King Lear*, (London: McFarland & Company Incorporated, 2012), 80.

<sup>107</sup> Moore, *Kozintsev’s Shakespeare Films*, 56.

“ardent desire to re-establish norms of truth and justice”<sup>108</sup> that have been defaced and distorted by the illusions of Stalinism. In cinematic adaptations like Grigori Kozintsev's *Hamlet* (1964), Kozintsev redirected the attention from Hamletism and placed his hero in political confrontation with Khrushchev's regime. The show mocks the illusion of Stalinism and highlights the disappointment with Khrushchev's new regime.

In the second half of the twentieth century, *Hamlet* slipped more into politics. Ileana Alexandra Orlich dedicated a whole chapter in her book, *Subversive Stages* (2017), to reflect on the adaptation of *Hamlet* in pre- and post-communist Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria. In Bulgaria, Shakespeare's *Hamlet* was reworked by Nedyalko Yordanov's in his *The Murder of Gonzago*, written and staged in 1988, to show the brutality and iron-fisted domination imposed by Georgi Dimitrov's regime.<sup>109</sup> Geza Bereményi's *Halmi*, written and staged in the late 1970s, is a Hungarian stage adaptation that revolves around Halmi, the main character, who appears in a permanent state of disappointment with his family, particularly after discovering his mother's adultery. The story takes place in Budapest; presented as a somewhat claustrophobic city that imprisons the characters in its semi-suffocating and inescapable atmosphere imposed by János Kádár's regime between 1956 and 1988.<sup>110</sup> *Halmi* became a copy of the Hungarian youths stuck in a climate full of defeatism, grotesque and absurdity shaped by the unpromising political atmosphere. Orlich comments:

*Halmi* offers testimony to Hungary's inability to escape the political affinities with its hated Russian neighbour that was holding the lands of the Soviet bloc in its tight grip at the time of the play's enactment in 1979. In this context, the narrowly circumscribed space of the Hungarian capital where Halmi's family lives suggests a dramatic representation of staged-captivity by which to protest the USSR's control of Hungary, one of the lands behind the Iron Curtain, as a political prisoner.<sup>111</sup>

Ruth J. Owen in *The Hamlet Zone: Reworking Hamlet for European Cultures* describes why and how Shakespeare's *Hamlet* has received all that attention in different European countries through ages. The book is a massive collection of the play's cinematic, poetic and theatrical reworkings in Germany, France, Hungary, Spain, Portugal, and Sweden. From the many reasons for reworking the play in Europe, Owen mentions politics as the

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<sup>108</sup>Mendel, “Hamlet and Soviet Humanism,” 733.

<sup>109</sup>Orlich, *Subversive Stages*, 135-154.

<sup>110</sup>Ibid, 134.

<sup>111</sup>Ibid, 117.

most significant factor behind many European *Hamlets*. From the examples, she mentions three reworkings produced by Spanish playwrights who ended up in permanent exile after the Spanish Civil War, 1936–39. In Ramon Vinyes's *Hamlet, the Playwright* (written in Colombia,) Paulino Masip's *The Diary of Hamlet Garcia* (written in Mexico,) and Salvador de Madariaga's *On Hamlet* (written in the UK,) the adapters intended to picture Hamlet not as hesitant intellectual, but as the confident Spanish intellectual who knows how to act in an 'out-of-joint' time caused by political tensions in Spain. Owen says that such reworkings intended to motivate the Spanish intellectuals to take an active role in the Spanish Civil War instead of standing neutral.<sup>112</sup>

Kott mentions two Polish political reworkings of *Hamlet* produced between the mid-1950s and the mid-1960s; the time Poland struggled to liberate from the Soviet influence: *Hamlet* by Roman Zawistowski or what was called 'The Polish Hamlet after the XXth Party Congress, staged at the Old Theatre in Cracow 1956, and *Hamlet Study* by Jerzy Grotowski, staged at the Laboratory Theatre of 13 Rows in Opole, 1964. Kott clarifies how Zawistowski created a "political drama par excellence"<sup>113</sup> in which "Denmark's a prison" is repeated three times in the play to symbolize how Poland became a prison under the USSR. Claudius became suppressive and "keeps a constant watchful eye on Hamlet,"<sup>114</sup> who feigns madness in order to perform a coup d'état. He is "a rebellious ideologist, and lived only for action,"<sup>115</sup> as Kott describes. If "Hamlet is mad," it is because "politics is itself madness when it destroys all feeling and affection."<sup>116</sup>

Another remarkable example of the political *Hamlet* is Heiner Müller's *Hamletmaschine* which appeared as a nine-page long rewriting of *Hamlet*. The play later was performed in Brussels (1987) and Munich (1979), in West Germany, as the GDR authorities banned the performance of the play for its "[divergence] from their own pronouncements on the form and function of literature."<sup>117</sup> It is not until 1988 that the play was allowed there as part of the artistic liberation in GDR. David Barnett said that the play's original title is '*Hamlet in Budapest*' to reflect on how "the Soviet tanks enforced a particular definition of communism in Hungary."<sup>118</sup> There is a direct reference in the play in the fourth scene,

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<sup>112</sup>Owen, *The Hamlet Zone*, 45- 59.

<sup>113</sup>Kott, *Shakespeare, Our Contemporary*, 54.

<sup>114</sup>Ibid, 54.

<sup>115</sup>Ibid, 61.

<sup>116</sup>Ibid, 62.

<sup>117</sup>David Barnett, *Heiner Müller's The Hamletmaschine*, (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016), 4-5.

<sup>118</sup>Barnett, *Heiner Müller's The Hamletmaschine*, 4.

“Pest in Buda,” as an allusion to the 1956 uprising in Hungary.<sup>119</sup> Nevertheless, the intention behind calling the play *Hamletmachine* was to “reflect on the balance between the human and the mechanical” and to provoke thinking about “to what the extent we have control over our actions”<sup>120</sup> under despotism. The play dramatizes Hamlet as a self-lamenting intellectual who regrets his passive role:

I was Hamlet. I stood on the coast and spoke with the surf BLABLA at my back the ruins of Europe... I play no role anymore...behind me the scenery is being taken down [by] people who are not interested in my drama.<sup>121</sup>

Other countries outside Europe had their political reworkings also. Robert Gurik's *Hamlet, prince du Québec* (1968), written originally in French and translated into English, reflects on national awakening in the 'quiet revolution' in Québec against British colonisation. In Gurik's hands, “Shakespeare's *Hamlet* became a political allegory in the service of a sovereign political agenda.”<sup>122</sup> It makes the question ‘to be or not to be’ an emblem that will motivate people to take action in that revolution against British hegemony. All of the characters wore masks except for Hamlet. They represent real political figures like Claudius who represents l'Anglophonie, “which holds the reins of economic and political power,” Queen Gertrude the Church, “forever willing to compromise,”<sup>123</sup> Polonius was Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson, his son Laertes was prime minister-in-waiting, Pierre Elliott Trudeau, and Ophelia was then-Québec premier Jean Lesage, and the ghost of Hamlet's father was Charles de Gaulle.<sup>124</sup> As said by Gurik, “Hamlet is Québec with all of its hesitations, with its thirst for action and for liberty, constricted by one hundred years of inaction.”<sup>125</sup>

The examples of the political reworking of *Hamlet* are plenty and cannot be included here. However, the question of why Shakespeare’s play kept remarkable resonance in the political context more than any of his plays can be answered if we look at the core theme in his play. *Hamlet*, at its core, dramatizes a state tragedy in which a throne usurper, who is

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<sup>119</sup>Ibid, 5.

<sup>120</sup>Ibid.

<sup>121</sup>Heiner Müller, *The Hamletmachine*, trans. Dennis Redmond, 2001, 5.

<sup>122</sup>“Shakespeare in Quebec,” *Internet Shakespeare Editions* (University of Victoria, Friends of the ISE, September 26, 2016), <https://internetshakespeare.uvic.ca/Library/Criticism/shakespearein/quebec3/index.html>.

<sup>123</sup>“Shakespeare in Quebec,” *Internet Shakespeare Editions*.

<sup>124</sup>Diana Brydon and Irene Rima Makaryk, eds., *Shakespeare in Canada: A World Elsewhere?*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 180.

<sup>125</sup>Brydon and Makaryk, *Shakespeare in Canada*, 181.

ready to kill and plot for the sake of power, is confronted by a revolutionary prince, who is haunted by his responsibility “to set it right” what “is rotten in the state Denmark,”<sup>126</sup> just the same as he is haunted by his promises to his father’s ghost to “revenge [its] foul and most unnatural murder.”<sup>127</sup> The personal and monarchy targets are inseparable. The internal political conflict also happens in parallel to an external geo-political threat caused by the ambitious Norwegian prince, Fortinbras, who appeared to find the throne of Denmark vacant, and consequently he is crowned as the new ruler. The two political rifts cause perplexity that intrigues the prince’s mind and leads to the death of six main characters at the end. By introducing such internal and external political rifts with all the expected results seen in the play, Shakespeare skilfully supplied later playwrights with a story that can happen all the time.

Furthermore, the play’s political dimension can be seen in three political allusions to political facts that occurred at Shakespeare’s time. Horatio's farewell speech, in V. ii. 364-365, is “assumed to be uttered by the Earl of Essex on the scaffold before his execution.”<sup>128</sup> Also, Laertes' speech justifying his return from France to the Court to witness the coronation of King Claudius, “though willingly I came to Denmark/To show my duty in your coronation,”<sup>129</sup> predicts the coronation of James I in July 1603. The coronation is mentioned for the first time in Q2 as a reference to the actual coronation. There is another political allusion to a war that occurred between the English against the Spaniards in 1601 upon the sand dunes of Ostende when the Captain, in Act IV. IV, 18-20, informed Hamlet: “We go to gain a little patch of ground/That hath in it no profit but the name.”<sup>130</sup> These allusions are more understandable to the English audiences, and their existence in the play shows how they echoed real political incidents that occurred at that time. However, many critics focused on the character’s subjectivity more than the objective circumstances that surrounded the play at that time. This decentred the fact that the play is essentially political.

Some other adaptations and rewritings, especially those produced in the colonized spots, had anti-colonial significance. Since adaptations “seek to voice marginalized or repressed groups,”<sup>131</sup> and since *Hamlet* is originally a Western product, the postcolonial

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<sup>126</sup>Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, I.iv.95.

<sup>127</sup>Ibid, I. ii. 25.

<sup>128</sup>Carl Schmitt and Simona Draghici, *Hamlet or Hecuba: The Interruption of Time into Play* (Corvallis, OR: Plutarch Press, 2006), 22.

<sup>129</sup>Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, I. ii.53.

<sup>130</sup>Schmitt and Draghici, *Hamlet or Hecuba*, 22.

<sup>131</sup>Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, 155.

adaptations of *Hamlet* came to be instrumented by which the colonized can write back, raise their voices, deconstruct all binary-oppositions, and utilize a universal story to introduce their own stories and their own bards to the globe. Though *Hamlet* does not carry in its text any sign of colonial supremacy or ethnicities like what is apparent in *The Tempest* or *Antony and Cleopatra*, it is still introduced to the world as a tragedy of a white, Christian and English hero who, despite his hesitation and madness, can act and meditate. Wulf Sachs' *Black Hamlet* is an example of these postcolonial adaptations. Sack tries in his novella, as Leonard Bloom said in his preface, to "raise the question of what dialogue is possible across the boundaries of race, nation, and culture."<sup>132</sup> He intends to generalize Hamlet's psychological problems on black people to create a sense of equality. Another postcolonial adaptation is by the Arab Kuwaiti Suleiman AlBassam in his *AL-Hamlet Summit*. AlBassam play was staged in 2002 when the USA with its allies invaded Afghanistan and Iraq to destroy terrorist sanctuaries erected by the Taliban and Saddam Hussein's regime. Hamlet joined the 'People Liberation Brigade,' described as an Islamic Terrorist organization in the play, to get rid of Claudius. The play is a critique of the Western politics and media that mistakenly associated terrorism with Islam. It exposes how terrorism and Islamophobia became excuses for the USA to keep invading the region after 2001.

#### **1.4. The Birth and Re-birth of *Hamlet* in the Arab Political Theatre**

*Hamlet* has maintained remarkable existence in the Arab World more than any other Western literary works. This can be seen in many adaptations and rewritings produced and directed by Arab playwrights and stage directors. The appearance of the play in the region can be dated back to 1893, when Tainus Abdoh translated the play into Arabic for the first time. It appeared as a stage performance for the first time by al-Qurdahi Arabic Theatrical Company in Cairo in 1898. However, the lateness of importing the play by Arab writers can be attributed to cultural, religious and political factors. The main factor, in brief, is that Arabs were not acquainted with Western theatre and its structure before the mid-nineteenth century. Another important factor is a political one. Arabs suffered from excessive colonization that kept Arabs busy struggling for freedom more than cultural and artistic prosperities. However, these factors did not prevent some theatrical practices to occur, but they were few.

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<sup>132</sup>Cited in Leonard Bloom, "ON Wulf Sachs' Black Hamlet," *Psychoanalysis and History*, 6, no. 2 (2004): 253-264, <https://doi.org/https://www.pep-web.org/document.php?id=pah.006.0253a>, 255.

The rationale behind the considerable interest in *Hamlet* is accounted for the geopolitical vagaries that dominated the Middle East and North Africa. Arabs had a long history of suffrage at the hands of successive colonial powers and different Arabic regimes that put them in permanent political conflicts. Arab playwrights have found asylum in theatre in general and *Hamlet* in particular to express themselves and to reflect on the political oppression they suffered from. The play has attracted those Arab directors, as it did in other regions, for its capacity to dramatize a violent struggle between a throne usurper and a revolutionary character who suffers from an inner struggle whether to act and ‘put things right’ in the ‘rotten’ region, or to consent. The play also has been problematized more in the West/East combat as Europe has colonized the Arab World for an extended period. Since the play is a Western product, Arabs borrowed this Western masterpiece, de-familiarized it through extensive alterations, and sent it back to its origin in a new format loaded with unfamiliar voices: the voices of the colonized. The Arab Hamlets, through these processes of alterations, appeared in traditional Arabic cap and gown, sang Arabic anthems, and inhabited Arabic deserts with all their crudeness.

The play’s journey in the Arab World can be classified into four main periods according to the political changes that occurred in the region, i.e. The period of Colonialism up to 1950, the period of Independence or Nasserism (1952-1969), Post-Nasserism (1970-2009), and the Arab Spring (2010-Present). Every period puts its own remarks on the play. However, before dwelling deep into the journey of Arabic *Hamlet*, it is significant to understand the political context of the region.

### **The Age of Colonialism (1299-1950)**

For almost 650 years, Arab lands were controlled by successive colonial powers that started with the Ottoman Empire (1299-1923) and ended with the British and French colonialism in the 1950s. Under Ottoman colonization, the Ottoman Empire willingly seized all Arab countries (MENA) as one land without dividing borders. Arabs considered themselves a significant spectrum, side by side with the Turks, of that empire that adopted indiscriminating policies at the beginning. Also, there was growth in many aspects, but less focus was given to the cultural one.

However, in the last hundred years of that reign, the empire engaged both Turks and Arabs in external wars on the Balkan and other countries in Eastern Europe. What makes it worse, and this time for Arabs more than the Turks, was the advent of two Turkish national

movements (İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti and Jön Türkler) who advocated Turkishism over Arabism. A sense of domination and discrimination appeared, and Arabs began to react to this exclusion through the appearance of some Arab national movements that searched for either equality or liberation.<sup>133</sup>

In June 1923, Arabic troops commanded by Sharif Hussein Bin Ali, who was promised to be the king of Hejaz (part of Saudi Arabia) and Jordan if he supports the British government to defeat the Turkish army, succeeded to free their lands from the Turkish in The Great Arab Revolt.<sup>134</sup> After the success of their revolution against the Ottomans, Arabs were surprised by the Sykes-Picot Agreement that gave Britain and France the right to divide and control Arab lands. Arab lands submerged again under colonialism, but this time, their lands were divided into small countries that can be governed by Britain and France simultaneously, and Arabs were disappointed by the failure of their revolution. The whole region went under extreme despair by the oppressive policies applied by the colonizers.

### **The Age of Independence (Nasserism: 1952- 1969)**

All Arab countries began to gain independence from British and French colonialism after the end of WWII, in which Britain and France were deeply exhausted by the War's casualties. The time also witnessed, in parallel, the appearance of Arab anti-colonial movements like the Syrian Ba'ath Party and the Egyptian Nasserists. They openly called for a serious Arab rally against the colonizers and their Arab followers and preached to return to the pre-colonial time when Arab countries were united before the Sykes-Picot Agreement. The Arab Ba'ath Party, meaning Awakening and Rebirth, became powerful in Syria and Iraq, and their national hopes resonated among Arabs in Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, and Yemen. This party began in the form of a resistance movement by Salah Bitar, Michel Aflaq, and Zaki al-Arsouzi on April 7, 1947, against France, and, in 1952, it formed integration with the Syrian Socialist Party— under the leading of Akram Hourani – and became the Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party. With its motto (unity, freedom, and socialism), this party achieved gradual success by becoming the second-largest party in the Syrian and Iraqi parliaments in 1954.<sup>135</sup> The second nationalist movement which was more

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<sup>133</sup>Bieber, *Debating Nationalism*, 92-97.

<sup>134</sup>This Great Arab Revolt started in Mecca by Sharif Hussein Bin Ali against the Turkish army in 1923. Hussein signed an agreement with the British government, Hussein–McMahon Agreement, in which the British authority promised to help Hussein's revolt.

<sup>135</sup>Abullah Hanna, *Şafahāt Min Tārīkh Al-Aḥzāb Al-Siyāsīyah Fī Sūrīyah Al-Qarn Al-‘ishrīn Wa-Ajwā’uhā Al-Ijtīmā’īyah*, (Beirut : al-Markaz al-‘Arabī lil-Abḥāth wa-Dirāsāt al-Siyāsāt, 2018).

prevalent in the Arab World is Nasserism, named after the Egyptian leader. Jamal Abdel Nasser, who headed the Free Officers Movement – formed of junior officers in the Egyptian army– that gradually seized power in Egypt after the revolution on July 23, 1952 against King Farouk; the last king of Egypt.<sup>136</sup> For almost two decades, the political system created by the Nasserists and Ba’athists won broad popular support not only in Egypt and Syria but in all Arab countries. They created an aura of glory around them, and their Pan-Arabism inspired a broad spectrum of artists, academics, and politicians. In 1952, the Nasserists reached out to the Arab Ba’athists in Syria, and the two parties decided to establish the United Arab Republic, a confederation between Syria, Egypt, and Yemen. Jamal Abdel Nasser became the head of the new state, and Cairo became the central capital.<sup>137</sup>

Nasser got a wide reputation for his national dream. His neutral policies, during the Cold War, damaged the relations with Western powers who withdrew their funding for the High Dam, which Nasser was planning to build. Nasser responded to this by nationalizing the Suez Canal Company in 1956 for the benefit of the Arabs. Consequently, Britain, France, and Israel occupied the Sinai region in north Egypt in 1956, but they withdrew under international pressure. The war strengthened Nasser’s heroic reputation in the Middle East and North Africa, and this period was later considered as the heyday of Arab nationalism.

However, the celebration of the patriotic Nasser came to its end as a result of two significant factors. First, the Arab United Country between Syria, Egypt, and Yemen was disintegrated after Karim Nahlawi’s coupe d’état in Syria against the earlier Ba’athists. This coupe d’état was a nail in the coffin of Nasser’s national dream. Second, the 1967 Arab / Israeli War, where Arab countries lost large parts of their lands, worsened the situation more. In 1967, the Israeli army unexpectedly invaded Jordan, Egypt and Syria at night, and within six days, it seized Sinai and Gaza from Egypt, East Jerusalem and the West Bank from Jordan and the Golan Heights from Syria.<sup>138</sup> The invasion came as a reaction for Nasser’s closing the Straits of Tiran, and for all the threatening manoeuvres against Israel by the United Arab Armies before the war. The invasion left twenty-thousand casualties and massive destructions of the military equipment on the Arabic

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<sup>136</sup> Joel Gordon, *Nasser: Hero of the Arab Nation*, (Oxford: Oneworld, 2012), 1.

<sup>137</sup> James P. Jankowski, *Nasser's Egypt, Arab Nationalism, and the United Arab Republic*, (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002), 1-7.

<sup>138</sup> Lon O. Nordeen, *Air Warfare in the Missile Age*, (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Books, 2010), 89.

side. It was known as the 'Six-Day War,' or later as 'Naksa' (The Setback') among Arabs who were confused by the vulnerability of their armies.

The war was a shift from the unachieved Arab idealism into a painful political realism. Before the war, Arab leaders, headed by Nasser, circulated impractical ambitions in their passionate speeches about freeing Palestine from Israel and recreating the unity among the Arabic twenty-two countries as it was before the 1920s. Their speeches enticed and fascinated many nationalists and Arab partisans who were beguiled by their leaders' unpractical and false heroic promises. Nasser could not endure the defeat. He resigned and died in agony two years after the end of the war.



Figure 2: Jamal Abdel Nasser saluting the crowds; taken from Ahram Newspaper <https://gate.ahram.org.eg/News/2496350.aspx>. 28.9.2020.

### **Post-Nasserism (1970-2009)**

After Nasser's death, Arabs demanded from their leaders a prompt and realistic response to return Arab lands, avenge Nasser, and preserve his national dream. Under this pressure, Anwar Sadat, the successive Egyptian leader of Nasser, decided with Hafez Assad, the Syrian leader, to launch an attack on the Israeli army on the 6<sup>th</sup> of October, 1973.<sup>139</sup> The attack caused minor damages without liberating the occupied territories. The war, known later as the October War, has received much criticism from Arab nationalists. Three years after the War, Arabs were surprised by Sadat's visit to Israel to sign The Camp David Accord with the Israel and under American custody.<sup>140</sup> Many Arab leaders blessed Sadat's step to end the war, but the accord allowed Israel to preserve most of the Arab

<sup>139</sup>Ian J. Bickerton and Carla L. Klausner, *A History of the Arab–Israeli Conflict*, 8th ed. (Milton: Taylor and Francis, 2018), 194-199.

<sup>140</sup>Bickerton and Klausner, *A History of the Arab–Israeli Conflict*, 218-230.

lands they occupied. This enraged many Arab nationalists who did not see any significance for the agreement since most of their lands had not been returned.

The political situation in the region became much more complicated, and the region entered a new stage of division by the destructive policies of the Arab regimes. In countries like Syria, Iraq, and Yemen, the Socialist Ba'ath Party became more loyal to the Socialist Russians, while in the Gulf countries, Jordan, and Morocco, the political atmosphere was oriented towards the Capitalist West. The multilateral military and oil agreements, signed with Russia and the USA alike, have rooted the West more and solidified neo-colonial ambitions in the region.



Figure 3: Camp David Accord signed at the White House, USA. To the right: the Egyptian president Anwar Sadat, in the middle: the American president Jimmy Carter, and to the left: the Israeli PM Menachem Begin.  
Taken from Almasry Alyaoum Online Newspaper on 17.Sept. 2018.  
<https://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/1323313>

The governing system varied in the Arab World, but, generally, it was marked by different forms of oppression. In Arab republics, the leaders managed to preserve the leadership for indeterminate periods through pro forma elections. Saddam Hussien, for example, ruled Iraq from 1979 to 2003, Muamer Qadafi ruled Libya for 42 years, Ali Abdullah Saleh led Yemen for 22 years, and Hafez Assad inherited Syria to his son Bashar in 2000. The Socialist Ba'ath Party excluded other parties in these countries. In other Arab kingdoms, absolute monarchism dominated the political scene. It was characterized by controlling the constitution, selecting the political positions, and accumulating authority in the hands of a specific class. Other countries, like Egypt and Sudan, were under military rules described as more radical and exclusive.

The situation was unbearable for the Arab youths who suffered from grinding poverty, rising unemployment, and lack of political representation. The whole atmosphere was rather suffocating for many Arabs to the extent that many immigrated to Europe. The regimes created an atmosphere of political despair by restricting freedoms, controlling the media, applying constant surveillance, and targeting their opponents. People witnessed different forms of oppression like detentions, banishment, and in some cases, annihilation for individuals or groups. The Hama Massacre against the Muslim Brotherhood Party in Syria, 1982, resulted in 20,000 casualties at the very least reported statistics.<sup>141</sup> It was one of many unforgettable slaughters that happened in the region.

What makes the matter worse is the ‘war on terrorism’ launched by the USA and its Arabic and non- Arabic allies in the Middle East after 2001. The war led to the destruction of Iraq, the construction of new prisons like Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay Detention Camp, which were bombarded by Arabs and Muslims alike. The terrorism charge, targeting Arabs more than any other ethnicity, became elastic and snowballed to include innocent Arabs. It became an excuse for the USA to launch more wars in the region, like what happened later in Syria against ISIS, and became a pretext for Arab regimes to target their opponents in broad daylight without irritating Human Rights Organizations.

### **The Arab Spring (2010- Present)**

After this long period of political despotism, Arab youths decided that they could no longer stand the oppression. The hope for political change started in Tunisia when the Tunisian youths decided in 2010 to revolt against Zain El Abidine’s regime in solidarity with Mohammad Booazeezy; a young Tunisian peddler who set fire to himself after the police had confiscated his food-selling cart.<sup>142</sup> Massive media coverage and press were reporting the incidents to other Arabs who were eagerly yearning for the success of the Tunisian uprising, and El Abidine’s eventually fled the country to Saudi Arabia. This successful revolution inspired and encouraged the Egyptians then the Libyans to revolt, and these uprisings became infectious and travelled from North Africa to the Middle East in countries like Yemen, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon. Some of the uprisings were suppressed, many deaths occurred, and millions were displaced to other countries. The uprising maintained a sense of hope and optimism in the youths’ vision despite all of that. They

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<sup>141</sup>Kathrin Nina Wiedl, *The Hama Massacre - Reasons, Supporters of the Rebellion, Consequences*, (Norderstedt: GRIN Verlag, 2006).

<sup>142</sup>Larbi Sadiki, *Routledge Handbook of the Arab Spring: Rethinking Democratization*, (London: Routledge, 2017), 63-187.

became more determined to change the situation for the better. What was also remarkable in these Arab revolutions is that Arabs avoided ideological rifts permeated and nourished by the regimes in Post-Nasserism. Furthermore, the uprisings witnessed unprecedented roles for Arab women who went down to the streets demanding more political freedom and representation.



Figure 4: Part of the Egyptian Uprising from Tahrir Square. The demonstrators hold flags of Syria, Libya, and Palestine and show solidarity among the Arab youths.

Up to this moment, no one can decide if the Arab Spring has ended. Scholars predict that political eruption might happen anytime and anywhere in the region. That depends on the leaders' readiness to fulfil the youth's demands of fixing the corruption and granting them more political freedom.

#### 1.4.1. Tracing the Journey of *Hamlet* in the Arab World (1989-2020)

The first Arabic performance of *Hamlet* was by al-Qurdahi Arabic Theatrical Company in Cairo around 1893.<sup>143</sup> This performance was based on Tanius Abdouh's Arabic translation from Jean-Francois Ducis's French translation (1769). Abdouh's 'translation' was described as "an awkward translation"<sup>144</sup> for all the alterations he made. Amel A. Zaki indicated, "except for the title, the play is entirely the creation of Abdouh."<sup>145</sup>

Abdouh deleted significant scenes in his version of the play, like the first scene, and began with the second one. The most significant change occurred in the last scene, where

<sup>143</sup>Graham Holderness, "Arab Shakespeare: Suleiman AlBassam's The Al-Hamlet Summit," *Culture, Language and Representation*, IV (2007): 141-150, <https://doi.org/file:///C:/Users/user/Downloads/1339-Texto%20del%20art%C3%ADculo-5255-1-10-20140427.pdf>, 141.

<sup>144</sup>Mahmoud F Al-Shetawi, "Hamlet in Arabic," *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 20, no. 1 (July 21, 2010): 43-63, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07256868.1999.9963470>, 44.

<sup>145</sup>Al-Shetawi, "Hamlet in Arabic," 45.

Hamlet is supposed to die after killing his uncle. However, Abdouh's version has a happy ending as Hamlet kills his uncle and restores the throne. His father's ghost appears and blesses him for that saying: "Hamlet, May you live a joyful life on earth, pardoned in heaven. Ascend the throne formerly occupied by your uncle."<sup>146</sup> Also, Abdouh has employed many songs by the Egyptian poet Ahamd Shawki in his play. The Syrian Salmah Hjazzi sang the songs in all the performances staged later.

Critics like Mahmoud Al-Shetawi or A. Zaki, who judged Abdouh's version on its infidelity to Shakespeare's text, overlooked that Abdouh had intended to rewrite Shakespeare's play rather than to translate it. Abdouh kept in his mind the cultural and linguistic discrepancies between the two contexts, like when he changed Hamlet's approaching to Ophelia in Act three, scene two: "Lady, shall I lie in your lap?"<sup>147</sup> to "Allow me, O lady to sit at your feet, for I am afraid that the arrows of your eyes might smite me."<sup>148</sup> This change occurred to suit the Arabic cultural sensitivity towards indecency.

However, and despite the critique, the version was still used in the first half of the twentieth century since no other translations had been produced to replace it, and all the subsequent performances of the play in the first half of the century entirely relied on Abdouh's work. These performances were attacked by Al-Shetawi, who described them as: "Overall, the early stage productions of *Hamlet* were crude, vulgarizing Shakespeare's masterpiece in order to please the illiterate audiences."<sup>149</sup> However, Arab theatre makers and critics had not taken a breath until they supplanted Abdouh's translation with another one in 1960 when the Egyptian Ministry of Culture asked the Palestinian Jabra Ibrahim Jabra to translate the play and fix the distortions that occurred before. Jabra's translation happened to be the most desirable one after that time.

The following hallmarks can mark the existence of *Hamlet* on the Arabic stages before the 1950. Firstly, most Arabic performances of the play occurred in Egypt as the country was the pathfinder of the Arabic theatre in the region. Secondly, the performances took place in the streets by acting companies to entertain public audiences. This has resulted in a clear simplification of the Arabic language. Thirdly, the acting companies who roamed from one place to another to gain a decent living were compelled to shorten the duration of

<sup>146</sup>The Arab text is "هاملت ، أتمنى أن تعيش حياة رغيدة ، مغفوراً لك في السماء. اصعد العرش الذي احتله عمك سابقاً." The English translation is found in Nadi Al-Bahar, "Shakespeare in Early Arabic Adaptations," Essay. In *Shakespeare Translation*, (Tokyo: Yushodo Shoten, 1975), 13-25, 16.

<sup>147</sup>Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, III. ii.103

<sup>148</sup>Al-Shetawi, "Hamlet in Arabic," 45.

<sup>149</sup>Ibid, 46.

each performance. Finally, Hamlet's dilemmas, madness, and procrastination were not in focus. Instead, he was delineated as a wise, romantic, and revengeful hero who successfully terminates Claudius, the throne usurper.

After the 1950s, *Hamlet* began to appear more on the Arabic stages, thanks to Nasser, who supported theatres and built more theatre houses in Egypt. Another factor is Jabra's influential translation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Jabra was famous for his unique linguistic eloquence in Arabic, and his poetic dexterity allowed him to render Shakespeare's verses in a more attractive style than Abdouh's style. One of the parts that Jabra excelled in translating is the "To be, or not, to be" part:

<p>To be, or not to be: that is the question:          Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer          The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,          Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,          And by opposing end them? To die: to sleep;          No more; and by a sleep to say we end          The heart-ache and the thousand natural          shocks          That flesh is heir to, 'tis a consummation          Devoutly to be wish'd. To die, to sleep;          To sleep: perchance to dream: ay, there's the          rub;          For in that sleep of death what dreams may          come          When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,          Must give us pause: there's the respect          That makes calamity of so long life;          For who would bear the whips and scorns of          time...<sup>150</sup></p>	<p>أأكون أم لا أكون؟ ذلك هو السؤال .          أمن الأنبيل للنفس أن يصبر المرء على          مقاليع الدهر اللئيم وسهامه          أم يشهر السلاح على أبحر من الهوموم          ويصدها يئهبها؟ نموت... ننام . .          وما من شيء بعد... أتقول بهذه التومة ننهي          لوعة القلب، وآلاف الصدّمات التي          من الطبيعة تعرّض لهذا الجسد؟ تلك غاية          ما أحرّ ما تشتهي . نموت: ننام ،          ننام – وإذا جلمنا؟ أجل لعمرى ، هناك العقبة .          فما قد نراه في سبات الموت من روى،          وقد ألقينا بفانيات التلايف هذه عنّا،          يوقهنا للترّوي .          ذلك ما يجعل طامة من حياة طويلة كهذه .          وإلا فمن ذا الذي يقبل صاغراً سيات الرّمان          ومهانته...<sup>151</sup></p>
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Moreover, Jabra added a short critical comment to the play. This is considered one of the earliest Arabic criticisms about the play. He said, "It is not surprising that *Hamlet* is the most beloved play for people in the history of literature and acting. It is Shakespeare's

<sup>150</sup> Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, III. i. 57-84.

<sup>151</sup> William Shakespeare, *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, Translated by Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, (Beirut: Arab Institute For Research & Publishing, 1960), 106.

most polished, complete, and rich tragedy.”<sup>152</sup> He, in addition, provided the Arab stage directors with some advice on how to stage the play, saying: “The play has a rhythm similar to the rhythm of a piece of music, and the Arab director has to pay attention to the speed of this rhythm, so that the play does not sag or unlimitedly extend.”<sup>153</sup>

Jabra’s translation influenced two stage adaptations of *Hamlet* at that period. The Iraqi Hameed Jawad’s *Hamlet* (1967), performed for The Institute of Fine Arts in Baghdad, contains many surreal scenes, and Jawad placed a ‘big question mark’ in the middle of the stage and used heavy black curtains to block some scenes from the spectators. He emptied the play from its supernatural parts, like the ghost scene, to comply with the Ba’athists’ anti-religious attitudes. Hamlet maintained his position as a protagonist who acts among all obstacles, but he dies at the end. Another performance was *Hamlet of Arabia* by the Iraqi Sami Abdel Hamid (1969). It was staged at The Theatre of the Modern Art in the same country. Hamid’s goal was to create privacy for the Arabic theatre by creating an atmosphere similar to the Arabic Sahara. He employed a scenography of Arabic tents and mattresses, and he omitted many allusions to Denmark in the play.<sup>154</sup>

Hamlet is killed in both performances, unlike the performances leaning on Abdouh’s translation. Still, Hamlet maintained his image as a hero who can act in a time of trouble. He became a symbol for the Arab heroism found in Nasser and other nationalists who died struggling with the colonizers. Margaret Litvin accentuated this fact in her book *Hamlet’s Arab Journey* when she connected Hamlet to the image of Nasser:

To understand their work will require a closer look at the Egyptian Revolution of 1952 and its leader, Jamal Abdel Nasser. For if ‘to be or not to be’ is the defining slogan of Arab politics, as I have argued here, then Nasser is the figure most deeply and persistently associated with that slogan. The Arab Hamlet tradition, with its emphasis on collective political agency, responds directly to Nasser’s anticolonial revolution.<sup>155</sup>

In the period of Post-Nasserism, the play received wide popularity through several theatrical adaptations. Nevertheless, the new Arab *Hamlets* were not meant to celebrate a hero at this time, but to ridicule the new Arab leaders who forgot Nasser’s national dream.

<sup>152</sup>My translation from Jabra’s Arabic text, p. 5. "لَيْسَ عَجِيبًا أَنْ تَكُونَ مَسْرُجِيَّةً هَامَلتْ أَحَبَّ مَسْرُجِيَّةً لِلنَّاسِ فِي تَارِيخِ الْأَدَبِ." وَالنَّمَثِيلِ. أَنَّهَا أَشَدُّ مَاسِيًّا شَيْكُسْبِيرِ صَقْلًا وَأَكْمَلُهَا شَكْلًا وَأَكْثَرُهَا تَنْوِيغًا وَحَشْدًا لِلْمَسْرُحِيَّةِ إِيقَاعِ أَشْبَهَ بِإِيْقَاعِ الْقُطْعَةِ الْمَوْسِيْقِيَّةِ وَعَلَى الْمَخْرَجِ الْعَرَبِيِّ أَنْ يَتَأَكَّدَ "

<sup>153</sup>My translation from the Arabic text, p. 24. "مَنْ سُرْعَةً هَذَا الْإِيْقَاعِ فَلَا يَسْمَحُ لِلْمَسْرُحِيَّةِ بِالْتَرَهْلِ وَالْإِمْتِدَادِ إِلَى مَا لَا نِهَائِيَّةَ"

<sup>154</sup>Manşūr Nu‘mān Najm Dulaymī, *Dialogue Problems between Text and Performance: Ishkālīyat al-ḥiwār bayna al-naṣṣ wa-al-‘arḍ fi al-masrah*, (Irbid: Dār al-Kindī lil-Nashr wa-al-Tawzī‘, 1998), 63.

<sup>155</sup>Margaret, *Hamlet’s Arab Journey*, 33.

New Hamlets were born again on Arabic stages, but this time as sarcastically hapless characters. This image of the anti-heroic Hamlet is seen in the Syrian Mamdouh Adwan's re-writing, *Hamlet Wakes Up Late* (1976). The play started by announcing the death of Hamlet after the fencing scene with Laertes. Before his death, he asks Horatio to tell his story, and the whole play goes on as Horatio tells the real story of Hamlet in flashback. However, instead of making Hamlet a hero, Horatio announces that Hamlet was reluctant to take revenge. This reluctance comes from his weakness in facing Claudius. He became alcoholic, intoxicates his mind to forget the ghost's commandment to revenge. The ghost's presence disturbs his pleasure as he always complains: "I couldn't stand it anymore. Nothing was doing me any good. If I drank, I saw him, and if I slept, I saw him and if I embraced a woman I saw him."<sup>156</sup> Even when Hamlet wakes up late to act, his words speak louder than his action. His insistence on Horatio to tell his heroic story after his death was mocked by Horatio. Adwan's dramatization of Hamlet as anti-heroic, over-sexed, apathetic, impotent, and manipulated by other characters implied a message to ridicule Sadat's Camp David Accord with Israel after losing the two wars in 1967 and 1973.

The use of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* to reflect on the political atmosphere is also seen in Jawad Al-Assadi's *Forget Hamlet* (1994.) The rewriting revolves around the crisis of Arab intellectuals and oppression under the Iraqi Ba'athy regime headed by Saddam Hussein. Also, it ridicules those pro-regimes intellectuals, actors, and artists who confiscated their political role and sided with power. Hamlet is dramatized as a lethargic and bookish intellectual, an apathetic persona whose cold reaction to his father's murder agitates resentment and cynicism. The play begins as Claudius and Gertrude execute King Hamlet, and the murder is seen by Ophelia, who informs Hamlet, Laertes, and Horatio about the murder, but Hamlet shows indifference to that. He becomes the 'Sufi' who empties "[his] guts in prayer"<sup>157</sup> and busies himself in reading theologies instead of figuring out a plan to revenge his father. The play was staged in Cairo, in 1994, under the title *Ophelia's Window* that recalls the window of Ophelia's room from which she has seen the murder. Al-Assadi

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<sup>156</sup>Mamduh Adwan, "Hamlet Wakes Up Late," in *Four Arab Hamlet Plays*, trans. Marvin Carlson, Margaret Litvin, and Joy Arab (New York: Martin E. Segal Theatre Center Publications, 2015), 81.

<sup>157</sup>Jawad Alssadi, "Forget Hamlet," in *Four Arab Hamlet Plays*, trans. Marvin Carlson, Margaret Litvin, and Joy Arab (New York: Martin E. Segal Theatre Center Publications, 2015), 264.

changed the title to *Forget Hamlet* to imply a dramatic irony to forget the hero Hamlet and remember the hapless one.<sup>158</sup>

The Moroccan Nabil Lahlou's play, *Ophelia Is Not Dead* (1968), was written during the peak of what many Moroccans call "the years of lead,"<sup>159</sup> a period of repression and strict censorship under the rule of King Hassan II (1961-1999). It was staged in Marrakesh in 1987, then at the Goethe Institute of Rabat in 1999. The play dramatizes two actors; their names happened to be Macbeth and Hamlet who pretend a state of paralysis after they were caught by the police doing political theatre. This state of paralysis is represented by a wheelchair, placed at the centre of the stage, on which the characters sit. They communicate through puns because they are afraid of the police to hear them. The physical pain makes Hamlet and Macbeth forging this voluntary state of physical immobility as a way to condemn the physical torture inflicted on them by the police as Hamlet explains, "I paralyze my body to keep my conscience from causing me any pain."<sup>160</sup> He was severely tortured after he was jailed in a separate cell with other actors: "one evening, in my grey cell and on my iron bed, I awoke to find myself unable to move even my little toe. I can't stop asking about the cause of my paralysis."<sup>161</sup> Hamlet became haunted by the state's police more than his father's ghost after his release. He became algophobic,<sup>162</sup> and constantly warns Macbeth that their words and movements will be recorded: "don't do anything. They'll slaughter you."<sup>163</sup> This physical torture gradually persists, inflicts the characters' conscience, and creates long-term physiological problems. The corollary of this physical punishment also has ravaged their sense of gender, identity, time, and being. Hamlet keeps asking, "How old do you think I am?" and at the end, he asks, "who am I?"<sup>164</sup> The play's central theme is the severe censorship and constant surveillance imposed on Arabic playwrights in Post-Nasserism.

The Kuwaiti Suleiman AlBassam's *Al-Hamlet Summit* (2002) comes within the scope

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<sup>158</sup>Marvin Carlson et.al, *Four Arab Hamlet Plays*, (New York: Martin E. Segal Theatre Center Publications, 2015), 227.

<sup>159</sup>A period of repression under the rule of King Hassan II (r. 1961-1999). It is informed by the prison experiences of activists and political prisoners in Morocco's cruelest detention centers. For decades, Moroccan authorities have routinely practiced a regime of garde à vue detention (inherited from the French colonial administration)

<sup>160</sup>Nabeel Lahlou, "Ophelia Is Not Dead," in *Four Arab Hamlet Plays*, trans. Marvin Carlson, Margaret Litvin, and Joy Arab, (New York: Martin E. Segal Theatre Center Publications, 2015), 245.

<sup>161</sup>Lahlou, "Ophelia Is Not Dead," 40.

<sup>162</sup>Algophobia is the abnormal fear of pain. It happens after one goes through an extreme painful situation like torture (Wikipedia).

<sup>163</sup>Lahlou, "Ophelia Is Not Dead," 15.

<sup>164</sup>Ibid, 60.

of postcolonial theatre. His play attempts to decolonize the stage and produce an Arabic version of *Hamlet* in which he can fight back against the Western hegemony. The actions take place in one of the Arab countries in the Middle East which is threatened by the ambitious Fortinbras who came from the West as an invader. AlBassam added another character to the play, the English Arms Dealer, who convinces Claudius to sign military agreements with him. He threatens Claudius that he will support Fortinbras if the former refuses to sign the agreements. Claudius is a greedy Arab leader, thinks only of protecting his throne from Hamlet. He agrees to sign the contract only if the English character agrees to help him fighting Hamlet. The Arms Dealer informs Claudius and Polonius that the best way to defeat Hamlet and mobilize people against him is by calling him 'a terrorist' who plans to destroy the country. During that time, Hamlet joined a group of armed political opponents called the 'People Liberation Brigade' to help him overthrow his uncle. A civil war happens at the end between Hamlet's group and Claudius's army, and Fortinbras enters the country to find all the characters dead.

Through this rewriting, AlBassam reflects on the Western political and economic ambitions in the Middle East. These ambitions are exemplified in the military and oil accords Claudius signed with the English Consultant. Also, AlBassam attempted to decolonize terms like 'Islamic terrorism' popularized by the Western media and used as an excuse to invade the Middle East.

Arab *Hamlets*, post-2010, were also political. Despite the severity of the conflict that happened between the Arab rulers and their unarmed people, the spirit of defeatism, which had lurked in the Arab consciousness during the previous decades, changed into a state of hope. Different playwrights and stage directors reworked *Hamlet* to reflect on that sense of optimism. In general, the new image of Hamlet is full of heroism, a hero who can perform actions. This image is explicitly seen in the Iraqi Haider Abdullah Alshatri's *Fee Intezar Hamlet* (In Waiting for Hamlet), 2010. Alshatri's rewriting manifests a similar structure as Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. The ghost of Hamlet's father and The Actor are waiting for the appearance of Hamlet, whose coming will solve many problems. However, while Beckett's characters are stuck in meaningless conversations, the characters in this play indulge themselves in more meaningful dialogue. The play begins with the Actor rehearsing Hamlet's monologue for future performance. During that time, the Ghost appears unexpectedly and informs the Actor that he is waiting for his son to deliver some news to him. Hamlet, according to the Ghost, has a timeless significance since injustice

always exists: “as long as the criminals exist, Hamlet must also exist.”<sup>165</sup> The play ends while both characters are waiting for Hamlet to come.

Mahmoud Farouq’s *Goodbye Hamlet*, performed by Egyptian university students in 2012, also shows this heroic Hamlet. The play’s director and other characters spend the whole play searching for an actor who can play Hamlet’s role to avenge the old Hamlet, murdered by a group of murderers this time. The group symbolizes Hosni Mubarak’s troops, who killed many Egyptians in the Egyptian uprising between 2011 and 2012. However, the play ends while they search for someone who can play Hamlet, the hero.

Though Hamlet does not appear in both plays, what matters most is the idea of the coming saviour whose presence will free people and re-establish justice, but Hamlet does not symbolize any particular person. He became a symbol and icon for any brave Arab youth who is willing to fight for freedom.

Hamlet also became an icon of solidarity and unification in the Arab Spring when Arab youths insisted on discarding all political and religious rifts that occurred in Post-Nasserism. *Following the Footsteps of Hamlet (Ala Kuta Hamlet)*, staged by the Palestinian director Kamel ElBasha in 2010 reflects that sense of unification among the Palestinians. After the death of Yasser Arafat in 2003, the national leader of Palestine, the Palestinians were divided by the conflict over power between Hamas, under the leading of Ismail Haniyeh, and Fatah, ruled by Mahmoud Abbas. In this performance, eight actors play the role of Hamlet, accompanied by six actresses for Ophelia. All characters are dressed in black and roaming the stage in steady and counted steps as soldiers, and each one recites some part of Hamlet’s monologues. The choruses in the adaptation have political significance. Their harmonious movements and speeches preach unity among Palestinian spectators who came from different religious and political backgrounds. The collective movements of the chorus tuned the bodies of the spectators who also participated in the collective songs performed by the choruses. Another strategy is the ghost which permanently accompanies the chorus. The ghost’s significance is to create a sense of nostalgia for the days of Arafat, who united the Palestinians under his leadership. It incites the spectators to remember him and their unity before the Hamas/Fatah conflict. The collective death at the end, except for Claudius, who stays alive, is a hidden message of the harmful consequences that will happen if Palestinians do not unite.

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<sup>165</sup>My translation from Alshatri, Hiader. “In Waiting for Hamlet,” In *Anour Foundation for Culture and Media*. 1st (August 2009), <http://www.alnoor.se/article.asp?id=55105>.

*Hamlet! Leave My Head (Hamlet Okruj Men Ra'see)* is a Saudi performance written by Fahad ALHoushanei and directed by Subhi Yusuf in 2016. This solo performance is a dramatization of an actor who rebels against the oppressive director that keeps performing Shakespeare's text without any changes. Announcing that he is fed up with Hamlet's hesitation, "leave my head Hamlet,"<sup>166</sup> the actor decides to reform the play to be more touching to the spectators and more indulged into a current political dispute as he thinks. While the play talks about the actor's revolution against the oppressive stage director, it conceals more objections to the excluding of Arab artists from political life in Saudi Arabia. The work came as an outcry against the Saudi government's long history of artistic exploitation and censorship.

One of the important reasons to adapt *Hamlet* during the Arab Spring is to comment on the political role of Arab women in the uprisings. Women, unprecedentedly, shaped fifty per cent of the demonstrators, and in many cases, they led the uprisings in the streets. They left their children, opened their houses for the injured, and prepared food for their companion men. They went down to the streets to reverse all the social misconceptions about their weakness. Evan Daraji's *Hamlet vs Ophelia* is a one-act rewriting that dramatizes Ophelia as robust, rigid, and mentally stable compared to Hamlet, who suffers from madness and identity disorder. The play starts as Ophelia and Hamlet are rehearsing for a theatrical performance, but the rehearsal takes another direction when both engage in a hot argument about love and madness. Ophelia appears more manipulative, able to convince Hamlet of the reality of his madness and his false conception of love that is built on sexual desires. Hamlet, in return, justifies his madness and pretends that his love for Ophelia is pure, but Ophelia announces that she knows about Hamlet's affairs with other women, and, consequently, she has deserted him and started having her own affairs with other men as revenge. Hamlet tries to avenge his love by killing the 'treacherous' Ophelia, but she manages to kill him before. By this dramatization, Daraji tries to direct the audience's attention to cultural misconceptions that allow men to victimize women in the Arabic patriarchal culture. The female's body has permanently been restricted by cultural traditions that overvalue female purity and virginity. The argument is heated between the two characters, and Ophelia manages to kill Hamlet at the end.

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<sup>166</sup>My translation from Fahad ALHoushanei, "هاملت أخرج من رأسي," *youtube* Video, 40:41. February 25, 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ycn4rx6srsU>. (Director), *Hamlet! Leave My Head*,

## **Chapter Two**

### **The Reworking of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in an Age of Political Crises: The Post-Nasserists Arab World (1970-2009)**

## 2.1.

**Nasser's Ghost Haunting Sadat's Camp David: Anti-heroism in Mamdouh Adwan's  
*Hamlet Wakes Up Late***

Mamdouh Adwan's *هاملت يَسْتَيْقِظُ مُتَأَخِّرًا* (*Hamlet Yastayzeq Mutakeran* or *Hamlet Wakes Up Late*) is one of the earliest and longest Arabic reworkings of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in Post-Nasserism.<sup>167</sup> The play was written in 1976, but appeared for the first time in a collection drama book by Adwan, published in 1980.<sup>168</sup> It is written in classical Arabic prose, based on Jabra's Arabic translation, and translated again into English by Margaret Litvin in *Four Arab Hamlet Plays* that was published in 2016.<sup>169</sup> The play has never been staged until 2017 when Rebekah Maggor staged the play in English for Cornell University, and in 2020 when the Jordanian Zead Kallel Mustafa shortened it for an Arabic stage performance under the title *Hamlet Ba'ad Heen* (*Hamlet Afte A While.*)

Adwan's rewriting is a one-act-two-scene drama that bares strong similarities to Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in terms of the characters' number and the main plot. Still, Adwan made slight alterations to the sequence of the story. It starts from the last scene of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* when Hamlet and Laertes are fencing in front of Claudius and other characters. Hamlet, before his death, demands that Horatio should tell his story to the Danish people. He dies and Horatio starts telling the audience about the previous incidents happened before Hamlet's death; turning the play into a memory play. A new character appears in the play under the name the 'Actor' and he is hired by Hamlet to perform in the *Mousetrap*. The Actor informs Hamlet that Claudius is the real murderer of the Old king as the poor Danish people believe. Meanwhile, Claudius and Polonius search for profits through the investments they make with Norway, and they prepare to welcome Fortinbras in Denmark as a friend. Ophelia arranges with her father to marry Hamlet, and her "pseudo-liberated sex life brings no happiness but turns her into a disposable tool of the men around her."<sup>170</sup> Gertrude's role and fate in the play is almost the same in

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<sup>167</sup>Mamdouh Adwan (1941-2004), in Arabic ممدوح عدوان , is a famous Syrian playwright born in 1941. He studied English Literature and graduated from Damascus University in 1966. After his graduation, he worked as a journalist for the ath-Thaura Newspaper (The Syrian Revolution Newspaper) and he wrote 26 plays including *Hamlet Wakes Up Late*.

<sup>168</sup> I am using here both the Arabic text and Litvin's English translation. The citation will be from Litvin English text.

<sup>169</sup> Margaret Litvin is an associate professor of Arabic Literature and theatre from Brown University. She produced *Hamlet's Arab Journey: Shakespeare's Prince and Nasser's Ghost* , and *Four Arab Hamlet Plays*, a book co-translated with Marvin Carlson and Joy Arab.

<sup>170</sup>Marvin Carlson et al. *Four Arab Hamlet Plays*, 65.

Shakespeare's *Hamlet* except for her belief that her son's excessive drinking, not madness, is the reason for his wired behaviour. The conclusion of the play is slightly different in that Claudius, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern stay alive after Hamlet's death. Also, little description is made by Adwan about the setting and the theatrical scenery. We are told that Horatio is standing alone on the stage facing the audience. Lights are turned on and off from time to time while he is narrating the story that recently took place in a castle located in Denmark.

The first scene begins with both Hamlet and Horatio fencing in front of other characters. Hamlet is surprised by Laertes's real intention to kill him with a poisoned sword. After Hamlet is wounded by the sword, Horatio blamed Hamlet for not taking the fencing seriously as a revenge combat: "It's an execution Hamlet, not a fencing match, have you forgotten that?"<sup>171</sup> Hamlet is awakened by Horatio's caution, and he stabbed Laertes to death. He runs after Claudius to kill him, but the latter managed to escape. As he is dying, Hamlet demands that Horatio should tell his story to the Danish and defend him after his death.

Horatio recalls how Hamlet does not behave heroically regarding the revenge of his father. He avoided meeting the ghost at the beginning and always invented excuses to postpone revenge after he discovers the murder. Hamlet's anti-heroism was seen in his moral corruption, inaction, excessive drinking of alcohol, and having affairs with Ophelia and other women. Hamlet's obsession with his life made him ignorant of the corruption Claudius made in Denmark. He discovered later that Claudius and Polonius had arranged to welcome Fortinbras in Denmark in an attempt to build economic agreements between Denmark and Norway. Hamlet attacked Fortinbras and Claudius, in the night of Fortinbras' reception, only verbally by citing verses from the gospels. Horatio mocked Hamlet's content with words more than actions.

Hamlet was planning to perform a play within a play called *Shahrayar* in which he wanted to make his mother ashamed of her hasty marriage after his father's death.<sup>172</sup> He hired an Actor from the commoners to act in the play. In one of the conversations between Hamlet and the Actor, the latter tells Hamlet that the Danish people think their Old King was murdered by his brother Claudius. Hamlet was shocked to know that. He defended his uncle at the beginning, but Horatio insists on Hamlet to find the truth. Hamlet agrees to

<sup>171</sup> Adwan, "Hamlet Wakes Up Late," 69. "هل نسيبت ذلك؟" "أَنَّهُ إِعْدَامٌ هَامِلٌ وَلَيْسَ مُبَارَزَةٌ ، هَلْ نَسِيتَ ذَلِكَ؟"

<sup>172</sup> *Shahrayar* is the name of the Mousetrap which is supposed to capture the conscience of the king. It is named after Shahrayar the king in *Thousand Nights and a Night* or *Arabian Nights*.

adjust the play as a mousetrap. However, his plan is quickly discovered by Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, who inform Claudius about Hamlet's intention behind adjusting the play. Claudius ordered Polonius to attend the rehearsal and inform him about any changes Hamlet makes to the play. Hamlet, in reaction to the treachery of his friends, cancelled the play.

In the second scene, Fortinbras, who was enraged by Hamlet's verbal threatening on the reception night, refused to sign any commercial agreements with Claudius until Hamlet be liquidated, and Claudius agreed to kill Hamlet. Hamlet killed Polonius in Gertrude's room, and Claudius seized the chance and gave the orders for Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to capture Hamlet and his friends. They were tortured in the prison and Lorenzo died under the torture. Hamlet saw the ghost for the last time in his cell. He scolded it, declaring its responsibility for all the miseries he and his friends faced. The ghost disappeared and it never came back. Claudius arranged for a duel to allow Laertes to avenge his father by killing Hamlet with a poisoned sword. Hamlet is killed at the end, while Claudius stayed alive.



Figure 5: Hamlet fencing with Laertes. The picture is taken from a cast from Cornell University, directed by Rebekah Maggor in 2017 from Litvin's translation. Seen (13.11. 2020) in: <https://news.cornell.edu/stories/2017/10/syrian-political-satire-hamlet-wakes-late-premiere-cornell>

Adwan's rewriting appeared in accordance with two important political incidents that shaped the modern political history of the region. It has been written after two significant wars between the Arab countries and Israel; i.e. The Naksa War in 1967 and the October War in 1973. Before the Wars, the Nasserists and Ba'athists circulated idealistic promises of freeing Palestine and uniting Arab countries against Israel and Western powers heading

by the USA. However, the wars' shocking outcomes turned the idealist Pan-Arabism into a new era of Political realism. Arabs discovered the fragility of their armies, questioned the efficacy of Pan-Arabism, and rejected any ideal rhetoric by their leaders.

After Nasser's death in 1970, Arab nationalists demanded a backlash against Israel. The October War was a kind of revenge and reprisal for the Naksa War, but its ineffectiveness in returning the occupied lands deepened the sense of defeatism more. Arabs were shocked by Anwar Sadat's secret negotiation with Israel that ended with the Camp David Accord (CDA). It was the first peace accord in the region, and it paved the way for later peace accords with Israel like the Oslo Accords between Israel and Palestine, and 'Wadi Araba Peace Accord' between Israel and Jordan. It is not only Sadat who was accused of confiscating Nasser's Pan-Arabism, but the Ba'athists in Syria also gradually neglected their rights in the Golan Heights, which are still under the Israeli occupation to this moment. Other Arab regimes were only content with refusing any normalization with regard to the relations with Israel. The Palestinian case gradually became absent from the political concerns of the governments but remained in the public memory.

Despite that, Nasser revived in the Arabs' memory as a national hero for his national stands; while, other Arab leaders like Sadat were seen as anti-heroic, apathetic, and corrupted after their agreements with Israel. They became more autocratic and detached from people's concerns.

Adwan rewrote Shakespeare's *Hamlet* to mock the reluctant Arab leaders in general, and Anwar Sadat's Camp David and the Ba'athists false nationalism in particular. However, his ability to discuss political themes in the Ba'athist Syria at that time came out of the fact that he was "from the same minority group [Alawaites] as the ruling Hafez Assad family." This belonging to Alawaites has "granted him some small measure of freedom to criticize government abuses."<sup>173</sup> The attempt of Claudius to sign a peace agreement with Fortinbras in the play, the enemy of the Danish people, is a clear allegory of Sadat's peace agreement. Hamlet's inaction, avoiding the commands of the ghost, and his corruption symbolize the Ba'athists forgetting the previous national promises with the Nasserists. The forgotten ghost, haunting the stage and waiting for his son to speak to it, represents Nasser's figure seeking to avenge his death and rescue the occupied lands.

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<sup>173</sup>Carlson et al. *Four Arab Hamlet Plays*, 65. Alawaite (In Arabic: علوي) is an extreme sect of Shia Islam created by Mohammad Ibin Nusayr around the end of the ninth century. They gained their name from their reverence of Ali bin Abi Talib, Prophet Mohammad's cousin and his brother-in-law. The sector spread and has a big influence in Arab country like Morocco, Syria and Iraq. In Elie Elhadj, *Oil and God: Sustainable Energy Will Defeat Wahhabi Terror* (Irvine: Universal Publilshers, 2018), 250.

There is also a political reference to the Aswan Dam built by Nasser as a national project. Hamlet justifies his weakness to the ghost at the end, saying: “If you had asked me to stop a crack in the dam you built, I would have done it with my body. But the whole dam has collapsed, and the torrent fumes with rage. I’m alone, a small pebble against the current.”<sup>174</sup>

### 2.1.1. Hamlet’s Anti-heroism.

Chris Baldick defines the anti-hero as the “central character in a dramatic or narrative work that lacks the qualities of nobility and magnanimity expected of traditional heroes and heroines in romances and epics.”<sup>175</sup> Meyer H. Abrams and Geoffrey Galt Harpham also define the anti-hero as:

The chief person in a modern novel or play whose character is widely discrepant from that which we associate with the traditional protagonist or a hero of a serious literary work. Instead of manifesting largeness, dignity, power, or heroism, the antihero is petty, ignominious, passive, ineffectual or dishonest.”<sup>176</sup>

Adwan's Hamlet is an anti-heroic character. His anti-heroism comes out of his apathy to revenge his father’s murder, incapability to perform noble actions, and his fear of Claudius’s punishment. He avoided the ghost, disobeys his friend Horatio, and invented excuses to hide his fear. His weakness and his death at the end without terminating Claudius evoke mockery and cynicism more than sympathy. In the following, I’ll show the layers of Hamlet’s anti-heroism in Adwan’s play.

#### *Hamlet Avoids the Ghost*

Horatio recalls that Hamlet's anti-heroic behaviour began early when he intentionally avoided speaking to the ghost and listening to its commands. Hamlet frequently complained to Horatio how the spirit’s constant appearance frightened him: "wherever I

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<sup>174</sup>Adwan , “Hamlet Wakes Up Late,” 150.

<sup>175</sup>Chris Baldick, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 16. Baldick also says in the same page “Unheroic characters of this kind have been an important feature of the Western novel, which has subjected idealistic heroism to parody since Cervantes's *Don Quixote* (1605). Flaubert's *Emma Bovary* (in *Madame Bovary*, 1857) and Joyce's *Leopold Bloom* (in *Ulysses*, 1922) are outstanding examples of this antiheroic ordinariness and inadequacy. The antihero is also an important figure in modern drama, both in the theatre of the Absurd and in the tragedies of Arthur Miller, notably *Death of a Salesman* (1949). In these plays, as in many modern novels, the protagonist is an ineffectual failure who succumbs to the pressure of circumstances. The antihero should not be confused with the antagonist or the Villain.”

<sup>176</sup>Meyer H. Abrams and Geoffrey Galt Harpham, *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (Boston, MA: Thomson Wadsworth, 2012), 16.

turn I see his image."<sup>177</sup> Horatio was appalled to discover how the apparition has mentally disrupted Hamlet to the extent that he insanely dig his father's grave as he wanted "to make sure that he was not leaving his grave and coming out."<sup>178</sup> Even Horatio, in the beginning, mistakenly thought that Hamlet's state of melancholy over his father and his excessive drinking made him fanaticize the ghost: "I hope this encounter will convince you that in this condition he cannot leave his coffin to chase after you. When will you get over your fantasies?"<sup>179</sup> Hamlet insisted that the ghost's appearance was a real thing, not an illusion or a daydream. He was ignorant of what the ghost wanted. He informed Horatio how the ghost kept chasing him:

وَلَكِنَّهُ سَارَ مَعِيَ طَوَالَ الطَّرِيقِ. أَنَّهُ يَلْحَقَنِي وَيَلْحَقَنِي وَيَحْدِقُ إِلَيَّ غَاضِباً وَلَا يَتَحَدَّثُ. أَنَّهُ غَاضِبٌ دَوَماً. غَاضِبٌ أَوْ عَاتِبٌ. لَا أَفْهَمُ مَا يَرِيدُ. كُلَّ يَوْمٍ بَعْدَ أَنْ يَزُورَنِي أَسْأَلُ نَفْسِي: مَا الَّذِي يُرِيدُهُ مِنِّي؟ أَهُوَ أَمْرٌ مُتَعَلِّقٌ بِهِ؟ أَمْ بِالْحَرْبِ؟ أَمْ بِالْوَطَنِ؟ أَمْ بِالنَّاسِ؟ لَا فَايِدَةَ. لَا أَسْتَطِيعُ أَنْ أَجِدَ جَوَاباً.

But he walked with me the length of the road. He stared and stared at me angrily and did not speak. He's constantly angry. Angry or determined, and I don't understand what he wants. Every day after he visits me, I ask myself: What is it he wants from me? Is it something related to him? Or to the war? Or to the nation? Or to the people? But it's no use. I can't find an answer.<sup>180</sup>

Horatio suggested that Hamlet must speak to the ghost and stop avoiding it if he wanted to know the secret of its frequent visits: "ghosts only speak when you speak. He's a message from you to yourself. He's your conscience, your feelings of responsibility."<sup>181</sup> Horatio realized that Hamlet kept finding excuses to avoid speaking to the ghost as it always disturbed his extravagant lifestyle of drinking and womanizing as he confessed to Horatio: "I couldn't stand it anymore. Nothing was doing me any good. If I drank, I saw him, and if I slept, I saw him, and if I embraced a woman, I saw him."<sup>182</sup> Besides, he was afraid that the spirit was an evil spirit that appeared to ruin his life and drag him into a sinful act of murdering a soul. He was afraid of revenge since "killing is a sin. Spilling blood is a thing forbidden by God" as he believed.<sup>183</sup>

<sup>177</sup> Adwan, "Hamlet Wakes Up Late," 81. "أَيْنَمَا التَّقَتِ أَرَى صُورَتَهُ."

<sup>178</sup> Ibid, 81. "أَرَدْتُ أَنْ أَتَاكَ أَنَّهُ لَا يُتْرَكُ قَبْرُهُ وَيَخْرُجَ إِلَيَّ."

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid, 82.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid, 83. "الاشباح لَا تَتَكَلَّمُ إِلَّا جِئْتَ تَتَكَلَّمُ أَنْتَ. أَنَّهُ يُبْنِعُ مِنْ نَفْسِكَ. هُوَ ضَمِيرُكَ وَاحْسَاسُكَ بِالْمَسْئُولِيَّةِ."

<sup>182</sup> Ibid, 81. "لَمْ أَعُدْ أَسْتَطِيعُ الْإِحْتِمَالَ. لَمْ يَنْفَعْنِي شَيْءٌ. إِذَا شَرِبْتُ أَرَاهُ وَإِذَا نَمْتُ أَرَاهُ وَإِذَا عَانَقْتُ امْرَأَةً أَرَاهُ."

<sup>183</sup> Ibid, 106. "الْقَتْلُ حَرَامٌ وَسَفْكَ الدِّمَاءِ أَمْرٌ حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ."

Hamlet's indifference to the reason why the spirit has summoned from its purgatory and why it is "doomed for a certain term to walk the night"<sup>184</sup> compelled the ghost to appear many times waiting for Hamlet's response, but Hamlet was reluctant to tell the ghost "speak. I am bound to hear,"<sup>185</sup> neither has he showed the eagerness to know why and how Denmark has become a 'prison' as Horatio indicates. On the other hand, Hamlet admitted to Horatio that he resorted to drinking much alcohol to forget the ghost and the nagging of Horatio, who keeps pushing him to speak to it.

When Hamlet was arrested for killing Polonius in the last scene, the ghost appeared in his cell. Hamlet insanely accused the ghost of running his life:

مَاذَا تُرِيدُ مِنِّي؟ أَنَا لَسْتُ مَسِيحِكَ لِكَيْ تَلْقَى عَلَيَّ صَلِيْبِكَ التَّوَيْلِ. لَمْ يَعْذُ ثَأْرَكَ وَحَدَكَ. أَنَّهُ عَالَمٌ يَفُورُ بِالْخَدِيْعَةِ وَالْعُدْرِ.  
لَوْ كُنْتُ تَطْلُبُ مِنِّي إِنْ أَسَدَدْتُ نُغْرَةً فِي سَدِّ بَنِيْتِهِ لَفَعَلْتُ بِجَسَدِي. وَلَكِنْ السَّدُّ كُلُّهُ يَنْهَارُ وَالسُّيُولُ تَرْغِي وَتَزْبَدُ. وَأَنَا وَخَدِي  
حَصَاةٌ صَغِيْرَةٌ فِي وَجْهِ النَّيَّارِ. أَرْحَمُ ضَعْفِي أَيْهَا الْأَبِ الْقَاسِي. (بِخْتَفِي الشَّبَح)

What do you want from me? I'm not your messiah that you should cast your heavy cross on me. It's not just avenging you anymore. It's a world overflowing with treachery and deceit. If you had asked me to stop a crack in the dam you built, I would have done it with my body. But the whole dam has collapsed and the torrent fumes with rage. I'm alone, a small pebble against the current. Have mercy on my weakness, cruel father!<sup>186</sup>

Hamlet also confessed his weakness to fulfil any task the ghost might ask him to do: "Don't you see how the world is collapsing around me? I'm a goat that fell down and suddenly everyone discovered they had knives."<sup>187</sup> The ghost then leaves Hamlet forever, and Hamlet was killed before knowing what the apparition wanted.

### ***Hamlet's Moral Corruption***

As Horatio indicates, one of Hamlet's anti-heroic dilemmas was his "moral degeneracy" that turned him away from his moral responsibility toward his father and his nation. He was excessively busy "drinking and womanizing"<sup>188</sup> as Laertes made fun of him, and he was engaged in consensual sexual intercourse with Ophelia, who was also corrupted. Still, Hamlet's corruption was part and parcel of the whole corruption dispersing in the court as Horatio indicates:

<sup>184</sup>Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, I. v. 10.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid, I.V. 7.

<sup>186</sup> Adwan, "Hamlet Wakes Up Late," 150.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid. "أَنْتَ تَرَى كَيْفَ يَنْهَارُ الْعَالَمُ مِنْ حَوْلِي. أَنَا عَنَزَةٌ وَقَعَتْ فَانْتَشَفَتْ الْجَمِيْعُ إِنْ لَدَيْهِمْ سَكَكِيْنٌ."

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

تَهْدِمُ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ. انْهَارَ الْبُنْيَانِ الْإِنْسَانِيَّ مِنْ أَسْوَارِ الْوَطَنِ إِلَى عِزَّةِ النَّفْسِ. الْخُدُودُ تَكْسَرَتْ وَالْأَخْلَاقُ تَلَاشَتْ. لَمْ يَكُنْ  
الْفَسَادُ الَّذِي أَحَاطَ بِهِامِلْتِ وَيَبْنَى فَسَادَ شَخْصٍ وَاجِدٍ أَوْ أَشْخَاصٍ قَلِيلٍ. كَانَ الْفَسَادُ تُرْبَةً وَهَوَاءً. وَمِنْهُ كَانَ الْفَاسِدُونَ يُنْبِثُونَ  
دُونَ زَرَاعَةٍ كَمَا يُنْبِثُ الْعَشْبُ عَلَى الْمَزَابِلِ. كَانُوا يَفْقَسُونَ فَقَطَّ بَحَثًا عَنْ كُلِّ مَعْنَمٍ وَحَقْدَهُمْ عَلَى كُلِّ نَظِيفٍ وَاسْتِعْدَادًا  
لِللْتِنَازِلِ عَنْ كُلِّ قِيَمَةٍ.

Everything is destroyed. The human structure has collapsed, from the walls of the homeland to the sanctity of the soul. Borders have been crushed, and values have caved in. The corruption that surrounded Hamlet and us wasn't one person or a few people. Corruption was the soil and the air, and corrupt people sprouted from it without being planted, like weeds sprout from garbage. They just hatched, greedy for any spoils and hating any cleanness, and ready to ignore any value.<sup>189</sup>

Everyone is "drowning in love" in Gertrude and Claudius's wedding night, as Ophelia commented, and "everyone from the palace only cares about arranging deals and smuggling money abroad."<sup>190</sup> Polonius, for instance, "embezzled from the money donated for the war victims,"<sup>191</sup> and he consented to his daughter's sexual relationship with Hamlet as this relation would make her the future-Queen of Denmark, "you'll reap the fruits of your daddy's genius. The important thing is that you carry through on our plan to get you married to Hamlet."<sup>192</sup> Ophelia was also involved in her father's plan, assuring him that she has "some plans too," and her "marriage [to Hamlet] is guaranteed."<sup>193</sup>

Lorenzo declared that Rosencrantz's betrayal of Hamlet when he informs Claudius about Hamlet's plan in adjusting the play within the play was "a natural result of the general corruption"<sup>194</sup> in the country. However, the most notable corruption was seen in Claudius's willingness to receive Fortinbras in Denmark to build "mutual interests" and to form "economical agreements whose financial worth will be in the millions."<sup>195</sup> Hamlet was frustrated to know about Fortinbras' visit when his mother informed him about her passion for seeing Fortinbras in Denmark. He accused Claudius of his indifference to the blood of the 'Danish martyrs' that have been spilled in their previous fighting with Norway:

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<sup>189</sup>Ibid.

<sup>190</sup>Ibid, 97.

<sup>191</sup>Ibid,75.

<sup>192</sup>Ibid, 110.

<sup>193</sup>Ibid, 111.

<sup>194</sup>Ibid,105.

<sup>195</sup>Ibid,133.

أَيَّتَهَا الدَّمَاءِ الَّتِي سَفَكَتَ فِي المَيْدَانِ. هَلْ سَتَهْضِمِينَ اليَوْمَ اخْتِجَاجًا؟ أَيُّهَا الشُّهَدَاءُ الَّذِينَ تَزَاحَمْتُمْ إِلَى المَوْتِ دِفَاعًا عَنِ الوَطَنِ. انْهَضُوا وَانظُرُوا إِلَى العَدُوِّ الَّذِي قَتَلَكُمْ بِدُوسِ التُّرَابِ المَضْمُخِ بِدِمَائِكُمْ . . . الآنَ فَقَطْ أَيُّهَا الشُّهَدَاءُ . . . الآنَ فَقَطْ تَتَاكَدُونَ مِنْ أَنَّكُمْ مِنْ بِلَا تَمَنٍّ.

Oh! blood that has been spilled on the battlefield! Will you rise today in protest? Oh! Crowd of martyrs who died defending the nation. Rise and see the enemy who killed you trampling the ground anointed with your blood! ... Only now, martyrs... Only now can you be certain that you died in vain.<sup>196</sup>

Horatio remembers how Hamlet ironically accused other characters of moral corruption while he could not see his debauchery. He accused his mother of betraying his father and condemned Claudius for receiving Fortinbras in the country. Horatio says that Hamlet was 'duplicitous.' He liked to search for people's mistakes but ignored his misfortunes. Hamlet's moral debauchery was also known and exposed to the poor Danish, who no longer doubted that their prince's moral decadence was part of the corruption prevailing in the palace. When Hamlet asked the Actor, about what the poor Danish think of him, he was shocked to know how people were aware of his corruption:

HAMLET: And what do they say about the rest of the court?	هاملت: وَمَاذَا يَقُولُونَ عَمَّنْ فِي البِلَاطِ؟
ACTOR, <i>embarrassed, looks at</i> HORATIO	المُمَثِّلُ محرجاً و يُنْظِرُ إِلَى هوراشيو
HORATIO: Say it. Don't be afraid.	هوراشيو: قُلْ. لَا تَخَفْ.
ACTOR: I'm not afraid, but I don't want to hurt you. In the poor quarters, they say that everyone from the palace only cares about arranging deals and smuggling money abroad—things like that.	المُمَثِّلُ: أَنَا لَسْتُ خَائِفًا وَلَكِنِّي أَحْشَى أَنْ أَجْرَحَكُم. يَقُولُونَ فِي الإِحْيَاءِ الأَفْقِيرَةِ أَنَّ كُلَّ مَنْ فِي القَصْرِ مِنْهُمْ يَتَأَمَّنُ فِي الصِّفَاتِ وَتَهْرِيبِ رُؤُوسِ الأَمْوَالِ. أَشْيَاءَ مِنْ هَذَا القَبِيلِ.
ROSENCRANTZ: Shut up.	روزنكراتس: أَحْرَسْ.
GUILDENSTERN: What's this vulgarity?	غولدسترن: مَا هَذِهِ الوُقَاحَةُ؟
HAMLET ( <i>firmly</i> ): Let him speak.	هاملت (بِتَأَكِيدِ): دَعُوهُ يَتَكَلَّمْ.
ACTOR: And they say you don't steal because you're too busy with drinking and culture.	المُمَثِّلُ: لَكِنَّهُمْ يَقُولُونَ بِأَنَّكَ لَا تَسْرِقُ لِأَنَّكَ مُنْشَغِلٌ فِي الشَّرْبِ وَالْفَنِّ.
HAMLET: What else do they say?	هاملت: وَمَاذَا يَقُولُونَ أَيضًا؟
ACTOR: They say no one cares anymore about the land Fortinbras has occupied.	المُمَثِّلُ: يَقُولُونَ إِنَّ الأَرْضَ الَّتِي اغْتَصَبَهَا فورتنبراس لَمْ تَعُدْ تَعْنِي أَحَدًا.

<sup>196</sup>Ibid, 114.

HAMLET: And what else?	هاملت: وَمَاذَا أَيْضًا؟
ACTOR: Sir, ask me about the details of what you want to know.	المُتَمَلِّل: أسألني يَا سَيِّدِي عَنْ تَفَاصِيلِ مَا تُرِيدُ مَعْرِفَتِهِ.
HAMLET: Do they say, "His mother got married a month after his father died, and he just sat there?"	هاملت: هَلْ يَقُولُونَ إِنَّ أُمَّهُ تَزَوَّجَتْ بَعْدَ شَهْرٍ مِنْ وَفَاةِ أَبِيهِ وَأَنَّهُ لَا يَتَحَرَّكُ؟
ACTOR: No, sir. Our worries and concerns are bigger—they don't leave us time for small details like that. They do say, "Hamlet just sat there," not about his mother's marriage, but about his father's murder. <sup>197</sup>	المُتَمَلِّل: لَا يَا سَيِّدِي. أَنْ مَشَاغِلَنَا وَهَمُونَا أَكْبَرُ مِنْ أَنْ نَسْمُحَ لَنَا بِالْأَهْتِمَامِ بِهَذِهِ التَّفَاصِيلِ الصَّغِيرَةِ. يَقُولُونَ إِنَّ هَامِلْتَ لَمْ يَتَحَرَّكْ وَلَكِنْ لَيْسَ مِنْ أَجْلِ زَوَاجِ أُمِّهِ بَلْ مِنْ أَجْلِ قَتْلِ أَبِيهِ.

Adwan dramatizes the decadent Hamlet to comment on one of the hero's dilemmas. This moral dilemma has always shaped the discussion about the moral duty of the hero. Aristotle, for example, indicates in *Poetics* that for a tragic hero to arise pity and fear, Hamartia, he should be “a man who is not eminently good and just, yet whose misfortune is brought about not by vice or depravity, but by some error or frailty.”<sup>198</sup> Though Aristotle defines moral excellence not in the sphere of modern orthodoxy of moralization but in the realm of moral responsibility, the hero should avoid moral decay that might distract him from his responsibility. In Adwan's tragedy, Hamlet's downfall was not a corollary of misjudgement in fulfilling his moral duty, but as a result of his moral degradation that busied him from his responsibility as a son and as a prince, and his downfall raised mockery and cynicism more than pity and fear. The picture is different in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Hamlet can still be grasped as a hero despite his hesitation in taking revenge at the beginning. His idea about heroism stems from his moral responsibility and determination to promote a moral examination of his actions, preserve virtues in a time full of uncertainties, and have ethical enterprise in a world full of corruption. Even if Hamlet is not able to act at the beginning and he does not fully maintain the old classical heroism found in his father, his moral obligations to re-fix things in the corrupted state, and his determination to reach the virtuous end of justice and integrity are what make him a hero. He hears from the apparition and accepts the responsibility that is fallen on his burden. He promised to should “wipe away all trivial fond records” from “the table of [his]

<sup>197</sup>Ibid, 97.

<sup>198</sup>Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. S. H. Butcher, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1961), Chap. xiii.

memory.”<sup>199</sup> It is not only that, but he became sensitive and cynical of all distractive pleasure that appeared among the courtiers like when he is offended by the excessive drinking and pleasure in the court: “This heavy-headed revel east and west/Makes us traduced and tax'd of other nations; They clepe us drunkards, and with swinish phrase Soil our addition.”<sup>200</sup> If Shakespeare’s Hamlet succeeds in maintaining the “important social ideal of intellectual, moral, and civic excellence,”<sup>201</sup> Adwan’s Hamlet irresponsibly confiscates all that for the sake of delight and pleasure.

### ***Hamlet's Detachment***

Hamlet's moral debasement and materialistic passion blinded him. He was stunned to discover that his father did not die a natural death as he had believed, but was murdered. The poor Actor informed him about the rumours among the Danish who believed that their king had been massacred, and Claudius is the real murderer. Hamlet ignorantly replied to these rumours as: “My father wasn't murdered. He naturally died.”<sup>202</sup> His preoccupation with his aesthetic and physical entertainment did not only make him ignorant of his father being murdered, but other characters also were indifferent to his presence in the court as Horatio mentions. For example, Hamlet was the last to know about Fortinbras' visit to the city when his mother, without serious intention, mentioned how the country has almost finished the preparation for receiving Fortinbras. Hamlet was shocked to discover Fortinbras' visit late: "Fortinbras? Did you say Fortinbras? The one visiting us is Fortinbras?"<sup>203</sup> Another example is when the Actor and Lorenzo informed him about the corruption and poverty Claudius caused in the country; Hamlet appeared to be unaware of all that:

HAMLET: Corruption? What corruption?	هاملت: فسَاد؟ أَيُّ فسَادٍ؟
ACTOR: The corruption in everything. Things have reached the point where we're about to reconcile with Fortinbras.	المُمَيَّل: الفسَادُ فِي كُلِّ شَيْءٍ. لَقَدْ وَصَلَ الأَمْرُ إِلَى دَرَجَةٍ إِنَّا عَلَى وَشْنُكَ أَنْ نَتصَالِحَ مَعَ فورتنبراس.
HAMLET: No... Impossible...	هاملت: لا... مُسْتَحِيلٌ...

<sup>199</sup>Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, I. V. 96-104.

<sup>200</sup>Ibid, I. iv. 17-20.

<sup>201</sup>Steve Brie and William T. Rossiter, eds., *Literature and Ethics: From the Green Knight to the Dark Knight*, (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), 53.

<sup>202</sup>Ibid. "وَلَكِنَّ أَبِي لَمْ يُقْتَلْ. أَبِي مَاتَ"

<sup>203</sup>Ibid. 114.

ACTOR: I swear to you it's all people are talking about.	المُمْتَل: أَقْسَمُ لَكَ أَنَّ النَّاسَ لَا حَدِيثَ لَهُمْ إِلَّا ذَلِكَ.
LORENZO: And the arrests are at their worst.	لورنزو: والاعتقالات على أشدها.
HAMLET: Why arrests?	هاملت: لِمَاذَا الاعتقالات؟
LORENZO: They're arresting those who show their discontent with the deal.	لورنزو: أَنَّهُمْ يَعْتَقِلُونَ أُولَئِكَ الرافضين للصَّفَقَة.
HAMLET: What to do?	هاملت: مَا الْعَمَلُ؟
ACTOR: Instead of being surprised by small things like Rosencrantz's betrayal, you should see what's happening in the centre of events.	المُمْتَل: بَدَلُ أَنْ تَفَاجِنِكَ الْأُمُورَ الصَّغِيرَةَ مِثْلَ خِيَانَةِ روزنكرانتس يَجِبُ أَنْ تَرَى مَا يَجْرِي فِي مَرَكَزِ الْأَحْدَاثِ.
LORENZO: My dear. There are many things you're ignorant of. That's why you're always surprised. <sup>204</sup>	لورنزو: يَا عَزِيزِي. هُنَالِكَ أُمُورٌ عَدِيدَةٌ تَجْهَلُهَا وَلِهَذَا فَأَنْتَ تَتَفَاجَأُ دَائِمًا.

Hamlet's detachment and apathy aroused the mockery of Hamlet's enemies and his friends alike. Horatio describes Hamlet as a “stupefied fish” around which “the water started to dry up.”<sup>205</sup> His problem, as Horatio continues, was that “events have always preceded him.”<sup>206</sup> It is not only Horatio who tried to wake Hamlet up, but Lorenzo asks him: “Hamlet! You should do something. You have to stop what's happening. You have to halt the current that's corrupting the people, end the waste of the nation's resources, and block these treacherous deals,”<sup>207</sup> but Hamlet kept finding excuses to postpone his revenge.

### ***Hamlet Keeps Postponing His Revenge***

After Hamlet discovered Claudius's real crime, through the Actor, he found himself facing a tremendous pressure to fix the situation. However, his friends were enraged by the excuses Hamlet created to defend his reluctance. One of the excuses was that nobody was willing to help him as his friends, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, have already betrayed

<sup>204</sup>Ibid, 105.

<sup>205</sup>Ibid, 111.

<sup>206</sup>Ibid.

<sup>207</sup>Ibid, 106. “يَجِبُ أَنْ تَوَقَّفَ التَّيَّارَ الَّذِي يُفْسِدُ النَّاسَ وَإِنْ تَوَقَّفَ تَسْرَبَ ثُرُواتِ الْوَطْنِ وَإِنْ تَوَقَّفَ هَذِهِ “المُصَالِحَةُ الْخِيَانَةُ”.



wasting your time and showing off your mastery of the Gospels.”<sup>213</sup> Hamlet’s verbal threatening was not enough for "the crime that has taken place around [him] is too big to be cured by such treatment."<sup>214</sup> However, Hamlet did not listen to Horatio's warning. He defended his inaction by saying: “To each field its weapons.”<sup>215</sup> Horatio asked him about the weapon he stabbed with when he met Fortinbras:

HORATIO: But you’re not carrying any weapon. What’s the weapon you stabbed with?	هوراشيو: أَلَيْسَ لَكَ سِلَاحٌ. مَا السِّلَاحُ الَّذِي طَعَنْتَ بِهِ؟
HAMLET: Words. Words. Words.	هاملت: كَلِمَات. كَلِمَات. كَلِمَات.
ACTOR ( <i>with bitter irony and disappointment</i> ): Words, words. What’s the use?	المُمَثِّل (بسخرية مريضة وخيبة أمل): كَلِمَات. كَلِمَات. مَا الْفَائِدَةُ؟
HAMLET ( <i>exultant</i> ): Let the gazelle run; the arrow I shot is lodged between its ribs.	هاملت (منتشياً): دَعِ الْغَزَالَةَ تَرَكُضْ حَامِلِهِ السَّهْمَ الَّذِي أَطْلَقْتَهُ بَيْنَ أَضْلَعِهَا.
ACTOR: But this is no gazelle. It’s a vicious lioness. This trivial wound will only make her more vicious.	المُمَثِّل: وَلَكِنْ هَذِهِ لَيْسَتْ غَزَالَةً. هَذِهِ لَبُؤَةٌ شَرِسَةٌ سَتَزِدُّاد شَرَّاسْتِهَا بِذَلِكَ الْجُرْحِ التَّافِه.
HAMLET ( <i>laughs exultantly</i> ): Trivial! You don’t understand, to each field, its weapons.	هاملت (يَضْحَكُ مَنْتَشِيًا): تَافِهَةٌ! أَنْتَ لَا تَفْهَمُ. لِكُلِّ مَيْدَانٍ سِلَاحَهُ.
HORATIO: He’s right, Hamlet. You’ll see what weapons they’ll fight back with.	هوراشيو: أَنَّهُ عَلَى حَقٍّ يَا هَامَلْت. سَتَرَى بِأَيِّ سِلَاحٍ سِيرِدُونُ عَلَيْكَ.
ACTOR: He shows them his cards, so they can strike directly at the revealed target. <sup>216</sup>	المُمَثِّل: يَكْتَشِفُ أَوْرَاقَهُ لَهُمْ وَهُمْ سَيُوجِهُونَ ضَرْبَتَهُمْ عَلَى هَدَفٍ مَكْشُوفٍ.

Hamlet’s anti-heroism as Horatio and his friends discovered was his incapability to perform noble actions that rise to a hero's level; neither can he behave as a son, a prince, or an intellectual. These noble actions, or at least the potentials to act as a hero, like when the ghost in Shakespeare's play asks Hamlet, “If thou hast nature in thee, bear it not,”<sup>217</sup> the 'nature' here is the ability to form noble actions, are lacked in Adwan's character who did not know how to "suit the action to the word, the word to the action."<sup>218</sup> Even Hamlet's verbal attack towards his enemies was not taken seriously. Claudius told Fortinbras that he

<sup>213</sup> Adwan, “Hamlet Wakes Up Late,” 125.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid, 125.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid, 125.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid.

<sup>217</sup> Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, I. v. 81.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid, III. ii. 1.

should not be upset by Hamlet's words because "he's lost. No doubt he's drunk."<sup>219</sup> Hamlet's words did not worry other characters since "no one knew if Hamlet had gone mad or if his actions were just a drunkard's hallucinations"<sup>220</sup> as Horatio comments. Polonius and Claudius used language skilfully to gain more power over him. They devalued his thoughts and distorted his ideas, and he was left confused by their linguistic skills. Polonius once assured his daughter that Hamlet shapes no danger for them: "We are the system, and he is just the person. We're the current, and he is the pipe. A pipe can't hold the current."<sup>221</sup> Rosencrantz also noticed Hamlet's impotent words: "Why is your talk jumping around like a fish?"<sup>222</sup> Everyone discovered Hamlet's weakness, like when Rosencrantz arrested Lorenzo for "inciting the people to curse Fortinbras,"<sup>223</sup> Hamlet tried to free Lorenzo, but Rosencrantz refused telling Hamlet: "instead of attacking me, take it up with the one who gave the order."<sup>224</sup>

### ***Hamlet's Unheroic Death***

Hamlet's verbal attacks through gospels enraged all other characters, including Fortinbras. He kept quoting the gospels on the night of meeting Fortinbras, like when he calls Claudius, "Cain, where is your brother? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the earth,"<sup>225</sup> or when he calls his mother "Magdalene. Why haven't you repented yet?"<sup>226</sup> Fortinbras informs Claudius that Hamlet is dangerous for the future of the investments between the two countries. Claudius, in return, decided to send Hamlet abroad, but Fortinbras insisted that Hamlet might return, and it is better for the investments to have Hamlet liquidated:

KING: He's not as dangerous as you think.	المَلِك: أنه لَيْسَ خَطَرًا إِلَى الْحَدِّ الَّذِي تَتَصَوَّرُهُ.
FORTINBRAS ( <i>firmly</i> ): Our words are clear. The projects will not proceed as long as Hamlet is in the picture. Think it over and let us know. I will depart now, not in anger. But in order to deepen our relations, send us a	فورتنبراس (بحزم): كَلَامُنَا وَاصِحٌ. الْمَشَارِيعُ لَنْ تَقُومَ طَالَمَا هَامَلْتِ مَوْجُودًا. فَكَّرُوا بِالْأَمْرِ وَعَالِمُونَا. سَاسَافِرِ الْأَنْ وَلسْتِ غَاضِبَا. وَلَكِنْ لِكِي نَعَزِزِ عِلَاقَاتِنَا أَكْثَرَ أَرْسَلُوا لَنَا مَا يَطْمَئِنُّنَا إِلَى أَنْ السَّعْبِ لَمْ يَعْذُ مَوْجُودًا اسْتُودِعْكُمْ.

<sup>219</sup> Adwan, "Hamlet Wakes Up Late," 122. "أَنَّهُ ضَائِعٌ. لَا شَكَّ لِأَنَّهُ سَكْرَانٌ."

<sup>220</sup> Ibid, 115.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid, 110. "نَحْنُ النَّيَّارُ وَهُوَ الْمَجْرَى." "نَحْنُ النَّيَّارُ وَهُوَ الشَّخْصُ."

<sup>222</sup> Ibid, 104. "إِلْمَادًا تَقْفَرُ فِي حَدِيثِكَ كَالسَّمَكَةِ؟"

<sup>223</sup> Ibid, 126.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid, 127. "بَدَلْ أَنْ تَنْهَجِمَ عَلَيَّ تَفْضُلْ وَجَاهِ الَّذِي أَصْدَرَ الْأَمْرَ."

<sup>225</sup> These verses are taken from Genesis 4:10.

<sup>226</sup> Marry Magdalene is the first person recorded in the New Testament. She falls by her sins as a prostitute and was redeemed by Jesus after her repentance.

reliable assurance that the disturbance is no longer present. Farewell. ( <i>exits</i> )	(يخرج)
KING ( <i>stunned</i> ): He wants Hamlet's head.	الملك (مذهولاً): يريد رأس هاملت.
POLONIUS: Is he the only one who wants Hamlet's head, my lord? <sup>227</sup>	بولونيوس: هل هو وحده من يريد رأس هاملت يا مولاي؟

When Hamlet entered his mother's room and found Polonius hiding behind the curtain, he kills him. Claudius immediately gave Rosencrantz and Guildenstern an order to arrest Hamlet, Lorenzo, and the Actor and to interrogate them. Hamlet received many accusations of "killing a peaceable old man," "seducing a minor," "damaging the country's diplomatic relations," and having "moral degeneracy such as drinking and womanizing."<sup>228</sup> Horatio says that Hamlet responded to these accusations with silence. He became like "a goat that fell down, and suddenly everyone discovered they had knives."<sup>229</sup>

Claudius arranged with Laertes to kill Hamlet indirectly with a poisoned sword in a duel. This would protect them from the people who would be angry to know the murder of their prince. Hamlet was ignorant of their intention to kill him. He was idiotically surprised by Laertes' serious intention to kill him as the former used a real poisoned sword. Horatio mocked Hamlet's ideal and theoretical conception of revenge, thinking of the combat only as a fencing match that will not harm him or Laertes:

HAMLET ( <i>touches his wound</i> ): Blood. ( <i>looks at HORATIO</i> ) A real sword.	هاملت (يلمس جرحه): دم! (يُنظُرُ إِلَى هوراشيو) أَنَّهُ سَيْفٌ حَقِيقِيٌّ.
HORATIO: Real, of course.	هوراشيو: حَقِيقِيٌّ طَبْعاً.
HAMLET: What to do?	هاملت: مَا الْعَمَلُ؟
HORATIO: There's no time left to ask questions now. They are killing you without hesitation or questions. Look at them.	هوراشيو: لَمْ يَبْقَ وَقْتُ لِلْأَسْئَلَةِ. الْآنَ يَقْتُلُونَكَ دُونَ أَنْ يَتَرَدَّدُوا أَوْ يَتَسَاءَلُوا. أَنْظُرْ إِلَيْهِمْ.
HAMLET: What do I do, with this sword of mine, against a real sword?	هاملت: وَمَاذَا أَفْعَلُ بِسَيْفِي هَذَا مُقَابِلَ سَيْفٍ حَقِيقِيٍّ؟
HORATIO: It's an execution, not a fencing match, have you forgotten that? <sup>230</sup>	هوراشيو: أَنَّهُ إِعْدَامٌ وَلَيْسَ مُبَارَاةً، هَلْ نَسِيتَ ذَلِكَ؟

<sup>227</sup> Adwan, "Hamlet Wakes Up Late," 136.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid, 149.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid, 150.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid, 69.

Unlike Laertes, who conceived the combat as a deadly and fatal incident where “blood can only ever be washed out with blood, and shame can only ever be washed out with blood”<sup>231</sup> as he told Claudius, Hamlet un-heroically seemed more phantasmic and bookish. He borrowed his ideals about heroism from the illusory and romantic enterprises of knights-errant he read about at university. Hamlet cynically wished to immortalize his miserable life in a mythic story where his story will be heard across the centuries, like those about Achilles or Odysseus. Still, Horatio is restricted by his realistic idea about the truth of revenge which, for him, “means victory and defeat, a mighty nation and a threatened nation, heroes and traitors.”<sup>232</sup> After Hamlet’s death Horatio finds himself compelled to tell Hamlet’s real un-heroic story for people only to learn from his mistakes:

What good is it if I tell your story to the people? Are you still expecting to get justice from them that way? My dearest, I had hoped they would learn from your mistakes, but they keep making the very same ones over and over, and meeting the very same fate as you. And you keep coming back to me insisting that I not get tired and that I keep on reciting the story. (*Turns to audience*) What do I do? I have to tell his story to you as well. So you judge him fairly and so you don’t suffer his fate.<sup>233</sup>

Hamlet’s ideal concept of heroism did not help him to be an accomplished swordsman. Instead, he was actually anti-heroic as Horatio unfolds to the audience. Hamlet’s revenge included anything except violence. He told Horatio that the criminals can repent without the need to resort to action, and “everything can be reformed, even the King. He can only persevere in his wrongs as long as he doesn’t find anyone to warn him about them.”<sup>234</sup> When he spoke to the ghost for the first time in the jail, he confessed that the effort he has made was not enough: “all I’ve spent is cheap compared to your approval and your dignity.”<sup>235</sup> Still Hamlet blamed the ghost for the problems happened to him and his friends. He accused it of running his life.

### **2.1.2. *Hamlet Wakes Up Late as a Political Play***

Adwan suffused his play with many symbols that correspond with the problematic political situation after Nasser's death. First, Hamlet’s attempt to escape meeting the ghost and respond to his demands mirrors Sadat’s intention to forget Nasser’s national promises,

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<sup>231</sup>Ibid, 149.

<sup>232</sup>Ibid, 72.

<sup>233</sup>Ibid, 71.

<sup>234</sup>Ibid, 106.

<sup>235</sup>Ibid, 152.

dream of unity, and his aspiration to end Western predominance in the region and their military support for Israel. Second, Hamlet's unreal conception of heroism and the reality of revenge when he fights with Laertes in the first scene signify the abstract heroic speeches of the Nasserists and Ba'athists before the 1967 war. Before the War, Nasser often used euphonic statements in his speeches like "Arab unity is our hope for the liberation of Palestine and the return of the rights of the Palestinian people to their people," "People do not want words - they want the sound of battle - a battle of fate," "If we were forced to fight, we would never be forced to surrender ... We will fight ... We will fight ..."<sup>236</sup> Nasser also assured Arabs in his speech delivered at Cairo University one month before the war that victory against Israel is coming, and he will decide the time of the attack. Arabic radios circulated his speech for a month; celebrating Nasser's decision. One of the most sarcastic repetitive statements was by Ahmad Saeed, a reporter in Assout AlAraby Newspaper (Arabic Voice Radio) who kept saying, "Oh Fish! Wait in hunger"<sup>237</sup> as a metaphor for throwing the Israeli soldiers in the sea. However, the grievous loss after the war shook Arabs' trust in their leaders. Arabs calling the war 'Naksah,' "The Setback" showed how deep the disappointment they felt was after the failure of Nasser's statements and promises.

The agreements Claudius aspired to sign with Norway simulates Camp David Agreement Sadat signed with Israel in 1976 after secret negotiations. It was described as a fragile peace, an impotent bold step that gave Israel the right to preserve most Arab-occupied lands. It was a crushing blow for the Arab nationalists who saw the agreement as an anti-heroic step at that time. The agreement evoked protests by Arabs in all Arab countries at that time, condemning the unwanted relation with an occupying state and their leaders' forgetfulness for the hardships Arabs suffered in the previous wars. Though Adwan rewrote *Hamlet* eighteen years before the Oslo agreements, he was able to predict the inclination of some Arab leaders to imitate Sadat and sign other peace accords. Claudius forgetting the Danish blood is an example of how Sadat and other Arab leaders have ignored all the previous sacrifices done for Palestine.

Hamlet's corruption is another symbol of the corruption spread in Post-Nasserism immediately after Nasser's death. He is busy with his material life to the extent he refuses to meet the ghost. Arab regimes were absorbed with their interest. They gradually became

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<sup>236</sup> Amr Laythi, *Aikhtiraq* (Amman: Dar Ashorook , 2003), 14. In Arabic: إِذَا فُرِضَ عَلَيْنَا الْقِتَالُ فَلَنْ يُفْرَضَ عَلَيْنَا اِبْدَاءً . . . . . الإِسْتِسْلَامُ . . . سنقاتل . . سنقاتل

<sup>237</sup> Cited in Ahmad Theban, "Between Al-Naksah and the Hell of Reality," *Palestine Today Newspaper*, 4306, (June 4, 2017) 23-24.

autocratic, and they blackmailed, formed economic agreements with the West, and divided their people to preserve their thrones. The visit of Fortinbras to Denmark, in Act II, and the investment with Denmark is parallel to those oil agreements between Arab countries and the USA, by which the USA could take the petroleum and provide protections for Arab leaders in return. Many agreements like ‘The Oil for protection Program’ between Saudi Arabia and the USA, and ‘The Oil for Food Program’ imposed on the Iraqi state after the first Gulf war in 1992 show the economic ambitions of the USA in MENA. Other countries like the Ba’athist Iraq and Syria became more oriented toward the Soviet Union. They also performed agreements and opened their markets for the Russian military products. The period witnessed a political split among Arabs that divided them instead of the Pan-Arabism Nasser adopted. These divisions were maintained and nourished by the economic ambitions of Arab leaders.

Claudius utilized all his effort to suppress his people and to silence them. The wide arrestment for his opponents like Lorenzo, Hamlet, and the Actor resemble most of the Arab regimes' strategies to silence people. They formed different shapes of dictatorships. Some countries like Yemen and Libya were controlled by a ‘military dictatorship’ where power was held by coup officers who imposed martial laws, curfews, and media surveillance on people from time to time. Other countries were ruled by a ‘single-party dictatorship’ like the Ba’athy party in Iraq and Syria. The single party had controlled the state and oppressed other parties,<sup>238</sup> while in other countries like Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Morocco, absolute monarchism generated absolute powers. Most of these regimes used police intelligence to interrogate people and collect information in the same way Lorenzo is tortured and interrogated by Rosencrantz and Guildenstern before his execution. The regimes legitimized police brutality to restrict people's freedom and limit their physical movements, like when Polonius orders to arrest some officers who “wanted to avoid standing and greeting Fortinbras.”<sup>239</sup> It was common for political opponents in the region to be jailed, compelled to give confession, and to receive undetermined sentences by officers who exercised excessive power, physical and verbal harassment, property damage,

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<sup>238</sup>Ba’athists killed many people like what happened in ‘Hama Massacre’ in Syria in 1982. The regime: remained cohesive, and its security apparatus, led by Alawite troops with a stake in regime survival, mounted a repressive campaign marked by the 1982 sack of Hama, in which it is estimated that between ten thousand and twenty-five thousand people were killed. See 43 Mark Gasiorowski and Sean L. Yom, *The Government and Politics of the Middle East and North Africa*, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2016), 43.

death, and enforced disappearance. Horatio describes the situation in Denmark as Claudius's police "were tightening the siege to the bare limits of dignity and bread."<sup>240</sup>

Claudius imposed a system of surveillance in the country. He ordered to "observe Horatio and this actor" for "their friendship is upnormal."<sup>241</sup> Rosencrantz, who works with Hamlet on his play *Shahrayar*, informs Claudius about Hamlet's intention behind performing the play, and Claudius then orders that the rehearsal should be observed by Polonius, who will be responsible for the last performance.

Claudius's restriction is similar to the censorship applied by the Arab regimes at that period. Some writers and playwrights used symbolism and puns to express their objection to the governments' policies. Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is one of these works adapted and rewritten for this purpose, and Adwan mocks Sadat's hasty peace accord after Nasser's death in the same way Hamlet intended to use *Shahrayar* to make his mother feel ashamed of her hasty marriage. Hamlet is busy with his pleasure and life to the extent he becomes ignorant of the Danish concerns. His ignoble death at the end resulted from his in-seriousness to take revenge, and from his unpractical ideals of heroism that is similar to the Arab leaders' ideal rhetoric which did not level up to action after Nasser's death.

In conclusion, the dramatization of Hamlet as a weak and anti-heroic prince by Adwan has a political significance. He wants to draw the attention to the political crises occurred after the death of Nasser. He also mocks the Camp David Accord Sadat signed with Israel at that time. The image of the ruthless Claudius, who plots and kills his people for the sake of power, echoes the oppressive policies the regimes used against their people. They maintained divisions, and abused power to protect their chairs.

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<sup>239</sup> Adwan, "Hamlet Wakes Up Late," 112.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid, 111.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid, 102.

## 2.2.

### **Dramatizing the Paralyzed Bodies under Strict Censorship in Nabil Lahlou's *Ophelia is Not Dead***

The body was highly emphasized in theatrical mediums during Post-Nasserists Arab World. It received special attention as it signified and reflected the physical oppression and the corporeal punishment practiced by the Arab regimes against their people. The majority of the Arab regimes employed strict prisons, executed their dissidents, and exiled others. Radical oppressive strategies were formulated by the authorities and manifested in extreme police brutality, inhuman investigations, different shapes of surveillance, and violation of human rights. A victim in the Syrian Ba'athy jail once announced the different strategies used in interrogating him saying: "In Syrian prisons, there are forty methods of torture, including breaking bones, rape, electric shocks, pulling out nails, hanging by the feet with flogging all night and day, and others."<sup>242</sup> The World Press Freedom Index in 2000 evaluated freedom around the world and ranked the majority of Arab countries in the bottom, Syria 165, KSA 163, Libya 156, Sudan 145 and Egypt 143. An atmosphere of physical paralysis and fear of pain dominated Arabs, and they were deprived of speaking against that repression. In this part, I will discuss how Nabil Lahlou's *Ophelia Is Not Dead* dramatizes the paralyzed bodies under oppression in Morocco in the period of what many Moroccans called 'the years of lead' that extended between 1968- 1980 under King Hassan II.

#### **2.2.1. The Synopsis of the Rewriting**

*Ophelia Is Not Dead* is a two-act rewriting by the Moroccan playwright Nabil Lahlou. It was rewritten in 1968 in Paris when he was a student at Sorbonne University. The first production of the play was in French, and it remained as a text until it was staged in Marrakech, Morocco, for the French Cultural Institute in 1987, and in English at the University of Lancaster by the Moroccan director Hicham Regragui in 1991. Different translations appeared for the play including the translation I am using here by Khalid Amine and which appeared in Margret Litvin's *Four Arab Hamlet Plays* in 2015.<sup>243</sup>

The play shows two characters, Hamlet and Macbeth, in a state of physical paralysis. The paralysis is manifested in the wheelchairs the characters are confined to in most of the

<sup>242</sup>Cited in "Ṭā'ir Al-Shamāl," *Arab Countries Periodicals*, 10, (January 1997): 22.

<sup>243</sup>I am using her Amen's English translation. See Lahlou, "Ophelia Is Not Dead", 18.

time and the crunches they use to move in and outside the stage. This paralysis is caused by a severe physical punishment inflicted on them by the police. It is not until Act two that we discover how Hamlet was caught by Claudius's police after he plotted to act a play called the *Lipp Tavern* which, perhaps, is a new name for the *Mousetrap* directed to the king's conscience. No description in the play shows how Hamlet and Macbeth have met, but the play starts with both characters sitting in a room that looks like a room in a hospital or a cell in a prison. Also, the two characters, through their dialogues, appear to be waiting for the coming of Ophelia who seems the only person visiting them, but the play ends without her coming.

During their time of waiting for Ophelia, the characters reflect humorously on their state of paralysis. This kind of humour is supposed to lessen their pain and agony. Also, they perform short micro-dramas to spend the time. They act the cop/actor, colonizer/colonized, and the doctor/patient comic dramas.

The play bears few similarities to international dramatizations and rewritings of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. For example, the obscure verbal chattering used by the characters to deceive the police and rescue themselves from any future punishment can parallel the 'Dogg' language used by the three schoolchildren in Tom Stoppard's *Dogg's Hamlet* to deceive the police watching them, and Hamlet mimicking sounds of machines, like the metaphor of 'Ding Don sound' used in airplane when he said "Ding-dong, ladies and gentlemen, Captain Bourro requests you not to move, not to think, not to ask for anything, not to claim anything; he asks you to behave yourselves and to SHUT UP"<sup>244</sup> reminds us of Heiner Müller's *Hamletmachine* that reflects how power dehumanizes human being and turns them into machines.

The political significance of the play manifests in reflecting the suffocating atmosphere Arabs experienced by their tyrannical regimes in Post-Nasserism. It is full of analogical and indirect satire and mockery like when Hamlet acts as a police man, in one of the micro-dramas, interrogating and severely hitting an actor played by Macbeth. Another political analogy is made to mock the Nasserists and Baathists officials who were having a concert for a famous female singer, called Oum Kalthoum, in the night Israel attacked and seized North Egypt in 1967, Macbeth says: "And while the blood flows, the pharaohs

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<sup>244</sup>Lahlou, "Ophelia Is Not Dead," 10.

surfeit themselves with Oum Kalthoum's songs."<sup>245</sup> The play also is a satire of what many Moroccans call 'the years of lead,' a period of repression under the rule of King Hassan II. Many Moroccan political activists were imprisoned in one of the cruellest detention in Morocco.<sup>246</sup>



Figure 6: *Ophelia is not Dead* (From Khalid Amin's 'Ophelia Is Not Dead: An Interview with Nabyl Lahlou' *Critical Survey*, Volume 28, Number 3) file:///C:/Users/user/Downloads/[17522293%20-%20Critical%20Survey]%20Ophelia%20Is%20Not%20Dead%20at%2047%20(4).pdf

### 2.2.2. The Verbal and Physical Paralysis

Paralysis is usually defined, in a general term, as "a loss to a greater or less extent of motion and sensibility."<sup>247</sup> The paralysis can be verbal and physical and is anatomically caused by a health problem. However, the term is also used in politics and 'political paralysis' signifies any state of political incarceration imposed on people's bodies by tyrannical regimes; aiming to silence their dissidents through corporeal punishment, police brutality and abused surveillance. In the play, two patterns of paralysis are seen: verbal and physical. The verbal paralysis is highly manifested in the characters' incomprehensible speeches and meaningless chattering observed in most of their dialogues. Most of the dialogues in the play are characterised by echoing, parroting, onomatopoeias, and wordplay that go like this:

MACBETH: When I... When I... When I... When I th... When I thin... When I than... When I thouk... When I thaouk... When I than, when I Thou, when I thoun, when I

<sup>245</sup>Ibid, 18. Oum Kalthoum (in Arabic: أم كلثوم 1898-1975) is a famous Egyptian female singer. The story says that in the night of Israel's attacks on Egypt (1967), Egyptian officials were having a concert party listening to Oum Kalthoum.

<sup>246</sup>Ibid, 4.

<sup>247</sup>W. H. Dickinson, *Homeopathic Principles and Practice of Medicine*, (Memphis, TN: General Books, 2011), 258.

thouk, when I thouk... thouk? When I... THINK. I

HAMLET: When you think? When you think!

MACBETH: I feel bad.

HAMLET: When she comes, this fucking revolution,

We shall leave the earth,

We shall keep silent.

In the abyss, the abyss,

The abyss, the abyss, the abyss. . .

MACBETH (*theatrical*): Ho la! ...Ho la! ...Ho la! ...Ho la! ...Ho la! ...Ho la! ...Ho lalalalaJala!

HAMLET: Why not!

MACBETH: Why not what?

HAMLET: How, why not what?

MACBETH: How, how why not what?

HAMLET: How, how, how?

MACBETH: How, how, how what?

HAMLET: What, what how, how?

MACBETH (*speaking at the same time*): Who what what what who?

HAMLET: Kikakoukakikoikikoukikuikui?

MACBETH: Kuikuikuikuikoikou?<sup>248</sup>

Other examples of onomatopoeias are seen in the play when Macbeth expresses the pain he experienced by using the sound ‘Ah’ saying: “I say Ah, I shout Ah, I write Ah, I scream the Ah and of the Ah(s), and every Ah has its own significance.”<sup>249</sup> Hamlet devises words like the verb ‘thinksay’ to declare his fear of thinking under Claudius’s oppression. When Macbeth asks him what does this verb means, Hamlet answers:

A Third-word. I thinksay, you thinksay, he thinksays, she thinksays, we thinksay, you thinksay, and they thinksay. It’s a verb which does not exist in big Western dictionaries, but I think say that they will soon introduce it. Think say is to think through the intermediary of your guts, to want to shout one’s thoughts out loud without being able to do so for fear of being hanged. That’s what thinksaying is. The Tense.<sup>250</sup>

Macbeth immediately reacts to this verb by saying “I thinksay: enough of beating up, of hitting, of mistreating, of torturing, of fanaticizing, of fascisizing, of killing, of

<sup>248</sup>Lahlou, “Ophelia Is Not Dead,” 8.

<sup>249</sup>Ibid, 9.

<sup>250</sup>Ibid, 13.

eviscerating, of executing! Executing! Executing! Exercise.”<sup>251</sup> This wordplay, in the previous examples and other examples, is not a result of a physical problem or ignorance, but it appears later that it is intentionally utilized as an effective verbal tactic to escape surveillance and any probable incarceration in the future. After that brutal persecution, the two became haunted by the police's apparition and fear of pain. Hamlet, for instance, keeps reminding Macbeth not to say things loudly for the police might hear them, “Be careful, Macbeth, don't do anything. They'll slaughter you.”<sup>252</sup>

Hamlet's fear of speaking reflects the real stifling situation in most of the Arab countries in Post-Nasserism. Arab regimes employed different aspects of state terrorism in their practical politics to forbid the masses from speaking up against their corruption and the political oppression. Arab people have been alarmed, and of course alarmed each other, about speaking publically as their talks will be reported to the intolerant authorities. The talk always inflicted the same punishment as political actions do, and verbal paralysis is seen in famous sayings like *Alhetan Laha Wedan* (translated as Walls have Ears) which is popular in most of the Arab countries. This verbal paralysis appeared when the regimes, who felt shameful of their apathy to the Palestinian case, targeted their dissidents and prevented them from speaking against their aloofness after the death of Nasser. They succeeded to maintain that sense of verbal fear which “hangs in the air, blocking oxygen to the Arab mind, dominating thinking processes, surfacing in a self-censored media, nervous jokes, absurd commentary that wastes hours describing black as white.”<sup>253</sup>

The reason behind the characters' paralysis remains vague in the play till Act two when Hamlet announces to Macbeth that he was caught by the police doing a political theatre. He was planning to perform a play called the *Lipp Tavern* which could be another name for the *Mousetrap* or can be an adaptation for Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. However, Lahlou does not clarify why and where Hamlet decided to do the play. Hamlet informs Macbeth about his arrestment in the following comment:

After having worked on the plot of the Lipp Tavern, the general rose and there was a blackout on the set. The only thing I remember is the cops disguised as waiters. Hamlet had already been dead for a while. When the light returned, I found myself in an interrogation room. I swore to them that Shakespeare was just a historical playwright, but they weren't having it and demanded his address so they could arrest him. I also swore to

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<sup>251</sup>Ibid, 10.

<sup>252</sup>Ibid, 15.

<sup>253</sup>Youssef M. Ibrahim, “Shackles on the Mind: The Fear That Chokes the Arab World,” *The New York Times*, (October 30, 2004).

them that Hamlet was a dramatic character, but they tortured me and demanded his address too.<sup>254</sup>

In this comment, it becomes clear that Hamlet is actually was an actor who was interested in political theatre. Hamlet follows the comment by explaining to Macbeth the pain he received in the prison: “One evening, in my grey cell and on my iron bed, I woke to find myself unable to move even my little toe. I can’t stop asking about the cause of my paralysis.”<sup>255</sup> For Macbeth, the reason for the torture he experienced remains also vague to the end of the play, but it seems that he enraged Claudius for a particular reason that compelled the police to arrest him. He suffered from the same torture before meeting Hamlet, and the two decided to forge this voluntary paralysis as a defence mechanism in their place. This voluntary state of paralysis and isolation will protect them from the surveillance and punishment that haunt their minds.

The physical paralysis is seen also in the wheelchairs the characters sitting in, and the crutches they use occasionally to move in and outside the stage as the description says. The wheelchair has a theatrical effect. It should arrest the attention of the audience and make him/her feel the same state of paralysis while sitting in their chairs. It should remain on the stage as a visible reminder to the degradation of the body, and it develops into a stigma of oppression. The theatrical significance of the wheelchair is not only manifested on the level of the physical pain afflicted on the characters, but its significance also appears in reflecting the general pain of all the Arabs at that time. We are told that the characters can look at the wheelchair, react, and respond to it. It becomes a stimulus for the actors and the audience to respond to their situation and unravel their story of oppression.

### **2.2.3. Body under Oppression**

The physical torture inflicted on Hamlet and Macbeth forces them to invent physical immobility. Hamlet announces, "I paralyze my body to keep my conscience from causing me any pain."<sup>256</sup> Macbeth also declares that he does not want to suffer that pain again, "I don't want to suffer."<sup>257</sup> This pain had a great influence not exclusively on their bodies, but has altered their principles, interests, and values. Hamlet declares to Macbeth the fact that he became no more interested in theatre. Instead, he prefers painting now, since this hobby

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<sup>254</sup>Lahlou, "Ophelia Is Not Dead," 40.

<sup>255</sup>Ibid.

<sup>256</sup>Ibid, 27.

<sup>257</sup>Ibid, 12.

will not expose him to any danger as he believes. He says that in a playful way:

My paintings are condemned. My inspiration is contaminated. My tendency wanders, gets lost and capsizes. My style coagulates: from primitivism, I've moved into Realism. From Realism, into Sub-Realism, Surrealism, Ultra-Realism. From Pointillism, into Tracesism, Graphism, Bluffism, Chatterism, Do-Nothingism, Nudism, Bollockeism, and finally earn-bread-ism. And now you want me to abandon it all for your Politicism? Why?

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Hamlet's funny opinion comes as a response to Macbeth's implied talk about his concerns of the suspended revolution. The intolerable torment Hamlet encountered has transformed his previous political passions to rescue the kingdom, and became passively calm; refusing to participate in any political protest. It is not only that, their consciences have been deeply hurt by that awful experience. Every time the characters consider leaving the wheelchairs and break out of their paralysis, they are unconsciously confronted by their scares. They became metaphorically fastened to their wheelchairs to the degree that they clean forget their ability to walk. Macbeth pretends that he will do something if he has legs:

MACBETH: Give me legs and I'll show you what I'm capable of. If I had legs I'd. . .

HAMLET: Be careful, Macbeth, don't do anything. They'll slaughter you.

MACBETH: If I had legs, I'd. . .

HAMLET: No, Macbeth, don't do anything. Renounce your ideas. They'll torture you!

MACBETH: I would be the captain of the national team. My players would wear blue-white-and-red stripes...<sup>259</sup>

Hamlet is relieved the time Macbeth mockingly says that he would join the football team of the country, not because he wants to join the revolution happening outside. Hamlet's anxiety blocks him from rationalising and contemplating like the way he did before. Even he stopped asking his famous question of 'to be or not to be.' Instead, he blames himself, in a side talk, saying: "To be or not to be. You would be the last of the idiots if you asked yourself the question."<sup>260</sup> Macbeth similarly announces that he cancelled raising questions that might put him in danger: "The problem is the question I ask myself. Question: What do I want? Answer: I am worth something. Question: What am

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<sup>258</sup>Ibid, 17.

<sup>259</sup>Ibid, 16.

<sup>260</sup>Ibid, 42.

I worth? Response: I want.”<sup>261</sup> They became algophobic and their fear will grow with them, and become a permanent mental state that stays with them to the end of the play.<sup>262</sup> The dramatic description says that the Act two happens thirty years away from Act one without metamorphosis. This breaking of the theatrical time unity by Lahlou also has a theatrical importance; he wanted to demonstrate the amount of fear that persisted in the region for decades and dramatically affected Arabs’ lives. Arabs lost the control of their movements, lives and interest. They found themselves stuck in a post-human condition that dehumanized them and treat them like machines. The failure to choose what type of being one could achieve is a characteristic of post-humanism that reverses the traditional humanism and its assumption of the subject as self-conscious and self-determiner found in Descartes’s *cogito ergo sum*. Hamlet’s conception of his body as ‘engines’ that “resist strong external pressures and subversive currents pressure”<sup>263</sup> reflects this mechanization of our bodies under the threatening of the extreme power. Foucault coined the elusive term ‘bio-power’ and bio-politics, appeared in *The Will to Knowledge: History of Sexuality* volume, to show the genealogies of power and how it systematizes our bodies. While Foucault spoke of the positive side of power in administrating our lives, he does not deny the ‘juridico-discursive’ ability of power to be repressive and negative.<sup>264</sup>

Under this bio-power, the characters in the play became machines. Ophelia also is dehumanized under Claudius’s destructive power. She has negatively changed, aged and addicted to alcohol as Macbeth portrays her saying, “Ophelia has aged a lot, she’s changed. Ophelia drinks too much. Ophelia has lost her memory, or nearly lost it. Ah! Where is the true time of Ophelia when Ophelia was still the real Ophelia? What’s she called in reality?”<sup>265</sup> It is not only that, she is compelled to work as a prostitute achieving a good lifestyle under that suffocation. We understand from their dialogues that Ophelia does not only work as a maid but she also became a prostitute trying to better her income through undressing to men. They are waiting for her to give them some sexual pleasure:

HAMLET: Please, you can go to the very end of your thought!

MACBETH: Which thought?

HAMLET: The one that always pushed you to undress Ophelia.

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<sup>261</sup>Ibid, 11.

<sup>262</sup>Algophobia is the abnormal fear of pain. It happens after one goes through an extreme painful situation like torture.

<sup>263</sup>Ibid, 10.

<sup>264</sup>Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1988), 140.

<sup>265</sup>Ibid, 44.

MACBETH: I never undressed Ophelia! She always managed to do it herself. But I know that your big pleasure is to see her naked, completely naked. When she comes, she will make us coffee, she will play a record, and will dance naked to ease our waiting. Confess that you long for today to be tomorrow and for every day to be bathed in her nudity. You know, she knows that I know that you know that she knows that they know that we are sadists, we are failures. She undresses to prevent us from undressing her with our eyes.

HAMLET: Oh! If only all women could do like her.

MACBETH: There would be less laundry on the balconies.

HAMLET: First, I want to say that right after Hamlet's murder, Ophelia came to our place.

..

MACBETH: And she said; "I'm going to become a whore."

HAMLET: She didn't say WHORE. She said PROSTITUTE.<sup>266</sup>

Ophelia's turning into a prostitute, and the male characters perception of her as a sex and pleasure machine adequately demonstrate how power dehumanizes and degrades human being. The characters lost their sense of human dignity and respect. They are baffled by the poor circumstances searching for a source of entertainment in Ophelia's boy. This in fact echoes how Arabs have been corrupted and impoverished by the regimes selling the nations' natural interest for their own benefits. The unemployment reached to high percentage in most of Arab countries while the regime used to accumulate wealth in their hands and in the hands of minority like the Ba'athist minority in Iraq and Syria. It is not only the political situation that was deteriorated after 1970; the economic hardships suffocated people and enslaved them. Other Arabs were forced to immigrate to the West where they can be treated as a human, like when Macbeth at the end carries his suitcase announcing his wishes to escape the stagnant country that he cannot endure anymore: "What has become of us all in this poor country?"<sup>267</sup> He is extremely desperate of any change in the near future saying "no metamorphosis."<sup>268</sup> This desperation and this traumatic experience gradually persist, inflect their conscience, and create long-term physiological problems. This is apparently clear in the characters whom the physical punishment ravaged their sense of gender, identity, time, and being. In one of the conversation Hamlet asks:

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<sup>266</sup>Lahlou, "Ophelia Is Not Dead," 45-46.

<sup>267</sup>Ibid, 22.

<sup>268</sup>Ibid, 10.

HAMLET: How old do you think I am?

MACBETH: I don't know. We started doing theatre ten years ago; you were fifteen when you married this dirty religion. You just have to remember.<sup>269</sup>

The trauma affects Hamlet's memory towards the end of the play when he forgets his past and his identity as he asks: "But who am I? Hamlet or Macbeth? But I must have been someone else before? Eh? Too much disorder in my head... No, no I am not going to waste my life."<sup>270</sup> Claudius's aggressive policies made the kingdom unbearable and very stifling. It is the same manner some Arab regimes created their emergence law to protect their chairs. These emergence laws, like in the Ba'athy Syria Iraq, in KSA, Libya and Morocco, are characterised by violation and corporeal punishment. In Syria alone, the Ba'athists committed almost 2012 homicide against their domestic enemies from 1963-2004 according to statistics. KSA authorities committed crimes using Sharia religious laws, Khadafy's regimes in Libya practiced state terrorism, and in Morocco, the years of lead continues from 1968 to 1980 when King Hassan II and his regime killed thousands of Moroccans arrested people and confiscated properties.<sup>271</sup> It was a black era for the Moroccans who called these years as *Asanaout Al-Sawda* (The Black Years). Other Arab countries had their covert violation of human rights also, and they practiced different types of physical punishment.<sup>272</sup>

Still, the characters' treated their paralysis with humour sometimes. This humour has the function of easing their agony and releasing their anxiety. Freud spoke of the importance of humour in a distressing effect saying "The pleasure of humour ... comes about ... at the cost of a release of affect that does not occur: it arise from an economy in the expenditure of affect."<sup>273</sup> Laughter also increases pain tolerance and expresses the feelings suppressed by stress. The sense of humour appears in the micro-dramas they act. In one of these dramas, Hamlet acts a policeman who is torturing an actor and wants him to confess his crime in doing political theatre:

HAMLET: That reassures me. (*He hits him*) Now you are going to confess.

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<sup>269</sup>Ibid, 20.

<sup>270</sup>Ibid, 60.

<sup>271</sup>Graeme R. Newman et al., *Crime and Punishment around the World*, vol. 4 (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2010), 370.

<sup>272</sup>Susan Slyomovics, *The Performance of Human Rights in Morocco*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 50.

<sup>273</sup>Cited in John Morreall, *Comic Relief: A Comprehensive Philosophy of Humor*, (Somerset: Wiley, 2011), 19.

MACBETH: I've already confessed.

HAMLET: But you didn't say anything. (*He hits and tortures him*) Speak!

MACBETH: What's the point of speaking?

HAMLET: You are going to confess, re-confess and re-re-confess.<sup>4</sup> (*he tortures him*) I am going to make you mute and impotent for the rest of your life. (*He hits him*) Do you feel better now? Cigarette? Don't blame me. This is a job that requires a lot of patience and clairvoyance. There are those who hit using their tongue and their pens, idiots like you, and there are those who hit by hitting. I belong to the second category. Don't worry about these bruises, they will gone by tomorrow. I am a human, me. I like to make myself familiar and to be made familiar. It is more intimate. Well! You can call me Cop.<sup>274</sup>

Hamlet keeps lashing and hitting Macbeth, and when Macbeth asks him to pause and stop the acting, he continues hitting him. Macbeth describes Hamlet as becoming 'sadist' who tries to inflict the pain he experienced on him and Hamlet replies: 'I am not sadist... I felt really good in my skin as a cop.'<sup>275</sup> Gary Cox speaks of the psychology of the sadist who likes others to be incarnated in an uncomfortable position he/she experienced before and how they 'make a tool of the other ... as an *instrument-object* ... to realize his incarnation'.<sup>276</sup> Anger directed against the self or others is always a focal dilemma for people who have been abused and who like to re-enact this dilemma on other people.<sup>277</sup> This is what happened when Hamlet became happy hitting Macbeth.

Another play-within-a- play is acted by them, and Macbeth acts a French colonizer who hits an African slave: Macbeth is the one who will torture Hamlet this time:

MACBETH: You believe in Santa Claus.

MACBETH *whips* HAMLET

HAMLET: I believe in revolution.

MACBETH (*whipping* HAMLET): You are nothing but a savage, a savage!

HAMLET: Africa must be de-tamtamized in order to wake up. It must be de-folklorized in order to stand up. It must be de-footballized in order to walk (*he receives more lashes*).

I'm an African who's got no dough. I'm an African who hates the po-po.

MACBETH: Why this last sentence, bastard?

MACBETH *whips* HAMLET

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<sup>274</sup>Ibid, 27.

<sup>275</sup>Ibid, 27.

<sup>276</sup>Gary Cox, *The Sartre Dictionary*, (London: Continuum, 2008), 177.

<sup>277</sup>Patt Denning, *Practicing Harm Reduction Psychotherapy: an Alternative Approach to Addictions* / Patt Denning, Jeannie Little, (New York: The Guilford Press, 2012), 133.

HAMLET: Just for the pleasure of the rhyme, sir. Dough-dough equals po-po, doesn't it?  
 In other words: no dough for the po', but for the cop-cash-jack-stick-peak-click.<sup>278</sup>

This micro-play is long, and it shows another side of the long-lasting corporeal punishment inflicted on Arabs by the colonizers. The French colonizer, Macbeth, enslaves the colonized body, Hamlet, and lashes him to change his idea of revolution. The example here shows the multi-level of oppression the colonizer used. They used physical power and torture to enslave people, and soft-power like religion and language to control them. The colonizer perceived the colonized in terms of inferior object, raw, and untamed bodies that can be possessed, sexualized, and categorized, and the colonized revolted with their bodies against the colonizer. The colonizers have always used chromaticism and genitalism that define them as a superior race, while the 'Other' is imagined as inferior people.<sup>279</sup> The body for them became a tool for oppression and discrimination. Lahlou actually draws the attention to a long history of physical objectification Arabs suffered from in North Africa and The Middle East. After the colonizers left the region, the physical torture is practiced on them by their oppressive regime.

The characters tease one another like when Macbeth calls Hamlet "Prosaic as usual, Mister Hamlet! You haven't changed. You always talk, all you do is talk."<sup>280</sup> They also ridicule the lack of freedom like when Macbeth asks Hamlet: "Where is our taste for democracy?" and Hamlet answers: "Why democracy?"<sup>281</sup>

The micro-plays also help the characters to reflect on their political paralysis without endangering themselves. This strategy is used in real life by Arab playwrights, like Lahlou, who satiated their dramas with sarcasm to mock authorities indirectly. The analogical satire and sarcasm's significance comes when directness and political criticism are forbidden and inapplicable under state censorship.<sup>282</sup> It is adopted when "the artist is seeking simultaneously to take risks and escape punishment for his boldness."<sup>283</sup> However, there is an inverse relationship between satire and liberalization. When censorship is lessened,

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<sup>278</sup>Lahlou, "Ophelia Is Not Dead," 30.

<sup>279</sup>Bill Ashcroft et al., *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, (Florence: Taylor and Francis, 2013), 37.

<sup>280</sup>Lahlou, "Ophelia Is Not Dead," 43.

<sup>281</sup>Ibid, 50.

<sup>282</sup>In John Shillington, *Grappling with Atrocity: Guatemalan Theater in the 1990s*, (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2002), 77-78. Shillington defines Analogical Satire in drama as the satire used to portray a situation in the past, in a different location, or in a fictional situation that is analogous to the current social-political situation. It offers more distance than usual from the current political-social issues.

<sup>283</sup>Cited in Dustin Griffin, *Satire: a Critical Reintroduction*, (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2015), 139.

satire becomes effete.

#### 2.2.4. Censorship

Arab countries imposed discrete forms of observation and censorship for many decades. They restricted and dictated media and observed publishing houses. Since 1970, the Arab World lagged behind the rest of the world in terms of democracy and freedom, and "most Arab countries scored poorly on indices of freedom of expression, including press and academic freedom; freedom of assembly, demonstration, and open public discussion; freedom of association and civil society organization."<sup>284</sup> No Arab country really had complete free media system that allowed people to speak. Even in few countries where private ownership for print media was given, they were restricted and monopolized by those who supported the authorities. Macbeth comments on how the states controlled all the information sources and intentionally de-literalized people saying: "A lack of information, a lack of education, a lack of truth and frankness, a lack of contact. I think I need to start reviewing my geography."<sup>285</sup> Claudius, like most of Arab leaders, tidied and controlled people's lives through strict censorship. He uses secret police, and filled his jails with his opponents like when Hamlet is caught by the policemen disguised as waiters and hide among the crowds. The characters give description of how Claudius's censorship suffocates people in the country. Macbeth comments on that censorship:

I've got my own place. I have my place in the kingdom of the deaf and dumb. Let them teach me how to play the sax, or the drums or the flute or the bendir to be able to describe humanity in rags. Or rather, let them teach me to shoot! Yes, to shoot! It is our unique chance to get ourselves out.<sup>286</sup>

Claudius uses all his tactics to silence people and manipulate them. Theatres and actors also were part of his victims. Hamlet acting as policeman and interrogating playwrights mocks that censorship applied on actors:

*(Act as he is carrying a book)* Let's move on to theatre, in your previous book, which I have here with me, and which has as title, *The Theatre Inflation or How to Prostitute Oneself on Stage*—nice title—you say, I quote you: "Because of inflation, theatre was obliged to sell its costumes in order to survive. Thus the Noh theatre became the Nu

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<sup>284</sup>Barrie Gunter et al., *Arab Media in a Turbulent World*, (The Peninsula Publishing, 2013), 107.

<sup>285</sup>Lahlou, "Ophelia Is Not Dead," 48.

<sup>286</sup>Ibid, 57.

theatre, a ball-ass theatre, a theatre of tits and cunts, a carnal theatre for perverts, porno theatre for voyeurs and impotent, a theatre with dicks as seats, with naked women as usherettes. In brief, shit everywhere. It's the alienation caused by money, money, money, money, money, money, money... We must do something about this. We must take to the streets in order to fight the germs and the enemies of liberty with the necessary weapons," end of quote. What do you mean by "the necessary weapons?"<sup>287</sup>

The censorship applied on theatres also is seen when the characters act as if they are speaking to a policeman chasing them and see if they want to do political theatre again:

MACBETH: "Well, bastard, you're involved in political activities now?" Me? Not at all sir, I only do theatre. "Theatre, idiot? What kind of theatre, idiot?" Just the simplest theatre. "I don't like simple theatre, idiot!" But sir, I want to know what stages I can act on. "Idiot, you will play masterpieces I will choose for you and you will act on the stage I will indicate to you. Understood?" Understood, understood. No need for beating.

HAMLET (*offstage*): Tell this dirty inquisitor that we want to make political theatre that has for its objective the search for human shit, humanity in deep shit.

MACBETH: He says he doesn't understand.

HAMLET (*offstage*): Tell him that it's not our fault if at drama school we weren't taught belly dancing.

MACBETH: He says patience; it won't be long in coming.

HAMLET (*offstage*): Tell him that the public funds are pumped out by charlatans.

MACBETH: He says that the pillars of every state are charlatanism.

HAMLET (*offstage*): Tell him "Shit then!"<sup>288</sup>

The fact that Hamlet quotes from a book, written by Macbeth about the role of theatres, shows how strict the censorship is. He interrogates Macbeth about the fact of theatre being a "necessary weapons." It is not only that, but they also ridicule how theatre in the region became void of its political and social significances. The ability of theatre to become a necessary weapon in the region is almost vanished after 1970s when subversive stages and theatres became a tool to ideologies people in the Arab World and a method to distract people from politics. Some dramas were encouraged and supported by the government

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<sup>287</sup>Ibid, 24.

<sup>288</sup>Ibid, 52.

who saw theatre only as an entertainment tool. Dramas like *Madrasatu Almushageebn* (*The school of Troublemakers*), and *AlEyal Kebret* (*The Kids Grown Up*) became very popular comedies in Egypt and the Arab World, and all Arabs knew such comedies that were broadcasted regularly on TVs and radios. Other dramas like *Cassak Ya Watan* (*A Cup of My Country*) and *Gurbah* (*Aliention*) became also popular during the 1970s and 1980s in the Ba'athy Syria. The dramas were acted by the pro-state comedians, Dureed Laham, who discussed the danger of capitalism and the importance of socialism in the socialist Ba'athy Syria. The two dramas are abused by the authorities to preach for their propagandas. Other playwrights and stage directors could not publish their dramas without licenses issued by the authorities, and this perhaps justifies why most of *Hamlet* rewritings in Post- Nasserism appeared as unpublished text or as performance acted outside the Arab land.

### 2.2.5. Liberating the Body

It is not only that Lahlou comments on bodies under oppression in his play, but he hints to the fact that these bodies should be liberated. This is clearly seen in the characters conversation like when Macbeth keeps telling Hamlet that they must leave their wheelchairs and do something. Hamlet seems unwilling to have the courage to leave his state of paralysis:

MACBETH: To tell you the truth, Mister Hamlet, my imagination refused to go into the guerrillas' camps. We must make a decision, Mister Hamlet. This voluntary paralysis is swallowing us. We must react! Time is flying!

HAMLET: Well, what are you doing here then?

MACBETH: The caravan ran out of water. They've been hanging around for weeks, looking for a well. The desert is so beautiful.

HAMLET: It's frightening as well. Sandstorms, the howling of beasts that swallow the sand, the moon, looking like Cain's eye, camels like ghosts, vultures and eagles flying in the damned sky, looking for prey. All this is the desert.

MACBETH: Prosaic as usual, Mister Hamlet! You haven't changed. You always talk, all you do is talk.

HAMLET: It's hereditary, Lord Macbeth.

MACBETH: Hereditary? Race of parrots! We must make a decision, Mister Hamlet!<sup>289</sup>

The action takes another direction at the end of the play when Macbeth informs Hamlet

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<sup>289</sup>Ibid, 43.

about his serious intention to go and speak to Claudius. In fact, the relation between Macbeth and Claudius is not clear in the play and we do not know how Macbeth has an access to Claudius. This is one of the confusion Lahlou does not solve in his text. Hamlet asks Macbeth what is his plan to tell Claudius and Macbeth humorously answers:

In the name of the fundamental principles on which our poor and wretched humanity relies, I'm asking you to put an end to this destructive liberalism. In the name of the people's right to existence, I'm asking you to de-footballize and de-televise this race and give it back its taste for life. I ask you to remove yourself from our path, because you are blocking the way to the moon. I'm asking you to replace the actors because they are bad and smell bad.<sup>290</sup>

Macbeth suggests that Hamlet also must do something to stop Claudius, but Hamlet does not want to move and confront Claudius "Make a decision! What for?"<sup>291</sup> Macbeth says the decision is important to leave their state of paralysis, but Hamlet replies that he prefers this disguise, "Never! I will leave my chair when Claudius leaves his." Macbeth assures Hamlet that as long as Claudius sits on his throne, they will not be able to do anything regarding oppression, but Hamlet says:

I'm on my throne too! A rolling throne, not a crumbling one. We've chosen this voluntary paralysis, so let's take it to the very end. You want me to leave my chair to go and die. For who? For what? The cause! What cause? What is the cause?<sup>292</sup>

Macbeth insists that he could not continue his game and a step forward must be made: "No, I cannot continue this game. I am going to leave this wheelchair and go shout outside and vomit my years of paralysis." He also tells him that the entire nation should stand against Claudius fascism: "I'm talking about you, about me, about us. I'm talking about all of us; about all of those who have become powerless before this rising fascism."<sup>293</sup> Hamlet in return asks Macbeth to renounce his idea for the police will torture him again: "You always refused to live elsewhere, outside your home, and now you want to go over there. You are no longer young." Hamlet in the end is left alone on the stage without Macbeth and without the coming of Ophelia.

Other aspect of body liberation is seen in Ophelia's becoming a prostitute, as the

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<sup>290</sup>Ibid, 57.

<sup>291</sup>Ibid, 43.

<sup>292</sup>Ibid.

<sup>293</sup>Ibid, 51.

characters describe. This can be seen as a way of liberating her body. She is no more confined by male's concept of purity and chastity they always restricted her body with. It seems that Ophelia is aware of the power of her body, and her absence makes male characters uncomfortable, and they enter into a phantasmal state of mind where they are obsessed by their desires to see her naked. Ophelia's body becomes a weapon to fight back, and put them in a stressful condition by her absence. Her consent to the social constructivism of her body, as a source of sexual pleasure, could also be a strategic way by which she can liberate her body. This strategy by which women can escape and resist the biological essentialism is called 'strategic essentialism,' coined first by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in her essay 'Can the Subaltern Speak.' By strategic essentialism, Spivak means that women can tactically use this inescapable essentialism, which envisions a woman's body as fragile, sexualized, and monopolized, as a tool of resistance, liberation, and identity assertion.<sup>294</sup>

Lahlou is interested in the social oppression practiced on female's body. This is perhaps why he named two actresses to play the roles of Hamlet and Macbeth in one of the performances: Sophia Hadi played Macbeth, and Amal Ayouch played Hamlet, respectively. By this physical presence of female actors in traditionally masculine roles, Lahlou enunciated critique of the deeply rooted patriarchal structures and the dominant sexual politics. His professional practice parallels previous international practices that gave many actresses the chance to play Hamlet. Tom Howard's *Women as Hamlet* dwells on many theatrical experiences like Charlotte Clark, Sarah Siddons, Sarah Bernhard, and Angela Winkler's, who excelled in playing the role of Hamlet. This distinction comes out of their eagerness to challenge expectations and to transcend gender barriers and biological boundaries. Howard comments:

Women who take the role pose recurrent questions. Is Hamlet a universal figure whose dilemmas everyone shares male or female? Is Hamlet a female character whose words invite women's voice? What is the relation between Shakespeare's all-male theater and the conventions that have succeeded it? How may the sexual and state politics of an English renaissance play relate to the time of place or is reenactment?<sup>295</sup>

Lahlou, like other playwrights, attempted to disrupt the Arabic cultural constructivism that envisioned the woman's body as fragile and sexualized. This is perhaps justifies the

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<sup>294</sup>Simon Shepherd and Mick Wallis, *Drama/Theatre/Performance*, (London: Routledge, 2010), 75.

<sup>295</sup>Howard, *Women as Hamlet*, 1.

title of his play, though Ophelia does not appear in it. This double objectification of women is not only built on biological characterization, but also it is constructed by the patriarchal discourse. Ophelia's absence in the play disrupts the conscience of the two characters, and while they remain paralyzed, she freely moves and practices her own life.

In conclusion, Lahlou's rewriting is one of the most important plays that reflected the injustice suffered by the Arabs in post-Nasserists era, which was characterized by widespread injustice and strict censorship imposed on literary and theatrical activities. Arabs have suffered greatly under this surveillance, which drained their strength beside the state of poverty and political despair that prompted many of them to leave their countries in search of a decent life. In fact, Arab regimes created an unbearable life for their people through applying corporeal punishment in prisons. The state of fear dominated the region and restricted writing, theatres, journalism and other cultural means. Hence, many Arab writers, especially free playwrights, resorted to the use of stages and dramas to mock all the political despotism they lived in, and to create awareness among their audiences, but this awareness is always hindered by the extreme power. The rewriting of *Hamlet* for the Arab audiences by Lahlou and others had indirect political messages that tried to change the political reality and reverse the state of despair experienced by the Arabs at that period.

## 2.3.

**“Not to Be” Rather than “To Be.” Hamlet as a Detached Arab Intellectual in Jawad Al-Assadi’s *Forget Hamlet***

One of the political aspects that the Arabic *Hamlets* commented on is the massive oppression and the silencing policies enforced by Arab regimes on many Arab intellectuals. Jawad Al-Assadi, the author of *أنسوا هامليت* (in Plural: *Forget Hamlet*), was one of those Iraqi academics, journalists, clergymen, and artists impacted by the undemocratic Ba’athy regime.<sup>296</sup> Al-Assadi had fled Iraq to Bulgaria immediately after the Ba’athists got a grip over Iraq in 1966. He earned a PhD in Theatrical Studies in Bulgaria and kept his 25-year exile working in Eastern Europe, Syria and UAE before settling in Iraq after the demise of Saddam Hussein’s regime in 2003.<sup>297</sup>

The play was written by Al-Assadi in his exile in Europe in 1976. It has bilateral political allegories: Claudius targeting “the scholars and wise people”<sup>298</sup> represents Hussein’s oppression of the Iraqi intellectuals, and Hamlet’s searching for serenity and spirituality instead of stopping Claudius’ “guillotine” that “has crushed people near and far,”<sup>299</sup> is a mockery of the Arab intellectuals who remained neutral and silent against Hussein’s brutality. Under the Ba’athy regime of Saddam Hussien, many intellectuals were arrested, others were exiled, and many fled the torture to Europe and nearby countries. They were charged with their dissenting ideas that opposed the Ba’athists’ socialist beliefs. Some academics were denied access to national universities controlled by the regime, many were prohibited from the political assembly, and some were also prevented from establishing political parties. The Ba’athists also enlisted intellectuals from utopian nationalists, scholars, and university academics to speak for them.

It is not only in Iraq, but targeting intellectuals was a distressful fact in most Arab countries during Post-Nasserism. In Syria, for example, the Ba’ath regime has controlled universities, publication houses, and religious institutions and widely excluded unwanted scholars. Al-Ba’ath University in Syria is an example of how the states funded and subsidized their projects, universities, ministerial agencies, hospitals, and courts where

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<sup>296</sup>Jawad Al-Assadi (in Arabic: جواد الأسدي) is an Iraqi playwright and stage director. He was born in Baghdad in 1947. He received the prestigious Prince Claus Award for Theatre Achievement in 2004 for his theatrical heritage in directing many plays like “The Rape” (1992), “Variations on the Ward” (1993), “The Maids” (1994), and “Women of War” (2000).

<sup>297</sup>Carlson et al. *Four Arab Hamlet Plays*, 227.

<sup>298</sup>Al-Assadi, “Forget Hamlet,” 271.

<sup>299</sup>Ibid.

such pro-state intellectuals were usually institutionalized. They succumbed to the power to attain safety and to avoid punishment. In other countries like Saudi Arabia, the state created its supporters from the Wahabists, a type of Islamic religious clerks who produced Fatwas<sup>300</sup> to prevent any revolution against the Saudi leaders. Wahabists, later named the 'Mashaiek Alssultan,' which means the court clerks, were famous for their blind loyalty to the regime. They managed to plant their followers in most Arab countries, and the authorities always favoured them for their supportive stands.

Other Arab scholars adopted a nonaligned position and preferred to stay neutral, but such scholars have constantly been attacked for their non-interference in politics. These intellectuals have always found excuses to defend their isolation. Zeina G Halabi indicates in *Unmaking of Arab Intellectual* how part of these intellectuals, called by her the prophetic intellectuals, became neutral after their national dream had failed to be materialized after Nasser's death. For example, the Palestinian poets Mahmoud Darweish and Ibrahim Toukan were among the prophetic intellectuals who recalled the prophecy of nationalism and emancipation in their works before the Oslo Accord between PLO and Israel (1992). However, they detached themselves after the Oslo accord due to their disappointment in the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat. Halabi comments:

No longer [is] the lone voice speaking truth to power. The prophetic intellectual that Toukan portrays carries tragically the burden of his aborted prophecy, stranded in a dystopic present, unable to move to the future. Intertwined and enmeshed, the prophetic past, the dystopic present, and the stalled future are temporalities that operate as a reminder of the intellectual's interrupted journey toward emancipation.<sup>301</sup>

While such prophetic intellectuals detached themselves when their national dreams failed to be materialized, other Arab intellectuals chose neutrality as 'epistemic pride,'<sup>302</sup> believing that neutrality will grant them the ability to see the truth objectively without the need to be corrupted by politics. Some university academics and journalists adopted

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<sup>300</sup>Fatwas are religious laws, produced by high religious institutions, and decide for Muslims what is allowed or prohibited in their lives.

<sup>301</sup>Zeina G. Halabi, *Unmaking of the Arab Intellectual: Prophecy, Exile and the Nation* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), Xviii.

<sup>302</sup>The term epistemic pride is coined by Dick Pels in his book *The Intellectual as Stranger*. The term signifies a state of intellectualism when the intellectual "have identified themselves, as 'displaced persons', distanced and dissident *vis-à-vis* the broader society and its centres of political and economic decision making. Such outsidership, while breeding resentment and anxiety, has also been a source of considerable epistemic pride, in so far as intellectuals have often presumed the existence of a structural relationship between their generic distanciation and their chances of attaining a broader, less distorted, more objective or just view of the social world." In Dick Pels, *The Intellectual as Stranger: Studies in Spokespersonship* (Routledge, 2013), x.

professionalism and were regulated by institutionalization. Other religious men and women, like the Sufis, separated themselves behind mysticism and spirituality that can be gained in solitude away from the common issues.<sup>303</sup> The attempt of those intellectuals to isolate themselves aroused mockery and cynicism by many political activists. Edward Said, who came from an Arabic background, spoke of those disengaged Arab intellectuals and how they forsook their principles and preferred silence:

A more ominous phenomenon is the power and wealth of the oil-rich states. A lot of the sensational Western media attention paid to the Ba'athy regimes of Syria and Iraq has tended to overlook the quieter and insidious pressure to conform exerted by governments who have a lot of money to spend and offer academics, writers, and artists munificent patronage. This pressure was particularly in evidence during the Gulf crisis and war. Before the crisis, Arabism had been supported and defended uncritically by progressive intellectuals who believed themselves to be furthering the cause of Nasserism and the anti-imperialist pro-independence impulse of the Bandung Conference and the nonaligned movement. In the immediate aftermath of Iraq's occupation of Kuwait a dramatic realignment of intellectuals took place. It has been suggested that whole departments of the Egyptian publishing industry along with many journalists did an about-face. Former Arab nationalists suddenly began to sing the praises of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, hated enemies of the past, new friends and patrons now.<sup>304</sup>

The insidious pressure Said mentions in the previous quotation changed many Arabic academics and nationalists stand. Many of them succumbed to power and money, and others remained silent and passive. Al-Assadi uses *Hamlet* to mock all those Arabic intellectuals from academics, clergymen and journalists who did not speak truth to power in Post-Nasserism. Hamlet's passiveness in stopping Claudius's guillotine and his indifference to his revenge searching for spiritual and peaceful life symbolize the attitude of many Arab intellectuals at that time.

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<sup>303</sup>Sufis, from the word 'soof' means 'wool' in Arabic, refer to those Islamic clergy men used to wear cheap wool out of asceticism. It is an Islamic mystical movement appeared in the seventh century and spread in all the Arab World. Sufis are known of their different *Tariqas*, means religious baths, to attain more closeness to God. They are also known of their non-interference in social and political issues. The estimated number for Sufis is fifteen million in Egypt alone.

<sup>304</sup>Edward W. Said, *Representations of the Intellectual : the 1993 Reith Lectures*, (London: Vintage Books, 1996), 115-116.

### 2.3.1. AL-Assadi's *Forget Hamlet* as a Rewriting

*Forget Hamlet* is a one-act fifteen-scene Arabic rewriting of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* by the Iraqi Jawad Al-Assadi.<sup>305</sup> It was first staged in Cairo, 1994, under the title (شباك أوفيليا, *Ophelia's Window*) that signifies the window from which Ophelia has seen the murder committed by Claudius and Gertrude against the king. The play later was retitled, when published as a text with another play by Al-Assadi in 2000, as *أنسوا هاملت*, *Forget Hamlet* to create dramatic irony; asking the audience to forget the hero Hamlet and remember the hapless one at the same time. The play was translated into English by Margaret Litvin in 2006 for a stage reading at the world Shakespeare Congress held in Brisbane, Australia. It was then workshopped by the New York Theatre Workshop at Vassar College.<sup>306</sup> It was also excerpted in the Norton Critical Edition of *Hamlet*, 2010.

#### The Plot

The play begins as Claudius and Gertrude execute the old Hamlet while he is sleeping at night. Claudius, then, enters the stage dragging one of the servants and accusing him of killing the king. Ophelia rejects Claudius' false story and informs Hamlet that the servant is innocent. She has seen Gertrude and Claudius execute the king from her window that night. Hamlet indifferently discarded Ophelia's story, unconvinced that his mother and uncle could be the murderers. He gradually became autistic, searching for serenity by locking himself in his chamber reading 'theologies.' Horatio informs him that he has seen a ghost that resembles his father, but he carelessly accuses Horatio of forging that to ruin his 'spiritual peace'. In the meantime, Claudius becomes excruciatingly a butcher, executing in broad daylight his opponents and targeting in a heartbeat the wisest men in Denmark. His "guillotine" is "going around the clock, day and night"<sup>307</sup> tirelessly as one of the gravediggers described. Hamlet's disengagement compels other characters to stand firm against Claudius's bloody actions. For example, on the coronation day, Laertes confronts Claudius, telling him: "We are ready for blood, O master of Denmark."<sup>308</sup>

Claudius is annoyed by Laertes' fortitude, and he gives the order to send Laertes to a 'sanatorium.' Ophelia asks Hamlet to save Laertes, but Hamlet pretends that he is ignorant of Laertes's imprisonment. She angrily leaves him after scolding him by saying: "Get

<sup>305</sup> I mainly use the Litvin's English translation with parallel quotations from the Arabic text.

<sup>306</sup> Carlson et al. *Four Arab Hamlet Plays*, 227.

<sup>307</sup> Al-Assadi, "Forget Hamlet," 246.

<sup>308</sup> *Ibid*, 244.

yourself to a monastery.”<sup>309</sup> She goes and asks Claudius to release her brother, but Claudius tries to seduce her, demanding her to spend "a nice time together"<sup>310</sup> if she wants him to free her brother. Ophelia rejects, warning Claudius that she will inform Gertrude about that. When Gertrude learns about Claudius's inclination to seduce Ophelia, she confronts him, telling him how she can no longer endure his crimes. She also announces to him her intention to confess her crime and leave the court with her son. Claudius quickly issues an order for two soldiers to kill Hamlet before the latter knows about his crime. They sneak to Hamlet's room, finding him alone, relaxing in his bathtub. They stab him to death without any resistance from him. Ophelia and Gertrude enter to see Hamlet's body. They run to inform the palace about the crime. In the end, Laertes, who managed to escape the sanatorium, appears to discover Hamlet's death. He has a fencing match with Claudius and finally kills him. Laertes sits on the throne, declaring himself the new king of Denmark.

### **The Alteration**

Al-Assadi's rewriting draws many verbal echoes of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, but most of Hamlet's speeches are ascribed to other characters who refilled the spaces vacated by the inactive Hamlet. For instance, Ophelia turns the nunnery scene on Hamlet, saying: "Get yourself to a monastery; that would be more merciful. There you can focus your body and your mind on the pressing theological questions."<sup>311</sup> Laertes replaces Hamlet in the play. He is the one who is charged with madness, and he is the one who kills Claudius at the end. Al-Assadi also changed much of Shakespeare's plot by omitting the ghost scene, all the scenes about Fortinbras, and the play within the play, and the fencing match happens between Laertes and Claudius this time instead of Hamlet and Laertes. In the play, Hamlet is presented as a bookish intellectual who quits his responsibility out of fear. He pretends that his solitude is a result of his wish to avoid the corruption of power. Power, as he describes, is "an eternal curse, a wild animal that opens its mouth greedily to positions of rank and blinding lights," and "a spiritual person has no business with it."<sup>312</sup> By doing these alterations, Al-Assadi wanted to shift the focus from Hamletism, where the prince's procrastination causes his delay in acting his revenge, to the prince's intellectual dilemma caused by his desires to have a peaceful life. In his preface to the play, Al-Assadi declares his purpose behind this alteration:

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<sup>309</sup>Ibid, 255.

<sup>310</sup>Ibid, 261.

<sup>311</sup>Ibid,255.

<sup>312</sup>Ibid, 264.

I wanted in my dramatic text, *Forget Hamlet*, to pull the curtain from some characters suffering the edge of madness and to open the door of the text to their desires and their rancour, postponed in the face of Claudius, the state barbarian who swallowed up both his brother and sister-in-law at once to send the former to the gravediggers and the latter to his own bed and his boorish unmanly haste...To take issue with texts, whether through writing or direction, pulls them from their places and times and puts them into a time and place that respond to the intellectual and political changes that have occurred, which brings texts into contact with contemporary life.<sup>313</sup>

### **The Influence**

Al-Assadi also announces that Heiner Müller's *Hamletmaschine* influenced him while he was living in Europe. He says in his preface: "Heiner Müller transformed *Hamlet* into *Die Hamletmaschine*, and all the characters played out with unparalleled violence [sic] Müller's vicious anger and hatred toward those who, lost in the kingdom of the political priesthood, invented justifications for collusion and appeasement with the enemy (i.e., Power)."<sup>314</sup> Müller announces his hatred for the German priests and intellectuals who chose a neutral position in the Nazi occupation of Europe. He dramatizes Hamlet as a self-lamenting intellectual: "I stood at the shore and talked with the surf BLA BLA, the ruins of Europe in back of me."<sup>315</sup> Also, people became no more interested in theatres that do not discuss their political issues as Hamlet indicates: "I play no role anymore...behind me the scenery is being taken down [by] people who are not interested in my drama."<sup>316</sup>

Similarly, Al-Assadi's mocks the fruitless Arab intellectuals in the play. Hamlet is inactive, a detached intellectual searching for spiritual life. He locked himself in his room studying theologies, and announces to Ophelia that "he'll enrol in the seminary to be a monk."<sup>317</sup> His intellectual dilemmas are seen in his detachment from the courtly issues, inventing excuses to defend his detachment, and in his cold reaction to Claudius's bad treatment of people. I will discuss here how Hamlet's passive reaction to his father's murder and his obsession with solitude empowers Claudius more and leads to Hamlet's death at the end.

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<sup>313</sup> Carlson et al. *Four Arab Hamlet Plays*, 223

<sup>314</sup> Ibid, 223.

<sup>315</sup> Müller, *The Hamletmaschine*, 1.

<sup>316</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>317</sup> Al-Assadi, "Forget Hamlet," 266.

## Hamlet's Solitude

The news comes about the death of King Hamlet in scene two. Hamlet's is sitting in his room reading religious books. Claudius accused one of the servants of killing the Old king, saying: "Lowlife! Lowlife! Lowlife! Who bribed you to kill the king?"<sup>318</sup> And he stabs the servant to death. After the funeral, Hamlet becomes melancholic, and after the marriage of his mother to his uncle, he becomes lonely and isolated. Ophelia comes to Hamlet's room and informs him that she has seen Gertrude and Claudius killing the king at that night from her window: "I saw the slaughter with my own eyes, Hamlet,"<sup>319</sup> but Hamlet responds indifferently to that news, thinking that Ophelia creates the story to destroy his life after he stops loving her. Ophelia is shocked that Hamlet does not believe her story and that he becomes apathetic to the murder of his father and her love.

In the night of Claudius's coronation, Hamlet is forced to attend the celebration. Claudius makes a horrifying speech in which he threatens the characters that he will not tolerate "the rot and permissiveness that crept in with [his] good, tender brother."<sup>320</sup> He is going to protect Denmark "by the guillotine from anyone [sic] who would tell lies or go fishing in dirty waters."<sup>321</sup> Laertes, after seeing Hamlet's carelessness, decides to confront Claudius's horrifying speech by himself. He says in a loud voice: "We attend your celebration and your coronation only to bear witness to your guillotine, which you show us very early! We have become your food! The meals for your table!"<sup>322</sup> Polonius begs Claudius to forgive Laertes as the latter "has been in the middle of a terrible nervous breakdown for some time now."<sup>323</sup> Claudius orders that Laertes might be mad, and he should be sent to a 'sanatorium' to receive medication. Ophelia then comes to Hamlet and asks him to rescue her brother before being killed by the angry Claudius. Hamlet assures her that Claudius will not kill her brother, and Laertes should not have made the king angry:

OPHELIA: Hamlet—Laertes is in danger!	أوفيليا: هاملت أن لايرتس في خَطر!
HAMLET ( <i>calmly and coldly</i> ): Why is Laertes in danger?	هاملت (بهُدوء وبرود): لِمَاذَا لايرتس في خَطر؟
OPHELIA: Don't you know why?	أوفيليا: إِلَّا تُعَرَف لِمَاذَا؟

<sup>318</sup>Ibid, 237. "مُنْحَطٌّ، مُنْحَطٌّ، مُنْحَطٌّ. مِنْ الَّذِي رَشَاكَ لِتُدْبِحَ الْمَلِكَ مِنْ؟"

<sup>319</sup>Ibid. "لَقَدْ رَأَيْتُ الدَّبِيحَةَ بَعَيْنِي يَا هَامَلْت."

<sup>320</sup>Ibid., 243. "لَنْ تَكُونَ الدَانِمَارِكُ مُسْتَبَاحَةً، مُسْتَضْعَفَةً، وَلَنْ يَتَسَلَّلَ الْعَفْوُ وَالنَّسَامُحُ إِلَى نَفْسِي كَمَا كَانَ يَفْعَلُ أَخِي الطَّيِّبُ."

<sup>321</sup>Ibid. "والمقصلة حامية لكل من يتخرص أو يصتاد في الماء الوسخ!! لَنْ تَكُونَ الدَانِمَارِكُ مُسْتَبَاحَةً."

<sup>322</sup>Ibid, 244. "لَنْ تَكُونَ فِي حَفْلَتِكَ وَتَتَوَجَّعُ سِوَى شُهُودٍ عَلَى مَقْصَلَتِكَ الَّتِي تَشْهَدُهَا مُبَكِّرًا جَدًّا! صِرْنَا طَعَامَكَ! مَانِدَتِكَ! شُهورِكَ."

<sup>323</sup>Ibid.

HAMLET: Where is he now?	هاملت: أَيْنَ هُوَ الْآنَ؟
OPHELIA: In heaven, building a kingdom of pain.	أوفيليا: فِي الْجَنَّةِ يَبْنِي مَمْلَكَةً مِنَ الْأَلَمِ.
HAMLET: Are you ill? Exhausted? You should see a doctor! <sup>324</sup> Your brother will be fine. No Need to worry.	هاملت: أَأَنْتِ مَرِيضَةٌ؟ مُتْعِبَةٌ؟ اسْتُدْعِي الطَّبِيبَ مِنْ أَجْلِكَ!

Ophelia is enraged by Hamlet's cold reaction, and she scolded him, saying: "You've disappointed me... You're just sick, just a dumb kid. That's how I see you now."<sup>325</sup> She also asks him:

اِذْهَبْ إِلَى دَيْرٍ، ذَلِكَ أَكْثَرُ رَحْمَةٍ. هُنَاكَ سَتَرْتَبِ جَسَدِكَ وَعَقْلُكَ عَلَى أَسْئَلَةٍ لَاهُوتِيَّةٍ أَكْثَرَ سَعَةٍ، هُنَاكَ يُمَكِّنُكَ أَنْ تُجِيبَ  
طَرَحَ سُؤَالِكَ بِرَتَابَةٍ أَكْبَرَ "نَكُونُ أَوْ لَا نَكُونُ".

Get yourself to a monastery; that would be more merciful. There you can focus your body and your mind on the pressing theological questions. There you can have more peace and quiet to ask and re-ask your question, "to be or not to be."<sup>326</sup>

Hamlet reacts to Ophelia's reprimand coldly. Ophelia then goes and tells her father that she will not continue in their plan to marry Hamlet. She believes that he is not the old Hamlet she knew before: "He's the one giving himself up. My soul doesn't want him anymore."<sup>327</sup> She decides to desert him after he becomes indifferent to the murder of his father and the imprisonment of his friend Laertes: "He turns his back on the murderer and keeps contemplating and philosophizing."<sup>328</sup> Polonius defends Hamlet, telling Ophelia that Hamlet became a wise man, unlike the reckless Laertes who will put Polonius and Ophelia in danger.

Horatio appears and informs Hamlet that he saw a ghost that resembles his father's figure, "I swear I saw him!"<sup>329</sup> Hamlet charges Horatio of running his spiritual solitude with nonsense: "Don't ruin my peace with your nonsense."<sup>330</sup> Horatio then asks Hamlet to do something against Claudius, who became like a "wild buffalo" killing everyone in Denmark, but Hamlet reached a state of indifference to all that is happening in the country:

<sup>324</sup>Ibid, 254.

<sup>325</sup>Ibid.

<sup>326</sup>Ibid, 255.

<sup>327</sup>Ibid, 253. "كُنْتُ أَحَبُّهُ يَوْمًا أَمَّا الْآنَ فَلَا! لَقَدْ مَاتَ حَبَّةً! دَفَنْتَهُ فِي مَقْبَرَةٍ".

<sup>328</sup>Ibid.

<sup>329</sup>Ibid, 243. "رَأَيْتَهُ، أَقْسَمُ بِأَنْبِي رَأَيْتَهُ".

<sup>330</sup>Ibid, 247. "هاملت: لَا تَفْسُدْ عَلَيَّ سَكُونِي بِخَزْ عِبَلَاتِكَ".

“I do not care about anything anymore. That’s how I’ve trained my body and mind to be.”<sup>331</sup> Horatio tries to awaken him, but Hamlet refuses to act:

HORATIO: I’ve never seen anything so horrible in my life. Claudius turned into a wild buffalo, parting the sea and coming toward us with a sword in his hand.	هوراثيو: لم أرى في حياتي أكثر هولاً من ذلك! كلوديوس وقد تحوّل إلى جاموس برئ يشقّ البحر قادماً إلينا والسيف بيده.
HAMLET: I’m going back to the palace. It’s my bedtime.	هاملت: سأعود إلى القصر! حانت ساعة نومي.
HORATIO: You act as though Claudius hadn’t killed your father.	هوراثيو: تتصرّف كما لو أنّ كلوديوس لم يقتل أباك.
HAMLET: He killed my father or he didn’t kill him—it’s all the same to me.	هاملت: قتل أبي أو لم يقتله فالأمر سيّان عندي.
HORATIO: You’re making me angry.	هوراثيو: إنك تثير غضبي.
HAMLET: I don’t care about anything anymore. That’s how I’ve trained my body and mind to be.	هاملت: لم أعد أكرث بشيء! هكذا دربت جسدي وعقلي.
HORATIO: You don’t care about anything—and here your uncle has grabbed the crown away from your father just like a child grabs a doll away from his brother.	هوراثيو: لا تكثرت بشيء وعمك خطف تاج أبيك كما يخطف طفل دمية من أخيه.
HAMLET: This is the play of brothers! An eternal play that will never cease!	هاملت: هذه هي لعبة الإخوة! لعبة أبدية ولن تنتهي!
HORATIO: A bloody king has mounted the throne of the just king.	هوراثيو: ملك دموي يتربّع على عرش الملك العادل.
HAMLET: Who said my father was just? And who can tell if Claudius is really bloody? This killing doesn’t prove that the new king is bloody. <sup>332</sup>	هاملت: من قال إن أبي كان عادلاً؟ ومن يدري إذا كان كلوديوس دمويّاً فعلاً؟ أن القتل ليس دليلاً كافياً على دموية الملك الجديد.

Horatio is shocked by Hamlet defending the murderer king. He scolds Hamlet “You aren’t the Hamlet I’ve known and lived with... Your father’s blood hadn’t dried on the floor tiles before your mother married your uncle. Two days after your father’s death! Doesn’t

<sup>331</sup>Ibid. "هاملت: لم أعد أكرث بشيء! هكذا دربت جسدي وعقلي."

<sup>332</sup>Ibid, 247.

that stir any doubts in you?" Hamlet callously answers Horatio, "Well, maybe I should change my name."<sup>333</sup>

### Hamlet Defends His Solitude

Every time Horatio or Ophelia tries to push Hamlet to leave his books and do something against Claudius, Hamlet keeps inventing excuses to justify his inaction and his voluntary state of disengagement. One of his excuses is that he does not want to be corrupted by politics as he tells Horatio:

أَنَّ السُّلْطَةَ نَدَمٌ أَبَدِيٌّ، وَوَحْشٌ يَفْتَحُ فِيهِ بِشَهْوَةٍ كَبِيرَةٍ لِلْجَاهِ وَالْإِنْبِهَارِ وَالْأَضْوَاءِ، وَالْإِسْتِحْوَاذِ وَالْتَّمَلُّكَ، ثُمَّ تَالِيًا تَحْوِيلُ النَّاسِ إِلَى جَزَافٍ مُطْبِعَةٍ فِي مَلْكَوتِ الْمَلِكِ! هَذِهِ هِيَ أَبْجَدِيَّةُ الْعَالِمِ الَّذِي لَا شَأْنَ لِرُوحِي بِهِ، أَقُولُ يَا هوراثيو صَدِيقَ رُوحِي، بِأَنْتِي صِرْتَ بِلَا رَغْبَاتٍ، بِلَا شَهْوَةٍ، بِلَا مُطَالَبٍ.

Power is an eternal curse, a wild animal that opens its mouth greedily to positions of rank and blinding lights, and overwhelms and masters people and then turns them into obedient sheep of the king! This is the ABC of the world, and a spiritual person has no business with it, I say, Horatio my bosom friend because I no longer have any desires, or any appetites, or demands.<sup>334</sup>

Hamlet pretends that power will not corrupt him, "I haven't been swayed by its pull. Nor by its treasures."<sup>335</sup> He does not believe in the significance of revenge, for revenge breeds hatred: "If I killed Claudius and spilled his blood and sat on the throne myself, what would happen? Would the world rise to a life without violence, in certain justice?"<sup>336</sup> When his mother asks him at the end if he plans to kill Claudius, he informs her that he knows about everything, but his silence comes because he does not want to be dragged into her filthiness and the struggle of power between brothers:

يَا أُمَّاهُ مَنْدُو تَوَلَّيْتُ عَمِي الْمَهَامَ فِي هَذِهِ الْمَمْلَكَةِ وَمُنْذُ إِنْ مَاتَ أَبِي مَذْبُوحاً لَسْتُ أُرِيدُ أَنْ أَسْتَفِزَّكَ، لِأَنِّي لَا أُرِيدُ أَنْ أَقْحَمَ نَفْسِي فِي وَسَاخَتِكُمْ! أَنَا السُّكُوتُ نَفْسِيهِ! صِرْتَ السُّكُوتُ بَعِيْنِهِ، لَا أُرِيدُ أَنْ أَنْتَقِمَ مِنْ أَحَدٍ وَلَسْتُ حَزِيناً عَلَى أَحَدٍ! أُرْجُوكَ لَا تَعْزِفْ عَلَيَّ عَلَى الْمِيَّ مَعْرُوفَاتِ بَاهْتِهِ وَمَكْرُورِهِ.

Mother, since my uncle has taken over this kingdom, and since my father was slaughtered, I have not wanted to provoke you, because I don't want to be dragged into your filthiness. I am silence itself! I have become the very soul of silence. I do not wish to

<sup>333</sup> Ibid. 248.

<sup>334</sup> Ibid, 264.

<sup>335</sup> Ibid. "لم تبهرنى السلطنة ولم إنخطف بشنودها! ولا بكنوزها ولا باستثمارها."

<sup>336</sup> Ibid. "إذا قتلْتُ كلوديوس وسفكت دمه وتربعت على العرش بنفسى ماذا سيحصل؟ أيستقيم العالم على حياة بلا عنف، في عدالة أكيدة."

avenge anyone or grieve for anyone. Please, do not play these banal and faded performances upon my pain.<sup>337</sup>

Hamlet also tells Horatio that he has found the peace and serenity he was looking for, and he will not forsake that peace in seeking revenge. Horatio tries to remind him of his old days, "Where are your wild cries, where is your madness?"<sup>338</sup> He responds that he drains his anger in prayer, "I emptied my guts in prayer."<sup>339</sup> He also tells Horatio that he became a pessimistic person who does not see any significance in this life since "all of us will die."<sup>340</sup> Even his love for Ophelia disappeared because he started seeing her as a "body made of plaster ... A mummy-woman [sic] just looking for some male to drag her to bed and play with her breasts, like two moons."<sup>341</sup> He is also aware of the changes that occurred to him when he tells Horatio that he is no more willing to live like before:

نَمَّة هَامِلْتَانِ يَعْيشَانِ فِي جَسَدٍ وَاحِدٍ، الْأَوَّلُ الشَّرْسُ، يَزْتَهِنُ إِلَى الْخَنْجَرِ، وَيَحْلُمُ بِالْخَلَاصِ وَقَتْلُ كَلُودِيوسِ وَأَخَذَ النَّارَ،  
أَمَّا هَامِلْتِ الثَّانِي فَكَثِيرُ الْجَزَعِ وَالْخَيْبَةِ. نَمَّةٌ ضَجَّةٌ وَتَشَابِكُ بَيْنَ الْهَامِلْتَيْنِ، انْتَصَرَ فِيهَا هَامِلْتِ الْخَائِبِ! هَامِلْتِ الْمَسَالِمِ!

There were two Hamlets living in one body: one vicious, pledged to the dagger, dreaming of salvation and killing Claudius and revenge; the other, a Hamlet disillusioned and full of anxiety. There was a clash and a struggle between the two Hamlets, and the winner was the disillusioned Hamlet! The resigned Hamlet!<sup>342</sup>

### Hamlet's Fear of Claudius

Hamlet's excuses in defending his solitude do not deceive his friends who knew his fear of Claudius. Laertes, for instance, describes him as 'a rat,' saying: "Hamlet responds to his father's murder with "to be or not to be." Be, just for once be, you rat!"<sup>343</sup> Ophelia calls him "presumptuous! What a catastrophe for Denmark."<sup>344</sup>

It is not only his friends who recognized his weakness but even his enemies. When Gertrude tells Claudius that Hamlet's silence does not mean acquiescence to what is happening, and he might be planning something dangerous for both of them, Claudius reassures her that Hamlet has changed and became wiser. He does not shape any danger:

<sup>337</sup>Ibid, 276.

<sup>338</sup>Ibid, 264. "أَيْنَ صِيحَاتِكَ الْمَتَوَثِّبَةِ؟ أَيْنَ جُنُونِكَ؟"

<sup>339</sup>Ibid. "لَأَقْدُ أَفْرَعْتُ كُلَّ مَا فِي جَوْفِي فِي الصَّلَاةِ."

<sup>340</sup>Ibid, 265.

<sup>341</sup>Ibid. "حَتَّى أَوْفِيلِيَا الْيَتِيمِ كُنْتُ أَحَبَّهَا يَوْمًا جَفْتُ نَبْعَهَا فِي رُوحِي وَمَاتَتْ! فَتَنَاءَ مَحْنَطَةٌ تَبْجُثُ عَنْ ذِكْرِ بَجْرُهَا إِلَى فِرَاشِي " !  
"النَّوْمُ لِبَعْثِ بِنْدِيئِهَا الْقَمْرِيِّينَ"

<sup>342</sup>Ibid, 264.

<sup>343</sup>Ibid, 242.

<sup>344</sup>Ibid, 255. "هَامِلْتِ يَرُدُّ عَلَى مَقْتَلِ أَبِيهِ بِنُكُونِ أَوْ لَا نُكُونِ، كُنَّ وَلَوْ لِمَرَّةٍ وَاجِدَةً بَا جَرْدًا."

GERTRUDE: I know my son well. Silence doesn't always mean acquiescence. Maybe he's planning something.	غير ترود: أعرف ابني حقَّ المَعْرِفَةِ! السُّكُوتُ لَيْسَتْ عِلَامَاتُ الرِّضَى دَائِمًا، رُبَّمَا يُحْضِرُ شَيْئًا!
CLAUDIUS: Yesterday I invited him to eat at my table. He sat beside me like an obedient boy. His silence made me nervous. He's started to look as diffident as a wax statue.	كلوديوس: النَّحَارَةَ دَعَوْتِهِ إِلَى مَائِدَةِ طَعَامِي، جَلَسَ إِلَى جَانِبِي مِثْلَ الصَّبِيِّ الْمُطِيعِ. لَقَدْ أَذْهَلَنِي سُكُوتُهُ. صَارَ يُشْبِهُ تِمْنَالًا شَمْعِيَا خَجُولًا.
GERTRUDE: What was he doing?	غير ترود: مَاذَا كَانَ يَفْعَلُ؟
CLAUDIUS: Reading as though chewing the page mouthful by mouthful.	كلوديوس: يَقْرَأُ كَمَا لَوْ كَانَ يُمَضِّغُ الْوَرَقَ مَضْغًا!
GERTRUDE: He didn't drop any hints?	غير ترود: لَمْ يَلْمَحْ لِأَيِّ شَيْءٍ؟!
CLAUDIUS: He didn't even eat or drink! He was immersed in his reading! And so absent-minded! Sometimes he would talk to himself and move his hands in the air. He'd make gestures I didn't understand ...	كلوديوس: حَتَّى إِنَّهُ لَمْ يَأْكُلْ وَلَمْ يَشْرَبْ! كَانَ غَارِقًا فِي الْقِرَاءَةِ! وَالشُّرُودِ! فِي بَعْضِ الْأَحْيَانِ كَانَ يُكَلِّمُ نَفْسَهُ وَيَحْرِّكُ يَدَهُ فِي الْهَوَاءِ. يُوَسِّرُ إِشَارَةً لَا أَعْرِفُ مَعْنَاهَا ...
GERTRUDE: I know Hamlet well. He's preparing himself for some explosion.	غير ترود: أَعْرِفُ هَامَلْتِ حَقَّ الْمَعْرِفِ. أَنَّهُ يَحْضُرُ نَفْسَهُ لِانْفِجَارٍ مَا.
CLAUDIUS: I don't think so! He's wiser than Laertes, that hothead who destroyed himself. <sup>345</sup>	كلوديوس: لَا أَظُنُّ ذَلِكَ! أَنَّهُ أَكْثَرُ حُكْمُهُ مِنْ لَابِرْتِيسِ، ذَلِكَ الْأَرَعْنَ الَّذِي أَصْنَعَ نَفْسَهُ.

Claudius understands how power will make him “the eternal man,”<sup>346</sup> as he tells Gertrude. He is a man of action and ready to hang and kill to preserve his throne. He explains to Gertrude that the throne is everything for him: “When the throne dies, then dies Claudius! And since the chair is still here, so is Claudius.”<sup>347</sup> He threatens the Danish on the coronation day, and he has “already chopped off 20 heads since he took the crown”<sup>348</sup> as one of the gravediggers who is tired by digging graves comments. Claudius carelessly decides to send Laertes to the sanatorium, seduces Ophelia, and kills Hamlet in the end; all that for the sake of power. He targets the intellectuals and artists in Denmark, intentionally kills “the scholars and wise people, women and men.”<sup>349</sup> Gertrude decides to

<sup>345</sup>Ibid. 250.

<sup>346</sup>Ibid, 272.

<sup>347</sup>Ibid. "عِنْدَمَا يَمُوتُ الْكُرْسِيُّ يَمُوتُ كَلُودِيُوسُ! وَيَمَا أَنَّ الْكُرْسِيَّ بَاقٍ إِذَا كَلُودِيُوسُ بَاقٍ."

<sup>348</sup>Ibid, 246.

<sup>349</sup>Ibid, 271 " لَمْ تَعُدْ الْبِلَادُ بِلَادًا! مِفْصَلَةٌ أَطَاخَتْ بِالْبَعِيدِ وَالْقَرِيبِ! الْعُلَمَاءُ وَ أَهْلُ الْحِكْمَةِ! النِّسَاءُ وَالرِّجَالُ! حُوِّلَتِ الْحَيَاةُ إِلَى بَرْكَةِ دَمٍ " كَبِيرَةٌ.

confront Claudius' bloodbath in the country, telling him: "You've turned life into a big puddle of blood."<sup>350</sup> Claudius explains that his policy is "to wipe out anyone who is [sic] plotting against [him],"<sup>351</sup> and the intellectuals are the most dangerous ones.

### Hamlet Avoids the *Mousetrap*

Hamlet keeps a blind eye on all of Claudius's oppression. Even the time an actor, who used to work with Hamlet before, suggests doing a political play about the jailing and the poisoning of 'Socrates' as an indirect criticism of Claudius's aggression against the Danish scholars, Hamlet did not agree to the idea after he heard it. He asks the actor to recite some lines of the play they might perform in front of Claudius:

HAMLET: Can you recite to me a piece of what you're working on?	هاملت: هل ستتلو عليّ مَقْطَعاً مِمَّا تَحْفَظُهُ؟
PLAYER: Of course, my lord. I'll perform for you the last thing I've written.	الممّتل: حاضرٌ سيّدي. سامتل أمامك آخر ما كتبت.
<i>HORATIO begins to play the flute.</i>	هوراثيو يغرّف على الفلوت.
PLAYER: I was Socrates' jailer and the guardian of the community. Before that I was a groom for the horses, and a blacksmith making swords for the wars. Every day the carriage with its shabby horses used to take me to the town square where the guillotine stood, solid and high. We would wash the guillotine at dawn to remove the scent of blood. Especially the blade, which took off the heads of many of the best young people of the land. More than once I knelt at the feet of the saints and begged forgiveness for my sins. One day something unexpected happened. The head of the prison asked me to serve as a jailer for Socrates! I was happy, for I admired Socrates. Why? Because Socrates was Athens and Athens was Socrates. And indeed I became Socrates'	الممّتل: كُنت سَجَانِ سُفْرَاطِ وَحَارِسِ الْأُمَّةِ. قَبْلًا كُنتُ سَائِسَ خَيُْولٍ، وَحَدَادًا أَصْنَعُ السُّيُوفَ لِلْحُرُوبِ. فِي كُلِّ يَوْمٍ كَانَتْ تُجْرِنِي عَرَبِيَّةٌ خَيُْولٌ مَهْتَوِكَةٌ إِلَى سَاحَةِ الْمَدِينَةِ حَيْثُ الْمَقْصَلَةُ رَاسِخَةٌ وَعَالِيَةٌ! كُنَّا نَغْسِلُ الْمَقْصَلَةَ فَجْراً لِنُنْزِلَ عَنْهَا رَائِحَةَ الدَّمِّ، خُصُوصاً الشَّفْرَةَ الَّتِي أَطَاخَتْ بَرُؤُوسَ كَثِيرَةٍ لِحَيْرَةِ قَتِيانِ الْبِلَادِ. أَكْثَرَ مِنْ مَرَّةٍ رَكَعْتُ تَحْتَ قَدَمِي الْقَدِيسِينَ مُصَلِّياً طَالِباً الْمَغْفِرَةَ عَنِ ذُنُوبِي ذَاتَ مَسَاءٍ حَدَثَ مَا لَمْ أَتَوَقَّعْهُ، طَلَبَ مِنِّي مَأْمُورُ السِّجْنِ أَنْ أَكُونَ سَجَانِ سُفْرَاطِ! فَرَحْتُ لِأَنَّي كُنتُ أَجَلَ سُفْرَاطِ، لِمَادَا؟ لِأَنَّ سُفْرَاطَ هُوَ أَثِينَا، أَثِينَا هِيَ سُفْرَاطُ. فِعْلاً صِرْتُ سَجَانِ سُفْرَاطِ رَاقِبَتَهُ، سَمِعْتُهُ وَأَحْبَبْتُهُ. أَطْعَمْتُهُ، سَقَيْتُهُ الْمَاءَ، أَوْصَلْتُ رَسَائِلَهُ إِلَى أَصْدِقَائِهِ فِي أَثِينَا كَمَا حَمَلْتُ الْكَثِيرَ مِنَ الرِّسَائِلِ إِلَيْهِ. ذَاتَ لَيْلٍ وَبشَكلٍ مُفَاجِئٍ طَلَبَ مِنِّي مَأْمُورُ السِّجْنِ أَنْ أَصْنَعَ السُّمَّ فِي الْكَأْسِ وَأَسْقِيَهُ لِسُفْرَاطِ. قُلْتُ أَنَا أَقْتُلُ سُفْرَاطَ بِيَدِي! أَقْتُلُ أَثْمَنَ مَا بَأَثِينَا بِيَدِي! مَرَّقُوا جَسَدِي بِالسُّبُاطِ أَذْلُونِي حَتَّى وَافَقْتُ، قُلْتُ حَسَنًا أَعْطُونِي الْكَأْسَ، وَفِعْلاً أَخَذْتُ الْكَأْسَ الْمَمْلُوءَ بِالسُّمِّ. كَانَ سُفْرَاطُ نَائِماً كَمَلَاكٍ ضَخْمٍ

<sup>350</sup>Ibid. "كلوديوس: لم أفعل شيئاً سوى أنني أرحم الذين يتربصون بي."

<sup>351</sup>Ibid.

jailer: I watched him, and heard him, and loved him. I gave him food and drink, and I carried his letters to his friends in Athens, as well as bringing many letters to him. One night, suddenly out of nowhere, the head of the prison ordered me to pour poison into Socrates' cup and make him drink it. I said: Me, kill Socrates with my own hands! Kill the most precious thing in Athens with my own hands? They tore my body with whips; they humiliated me until I agreed. I said Alright! Give me the cup! And indeed I took the cup filled with poison. Socrates was asleep at that moment, sleeping like a huge angel on the burnt-out earth. In that decisive moment I decided to drink the poison. And indeed I poured everything in the cup down my throat, and I was victorious. I died, and that death was the most beautiful and radiant moment of my whole life!<sup>352</sup>

عَلَى أَرْضٍ مُحْتَرَفَةً! فِي تِلْكَ اللَّحْظَةِ الْحَاسِمَةِ قَرَّرْتُ  
أَنَّ أَشْرَبَ السُّمِّ، وَفِعْلاً سَكَبْتُ كُلَّ مَا فِي الْكَأْسِ بِجَوْفِي  
فَانْتَصَرْتُ. لَقَدْ مِتَّ وَكَانَ ذَلِكَ الْمَوْتُ هُوَ أَجْمَلُ لَحْظَةٍ  
رَهْوٍ فِي حَيَاتِي!

Hamlet convinces the actor that the play might enrage Claudius, and it is better to cancel it. The actor asks Hamlet if he has another suggestion by which they can know the truth, and Hamlet keeps silent.

Hamlet's fear of speaking the truth to power reached his theatrical interest. He is not interested in doing political theatre anymore. All that is for the sake of safety and the lure of peace he is moralizing about. His words about how disengagement allows him to see truth objectively as a spiritual person, the time he informs Horatio that “power hasn't swept me away,”<sup>353</sup> is only an excuse to justify his inaction.

### Hamlet's Death

Hamlet's betting on peaceful life does not rescue him from death in the end. Claudius thought that murdering the bookish Hamlet would be more safeguard for his throne, especially when Gertrude announces that she will take her son and leave the palace after

<sup>352</sup>Ibid, 236.

<sup>353</sup>Ibid, 264.

confessing her crime. She could not tolerate Claudius's homicides anymore: "I'll go to church and confess to the priest. I'll tell him that I've committed terrible sins and wrongs."<sup>354</sup> Claudius immediately issues an order for two soldiers to stab Hamlet to death in his room thinking that Hamlet might kill him if Gertrude tells her son about the truth:

CLAUDIUS: Tonight, you must slaughter Hamlet. Your thanks are ready. He will be in his room after midnight—that's 30 minutes from now. Change into other clothes, not the ones you are wearing. Put masks over your faces.	كلوديوس: اللَّيْلَةُ عَلَيْنَا أَنْ تَذْبَحَا هَامَلْتِ. وَمَكَافَأْتِكَمَا خَاصِرَةٌ. سَيَكُونُ فِي غُرْفَتِهِ بَعْدَ السَّاعَةِ الثَّانِيَةِ عَشْرَةَ. أَيُّ بَعْدَ ثَلَاثِينَ دَقِيقَةً مِنَ الْآنِ. أَرْتَدِيَا مَلَابِسَ غَيْرِ مَلَابِسِكَمَا هَذِهِ. ضَعَا الْأَقْنَعَةَ عَلَى وَجْهِكَمَا.
SOLDIER 1: I'll stab him in the neck.	الْجُنْدِي 1: سَأَطْعَنُهُ فِي رَقَبَتِهِ.
SOLDIER 2: No, in the side.	الْجُنْدِي 2: بَلْ فِي الْخَاصِرَةِ.
CLAUDIUS: Quickly! <sup>355</sup>	كلوديوس: بِسُرْعَةٍ!

Gertrud runs to tell Hamlet about Claudius's plan to kill him, and if he does not plan to stop Claudius, he should leave the palace to rescue himself. Horatio also warns Hamlet that it is better for him to "go away quickly! All this excitement doesn't bode well. Claudius is sowing fear and horror among the people."<sup>356</sup> Hamlet insisted that he would not run and leave the palace even if he is going to die:

HORATIO: Have you noticed how empty the streets seem and how muddy—as though the people had swallowed themselves and gone to sleep. You'll only see soldiers out there. It's a country of soldiers. We have to get away!	هوراثيو: إِلَّا حَظَّتْ كَمْ تَبْدُو الشُّوَارِعَ فَارِغَةً وَمَوْحِلَةً، كَأَنَّ النَّاسَ ابْتَلَعُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ وَنَامُوا. لَنْ تَرَى سِوَى الْجُنُودِ هُنَاكَ. أَنَّهَا بِلَادُ الْجُنُودِ. عَلَيْنَا أَنْ نَهْرَبَ!
HAMLET: If you want to escape with your head, this is your last chance. Go, my friend!	هاملت: إِنْ أَرَدْتَ أَنْ تَنْجُو بِرَأْسِكَ، الْفُرْصَةُ الْآنَ مُوَاتِيَةٌ، أَرْحَلْ يَا صَدِيقِي!
HORATIO: And leave you?	هوراثيو: وَأَتْرَكَكَ!
HAMLET: I will stay here, but I will be with	هاملت: سَابِقَةً هُمَا، لَكِنِّي أَيْضًا مَعَكَ. أَهْدِيكَ هَذَا الْكِتَابَ

<sup>354</sup>Ibid, 263. "سأذهب إلى الكنيسة واعترف لإمام القيس. سأقول له بأبي ارتكبت معاصي وخطايا فادحة".

<sup>355</sup>Ibid, 274.

<sup>356</sup>Ibid, 275.

you as well. I give you this book. It will be your friend. You'll smell my scent on every page. Go, quickly! <sup>357</sup>	الَّذِي سَيَكُونُ صَدِيقَكَ، سَتَشْكُ رَائِحَتِي عَلَى كُلِّ وَرْقَةٍ. امض بسرِّعة!
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Horatio leaves Hamlet alone in his room. The two soldiers enter finding Hamlet relaxing and reading in his bathtub. They stab him to death without any resistance from him. Gertrude and Ophelia arrived to find Hamlet's body covered with blood. They knew that Claudius gave the order to liquidate Hamlet. Laertes, who is supposed to be imprisoned in the sanatorium, appears suddenly. He escapes the jail after he pretends death. Ophelia and Gertrude inform him that Hamlet is killed. They also inform him that Claudius gave the order to kill Polonius and tries to seduce Ophelia. Laertes rushes to find Claudius. He had a fencing match with Claudius and kills him as revenge. The play ends with Laertes sitting silently on the throne.

### 2.3.2. The Discussion

Al-Assadi's Hamlet is best described as a paralyzed intellectual. He absorbs knowledge theoretically and detaches himself from politics and power since as he believes "a spiritual person has no business with it."<sup>358</sup> He is an intellectual but without an intellectual role. He is "a rat, good for nothing but sophistry,"<sup>359</sup> "chewing the page mouthful by mouthful,"<sup>360</sup> and always philosophizes and moralizes. What makes it even worse is his self-awareness of his paralysis when he describes himself: "the spiritually pious Hamlet, the rat with his books and poems and dedication to stillness,"<sup>361</sup> or when the gravediggers find one of his notebooks after his death in which Hamlet seems to despise his silence by writing:

What a rogue and peasant slave am I!	أَي نَذَلْ أَنَا أَيَّ عَبْدُ قَرَوِي!
A dull and muddy-mettled rascal, peak,	مِنَ الْوَحْلِ لِحْمَتِي وَسَدَادِي
Like John-a-dreams, unpregnant of my cause,	إِسْتَرْقَ النَّظَرَ كَالْأَبْدِ الْحَالِكِ غَيْرَ مَلِيءٍ بِحَاوْفَرِي
And can say nothing.	غَيْرُ قَادِرٍ عَلَى النَّطْقِ بِشَيْءٍ
Am I a coward? Who,	أَجْبَانُ أَنَا؟ أَنَا الَّذِي
Prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell,	السَّمَاءِ تَحْتِي وَالْجَحِيمِ أَيْضًا عَلَى النَّارِ
Must, like a whore, unpack my heart with	أَفْضُ مَا بِقَلْبِي كَالْمَوْمَسَاتِ الْفَاطَا؟

<sup>357</sup>Ibid.

<sup>358</sup>Ibid, 264.

<sup>359</sup>Ibid, 242. "أَنَّهُ جَرَّدَ لَا يُحْسِنُ شَيْئًا سِوَى السَّفْسَطَةِ."

<sup>360</sup>Ibid, 250.

<sup>361</sup>Ibid, 264.

words?	
And fall a-cursing, like a very drab, A scullion! <sup>362</sup>	وَأَظَلَّ إِشْتَمَّ كَالْبَغِي !

Hamlet's intellectual stillness is a symbol for the paralyzed Arab intellectuals who have chosen a non-interference position in politics at that time. Al-Assadi creates a mocking image of the apathetic Hamlet to ridicule those neutral intellectuals who lock themselves in their ivory tower and start moralizing about life. They forsake their political and social responsibility for the sake of safety and professionalism. Hamlet's previous lines might also be read as a self-criticism by Al-Assadi, who preferred to flee Iraq instead of facing Hussein's atrocity. He is aware that the significance of the intellectual always comes out in political turmoil when people are in need of one to speak for them. The intellectual should speak truth to power even at the risk of being ostracised or imprisoned. His/her role, as Edward Said declares, is "to raise embarrassing questions, to confront orthodoxy and dogma (rather than to produce them), to be someone who cannot easily be co-opted by governments or corporations,"<sup>363</sup> Foucault once said: "The intellectuals speak the truth to those who had yet to see it, in the name of those who were forbidden to speak the truth."<sup>364</sup> Still, not all the intellectual have in society the role of the intellectual. Antonio Gramsci states that "all men are intellectuals... but not all men have in society the function of the intellectual"<sup>365</sup> This function materializes when the intellectual speaks truth to power, but this function is what Hamlet ignores.

Similarly, some Arab scholars succumbed to the lure of money and position. Others compromised to escape the state's surveillance. Hamlet's silence is part of the compromise and obedience he shows. He pretends that he is a spiritual person, but his fear of Claudius forces him to isolate himself. His fear is uncovered and felt by everyone in the court as one of the palace Guards comments:

GUARD 2: Here's Hamlet! My God, he's changed.	الْحَارِس 2: هاهو هاملت! يَا إِلَهِي لَقَدْ تَغَيَّرَ كَثِيرًا.
GUARD 1: He looks all skinny and pale.	الْحَارِس 1: كَمْ يَبْدُو هَزِيلًا وَسَاحِبًا.
GUARD 2: Maybe from fear. He's got to be	الْحَارِس 2: رُبَّمَا مِنْ كَثْرَةِ الْخَوْفِ. نَعَمْ أَنَّهُ يَخَافُ عَلَى

<sup>362</sup>Ibid, 281.

<sup>363</sup>Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, 11.

<sup>364</sup>Michel Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980), 207.

<sup>365</sup>Cited in John Schwarzmantel, *The Routledge Guidebook to Gramsci's Prison Notebooks*, (London: Routledge, 2014), 73.

afraid for his head right now.	رَأْسِهِ.
GUARD 1: He doesn't act like a prince anymore. He's fading away. He must be suffering. <sup>366</sup>	الْحَارِس 1: لَمْ يَعْذُ يَنْصَرَفْ كَأَمِيرٍ أَنَّهُ يَذْوِي. لَا بُدَّ أَنَّهُ يَتَأَلَّمُ.

The image of Claudius targeting “the scholars and wise people”<sup>367</sup> in the play paralleled Hussien’s Ba’athists regime, which employed many strategies to silence his opponents. Sennar Hassan observed how the Iraqi government abused those intellectuals to market their ideology for the public Iraqis:

In most totalitarian countries in the Middle East, especially Iraq, culture and literary activities cannot be understood separately from politics. In practice the state uses culture and intellectuals to market its ideology and legitimize its authority, and many intellectuals are associated with the state, either outside the ideology of persuasion or fear of power.<sup>368</sup>

The ability of Arab regimes to gather around them many utopian nationalists and institutionalize academics was accurate. The task of such intellectuals was to legitimize the brutality and defend the state’s vast cruelty and savageness against civilians under false national ideals. They always created enemies for people and always charged opponents with holding destructive agendas. Many of them got financial and non-financial rewards for their blind support. Many clergypersons were instrumentalized to silence people, especially the Wahabists who flourished in Saudi Arabia as a result of their pro-state Fatwas. One of their frequently quoted Fatwas is, “You listen and obey the leader even if he strikes your back and takes your money.”<sup>369</sup> Such Fatwa aimed to restrict people and marks any revolution against the leader as a satanic and eccentric practice that deserves God’s punishment. It is also essential that the regimes have used Wahabists to restrict other religious factions like the Muslim Brotherhood Party, who does not see any problem overthrowing the corrupted leader. The Wahabists issued Fatwa that considers Muslim Brotherhood Party as a terrorist organization later. As a result of that, many clergymen from Muslim Brotherhood Party have been arrested. The Egyptian Al-Qaradawi, one of the

<sup>366</sup> Al-Assadi, “Forget Hamlet,” 246.

<sup>367</sup> Ibid, 271.

<sup>368</sup> Sennar Hassan, “Iraqi Intellectuals...From Totalitarianism to American Invasion,” *Ultra-Iraq*, September 15, 2019, <https://ultrairaq.ultrasawt.com/المتقف-العراقي-من-الاستبداد-الى-الاحتلال-الأمريكي/سنار-حسن/ثقافة-وفنون>

<sup>369</sup> This saying is attributed to Prophet Mohammad before 1440 years. It always incites hot arguments between people in the Arab World. My translation from The Arabic text: سُنْمَعُ وَتَطِيعَ لِلْأَمِيرِ وَإِنْ ضَرَبَ ظَهْرَكَ وَأَخَذَ مَالِكَ فَاسْمَعِ وَأَطِعِ.

party's leaders, was exiled from Egypt for his revolutionary thoughts against Hosni Mubarak in 2001.

Still, few intellectuals raised their voices against the regimes' atrocities, and those who did, were jailed or exiled like Al-Qaradawi. For example, the Saudi religious man, Suleiman Aloudeh, has always shaped a threat for the Saudi leadership under King Abdullah and his successor, king Suleiman. His anti-government stands led him to be jailed several times, and in the last few years, he was accused of misleading youth and deception. The Jordanian civil engineer and political activist Layth Shbeelat was dragged and beaten many times by the state mercenaries for his speeches about the palace corruption in the time of King Hussein. The Egyptian Abdel Mounem Aboul Alfouttoh was jailed many times for confronting Sadat's agreement with Israel. The Egyptian University professor, Mohammad Algazaly, denied access to Cairo University after his frequent annoying speeches against Hosni Mubarak's policies in 1980. These are just a few examples of many intellectuals who suffered for telling the truth.

In the play, all the characters suffered because of Hamlet's aloofness and Claudius's despotism. When they discover Hamlet's indifference, they decide to act instead of him. Laertes is angered by Hamlet's inaction, and he scolds his silence by calling him 'a rat' saying, "Be, just for once be, you rat."<sup>370</sup> Ophelia also decides to rescue her brother after both Hamlet and Polonius reject to help Laertes. She goes to Claudius, telling him that she would inform all characters about the crime she has seen from her window if Claudius does not release her brother. Even Gertrude, in the end, decides to confess her crime. She scolds her son's inaction: "Have you lost the power of speech? Or is it weakness?"<sup>371</sup>

The decision made by Laertes, Ophelia, Horatio, and even Gertrude to stop Claudius' destruction of their country came out of Hamlet's apathy. This is an example of how the public is ready to discard any intellectual who quits his role. Foucault once said that the public does not need one to deliver knowledge to them in the time of political crises:

In the most recent upheaval, the intellectual discovered that the masses no longer need him to gain knowledge: they know perfectly well, without illusion; they know far better than he, and they are certainly capable of expressing themselves...Intellectuals are themselves agents of this system of power-the idea of their responsibility for "consciousness" and discourse forms part of the system. The intellectual's role is no longer to place himself 'somewhat ahead and to the side' in order to express the stifled truth of the collectivity;

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<sup>370</sup> Al-Assadi, "Forget Hamlet," 242.

<sup>371</sup> Ibid, 268.

rather, it is to struggle against the forms of power that transform him into its object and instrument in the sphere of 'knowledge,' 'truth,' 'consciousness,' and 'discourse'.<sup>372</sup>

Claudius's power objectifies Hamlet. His silence makes him an agent of the system imposed by Claudius, and his friends abandon him like most Arabs who abandoned their paralyzed intellectuals. Hamlet lost Ophelia's love, Horatio's respect, and his mother's sympathy. He, additionally, lost his self-respect when he describes himself in the notebook found by the gravedigger as "What a rogue and peasant slave am I!"<sup>373</sup>

Al-Assadi's Hamlet is different from Shakespeare's intellectual prince. The attempt to interpret *Hamlet* as an intellectual tragedy can be dated back to the eighteenth century when critics like Coleridge tried to fathom Hamlet's inner struggle with his consciousness. In 'Lectures on Hamlet' (1818), Coleridge comments on the intellectual Hamlet as: "... we see a great, an almost enormous, intellectual activity, and a proportionate aversion to real action consequent upon it."<sup>374</sup> Hamlet is undeniably intellectual, a student from the University of Wittenberg where he learned that "there is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so."<sup>375</sup> He raises philosophical, political, moral, and spiritual questions that always intrigued humanity. However, Hamlet's intellect and overthinking are mistakenly seen as a hindrance to his action by many critics like William Hazlitt, who believed that the prince's "passion to think [more than] to act" is the cause of his delay in taking revenge.<sup>376</sup> If Hamlet procrastinates, he does that because he learned to take action upon a solid background, for he declares to his mother, "I know not seems."<sup>377</sup> In contrast, in Al-Assadi's play, Hamlet's intellectualism became a burden that stops him from taking revenge and rescues the wise men and women that Claudius is targeting with his scaffold. It is not only Al-Assadi who uses Hamlet to reflect on the silence of the intellectuals amid political crises, but Muller also did that when he ridiculed the silence of the intellectuals against the Nazis' war crimes. Muller's Hamlet regrets his silence when he says, "I stood at the shore and talked with the surf BLA BLA, the ruins of Europe in back of me."<sup>378</sup> This is almost similar to Hamlet's regression here. In other adaptations like Charles Marowitz's version of *Hamlet*, staged first in Berlin in 1965 and filmed for television in 1969 in a condensed version by the BBC, Hamlet is a 'paralyzed intellectual' whose stream of

<sup>372</sup>Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory*, 207.

<sup>373</sup>Al-Assadi, "Forget Hamlet," 281.

<sup>374</sup>Cited in Kinney, *Hamlet*, 30.

<sup>375</sup>Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, II. ii. 259.

<sup>376</sup>Cited in Alexander Welsh, *Hamlet in His Modern Guises*, (Princeton University Press, 2001), 81.

<sup>377</sup>Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, I. II.74.

<sup>378</sup>Mueller, *The Hamletmachine*, 1.

consciousness became a nightmare for him. Marowitz comments on his work by saying, “I despise Hamlet. / He is a slob. / A talker, an analyser, a rationalizer. / Like the parlor liberal of paralyzed intellectual, he can describe every face to a problem, yet never pull his finger out.”<sup>379</sup> Similarly, Hamlet is absorbed with theories and moralization, but he is entirely a ‘talker’ in Marowitz’s descriptive word. This compels other characters to despise him and forget him.

To sum up, Al-Assad’s play has a twofold political significance. It reflects on the crises of the intellectuals caused by the oppressive regimes. It also comments on the passive role of some Arab academics, artists, religious men, journalists who preferred silence and compromise. Hamlet's cynical end, searching for safety, does not provoke pity and fear, but his death provokes mockery instead. He becomes a symbol for all the academics, Sufis and nationalists who avoided their responsibility for the sake of safety. Al-Assadi’s message is to forget those indifferent intellectuals. This is why he has chosen the title *Forget Hamlet* for his play.

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<sup>379</sup>Cited in White, *Avant-Garde Hamlet*, 122.

## 2.4.

**Decolonizing Islamophobia and Islamic Terrorism after 9/11 in Suleiman AlBassam's  
*AL-Hamlet Summit***

*AL-Hamlet Summit* (In Arabic: *قصة هاملت*) is a bilingual stage adaptation by the Anglo-Kuwaiti Suleiman AlBassam. It appeared for the first time under the title *Hamlet in Kuwait* in 2000. It was then reworked in reaction to 9/11 as *AL-Hamlet Summit* in 2002, and AlBassam used both Arabic and English speaking actors in his performance. Most of the speeches are spoken into classical Arabic language by the Arab actors from Iraq, Kuwait and Syria, while English is spoken by an English character, called in the play The Arms Dealer. When Arabic is spoken, an English translation appears on the back screen and vice versa.

The first performance was at Edinburgh Festival in 2002, and it received the Fringe Award for Excellence and Innovation. The play also was praised as the best performance in Cairo's International Festival for Experimental Theatre in 2002 and premiered in Tokyo in 2004.<sup>380</sup> AlBassam's did few alterations in his adaptation. Only Seven characters of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* appear in the show: Hamlet, Ophelia, Polonius, Claudius, Laertes, Fortinbras and Gertrude. Other characters like Rosencrantz, Horatio, Guildenstern and Lorenzo are omitted. The ghost appears once for few seconds and is seen by all characters on the stage in scene three. The Plot is almost similar to Shakespeare's play except for the time Hamlet learns about the murder through a leaflet, not by the ghost this time, distributed by an Islamic armed militia called 'People Liberation Brigade' and who want to avenge the murder of their old king. Another difference is the solo mousetrap performed by Hamlet, dressing in Islamic Jihadist knight and holding a war wooden horse. The theatrical scenery is a modern hall with six chairs arranged in a triangle shape where the six main characters sit and chat all the time. Claudius is sitting in the middle, Polonius and Hamlet on the right, while Gertrude, Laertes, and Ophelia are seated on the left. The room looks like a conference hall or an operation room with a huge screen placed on the back wall of the stage. The screen is significant for showing outside incidents like the streets and the buildings destroyed by Claudius' army. Ophelia also records a video, shown on the screen, before committing her suicidal bombing at the end. Polonius and Hamlet are

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<sup>380</sup>I use here the video of the performance occurred in Tokyo International Art Festival in 2004. Suleiman AlBassam, *AL-Hamlet Summit*, (Suleiman AlBassam Theatrical Company), accessed August 10, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zs3TMtsLBD0>.

dressed in suits, Claudius appears wearing Arabic cape and sometimes military suit, and Ophelia and Gertrude wear Western modern dress. Hamlet and Ophelia changed their Western clothes and appear in Islamic dress at the end. A sound of bell is heard repeatedly announcing the beginning and end of the meetings. Nothing is mentioned concerning Denmark, but the story takes place in an anonymous Arab country threatened by a Western army, led by Fortinbras, that is waiting on the borders to break into the kingdom.



Figure 7: The image shows the stage with the six characters sitting in a triangle shape like a summit, taken from the video 3: 36.

The play begins with Claudius making a public speech in front of the summit and announcing himself as the new king and a husband of the Queen. Hamlet, who is frustrated by his mother's marriage, asks permission to go back to Europe to start his study, but the summit voted for Hamlet's stay. Hamlet then goes to visit his father's grave complaining about his mother's hasty marriage, and, suddenly, an English-speaking character, called the Arms Dealer, appears and handed Hamlet a leaflet. The leaflet is distributed by a militia called 'People Liberation Brigade' who wrote something about Claudius poisoning their old king. Hamlet is shocked to hear the news and informs Ophelia about the leaflet, but Ophelia could not hide the leaflet from Polonius who tells Gertrude and Claudius that Hamlet became dangerous and influenced by the PLB. After listening to Hamlet's conversation with Ophelia, they conclude that Hamlet became an extremist and adopted an apocalyptic terrorist thinking. Claudius orders to send Hamlet to London where he becomes unreachable to the terrorist groups. Meanwhile, The Arms Dealer is pushing Claudius to sign military agreements with him if Claudius wishes to defend his country

against Fortinbras' army. He tells Claudius that he will support Fortinbras with F16 airplanes if Claudius refuses to sign the contracts. Claudius succumbs to the Arms Dealer threatening and he signs the contracts.

Laertes asks permission to go and join the battlefield to fight Fortinbras. On the night of the farewell party, Hamlet appears in the show wearing an Islamic Jihadist dress and carrying a wooden horse. He intends to act his *Mousetrap* to verify Claudius's murder. Claudius, frustrated by Hamlet's action, orders to kill him, but Hamlet manages to escape and returns to the palace with a pistol to kill his uncle. He finds Claudius praying and asking God to give him more petrodollars. Hamlet postpones killing the king and goes to confront his mother instead. When he discovers that Polonius is listening to their conversation, he shoots him dead. He runs away and joins the PLB. In the meantime, Ophelia recorded a video wearing a headscarf and says that she will bomb herself to avenge herself on those who victimized her. Gertrude informs Laertes how Ophelia's body was devastated by the bomb, and Laertes determines to kill Hamlet and destroy his militia. Claudius also makes a speech to mobilize people against the 'terrorist' Hamlet and his extremist followers who want to destroy 'the new democracy' and the value of the state. A civil war occurs between Claudius's army and Hamlet's militia, leading to the destruction of the whole country. Finally, Fortinbras enters the stage, finding the dead bodies thrown all over the stage, and he announces himself as the new ruler of the country. The Arms Dealer enters the stage smiling and sneaking behind Fortinbras.

#### **2.4.1. The Political Context**

AlBassam's adaptation reflects on one of the most terrorizing incidents occurred early in the 21 century. Nineteen Muslim members of Al-Qaeda hijacked four American airplanes and attacked the World Trade Centre in New York City and the Pentagon in Arlington County. The attack caused the collapse of the Twin Towers and 3,000 deaths from different nationalities. Gorge Bush announced his 'global War on Terrorism' by attacking the Taliban in Afghanistan to destroy Osama Bin Laden's terrorist sanctuaries. He delivered several long speeches in which he commented on the attack, and managed to globalize Al-Qaeda's threat to enlist as many countries as he could. Many countries like Australia, Canada, and Britain have responded to Bush's speeches and sent armed troops to fight in Afghanistan. It is not until 2003 that Bush announced another war on Sadam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction, and despite all the reports stating that Iraq did not possess such weapons, Bush insisted on launching the war to disarm Sadam's regime.

During Bush's War on terrorism, all the Westerners had their eyes pointed to the Middle East and Islamic World as the source of terrorism and religious extremism. Bush succeeded in globalising the danger of terrorism, connecting terrorism with Islamic groups more than any other groups, and warning the civilized West from the barbaric Islamic East. He utilized media and forced Arab regimes to participate in the War. Since that time, the Western media circulated terms like 'Islamophobia,' 'Islamic Terrorism,' and 'Political Islam' which drastically influenced Muslims and Arabs living in the Middle East and abroad. Many of them were tracked, interrogated, and some were banned from entering Western countries. They were accused of terrorism or having the potential to support and become terrorists despite many Muslim Sheiks produced Fatwas that criminalize Bin Laden and exonerate Islam from his barbaric attacks on civilians. The strictest prisons like Abu Graib and Guantanamo Bay were constructed especially for terrorists from Muslims and Arabic nationalities, and many of them are still missing. The accusation of terrorism became elastic and covered many innocent people. It drastically shaped the political atmosphere in the region when Arab regimes abused this war on terrorism and targeted their political opponents under the silence of the Human Rights Organizations.

The USA army withdrew from Iraq in 2014 under Obama's administration and from Afghanistan in 2021 under Joe Biden ruling and left the two countries in a more catastrophic situation. This raised many questions about Bush's misleading allegations of democracy and the freedom he promised to achieve. Bush, mainly backed and supported by Tony Blair, had an economic interest in the region and his war was launched to obtain new sources of petroleum in Iraq and Lithium in Afghanistan, as some politicians exposed. Islamic terrorism was an excuse adopted by the West to keep invading the Middle East and abused by their followers from Arab regimes to keep suppressing their nations.

#### **2.4.2. The Purpose of the Adaptation**

Some reviewers, particularly Western ones, assume that AlBassam's adaptation comes as an apology to the West and as a reflection on the religious extremism appearing in the Islamic world. Some Arab reviewers criticized AlBassam for consolidating Western stereotypes of Islamic terrorism through dramatizing Hamlet as a radical Jihadist whose apocalyptic hatred of humanity leads to the destruction of his land. However, AlBassam announced that his goal behind the adaptation is to reflect on Arabs and Muslims' political concerns after the destructive war launched by Bush and other Western countries. The play has a decolonizing purpose. It speaks back to Western terms like the Islamophobia and

Islamic terrorism promoted by Western media and the USA anti-Islam policies. Hamlet's country is an unspecified Arab country that appears rich from the petroleum pipeline we hear about in the play. A Western power threatens the country under the leading of Fortinbras. Also, the Arms Dealer, who speaks English fluently, represents the Western economic interest in the Middle East. He flatters Claudius, helps Gertrude renovate her farm in the south, and brings Hamlet the leaflet. He cunningly abuses the characters for his goals, and he is also willing to help Fortinbras at the same time. He teaches Polonius the word 'terrorist' and convinced him that such a word will grant them financial and military support from the West. The Arms Dealer's teaching this word for the characters shows how the West utilized their languages to subjugate the colonized people.

In addition, AlBassam uses bilingualism in the play to deconstruct the English language as an imperial language. The shifting between Arabic and English in the performance, and the speaking of English in a broken accent and unfamiliar intonation by Arab actors, estrange language and create barriers between English and the English-speaking audience. However, they find themselves compelled to pay attention and hear the voices of Arabs.

#### **2.4.3. Aspects of Terrorism in *AL-Hamlet Summit***

Hamlet began developing his radicalism after discovering the murder of his father through a leaflet given to him by the Arms Dealer in the graveyard. The leaflet was distributed by an armed militia called 'People Liberation Brigade' who discovered Claudius's murder and promised to take revenge. Hamlet is shocked by the news in the leaflet that says:

Forensic evidence leaked from the post mortem indicates that our great leader was murdered. His cardiac arrest was induced by Sodium nitrate injected into his ear via a syringe under the leadership of his brother and assassin Claudius"17:47 The Liberation Brigade will avenge this sickening murder and will show no mercy to those who weep and mourn. The evil forces of imperialism have found a willing agent in the figure of Claudius.<sup>381</sup>

The Arms Dealer tells Hamlet that the leaflet is everywhere, and the PLB "will not rest until"<sup>382</sup> they kill Claudius. Hamlet leaves the graveyard and returns to show Ophelia the

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<sup>381</sup> AlBassam, *AL-Hamlet Summit*, 17:45- 18:01.

<sup>382</sup> Ibid, 18:29.

leaflet telling her, “My father’s murdered Ophelia.”<sup>383</sup> Polonius appears suddenly and caught the leaflet. He informs Claudius about the news, and Claudius responds to that by ordering to burn the sanctuaries of the terrorist militia:

POLONIUS: I’ve got 300 men working round the clock gathering up the leaflets.	بولونيوس: لَدَيَّ 300 رَجُلًا يَا مَوْلَايَ يَعْمَلُونَ عَلَى مَدَارِ السَّاعَةِ لِجَمْعِ الْمَنشُورَاتِ . . .
CLAUDIUS: Forget the leaflets, burn the townships, all of them – I want them all burnt by dawn. <sup>384</sup>	الْمَلِكُ: اُنْسَى أَمْرَ الْمَنشُورَاتِ وَأَحْرَقْ مُدُنَ الصَّفِيحِ. أُرِيدُهَا كُلَّهَا مَحْرُوقَةً مَعَ طُلُوعِ الْفَجْرِ.

Polonius also informs Claudius and Gertrude that he has noted “a paranoid tendency”<sup>385</sup> and suicidal madness in the love letters Hamlet sent to Ophelia. He asks Ophelia to read some of Hamlet’s lines:

The villages of my heart have been emptied. Their pavements were orphaned to the wind... I’m the ghost bell that swings on churches. I’m the minaret in its tongue in the sand. I’m the child with a bullet in its heart Weeping amongst the rocks. <sup>386</sup>	خَلَّتِ الْقُرَى الَّتِي كَانَتْ فِي قَلْبِي وَجِبَارَةُ الْأَرْضِ صَفَةً تَعْصِفُ بِهَا الرِّيحُ . . . أَنَا جَرَسُ الشَّيْحِ الَّذِي يَتَأَرْجَحُ فِي الْكُنَائِسِ أَنَا الْمَنَارَةُ الَّتِي يَمْتَدُّ لِسَانُهَا فِي الرَّمَالِ أَنَا الطِّفْلُ الَّذِي فِي قَلْبِهِ رِصَاصَةٌ وَيَبْكِي بَيْنَ الصُّخُورِ.
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Hamlet’s madness, as Polonius says, should be observed as it might generate radical behaviour: “Note the apocalyptic imagery. Note the yearning for violent and comprehensive change to the world order. I have some studies that will elucidate further on the links between this sort of fantasy and terrorist activities.”<sup>387</sup> Hamlet “is being drawn further and further into extremist circles in his thoughts and actions,”<sup>388</sup> as Polonius comments. Gertrude tries to defend the madness of her son as a corollary of his grief over his father, not extremism: “grief can force him to do that. These lines prove nothing.”<sup>389</sup>

<sup>383</sup>Ibid, 18:55.

<sup>384</sup>Ibid, 09: 16.

<sup>385</sup>Ibid, 25:00.

<sup>386</sup>Ibid, 27:37-28:41.

<sup>387</sup>Ibid, 25:29. “لَا حَظَّ الْمَلَامِحِ التَّخْرِيْبِيَّةِ. لَا حَظَّ التَّعَطُّشِ لِلتَّغْيِيرِ الشَّامِلِ لِلنِّظَامِ الْعَالَمِيِّ. لَدَيَّ دِرَاسَاتٌ سَوْفَ تَنْبُتُ حَلَقَاتِ الرَّبْطِ بَيْنَ هَذَا “النُّوعِ مِنَ الْخَيَالِ وَالْأَعْمَالِ الْارْهَابِيَّةِ”

<sup>388</sup>Ibid, 24:30.

<sup>389</sup>Ibid, 25:40.

Polonius suggests using Ophelia to prove Hamlet's fanaticism while they can hide and listen to Hamlet's conversation with her:

POLONIUS: My daughter will supply the proof.	بلونيوس: ابنتي ستقدم الدليل يا مولاي .
GERTRUDE: Really! How?	غيرتروود: حقًا؟ وكيف ذلك؟
POLONIUS ( <i>To Ophelia</i> ): The next time you meet Hamlet, you will ask him in a roundabout and honey way questions like 'where have you been?' or 'what have you been writing?'	بلونيوس (إلى أوفيليا): في المرة القادمة التي ستترين فيها هاملت سوف تسالينه أسئلة بشكل غير مباشر وبطريقه معسوله أسئلة مثل " أين كنت؟ " أو "ماذا كنت تكتب؟" أو "ماذا تفعل بليليك؟"
CLAUDIUS: Asks him, 'Do you go to the mosques?' <sup>390</sup>	كلوديوس: أسأليه "هل تؤوم المساجد؟"

When Hamlet meets Ophelia, he shows her a pistol he took from Laertes. He thought several times of using the pistol to end his life because he feels hopeless: "I have any passions for death, nothing heroic, nothing repulsive. No martyr's passion blazing in this body. No vision of heaven, no yearning for justice, and no aching for change"<sup>391</sup> but he quits killing himself, and he will use the pistol for another purpose:

أنا بأمس الحاجة للتغير. سأطهر هذه الأرض. ساجعلها نقيّة ساعدها من أجلك حتى لو كلفني ذلك حياتي. ستفيض دماء. ساجعلها تفيض سيولاً. أقسم برحمة أبي. أقسم بالله.

I have this terrible need to change myself. I will clean this land; I will make it pure..., even if it costs me my life, I will clean it, and I will purge it. Blood will flow; I will make blood flow in torrents. I swear in my father's name. I swear in the name of Allah.<sup>392</sup>

Claudius arranged for an emergent summit meeting to look into Hamlet's apocalyptic and destructive madness that will be dangerous for the new democracy and "the investments in the country."<sup>393</sup> His "temperament," as Claudius comments, "seems regressive and un-conductive."<sup>394</sup> The members conclude that "the common good and

<sup>390</sup>Ibid, 26:23-26:32.

<sup>391</sup>Ibid, 42:14. " لا حماسة شهيد تُوجج " . لا أشيء ثوري. لا أشيء بطولي ولا شيء للموت. لا أشيء اشواق للموت. لا أشيء بطولي ولا شيء ثوري. لا حماسة شهيد تُوجج " . هذا الجسد. لا أخلام بالجنة ولا شوق للعدالة ولا طوق للتغير "

<sup>392</sup>Ibid, 44:05.

<sup>393</sup>Ibid, 45:09.

<sup>394</sup>Ibid, 45:17.

national security demands that Hamlet is sent away.”<sup>395</sup> After a long negotiation, they decide to send him to London with “a state cheque book to gamble in Piccadilly”<sup>396</sup> and be distant from the extremists. Gertrude insists on making a ‘send-off party’ for Hamlet before his departure.



Figure 8: Hamlet is trying to kill himself with a pistol, 41:20

On the night of the farewell party, Hamlet decides to act his ‘play within the play’ to verify the murder committed by his uncle. He enters the stage wearing an Islamic jihadist dress and holding a wooden horse in his hand. Gertrude asks Hamlet: “What’s this nonsense?”<sup>397</sup> and Hamlet replies, “I’m preparing for war... Today we honour the elders and stroke the horse of war.”<sup>398</sup> Hamlet gives sugar cubes to his uncle to feed his warhorse. When Claudius cynically feeds the horse, Hamlet shouts, “Oh, it's dying! You killed it, Uncle. My horse! My father!”<sup>399</sup> Hamlet then turns to his mother, asking her to weep on his horse, for her weep might raise the horse again, “If my mother could weep, my horse might rise again. No tears, mother?”<sup>400</sup> Hamlet observed his uncle and his mother’s reaction and came to know the reality of their murder. He comments: “Now! The pens have been lifted, and the pages have dried.”<sup>401</sup> He left them saying, “I am going to war.”<sup>402</sup>

<sup>395</sup>Ibid, 45:52.

<sup>396</sup>Ibid, 46: 05.

<sup>397</sup>Ibid, 52:51.

<sup>398</sup>Ibid, 53:01.

<sup>399</sup>Ibid, 54:02.

<sup>400</sup>Ibid, 54:16.

<sup>401</sup>Ibid, 55:30.



Figure 9: Hamlet is wearing knight clothes and carrying a wooden horse.

After Hamlet's upsetting Claudius with this play, Claudius secretly arranged for killing Hamlet on his trip to London, "He is a threat. I want him liquidated."<sup>403</sup> Hamlet managed to escape the assassination, and he returns to the palace carrying a pistol and intends to kill his uncle, but he finds Claudius praying. Hamlet postpones killing Claudius and goes to his mother's room to confront her. He violently drags his mother, curses her, calls her "rude Gertrude",<sup>404</sup> and at the end, slaps her. Gertrude accuses him of being "a threat to state's security,"<sup>405</sup> and Hamlet replies, "Mother! You are a threat to state's morality."<sup>406</sup> Gertrude charges him of extremism, "Are you collaborating with the extremists?" and Hamlet replies, "Do you commune with the devil, Madam?"<sup>407</sup> When Hamlet discovers that Polonius is listening to their conversation, he shoots him dead, saying, "Run blood. Run across the sewers and the graves. Stop up the mouths of the vermin and hypocrites."<sup>408</sup>

Hamlet ran away and resorted to PLB, who appointed him as their leader. Meanwhile, Claudius informs Laertes about Hamlet's murder and orders him to come back from the frontline. He says that Hamlet became a "terrorist! We will not let an insidious terrorist coward to push our nation to the brink of collapse."<sup>409</sup> Laertes should kill Hamlet and

<sup>402</sup>Ibid, 55:55.

<sup>403</sup>Ibid, 57:08.

<sup>404</sup>Ibid, 1:06:26.

<sup>405</sup>Ibid, 1:03:46.

<sup>406</sup>Ibid, 1:03:48.

<sup>407</sup>Ibid, 1:03:59.

<sup>408</sup>Ibid, 1:04:42.

<sup>409</sup>Ibid, 1:07:48.

destroys his group as an act of revenge, and Claudius will make him “the lord of the southern region”<sup>410</sup> as a reward for that.

Laertes becomes angrier when Ophelia appears on a recording video, shown on the back screen, announcing that she will bomb herself as a reaction to men’s subjugation of her mind and body:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ. أَنْ مَنْ حَوْلِي إِلَى لَاحِنَةِ صَنْعِ مَنِّي فُتْبَلَةٌ. حَاوَلْتُ أَنْ أَتَحَدَّثَ حَدِيثَ الْمَرْأَةِ، حَاوَلْتُ أَنْ أَسْمَعَ  
وَفِي لَيَالٍ كَثِيرَةً شَحَدْتُ لِسَانِي. لَكِنْ سَكَوَتِي نَزَفَ مِنْ بَيْنِ أَسْنَانِي وَهَا أَنَا ذَا الْحَيَوَانَ الَّذِي يَنْسَاهُ الْعَالَمُ. حَاوَلْتُ أَنْ أَتَحَدَّثَ  
بَلَّغَهُ الْبَشَرُ: لَعَنَكُمْ. لَكِنْ الْكُذْبَ لَا يَفِيدُ. لِأَشْيَاءٍ يُمَكِّنُ أَنْ يَمْنَعَ الظُّلْمَ فِي هَذِهِ الْحَيَاةِ. بِهَذَا أُرِيدُكُمْ أَنْ تَعْلَمُوا إِنِّي سَاعِبُ  
بَجَنَّتِي عَمَّا تَعْجِزُونَ عَنْهُ.

In the name of God, the Bounteous, The Merciful. The one who has turned me into a refugee has made a bomb of me. I have tried to speak the language of women. I have tried to forgive. I served my tongue, but my silence bleeds from my mouth. Here I’m the animal that the world forgets. I have tried to speak the language of men, but lying is not good...I want people outside to know this, that I will express with [sic] my body what is not expressed in language.”<sup>411</sup>

All the characters expect Hamlet think that Ophelia became mad and she decided to bomb herself out of her grief upon her murdered father. They blamed Hamlet for her madness. Hamlet appears again at the end dressed in jihadist clothes and discovered the death of Ophelia. Laertes attacks Hamlet, and Hamlet says, “I loved her.” After Hamlet’s departure, Claudius convinces Laertes to lead the army and destroy Hamlet’s terrorist militia. He also makes a speech in the media to sanction Hamlet and mobilize the nation against him:

هَامَلْتُ سَيَعُودَ مَعِ مَجْمُوعَةٍ مِنَ الْمُنْفِيِّينَ وَالشُّيُوعِيِّينَ وَالْحَثَالَةِ الَّذِينَ نَبِذَهُمُ الْوَطَنَ مُنْذُ زَمَنٍ. وَيُعْلِنُ نَفْسِهِ مُخْلِصاً. وَلَكِي  
يُحْصَلُ عَلَى دَعْمِ الْعَامَّةِ سَوْفَ يُلْجَأُ إِلَى الْمَسْجِدِ لِنَوْمِ النَّاسِ فِي صَلَاةِ الْجُمُعَةِ. أَنَّ التَّارِيخَ يُعَدُّ لَنَا أَكْثَمَ تُحَدِّ. مُنْذُ سَاعَتَيْنِ  
فَقَطَّ بَدَأَتْ قَوَاتِنَا هُجُومَهَا عَلَى مَعَاوِلِ الْإِرْهَابِ التَّابِعَةِ لِهَامَلْتِ وَجَيْشِهِ. وَالِاشْتِبَاكَاتِ مَا زَالَتْ تَتَوَاصَلُ حَتَّى هَذِهِ السَّاعَةِ. بَدَأَ  
هَذَا الصِّرَاعَ عِنْدَمَا قَرَضْتُ هَامَلْتِ جِصَارًا عَلَى دِيمِقْرَاطِيَّتِنَا وَقِيمِنَا وَشَعْبِنَا مِنْ خِلَالِ سِلْسِلَةِ أَعْمَالٍ وَحَسْبِيَّةٍ مِنْ خَطْفٍ  
وَتَفْجِيرَاتٍ ارهَابِيَّةٍ تَسْبَبَتْ فِي قَتْلِ الْعِدِيدِ مِنَ الضَّحَايَا الْأَبْرِيَاءِ وَهَرَّتِ الْمُجْتَمَعُ الْقَوْمِي.

Hamlet is returning with a flock of émigrés, communists and degenerate scum that the nation spat out years ago. He claims to be the redeemer! To raise support among people, he’ll go to the Mosque to lead Friday prayer. Just two hours ago, our forces began an attack on terrorist positions belonging to Hamlet and his army. This conflict began when Hamlet laid siege to our democracy, our values and our people through a brutal series of kidnapping

<sup>410</sup>Ibid, 1:14:28.

<sup>411</sup>Ibid, 1:12: 50- 13:46.

and terrorist bombings that have killed many innocent victims and shocked the world community.<sup>412</sup>

After Claudius's speech, the country enters into a civil war between Hamlet's group and Claudius' army, led by Laertes. A report is broadcasted in English language about the war and many pictures of the fighting are shown on the back screen. The report says:

We are just receiving a report that the streets of the capitals are inflamed. Buildings have collapsed through the endless assaults of air attacks of F16 airplanes that are still loyal to the king. In unconfirmed reports, the Queen, Gertrude, has been killed while trying to prevent the king's tanks from surrounding her son who's trapped inside the grand mosque. As the international reports received from the United Nations earlier today, General Laertes and Hamlet's forces engaged in armed-to-armed combat throughout the streets. Both Hamlet and Laertes were severely injured and their conditions are critical.<sup>413</sup>

Claudius, Laertes and Gertrude act their death while the report is being broadcasted on the screen. Hamlet is the last one to die on the stage. He announces his regression for the destruction he causes to his country:

بِسْمِكَ اللَّهُمَّ. اخْتَلَفْتُ لَعْنَةَ لَاسِطِرٍ بِهَا تَارِيخُ الْأَخْرَيْنِ بِدِمَاءِ شَعْبِيٍّ. أَنْ أَصْنَعَبَ الْأَشْيَاءِ إِنْ نَجِدَ الْعَرْزُ لِنَتْسِيْقِطِ صَبَاحاً  
لِنَتَلْمَسَ بَيْنَ الْإِطْلَالِ دَرَباً. أَنْ إِذْرَاكَ الْحَقِيقَةَ بَعْدَ فَوَاتِ الْأَوَانِ لَهُوَ الْجَجِيمِ. (يموت)

In the name of God, I've invented a curse that writes the history of other nations through my own people's blood. The hardest thing is to find the courage to walk in the morning and find a path through these ruins. The knowing of truth late is the true hell.<sup>414</sup> (*He dies*)

Fortinbras appears at the end finding the dead bodies scattered on the stage. He announces his right to rule the country in a long speech:

Faces, intestines and sweat, only dead humans can smell like that. I, Fortinbras, have biblical claims upon this land. It is empty and barren and my presence here is a fact that has not been invented. It won't be easy. Terrorism is not yet defeated, but the pipeline will be completed within a year. The old will die and the young will forget, and this barren land will be seen to bloom. What we see here can never happen to us. For this is the dawn and the birth of the Greater Izzzz... (*He tries to say the full name of his country but he could not.*)<sup>415</sup>

<sup>412</sup>Ibid, 1:14:33- 1:23:05.

<sup>413</sup> Ibid, 1:23: 10-1:24:08.

<sup>414</sup> Ibid, 1:24:49-1:25:16.

<sup>415</sup>Ibid, 1:25:52- 1:26:56.

The amount of violence shown by characters on the stage was disturbing for the audience who came to see the prince fighting for justice like always, but they were surprised by the extremism and bloodshed committed by Hamlet and Ophelia alike. Fong Li Ling once comments on the performance he attended in Tokyo as, "It was as if the action had come at me like a whirlwind and struck me in the face, rendering me speechless. I struggled to get to grips with my reaction to it for a long time."<sup>416</sup> If Hamlet has always been dramatized as a victim of madness and procrastination and tries to maintain the least amount of damage in his fighting with Claudius, Hamlet here unwisely demonstrates a destructive apocalyptic mentality. He extends the conflict to cover innocent people, destroy the country, and hand it to Fortinbras. The image of the suicidal bomber Ophelia is not less disrupting for the audience, who used to see her as an example of innocence and purity. This shocking image compels the audience to ask whether the murder done by Claudius and male characters deserves all that violence conducted by Hamlet and Ophelia and whether they can sympathize with Hamlet and Ophelia's extremism. This tragedy does not raise pity and sympathy, but it generates fear in the audience.

What is more notable for the audience is AlBassam's attempt to connect Hamlet and Ophelia's radicalism with Islamic beliefs. Both Hamlet and Ophelia keep reciting Koranic verses like when Hamlet says, "I bear witness that there is no god but Allah and Mohammad is his messenger,"<sup>417</sup> or when Ophelia starts her recording video by saying, "In the name of God, the Bounteous, The Merciful."<sup>418</sup> Hamlet connects the swords with the prayers in his speech: "Do we saddle our horses, sharpen our swords, and make prayers,"<sup>419</sup> gives himself the task of returning the corrupted people to God: "The corrupted people should be returned to the path of God,"<sup>420</sup> and glorifies the jihadist martyrs who die for the sake of God: "May God raise the souls of his martyrs to the gardens of Heaven."<sup>421</sup> Ophelia thinks she will "go to [her] God pure in [her] soul and in [her] dignity."<sup>422</sup> It is not only in words; their Islamic belief is also seen in their traditional Islamic dress, which has always been associated with terrorism. Hamlet has taken off his Western suit and tie and is dressed in Islamic dress similar to Osama bin Laden's clothes.

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<sup>416</sup>Fong Li Ling, "The Al-Hamlet Summit," *The Flying Inkpot Theatre and Dance* (blog), June 10, 2005, <https://inkpotreviews.com/oldInkpot/05reviews/0610%2Calhasumm%2Cfl.html>.

<sup>417</sup>AlBassam, *AL-Hamlet Summit*, 1:20:00. "أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ"

<sup>418</sup>Ibid, 1:12:56.

<sup>419</sup>Ibid, 1:18:31. "أُنْعِدِ الْعِدَّةَ مِنْ سَيْفٍ وَتَرَسٍ وَرِبَاطِطِهِ جَائِشٍ وَذَكَرٍ؟"

<sup>420</sup>Ibid, 1:20:18. "حَكَمْنَا سَيَعِيدِ شَعِينَا الْعَظِيمِ إِلَى السَّرَاطِ الْمُسْتَقِيمِ."

<sup>421</sup>Ibid, 1:20:49. "الْمَجْدِ وَالْخُلُودِ لِشَهَدَاتِنَا الْأَبْرَارِ."

<sup>422</sup>Ibid, 1:13:48.



Figure 10: The change in Hamlet's dress in the play in 8:35 and 1:18:56 respectively.

Ophelia also wears a headscarf before bombing herself, and she justifies that her scarf is part of her religious purity that she likes to meet her god with after bombing herself, “So, I can meet the face of God purified in soul and body.”<sup>423</sup> After Ophelia has bombed herself, Gertrude enters terrified with spots of blood on her face. She describes the scene of the Ophelia’s torn clothes and shreds to Laertes:

جاءت مع غروب الشمس على قمم النخيل. عيناها متوهجان وتوبها ملينه الريح. ذهبت إليها وهي ترفع يدها كأنها  
 تخيي العلم. وقع من فستانها زر. أنا أعرف ذلك الزر. وانحنائي لالتقاطه. لا. لا. لا. عندما كنت هناك (تصمت وتنتظر  
 ليديها الملتحة بالدماء) اللحم الأدمي المتناثر والواصل المتقطعة وجسدها كالينبوع. اغتسلت منه. (تلمس خدها) كم كان  
 حار على وجهي. كم كانت رنتها حارتين. كم كانت امعائها حارة. لا أخذ مغفَى من المسؤولية لا أحد.

She came into the palace when the sun fell into the palm trees. Her eyes were blazing and alive, her dress swollen with the wind as if with a phantom child. I went towards her, and she raised her arms as if to salute the flag, a button came loose from her shirt and tittered onto the steps. I remember this button Laertes, this little disc of mother of pearl, and leaning over to retrieve it on my way home when, No!, when I was there, (*She looks at her red hands*) the rolling flesh in the twitching limbs and her body was a well I washed myself in. (*Touches her face*) How hot it felt across my face, how hot her lungs, her intestines, how hot. No one is exempted from responsibility<sup>424</sup>

The description of Ophelia’s dress and her devastated interior parts is very frightening for the audiences who cannot imagine Ophelia’s willingness and strong motives to bear all that pain. Some says that AlBassam, through Ophelia’s speech, echoed a real example of a female suicide bomber that happened in 2001. Andaleeb Takatka, a 20-year-old Palestinian

<sup>423</sup>Ibid, 1:13:46. "وَيَذَلِكِ أَلْقَى وَجْهَ رَبِّي بِرُوحٍ طَاهِرَةً وَكَرَامَةً"

<sup>424</sup>Ibid, 1:15:24-1:16:13.

female who killed six Israeli soldiers when she bombed herself in a bus stop, recorded a video before her death reflecting on her feeling to bomb her body:

When you want to carry out such an attack, whether you are a man or a woman, you don't think about the explosive belt or about your body being ripped into pieces. We are suffering. We are dying while we are still alive.<sup>425</sup>



Figure 11: Ophelia (the first image), and Takatkah (The second image) in their recorded videos before blowing themselves up. Taken from AlBassam's play 1:12: 50, and Takatkah's picture from <http://blog.amin.org/najeebfarraj/2014/04/12/الذكرى-الثانية-عشرة-للشهيذة-عندليب-طق>. Accessed in 03/ August/2019

Both Ophelia and Takatka delivered almost a similar speech and dressed in similar clothes. However, not all the audiences, especially the Western ones, know Takatak's story, but they are aware of how Islamic female bombers dress. In the West, the image of the Muslims, particularly males, and their dress are imagined in Bin Laden's dress, beard and speech, while the female bombers are imagined wearing a headscarf and sometimes burqa.<sup>426</sup> The Western moviemakers, cartoonists, and painters usually grasped the terrorists with the Islamic clothes in their works. One of the cartoons that raised heated arguments and sometimes violence was by the Danish Kurt Westergaard when he intentionally drew Prophet Mohammad in the image of Bin Laden's beard and clothes as a reaction to the 9/11 attack. What is ironic is that the cartoon was produced in Denmark where Hamlet's castle was in Helsingor, a town North of Copenhagen, in the country of Denmark. This might be an explanation for why AlBassam has adapted Hamlet in this terrorist image at that time, and his adaptation might be a writing back to the Danish cartoon to show them how their prince can become a terrorist if he is put into difficult political situation. However, Westergaard's cartoon made many Muslims angry worldwide believing that the cartoon

<sup>425</sup>Sophia Anderson, "Martyrdom on Video: Testimonial Videos, Femininity, Islamism, and Palestinian Martyrdom in the Second Intifada", Thesis, (The University of Victoria, 2021), <https://www.uvic.ca/humanities/history/assets/docs/honours-thesis---sophia-anderson-2021.pdf>, 1.

<sup>426</sup>Burqa is a veil worn by some Muslim women to cover their face.

was unjustly reflecting Prophet Mohammad, but Westergaard has never regretted his cartoon, and many Westerners defended his right of expression disregarding the harms caused for Muslims' feelings. The cartoon was described by many political activists as unwisely done and might lead to more hatred between the East and the West. Westergaard's work is part of the sweepings and misconceptions that frequently occur in the West about Muslims.

When AlBassam's company performed this play in non-Arab countries, many reviewers, especially the non-Muslim who attended the performance, saw the adaptation as an apology to the West and an attack on Islamic fundamentalism in the Arab World that affects Muslims and non-Muslims, Arabs and non-Arabs alike. Sunday Herald comments in a review that the play is "a superbly constructed dramatization of a society's descent into fundamentalism and chaos."<sup>427</sup> Peter J. Smith says that the play "presents a composite of many Arab concerns that affect people from the Arabian Gulf to the Atlantic and beyond. Terrorism is a worldwide scourge."<sup>428</sup> Other reviewers from Muslim and Arabs considered performing the play at that time would deepen the Western stereotypes about Islamophobia and terrorism. Other less biased critics like Graham Holderness, believed that such performance, in non-Arab countries, will significantly help in bridging the gap between the Muslim and Non-Muslim worlds. It can create a balance at a time the gap between the East and the West was widening. Holderness believes that AlBassam intended to create a dialogue across borders and consolidate hybridity. This can be seen in the code-switching used in the play too.<sup>429</sup>

However, AlBassam replies to these reviews in one of the interviews, saying that some Arabs would mistakenly see the play as an apology to the West for what the Taliban has done, but his real aim is to defend Arabs and speak back to the Western misconceptions. He says:

For some, *The Al-Hamlet Summit* was the work of a Westernised traitor that falsely approximated between Islam and the propagation of violence. For others, and I'm happy to say the majority and particularly the young, *The Al-Hamlet Summit* gave vital and much-

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<sup>427</sup>Cited in Suleiman AlBassam, *The Al-Hamlet Summit: A Political Arabesque*, ed. Graham Holderness, (Hatfield, Hertfordshire: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2006), Back Cover Page.

<sup>428</sup>Peter Joni Smith, "Under Western Eyes": Suleiman Al-Bassam's 'The Al-Hamlet Summit,'" in *Shakespeare Bulletin*, 22, no. 4 (2004): 65-77, [https://doi.org/https://www.jstor.org/stable/26349165?seq=5#metadata\\_info\\_tab\\_contents](https://doi.org/https://www.jstor.org/stable/26349165?seq=5#metadata_info_tab_contents), 69.

<sup>429</sup>Al-Bassam, *The Al-Hamlet Summit: A Political Arabesque*, 9-20. Also, the use of more than one language or dialect within the same play has a long tradition in Western drama and theatre, and it suits the aims of non-Western playwrights, too.

needed expression to today's Arab concerns and presented them to the West in a sophisticated and human form.<sup>430</sup>

He adds:

I had wanted them to feel the same voyeuristic thrill that the Arabic one had felt in listening to the word, hearing the forbidden thought, and witnessing the forbidden act.<sup>431</sup>

In other words, AlBassam's play intends to voice Arabs and Muslims and decolonizes Western terms like Islamophobia, political Islam and Islamic terrorism that circulated in the Western media after 9/11. It is apparent in the play that he does not condone or glorify terrorism, but he wants to pay attention to the actual political factors that generated extremism in the Middle East other than the religious fundamentalism, and though he deals with the image of Islamic Jihadism and religious fanaticism in his play, he also attracts attention to a significant factor that shaped the politics of the Arab World after 2001. In the play, the Western hegemony and their economic exploiting policies of the Islamic World's petroleum, lithium and gas generated much violent reactions. The Western economic interest is seen in Fortinbras' attacks on Claudius's Arab country. Fortinbras resembles a Western colonial power, supported and "armed with millions of dollars of foreign equipment,"<sup>432</sup> hanging on the country's borders. When he occupies the country at the end, he claims, in his broken English, his right to rule it, and he announces that the oil pipeline has always been his target. The relation between fighting terrorism and economic interest is evident in his words.

But it is not only Fortinbras who shows Western economic interest in the region, the Arms Dealer, who is a native speaker of English, is manipulating Claudius to sign a military agreement with him. Hamlet asks him in English, "Are you American?"<sup>433</sup> but he avoids answering the question. He is pragmatic; knows when to flatter Claudius like when he says, "Your highness! Power suits you",<sup>434</sup> and knows when to threaten him at the same time. He hints to Claudius that he will sign an agreement with the 'ambitious Fortinbras' if Claudius refuses to pay him the money. The threatening compelled Claudius to succumb to his seduction. He also tries to seduce Hamlet by offering help to overthrow Claudius if

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<sup>430</sup>Cited in AlBassam, *The Al-Hamlet Summit: A Political Arabesque*, 16.

<sup>431</sup>Cited in Pamela Bickley and Jennifer Stevens, *Studying Shakespeare Adaptation: From Restoration Theatre to YouTube* (London; New York; Oxford; New Delhi; Sydney: The Arden Shakespeare, 2021), 110.

<sup>432</sup>AlBassam, *AL-Hamlet Summit*, 5:33.

<sup>433</sup>Ibid, 17:04.

<sup>434</sup>Ibid, 21:24.

Hamlet agrees to deal with them in the future. Hamlet, in the end, requires from the Arms Dealer to leave the country. When Fortinbras enters the stage acclaiming his right of Hamlet's country, the Arms Dealer appears again sneaking and smiling behind Fortinbras. This shows how he sympathizes with the Western Fortinbras more than the Arab Claudius.

Moreover, the first time the word 'terrorist' appears in the play was by the Arms Dealer who promised to teach Polonius a new English word that will grant him and Claudius international support against the terrorist Islamic militias. Polonius used to call PLB "dwarves and mercenaries," but the Arms Dealer teaches him this new word. Both have this conversation in English:

ARMS DEALER

Parliament opened with a bang!

POLONIUS

The treacherous [sic] enemy are dwarves. They spit at the giant, but the giant picks them up and crushes them. They are traitors and mercenaries.

ARMS DEALER

We call them terrorists.

POLONIUS

Yes, I like this word. Will you write it for me?

ARMS DEALER

Of course. (*He starts writing the word*)

POLONIUS *Trying to spell the word*

Teroree!

ARMS DEALER

Terrorist

POLONIUS

Tararroo!

ARMS DEALER *Shouting*

Terrorist.

POLONIUS

Terrorist! Excellent word ! much money in this word!

ARMS DEALER *Pocketing Polonius's pen*

Yes, about the money!

POLONIUS

Money? No problem, no problem.<sup>435</sup>

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<sup>435</sup>Ibid, 34:19-34:57.

The Arms Dealer pocketing Polonius's pen shows how much the West has an economic interest in the East. It is not only that, but the connection between the word terrorism and economy in the conversation shows how terrorism became an excuse for invading the Middle East and exploiting its petroleum and natural resources. After 9/11, Gorge Bush used a sentimental speech to start his “ war on terrorism” against the Taliban like when he said: “the attack took place on American soil, but it was an attack on the heart and soul of the civilized world,” “we are supported by the collective will of the world,” “the United States of America is a friend to the Afghan people, and we are the friends of almost a billion worldwide who practise the Islamic faith,” and “ the United States of America is an enemy of those who aid terrorists and of the barbaric criminals who profane a great religion by committing murder in its name.”<sup>436</sup> Bush’s rhetoric is cunningly delivered. He knew how to mobilize the West against the Taliban by using words like ‘the civilized West’ and globalize the threat by words like ‘the collective will of the world.’ He connected terrorism with Islam and describes Taliban members as ‘Barbaric’ people that should be eradicated. Bush also used the same rhetoric when he decided to wage war against Saddam’s regime in Iraq, 2003. He succeeded to convince the world that Saddam’s regime had mass destructive weapons and should be disarmed. Bush announced himself as the world policeman, who will grant Iraqi people freedom, saying: “At this hour American and coalition forces are in the early stages of military operations to disarm Iraq, to free its people and to defend the world from grave danger.”<sup>437</sup>

Many politicians questioned how the world was a victim of Bush's misleading rhetoric, especially after the American army left Iraq in 2014 and Afghanistan in 2021 in a more catastrophic situation than before. Some said that America had an oil interest in Iraq, and it was not for the sake of freedom claimed by Bush. In fact, the war on terrorism shaped a disguise for Bush’s fondness of petro-dollars more than being a war that would protect the Muslims and the whole world from the extremists. Faruk Arslan comments on the reality behind invading Iraq by saying: “Iraq war was also launched for oil like Afghanistan. Bush administration, receiving 356 billion dollar war budget, was after the 8 trillion Middle East petrol.”<sup>438</sup> Claudius uses the same rhetoric of terrorism used by Bush to protect his

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<sup>436</sup> Available at “George W. Bush, Address to the Nation, October 7, 2001,” Web log. Accessed April 18, 2020, <https://press.uchicago.edu/Misc/Chicago/481921texts.html>.

<sup>437</sup> “President Bush Addresses the Nation,” Washington, March 13, 2003, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/infocus/iraq/news/20030319-17.html>.

<sup>438</sup> Faruk Arsalan, *September 11 Fiction of Matrix* (North Carolina: Lulu Press, 2005), 73.

economic interest. He cares only for keeping the fuel pipelines away of the terrorists' bombing attacks just to keep the Western investors calm. He orders Polonius to track the bombers and arrest them:

CLAUDIUS: Find them!	كلوديوس: اَعْتَرِ عَلَيْهِم!
POLONIUS: No one has claimed responsibility, no tip-offs, no calls, nothing.	بلونيوس: لَمْ يُعْلَنْ أَحَدٌ مَسْؤَلِيَتِهِ يَا مَوْلَايَ. لَا إِتِّصَالَاتٌ، لَا إِشَارَاتٍ، لَا شَيْءَ.
CLAUDIUS: The pipeline is on the rocks and the investors are terrified.	كلوديوس: أَنْ خُطُوطَ البِنْرُولِ مُهَدَّدَةٌ وَالمَسْتَنْتَمِرُونَ مَرْعُوبُونَ.
POLONIUS: I have got 20 PLB members under torture. The religious leaders are being rounded up.	بلونيوس: لَدَيْ عِشْرُونَ عَنصْرًا مِنْ جَبْهَةِ النِّضَالِ الشَّعْبِيَّةِ تَحْتَ التَّعْذِيبِ. رُؤُوسُ التَّنْظِيمَاتِ الدِّينِيَّةِ قَدْ تَمَّتْ مَحَاصِرَتُهُمْ.
CLAUDIUS: I want to see the faces of the car-bombers on the first pages of tomorrow magazines, or I'll write your resignation with my hand. <sup>439</sup>	كلوديوس: أُرِيدُ أَنْ أَرَى وُجُوهَ مَفْجَرِي السِّيَّارَاتِ عَلَى الصَّفَحَاتِ الْأُولَى مِنْ جَرَائِدِ الْعَدُوِّ وَإِلَّا كَتَبْتُ اسْتِقْفَالَتَكَ بِيَدِي هَذِهِ.

When Hamlet enters to find his uncle praying, he discovers that Claudius is asking God to give him more money instead of regretting his murder and asking for forgiveness:

دُولَارَاتِ البِنْرُولِ! عَلِّمْنِي يَا رَبِّ مَعْنَى دُولَارَاتِ البِنْرُولِ. لَا رَبَّ لِي إِلَّا أَنْتَ. خُلِقْتَ عَلَى صُورَتِكَ وَاسْتَلْتَهُمُ الْهُدَايَةَ مِنْكَ. يَا مَنْ يَرَى كُلَّ شَيْءٍ وَيَسْمَعُ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ. (يُخْرَجُ خُرْمًا مِنْ الدُولَارَاتِ) هَذَا لِلْفَضَائِيَّةِ وَهَذَا لِأَقْمَارِكَ يَا رَبِّ. وَهَذَا لِلتَّعْلِيمِ وَهَذِهِ لِمَنَاهَجِكَ الرِّبَائِيَّةِ. أَنَّهُمْ مَتَخَمُونَ بِكُلِّ عَطَايَا السَّمَاءِ وَأَنَا الْعَرَبِيُّ الْقَدْرُ ابْدِدِ الْمَلَائِينَ لِأَعْبِدَكَ. أَنَا صَافٍ وَشَافٍ. أَتَوَسَّلُ إِلَيْكَ مَوْلَايَ لِأَتَجْعَلَكَ كَرِيهًا بِنَظْرِكَ. أَنَا لَا أَتَنَافَسُ مَعَكَ. أَنَا وَكِيلٌ. أَنَا مَلِكُ الْقَدَارَةِ أَصْنَعُ تَلْأَلًا مِنْ أَجْسَادِ البِشْرِ وَأَقْدَمُ الْأَضْحِيَّاتِ لَكَ. (يُنْظَرُ إِلَى الْعَرْشِ) لَا تَنْسَى مِنْ وَضْعِي هُنَا. (يَخْلَعُ قَمِيصَهُ) أَنَا أَمَامَكَ مَخْلُوقٌ اغْزَلْ. أَنْ أَنْفِي لَيْسَ أَكْثَرَ انْعَاكَا مِنْ قَبْلِ. وَعَيْنَايَ لَمْ تَزِدْ شَيْطَانِيَّةً عَمَّا كَانَتْ عَلَيَّ عِنْدَمَا ضَيَّقْتَنِي عَدَاوِي وَاشْتَبَطُونَ وَافِيُونَ السِّيَ آيٍ آيَةٍ؟ أُرِيدُ بِنِكَ الدُّوَلِيَّ فليصَاجعني الآن .

Oh God: Petrodollars. Teach me the meaning of petrodollars. I have no other God than you. I am created in your image. I seek guidance from you, the All-Seeing, the All-Knowing Master of Worlds, Prosperity and Order. (*He brings out stacks of dollars*) This is for the nation's TV station. This is for the surveillance networks across the capital. This is for education and for God's curriculum, and this is for me. Your agents have all the heaven gifts, and I am, the sluttish Arab, forgoing billions to worship you.... I beg you Lord; do not make me disagreeable to you. I do not compete with you. I do not try to be pure...I make hills of human bodies and sacrifice them to your glory. (*He points to his throne*) Remember! Who

<sup>439</sup> AlBassam, *Al-Hamlet Summit*, 30:43-30:49. The conversation is in Arabic language.

brought me here? Is it not charm, [sic] is it not consummate to slouch on silk cushions and fuck and be fucked by all what the flesh dollars can buy? (*Takes off his Shirt*) In front of your beneficence [sic], I am a naked mortal, full of awe: my ugliness is not unbearable, surely it is not? My nose is not so hooked. Are [sic] my eyes more diabolical than the time you offered me your Washington virgins and CIA opium? I want your World Bank to shaft me now.<sup>440</sup>



Figure 12: Claudius is praying to God while Hamlet is sneaking behind him. 1:01:35.

Claudius would not spare a moment to use terrorism as a charge against Hamlet and the PLB. He describes Hamlet as a threat to the new democracy: “This conflict began when Hamlet laid siege to our democracy, our values and our people through a brutal series of kidnapping and terrorist bombings that have killed many innocent victims and shocked the world community.”<sup>441</sup> The charge of terrorism became an excuse to smear Hamlet’s reputation, mobilize the nation against him, and give him out an image of innocence. Bush and Tony Blair used the same humanitarian strategy to conceal their interest in the region and compel countries like Canada, France, Australia, and other NATO countries to participate in the attack.

AlBassam also draws attention to the fact that religion has always been instrumentalized in West/East combat. The West grasped itself as a civilized Christian agency threatened by the barbaric Islamic East. Bush unconsciously accentuated this fact when he said, “This

<sup>440</sup>Ibid, 58:27-1:02:08.

<sup>441</sup>Ibid, 1:23:05.

crusade, this war on terrorism, is going to take a while.”<sup>442</sup> The attempt to see the war as a crusade was to mobilize the majority of the Western Christian powers against Bin Laden’s Islamic group. Still, the abuse of religion in the conflict is not only seen post-2001. It has always been there, and terrorism is usually tied to Islam in Western politics more than any other religion. In the 1960s, the Palestinian militia Fatah, defining itself as a resistance movement of the Israeli occupation, is designated under Israeli law and backed by the United States Congress as a terrorist organization.<sup>443</sup> The method is repeated for the Palestinian Hamas, born in 1983, which the USA requires several times from the Security Council to designate as a terrorist militia. A majority of countries refused the demands and voted against the decision. The Lebanese Hezbollah, the Arabic Muslim Brotherhood Party, the Iranian Al-Quds Militia suffered the exact charges.

The USA showed dualism in supporting the Judicial right of Israel in the Holy Land, disregarding the massive displacement that happened for Palestinians, and its insistence on labelling all the militias with the same brush as Islamic terrorist organizations created a kind of hostility to the USA in the region. American policies were often described as ‘The Great Satan’ by Arabs and Muslims alike. Once, the Iranian leader Ayatollah Khomeini called America ‘The Great Satan’ as a reaction to the American tendency to call Iran “The Axis of Evil.”<sup>444</sup> This religious conflict between the East and the West is seen in the play when Fortinbras announces his biblical right to rule the Arab country, “I, Fortinbras, have biblical claims upon this land.”<sup>445</sup>

Fortinbras almost achieved his economic and religious goals. However, he is willing to continue his war abroad against what he calls ‘terrorism.’ Fortinbras’ expansionary policy reflects the expansion wishes of the Israel government in the region, backed by the USA and many far-right Christians, under what they call ‘The Great Israel’ or the ‘Promised Land’ in the Old Testament, and which extends “from the flood of the River [Euphrates] to the Brook of Egypt.”<sup>446</sup> Yasser Arafat once paid attention to the two blue lines on the Israel

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<sup>442</sup>“Remarks by the President Upon Arrival,” Washington DC, September 16, 2001, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010916-2.html>.

<sup>443</sup>Jim Zanotti, *The Palestinians: Background and U.S. Relations* (Congressional Research Service, 2021), 2.

<sup>444</sup>Christopher Buck, *Religious Myths and Visions of America How Minority Faiths Redefined America's World Role*, (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2009), 147.

<sup>445</sup>AlBassam, *Al-Hamlet Summit*, 1:26:53. The quote is already said in English language.

<sup>446</sup>Isaiah 27: 11-13. Amplified Bible, Classic Edition.  
<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah%2027:11-13&version=AMPC>

flag, which represent the land between the River Nile in Egypt and the Euphrates River that flows through Syria and Iraq.<sup>447</sup>

Hamlet also demonstrates a religious attitude in the play, but his radicalism is directed by political motives other than religion. He says, “Violence generates princes, and princes generate violence.”<sup>448</sup> His hatred for his uncle’s oppression and Polonius’ hypocrisy compels him to join the PLB as a last resort to retain his right to the throne, “I’m Hamlet, son of Hamlet, and the rightful heir of the throne.”<sup>449</sup> He condemns silence in facing tyranny, “this silence will bury us all,”<sup>450</sup> and hates bureaucracy by promising that his rule “will crush the fingers of thieving bureaucrats and tame the debauchery.”<sup>451</sup> When the UN sent a letter at the end offering to “send peacekeeping troops to the region and organize a summit meeting by disinterested political figures” between Fortinbras and Claudius, Hamlet dismissed the letter as he believed that the UN covered Claudius’s oppression and did not stop Fortinbras from invading them. He says, “Invite your masters to a private showing to see the dead dancing before their killers. You can teach us the art of slaughter and the acquittal of the slaughter.”<sup>452</sup> In fact, Hamlet is motivated by politics and revenge more than by his Islamic ideology. He resorted to PLB and dressed like them because they are the only ones who are willing to help him restore his throne.

Like Hamlet, few Arab youths resorted to violence under a religious disguise. They used religion to give their political revolution a spiritual shape; especially that Islam does not condemn self-defence. It does not support violence, but anyone who dies in defending his right is considered a martyr who deserves Heaven in the afterlife. The reward in the afterlife for speaking truth to power becomes a consolation for them if they die. One of Prophet Mohammad’s saying: “He who dies while defending his property is a martyr; he who dies in defence of his own life is a martyr.”<sup>453</sup> This consolation is perhaps what makes some militias adopting religion in their conflicts with Israel like Hamas or Hezbollah.

It is not only Hamlet, but Ophelia is directed by her hatred of injustice she suffered from. Laertes threatened her by saying: “Tame this lust in your eyes, tame it, women,

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<sup>447</sup>Barry M. Rubin and Judith Colp Rubin, *Yasir Arafat: A Political Biography*, (Chelsea House Publishers, 2005), 241.

<sup>448</sup>AlBassam, *AL-Hamlet Summit*, 1:20:38

<sup>449</sup>Ibid, 1:20:08.

<sup>450</sup>Ibid, 1:19:56.

<sup>451</sup>Ibid, 1:20:11.

<sup>452</sup>Ibid, 1:21:42-1:21:55.

<sup>453</sup>Cited in Mahmud Matraji Nawawi and Amirah Zurain Matraji, *Riyad US-Saliheen*. ch. 235. Hadeeth.1356. (Beirut: Dar el-Fiker, 1993).

before I tame it for you.”<sup>454</sup> Polonius restricted her movement with Hamlet: “Don’t walk at dusk, don’t walk at night, and don’t walk at dawn. Whenever you walk, it will be within the orbit of my hearing.”<sup>455</sup> Even Gertrude practised double oppression on her by telling Ophelia, “No talk in politics, no religion. Talk about love, not sex [with Hamlet].”<sup>456</sup> The Arms Dealer sees her as a sexual object suffering the unfulfilled sexual desires. He tries to seduce her: “I can get you all what you desire. What do you desire?”<sup>457</sup> The Arms Dealer sexualizing Ophelia’s body is a Western inclination that appeared in the nineteenth century by the writings of many orientalists, to grasp “the Eastern females as the fairies of sensuality and seduction.”<sup>458</sup> The same image circulated before that in literary works like Shakespeare’s *Antony and Cleopatra*. Cleopatra appears as a cunning oriental woman who can seduce men for her political ends, and “the sexual conquest of Cleopatra by Antony symbolizes the domination of Egypt by Rome.”<sup>459</sup>

Ophelia announces that she will use the same body men tried to control as a bomb only to let her voice be heard, “I have tried to speak the language of women, I have tried to forgive. I served my tongue, but my silence bleeds from my mouth.” Her body becomes a weapon that helps her to “express what she could not express by language.”<sup>460</sup>

The implementation of bilingualism by AlBassam is a decolonizing strategy also. Arabic is spoken by the Arab actors, who also speak broken English with the Arms Dealer. The English speaking character is the only one who speaks English fluently. This mixing of Arabic and English is perplexing for the non-Arabic audience more than the Arabic speakers. The actors fuse English with their Arabic intonation, inject different metaphors and sign systems that are new for the English speakers and who came to hear how different people utter their Queen language. Still, the spoken language causes more puzzling and estrangement. They became in need of a sharper ear to follow up with words. Also, the constant shifting from Arabic to English discomfort them and force them to pay more attention to how the words are differently spoken, and let them feel the agony the Arab characters face in learning the English language. AlBassam says:

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<sup>454</sup> AlBassam, *AL-Hamlet Summit*, 14:06.

<sup>455</sup> Ibid, 14:37.

<sup>456</sup> Ibid, 39:08.

<sup>457</sup> Ibid, 48:31.

<sup>458</sup> Naji Queijan, “Sexualizing the Orient,” *Essays on Romanticism*, 14, no. 1 (January 2006): 7-25, [https://doi.org/https://www.academia.edu/18908462/Sexualizing\\_the\\_Orient](https://doi.org/https://www.academia.edu/18908462/Sexualizing_the_Orient).

<sup>459</sup> Nastaran Fadaei Heidari, “Re-Visiting Orientalism in Antony and Cleopatra,” *International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciencs*, 5, no. 1 (2020): 122-131, <https://doi.org/10.22161/ijels.51.25>, 123.

<sup>460</sup> AlBassam, *Al-Hamlet Summit*, 1:12: 50- 1:13:46.

I had wanted to put the English-speaking spectator inside the head of the Arab spectator in Kuwait and Tunisia...I had wanted the English spectator to experience the same sense of strangeness in familiarity the Arab one had felt and, above all, the same degree of implication in the events presented to them on stage.<sup>461</sup>

Arab audiences will not face the same perplexity in the mixing, for they came to celebrate their Arabic language and see how it can be used in a theatrical production to perform one of the world masterpieces. They do not feel threatened when English is spoken, for they know that the original language of the play is English. When some Arabic jokes, songs, sexual metaphors are used in the play; the Arabic audience feels the peculiarity in understanding these linguistic aspects more than the English speakers. This mixing, shifting and employing of Arabic linguistic aspects create a barrier between the English speakers and English. They were compelled to pay attention to the voices that came from Arabs.

English has always been seen as an imperial language and an aspect of colonial power. It became one of “the most basic markers of colonial authority,”<sup>462</sup> and “the most important vehicle through which that power fascinated and held the soul prisoner. The bullet was the means of physical subjugation. Language was the means of the spiritual subjugation.”<sup>463</sup> The attempt of the postcolonial playwrights to use syncretic language on their stages, through mixing the indigenous with the imperial language, is a deconstructing method of Logocentrism. In their ontological, epistemological, and metaphysical fields, the West tried to see English as a stable medium that would generate a fixed and stable meaning all the time. ‘Islamic terrorism’ became a signifier that has its fixed signification. It is not only that, but English always conceals binarism like West/East, white/ non-white, and civilized/barbaric. This binarism promoted by the English language helped the colonizers define themselves in contrast to the colonized ‘Other.’ In addition, the colonizers promoted their language through systems of jurisdiction, pedagogy, naming, and banning of the indigenous language. Shakespeare’s works have also been abused to train the indigenous Arab actors and contextualize the Arab audiences, and his works are conceived as the best medium to know the perfect Queen English. The idea of imposing English on Arabs aimed

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<sup>461</sup>Sulieman AlBassam, “Am I Mad? Creating The Al-Hamlet Summit,” *Theatre Forum*, 22, no. Winter (2003), 87.

<sup>462</sup>Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins, *Post-Colonial Drama: Theory, Practice, Politics*, (London: Routledge, 1996), 164.

<sup>463</sup>Ngöugöi wa Thiong’o, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*, (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1994), 9.

at creating linguistic mimicry by the indigenous people who will adopt the colonial cultures and values. They can replicate the English speakers, but they will not be equally the same.

The use of English by Postcolonial playwrights creates a sense of linguistics ambivalence, a term used by Homi K. Bhabha to indicate how the colonial discourse encouraged linguistic mimicry, but a mockery generates instead of that.<sup>464</sup> When Polonius has learned the English word ‘terrorist’ from the Arms Dealer, he used the term against the Arms Dealer himself. Polonius unknowingly calls him ‘a terrorist’ for stealing his pen. Another example is when the Arms Dealer tries to seduce Ophelia by asking her to give him *Kubla*, a kiss. He brags about knowing some Arabic words like *Kubla*, but Ophelia surprised him when she altered the word into *Kumbula*, which means an explosive bomb.

AlBassam also wanted to uncover how the colonizers used language to manipulate the colonized with their discourse. The Arms Dealer uses the language skilfully to flatter Claudius, “Your Highness. You look like a king”,<sup>465</sup> and praise Fortinbras in front of Claudius to threaten the latter that he is willing to deal with Fortinbras. When he meets Hamlet in the graveyard and Hamlet asks, “Who’s there?” the Arms Dealer replies “a friend.” He tells Hamlet, “I understand you perfectly in Arabic,”<sup>466</sup> and he wants to abuse Hamlet’s melancholy, saying, “Your father was a great man... We are alike. We prefer to be in the shadow... I was thinking perhaps we could be friends one day”<sup>467</sup> The Arms Dealer knows how to exploit Polonius’s greed by convincing him that the word ‘terrorism’ is a good source of money and a way to get rid of Hamlet.

The linguistic strategy of the Arms Dealer shows how English was used cunningly to manipulate Arabs. The labelling and naming system by the USA, and adopted by many Arab leaders, generated a lot of political problems in the region. Many Arab nationalists have been accused of terrorism, tracked, and deprived of entering Europe and America. Some Arabs politicians demanded to define the term terrorism, limit its use, and disconnect it from any religion. Despite that, Muslims and Arabs are still suffering the consequences worldwide. If they are not terrorists, they can be potential terrorists. AlBassam in his adaptation wants to raise such questions about the validity of the term terrorism, who is the real a terrorist and how can political oppression in the region, not only religion, turn people to violence? If both Hamlet and Ophelia demonstrate Islamic fundamentalism at the end,

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<sup>464</sup> Ashcroft et al., *Post-Colonial Studies the Key Concepts*, 10.

<sup>465</sup> AlBassam, *AL-Hamlet Summit*, 21:26.

<sup>466</sup> *Ibid*, 16:42.

<sup>467</sup> *Ibid*, 28:43-29:14.

they are also pushed to violence by all unbearable oppression they experienced before.

If Hamlet in Shakespeare's play is defined as a white English and Christian character, AlBassam's Hamlet is conversely a non-White Arabic and Muslim prince. Both characters can be set off against one another in a binary opposition existing in real life. Shakespeare's Hamlet exemplifies heroism, intellectualism, civilization, and wisdom found in the Western persona. AlBassam's Hamlet is the opposite of all that. He is the imagined fundamentalist, extremist and backward Arab incited by his apocalyptic Islamic vision. Still, what is common between them is the fact that each Hamlet uses religion for his own purpose. The Christian Hamlet's reluctance to commit suicide and kill his uncle is enticed by his fear to be a sinner, but he still can condemn the murder of his uncle, the illegal marriage of his mother which is described religiously as 'damned incest,' and women's immorality that can be purified in a nunnery upon his religious beliefs.<sup>468</sup> Christianity is the general framework that directs Hamlet's behaviour and controls his thoughts, actions and morals in Shakespeare's play. Similarly, religion directs Hamlet's action in AlBassam's play, but in a negative way that causes Hamlet's remorse at the end after he discovers the destruction he causes for his nation. It blinds him and causes his sin instead of rescuing him. Claudius shows in his pray how a Christian sinner asks for real forgiveness in Shakespeare's play, while he prays for petrodollars in AlBassam's play asking for more power. Ophelia's transformation into a more religious Muslim female and her misconception of Islamic purification motivate her to bomb herself killing civilians. In both plays, it is the type of religion that can humanize and civilize or degrade and demote us. This fact persists in the conscience of many Westerners, especially when it comes to Islam and Muslims. AlBassam reverses this Western religious discourse that tries to perpetuate Islamophobia. He draws the attention to other factors that might turn human being to violence. Also, he uncovers the religious hypocrisy that shows Christianity as a peaceful religion and condemned Islam as a religion of hatred. Hamlet in the play becomes a symbol for all Arab and Muslim youths demanding liberation, and who were unjustly accused by the USA and Arab regimes of terrorism after the 9/11 and before.

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<sup>468</sup>Omar Abdulaziz Alsaif says that "This kind of marriage was considered illegal at the time, and is described as 'damned incest'. Accordingly, one of the main reasons for Hamlet's aversion to his uncle is this 'damned incest', a religious reason." In Omar Abdulaziz Alsaif, "The Significance of Religion in Hamlet," *Journal of English and Literature*, 3, no. 6 (October 8, 2012): 132-135, 133.

## **Chapter Three**

### **The Reworking of *Hamlet* in the Arab Spring (2010 – Present)**

### 3.1.

#### The Arab Uprisings

The Arab Spring (In Arabic: الربيع العربي 2010 ) is considered as one of the most important turning points in the modern political history of MENA. It is embodied in the mass upheavals and revolutions provoked by Arab youths to overthrow Arab regimes after a long period of political and economic decline. The uprisings came mainly as a result of a long history of repressive military rules, cover-up policies, corruptions, restriction of liberties, and the jailing and executions of dissidents; while on the economic side, unemployment, patronage, taxes, the lack of adequate salaries, and the monopolization of wealth by the ruling classes were also significant motives for the demonstrations. These factors, in addition to the social injustice towards women, pushed people to hit the streets demanding profound reforms. The Arab Spring started in 2010 and can be divided into two major phases:

**Table 2: The First Phase started at the end of 2010 and continued to 2012.**

Country	The Period	Main Results
Tunisia	December 17– January 14, 2011	The Tunisian president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali fled the country to Saudi Arabia on December 14.
Egypt	January 25 – February 11, 2011	Mohammad Hosni Mubarak stepped down, and Mohammed Mursi was elected for the presidency a few months later. On June 13, 2013, Abdel Fatah Assisi performed a coup d'état with the army against Mursi and became the president of Egypt.
Libya	February 17 – Present	The Libyan president Mu'ammer Kaddafi was assassinated on October 20, 2011.
Yemen	January 15 – February 23, 2011	Yamani President Ali Abdullah Saleh stepped down and left for Oman.
Syria	March 18, 2011–Present	Syrian Free Army was established against Al-Assad's state Army. Thousands were killed, and three millions were displaced.
<b>Sustained Revolutions</b>		

Bahrain	February 14 – March 15, 2011	The Bahrain regime was aided by Peninsula Shield Forces from nearby Gulf countries and managed to end demonstrations.
Jordan	January 14 – January 25, 2011	Peaceful protests against corruption led to the change of Marouf AL Bakeet's government
Saudi Arabia	January 28, 2011– January 2012	Many Saudis were captured, including the Shiats' Shiek Nemer AL-Nemer, who was hanged in 2016 after the government accused him of terrorism.
Iraq	2015-2016	Sustained by the police.

**Table 3: The Second Phase ( 2018 – 2021).**

Country	Period	Main Result
Sudan	December 18, 2018– April 11, 2012	The Sudanese army removed the president Omar AL-Basheer and a council made of soldiers and civilians led Sudan.
Algeria	February 22, 2019– May 15, 2019	Abdul Azzez Boutafleegah resigned, and Abul Majeed Taboun became the president.
Lebanon	October 17 2019– Present	The government promised political reforms.

The spark of the Arab Spring started in Tunisia, when the Tunisian Mohammad Bouazzery set fire to himself on September 17, 2010, as a protest to confiscating his food wagon by the police. Thousands of Tunisian youths revolted in solidarity with the death of Bouazzery, demanding Zein AL-Abdeen Ben Ali to renounce the presidency. After five months of confrontations, AL-Abdeen fled to France then to Saudi Arabia on January 14, 2011.

After the success of the demonstrations in Tunisia, the Arab Spring spread to other countries and succeeded in overthrowing five other Arab regimes. In Egypt, the revolution started on January 25, 2011, where Tahrir Square in Cairo filled with Egyptian males and females, and took down the Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak on February 17, 2011. Muammar Al-Qadhdhafi was killed in Libya on November 11, 2011, and the Yemeni

president Ali Abdullah Saleh agreed to the peaceful transfer of his rule after the eight months revolution. On April 11, 2019, the Sudanese people succeeded in removing their president Omar Al-Basheer. The demonstrations also reached out to Jordan, Iraq, Algeria, Kuwait, Bahrain, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Djibouti, and Palestine but failed to overthrow the presidents and kings. However, the Arab Spring is renewing, and nobody can tell when it will end.



Figure 13: The picture for different demonstrations in some countries; Tunisia, Egypt, Syria and Morocco. Masrawi Magazin.

[https://www.masrawy.com/news/news\\_press/details/2017/1/2/1007974/الربيع-العربي/6-سنوات-من-الربيع-العربي](https://www.masrawy.com/news/news_press/details/2017/1/2/1007974/الربيع-العربي/6-سنوات-من-الربيع-العربي)

The Arab Spring is not a spur-of-the-moment decision. It came after a long-overdue of peaceful demands of reformation, exemplified in peaceful gatherings in streets and squares, (Tahrir square in Egypt, Fourth circle in Jordan, Pearl Square in Bahrain, Freedom Square in Yemen, to mention a few), and demanded the involvement of people in decision-making, the creation of jobs and equal opportunities, and the fair distribution of wealth. People chanted for system reforms, *Alshaeb Yureed Islah Anezam* “People demand system reforms,” but their demands were met with ignorance, intentional procrastination, and force-use threats. The conflict gradually mounted as the stubborn regimes resorted to repressive tactics to silence people, leaving no space for peaceful negotiations. The youths

raised the ceiling of their demands to request immediate bringing down of their rulers. The chant: *Alshaeb yurid 'iisqat alnizam* (People want to bring down the regime) became a frequent slogan for the youths in different countries. Since that time, many young people, male and female, have been arrested, killed, and many run to other countries. People stood right against tanks, used clothes as tear gas masks, and opened their houses for the injured. Their determination was not only surprising for the regimes who bet on the youth's retreat, but remaining in the streets for months mobilized and encouraged other people to join them.

The employment of many strategies marked the success of these uprisings in some countries like Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, and Libya. First, Arab youths insisted on the unification of people, whether Muslims, Christians, nationalists, or liberals, and they discarded ideological disagreements that divided the Arab region in the previous decades. Before the Arab Spring, the Arab World sank into ideological divisions mostly between Sunny/Shiat in Iraq and Saudi Arabia, Conservatives/Liberals in Tunis, Muslim/Christian in Lebanon and Egypt, West/East in Jordan, Baathists / Non-Baathists in Syria and Iraq, and Houthee /Sunny in Yemen. The regimes created a hierarchy among people, nourished cleavages, and mobilized people against each other. However, people in the Arab Spring realized that if they want their revolutions to succeed and achieve political and economic equality, they should bring down all ideological splits. Second, the lack of leadership allowed the revolutions to continue. Youths refused their uprisings to be confiscated and led by particular parties or any political force that might include and exclude people from power after the success of the revolution. Third, the Arab Spring started as 'Social Media Spring.' This harnessing of the virtual world of Facebook and Twitter at the very beginning allowed the youths to solidify more and decrease casualties since the early confrontations with the regimes might destroy their revolution in its crib.

What also distinguishes the Arab uprisings is the presence of female participants in the demonstrations alongside men. Their participation reached out to 50% in Tunisia, Egypt, and Lebanon; while, in Yemen, Libya, and Iraq, which are more conservative countries, the percentage was less than that. However, women's participation was unprecedentedly shocking for most people as they have always been neglected in the Arab patriarchal culture. It is not only that, but their role transformed from participation to leading the uprisings at the end. They used their bodies as shields for men, hospitalized the injured, provided food, and slept for nights away from their homes and children. They were dragged in the streets, sexually harassed, and many were killed in some countries. Also,

women's role was mostly exemplified in the use of Social Media as they uploaded videos and pictures, mobilized other women to participate, and arranged for the time and place of gatherings.

Even though the demonstrations were bloody and violent in all Arab countries with different stages, the demonstrations have always been associated with a sense of hope in contrast to the Post-Nasserism that was characterized by fear and despair. The hope of the youths to achieve drastic political and economic change and return to the boomed historical period of Arab nationalism (1950-1970) kept some demonstrations alive. Even in countries where the Arab Spring failed, like in Syria, or confiscated by coups d'état, like in Egypt, people kept their hope alive that one day a change would happen.

The theatre played a significant role in the Arab demonstrations. It created a platform for the youths to express their goals and mobilize other people. Women also used theatre to reflect on the maltreatment and the political exclusion they experienced by patriarchal regimes. Theatre, at this period, is characterized as political in which political dramas were performed. *Hamlet* has appeared during this period through the reworking of many playwrights. The reworkings were mainly political that seek political changes, and Arab Hamlets at this time can be marked by three major characteristics. First, while Hamlet in the Post-Nasserists era was characterized by fragility, haplessness, and despair, Hamlet of the Arab spring was born as a hero again; a symbol of the Arab youth who terminates the tyrannical ruler. In works like *The Syrian Hamlet* by Urwa Al-Araby and *In Waiting For Hamlet* by Hayder Alshateri, Hamlet is envisioned as a national hero who can act when time is out of joint and put things right again. Second, Hamlet became an icon of social solidarity, a hero who can unify people against oppressive regimes. *Following the Footsteps of Hamlet* by the Palestinian Kamel EL-Basha calls for the Palestinian political sectors and parties to discard all divisions and unify to free Palestine. Third, Hamlet appears in the Arab Feminist Theatre in this period, especially through Ophelia's character, to reflect the image of the strong Arab woman that broke silence against oppression practiced by males for a long time. In Daraji's *Hamlet vs. Ophelia*, Ophelia appears as an aggressive and tough character. She mocks Hamlet, manipulates him and kills him at the end.

Thematically speaking, the difference between reworking Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in Post-Nasserism and the period of the Arab Spring can be envisioned in four dichotomies: anti-heroism vs. heroism, division and the neglected Pan-Arabism vs. unity and Pan-Arabism, the weak and marginalized vs. the strong Arab women, and artistic censorship vs.

artistic freedom. Also, in terms of the reworking, it is noticed that most of the reworking of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in Post-Nasserism appeared as textual rewriting written abroad due to the censorship applied on stages and theatre houses. In contrast, most of the reworkings of *Hamlet* were local stage adaptations in the period of the Arab Spring. This is part of the political freedom achieved by the uprisings. Concerning the style, the adaptations in the Arab Spring are full of sarcasm that is not directed to Hamlet, like what is observed in Post-Nasserism, but only to the weak Claudius, who becomes a representation of the weak Arab regimes. Also, most of these adaptations are written in the vernacular, different Arabic slangs, to bridge the gap between theatres and the commoners who became interested in dramas in this period more than before. The reworkings in Post-Nasserism were all in the Arabic Fusha, the classical Arabic language that suited Arab academics and the elites more than the commoners at that time.

## 3.2.

### The Return of the Arab Hero

One of the impressive attributes of the Arab Spring is the acute sense of the political positivism and hope regained among Arabs after a lean period of political despotism and economic discomfort. This part aims at investigating theme of heroism in four reworkings of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* produced in the early period of the Arab Spring. It briefly traces how Hamlet is dramatized as a hero in Hayder Abdullah AL-Shatery's *In Waiting for Hamlet* as a rewriting In Iraq, Mohammad Farouq 's *Goodbye Hamlet* and Hani Affefi's *I'm Hamlet* as stage adaptations in Egypt, and Urwa Al-Araby's *The Syrian Hamlet* as a stage adaptation in Syria. It analyses how the four plays were impacted by the sense of political hope and heroism that accompanied the Arab uprisings and seen in the Arab youths fighting their oppressive regimes for political change. Finally, it intends to highlight how the Arab Hamlets are meant to be dramatic icons and symbols for the brave Arab revolutionaries fighting to achieve justice.

#### 3.2.1. Bravery and Heroism in the Arab Spring

Arab youths unprecedentedly signalled ruthless determination and sheer persistence defying police brutality in different Arab countries. The regimes spared no effort to crush the mass uprisings; arming themselves with live ammo and tear gas that were extensively fired on the exposed crowds in countries like Egypt and Tunisia. In Yemen, Syria and Libya, the clash was more deadly when the regimes used tanks and aircrafts systematically and deliberately to annihilate the rebellions. Civilians devised their own defending armies and guerrillas in facing the pro-regime murderers. The aggressive acts of violence in the Arab Spring diversified, but all the upheavals were gory and hard-fought.

Despite the atrocities, deaths and massive displacements unevenly occurred, Arabs in these countries were heroically determined to alter the political status quo and dethrone their current leaders. The accomplishment of the spring in Tunisia and Egypt in overthrowing Zín el-Ábidín ben Ali and Mohammad Hosni Mubarak's regimes successfully, early in 2011, inspired fervent and contagious hope in the Arab nations observing closely the outcomes of the revolutions. Soon, the protests went viral in the Middle East and reached to unexpected countries. Najeeb Jarad comments on this heroism, saying: "The Arab Revolutions 2011 surprised the world and caused a turning point in

history. It breathed into the body of the Arab-Islamic World a spirit of change and instilled in the oppressed nations a hope of liberation from the captivity of the tyrannical regimes.”<sup>469</sup>



Figure 14: Some of the excessive power used by the regimes in the Arab Spring. Taken respectively from <https://arabi21.com/story/706163> سحب-قنابل-الغاز-تغطي-عدة-مدن-بمصر  
[https://arabic.rt.com/middle\\_east/962324](https://arabic.rt.com/middle_east/962324)-الأمم-المتحدة-كلفتة-الدمار-سوريا  
<https://atlasscoop.com/m/news21696.html>

The bravery and true heroism demonstrated by Arabs in enduring pain for the sake of freedom and justice were celebrated and praised in Arabic poetry, music and theatre. Dramas produced post-2010 echoed the sense of hope in the region, and Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* had its share in the political optimism through textual rewritings and stage adaptations by the pro-demonstration Arab playwrights and stage directors. The Jordanian Sami Al-Ardeh, for instance, draws the connection between Hamlet’s choices between (To be, or not, to be) with the Libyans facing cross-roads of whether to act or in-act against Muammer Kadhafi in 2011. He compliments the Libyans’ heroism by saying: “Here are the Libyan people carrying the slogan "to be or not to be" in their struggle with the regime that

<sup>469</sup>My translation from the Arabic text. Najeeb Jarad, *Nazariyat Nihāyat Al-Tārīkh ‘inda Frānsīs Fūkūyāmā: ‘alā Miḥakk Al-Tārīkh Al-Ānī*, (Tunis: al-Dar al-Tunisiyah lil-Kitab, 2013), 17.

was established 42 years ago.”<sup>470</sup> The Egyptian Eman Ali also spotlighted the same analogy in her report ‘Hamlet in Tahrir Square,’ but this time between Hamlet’s courage and the brave Egyptian males and females who went down to streets demanding the dethroning of Mubarak. She starts her report asking: “In what picture can we imagine Hamlet in the heart of Tahrir Square?”<sup>471</sup> Ali later in her report hints at the fact that Hamlet is a real symbol for the Egyptians who slept in Tahrir square for weeks fighting heroically the oppressor to set things right in the rotten Egypt. In most of the reworkings that appeared between 2010 and 2012, early in the Arab Spring, Hamlet is dramatized as a signifier and a symbol of the heroic Arabs who went down to streets and tolerated the pain for the sake of fixing what “is rotten in their states.”<sup>472</sup>

### 3.2.1.1. *Hamlet in Egypt*

The utilization of Shakespeare’s prince as a signifier of the Arab heroes in facing oppressive regime is seen in two stage adaptations, *Goodbye Hamlet* and *I’m Hamlet* that were produced in Egypt a few months after the outset of the Egyptian spring. The Egyptians started their spring against Mubarak in January 2011, and they were faced by firm resistance by the regime. Thousands of soldiers targeted people in different cities by throwing tear-gas canisters and rubber bullets to divide them. The authority also cut electricity and internet lines to stop people from gathering. Nevertheless, the revolution quickly expanded to other cities and the ‘Tahrir Square’ in the middle of Cairo became the gathering point where Egyptian males and females slept for weeks. This quick expansion of the revolution made the police and the army more aggressive in using tanks and live ammunition this time. Upon the youth’s insistence, the regimes’ police started withdrawing from main cities, and by February 11<sup>th</sup>, people reached to the presidential Palace in Cairo and surrounded it, calling out slogans like *Yasqut, Yasqut Hosni Mubarak* (Fall, Fall Hosni Mubarak) and *Alshaeb yurid eisqat alnizam* (People want to overthrow the regime). Mubarak was forced to step down on February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2011 due to the Egyptians’ determination.

During the Egyptian uprising, music, dancing, and performative shows were seen in the streets and squares aiming to satirize the regime, inspire the youths, and show the police

<sup>470</sup>Sami Al-Ardeh, “Ma Bayen Mashrou Al-Sharq AlAwasat WA Alwehdah AL-Arabiyah,” *Arabic People*, November 8, 2011, <http://arabic.people.com.cn/99002/101902/7312106.html>.

<sup>471</sup>Eman Ali, “Hamlet Fee Maydan Al-Tahreer,” *RoseAlyousef Magazine*, June 10, 2016, <https://magazine.rosaelyoussef.com/21242/هاملت-في-ميدان-التحرير>.

<sup>472</sup> Marcellus describes Denmark as “Something is rotten in the state of Denmark.” In Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, I. iv. 95.

people's insistence. Theatres, also, had its role in inspiring Egyptians, and most of the dramas performed were sarcastic, short and acted in the Egyptian vernacular to suit the public. Alike *وداعاً هاملت*, (*Wda'an Hamlet, Goodbye Hamlet*), a one-hour-twenty-minute stage adaptation directed by Mohammad Farouq and Ahmad Rassem early in 2012 at the House-appear Theatre in Cairo, was acted in the Egyptian slang, and except for the some lines uttered occasionally from Hamlet's speeches, the play bears no similarities to Shakespeare's play.

The actors are dressed in modern Arabic clothes. The stage is poorly designed as a graveyard with four graves and one shovel. A cross, a representation for Christen graves, and a crescent, a symbol for Islamic graveyard, are hanged on the stage's back wall to preach unity between Christians and Muslims.



Figure 15: The stage is arranged as a Graveyard; taken from the performance 7:08.

The play is metatheatrical in that it starts with nine actors and actresses rehearsing Shakespeare's *Hamlet* for a forthcoming performance. The rehearsing in the play begins from the Gravedigger scene in Shakespeare's play when Hamlet asks one of the gravediggers "whose grave's this?" Hamlet is told that the grave and the skull belong to Yorick, the old King's jester.<sup>473</sup> The rehearsing, then, is continuously interrupted by other actors making the main actor, who is supposed to play Hamlet, angry. The main actor left the stage. After his departure, the director requires from other actors to pick one who can play Hamlet and rescue the upcoming show, "One of you must do Hamlet."<sup>474</sup> The director then leaves the actors perplexed as they recognize that no one will be competent enough to

<sup>473</sup>Mohammad Farouq and Ahmad Rassem. *وداعاً هاملت* (Media Baladi, 2012), [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ru8v9af\\_-Eo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ru8v9af_-Eo).

<sup>474</sup>Ibid, 12:14. The Arabic text is *وَأَجِدْ مِنْكُمْ حَيِّعْمَلْ هَامِلْت*.

memorize all Hamlets' speeches in a short time. The play then proceeds as the actors and actresses alternatively struggle to act Hamlet's role, but they miserably fail.

During their search for the appropriate actor, they engage in comic and sarcastic dialogues in which they tease one another. The play takes another direction when they earnestly start reflecting on their miserable lives in the stifling political and economic atmosphere in Egypt. This turns the play into a psychodrama in which all of them spontaneously dramatize their problems before the audience, and it turned out from the dialogues that most of the actors have decided to join the performance only as a source of secondary income to support their low-income families. A couple of the performers are a husband and wife who feel desperate that the play might not be performed. The actress asks: "Won't be there any payment?" and her husband answers, "It seems no."<sup>475</sup> Another actor is a farmer from the Upper Egypt who came to act as a background actor in the play to support himself after the government refuses to compensate for his damages. Other issues like love, marriage and female problems in suffocating Egypt are also sarcastically reflected on during the dialogues. An actress comments that she lost her lover by the difficult economic situation and after she had already married a rich man. She regrets her decision as she believes that money should not be everything in this life:

أَنَا مُمَكِّنٌ كُنْتُ حَتَّجُوزَ أَحْسَنَ جَوَازِهِ. بَتَحْلَمُ بِبِهَا أَيُّ بِنْتٍ. حَاسَةً حَالَةَ تِجَارَةِ رَخِيصَةً. بَيْعُهُ وَشُرُوهَ لِلْبَيْدِ فَكَثِيرٌ.

I could have married in the best way a lady can dream of. I feel that I became a silly trade, sold and bought for the one who pays much.<sup>476</sup>

When the male actors fail to act Hamlet, one of the actresses suggests that Hamlet can be played by a female, "why not an actress plays the hero?"<sup>477</sup> She starts playing Hamlet in her Egyptian accent, but she fails to memorize the whole speech. What is also remarkable in the play is that all the characters only memorize the same a few prompts of Hamlet's soliloquies. They find themselves stuck in the same lines like "I will take revenge," "Who could bear the whips and scorns of time," and "who's grave is this?"<sup>478</sup> These are the only a few lines of Hamlet's speech stuck in their memories, but the words reveal what is also stuck in their subconscious. Their mastering of these lines exclusively proves their

<sup>475</sup>Ibid, 18: 13 – 17. The Arabic text is: الرَّوَجَةَ: مَفِيشَ دَفْعَ فُلُوسٍ الزَّوْجَةَ: الضَّاهِرَ لَا.

<sup>476</sup>Ibid, 33:27- 33:44.

<sup>477</sup>Ibid, 19:54. "الِيشَ مَا تَبَاشُ وَحَدَّهَ سِتِّ".

<sup>478</sup>These quotations of Hamlet speech repeatedly heard in the play. These are the only lines said in Arabic Fusha in the play. Translated as "سَاتَارُ لَكَ يَا وَالِدِي"

revolutionary awareness and their willingness and passionate enthusiasm to rebel.

The image of Egypt, which the actors give, is a rather suffocating country where the regime's economic and political policies destroy their dreams and hopes. At the same time, it is stuck in their mind that a hero can solve all their problems once they find him/her in real life. Their little journey, searching for the hero actor, echoes the way Egyptians are searching for a person who can solve their problems and free them from all their agonies. When some characters became desperate of doing the show towards the end, an actor comes up with a clever idea to get over the verbal issue. They can perform a miming play in which all of them will wear masks and silently dance. All of them will play the role of Hamlet, and the dance will be enough to rescue the show and deliver the essential message of a revolutionary hero who terminates the usurper king.



Figure 16: The Mask dance at the end, 1:12: 50. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ru8v9af\\_-Eo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ru8v9af_-Eo)

The play's conclusion transmits an important message for the Egyptian audience. Anyone from the Egyptians can act the rebellious hero despite the difficulties he/she might face. The mask-dancing is a coded message of that, and the Egyptian Hamlet must be everywhere fighting to rescue Egypt from the claws of the corrupted regime.

Another Egyptian adaptation that duplicate the same image of the hero Hamlet, but in a different method, is Hani Affefi's *أَنَا هَامَلِتْ* (*Ana Hamlet/ I'm Hamlet*). The play is a one-hour- thirty-minute stage performance that also appeared in 2012. Affefi employed cinematic features at the beginning by using a backstage screen and taking the audience outside the stage to the main actor's house. We can see the poor actor in his modest house doing some of his daily routines like waking up in the morning and listening to early news.

Two voices are heard: one from the TV broadcasting a football match mixed with a voice from the radio broadcasting news about the Egyptian revolution. The main actor leaves his modest house then, eats his breakfast from a cheap food wagon in the street, and sits in a café chatting with the poor people. Nothing is heard of their talks. The camera moves in different angles capturing the faces of the poor Egyptians who seem unemployed and agonized. It also shows street vendors waiting for someone to buy their goods, a few people pushing a broken old car, and a crowd running to catch the bus. The actor heads to the subway, and during his walk, he comes across an old book exhibited in a bookshop. The camera comes closer, and we can see the title *Hamlet Amir al-Denmark (Hamlet: Prince of Denmark.)* The actor buys the book and rides a crowded train cabin where he starts reading the book among the crowds. Suddenly, the cabin turns into a stage, and the riders become the main actors in the play. It is this time that the play moves to the stage. The screen video is stopped, lights turned on, and the audience finds the actors immediately acting Shakespeare's first scene. The play then follows Shakespeare's plot and almost the same structure except for the Egyptian Arabic slang that replaces Arabic Fushah, the classical Arabic. Other alterations can be seen when Polonius reads Hamlet's love messages to Ophelia in front of Claudius and Gertrude from a mobile phone. The play-within-the-play in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is also altered to a break-dance.





Figure 17: The Pictures show the camera following the main actor in the street, taken from the first three minutes of the show, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2HCxaps6wGY>.

The tone in the play is mostly sarcastic. Hamlet mocks the King in most of his speech, and Polonius, acted by the comedian Bayoumi Fouad, is also the most sarcastic figure in the play, especially in his description of Hamlet's probable madness. Sometimes, the sarcasm is overtone to the extent that some a few critics disliked this sarcasm for degrading the seriousness of Shakespeare's tragedy. Qasem Madee commented on the language used in the play as:

It is assumed that the author of this elegant and expressive work should not play with such a calculated poetic work and reformulate it in the vernacular Egyptian dialect, moving away from the beauty of the Arabic Fusha, as if we are in an Egyptian village.<sup>479</sup>

Madee's hostility to this theatrical dialectism, that replaced the classical Arabic in the play, does not prevent him from seeing the significance of the play as a political one:

Apart from that, it was successful. It began with the dream of "Hamlet" as he is struggling with himself on his bed, with voices emanating from behind the curtain asking him to get rid of what is going on in our Arab World of killing / destruction / and control by the West. He rejects all the falls slogans pursued by the Arab regimes.<sup>480</sup>

I agree with Madee's idea of the shortcoming of the Egyptian dialectic to reflect the beauty of the poetic text, but from another point, if we look at the play and the type of audience who attended theatres in and after the time of the Egyptian revolution, we can excuse Affefi for this linguistic alteration. Theatre houses began to be visited by the

<sup>479</sup>My translation from the Arabic text which comes as following:  
وَيُفْتَرَضُ مِنْ مَعَدَّ هَذَا الْعَمَلِ الرَّاقِي وَالْمُعْتَبَرِ أَنْ لَا يَتَلَاَعَبَ مَعَ هَكَذَا عَمَلِ شَاعِرِي مَحْسُوبٌ وَيُعِيدُ صِيَاغَتِهِ بِاللَهْجَةِ الْمِصْرِيَّةِ الدَّارِجَةِ مَبْتَدَأً عَنِ  
جَمَالِيَّةِ اللَّغَةِ الْعَرَبِيَّةِ وَكَأَنَّهَا فِي إِخْدَى الْقُرَى الْمِصْرِيَّةِ.

<sup>480</sup>Qasem Madee, "Ana Wahamalt Shrikan Fi Alhuzn Alaa Masrah Markaz Alaibidae Alfaniyi,"  
*Almothaqef Arabic Association*, October 10, 2010, <http://ns1.almothaqaf.com/qadayaama/qadayaama-09/6238-2009-10-10-01-50-02>.

majority of the public at this time as a celebration of the artistic freedom and as a way to see dramas that touch upon their social and political issues. Besides, the Egyptian dialect is the domineering dialect spoken by the public in the street, and Affefi intends to simplify language instead of making it a barrier. It is not only Affefi who used this dialectic, but most of the theatrical performances in Egypt did the same in a try to bring theatres closer to the commoners and release it from the hand of the elites. The Moroccan theatrical critic AL-Jabari defended this dialectism used in social dramas as this:

Writing [and acting] the play in the vernacular receives a wide response from the audience who sees in it his actual life and his real issues; since it is the language of his daily life, and because the modern play, if written in the classical language, will not receive from the contemporary audience the response and the sympathy that it receives if it is staged and written in the vernacular.<sup>481</sup>

It is not only theatrical dialectism used by Affefi to reflect Egyptians' everyday life in the play, but the employment of the camera in such cinematic aspect at the beginning, which I see as a new strategy in the Arab theatre, is also an attempt to connect theatre to the Egyptian's real life after 2010. The actor who played Hamlet is one of the commoners whose life looks like that of any poor Egyptian struggling to achieve a better life. The actor's readiness to act *Hamlet* does not come from his love for theatre only, but from his potential to create justice in the corrupted Egypt. *Hamlet* would resonate with the Egyptians more than any of Shakespeare's plays because it materializes the Egyptian struggle against Mubarak's regime, which, as many believed, wrecked Egypt, destroyed its basic infrastructure of health and education, and forced millions of Egyptians to migrate to countries where they find more proper life. It is not only that Mubarak changed Egypt from a republic into *jumrumalaky* (turning the republic into a kingdom by inheriting the throne) and was preparing one of his sons to inherit leadership, but he also gave absolute authority to the army and the police who widely abused such authority and oppressed people under false slogans of Arabism and nationalism.

Even though Hamlet is killed in the last scene in Affefi's play, he still demonstrates heroism in his fighting the tyrannical Claudius. This conclusion is a lamentation of the

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<sup>481</sup>Najeeb AL-Jabari, "Fanu Almasrah Wa Eshkaliyat Allughha," *AL-Faysel Journal*, no. 321 (May 2003): 20-21, 21. My translation from the Arab text that comes as follow:

أَنَّ كِتَابَةَ وَتَمَثِيلَ الْمَسْرُجِيَّةِ بِالْعَامِيَّةِ تَلْفَى اسْتِجَابَةً وَاسِعَةً لَدَى الْجُمْهُورِ الَّذِي يَرَى فِيهَا حَيَاتِهِ الْفَعْلِيَّةَ وَقَضَائِيهِ الْوَاقِعِيَّةَ لِكُونِهَا لُغَةً حَيَاتِيَّةَ الْيَوْمِيَّةِ وَلِأَنَّ الْمَسْرُجِيَّةَ الْعَصْرِيَّةَ إِذَا كَتَبَتْ بِاللُّغَةِ الْفُصْحَى لَمْ تَلْفَى مِنْ الْجُمْهُورِ التَّجَاوُبَ وَالتَّعَاطُفَ الَّذَيْنِ تَلْفَاهُمَا لَوْ كَانَتْ بِالْعَامِيَّةِ.

hundreds of the heroic Egyptians killed by the regime in 2011, and Hamlet demanding Horatio to tell his story in the Egyptian slang at the end, *Sadikee Horatio*, Akber Annas an *Qesaty*, (translated as: My friend Horatio! Please tell people about my story) shows how he believes that the story of the heroic Egyptians should be narrated to the next generations.

### 3.2.1.2. *Hamlet in Syria*

*The Syrian Hamlet* (In Arabic: *هاملت السوري*) by the Syrian Urwa AL-Araby is another Arabic adaptation produced in Syria in the same year the Syrians decide to revolt against Al-Assad's Alawaite regime in 2011. Unlike the Egyptian adaptations, AL-Araby's play is a very close adaptation to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, and it is performed in Arabic verses based on Jabra Ibrahim Jabra's Arabic translation. Except for the entrance of the main actor from the audience's gate, breaking the fourth wall between the actors and the audience, the play closely adheres to Shakespeare's plot and structure. Some famous actors participated in the show like Wassem Kazez in the role of Hamlet, Yousef AL-megbel as Claudius, Mohammad Jarah as Polonius, and Arwa Amreen as Gertrude and Batool Mohammad as Ophelia. The scenery and dress, done by Zahra Al-Araby, is almost analogous to the Elizabethan time.<sup>482</sup> A catwalk stage is added to the front part of the main stage giving more space to the characters.

Even though the play is a restaging of Shakespeare's play as it is, the chief influence of the performance can be attributed to the fact that the performance is one of the a few Syrian adaptations staged in the Ba'athy Syria after 1963. The play's revolutionary theme and the story of throne usurpation that could mimic the Ba'athist coup d'état in 1963 made it distasteful by the Ba'athists. However, the Syrian Spring brought much freedom for theatres when the Syrian Free Army expelled Al-Assad's army from some cities. At that time, theatrical performances became a tool to express the gained-by-force freedom and a way to reflect on the Syrians' struggle for liberty from the regime's control.

The restaging of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* without alteration by AL-Araby still carries a message of heroism to the Syrian audience. Even though the Syrian Hamlet is still suffering procrastination and madness, he is considered a hero whose action is agitated by his pure enmity for despotism and his desires for revenge. His heroism is seen in maintaining morals in a time that is 'out of joint' in the ruined Syria, and among all the corruptions. He is inclined to annul "all trivial fond records" from the table of his

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<sup>482</sup>Urwa Al-Araby, *هاملت السوري* (Damascus: Al-masrah Al-qawmy, 2012), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fKyDAQdwfME>.

memory.<sup>483</sup> His revenge and action are guarded by wisdom not impulsion, by his deliberation not procrastination, and madness for him is a weapon not a hindrance in a world full of political madness and treachery. He is confronted by one of the ancient crimes and sins that afflicted humanity; a brother kills his brother for power. Among all these hardships, Hamlet, like all Syrians, demonstrates morality, behaves wisely and holds values.



Figure 18: Hamlet is delivering one of his monologues in the catwalk stage, 20:14.



Figure 19: Hamlet meets his father's ghost, 11: 35.

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<sup>483</sup>Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, I. v. 99.



Figure 20: The actors are performing the *Mousetrap* in front of Claudius and Gertrude, Part 1. 51:15.

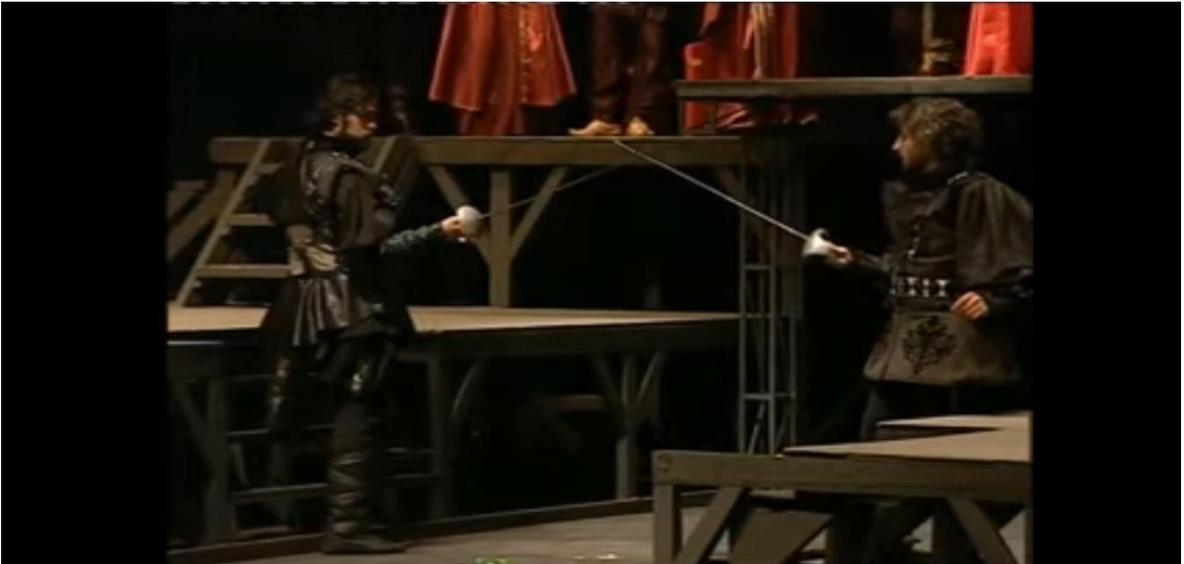


Figure 21: Hamlet and Laertes having fencing match in the last scene. Part2: 39:07.

*The Syrian Hamlet* is not a personal tragedy only; it is a state tragedy in a country ruined by greed and ambition. The tragedy repeats itself since the creation of man and enrages heaven to the extent that ghosts return from purgatory to inform how such sin is the most unnatural one. When greedy people assumed the throne throughout history, they don not spare any effort to preserve it. They plot, exile and kill their opponents. The restoration of peace and the throne from the hands of such tyrannical rulers is not an easy task. That was clearly seen in Syria before and during the Syrian Spring. It is full of blood, torture and displacement.

The success of the Syrian Spring at the beginning was different and more surprising for

the Arabs than other Arab springs. The Syrian Ba'athists were well known for their tight grip over Syria and many Syrian Alawite supporters who share the same religious factor of Al-Assad. This makes the Syrian Spring closer to a sectarian religious war between the revolutionary Sunnis and the Alawite regime that has been supported by the Shia Iran and the Lebanese militia Hezbollah, who share almost the same religious belief. The Syrian nation was seen as a brave nation to fight all these powers and bear all the atrocities for more than ten years. Ibrahim Hamamy praised this heroism in his words, saying: "The revolution of the heroic Syrian people is the longest and fiercest among the revolutions of the Arab peoples, and it is capable of bringing down the schemes of the conspirators."<sup>484</sup> *The Syrian Hamlet* resonated with the heroic atmosphere at that time even though the Syrian Spring is the most aggressive and longest one in the region. Hamlet's accepting death at the end only to rescue his country symbolizes the Syrians who accepted death to fix that is rotten in Syria. The journalist Abdullah AL-Otaybe declares in his article, 'Something Rotten in Syria' how the regimes brutally targeted the exposed civilians by barrel bombs:

The tile is borrowed from a famous line said by Hamlet, a famous character from Shakespeare's play, *Hamlet*, but the talk here is about the reality that is stranger than the imagination of the novelists and playwrights: A regime in the twenty-first century is killing his nation by all kinds of weapons in front of the world that does not move a finger.<sup>485</sup>

Hisham Al-Zaouqy also asserts how Hamlet's heroism is still residing in the minds of some Syrians in his article 'The Ghost of Hamlet Roaming the Ruins of Aleppo City.' He speaks about how three actors found a text of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* under the ruins of one of the buildings destroyed by Al-Assad's bombing caskets in Aleppo city. They decide to dramatize the play, but one of the actors is killed later. The other two actors ran to Beirut in Lebanon and made a movie called *Jeld* (means Skin), in which they talk about their experience when they decided to perform *Hamlet* before the death of their friend.

### 3.2.1.3. *Hamlet* in Iraq

The earliest reworking of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in the period of the Arab Spring was by the Iraqi Hayder Abdullah AL-Shatery in his *فِي انْتِظَارِ هَامَلْت* (*Fee Intzar Hamlet, In*

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<sup>484</sup>Ibrahim Hamamy, *Adawlah Al-Alwaieh Kayar Al-Assad Alakeer*, (Beirut : Fiker Center for Studies, 2015), 104. (my translation for the Arabic text).

<sup>485</sup>Abdullah Al-Otaybe, "Shay' Afen Yahduth Fee Suria," *Alarabiya Online Magazine* , November 3, 2013.

*Waiting for Hamlet*), 2010. Even though the Iraqis did not have their spring until 2015, the revolution and sense of optimism that accompanied the Arab Spring in Tunisia and Egypt immediately resonated in Iraq and other Arab countries. The Iraqis, perhaps, are the most oppressed Arab people, despite the fact that Iraq is one of the richest oil countries in the region. Their political miseries are the most abject in the modern Arab World, starting from the control of the Ba'ath regime of Saddam Hussein (1969-2003), the Gulf War 1 & 2 in 1991 and 2003 respectively and the frequent economic blockades imposed by the USA on Iraq. After the death of Hussein in 2003, Iraq had entered a period of internal political struggles over power between the two biggest Islamic branches, Sunnis and Shiats, fighting to rule Iraq. The external and internal wars immersed Iraq in poverty, ruined health and education systems and caused massive displacement of Iraqis to nearby Arab countries and Europe.

Still, the Iraqis have always fantasized the hero saviour who can save and unite Iraq from all kinds of oppression. The image of the expected saviour is persisted in most Iraqis' consciences, especially the Shiat who believe in the legend of the AL-Mahdi AL-Muntazer (The Expected AL-Mahdi)<sup>486</sup> and who, as they believe, will appear soon to rescue them. No one can tell exactly when and from where he will appear, but Al-Mahdi is an essential part of their religious belief and his coming is always dramatized in their *Tashabeh* and *Ta'zeyh* Theatres in Iraq.<sup>487</sup> Even the fact that some Iraqis do not believe in such popular legend, and believe, instead, that it makes the Iraqis complacent and inactive in changing political realities by their hands, the myth has a positive side in generating hope among Iraqis. This legend of the expected saviour was awakened more with the advent of the Arab Spring when the heroic Arab youths broke silence for the first time and revolted against oppression.

AL-Shatery's *Hamlet* comes in this type of Tashabeh Theatre in that it dramatizes Hamlet as the upcoming saviour like AL-Mahdi, and his coming will solve the problems of the characters and re-establish justice. The play is a one-act-two-scene Arabic prose rewriting that appeared for the first time in *Markez Anour Online Magazine*. It is one of the

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<sup>486</sup> AL-Mahdi AL-Muntazer is a legendary person and part of the Shiats' Islamic belief. He will appear to rescue the Shiats from all of their miseries. No one can tell when he will appear.

<sup>487</sup> <sup>487</sup> These are public religious tragic theatres popular among Shiats people. Tashabeh, means image, and Tazeyah, means consolation, were popularized in the ninth century when Iraqis used theatres to remind themselves of AL-Hussein Ben Ali, the grandson of Prophet Muhammad, who was killed by Yazeed Ben Muawieh, a Sunni rival who wanted to be the Caliphate. The dramas in these theatres take place in streets, schools and mosques up to this moment. The Expected AL-Mahdi is always presented in these dramas as a revengeful hero who will revenge AL-Hussein's murder, but the way and whom he will take revenge from is not known.

shortest Arabic rewritings, and it has not been staged up to this moment. Though it is a reworking of Shakespeare's play, it is completely different from Shakespeare's story and dramatic structure. Nothing is similar to Shakespeare's play except for the ghost and the few lines of Hamlet's speeches that were mentioned in the rewriting. It also resembles Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* in its structure. Four characters are waiting for the coming of the hero Hamlet: The Actor, The Ghost, The Man and his Son. It begins with the Actor, alone on the stage, rehearsing Hamlet's soliloquy "To be, or not, to be" for a stage performance in English. The Actor expresses his admiration for Hamlet and his desire to act him. He likes Hamlet's heroic personality and brave struggle "to fix the disorder of time."<sup>488</sup> Hamlet, for him, is a model for a hero and a noble youth burdened by "the huge responsibility placed on [his] shoulder" and "bowed [his] back until [he] barely stood upright."<sup>489</sup> At the same time, he pities Hamlet, who is "a pure, noble character who lacks strength and the nerves necessary to bear great calamities."<sup>490</sup> He comments:

<p>Oh, Hamlet! Where are you? ... You have never known comfort any day. What justice is this? And What a burden is that you have been shouldered? I can't bear these burdens, nor I can imagine them. You carried a heavy load that bowed your back until you were hardly ever being able to stand upright.</p> <p>Oh Beautiful spoiled prince! Who dares break your sensitive heart and jam your head? You don't deserve all that. Oh my God! A great tragic crime and a pure noble character that lacks the needed strength to withstand great calamities. It's an uneven comparison! How can you handle that and fix the disorder of time? This is a great responsibility that will destroy any of us if being exposed to it.</p> <p>So, I don't know how I'm going to play this</p>	<p>تَرَى أَيَّنَ أَنْتَ؟ . . . يَا مَنْ لَمْ تَعْرِفِ الرَّاحَةَ يَوْمًا . . .  أَيَّةَ عَدَالَةٍ هَذِهِ؟ وَأَيَّ عِبَاءٍ ذَلِكَ الَّذِي وُضِعَ عَلَيَّ كَاهِلِكَ. أَنَا لَا  أَسْتَطِيعُ تَحْمِيلَ هَذِهِ الْأَعْيَاءِ وَلَسْتُ قَادِرًا حَتَّى عَلَيَّ تَصَوُّرَهَا.  لَقَدْ حَمَلْتُ جَمَلًا ثَقِيلًا أَحْنَى ظَهْرَكَ حَتَّى لَمْ تَكُنْ تَقِفُ بِطَوْلِكَ.  أَيُّهَا الْأَمِيرُ الْجَمِيلُ الْمُدَلِّلُ. مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَجْرُؤُ عَلَيَّ  كَسْرَ قَلْبِكَ الرَّقِيقِ وَتَشْوِيشَ رَأْسِكَ وَأَنْتَ لَا تَسْتَجِيقُ كُلَّ هَذَا.  يَا إِلَهِي . . . جَرَمَ مَأْسَاوِي كَبِيرٍ وَشَخْصِيَّةَ نَبِيلَةٍ نَقِيَّةٍ تُنْقِصُهَا  قُوَّةَ الْعَصَبِ الصَّرْوَرِيَّةِ لِتَحْمِلَ الْمَصَائِبَ الْكَبِيرَةَ . . .  أَنَّهَا مُقَارَنَةٌ غَيْرَ مُنْسَاوِيَّةٍ . . . فَكَيْفَ لَكَ تَحْمِيلَ ذَلِكَ  وَإِصْلَاحَ اضْطِرَابِ الزَّمَنِ . . . فَهَذِهِ مَسْئُولِيَّةٌ عَظِيمَةٌ لَوْ  تَعَرَّضَ لَهَا أَيُّ وَاحِدٍ مِنَّا لَقَضَتْ عَلَيْهِ. لِذَلِكَ لَا أَدْرِي كَيْفَ  سَأَقُومُ بِإِدَاءِ هَذَا الدَّوْرِ وَرَسْمِ هَذِهِ الْمَشَاعِرِ وَالْأَحَاسِيسِ . . .  إِنِّي لَا أَقْوَى عَلَى ذَلِكَ . . . وَلَكِنِّي فِي الْوَقْتِ نَفْسِي أُرِيدُ أَنْ  أَمْتَلَّ دَوْرَهُ فَلَطَالَمَا أَحْبَبْتَهُ وَلَطَالَمَا حَلَمْتُ بِهِذِهِ الْفُرْصَةَ  الْكَبِيرَةَ مُنْذُ سِنِينَ.</p>
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<sup>488</sup>My translation from the Arabic text. Hayder Abdullah AL-Shatery, "في انتظار هاملت", *Markes AL-Nour*, September 1, 2010, <http://www.alnoor.se/article.asp?id=55105>.

<sup>489</sup>AL-Shatery, "في انتظار هاملت".

<sup>490</sup>Ibid.

<p>role and draw these feelings. I can't do that, but at the same time, I want to play his role as I always loved him and dreamed of this big opportunity for years.<sup>491</sup></p>	
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After the Actor delivers his speech, he is surprised by the appearance of a ghost on the stage. He becomes frightened, but the ghost ensures him that he means no harm. The Actor then asks the Ghost about his purpose in haunting the stage, and the Ghost replies, “I’m waiting for my son to deliver a message to him.”<sup>492</sup> After the Actor discovers that the apparition is Hamlet’s dead father waiting for Hamlet, he agrees to wait with the ghost since he also has “many questions to be answered,” and “no one else can answer them” except Hamlet.<sup>493</sup> Both characters engage in a long dialogue during their waiting for the appearance of Hamlet, talking about Hamlet’s significance at all times. The Ghost informs him that Hamlet has a necessary role to perform, and there is “no one else can do this role.”<sup>494</sup> The Ghost quotes from Hamlet’s speeches:

<p>Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, Or to take arms against a sea of troubles? This is what I came for... and this is the message that should reach him. It is greater than the issue of a throne, even though they stole it from him. I did not come for that... The throne was not his first concern, even though he is the legitimate heir to it.<sup>495</sup></p>	<p>مَنْ ذَلِكَ الَّذِي يَقْبَلُ صَاغِرًا سَيَاطُ الرَّمَنَ وَمُهَانَاتِهِ . . وَيَرُضِّخَ لَطْلُمَ الْمُسْتَبِيدِ وَيَسْكُتُ عَنْ زُرَابِيَةِ الْمُنْغَطَّرِسِ؟ هَذَا مَا جِئْتُ بِهِ . . . وَتِلْكَ هِيَ الرَّسَالَةُ الَّتِي يَجِبُ أَنْ تَصِلَ إِلَيْهِ. أَنَّهَا أَكْبَرُ مِنْ قَضِيَّةِ عَرْشِ رَغَمِ أَنَّهُمْ سَلَبُوهُ مِنْهُ. وَأَنَا مَا جِئْتُ مِنْ أَجْلِ ذَلِكَ . . . ثُمَّ إِنَّ الْعَرْشَ لَمْ يَكُنْ هَمُّهُ الْأَوَّلُ . . . رَغَمِ أَنَّهُ الْوَرِيثَ الشَّرْعِيَّ لَهُ.</p>
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The Ghost says that he ascended from the purgatory not for the sake of the throne, but re-establishing justice is his priority. It is aware that the orders will problematize Hamlet’s life and “will be an impenetrable dam against the kingdom of his dreams.”<sup>496</sup> However, it believes that Hamlet is up to that task and will consent to the commands as soon as he hears them. He has a universal task to do, and “as long as crime has incubators,” his

<sup>491</sup>Ibid.

<sup>492</sup>Ibid.

<sup>493</sup>Ibid.

<sup>494</sup>Ibid.

<sup>495</sup>Ibid.

<sup>496</sup>Ibid.

appearance is necessary and urgent and “for all the times there must be a Hamlet.”<sup>497</sup>

It is not only Hamlet who has responsibility, but the Ghost should keep appearing to deliver his message in all oppressive times: “I am from all the times that reproduce and repeat themselves without a solution.”<sup>498</sup> The Actor asks if the Ghost expects to see a solution for the Iraqis’ problems, “When will the solution come?” and it answers: “When we stop needing him and everyone is Hamlet” and when “every human is treated as a human.”<sup>499</sup>

During their conversation, another man with his son enters the stage terrified. As called in the play, the Man tells them that he found the theatre house a shelter to hide after a bomb has exploded near his son’s school. The Actor thinks he is Hamlet asking, “Are you Hamlet?” and the Man answers in mockery, “Does a person like me fit to be Hamlet? I barely could be Othello.”<sup>500</sup> He is hopeless to find any solution soon and does not know when the random bombing will stop: “How many circles we are stuck in and we do not know the way in or out. It is like the story of the egg and chicken. We do not know who’s first.”<sup>501</sup> Another sound of an explosion is heard, and the man’s son becomes more terrified. The Ghost tries to calm the child down, asking him about his name, and the child answers that his name is Hani, which ironically means a happy person in Arabic. The Man then asks the two characters if they are hiding like him, but they answer that they are waiting for Hamlet. He then asks about the reason behind waiting Hamlet, and the Ghost replies that Hamlet is the one who will find a solution for the Iraqis’ miseries.

The Man ridicules the Ghost’s words, and he doubts if a person like Hamlet can fix the situation: “What makes you sure of his ability to change the situation here?” The Ghost assures him: “Because I see him differently. I know him very well.”<sup>502</sup> He then asks, “If what you say is true, then, why did he leave us like this?”<sup>503</sup> and the Ghost replies that Hamlet “cannot leave us like this.” But “it’s his duty to come and scream against this time of errors.”<sup>504</sup>

However, the Ghost also says that people, themselves, must do something against these calamities “Our waiting should be accompanied by work.” It is not only that, but they have to believe in the coming of that saviour: “People have to believe in [Hamlet] and his

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<sup>497</sup>Ibid.

<sup>498</sup>Ibid.

<sup>499</sup>Ibid.

<sup>500</sup>Ibid.

<sup>501</sup>Ibid.

<sup>502</sup>Ibid.

<sup>503</sup>Ibid.

<sup>504</sup>Ibid.

capacities.»<sup>505</sup>

In the end, the characters suddenly hear a sound outside. The Actor looks from the window expecting to see Hamlet coming, but the sound appears to be coming from the tanks in a military convoy heading towards the theatre. The Man informs the Ghost about his plan to leave theatre with his son before the coming of the tanks. They cannot wait Hamlet with the Ghost anymore. It agrees with them and encourages them to exit and do something since Hamlet did not come:

<p>THE GHOST: (<i>Disappointed</i>): It looks like a military convoy. It's the rumble of tanks, and Hamlet is not with them.</p> <p>THE ACTOR (<i>Looking from the Window</i>): Oh my God! What to do? Are we going to keep giving up like this? I kept my promise, but he did not come.</p> <p>THE GHOST: But he cannot break his promise.</p> <p>THE ACTOR: But when...?</p> <p>THE GHOST: He might have come and gone, and he might not come yet.</p> <p>THE MAN: What do you mean?</p> <p>THE GHOST (<i>With Stress</i>): You can't wait any longer... The tragedy does not wait any longer.</p> <p>The ACTOR: Yes! I smell him everywhere ...I feel him close to me. We have to do something.</p> <p>(<i>They exit, leaving the Ghost alone</i>)</p>	<p>الشَّبَح (بخيبة أمل): يَبْدُو أَنَّهُ رَتَّلَ عَسْكَرِيٌّ. أَنَّهَا أَصْوَات سَرَبِ الدَّبَابَاتِ وَالَّتِي لَا يُمَكِّنُ أَنْ تَحْمِلَ مَعَهَا هَامِلَت. الْمُمْتَلِ: يَا لِهَيْ . . . مَا الْعَمَلُ هَلْ سَنَبِقِي مُسْتَسْلِمِينَ هَكَذَا . . . لَقَدْ وَفَّيْتُ بوعدي وَلَكِنَّهُ لَمْ يَأْتِي. الشَّبَح: وَلَكِنَّهُ لَا يُمَكِّنُ أَنْ يَنْفُضَ وَعْدَهُ. الْمُمْتَلِ: وَلَكِنْ إِلَى مَتَى . . . ؟ الشَّبَح: رُبَّمَا قَدْ أَتَى وَذَهَبَ وَرُبَّمَا أَتَى وَلَمْ يَذْهَبْ. الْمُمْتَلِ: وَمَاذَا تَعْنِي؟ الشَّبَح: لَا يُمَكِّنُ الْإِنْتِظَارَ أَكْثَرَ مِنْ ذَلِكَ! الْمُمْتَلِ: نَعَمْ . . . أَحْسَنَهُ قَرِيبٍ مِنِّي. الشَّبَح: لَا يُمَكِّنُ لِلْوَقْتِ أَنْ يَسْتَطِيلَ أَكْثَرَ مِنْ ذَلِكَ وَالْمَاسَاةَ لَا تَنْتَظِرُ أَكْثَرَ مِنْ ذَلِكَ. الْمُمْتَلِ: نَعَمْ ! إِنِّي أَشْمُّ رَائِحَتَهُ فِي كُلِّ مَكَانٍ. أَنَّهُ يَمْلَانِي مِنْ رَأْسِي حَتَّى أَلْخَمَصَ قَدَمِي.</p>
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Although Hamlet does not appear at the end of the play, his heroism is the focus of the discussion. Hamlet's importance here is not in his coming as a saviour for Iraq but as a

<sup>505</sup>Ibid.

symbol that every Iraqi should imitate. The Actor's saying, "I smell him everywhere ... I feel him close to me,"<sup>506</sup> shows that Hamlet must inhabit and haunt every Iraqi. AL-Shatery highlights the parallel between AL-Mahdi's legend and Hamlet's story. Both will fight oppression, and both are motivated by their revenge. The importance of AL-Mahdi is not to rescue Iraq only, but to take revenge from those who killed AL-Hussien Ben Ali thousand years ago, as Shiats believe.<sup>507</sup> Still, the disappearance of Hamlet at the end is an implied criticism for those Iraqis who still believe in this old legend and are distracted from reality. The Ghost's saying, "We can't wait any longer... The tragedy does not wait any longer,"<sup>508</sup> is a call for the Iraqis to unite and fight the regime bravely for their rights instead of waiting for a legendary hero. Every Iraqi can be Hamlet or AL-Mahdi if he has the potential and strength to act nobly like them.

It is not until 2015 that Iraqis had their own hard spring. Talabani's regimes used the army to suppress people and their revolution, and the uprising was suspended by force. However, a sense of unity between Shiats and Sunnis felt in the uprising and both parties decide to stop the civil war for a while, fight the oppressive authority and stop the Western exploitation of their land. However, it is hard to tell when the revolution can start again in Iraq. Iraqis still believe that political changes did not happen and the government is still ignoring their political demands.

All in all, the heroic pictures of Hamlet in the previous four adaptations and rewritings resonated with the sense of hope and optimism that marked the early three years of the period. The attempt to present Hamlet as a hero in these adaptations comes out of the need to motivate Arab people, and from the fact that Arabs, in most of these countries, fought their regimes bravely. The ruined Egypt, Syria, and Iraq are similar to Denmark that is ruined by the greedy and ambitious Claudius, whose policy in ruling Denmark and killing his brother for the sake of power resembles the atrocities done by many of the Arab regimes. The image of a brother killing his brother for the sake of the throne is replicated in most Arab countries and evoked hatred and revenge among Arabs. Also, Hamlet's death to bring justice at the end in *The Syrian Hamlet* and *I'm Hamlet* resembles the people's willingness to bear pains and deaths for the sake of ending the abuse of their countries. The Arab Hamlets are courageous in this period, can act, and terminate the usurper, and despite

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<sup>506</sup>Ibid.

<sup>507</sup>The Shiats believe that AL-Hussien Ben Ali, the grandson of Prophet Mohammad, was massacred by the Sunni Caliphate Muawieh Ibnu Abe Sufiyan before 1300 years ago. The legend says that AL-Mahdi will take revenge from the killer's ancestor when he comes. How and whom he will take revenge from is still unknown.

<sup>508</sup>Al-Shatery, "في انتظار هاملت".

the fact the two of these adaptations only used the title of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, they still talk about Shakespeare's prince in a bright image. The adaptations demonstrate the role of the Arab political theatre, in general, and Shakespeare's play, in particular, in solidifying the feeling of hope among theatre goers early in the Arab Spring. The playwrights and stage directors found a parallel between Hamlet's story and the story of the Arabs fighting for freedom.

### 3.3.

#### **Dramatizing Solidarity and Unification in Divided Palestine: The Chorus and The Ghost in Kamel EL-Basha's *Following the Footsteps of Hamlet* (2011)**

One of the remarkable differences between the period of the Arab Spring and Post-Nasserism is the sense of unification and Pan-Arabism that replaced previous divisive policies adopted by the regimes. Many political activists in the Arab region alerted Arabs against maintaining political and ideological divisions that previously occurred between 1970 and 2010. These divisions accompanied the conflict over power between different political and religious sectors after the death of Jamal Abedl Nasser. Most of the regimes nourished sectarian strife and ideological rifts between people through applying discriminating policies, encouraging seclusion, favouring one party over others, and mobilizing people against each other. Many examples of these rifts happened between Ba'athists/Non-Ba'athists in Syria and Iraq, Sunnis/Shiats in Iraq and Saudi Arabia, Islamists/Liberals in Egypt, Hoothies/Sunnis in Yemen, native/non-native in Jordan, Christians/Muslims in Egypt and Lebanon, conservatives/liberals in Tunisia, to name but a few. Media was implemented to deepen the fraction and nurture this religious and geopolitical sectarianism resulting in a fractured Arab World. However, unification was sensed early in the Arab Spring when Arab youths, from all ideological and political orientations, have ignored previous divisions. All the talk about political, religious, gender and geographical differences was almost avoided for the sake of unity and solidarity. The Egyptian Yahia al-Qazzaz asserts that by saying:

What we are now witnessing as revolutionary growth cannot be described as a series of national revolutions. It effectively represents an unprecedented revolution of the Arab nation, which burst into life in Tunisia and then found firm footing in Egypt, reflecting the latter's position as largest Arab state. This Arab awakening is presented as a probable precursor to a transnational movement of unification.<sup>509</sup>

Among the Arab countries devastated by the political rifts is Palestine. Palestinians have showed firm resistance to the Israeli occupation since 1948, and unification distinctively characterised their legitimate struggle for liberation. However, Palestinians, after 2006, immersed themselves into internal political rift and serious combat between the two

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<sup>509</sup> Cited in Yaseen Tamlali, "The 'Arab Spring' Rebirth or Final Throes of Pan-Arabism?," in *People's Power: the Arab World in Revolt*, ed. Layla Al-Zubaidi (Heinrich Böll Stiftung, 2011), 48-49, 48.

leading political parties, Fatah and Hamas, which has exacerbated tensions for the Palestinians already living under occupation and suffering from the Israeli Separation Wall that has already divided Palestine since 2002. The division within the internal Palestinian politics can be traced back to the general election following the death of Yasser Arafat, previous Chairman of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO), and President of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) from 1994 to 2004. In 2006, Palestinians in West Bank and Gaza Strip headed to the polling stations to vote for the Palestinian Legislation Assembly and to choose a successor president for Arafat. The elections resulted in victory for Hamas representatives who won the election with 44% of the votes, ending an era of Fatah dominance.<sup>510</sup> Hamas's victory led to armed clashes between the two factions after a failed attempt to create a unity government. Since 2007, the Palestinian leadership has been divided, Hamas governing the Gaza Strip and the Fatah-led Palestinian Authority governing the West Bank. This political rift has persisted over the course of the next fifteen years, causing more problems for Palestinians seeking liberation from the Israel's occupation. The two parties have continuous "costly and stifling disputes, while the Palestinians and Palestine continue to bleed under the Israeli occupation."<sup>511</sup>

Nostalgia has been felt among Palestinians yearning for the days of Arafat's leadership, who maintained less divisive policies than the current President Mahmoud Abbas. Palestinians were also inspired by that sense of unity spread among Arabs in the period of the Arab Spring. Asad Ghanem asserts how the Arab Spring had its positive impact on the Palestinians seeking unification between PLO and Hamas, saying: "Palestinians themselves have derived too limited a lesson from the Arab revolutions by focusing only on the call for unity between the competing Palestinian factions."<sup>512</sup> Like many Arabs who demanded the end of the internal conflicts caused by their Arab regimes, the Palestinians called for unification and solidarity against Fatah/Hamas conflict.

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<sup>510</sup> Jim Zanotti, *Hamas: Background and Issues for Congress*, (Congressional Research Service, 2010), 44.

<sup>511</sup> Occasional perfunctory meetings also have been held between the two parties under the auspices of Arab countries like Mecca Agreement in KSA in 2007, Cairo Agreement in 2011, The Beach Meeting in Palestine in 2014, Doha Declaration in 2014, and Cairo Agreement in 2017. Unfortunately, these meetings have been to no use. In Dina Matar and Zahera Harb. *Narrating Conflict in the Middle East: Discourse, Image and Communications Practices in Lebanon and Palestine*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013).

<sup>512</sup> Asad Ghanem, "The Palestinians – Lessons from the Arab Spring," *Contemporary Arab Affairs*, 6, no. 3 (July 2013): 422-437, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17550912.2013.813111>.



Figure 22: The picture shows the Israel Apartheid Wall. A military checkpoint guarded by an Israeli soldier appears on the left part of the image with some Palestinian women are waiting the permission to enter. Also, a painting of Yasser Arafat appears on the outside part of the wall. Taken by Aron Heller for AP News <https://apnews.com/article/853490132>. Accessed on 20/09/2020.

The yearning for a unified resistant Palestine that can continue its liberation project has been reflected in national poetry, traditional dance, songs, and dramas. Dramatic works like Eyad Abu Shareea's *Al-Habl Al-Sori* (The Umbilical Cord) in 2010, Ali Abu Yassin's *Al-Qafas* (The Cage) in 2015, and Ashraf Al-Afifi's *Sabe'a Ard* (Seven Grounds Under) in 2017 appeared after 2007 to preach unity and *sumud* (steadfastness) against occupation.<sup>513</sup>

The Palestinian Kamel El-Basha's *Following the Footsteps of Hamlet* has the same political message through adapting Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.<sup>514</sup> What distinguishes El-Basha's performance is the employment of the chorus playing Hamlet and Ophelia instead of the traditional individual characters. The chorus dresses similarly, walk and talk collectively in a try to dramatize and materialize solidarity among Palestinians. Other distinctive theatrical device is the ghost that uniquely keeps a permanent presence on the stage. The presence of the ghost with its huge size, (see the description in third part), is probably targeting the memory of the audience and compel them to remember the days of Arafat. While it is addressed mainly to the Palestinians to discard all political schism, it

<sup>513</sup> Mahmoud Abusultan. "A Palestinian Theatre: Experiences of Resistance, Sumud and Reaffirmation." Thesis, (Bowling Green State University, 2021).

<sup>514</sup> I use the performance in the Arabic language based on Jabra's translation. See Kamal EL-Basha. *Following the Footsteps of Hamlet*. Watan TV, December 21, 2010. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vlyVxihpMqY>.

does not leave behind the regional Pan-Arabism. The play never refers to real figures or designates a precise location in the Arab World, which makes it easily resonating in all Arab countries. EL-Basha explains his purpose behind his adaptation, saying:

I added touches in directing the play, which mainly talks about revenge after a brother kills his brother. It is the same subject that intersects with our lives today and looks like the internal conflict that we still have. I tried to use the play to talk about this conflict, and at the same time, to preserve the original text with its contents and elements.<sup>515</sup>

The Arabic-language production premiered on the Al-Hakawati National Theatre in Jerusalem, and last for one hour and a half. It is based on Jabra's Arabic translation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, and maintains the same plot of the original play with a few theatrical modifications. The staging is minimal, with a few set or props used on the stage. A black curtain is used as a backdrop to the playing area, and black was also evident in the characters' dress which consisted of long black robes with a red *kufiya* draped around the actors' shoulders.



Figure 23: The photo shows how the black colour is dominating the stage. It also shows the chorus, the ghost, and the first entering of Claudius and Gertrude; taken from the performance in minute 5:51.

### 3.3.1. The Chorus and Unification

One of the theatrical devices used by EL-Basha in his performance is the employment of two choruses who played the roles of Hamlet and Ophelia instead of individual actors. Hamlet's chorus consists of eight actors who in most of the time speak Hamlet's dialogue

<sup>515</sup>“ALa Quta Hamlet Tudfe Lamsah Felesteenyah Ala Masraheatu Shakespeer ,” *Adoustoor News Paper* , January 31, 2010.

and monologue collectively. Six actors shape the other chorus playing Ophelia; while, individual actors play the main characters of the King and Queen. Polonius and Laertes are acted by individuals from Hamlet's chorus. The two choruses sometimes merge and shape a band of fourteen actors dressed in black, sing, dance, move, and speak identically.



Figure 24: The chorus sing 'Yrasul Allah' song in the first picture, and an individual performs a break-dance in the second picture; retrieved from the show 3:48 and 14:50.

The performance starts with the two choruses entering the stage as one band walking in a military march accompanied by martial music. They walk the width of the stage back and forth in synchronous steps for a few minutes.<sup>516</sup> After that, the band splits into groups of threes and twos. They sing in a collective voice a well-known religious song, called "Yarasoul Allah" (Oh prophet of God). The song is followed by the recitation of verses from the Holy Quran by an individual actor to arrange for King Hamlet's funeral. The chorus then shifts to celebrate the marriage of Claudius and Gertrude through performing random *debke* movements acted respectively by individual male actors.<sup>517</sup> The dance is accompanied by *Zagareed*, ululation performed usually by Palestinian women, a sound made by the quick movement of the tongue up and down quickly.<sup>518</sup>

Claudius then addresses Hamlet's chorus directly asking them, "How is it that the clouds still hang on you?" and the chorus replies collectively: "Not so, my lord. I am too

<sup>516</sup>EL-Basha, *Following the Footsteps of Hamlet*, 1:00-3:00.

<sup>517</sup> *Debke* is a traditional dance acted mainly by Palestinian males in a straight line. It is performed in happy occasions by the males holding one another's hands and hitting the floor with counted and systematic steps. They are usually accompanied by traditional music played with *Mijwiz*, a musical instrument popular in Palestine, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon.

<sup>518</sup> For more about *Zagareed* see Janet Sturman, ed., *The Sage International Encyclopedia of Music and Culture* (Thousand Oaks (CA) etc.: SAGE, 2019), 120.

much i' the sun.”<sup>519</sup> Gertrude also demands from the Hamlet stop wearing the black clothes and behave in a friendly manner, “Good Hamlet, cast thy nighted color off, And let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark,” and the chorus sarcastically answers, “I shall in all my best obey you, madam.”<sup>520</sup> Claudius and Gertrude then leave, and the two choruses of Hamlet and Ophelia start roaming the stage impatiently as one group. They sit and begin beating the ground with their hands. They make a circle after that and repeat Hamlet's famous monologue “this too, too sullied flesh would melt,” as they are mourning the death of King Hamlet and lament the hasty marriage of the Queen:

<p>The Chorus: Oh, that this too, too sullied flesh would melt, Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew, Or that the Everlasting had not fixed His canon 'gainst self-slaughter! O God, God! How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable Seem to me all the uses of this world! Fie on 't, ah fie! 'Tis an unweeded garden That grows to seed. Things rank and gross in nature Possess it merely. That it should come to this. MEMBER 1: But two months dead—nay, not so much, not two. So excellent a king. MEMBER 2: So loving to my mother That he might not between the winds of heaven Visit her face too roughly.—Heaven and earth, Must I remember? Why, she would hang on him As if increase of appetite had grown By what it fed on, and yet, within a month— Let me not think on't.<sup>521</sup></p>	<p>الجَوْقَةُ: أه لَيْتَ هَذَا الْجَسَدَ الصَّلْدَ يَذُوبُ وَيَنْحَلَّ فَطَرَاتِ مِنَ النَّدَى، يَا لَيْتَ الْأَزَلِيَّ لَمْ يَضَعِ شَرِيْعَتَهُ ضِدَّ قَتْلِ الدَّاتِ. رَبَاهُ، رَبَاهُ مَا أَشَدَّ مَا تَبْدُو لِي عَادَاتِ الدُّنْيَا هَذِهِ مُضْنِيْبِهِ، عَتِيْقَةٍ، فَاهِيَةِ، لَا نَفْعَ مِنْهَا. إِلَّا تَبًّا لَهَا تَبًّا تَبًّا لَهَا! أَلَيْسَ الْحَدِيْقَةُ لَمْ تُعْتَسِبَ، شَاخَتْ وَبَزَّرَتْ، لَا يَمْلَأُهَا إِلَّا كُلُّ مَخْشُوشٍ تَنْتَنَتْ رَائِحَتُهُ أَحَدٌ أَعْضَاءِ الْجَوْقَةِ (بِشْكَالٍ مُنْفَرِدٍ): أَهْكَذَا تَنْتَهِي الْأُمُورَ— لَمْ يَمُضْ عَلَى مَوْئِهِ شَهْرَانِ بَلْ أَقَلُّ مِنْ شَهْرَيْنِ؛ أَقَلُّ مِنْ شَهْرَيْنِ، عُضْوٍ آخَرَ مِنَ الْجَوْقَةِ: كَانَ يَعْشَقُ أُمِّي فَلَا يَسْمَحُ لِرِيْحِ السَّمَاءِ بِزِيَارَةِ وَجْهَهَا إِذَا اِسْتَنْدَتْ. يَا أَرْضُ، يَا سَمَاءَ أَمَحْتَوْمٌ عَلَيَّ أَنْ أَتَذَكَّرَ؟ وَاهَا! كَانَتْ تَنْعَلُقُ بِهِ. كَأَنَّمَا أَرْدِيَادِ الشَّهِيَّةِ قَدْ اِسْتَدَّتْ بِمَا تَغَدَّتْ عَلَيْهِ— وَمَعَ ذَلِكَ، فَلَمَدَةُ شَهْرٍ!</p>
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<sup>519</sup> EL-Basha, *Following the Footsteps of Hamlet*. 11:12. The Arabic text is taken from Jabra's Arabic translation that is faithful to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. I use here the same text of Shakespeare's play when translating into English.

<sup>520</sup> *Ibid*, 11:17.

<sup>521</sup> *Ibid*, 15:13- 16:17.

Hamlet's chorus meets the ghost in the next scene, which informs them about the murder. The chorus then performs a short *Mousetrap* to verify Claudius's murder. Hamlet's chorus then enters the stage trying to take revenge by killing Claudius, but they find Claudius praying. They storm into Gertrude's chamber immediately to confront her. They surround her, trying to remind her how she has offended his dead father by marrying Claudius. Polonius, who hides behind the arras, shouts and calls out for help leading the chorus to stab him to death.

Laertes, acted by one of Hamlet's chorus, appears and discovers his father's death, and Claudius convinces Laertes of taking revenge. Meanwhile, Ophelia's chorus appears singing a sad song as if she has suffered from madness due to her father's death. The six female actors acted a collective death on the stage, and Gertrude laments Ophelia's death by singing a sad traditional song, sang usually for Palestinian martyrs died in their fighting for the occupation.<sup>522</sup> After that, Hamlet's chorus splits into two groups: four members represent Laertes fighting the other four which represent Hamlet, and *Kufiyas* are used in the combat instead of swords.<sup>523</sup> Gertrude drinks the poisoned goblet of wine toasting Hamlet and she eventually dies. The stage becomes covered with fifteen bodies: Hamlets, Laertes, Ophelias and Gertrude. The performance ends with the bodies rising from death and following the ghost which leads them slowly outside the stage. They collectively sing another familiar Arabic *Muwashshah* song in their way out leaving Claudius alone and alive on the stage.<sup>524</sup>

EL-Basha's employment of the chorus is perplexing for the spectators at the beginning, especially those who are not familiar with the aspects of choric theatre. The confusion appears early when it becomes difficult for them to identify individual actors for Hamlet and Ophelia and to understand why Ophelia's chorus accompanies Hamlet in his speech sometimes. The merging of the two choruses in delivering Hamlet's speech, sometimes, remains vague and perplexing. Jamal Al-Qwasmy accentuates this perplexity in his review for the play saying, "The young men were all representing Hamlet, and the young women representing Ophelia, but I did not understand why some young women would cast Hamlet

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<sup>522</sup>The song is 'Hanneni Yama Hanneni Wdaweely Sham'a Daweely' (Translated as Oh Mother, Cover my hands with Hina, and light the candle.)

<sup>523</sup>Kufiya is the traditional Palestinian scarf worn generally by males on their heads or around the neck. It became an icon of liberation and a defining dress for the Palestinians' struggle under occupation.

<sup>524</sup>*Muwashshah* (in Arabic موشح) is an Arabic popular poetic lines from the Arabic Andalusí literature and always sung in standard Arabic. One of the famous poems sang by the characters in the play is *Salab Anoum Kayalun Maranee* (translated as: A passing shadow deprived my eyes from sleep.) See also María R Menocal, *The Literature of Al-Andalus*, (2000), 166.

especially when he confronts his mother and accuses her of adultery and tells her not to go to his uncle's bed."<sup>525</sup> Another difficulty is caused by the excessive and quick movements of the chorus on the stage, which potentially distracts spectators from focusing on the speeches. Despite that, the spectators are quickly engaged in the show and the majority respond positively to the character's dance and singing.<sup>526</sup> The chorus's collective movements also help tuning the spectator's bodies as the latter pursue the movements with their eyes from one point to the other on the stage. One can sense a mutual energy circulating in the space between the actors and the spectators alike: the actors act, and the spectators immediately react. This harmony felt in the space and it would not have happened without the employment of the chorus.

The appearance of the chorus on the stage always signifies nation's desire for fusion, especially when political rifts dominate the scene and hinder resistance exactly like the political atmosphere in post-2006 Palestine. Edith Hall comments on the role of the chorus as "the chorus presents the we... Their oneness was expressed theatrically: visually, through matching costumes and masks, and also with collective dance movements; and audibly, through the choral singing of odes."<sup>527</sup> Hans-Thies Lehmann also asserts that "the chorus offers the possibility of manifesting a collective body that assumes a relationship to social phantasms and desires of fusion."<sup>528</sup> In the applicable side, the significance of the Choric Theatre in preaching unity is manifested in the German Einar Schleef's *The Mothers* (1986). He created a catwalk stage on which three female choruses walk, run, deliver their speech, interlude, and surround the spectators from a different direction. Schleef's theatre is inspired by his dream of a unified Germany, and the chorus reflects that "sense of utopic unison... [and] strove for total incorporation of all [German] members."<sup>529</sup> Still, the first critic to pay attention to the importance of the chorus as a theatrical unification device was probably Nietzsche in his seminal book *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872). Nietzsche imagined the role of the chorus away of its traditional role as ideal-spectators who create aesthetic distance and prevent the spectator's identification with the characters. Instead, the dithyrambic Chorus Satyrs, as Nietzsche believed, is essential in

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<sup>525</sup> Jamal ALQwasmy. "ALa Quta Hamlet Tudfe Lamsah Feleteenyah Ala Masraheatu Shakespeer," *Adoustoor News Paper*, (January 31, 2010).

<sup>526</sup> EL-Basha, *Following the Footsteps of Hamlet*, 4:32, 13:42.

<sup>527</sup> Fiona Anneliese Evans. "Radaptation: Adapting Ancient Greek Tragedy in the Twenty-First Century." Thesis, (Newcastle University, 2019). <https://theses.ncl.ac.uk/jspui/bitstream/10443/4533/1/Evans%20F%202019.pdf>. P.140.

<sup>528</sup> Hans-Thies Lehmann and Jürs-Munby Karen, *Postdramatic Theatre*, (London: Routledge, 2009), 130.

<sup>529</sup> Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Tragedy's Endurance: Performances of Greek Tragedies and Cultural Identity in Germany Since 1800*, (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2017).

the Greek dramas, and it celebrates the God Dionysius and reminded the Athenians of their sociality in comparison to Apollo, the god of rationalism and individuality. Nietzsche says:

In reality, however, that hero is the suffering Dionysus of the mysteries, that god who experiences the suffering of the individual in himself, the god about whom the amazing myths tell how he, as a child, was dismembered by the Titans and now in this condition is venerated as Zagreus. Through this is revealed the idea that this dismemberment, the essentially Dionysian suffering, is like a transformation into air, water, earth, and fire, that we also have to look upon the condition of individuation as the source and basis for all suffering, as something in itself reprehensible. From the laughing of this Dionysus arose the Olympian gods, from his tears arose mankind. In that existence as dismembered god Dionysus has the dual nature of a cruelly savage daemon and a lenient, gentle master.<sup>530</sup>

In the same manner of establishing social bonds between the spectators Nietzsche mentioned in his book, the chorus in EL-Basha's performance dress and talk similarly in a collective voice, most of the time, to materializes this unity among the Palestinians coming from different cities inside and outside the Israeli Wall, holding different ideologies (Muslims, Christians, Jews, conservatives or liberals), and having different political affiliations ( Hamas, Fateh, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Palestinian National Initiative, or other independent political association). This unity is seen also in engaging the audience in the show by addressing him/her directly sometimes, and by asking the individual spectator to engage in the singing. However, it is noticed that few individual liked to remain disengaged in the show, but this engagement/disengagement dichotomy does not prevent the show from achieving its unifying goal. El-Basha actually is aware of this dichotomy and allows individual performances from time to time in his show. Still, the general outcome is that a harmonious community is felt in the space and the barriers between the individuals are broken. This temporal community, sensed in the one-hour-and-half show and created by the harmonious movements of the chorus, is what matters most. The performance becomes like a social game and a festival played and celebrated by all for all.

The chorus does not only run and speak collectively to achieve that unity, it also performs some traditional songs and dances significant to solidify that feeling. The American hip hop dance performed regularly by individual actors on the stage and witnessed by the other members of the chorus and the spectators alike, manifest resistance

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<sup>530</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy: Hellenism and Pessimism* (Createspace Independent Publishing Platform, 2017), ch.10.

and compel them to reflect on the danger the political conflict causes. In fact, such traditional song and the hip hop dances mixed with dabke movements have always been part of the Palestinians' struggle for liberation. David A. McDonald once describes the connection between performing dabke in the historical Palestine and in diaspora and the Palestinian identity as :

To preserve the dabke is to preserve the nation. Indeed, to dance the dabke is to dance the nation in its purest form. In the face of Israeli encroachment and the erasure of Palestinian space, time, and presence, the preservation of indigenous practices such as the dabke forcefully resists dispossession. Folklore is resistance. Detached from its 'precious soil,' Palestinian identity, history, and nation must be kept alive, carried, preserved, and performed fact.<sup>531</sup>

Other traditional rituals acted on the stage are the funeral ritual performed at the beginning for king Hamlet, accompanied by Quranic verses that the individual player recites while the chorus and the spectators are listening. After the funeral, the female chorus of Ophelia performed some ceremonial practices like ululation to celebrate happy occasions like the wedding of Claudius and Gertrude in the play. What is typical between these sad or happy rituals is that they are similarly performed in different Palestinian cities inside and outside the Wall and they help in strengthening social affinity among Palestinians. It is not only in Palestine that performing rituals and ceremonies seeking unity, but all the colonised and marginalised nations have their performative rituals as part of their struggle to achieve liberation. Barbara Ehrenreich asserts how Westerners used to perceive such performative rituals by the colonised nations in Africa as "ecstatic ritual, noisy, crude, impious, and, simply, dissolute."<sup>532</sup> This does not deny the fact that some Europeans have known and practiced some performative rituals, but the general inclination, especially with the nineteenth-century European idealism, was to celebrate individuation more than community. After the 1930s, Western anthropologists began to see these "bizarre seeming activities of native people as mechanisms for achieving cohesiveness, generating a sense of unity and became a way of renewing the bonds that held a community together."<sup>533</sup> In his book *Theatre, Society and Nation: Staging American Identities* (2008), S.E. Wilmer also gives an example of the Indigenous Lakota Tribe performing 'Ghost Dances' to accentuate their identity against the white cultural hegemony

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<sup>531</sup> David A. McDonald, *My Voice Is My Weapon Music, Nationalism and the Poetics of Palestinian Resistance*, (Duke University Press, 2013), 22.

<sup>532</sup> Barbara Ehrenreich, *Dancing in the Streets: A History of Collective Joy* (London: Granta, 2007), 3.

<sup>533</sup> Ehrenreich, *Dancing in the Streets*, 10.

and the genocide and confiscation of their lands by the white Americans. For almost two weeks, they perform dances by which they aspire to connect themselves with the ghosts of their predecessors, revive their values, reconfigure their nation, resist assimilations and assert separate Indian identity.<sup>534</sup> In fact, all that appears in El-Basha's theatre is utilized to show Palestinian identity and preaches solidarity. The chorus, the dance, and wearing *kufiya* in the play reflect that. Palestinians "recounted *kufiya* as an allegory for national unity... and as a badge of national identity and activism."<sup>535</sup> The sound of happy ululation produced by women reflects their joy significant to heal the wounds and reflect their unbroken determination in facing the occupation. "The manifestations of joy, songs, and ululations were always associated with the culture of the Palestinian Revolution."<sup>536</sup>

### 3.3.2. The Ghost and Memory

Another theatrical device used by El-Basha for preaching unity and sumud in the divided Palestine is the ghost. The ghost is permanently present on the stage with its huge size and almost nine feet tall that exceed the boundaries of human body and can easily be seen from all the corners. Still, it occupies much space of the stage, and sometimes it blocks the characters' way forcing them to go around it to do the acting. It is dressed in a brown garment that covers its body from the head to foot, and the face is covered with a scary white masks. A moving statue in which the actor AbdulSalam Abduh entered and played the ghost is used. What additionally can be noticed is its constant movement that can be described as a slow and monotonous. It keeps watching and observing the characters and listening to their speech all the time. Still, Hamlet's chorus can see the ghost twice in the play: in Act I, where the chorus suddenly comes across the spirit that reveals to them the secret of Claudius's murder, and in Gertrude's room, where the ghost orders them not to harm her. The spectators, in contrast, can see the ghost all the time on the stage with its huge size and continuous movement.

The disruptive dramatization of the ghost has a theatrical significance, and it targets the audience's conscience and memory. Its scary shape discomforts the audience and compels them to remember the time when they were unified under Arafat's governance and who

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<sup>534</sup> S. E. Wilmer, *Theatre, Society, and the Nation: Staging American Identities*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 8.

<sup>535</sup> Jey O'Brien and William Rosberry, eds., *Golden Ages, Dark Ages: Imagining the Past in Anthropology and History*, (S.l.: University of California Press, 1991), 170-171.

<sup>536</sup> "A Purse, A Song, and A Gun: The Struggle of Palestinian Women in the 1920s and 1930s." Accessed October 31, 2021, <https://www.paljourneys.org/en/story/13812/purse-song-and-gun>.

unified Palestinians against occupation and always avoided any clashes with other parties. It is also important to mention that Arafat's quick illness and mysterious death in his centre in Ramallah, in 2004, were highly shocking for the Palestinians. Many suspicions have been raised about Arafat's unnatural death and the quick burying of his body, and many assumed the assassination of Arafat by poison. The accusations were directed to the Israeli government and to some of the Palestinian fellows surrounding him.<sup>537</sup> However, the Palestinians demanded an immediate international investigation to uncover the truth and to know the real murderer, but there was intentional procrastination to do the investigation. It was not until 2012 that some Swiss experts from the Swiss University of Lausanne confirmed in a conference that Arafat's corpse contains enough amount of plutonium enough to kill a person, but this very late dissection of the corpse would not prove the crime or decide who the real murderer is.<sup>538</sup>

The similarities between the death of King Hamlet and Arafat by poison incited EL-Basha to present the spirit in a unique way. The first time that Hamlet's chorus encounters the ghost is when it reveals the secret of the murder to them. The spirit clarifies that it is Old Hamlet's ghost and ascended from the purgatory to tell his son about the murder Claudius committed. The dialogue between the chorus and the ghost goes like this:

The CHORUS ( <i>stand still</i> ): Speak, I'll go no any step further.	الجَوْقَةُ (يقفون متجمدين): تَكَلِّمْ! لَنْ أَتَقَدَّمَ لِلْإِمَامِ حَطْوُهُ .
GHOST: Mark me! My hour almost comes when I to sulphurous and tormenting flames must render up myself.	الشَّبِيح: أَنْظُرْ إِلَيَّ! دَنَّتْ سَاعَتِي الَّتِي عَلَيَّ فِيهَا أَنْ أَشْرَفْتُ نَفْسِي بِنِيرَانِ الْكِبْرِيَّتِ وَالْعَذَابِ.
The CHORUS: Why are you telling me that poor ghost?	الجَوْقَةُ: وَأَنَا مَالِي وَمَالِكَ أَيُّهَا الشَّبِيحُ الْمُسْكِينِ؟
GHOST: Pity me not, but lend thy serious hearing to what I shall unfold.	الشَّبِيح: لَا تُشْفِقْ عَلَيَّ وَأَعْطِنِي إِذْنًا جَادَّةً مُصْغِيَةً لِمَا سَوْفَ ابْوَحُ بِهِ.
The CHORUS: Speak! I am listening.	الجَوْقَةُ: تَكَلِّمْ هَا أَنَا أَسْمَعُ!
GHOST: You must be ready for revenge, too, when you hear me out.	الشَّبِيح: وَمَلَزِمَ أَنْتَ أَيْضًا بِالْإِنْتِقَامِ.

<sup>537</sup>Muhsen Saleh et al. eds., "Arafat Killed and Dahlan Executed ," *Palestine Today Newspaper*, December 31, 2014, 3445 edition, 13-16.

<sup>538</sup>Colin P. Clarke, ed., *Terrorism: the Essential Reference Guide* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, an imprint of ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2018), 28.

The CHORUS: What?	الجَوْقَة : ماذا؟
GHOST: I am thy father's spirit, Doomed for a certain term to walk the night and for the day confined to fast in fires till the foul crimes done in my days of nature are burnt and purged away. But that I am forbid to tell the secrets of my prison house, I could a tale unfold whose lightest word would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood.	السَّبَّح: أَنَا رُوحُ أَبِيكَ، وَقَدْ حَكَمَ عَلَيَّ أَنْ أَطُوفَ بِاللَّيْلِ زَمَانًا وَفِي النَّهَارِ أَنْ اتَّصُورَ جُوعًا فِي اللَّهَبِ إِلَى أَنْ يَحْتَرِقَ مَا أَفْتَرَفْتُ مِنَ الْأَثَامِ فِي حَيَاتِي الدُّنْيَا. وَلَمَّا لَمْ يَحْظُرْ عَلَيَّ أَنْ أَفْشِيَ أَسْرَارَ سَجْنِي لَسَرِدَتِ عَلَيَّ سَمْعَكَ قِصَّةَ تُعَذِّبُ نَفْسَكَ وَتَجْمَدُ دَمَكَ الْفَتِي .
The CHORUS: Oh God!	الجَوْقَة: رَبَّاه
GHOST: Listen Hamlet! If you have ever loved your dear father, revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.	السَّبَّح: اسْمَعْ يَا هَامَلْت! إِنْ كُنْتَ يَوْمًا قَدْ أَحْبَبْتَ أَبَاكَ الْعَزِيزَ، انْتَقِمْ لِمَقْتَلِهِ الْخَسِيسِ اللَّئِيمِ.
The CHORUS: Murder?	الجَوْقَة: مَقْتَلُهُ؟
GHOST: His most horrible ,weird and unnatural murder.	السَّبَّح: مَقْتَلٌ رَهيبٌ، يُوجِي بِالْخَسَةِ وَالْعُدْرِ وَالتَّعَدِي عَلَيَّ شَرَائِعَ الطَّبِيعَةِ .
The CHORUS: Hurry and tell me about it.	الجَوْقَة: اسْرِعْ بِالْقَوْلِ!
GHOST: Everyone was told that a poisonous snake bit me when I was sleeping in the orchard, but the real snake that stung your father is now wearing his crown.	السَّبَّح: لَقَدْ شَبِعُوا أَيِّي كُنْتُ نَائِمًا فِي حَدِيقَتِي فَلَدَغْتَنِي أَعْمَى. وَلَكِنْ الْأَفْعَى الَّتِي لَدَغَتِ الْحَيَاةُ مِنْ أَبِيكَ تَلْبَسُ الْآنَ تَاجَهُ.
The CHORUS ( <i>astonished</i> ): My uncle murdered my father and married my mother! ...	الجَوْقَة (مندهش): عَمِي قَتَلَ أَبِي وَتَزَوَّجَ أُمِّي!
The CHORUS ( <i>in one voice</i> ): Ah, all you up in heaven! And earth! My Father is in Hell. My heart, and muscles, don't grow old yet, keep me standing. You poor ghost, as long as I have any power of memory in this distracted head. Remember you! Yes, I'll wipe my mind clean of all trivial facts and	الجَوْقَة ( يتجمهرون وَصَوْتٌ وَاحِدٌ): يَا جِحَافِلِ السَّمَاءِ! أَيَّتِهِنَّ الْأَرْضُ! لَا تَبَاتِ! وَالِدِي فِي الْجَحِيمِ! تَبَّأ تَمَاسِكَ أَيُّهَا الْقَلْبُ! وَانْتِي يَا افكاري لَا تَشِيخِي. أَجَلْ! أَيُّهَا السَّبَّحِ الْمُسْكِينِ مَا دَامَ لِلذِّكْرَى مَكَانٌ فِي هَذِهِ الكُرَّةِ المشوشة لَنْ أَنْسَلُكَ. أَجَلْ! مِنْ لَوْحِ ذَاكِرَتِي سَامِحِي كُلَّ تَدْوِينِ سَخِيفٍ أَحْمَقَ مِنْ كُلِّ كَنْبِي كُلُّهَا. كُلُّ شَيْءٍ وَكُلُّ شَيْءٍ مَضَى مِمَّا نُسِخَ الشَّبَابَ هُنَاكَ وَسَجَلْتَهُ الْمَلَاخِظَةَ وَلَنْ يَبْقَى فِي كِتَابِ

<p>memories and preserve only your commandment there. (Looks at his mother) O fatal and destructive woman. (Turn to his uncle) you dreaded rascal bastard. For my secret word: Good Bye! "Remember me." I have sworn.<sup>539</sup></p>	<p>ذَهَبِيَّ إِلَّا أَمْرَكَ وَحَدِّكَ دُونَ غَيْرِكَ. (يلتفت إلى امه) أَيْتُهَا الْمَرْأَةُ الْفَتَاكَةُ الْمَدْمَرَةُ. (ينظر إلى عمه) آيَةَ النَّذْلِ الْبَسَّامِ اللَّعِينِ . . أَمَّا كَلِمَةُ السِّرِّ عِنْدِي فَهِيَ: وَدَاعًا! وَدَاعًا! لَا تُنْسِينِي. لَقَدْ أَقْسَمْتُ.</p>
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Most of the Hamlet's dialogue is spoken collectively, and some lines are spoken individually by individual members. The dialogue is almost similar to that in Shakespeare's play with a few modifications, like when the ghost's repeating "Remember me!" three times in the play. The groups respond in return that they will never forget the ghost's commands. In Gertrude's room, the chorus thought that the ghost came to chide his commands again when they say: "Have you come to scold your tardy son for straying from his mission, letting your important command slip by? Tell me."<sup>540</sup> But the ghost tells the chorus to be kinder to Gertrude, who is convinced that her son suffers from madness after his father's death. The chorus asks Gertrude to look carefully and see the ghost, "Look, look how it's sneaking away", but she replies that she cannot see anything: "No, nothing but ourselves."<sup>541</sup>



Figure 25: The chorus's first time meeting the ghost.

It is perhaps true that El-Basha's dramatization of the ghost perplexes the audience at

<sup>539</sup>El-Basha, *Following the Footsteps of Hamlet*, 20:00-24:36. I use here the same text of Shakespeare because the Arabic text is based on Jabra's close translation of Shakespeare's play.

<sup>540</sup>Ibid, 46:00.

<sup>541</sup>Ibid, 46:24.

the beginning and distracts them from following the actions. Still, the important thing is that it quickly achieves its goal by evoking their anxiety and makes them eager to look at the past and connect the ghost to Palestinian national figures like Arafat. The ghost, in a different manner, asks the chorus to remember it three times. It is not only searching for revenge, but it also demands remembrance. This remembrance shapes the presence of the ghost haunting the stages all the time. Emily Pine traced how the appearance of the ghosts on Irish stages, for example, usually connects Irish people with their past time and national figures. According to Pine:

Ghosts are unwanted haunting presences, yet they also testify to a fascination – even obsession – with the past. Ghosts thus embody the tension between forgetting and remembering that runs through Irish remembrance culture.<sup>542</sup>

In *Hamlet and Purgatory* (2013), Stephan Greenblatt also emphasizes that the ghost "not only cries out for vengeance but his parting injunction, the solemn command upon which young Hamlet dwells obsessively, is that he remembers."<sup>543</sup> Greenblatt believes that the ghost's appearance is accompanied by horror and intensity of feeling to make its memory digging deep in Hamlet's mind and make him willing "to wipe away [all] saws of books, all forms, all pressures past" from his mind.<sup>544</sup> It is important for the ghost to be disruptive for his son's mind to make him always remember his uncle's sin. Similarly, EL-Basha's huge and fearful ghost becomes very disruptive for the audiences to compel them to remember old days when they were unified under Arafat's rule.

EL-Basha's performance is commensurate with the fundamental function of the theatre as a memory machine. According to Peter Holland, "If the theatre were a verb, it would be to remember."<sup>545</sup> Also, "Theatre is a function of remembrance. Where memory is, theatre is."<sup>546</sup> Its powerful effect ensued when it "plays on the nostalgic, on a version of memory, idealising the past as a way of looking at the present."<sup>547</sup> For this sake of remembrance, playwrights like EL-Basha, always implement images, stories, characters, verbatim, and ghosts relating to historical figures and past incidents that evoke the collective memory

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<sup>542</sup>Emily Pine, *Politics of Irish Memory: Performing Remembrance in Contemporary Irish Culture*, 3rd ed. (Palgrave Macmillan: London, 2011), 154.

<sup>543</sup>Stephen Jay Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 206.

<sup>544</sup>Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, I, v, 99-100.

<sup>545</sup>Peter Holland, *Shakespeare, Memory and Performance*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 207.

<sup>546</sup>Marvin A. Carlson, *The Haunted Stage: The Theatre as Memory Machine*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011), ii.

<sup>547</sup>Baz Kershaw and Helen Nicholson, eds., *Research Methods in Theatre and Performance*, (Edinburgh, U.K.: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 24.

about a particular nation.<sup>548</sup> Moreover, if the chorus sees the play-within-the-play as a way to capture Claudius's conscience and make him confess his crime, El-Basha's complete performance is targeting the spectators' memory and making them think carefully about the danger of maintaining internal political rifts that kept them busy from fighting the occupation. If Claudius is responsible for running Denmark to whom the *Mousetrap* should be addressed, then El-Basha's play is addressed to some of the Palestinians who participated in running Palestine when many of them supported the conflict between Fatah and Hamas, and tolerated the division for fifteen years. This is the significance of the ghost with its enormous size and unusual presence on the stage. It intends to disrupt them, make them uncomfortable, and compel them to remember their unity.

After the collective death of Hamlet's chorus due to the poison, was preceded also by the death of the Ophelias after committing suicide, and which the audience can see on the stage this time, all the spirits of the characters including Gertrude follow the ghost outside the stage walking slowly and singing. Claudius is left alone regretting his destructive policies before he dies. In a direct speech to the audience, he confesses his remorse:

What stinky my sin is,  
Its stink reaches to Heaven,  
And upon it, the first and oldest curse was put:  
A brother kills his brother.<sup>549</sup>

El-Basha ends his play tragically with the collective death of the characters to deliver a message to the audience. He wants to fuel their fear of the catastrophic future Palestinians will face if they sustained the division nourished by the Fatah/Hamas political struggle to rule Palestine.

El-Basha's *Following the Footsteps of Hamlet* is a real manifestation for the desired unification in post-2006 divided Palestine and the desired Arab World. The performance materializes unity and the audience can feel the connection in the space for one hour and a half through the chorus's identical dress, collective speeches and similar movements. It is a real festival in which both actors and the audience celebrate their cultures, collective identity and resistance. The collective songs, debke, and performing other rituals, even the

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<sup>548</sup>Marvin Carlson accentuates this ghostliness in his book *The Haunted Stage: The Theatre as Memory Machine* by explaining how "every play might be called Ghost" since "every play is a memory play." He calls this mechanism of remembrance 'ghostliness': the revisiting of past incidents and figures in recent memory about a particular nation to understand and interpret new and somewhat different phenomena, and "the retelling again and again of stories that bear particular religious, social, or political significance for the public," 8.

<sup>549</sup>My translation from the Arabic performance.

sad one, help in creating harmonious atmosphere among them. The ghost is also employed skilfully to target the audience's memory and compel them to remember their unified resistance of the occupation empowered by the internal Palestinian conflict lasted between Hamas and Fatah for fifteen years. The performance intrigues the audience with important question like how long can they endure division? Who is the most benefited part from that conflict? And what are the hard consequences that might result from that separation?

It is not only that El-Basha's *Hamlet* has unique dramatization in employing the chorus, which is a new theatrical experience in the Arab World that needs more critical attention, but what is more important is the political message the audience can grasp at the end. El-Basha creates an atmosphere in which the audience experience unity, and obliges them to remember and think of the time they were unified in resisting the occupation. The same message is directed also for the Arab demonstrators in the Arab Spring and whose countries suffered the same internal conflicts. If they want their revolutions to succeed, they should discard all the religious and political rifts. This actually was materialized in some revolutions in the region when Arabs decided that they need to unify in facing their regimes.

## 3.4.

**Can the Arab Ophelias Speak? Theatre as a Space to Confront Patriarchy in the Arab Spring: A Study in Evan Daraji's *Hamlet vs. Ophelia***

One of the remarkable divergences between the Arab Spring and Post-Nasserism is the remarkable participation of Arab Women in the political demonstrations taking place after 2010. Statistics show that the average number of women who went to the streets to overthrow the oppressive regime reached between 30-50 % of the demonstrators, and their unprecedented participation caught the attention of local and global media. Women however demanded social and cultural change besides the political one. They harnessed all means to speak up against cultural misconceptions that restricted their lives and political representation in the Arabic patriarchal culture. Unfortunately, the Arab woman has suffered for a long time from many cultural restraints that underestimated her mind, controlled her body, and limited her movement. Her mental capacities were undervalued by envisioning her as an emotional creature inadequate to assume a presidential position, and her body was restricted by social fallacies of virginity and social honour that placed more pressure on her than on the man.

However, few voices were raised against all that oppression even before the Arab Spring, and despite the few positions given to silence women here or there, the persisting attitude is that women are less capable of leading countries and taking a reasonable decision in important political matters. The participation of women in the Arab Spring side by side with men, and leading demonstrations sometimes, attempted to revise all these misconceptions. It is not only social media that women utilized to raise their voices during the Arab uprisings; theatre is one of the tools harnessed by Arab women to raise their voices against the control of their body and mind. It played a major role in exposing the maltreatment of Arab women, and the stage became a platform for women to raise their voices, reject males' double standards, and express their aspiration for more representation in the political field. Women used theatre to mobilize other women against all cultural misconceptions of marriage, virginity, jobs, and education that men have perpetrated.<sup>550</sup>

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<sup>550</sup>I refer here to dramas appearing during the time of Arab revolutions like, *Nessa'* Shakespeare (Shakespeare's Women 2016) by Muhammad Tayeh, bringing five Shakespearean female characters together, i.e. Gertrude, Cleopatra, Desdemona, Juliet, and Lady Macbeth. They meet in an isolated castle and after an intense debate about their representations in Shakespeare's works, and how their destinies were shaped by a male author, they decided to revolt and change their destinies. *Endama Tabkee Farah* (When Farah Cries 2013) by Mudjar Al-Hajji and directed by Stella Cristofolini, is another play about a Syrian lady, Farah, who participated in the peaceful demonstrations in Syria in 2012, and when the conflict mounted in Syria, she fled

Daraji's *أوفيليا vs. هاملت* (*Hamlet vs. Ophelia*) is one of those post-2010 dramas that struggle to reverse all the cultural misconceptions about female's body and mind in the Arab World. Daraji dramatizes Ophelia as a tough and capable character who manipulates Hamlet verbally, convinces him of the reality of his madness, and finally manages to kill him.

The play is a one-act-three-scene rewriting of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in Arabic prose. A nine-page play appeared for the first time in a drama collection by Daraji called *تياترو* (Teatro), and bears no similarities to Shakespeare's plot and structure, except for Shakespeare's prince and heroine that Daraji reuses for her purpose. The word *vs.* in the Arabic title indicates antagonism more than the affinity between the two characters. The play is full of symbolic scenes that can be described as bizarre sometimes and require multiple readings to catch up with the plot like the four characters of Hamlet which appear in the play (the mad, the revengeful, the romantic, and the philosopher) to dramatize the identity disorder Hamlet suffers from. Hamlet, the philosopher, is represented by a speaking head placed on a pole in the second scene. Ophelia is given supernatural power like when she makes four walls surrounding Hamlet just by a signal of her hand. The actions become violent when Ophelia chases the four characters and kills them with a hammer at the end. These scenes perhaps made it difficult for the play to be staged till this moment. However, the play gains its profound significance from its intention to empower women and draws attention to a social and political injustice practised against women for a long time.

The first scene in the text shows both Hamlet and Ophelia on a stage. We are told that the actions are taking place on a stage, but nothing is mentioned where and when. It begins by Hamlet entering the stage while Ophelia is already standing there observing him. After Hamlet enters the stage, he speaks as if he is addressing the audience: "Who is the most genius madman in the world? Who is the most romantic madman in the world?"<sup>551</sup> Ophelia laughs at him, telling him that there is no any audience watching him in the place, but if he wants the audience to like him in the future, he must stop being arrogant and proud of his madness: "Go back to where you came from and re-enter the stage with more humbleness.

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with her fiancé to Jordan. In Jordan, she found no choice but to abandon her domineering fiancé before she decided to write her own story about the double oppression she faced. *Al-Hejarah Tuganee* (The Stones Sing 2015) is a three-act play by the British writer Kay Itzhed. In this play, four women from four Arab countries, namely Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, and Libya, reflect on their significant roles in the Arab revolutions in these countries, and how they were beaten and jailed by the armies of the regimes. It is not only that but how their efforts in the demonstrations were forgotten by their male companions after the end of the revolutions.

<sup>551</sup>Evan Daraji, "Hamlet vs. Ophelia," in *Teatro* (Iraq: Sisyphus Publication House, 2014), 104.

Try to introduce yourself to the audience as it is the first scene...not the last.”<sup>552</sup> Hamlet goes out and re-enters the stage asking the same questions. He looks at Ophelia to know if she likes his ‘entering’ this time, but Ophelia insists that Hamlet is a narcissist and obsessed with his madness. Then, both have a heated argument about Hamlet’s madness:

<p>OPHELIA: Try to convince me that you are ‘Hamlet’ in five minutes: Hamlet the Philosopher, the Great, the inspiring writers and artists, the immortal, Hamllllettt (<i>with stress</i>).</p>	<p>أوفيليا: حاول أن تُقنعني إنك هاملت بِخَمْسِ دَقَائِقَ فَقَط. هاملت الفيلسوف، العظيم، مُلهم الأُدباء والفنانين. هاملت العَظيم. الخالد. هاملت ( بالتشديد).</p>
<p>HAMLET: But... It’s me.</p>	<p>هاملت: لَكِنِّي . . . لَكِنَّهُ أَنَا.</p>
<p>OPHELIA: Oh my God! How narcissist you are! You are showing the muscles of your cartoon character. Behind this provocative swagger is a weak boy who is afraid and wants to hide in his mother or girlfriend’s lap.</p>	<p>أوفيليا: يَا إِلَهِي . يَا لِنرجسيتك. عضلات شخصيتك الكارتونية. وَرَاءَ هَذَا التَّبَخُّرِ المُفْتَعِلِ قَتَى ضَعِيفٌ. خَائِفٌ. يُرِيدُ العُودَةَ لِحِضْنِ أُمِّهِ أَوْ الإِخْتِبَاءِ بِحِضْنِ حَبِيبَتِهِ.</p>
<p>HAMLET: Me! <i>He thinks as he walks along the stage. Then asks:</i> Who is the most genius madman in the world? Who is the most romantic madman in the world? Who is the most inspiring madman in the world? Who is the most logical madman in the world since he is proud of being a madman? <i>Approaches Ophelia’s ear saying:</i> Notice that all of them are crazy... All of them are me or part of me. Now! What do you think of yourself? Who are you?</p>	<p>هاملت: أَنَا؟ ثُمَّ يَطْرُقُ مُفَكِّرًا وَهُوَ يَسِيرُ بِطُولِ المَسْرَحِ. يَسْأَلُ: مَنْ هُوَ المَجْنُونُ الأَكْثَرُ عبقريّة في العَالَمِ؟ مَنْ هُوَ المَجْنُونُ الأَكْثَرُ رومانسيّة في العَالَمِ؟ مَنْ هُوَ المَجْنُونُ الأَكْثَرُ إلهامًا في العَالَمِ؟ مَنْ هُوَ المَجْنُونُ الأَكْثَرُ منطقيّة في العَالَمِ لِأَنَّهُ سَعِيدٌ وفخور بِكَوْنِهِ مَجْنُونًا؟ يَقْتَرِبُ مِنْ أَدْنَى أوفيليا قَائِلًا: لاحظي أَنَّهُمْ كُلُّهُمْ مَجَانِين. كُلُّهُمْ أَنَا أَوْ بَضْعَةٌ مِنِّي. أَمَا أَنْتِ. مَا أَنْتِ؟</p>
<p>OPHELIA: You are right! They are all crazy. We thought they were crazy, but why?</p>	<p>أوفيليا: صدقت! كُلُّهُمْ مَجَانِين. أَوْ ظَنناهم هَكَذَا. أَوْ حَكَمْنَا عَلَيَّهِمْ بِهِذَا. لَكِن لِمَاذَا؟</p>

<sup>552</sup>My translation. Daraji, “Hamlet vs. Ophelia,” 104.

HAMLET: You did not answer my question, and now you are answering it with another question.	هاملت: لم تجيبي عن الشَّطْرِ الثَّانِي مِنَ السُّؤَالِ وَهَا أَنْتِ تَزِدِينَ عَلَيْهِ بِسُؤَالٍ آخَرَ.
OPHELIA: Excuse me! I'm trying to please you, to raise your profile, to...	أوفيليا: أَرْجُوكِ. إِنَّمَا أَحَاوِلُ أَنْ أَبْهَجِكَ، أَنْ أَرْفَعُ مِنْ شَأْنِكَ، أَنْ...
HAMLET <i>interrupts her</i> : To raise my profile? Who are you?	يقاطعها هاملت: ترفعين من شأني؟؟ من أنت؟
OPHELIA: And who are you? Ha? Which one are you now?	أوفيليا: وَمَنْ أَنْتِ؟ هَا؟ أَيُّهُمْ أَنْتِ الْآنَ؟
HAMLET: I'm Hamlet.	هاملت: أَنَا هاملت!
OPHELIA: Excuse me! Ha-ha. We knew Hamlet when he was Hamlet. Who are you? Which Hamlet are you now? <sup>553</sup>	أوفيليا: أَرْجُوكِ. ههه. كُنَّا نَعْرِفُ هاملت عِنْدَمَا كَانَ هاملت. مَنْ أَنْتِ؟ أَيُّ هاملت أَنْتِ الْآنَ؟

It seems from the dialogue above that Ophelia knows how to manipulate Hamlet verbally. She deepens his self-doubt and practices verbal tactics to intensify his real madness. She cunningly keeps asking him questions like, “Who are you. Ha? Which Hamlet are you now?”<sup>554</sup> She underestimates his conscience, demanding him to prove himself to her: “Try to convince me that you are the real Hamlet in five minutes.”<sup>555</sup> Hamlet, in return, insists that he is mentally stable and able to prove himself to her: “I’m Hamlet!”<sup>556</sup> Every time he tries to emphasize his identity and to be proud of himself, she cunningly underestimates his words, underrates his efforts and ridicules his manhood: “You’re narcissist...showing the muscles of your cartoon character. Behind this provocative swagger is a weak boy who is afraid and who wants to hide in his mother or his girlfriend’s lap.”<sup>557</sup> Ophelia’s tactic attains its effect quickly on Hamlet’s mind. He gradually starts believing that he suffers from madness and becomes convinced that his melancholia over the death of his father and his mother's marriage is behind his fanaticising things.

Daraji attempts to reverse one of the long-lasting stereotypical images of the hysterical and mad Ophelia, whose madness appears when she loses the male figures from her life. In

<sup>553</sup>Ibid, 104-105.

<sup>554</sup>Ibid, 105.

<sup>555</sup>Ibid, 104.

<sup>556</sup>Ibid, 105.

<sup>557</sup>Ibid, 104.

Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the death of her domineering father, Polonius, and the rejection of Hamlet's love when he announces, "I loved you not,"<sup>558</sup> shakes her mind. Her unreasonable speeches at the end when she "speaks things in doubt that carry but half sense,"<sup>559</sup> and her behaviour which "may strew dangerous conjectures in ill-breeding minds"<sup>560</sup> beside her suicide at the end, shows how she suffered pre-death madness.

It is right that both Hamlet and Ophelia demonstrate madness after the loss of their fathers in Shakespeare's play. Still, Hamlet's madness is conceived by many critics in the Elizabethan time and beyond as a result of melancholia or a tactic to deceive Claudius. This madness is a characteristic of male intellect. In Shakespeare's play, Polonius comments on Hamlet's weird behaviours as "though this is madness, yet there is method in't."<sup>561</sup> Ophelia's madness, however, is seen as a result of 'erotomania' or love-madness; a common conception of female's mental disease among the Elizabethans that strikes females more than males, especially those who could not attain their lovers.<sup>562</sup> Whether Shakespeare tries to maintain that misconception or negate it, the biological and sexual interpretation of female madness was factually popular at that time. The seventeenth-century psychiatrist Edward Jordan accentuated the misconception in his book *A Briefe Discourse of a Disease Called the Suffocation of the Mother* (1603) in which Jordan designates hysteria as a 'natural female disease' connected to women's womb that victimizes their bodies. He argued that:

Although hysteria originated in the womb, it emerged only when vapors emanating from a disturbed uterus would ascend to produce symptoms in other body parts or when a sympathetic interaction between another organ and the uterus made the latter a partaker of grief.<sup>563</sup>

The biological normalization of female madness was popular in Western culture even before that time. The Greek psychiatrist, Hippocrates, linked madness to the female's biological formation and sexual deprivation. He assumed that virgins, maids, and widows are most prone to hysteria if they lack the benefit of marriage and are deprived of sexual

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<sup>558</sup>Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, III. i. 121.

<sup>559</sup>Ibid, IV. v. 7.

<sup>560</sup>Ibid, IV. v. 15-16.

<sup>561</sup>Ibid, II. ii. 195.

<sup>562</sup>Marta Cerezo Moreno, *Critical Approaches to Shakespeare: Shakespeare for All Time*, (Madrid: Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, 2017), 29.

<sup>563</sup>Cited in Elisabeth Bronfen, *The Knotted Subject: Hysteria and Its Discontentm,s* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 108.

intercourse.<sup>564</sup> Plato also envisaged the uterus constantly wandering through women's bodies and causing hysteria when it reaches the chest area.<sup>565</sup> Julianna Little says that madness became a tool to rescue women from the witchcraft accusations that led to the savage execution of 50,000-80,000 suspected female witches in Europe between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries.<sup>566</sup> In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the biological interpretation was replaced by a psychological one, and women's madness was more accentuated.

Lacan, for instance, tried to explain Ophelia's madness in his seminar on *Hamlet* in Paris (1959), saying that the etymology of Ophelia is 'O-Phallus'. The phallus becomes a transcendental signifier that disturbs Ophelia's mind the time she is deprived off.<sup>567</sup> Her speech '[y]oung men will do't if they come to't / By Cock, they are to blame'<sup>568</sup> signifies how she was mentally disturbed when Hamlet refused to marry her and fulfil his promises at the end. However, Ophelia became an icon of the mad female character, and a "prototype for madness in scientific tactics and fiction: the figure of the female-driven despair and death by a rejection of a lover...."<sup>569</sup> Even in Paintings, the image of the mad Ophelia persisted in works by Benjamin West for the Boydell Shakespeare Gallery in 1789 and Dante Gabriel Rossetti's famous painting in 1868.

The image of the mad Ophelia is reversed in Daraji's play. She manipulates Hamlet, and convinces him that his madness is a real disease caused by the loss of his father and mother. When Hamlet discovers his weakness to argue about madness with Ophelia in the play, he uses another tactic to dominate Ophelia. He tries to remind Ophelia of the romantic Hamlet, the one who used to love her and write love-poems to her. He drags

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<sup>564</sup>Jacqueline Simon Gunn and Brent Potter, *Borderline Personality Disorder: New Perspectives on a Stigmatizing and Overused Diagnosis*, (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, an Imprint of ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2015), 15-16.

<sup>565</sup>Robert Westwood and Carl Rhodes, *Humor, Work and Organization*, (London: Routledge, 2013), 52.

<sup>566</sup>Julianna Little, "Frailty, thy name is woman: Depictions of Female Madness." (Virginia Commonwealth University, 2015), 62. Little explains how witch trials were commonplace in Europe and North America from the late fourteenth century until the seventeenth century, resulting in the torture and death of women primarily. Estimates vary between hundreds of thousands to many millions. From 1500 to 1660, Europe saw between 50,000 and 80,000 suspected witches executed. Witches were said to be able to kill with a look, ruin crops and destroy livestock, and cause illness or famine. Women became a convenient source of evil and were used as scapegoats, accused of witchcraft for many reasons. Some women may have been melancholic, mad, or exhibiting psychotic symptoms; others could have been those who deviated in some way from societal norms. In many cases however, the accused was simply a susceptible lonely spinster, or in the case of revenge, someone's enemy.

<sup>567</sup>Cited in Elaine Showalter, "Representing Ophelia: Women, Madness, and the Responsibilities of Feminist Criticism," in *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory*, ed. Patricia A. Parker and Geoffrey H. Hartman, (London: Routledge, 2014), 77.

<sup>568</sup>Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, IV. v. 59-60.

<sup>569</sup>Christopher John Murray, *Encyclopedia of the Romantic Era: 1760-1850*, (New York: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2004), 829.

Ophelia to dance with him and whispers in her ear, “Oh dear” I miss you.”<sup>570</sup> Ophelia mocks Hamlet endeavours to seduce her with his phoney statements like the way he did before, but the new Ophelia would not succumb her heart and body to Hamlet anymore. Hamlet is shocked when Ophelia informs him that she knows everything about him being *Zeer Nissa* (a womanizer) who has cheated on her by having sexual intercourses with other women:

<p><i>Another character enters the stage. It is Hamlet standing at the same point on the stage. Ophelia observes him as he advances towards her. He kisses her hand, touches her face softly, and drags her to dance with him:</i></p> <p>HAMLET: Oh, dear! I miss you.</p>	<p>يَدْخُلُ مُمْتَلِئٌ آخِرٌ. هُوَ هَامَلَتْ نَفْسِهِ. مِنْ ذَاتِ النُّقْطَةِ فِي الْمَسْرَحِ. تَرَاقِبُهُ أَوْفِيلِيَا وَهُوَ يَتَقَدَّمُ بِاتِّجَاهِهَا. يُقْبِلُ يَدَهَا مُحْيِيًا. هَامَلَتْ: عَزِيزَتِي. اسْتَنْقَتِ إِلَيْكَ. يُدَاعِبُ وَجْهَهَا بِيَدِهِ. يَجْرُهَا لِلرَّقْصِ مَعَهُ بِمَنْتَصَفِ الْمَسْرَحِ.</p>
<p>OPHELIA (<i>with mockery</i>): Hamlet the lover...!</p>	<p>أَوْفِيلِيَا (بِسُخْرِيَّةٍ): هَامَلَتْ عَائِقًا ... !</p>
<p>HAMLET: All of them are nothing but mirrors, so how can you build the bridges between us, so we can always meet?</p>	<p>هَامَلَتْ: كُلُّهُمْ. لَيْسُوا إِلَّا مَرَايَا. فَكَيْفَ سَتَمْدِينِ الْجُسُرَ بَيْنَهُمْ. بَيْنَنَا كَيْ نَلْتَقِ كَيْ نَبْقَى؟</p>
<p>OPHELIA: Hamlet the poet...!</p>	<p>أَوْفِيلِيَا: هَامَلَتْ شَاعِرًا ... !</p>
<p><i>Hamlet dances with her, wraps Ophelia around herself and pulls her</i></p> <p>HAMLET: Listen to the music, and I will listen to what your waist says.</p>	<p>يِرَاقِصُهَا هَامَلَتْ وَيَلْفِهَا حَوْلَ نَفْسِهَا ثُمَّ يَجْدِبُهَا إِلَيْهِ، مُوسِيقَى هَادِيَةً تَرَاقِصُ أَدْمَانَ الْمَكَانِ هَامَلَتْ: أَنْصِتِي. لِمَا يَقُولُ اللَّحْنُ، وَسَأَنْصِتُ لِمَا يَقُولُ الْخَصْرُ.</p>
<p>OPHELIA: I have always convinced myself that distances are lies. Footsteps tainted by sins ...I invented these illusory straight lines between us to give us a space to see our actions and sins.</p>	<p>أَوْفِيلِيَا: أَقْنَعُ نَفْسِي دَائِمًا بِأَنَّ الْمَسَافَاتِ كَذِبٌ خَطِيءٌ. خَطِيءٌ لَطَّخَتْهَا الْخَطَايَا. اخْتَرَعْتُ هَذِهِ الْخُطُوطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَةَ الْوَاهِمِيَّةَ بَيْنَنَا كَيْ تَمُنِّحَنَا مَسَاحَةً لِنَرَى مَا هِيَ أَفْعَالُنَا، خَطَايَانَا.</p>
<p>HAMLET: Honey?</p>	<p>هَامَلَتْ: عَزِيزَتِي؟! </p>
<p>OPHELIA: You cannot help but admit it now ... We all participated in the crime ... we slaughtered ... we buried ... we cried ... we mourned ... we performed the funeral ceremonies ... and we consoled each other.</p>	<p>أَوْفِيلِيَا: لَا يُمْكِنُكَ إِلَّا أَنْ تُقِرَّ بِذَلِكَ الْآنَ. لَقَدْ اسْتَشْرَكْنَا جَمِيعًا بِالْجَرِيْمَةِ. دَبَخْنَا. دُفِنَا. بَكَيْنَا. نَدَبْنَا. أَقْمْنَا مَرَّاسِيمَ الْعَزَاءِ وَوَأَسَيْنَا بَعْضُنَا الْبَعْضَ.</p>

<sup>570</sup>Daraji, “Hamlet vs. Ophelia,” 105.

HAMLET: I spread my voice on the hills of your femininity, and you slap me with the tragedy of your illusions?	هاملت: أفرش صَوْتِي عَلَى تِلَالِ أَنْوَتِكَ، فَتَصْفَعِينِي بِئْرَاجِيدِيَا أَوْ هَامِك؟
OPHELIA: They are not illusions ... it is the truth that you forget when you become a philanderer. <sup>571</sup>	أوفيليا: لَيْسَتْ أَوْ هَامٌ. أَنَّهَا الْحَقِيقَةُ الَّتِي تَنْسَاهَا جِين تَلْبَس زِير النِّسَاءِ هَذَا.

Hamlet then accuses Ophelia of becoming jealous for losing him to other women, “Oh, it is jealousy then, Ophelia!”<sup>572</sup> He reassures her that she will stay his dearest love, “My dear Ophelia ... You are the only house that has embraced me, and still, I don’t know its door,”<sup>573</sup> but Ophelia pushes him away and condemns his double-standards in that he expects her to stay loyal and holds pure love to him while he flirts with other women. Ophelia then surprises Hamlet by announcing her revenge through having sexual intercourse with other men, “Do you know how many sidewalks I hanged around before coming here?”<sup>574</sup> Hamlet is shocked to know that. He retreats and refuses to accept the idea of Ophelia’s treachery being a prostitute or even imagine it. Hamlet condemns Ophelia’s treachery telling her that “everybody has betrayed me, even you!”<sup>575</sup> Ophelia replies, “we are all traitors ... in one way or another ... we are all guilty.”

Hamlet leaves the stage and comes back holding a rope and a hammer as the stage description indicates. This time, he becomes the revengeful Hamlet who decides to take revenge on Ophelia’s treachery. He tides her to a chair and tries to kill her with the hammer he is holding. Ophelia laughs and mocks his weakness to kill her. She unties herself, and with a signal she made by her hand, four strong walls suddenly appear and surround Hamlet. He tries in vain to destroy them with the hammer and reach to kill Ophelia, but she stands up, pulls the hammer from him, and easily destroys the walls. Hamlet is shocked by Ophelia’s physical strength. After that, she approaches to kill him, but he runs out from the stage.

Daraji here wants to reverse the image of the honest and fragile Ophelia that has always accompanied her since the production of Shakespeare’s play in the seventeenth century. She has always been iconographed as a “young and beautiful, with a wan and frail look. Her long, dishevelled hair is often strewn with flowers, twigs, or straw. She carries and

<sup>571</sup>Ibid, 105.

<sup>572</sup>Ibid.

<sup>573</sup>Ibid.

<sup>574</sup>Ibid.

<sup>575</sup>Ibid.

distributes symbolic flowers and wears a long flowing white dress as a sign of purity and innocence.”<sup>576</sup> It is not only her mind that has been underestimated, but also men controlled her body. In Shakespeare’s play, her father warns her of Hamlet, who will exploit her naivety: “You do not understand yourself so clearly, As it behoves my daughter and your honour,”<sup>577</sup> or when he warns her by saying: “you speak like a green girl, Unsifted in such perilous circumstance.”<sup>578</sup> If Ophelia does not preserve her virginity, she will make her father shameful: “You’ll tender me a fool.”<sup>579</sup> Laertes also asks his sister not to be seduced by Hamlet’s love poems: “weigh what loss your honour may sustain, If with too credent ear you list his songs.”<sup>580</sup> Her desires are dangerous if she does not suppress them: “keep you in the rear of your affection, Out of the shot and danger of desire.”<sup>581</sup> Hamlet who used to love her tells her once that he does not love her anymore since she could not maintain her virtue: “for virtue cannot so inoculate our old stock but we shall relish of it. I loved you not.”<sup>582</sup> He asks her to join a convent rather than being “a breeder of sinners.”<sup>583</sup> Ophelia succumbed to men’s victimization to her mind and body and always replied “Tis in my memory locked, and you yourself shall keep the key of it.”<sup>584</sup>

Daraji shows Ophelia as the owner of her body. Becoming a prostitute is not only a celebration of her desire but an announcement of the control of her body, too. She refuses the virgin/ villain dichotomy that always controlled her life and allowed men hypocritically to theorize about honour and purity.

Shakespeare’s dramatization of the virgin Ophelia in his play resonated with the virgin/villain dichotomy popular in Elizabethan time. The Elizabethans highly praised and appreciated virginity under the reign of the Virgin Queen Elizabeth. At that time, virginity was seen as a valuable social commodity and reflected women’s chastity. It is not only that, but Cole Hayes in ‘Elizabethan Virginity’ mentions how mythical tests of virginity were frequently set for women at that time:

One of the popular myths during this time was that a virgin could hold water in their hands without spilling. This myth was then put to the test by having women hold a sieve as water is poured into it and if no water escapes the sieve then she is proven pure. Queen

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<sup>576</sup>Little, “Frailty, thy name is woman,” 13.

<sup>577</sup>Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, I. iii. 95-97.

<sup>578</sup>Ibid, I. iii. 101-102.

<sup>579</sup>Ibid, I. iii. 112.

<sup>580</sup>Ibid, I. iii.28-30.

<sup>581</sup>Ibid, I. iii. 34-35.

<sup>582</sup>Ibid, III. i. 122-123.

<sup>583</sup>Ibid, III. i. 126.

<sup>584</sup>Ibid, I. iii. 85-86.

Elizabeth herself is depicted holding a sieve in several paintings as proof of her status as a virgin queen and as a social bragging point as it was then seen. Many women would keep the soiled blankets from one's first night together as bloody proof of virginity. The reason why virginity is so protected is that a woman's purity was prized by male suitors. This caused virgin brides to have higher dowries thus successfully making a maiden's purity a valued commodity.<sup>585</sup>

These tests were meant to determine whether a woman has committed fornication in the premarital life or not. They also became yardsticks for measuring women's virtue and honour. The virginity test always occurred in different times and cultures under different names like the *humhandara* in Zimbabwe, *ukuhlolwa kwezintombi* amongst the Zulu tribe in South Africa, *Agnipariksha* in India, and many others are still current practices for virginity tests that involve physical examinations to find out whether a woman's hymen is intact or not.<sup>586</sup> What is common in these practices is that these societies do not place similar value on men's virginity like women's virginity.

Similarly, Arabic culture places a high premium on virginity as a sign of self-respect, family obedience, and honour. In *The Virginity Trap in the Middle East*, David Ghanim declares how virginity became "an important social category and marker [in the Arab World], and there is a high value placed on the preservation of an intact hymen until the wedding night."<sup>587</sup> He also declares how such dichotomy in the Arab World is still generating cultural restrictions for women, limiting her representation and restricting her movement. Even though Arab culture has been shaped by the Islamic doctrines since the sixth century, where Islamic laws have barely distinguished between men and women in the sexual sphere (restrictions and punishments are the same for men and women in Sharia Laws), the Arab culture, since the nineteenth and twentieth century, has been governed more by different tribal laws and legislations which are still functioning in the region up to this moment. These legislations replaced many aspects of Sharia Law, gave males more superiority over women, and legalized inhuman practices like 'Honour killing'. In Jordan alone, 20 honour killings, in which Jordanian females were massacred by their fathers, brothers, or husbands for losing virginity in pre-marital sexual intercourse occurred in

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<sup>585</sup>Cole Hayes, "Elizabethan Virginity," (2016), <https://shakespearecomesalivefall2016.wordpress.com/group-1-themes/>.

<sup>586</sup>Anette Wickström, "Virginity Testing as a Local Public Health Initiative: A 'Preventive Ritual' More than a 'Diagnostic Measure,'" *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 16, no. 3, (September 2010): 532-550.

<sup>587</sup>David Ghanim, *The Virginity Trap in the Middle East*, (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 2.

2000.<sup>588</sup> These inhuman practices still occur in most Arab countries and always frustrate Human Rights Organizations who demanded radical amendments to the laws that protect the slaughters and required considering the killers as serious manslaughters that deserve severe punishment and long-term imprisonment. The Jordanian journalists, academics, and religious organizations condemned these barbaric practices protected by the government's legal laws (No: 97 and 98/1980) which alleviated the sentences for the killers. The authority changed the legislation at the end under that pressure. The image of the strong Ophelia revolting against Hamlet's love and hypocrisy and fulfilling her desires echoes Arab women's effort to break all social misconceptions of honour and chastity that confined only in women's virginity and dress. Women in the Arab Spring did not demand political changes only, but social and cultural transformation in the meaning of female honour. They proved that they can fight and bear all the pains like men.

The second scene starts when Hamlet, the philosopher, is represented by a huge talking head fixed on a pole at the centre of the stage, almost "like Aristotle's head," as the directions inform. One can imagine that an actor enters the statute and starts playing the role of the philosopher Hamlet. The head starts talking to Ophelia, who seems busy and indifferent to its speech. It starts philosophizing about ideas like madness: "Is the mad person the only one who can tell the truth without fear,"<sup>589</sup> death like in: "Death raises nothing but death," or absurdity when she says: "What's wrong with that door? Without a grip to tell us about the world behind it,"<sup>590</sup> and melancholy as she orders him: "Do not mention heaven! It is not for me. I am from the hell."<sup>591</sup> Ophelia, in return, shows less interest in the head's theorization and moralization. She indifferently replies to the head only with few words, like when the head tells her about his vision of life and death, she replies, "death! What about death?"<sup>592</sup> When the head kept moralizing about many issues, the bored Ophelia hits the head with her hands, rooting the head out of its position. Then, she catches the head again, "brings a drill and opens the skull."<sup>593</sup> The head asks what she can see, and Ophelia replies that it is something disgraceful, terrifying and real:

HAMLET: What is it? Is it frightening?	هاملت: ما؟ ما؟ أهو مخيف لهذا الحد؟
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<sup>588</sup>“Mujrimu (Alsharafi) Yahsudun Eishrin Emra'at 'Urduniyat Khilal Aam 2000,” *Al-Bayan Newspaper*, January 14, 2001, <https://www.albayan.ae/one-world/2001-01-04-1.1169969>.

<sup>589</sup>Daraji, "Hamlet vs. Ophelia," 107.

<sup>590</sup>Ibid.

<sup>591</sup>Ibid.

<sup>592</sup>Ibid.

<sup>593</sup>Ibid.

OPHELIA: It's disgraceful, painful and very real.	أوفيليا: بل مُخزٍ. بل مُوجعٌ. وحقيقي جداً.
HAMLET: I want to die, and I want to die. Set me free Ophelia!	هاملت: أريدُ أَنْ أَمُوتَ. أريدُ أَنْ أَمُوتَ. أوفيليا عزيزتي. حرريني.
OPHELIA: My dear Hamlet! You're already dead.	أوفيليا: هاملت عزيزي. أنت مَيّت أصلاً.
HAMLET: Do not mention heaven in front of me. It's not for people like me. I'm doomed to hell.	هاملت: لَا تَذْكُرُوا الْجَنَّةَ، هِيَ لَيْسَتْ لِأَمْثَالِي فَأَنَا مِنْ بَنِي الْجَحِيمِ.
OPHELIA: Are we waiting for hell and expecting heaven? Are we still talking in the name of God?	أوفيليا: أنتنظر جحيمً وتوقع جنةً؟؟ أَمَا زَلْنَا نَثُرُ بِاسْمِ الرَّبِّ؟
HAMLET: Oh, God! I will tirelessly learn to walk again till I fall into the darkness.	هاملت: يَا رَبِّ! سَوْفَ أَعْلَمُ السَّيْرَ ثَانِيَةً بِلَا كَلَّلٍ حَتَّى أَسْقَطَ فِي الظَّلَامِ.
OPHELIA: Are we still hanging our mistakes on God's rack? Are we afraid of heaven's messages? Is it the fear of trees, rivers, our voices, our thoughts or our children? Is it a fear of saying 'No' to their laws and their gallows? No to the imprisonment of our cries in throats, and No to walk like sheep to their alters (?) to wash their sins? Sins are nothing but them. Hell is nothing but obeying them. <sup>594</sup>	أوفيليا: أَمَا زَلْنَا نَعْلُقُ أخطائنا عَلَى سَمَاعَةِ الرَّبِّ؟ أهُوَ خَوْفٌ مِنْ رِسَالَاتِ السَّمَاءِ؟ أهُوَ خَوْفٌ مِنَ الْأَشْجَارِ، الْأَنْهَارِ، أَصْوَاتِنَا، أَفْكَارِنَا، أَطْفَالِنَا حَتَّى. أهُوَ خَوْفٌ مِنْ أَنْ نَقُولَ لَا لقوانينهم ومسانقهم. لَا لِسُجُنِ صرختنا فِي حَنَاجِرِهِمْ. لَا لِلسَّيْرِ كَالنَّعَاجِ إِلَى مَذْبَحِ الرَّبِّ وَبِاسْمِ الرَّبِّ. لِعَسَلِ الْخَطِيئَةِ؟ وَمَا الْخَطِيئَةُ إِلَّا هُمْ، وَمَا الْجَحِيمُ إِلَّا إِتْبَاعُهُمْ.

Whenever Hamlet's the philosopher tries to speak, Ophelia silences it. Ophelia here revolts against the knowledge that is always based on men's experiences and desires. In the Arab World, men always provided religious explanations, moralized, theorized, and mapped knowledge in the region. The knowledge they provide is biased and from a male perspective. Ophelia's unresponsive silence to the head's moralization is an attempt to alienate herself from male's domineering knowledge. She insists on seeing the world from her own perspective and desires. Her breaking of the head announces her freedom from all the morals and traditions that restricted her mind and body.

<sup>594</sup>Ibid, 106.

The third scene shows Hamlet's four characters (The Mad, The Romantic, the Revengeful, and the Philosopher, represented by the head) fighting on the stage. The mad Hamlet chases the romantic and the revengeful ones to kill them, while Hamlet the philosopher shouts to stop them. Ophelia, sitting on a sofa, tries to shut them out by drawing a curtain between them and herself, but they manage to break out and appear again. Ophelia then catches up the hammer, runs after them and manages to kill them on the stage. She sits back to her chair enjoying the silence, but suddenly, a group of voices are heard asking Ophelia why she has killed them, and Ophelia recognized that they are the apparitions of Hamlet:

<p><i>She squats, afraid of what she did. She imagines the voice of Hamlet condemning her crime:</i></p> <p>OPHELIA: We are all guilty in one way or another.</p>	<p>تُجْلِسُ القَرْفِصَاءَ خَائِفَةً مِنْ فَعَلَتِهَا . تُتَخَيَّلُ صَوْتِ هَامَلْتِ أَوْفِيلِيَا: كُنَّا مَذْنُوبِينَ بِشَكْلِ أَوْ بَآخَرَ.</p>
<p>HAMLET'S VOICE: You are the only one who is guilty. You killed me.</p>	<p>صَوْتُ هَامَلْتِ: أَنْتِ أَنْتِ وَحَدِكِ الْمُنْذِبَةُ فَقَدْ قَتَلْتَنِي.</p>
<p>OPHELIA: I tried to free you of your anger.</p>	<p>أَوْفِيلِيَا: إِنَّمَا حَاوَلْتُ تَخْلِيصِكَ مِنْ غَضَبِكَ.</p>
<p>The VOICE: You killed me without mercy.</p>	<p>الصَّوْتُ: قَتَلْتَنِي دُونَ رَحْمَةٍ.</p>
<p>OPHELIA: I freed you from your suffrage, thoughts, and dreams that prevent you from seeing the truth.</p>	<p>أَوْفِيلِيَا: حَرَّرْتُكَ مِنْ عَذَابِكَ. أَفْكَارِكَ وَأَحْلَامِكَ الَّتِي تَحْبِسُكَ عَنْ الْوَاقِعِ .</p>
<p>The VOICE You coldly buried me to conceal your sin.</p>	<p>الصَّوْتُ: دَفَنْتَنِي بِكُلِّ بَرُودٍ لِتُخْفِيَ فَعَلَتَكَ دُونَ شَعُورٍ بِالذَّنْبِ.</p>
<p>OPHELIA: I liberated you from your madness. Your death is what will make you immortal.</p>	<p>أَوْفِيلِيَا: خَلَصْتِكَ مِنْ جُنُونِكَ يَا هَامَلْتِ. مَوْتِكَ هَكَذَا هُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَكَ خَالِدًا.</p>
<p>The VOICE: You will live with me ... with us forever, Ophelia! You will not get rid of us easily, and you will bury us every day and night in your memory. We wake up with you every morning, and you will suffer and will be killed...</p>	<p>الصَّوْتُ: سَتَعِيشِينَ مَعِي. مَعَنَا إِلَى الْأَبَدِ أَوْفِيلِيَا! لَنْ تَتَخَلَّصِي مِنَّا بِسُهُولَةٍ، سَتَطْمَرِينَنَا تَحْتَ الثَّرَابِ كُلَّ يَوْمٍ أَوْفِيلِيَا، نَسْتَيْقِظُ مَعَكَ كُلَّ صَبَاحٍ وَنُسَعِّشِفِينَ وَنُذَبِّحِينَ سَتُعَذِّبِينَ وَتُحَاكِمِينَ.</p>

OPHELIA ( <i>Shouting</i> ): No! You are dead. All of you are dead. <sup>595</sup>	أوفيليا: لَا أَنْتِ مَيِّتٌ، كُلُّكُمْ أَمْوَاتٌ. كُلُّكُمْ أَمْوَاتٌ.
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The image that Daraji gives to Ophelia in his play is not only contrary to Shakespeare's image of Ophelia, but more broadly to the image of the Arab woman, often imprisoned by cultural and biological scales of purity and virginity which restricted their movements and activities during the previous times. If the Arab Spring has importance in the Arab region, it is seen in the ability of women to break out of these social barriers. The killing of Hamlet's four characters in the end is a symbol of Arab women breaking out from male dominance.

### 3.4.1. Ophelia as a Representation of Arab Women

The image of the strong Ophelia in Daraji's play resonates with Arab women's seeking a social change post-2010. Women began to raise their voices against the underestimation of their mind, and they seized the Arab Spring to raise their voices. The Arabic patriarchal culture always underestimated women's mental capacity upon biological excuses. One of the widespread misconceptions that have always subordinated women and prevented them of assuming high ranking positions in the political and judicial system in the Arab World is a biological fallacy that envisioned women as more emotional and less rational creatures the reasonable men. This biological and psychological fallacy engendered binarism and subordinated women. What makes this assumption valid in the Arab World can be traced to religious reasons. The Arabic culture is Islamic at its core, and Islam differentiates between the biological capabilities of males and females to perform religious rituals like prayer and fasts. For example, during menstruation, women are exempted from praying, fasting, or doing the pilgrimage differently from the male who, since he does not experience the same biological changes, are required to do all the rituals in their times. However, these religious excuses gradually transformed through times from an idea of religious simplification given to women into a picture of female biological incompleteness assumed by Arab men and exploited by them to subjugate women.

Another religious example that I think is more dangerous in consolidating this image of the incomplete and irrational woman in the Arabic patriarchal culture is the misunderstood saying by Prophet Mohammad, fourteen hundred years ago, that "women have a deficiency

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<sup>595</sup>Ibid, 109.

in intellect and religion.”<sup>596</sup> Despite that many religious people have defended Prophet Mohammad and tried to clarify the real context in the sphere of religious simplification for women, what becomes a fact is that many women have suffered from that misunderstanding caused by the saying and used by men to marginalize women from political positions like the presidency. Nawal Sadawi, an Egyptian political activist, reflected on how she was accused of being ‘mad’ for her attempt to run for presidency in Egypt once:

The word rebellious or revolutionary is still negative and is often associated with madness, as creativity has always been associated with hysteria, especially in the case of women. I was accused of insanity when I grabbed the pen and wrote against the injustice inflicted on women. A few days ago, politicians described me as a mad woman in the Egyptian parliament because I ran for the presidential elections, and none of them described the male candidates as such.<sup>597</sup>

Sadawi also mentioned the story of May Ziyadeh (1886-1941), a previous Syrian activist who roomed the Arab World defending women’s rights in the last century. She eventually ended up in Asofria Hospital for Mad people in Beirut, and after she had been released, she went to Egypt, where she died in agony and injustice. Sadawi comments on Ziyadeh’s madness:

The painful fate of Mai Ziyadeh was not different from the fate of any pioneering woman trying to change the backward patriarchal perception of women. Her fate was not much different from the intelligent (charming and wise) women who were accused in the middle ages of madness, immorality, or witchcraft.<sup>598</sup>

Sadawi and Ziyadeh are just a few examples one can mention on the suffrage of women in the Arab World. Men always found religious, biological, and cultural excuses to control women and arrange society with a hierarchal categorization in which women became

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<sup>596</sup>The Prophet’s complete saying in Sahih al-Bukhari: Once Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ) went out to the Musalla (to offer the prayer) of ‘Id-al-Adha or Al-Fitr prayer. Then he passed by the women and said, "O women! Give alms, as I have seen that the majority of the dwellers of Hell-fire were you (women)." They asked, "Why is it so, O Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ)?" He replied, "You curse frequently and are ungrateful to your husbands. I have not seen anyone more deficient in intelligence and religion than you. A cautious sensible man could be led astray by some of you." The women asked, "O Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ)! What is deficient in our intelligence and religion?" He said, "Is not the evidence of two women equal to the witness of one man?" They replied in the affirmative. He said, "This is the deficiency in her intelligence. Isn’t it true that a woman can neither pray nor fast during her menses?" The women replied in the affirmative. He said, "This is the deficiency in her religion." (Book 6, Hadith 9, p. 304) <https://sunnah.com/bukhari/6/9>.

<sup>597</sup>My translation from the Arabic text. Nawal Sadawi, *Aloujh Ala'ari Llmra'ah Ala'rbiah*, (Cairo: Dar Al-Maref, 1994), 120.

<sup>598</sup>Nawal Sadawi, *An Almara Wadeen Walaklaq*, (Cairo: Madbouli Publisher, 2005), 219.

subsidiary to them. The conception of women having limited mental abilities or being more emotionally oriented than the rational man is an ironic and contemptuous accusation aiming to prevent women from their political and social rights.

The presence of women in the demonstrations, in most of the Arab countries like Egypt, Tunisia, and Bahrain, reached out to 50% of the participants; while in other countries like Yemen, Libya and Syria, the percentage was below that as these countries are more regressive concerning women's role, and because of the fierce armed revolutions that limited the role of women. Nevertheless, no one denies that the period is unprecedentedly considered a turning point in the history of Arab women in the region. In Tunisia, the cradle of the Arab Spring, women went to the streets alongside men after the regime refused to release their husbands and fathers captured by Ben Ali's police. In Egypt in 2011, women's bodies became physical shields for men against the live bullets in Tahrir Square, where youths used to gather and chant against the Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak at that time. In Bahrain, women were the first to attend Pearle Square with their children, and they were headed by the activist, Zainab Al-Khawaja, who commenced a hunger strike to protest the arbitrary jailing of her father. Nabeel Rajab, president of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights, commented on the role of Bahraini women in the demonstrations, saying: "women have played a hugely influential role this time and put themselves in danger. They treated the injured in the streets and nursed them in their homes when they were too afraid to go to the hospital."<sup>599</sup> In Yemen, the descending of women to the streets was contrary to the traditional perception of women's image, and although their participation did not reach the required level, like in Egypt and Tunisia, where people are more open to the role of women, Yemeni women have proved their presence in the Yemeni spring. One of the most famous activists was Tawakol Karman, who led the students' marches in Sana'a, the capital of Yemen, against President Ali Abdullah Saleh. She was imprisoned for 36 hours, but after she had been released, she continued to mobilize women, and she announced February 3, 2011, as 'The Day of Rage' in which she asked Yemeni women to go down to 'Freedom Square' like the Egyptian and Tunisian ones.

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<sup>599</sup>Cited in Xan Rice et al., eds., "Women Have Emerged as Key Players in the Arab Spring," *The Guardian*, April 22, 2011, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/apr/22/women-arab-spring>.



Figure 26: Tawakol Karman in one of the demonstrations in Sana'a. BBC/Arabic October 7, 2011. [https://www.bbc.com/arabic/middleeast/2011/10/111007\\_karman\\_profile](https://www.bbc.com/arabic/middleeast/2011/10/111007_karman_profile)



Figure 27: Egyptian women carry a picture of police dragging and undressing a lady in the street (January 25, 2011).Dunya Alawatan Magazeen. <https://www.alwatanvoice.com/arabic/news/2011/12/17/228988.html>

However, the role of women from all the spectrums of society, academics, doctors, journalists, and housewives, gradually shifted from participating in the demonstrations to organizing and leading them. One of the fields that women excelled in was the harnessing of Social Media for their revolutionary purposes. Using Facebook and Twitter most frequently, they uploaded pictures, mobilized men and women together, and planned for the time and place of the gatherings. The Egyptian Asma Mahfouz, a 26-year-old business graduate of Cairo University, recorded a four-minute video of herself and placed it on her Facebook page on January 18, 2011, saying: ‘if you stay at home, then you deserve all that's being done to you. And you will be guilty, before your nation and your people. And

you'll be responsible for what happens to us on the street while you sit at home.’<sup>600</sup> Her calling quickly spread among Egyptians who went down to the streets, heeding her call.

Arab women in the Arab Spring demonstrated physical strength through bearing tortures and by making their bodies physical shields for their companion men. They endured the consequences of the revolutions more than men perhaps and were severely beaten, imprisoned, and some were raped. The Libyan Iman Al-Obeidi, for instance, informed the media of her rape by 15 police officers of Gaddafi's militia in prison.<sup>601</sup> Diana Wahba, an eyewitness in the Tahrir Square in Egypt, recounted in her essay “Gendering the Egyptian Revolution” how the police carried virginity tests for ten single women captured in Tahrir Square to humiliate them. As Wahba states, the idea behind this virginity test was to humiliate ladies and discredit their families: “The message was that fathers, brothers, and husbands should not allow their women to protest and compromise their families’ honour.”<sup>602</sup>

Despite these virginity tests and the physical torture women experienced during the Arab Spring, women’s participation in the demonstrations increased more. Arab women became intolerant of traditions that degraded their minds, controlled their bodies, and defined their chastity. They demanded new political positions and a change of social habits. Women protested against all the social hypocrisy that placed less pressure on Arab men. In the play, Hamlet is a hypocritical womanizer. He does not condemn his treachery but accuses Ophelia of becoming treacherous when she deserted him. His insistence to kill Ophelia and take revenge after her treachery resembles those honour killing practices by which men give themselves the right to control females' bodies. Ophelia's sexual intercourses are an announcement of her control over her body and a celebration of her desires that should not be repressed. She does not submit herself to men nor to any social or religious norms that will control her body: “Are we still hanging our mistakes on God’s rack?”<sup>603</sup> She announces that she will break her silence by saying ‘No’ to all male’s dominance:

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<sup>600</sup>Melissa Wall and Sahar El Zahed, “I’ll Be Waiting for You Guys’: A YouTube Call to Action in the Egyptian Revolution,” *International Journal of Communication*, 5, (January 2011): 1333.

<sup>601</sup>Ian Black, “Iman Al-Obeidi Faces Criminal Charges over Libya Rape Claim,” *The Guardian*, (March 29, 2011), <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/mar/29/iman-al-obedi-libya-rape-claim-charges>.

<sup>602</sup>Diana Wahba, “Gendering the Egyptian Revolution,” in *Women's Movements In Post-"Arab Spring" North Africa* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 61-76, 72.

<sup>603</sup>Daraji, “Hamlet vs. Ophelia,” 107.

“Is it a fear of saying No to their laws and their gallows? No to the imprisonment of our cries in throats, and No to walk like sheep to their altars to wash their sins?”<sup>604</sup> Hamlet tells her that she is sinful since she breaks all the religious and social norms of purity, but Ophelia replies that sin is all found in men and their tactics to subjugate her: “Sins are nothing but them. Hell is nothing but obeying them.”<sup>605</sup>

The victorious end of the play reflects a female's desire to break out from social restrictions imposed on her mind and body. As a male figure, Hamlet tries to practice male dominance on Ophelia as many Arab men have done. Still, Ophelia breaks all those norms by demonstrating more verbal and physical strength. She manipulates him, controls his thoughts and kills all the four Hamlets at the end. Ophelia is the new image of the Arab women that reversed social expectations and proved their capabilities to participate in demonstrations and bear the torture like men would.

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<sup>604</sup>Ibid.

<sup>605</sup>Ibid, 106.

## 3.5.

**The Artistic Freedom beyond Censorship in Zaid Khalil Mustafa's *Hamlet After A While* and Fahad ALHoushanei's *Hamlet! Leave My Head***

One of the remarkable changes in the period of the Arabic Spring is the artistic freedom achieved in some Arab countries in contrast to the state censorship applied on theatres in Post-Nasserism. The period witnessed a remarkable shift in the role of theatre houses as spaces where people visit to express their longing for freedom. However, this shift in artistic attention came gradually. It came when the need for platforms and stages that enable the speakers to reach out to the largest possible number of listeners gathering in the streets and squares became necessary. The platforms were built in streets as spaces where demonstrators spoke, danced, and chanted against regimes. The attention then was shifted to theatre houses when people sensed the powers of the stage in achieving political changes. It is not only that, but playwrights and stage directors in unique manners worked hard to bridge the gap between theatres and public life. This is accomplished by doing theatres that are concerned with the changes in the period, and by making theatres more inclusive to the public people through using the Arabic slangs instead of Fusha.

Still, the speaking about achieving ultimate theatrical freedom in all Arab countries during this period is erroneous. Some Arab regimes are still mastering censorship as they believe that theatres could mobilize people against them. In countries like Saudi Arabia and Jordan, theatres are still observed and censored by the states and it required getting the permission of the authority before staging any play. Still, the danger of the Arab revolutions that haunted these regimes allowed a small space, but an observed one, for theatrical freedom and indirect criticism. As long as that criticism is not directed to the leaders and not openly enticing revolutions against them, the authorities would allow such performances to happen.

Two important stage adaptations of *Hamlet* occurred in Jordan and Saudi Arabia in the last ten years: one by the Jordanian director Zaid Khallel Mustafa under the title *هاملت بَعْدَ حينٍ* (*Hamlet After A While*) in 2019, and another stage adaptation by the Saudi director Fahad ALHoushanei under the title *هاملت أَخْرَجَ مِنْ رَأْسِي* (*Hamlet! Leave My Head*) in 2016. What is common between the plays is the theme of censorship and limited artistic freedom, which both directors indirectly reflected on in the two countries.

Mustafa's play is an adaptation of the second scene of Mamdouh Adwan's *Hamlet Wakes Up Late* with some modifications. It was firstly shown in the Royal Jordanian

Cultural Centre in Amman in 2019. In the play, Hamlet is a playwright and a stage director who works with Ophelia on a romance play called *Scheherazade*, taken from the historical romantic story between Scheherazade and Shahrayar in *One Thousand and One Nights*.<sup>606</sup> After hearing the rumours about his father's suspicious death, from the commoners not from his father's ghost this time, Hamlet immediately decides to change the play to another one with the title *The Mousetrap*, which will be staged on the wedding night of Gertrude and Claudius. The "play's the thing \Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King"<sup>607</sup> is going to elicit tangible proof of the murder which he was ignorant of. Ophelia also convinces Hamlet that such a political play, which will comment on "the dread that afflicts the earth" and reflects "the stories of the deprived, the wounded and the deceived"<sup>608</sup> is currently more relevant than staging romantic stories like *Scheherazade*.

Claudius, after a while, finds out about Hamlet's real motives behind changing the play only through Guildenstern and Rosencrantz who serve as actors in Hamlet's theatre, and spy on him and his acting group. Both characters notify Claudius that Hamlet intends to produce "a political play that raises people's awareness and mobilize the masses against you."<sup>609</sup> Upon that, Claudius produces a new act of law in Denmark by which not only Hamlet's but all the theatrical productions will be observed. The committee, headed by Polonius, "will censor Hamlet's new play".<sup>610</sup> After proving that Hamlet's amendments to the play intend to entrap Claudius, Hamlet and his acting group are accused of planning secret arrangements with the poor people that "will destabilize the peace of Denmark"<sup>611</sup> as Claudius announces. An order is given to execute Hamlet and his fellow actors, and they die before completing the play.

Mustafa has intentionally omitted all other parts of Mamdouh Adwan's *Hamlet Wakes Up Late* such as the ghost' scenes, the graveyard scene, and the fencing scene with Laertes. Also, Horatio, Marcellus, and other good friends of Hamlet are removed from the play. This leaves Hamlet surrounded by his enemies in the court. Even Gertrude has turned into

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<sup>606</sup>Known as the *Arabian Nights* and a collection of tales about different topics told by Scheherazade to her husband Shahrayar who used to kill his wives in the night of wedding. Scheherazade, who recently is married to Shahrayar, finds a way to save her life. She intentionally never ends the stories to raise his curiosity and to force him to postpone her killing to the next night. In the next night, she starts another story and never ends it. She then became an icon of those romantic fairy tales in the Arab World. In Geraldine McCaughrean and Rosamund Fowler, eds., *One Thousand and One Arabian Nights*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

<sup>607</sup>In all the lines and quotes from Adwan's plays that are similar to the ones in: Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, II. ii. 603–605), I will use the same lines in English as they are in Shakespeare's text.

<sup>608</sup>Mustafa "Hamlet After A While," 25: 05.

<sup>609</sup>*Ibid*, 24:32.

<sup>610</sup>*Ibid*, 25:20.

<sup>611</sup>*Ibid*.

an egoistic person who does not tolerate her son's 'excessive grief' over his dead father anymore. This dramatic adjustment of Adwan's play offered Mustafa more space to comment on a milestone conflict between theatricality and anti-theatricality in the region.

In the play, theatre becomes a sticking point in the struggle between Hamlet and Claudius. Claudius, in the beginning, perceives theatre only as an entertaining tool that would keep Hamlet busy and distracted from revenge, "he will entertain himself with theatre and forget about his father's life and death."<sup>612</sup> Gertrude thinks of it as a significant approach to lessen Hamlet's melancholy, and Polonius believes that performances would amuse the masses, "the plays entertain people and do not pose any danger."<sup>613</sup> On the contrary, Ophelia believes that theatre must reflect "the stories of the deprived,"<sup>614</sup> Guildenstern warns Claudius that Hamlet's play can "enlighten people and form a collective consciousness,"<sup>615</sup> and Rosencrantz asserts the danger of theatre occurs the time it "defends and defines peoples' goals."<sup>616</sup> Hamlet is persuaded that theatre is truth discovering machine that can prove the rumours about his father's death as he indicates to Ophelia about the purpose of theatre, "the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature."<sup>617</sup> It is not only that, but theatre should penetrate hypocrisy and pretence through "[showing] virtue her feature, scorn her own image."<sup>618</sup> For him, theatre is an "honest method, as whole one as sweet."<sup>619</sup>

But Hamlet's obsession with honesty fails him this time to entrap Claudius and deceive other characters. When Claudius in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* interrogates if the play, *The Mousetrap*, includes any offense in it, "is there no offense in't,"<sup>620</sup> Hamlet cunningly reassures Claudius that his play is a fictitious piece of work, "they do but jest. Poison in jest. No offense i' th' world."<sup>621</sup> Hamlet smartly brought to the stage a factious story "tis a knavish piece of work,"<sup>622</sup> which happened in Vienna, somewhere else far from Denmark, that "it touches us not" as he entraps Claudius. Still, he knows how such a 'knavish piece' on stage, if it is dramatized well, and if the actors "speak the speech, I pray you, as I

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<sup>612</sup>Ibid, 31:30.

<sup>613</sup>Ibid, 31:40.

<sup>614</sup>Ibid, 25:08.

<sup>615</sup>Ibid, 35:57.

<sup>616</sup>Ibid, 35:45.

<sup>617</sup>Ibid, 30:20. I am using here the same translation of Shakespeare, *Hamlet*: III. ii. 20-21.

<sup>618</sup>Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, III. ii. P.1.

<sup>619</sup>Ibid, II. ii. 408.

<sup>620</sup>Ibid, III. ii. 220.

<sup>621</sup>Ibid, III. ii. 223-224.

<sup>622</sup>Ibid, III. ii. 252.

pronounced it to you,” and if they “suit the action to the word, the word to the action,”<sup>623</sup> it will turn into a stab and a yardstick truth machine. In Mustafa’s play, Hamlet still believes in the theatre’s ability to uncover the truth, but he could not conceal his motives from Claudius who soon discovers how “the amendment to [the text] is dangerous.”<sup>624</sup> If Hamlet is considerably obsessed with knowing the truth, he is incapable to balance reality and appearance like Hamlet in Shakespeare did. He discovers Rosencrantz and Guildenstern’s treachery at the end after they have already informed Claudius about his plan.

Mustafa intentionally draws this conclusion of Hamlet’s death to emphasize the obstacles preventing theatres from being effective in the region, and to show the danger theatre-makers face in the Arab World. His work is not about revenge to be accomplished after knowing the truth like in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, but it ends in an earlier stage where truth itself is forbidden and hindered by an overwhelming regime. In Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, there are two sources to support Hamlet with the truth: truth from the ghost in its abstract form, and truth by the actors in its application form. What is common between both sources is that they both came from outside Elsinore, and neither could be controlled by Claudius. Whereas, there are no ghosts or actors to bring truth from abroad in Mustafa’s play. The only thing that will bring forth the reality is the play, but his enemies do not allow it to happen.

If theatre is a recourse where people “[can be] enlightened about a political or social issue”<sup>625</sup> as Guildenstern mentions, then theatrical censorship comes to prevent this enlightenment to happen. The fear comes out of theatre’s ability to move, to influence, to incite, to teach, and to gather, and from the audience’s willingness to imitate the actors as Plato asserted in *The Republic*, more than two thousand years ago.<sup>626</sup> Like Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, which was written when censorship was an obstacle for theatre-makers – Queen Elizabeth appointed Edmund Tilney as the Master of Revels to observe dramas in England, and he exerted an authority of banning any play and omitting any part that could cause any political or religious offenses—<sup>627</sup> Mustafa wanted to uncover how such practices limited

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<sup>623</sup>Ibid, III. ii. 191-119.

<sup>624</sup>Mustafa “Hamlet After A While,” 32:07.

<sup>625</sup>Ibid, 32:10.

<sup>626</sup>“And therefore when any one of these pantomimic gentlemen, who are so clever that they can imitate anything, comes to us, and makes a proposal to exhibit himself and his poetry, we will fall down and worship him as a sweet and holy and wonderful being; but we must also inform him that in our State such as he are not permitted to exist; the law will not allow them.” In Plato, *The Republic*, (San Diego, CA: ICON Group International, 2005), 347.

<sup>627</sup>John A. Wagner, *Historical Dictionary of the Elizabethan World: Britain, Ireland and America*, (New York: Checkmark Books, 2002), 304.

and influenced the history of theatre in the region for the same reasons. In the Arab World, the ability of theatre to display political issues and to summon people has always been confronted with governmental and institutional fear, hostility, and confinement on theatres more than other cultural means. For example, Nehad Selaiha in *The Fire and The Frying Pan* traces how theatrical censorship in Egypt was applied since 1451 when Mamuleki Sultan Djagmag banned all shadow plays and ordered the burning of all shadow puppets.<sup>628</sup> Selaiha said that the ban was issued on the ground that shadow plays “were often coarse and obscene, and containing political insinuations and indirect criticism of the rulers.”<sup>629</sup> Also, during the reign of Mohammad Ali (1805-1847), police members were allowed into the performances to govern the show and punish anyone that broke the rules of the decorum. After Ali, Al-Kedawey Ismail appointed the French Paolino Draneht Bey as a licensor, and the latter banned one of Jacob Sanou’s plays, *Al- Durratayn* (The Two Wives), for its political content. Sanou’s theatre was also closed as a result of that. Between 1923 and 1936, 43 plays by the Egyptian National Company were banned and refused licenses for political reasons as Selaiha mentioned. In 1955, Article One/law 340, stated that any play containing themes about atheism, representation of prophets, incorrect readings of Quranic verses, sexual scenes, drinking, indecent and vulgar expressions, failing to show the sanctity of marital life, sympathy with crimes, and justification of revenge should be banned. The regulation was approved with few modifications in 1976 under the reign of Hosni Mubarak. Besides, between 2004 and 2005, 19 films and theatrical shows were denied licenses for political and religious reasons under Hosni Mubarak’s regime.<sup>630</sup>

Another country in which theatre-makers have suffered from hard restrictions is Syria. The Syrian playwrights and directors, particularly under Assad’s regimes: Hafez then his son Bashar were also victims of severe censorship. The Damascene director and actress Naila al-Atrash who graduated from Bulgaria’s Higher Institute of Dramatic Arts in 1978, declares to Muftah Magazine how she was interrogated by the Baathist Secretary of Culture for directing two plays: *Night of the Slaves* and an adaptation for *Waiting for Godot*. The two plays were written by Mamdouh Adwan, the same writer of *Hamlet Wakes Up Late*. She says, “I was preparing for the opening night when I received a call from the Secretary of Culture. He asked me to join him in his office for an important message. I

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<sup>628</sup>Nehad Selaiha, “The Fire and the Frying Pan: Censorship and Performance in Egypt,” in *The Drama Review*, 57, no. 3, (August 22, 2013): 20-47, [https://doi.org/10.1162/DRAM\\_a\\_00278](https://doi.org/10.1162/DRAM_a_00278), 20.

<sup>629</sup>Selaiha, “The Fire and the Frying Pan,” 20.

<sup>630</sup>Ibid, 30.

went there and he told me to stop the play's opening."<sup>631</sup> After that, al-Atrash was banned from doing theatre. She travelled to the USA where she started her career as a theatre director.

These are a few examples of the restrictions associated with the history of theatre in the region. But Mustafa directed the play in a time when the public perception of theatre began positively to change, thanks to the Arab uprisings, starting in 2010 and continuing until this date, and which brought massive political, social, and artistic changes to the region. Concerning theatre, stages and theatre houses became necessary tools to mobilize people against regimes. This shift in attention to such spaces gradually happened when the youths discovered their needs for platforms on which they can deliver speeches and reach out to a large number of people. Revolution leaders and managers assembled platforms and stages in streets and squares to speak and to be easily seen by the crowds. These platforms, also, were used as stages on which they danced, sang national songs, and played music. Young people started conceiving the power of such performances in gathering people, and gradually, they moved into well-established theatre houses where they can benefit from the available lights, spaces, and sceneries. Theatres welcomed a great number of attendants who came to express political opinions and to mock the oppressive leaders. They became more accessible for audiences to participate, and more involving for them in contrast to the previous decades when theatres were restricted to the rich or the university departments.

But what is the positive correlation between theatre and political crises like the Arab uprisings? Dom O' Hanlon answers this question in *Theatre in Times of Crisis* as "crises [are] the bedrock of the fabled 'conflict' we talk about when talking about drama. Crisis is the trigger to dramatic action."<sup>632</sup> By this, O' Hanlon means how theatre, in a time of crisis, can be a space where people turned to in order to raise questions about uncertain political problems or social dilemmas. For example, theatre can psychologically help to alleviate the boredom and solitude resulting from the COVID-19 crisis in 2020 as O' Hanlon mentions.<sup>633</sup> Similarly, in the time of the revolution, the significance of theatre houses materializes and climbs as they foster unionism. This is what has been observed in the Arab Spring when the conflict between people and their leaders heightened. Hamlet changed his idea about theatre as a reaction to a crisis that happened in the disturbed

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<sup>631</sup>Alexander Schinis, ed., "Naila Al-Atrash Discusses Theatre, Censorship and Exile," in *The New Humanitarian*, May 5, 2016, <https://deeply.thenewhumanitarian.org/syria/articles/2016/05/05/naila-al-atrash-discusses-theatre-censorship-and-exile>.

<sup>632</sup>Dom O'Hanlon, *Theatre in Times of Crisis: 20 Scenes for The Stage in Troubled Times*, (London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2020), 69.

<sup>633</sup>O'Hanlon, *Theatre in Times of Crisis*, 5.

Denmark, and a theatre for him became a tool to put things right when time is out of joint. Still, theatre in the play is also part of the problem that will cause the death of Hamlet at the end. As Claudius senses the danger of the play, he tightens his grip on Hamlet and the Danish people. The censorship exercised on theatre in the play is an exemplification of broader oppression and the banning of free speech exercised on Hamlet's nation. The law Claudius issued on theatre comes out of the previous law packages that subordinated people to his powers, and theatre is part of this subordination since it "creates public awareness and incites revolution and change"<sup>634</sup> as Rosencrantz acknowledges. It is not only that, but theatres and actors were frequently abused by the state as Claudius did with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Hamlet called Guildenstern 'Brutus' and Rosencrantz as 'Judas Iscariot'<sup>635</sup> when he discovered their treason.

There was a huge effort to use actors and theatres as mouth speakers for the regimes even in the revolutionary Arab World. In Egypt for example, a few pro-Mubarak- regime actors attacked the revolutionaries and accused them of pursuing foreign ideologies. For example, Ahmed Bedeer, a famous Egyptian theatre actor, acted as Abdulaal in *Raya Wa Sakena* (1970), attacked the demonstrators by saying, "they do not love the country. There are intruders with the youth in Tahrir Square."<sup>636</sup> Bedeer was later accused of being "Hosni Mubarak's puppet" in a program called *Inqlabyoon* (Coup Perpetrators) on an anti-governmental TV called Mekamelin TV.<sup>637</sup> Another example is the Syrian Dureed Laham, a well-known theatrical actor who supported the Baathists in Syria. He described the Syrian opponents of Bashar as "embodied in the dress of the Devil"<sup>638</sup>(1.52). Laham later was accused by the People's Criminal Court of encouraging homicides against civilians.

This is how theatre was abused by the regimes in the Pre-revolution time, and the revolutionary Arab World too. However, Mustafa defends theatre against all these practices. He used one of the famous theatrical groups in Jordan, called Ferqat Masrah Ala Alkashab (Theatre Group on Stage), who define themselves as defenders of theatres, and who want to enlighten people about theatre's role. This group is composed of young people who preach about the importance of theatre in our life, use daily simple language like the one used in this play, and mix humour with serious issues to attract the audiences

<sup>634</sup>Mustafa "Hamlet After A While," 32:10.

<sup>635</sup>Ibid, 46:25.

<sup>636</sup>Ahmad Bedeer Cying Over Mubarak, *Al-Mehwar TV*, 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dEQqphgNNH8>, 1.2 .

<sup>637</sup>Mubarak's Puppet Ahmad Bedeer, *Mekamelin TV*, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3pbC8mSK0yY&t=194s>.

<sup>638</sup>The Actor Dureed Laham Announces His Objection for the Syrian Revolution, *nbn TV*, 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9eHMWDvuHYs>, 1.52.

and break the boredom. Mustafa used new techniques to bridge the gap between theatre and the common people. He uses slang Jordanian Arabic, sarcasm, traditional songs, and many other tools.

It is not only Mustafa, but it is the public orientation in the region at this time to inaugurate performances that take into account people's instant concerns, all educational levels, and all interests. They produced plays that dynamically reflect on everyday issues and performed them in café's, sports halls, and squares. For example, In Mohammad's Faheem's *I'm Hamlet* (2012), the actions begin in streets where an introduction about the actors every day journey to the theatre is projected to the audiences through a big screen. This gives the impression that Hamlet is an average person that could be anyone in Egypt. In *The Syrian Hamlet* (2011), the actors, visiting Elsinore and conducting *The Murder of Gonzago*, entered the stage from the same door the audiences use and walk the steps down to the stage between the audiences. Such playwrights and stage directors felt the need for a theatre that is more involving for the public, not a one that is marked by solitary, dis-inclusiveness, and elitism like in previous periods.

The Arab Spring brought many political, social, and artistic changes to the region. The desired end of finding independent theatre, that can fulfil its role as a critical instrument, has not been completely reached. This adheres to the fact that the Arab Spring did not succeed in taking down all the repressive systems in the region. Some regimes became even more aggressive and hostile towards people and freedom of speech, and they tightened the clutches more on media and social means of expression. Nevertheless, no one can deny the fact that a shift in the social perspective about theatres has chiefly occurred ever since the dawn of rebellions in 2010. From that time, a feeling of independence for theatres was proportionately sensed.

Another country in the region that was widely known for its clear hostility towards theatre even in the time of the Arab Spring is Saudi Arabia. If anti-theatricality is defined as "the fundamental distrust of representation and an equally strong discomfiture with the bodies that lend themselves to the art of performance,"<sup>639</sup> then the history of the theatrical movement in Saudi Arabia has always been shaped with anti-theatricality. This hostility towards dramatic art in general and theatre, in particular, has always been foregrounded by theatre's inclination to digress Islamic doctrines of impersonification attributed to the

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<sup>639</sup> Lisa A. Freeman, *Ant-theatricality and the Body Public*, (Place of publication not identified: University of Pennsylvania, 2019), 1.

Creator. The restrictive and inflexible Wahhabism<sup>640</sup>, on which Saudi Arabia was constructed after 1932, prohibited images, statues, and acting as rivalry acts to divinity, and as Satan's ways to distract people from worshipping houses. In addition to that, theatre is the place where ecstasy, imitation, time and money wasting and male-female-commingling can happen.

In the last century, there were few noticed opportunities to make theatre in Wahhabi Arabia. Sheikh Ahmed Al-Sebaei, one of the leading figures and literary leaders in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, established a theatre house, the Quraysh House for Islamic Representation, as a school for teaching acting.<sup>641</sup> Studies also indicate that the poet Hussein Abdullah Serraj was the first to create Saudi poetic plays like *Being Unfair to Oneself* (1932), *Jamil and Buthaina* (1943), and *Love of Birth* (1952). However, none of these plays were performed. Other plays appeared but on the school level and they were mostly religious plays that intend to teach students about some religious stories.

However, the problem is not only governmental in Saudi Arabia, but theatres also suffered from social surveillance which is considered more dangerous. Two attacks on theatres and theatrical groups by citizens were registered in the last two decades only. One accomplished by some students of AlYamamah University on a university play, by Ahmad Alabssy in 2006, for its liberal content,<sup>642</sup> and the other one was committed by a Yamani citizen, living in Saudi Arabia, on a Spanish acting group that was performing a play in King Abdullah Theatre in Riyadh (November 2019.) The attacker said that the play performed preaches debauchery and moral degradation. He was sentenced to a penalty of death as punishment later.<sup>643</sup>

The first time *Hamlet* appeared on a Saudi stage was in 2016 with Fahad ALHoushanei's *Hamlet! Leave My Head*. This solo performance, which is close in its theme to Mustafa's play, dramatizes an actor, played by the Saudi Khalid Al-Harby, who is overburdened by the director's request to play *Hamlet* several times to entertain the audiences. The Actor informs the director of his objection to do the show, "I will not work

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<sup>640</sup>Or 'Salafiyah' is an Islamic sector named after the Saudi Mohammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab. It appeared as a reforming religious movement that claims to preserve the first teaching of Islam other sectors deviated from. Wahhabism became the official religion in Saudi Arabia in 1932.

<sup>641</sup>Abd Allah Malḥah, *Athar Al-badāwah 'alā Al-masrah fī Al-Sa'ūdīyah*, (Egypt: Naser Aleslam, 1994), 44.

<sup>642</sup>Mohammad Al-Rashedi, "Wasaty Bela Wasateeyah," *AR-Ryad Newspaper*, December 14, 2015, <https://www.alriyadh.com/1109412>.

<sup>643</sup>Two Yamani Were Punished by Death," *Alanba Online NewsPaper*, December 29, 2019, <https://alanbaonline.com/?p=13314>.

with you anymore,”<sup>644</sup> as he refuses the director’s financial greed that exposed the former for an excessive load of work hours. The play begins outside the theatre house where the audiences, entering the theatre, can hear the quarrel between him and the director. Eventually, The Actor agrees to do the play, but this time, he will do it the way he likes, “I have decided to change *Hamlet*; I will say a new text.”<sup>645</sup>

While addressing the audience, The Actor seizes the chance to dwell on several hardships that challenge him as a theatrical actor in the country. From the very beginning, he announces to the audience his internal struggle to forget Hamlet and get him out of his mind, “Hamlet! Leave my head.”<sup>646</sup> This animosity towards doing *Hamlet* comes out for many reasons as he mentions. First, his attachment to Hamlet’s personality and his love of acting compels him to endure all the economic hardships he is exposed to by the director, “he wants to humiliate me because he has the money and the power.”<sup>647</sup> He announces that he suffers from difficult economic conditions that forced him to search for another more profitable job on the weekdays, and obligated him to consider quitting the theatre several times, but what makes him bear all these hardships is his admiration for theatre as he declares, “I decided to stay because I love theatre.”<sup>648</sup>

The actor blames Hamlet for causing his theatromania as *Hamlet* was the first play he came across that drove him into all the miseries in his life. It is not only that, but Hamlet’s procrastination influenced him and his ability to make the right decisions in his life, “what is a Human Being if all that runs in his mind is food and sleep? Is it the intention to forget? Or is it the hesitation of the scared person? I guess I am afraid of everything.”<sup>649</sup> The Actor declares that his fellow actors feel the same, but some of them were more courageous to leave to more rewarding jobs in cinema and TV.

The Actor comments on how many Arab actors are challenged with low wages, excessive workload hours, unfair contracts, and the dominance of exploitative sponsors who would eagerly manipulate them to gain profits. He comments on how this problem compelled many of them to leave the theatre. In a report for Al-Akhabar Online Magazine (May 27, 2016), Wissam Kanaan informs how drama actors are “the lowest-paid actors

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<sup>644</sup>Fahad ALHoushanei, “هاملت أخرج من رأسي,” *youtube* video, 44:26, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QpTG97Wwqms>.

<sup>645</sup>ALHoushane, “هاملت أخرج من رأسي,” 2017, 9:59.

<sup>646</sup>Ibid, 9:59.

<sup>647</sup>Ibid, 3:56.

<sup>648</sup>Ibid, 23:00.

<sup>649</sup>Ibid, 05:37.

compared to some movie actors in the Arab World.”<sup>650</sup> Jamal Adam, also, in a report to *Albyan Newspaper* under the title ‘The Empty Pockets of the Arab Theatre-Workers and Their Big Dreams’ declares that the wages theatre workers get are not enough for their daily needs:

The theatre is the only place where wages are not fixed or fair often, for everything in it is subject to change, and in return, there are no cultural institutions that would respect what theatres offer, nor honour their workers with appropriate wages... Sometimes, we see how this problem is advocated by the theatre workers who are fully aware of what they usually provide on stages does not match the amount of money they receive.<sup>651</sup>

Moreover, the Lebanese actress Aida Sabra also told the *Arab Independent Newspaper* in an interview entitled (Aida Sabra, Moving between Theatre, Cinema and Television’ (19 July 2019) about her decision to leave the theatre and work in TV. Sabra declared that the reason for her decision was not made because of “the lack of good theatre productions ... But those who perform theatrical productions pay out of their own pockets or completely depend on aids.”<sup>652</sup> Sabra added that theatre in the Arab World depends on two sources, either the insufficient government sources from the Ministries of Culture, which control theatrical productions, or the sponsoring companies. Also, the fact that theatre in the Arab World does not constitute much of the cultural heritage, and that theatregoers are always limited to a few interested or specialized people, makes the financial returns insufficient. The result is more compromise for artistic freedom and few theatres can be described as independent institutions. The Actor says how the director always asks him to work under poor conditions with almost few facilities, and how he grasps theatre as a money machine, “he orders me to do everything on the stage,” including “tidying up the stage after the show.”<sup>653</sup>

It is not only that, but the monotony of doing the same play repeatedly without any change is what displeases The Actor. The director warns them that “the deviation from the text is prohibited.”<sup>654</sup> The play, as he believes, has been ridiculed and derided for its importance to tackle real issues and touch upon people’s real concerns, “he wants me to

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<sup>650</sup>Wisam Kan'an , ed., “Syrian Drama and Digital Media,” *Al-Akbar Newspaper* , November 7, 2020, <https://www.al-akhbar.com/Author/51>.

<sup>651</sup>Jamal Adam, “The Empty Pockets of the Arab Theatre-Workers and Their Big Dreams ,”in *AL Bayan*, June 12, 2011, <https://www.albayan.ae/five-senses/arts/2011-01-12-1.994865>.

<sup>652</sup>Schinis, ed., “Naila Al-Atrash Discusses Theatre, Censorship and Exile.”

<sup>653</sup>Ibid, 04:08.

<sup>654</sup>Ibid, 09:13.

perform silly roles.”<sup>655</sup> Theatre is not only an entertainment spot as he believes but rather, a place where political and social awareness is taught. The actor does not only blame the greedy director for that, but he also attributes the demise of the theatrical life to the authorities who also suppressed theatre and unloaded it from its importance as a social and cultural means, “all this happens right under everyone’s eyes.”<sup>656</sup> He, moreover, does not exempt the audiences from this crime, but they participated in the same crime too as he believes, “if all people have paid a good price for the actor, we would not end up in this situation... You must pay for the actors the money they deserve, and it is unbearable anymore for them to be the margins.”<sup>657</sup>

During his speech, the actor unconsciously quotes from Hamlet’s dialogue and monologue, like when he asks the audiences: “will you see the players well bestowed? Do you hear, let them be well used, for they are the abstract and brief chronicles of the time. After your death you were better to have a bad epitaph than their ill report while you live,”<sup>658</sup>

Also, when he decides to revolt against the director he says, “From the table of my memory, I’ll wipe away all trivial fond records, all saws of books, all forms, all pressures of the past that youth and observation copied there.”<sup>659</sup> The stage becomes haunted with two ghosts as he declares; the “domineering director” who “always persecutes”<sup>660</sup> him, and Hamlet’s apparition that requests him to revolt against the director. The actor prefers a peaceful life, but the permanent existence of Hamlet in his mind will destroy him and will endanger his life, “I may not act Hamlet, but it seems that Hamlet acts me.”<sup>661</sup>

Though the play was performed in what is called modern Saudi Arabia, a year before Muhammad Ben Salman ascending to the throne, and who promised to fight fundamentalism in the country and to make Saudi Arabia more open to the world, the religious and societal censorship was still valid more than any other country in the region at this time. For this, ALHoushanei avoided all scenes that might put him in trouble with religious institutions. He omitted the ghost scene (Whabists do not believe in the purgatory but the soul is either punished in hell or goes to paradise), the graveyard scene (digging graves is prohibited according to them), and the news about Ophelia’s suicide (destroying

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<sup>655</sup>Ibid, 16:33.

<sup>656</sup>Ibid, 30:14

<sup>657</sup>Ibid, 14:05.

<sup>658</sup>The same translation from Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, II. ii. 518-522.

<sup>659</sup>ALHoushanei, Fahad. “هاملت أخرج من رأسي,” 2017, 05:53.

<sup>660</sup>Ibid, 16.02.

<sup>661</sup>Ibid, 06.06.

one's soul is a sin). All the scenes he omitted are considered a milestone in the play, but he did that to avoid confrontation with the religious institutions. Still, while ALHoushanei focused on this micro conflict between an oppressive director and an actor who wants to revenge himself on the former's abuse, the play is adhered to reflect on macro issues. If this conflict happens inside the wall of theatre at a particular time and on the micro-level, it also echoed macro conflicts happening in the Arab World between justice/injustice, oppression/ freedom, and theatricality/ anti-theatricality.

It is important to mention that Shakespeare's *Hamlet* was also written in the same situation; when England was swinging between Catholicism and Protestantism. J. Dover Wilson in *What Happens in Hamlet* (cited in O'Connor 2006) talks about how the concept of the 'purgatory' was a religious contention between the two religious sectors that Shakespeare was aware of at that time. The two religious doctrines had their conception of the purgatory. Catholics believed that a ghost can go down to the earth from purgatory if it had a special purpose that would help the wandering soul eventually to rest in peace.<sup>662</sup> King Hamlet's spirit is "a Catholic spirit" that is "Doom'd for a certain term to walk the night / And for the day confin'd to fast in fires / Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature/ Are burnt and purg'd away."<sup>663</sup> While, the Protestants, who are very close to the Wahhabi in their belief, do not believe in ghosts or Purgatory; they believe that the soul only goes to heaven or hell. Wilson adds that all ghosts are "apparitions of the Devil that assume the form of a relative or friend to do bodily harm upon those to whom the apparition appears,"<sup>664</sup> as the reformers believed. Shakespeare smartly dealt with the two beliefs that saved him from the assault of the religious institutions. Arthur MoGee, in *The Elizabethan Hamlet*, comments on how Shakespeare avoided religious censorship at that time. Zacharias Pasfield, a trusted censor between August 1600 and December 1610, issued a license for the printing of *Hamlet* on 26 July 1602. MoGee concluded that "Pasfield would not have passed *Hamlet* if it in any way conflicted with the teachings of the Anglican Church."<sup>665</sup>

This religious attack over theatre overlooked the fact that theatre, apart from the impersonification issue, can enlighten and humanize people. Many have already defended

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<sup>662</sup>Bridget O'Connor, "Spirit of Health' and 'Goblin Damned' The Ghost of King Hamlet as a Symbol for the Religious Ambivalence in England during the Religious Reformation," *Honors Projects*, April 14, 2006, 1-50,

[https://doi.org/https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1001&context=eng\\_honproj](https://doi.org/https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1001&context=eng_honproj), 2-3.

<sup>663</sup>O'Connor, "Spirit of Health," 4.

<sup>664</sup>Ibid, 4.

<sup>665</sup>Arthur MacGee, *The Elizabethan Hamlet*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 26-27.

theatre against all these attacks. For instance, Kathleen Gallagher and Barry Freeman in *In Defence of Theatre: Aesthetic Practices and Social Interventions* emphasized the virtues and values that theatre can provide in a time of globalization, technology, and expansion in the twenty-first-century in Canada.<sup>666</sup> Andre Kushnir in the same book also asserts how “theatre teaches us unequivocally about people’s hopes and for what and whom they care and, consequently, also about those things that encumber dreams and beset imaginaries...Theatre [is] a way of being in the world, a way to kindle collaboration, an unapologetic tactic for exercising creative impulses and desires with others.”<sup>667</sup>

The actors defend theatre against all censorship and hostility he faces from the greedy directors and indifferent audiences as he asks them “let them be well used, for they are the abstract and brief chronicles of the time.”<sup>668</sup> Also, he asks the audience to protect him from the director if he intended to fire him, “you shall protect me, shall you?”<sup>669</sup> He shows how theatre has a big influence on people and how it humanizes people and lead to their purgation, “when the criminals sit in the theatre, the scenes affect them and let them regret their sins.”<sup>670</sup>

The Actor also defended theatre against the political restrictions applied by the state. He explains how he is always observed and watched by the state police. The devices and speakers the director use strangle him and his fellow actors, “Devices are everywhere, and they are sensitive and very accurate.”<sup>671</sup> He indirectly mocks the double-standard enlightenment that modern Saudi Arabia promises by fighting fundamentalism, but it still practices oppression on people. In the Arab Spring, Saudi Arabia fiercely contradicted and fought Arab revolutions and accused Arab demonstrators of practicing foreign agendas, especially Iranian’s ideologies, against their regimes. In the region, two religious sectors appeared in the Arab Spring, the Whabists, who produced Fatwa<sup>672</sup> that criminalizes demonstrations, and The Muslim Brother Party, who encouraged such demonstrations. The Saudi regimes and its media mobilized against MBP which led to the imprisonment of many of them inside Saudi Arabia and Egypt. On the contrary, Saudi Arabia supported

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<sup>666</sup>Kathleen Gallagher and Barry Freeman, *In Defence of Theatre: Aesthetic Practices and Social Interventions*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 3.

<sup>667</sup>Kathleen Gallagher and Barry Freeman, “Politics and Presence: A Theatre of Effective Encounters,” in *In Defence of Theatre: Aesthetic Practices and Social Interventions*, ed. Kathleen Gallagher, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 69.

<sup>668</sup>ALHoushanei, Fahad. “هاملت أخرج من رأسي,” 2014, 05:15

<sup>669</sup>Ibid, 17:03.

<sup>670</sup>Ibid, 07:40.

<sup>671</sup>Ibid, 16:01.

<sup>672</sup>Religious law that prohibits or allow an action to be done.

uprisings in Syria against the Assad regime that has a good relationship with Iran. The actors mock this hypocritical freedom and liberty. He used the metaphor of the lights in the theatre, “he lights it whenever he wants and turns it off whenever he wishes... This is the situation in Denmark.”<sup>673</sup>

The two plays by ALHoushanei and Mustafa share many similarities and differences. Concerning similarities, both have employed Shakespeare's *Hamlet* to dwell on the crises facing theatres and their workers which occurred since the beginning of theatre in the region. These problems are embodied in the form of political, religious, and social censorship, and in some Arab countries, it has been characterized by extreme hostility. This aggression considerably reduced the duty of theatre as a social and political critical tool that aims at educating the public on many issues. Moreover, both reworked *Hamlet* at a time when the need for change became urgent and necessary. This change did not centre on politics and state oppression alone, but also included a radical change in the artistic movement in which theatre is an essential constituent. Hence, they aimed to enlighten the audiences about the significance of theatre in this change on the one hand, and warn them against the abuse of theatre by the authorities on the other hand. Besides, both wanted to produce theatre for the public, and both avoided linguistic sophistication. They believed that theatre was primarily created for the public and not only for the elite as it was in previous years. They, like other Arab playwrights, both wanted to remove the theatre from the ivory tower and present it in a different way to the public.

The differences between the two plays are concerned with the level of directness. Mustafa's play was more direct in talking about the political censorship represented by the fight between Claudius, as a symbol of oppression, and Hamlet as a symbol of artistic and political revolution. ALHoushanei's play is full of indirectness and symbolism. It focuses on an internal struggle in the theatre's walls between a revolutionary actor and an opportunistic director. Still, the play is satiated with broader political and religious messages about anti-theatricality, injustice, and state control. This discrepancy between directness and indirectness in the two plays refers to the place in which they are produced. Whereas Mustafa's play was directed and shown in Jordan, which is considered to some extent less hostile to political theatre, ALHoushanei's play was staged in Saudi Arabia which demonstrated hatred to performative arts in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

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<sup>673</sup>Ibid, 11:50.

Religious censorship is still effective in Saudi Arabia despite the new orientation to make the country more open.

The two works give the audience an idea of how Hamlet was used in the region during the Arab Spring. Anti-theatricality and freedom of speech are some issues raised in the period. This period is not only about the demanding of political change, but also aims at creating more space for artistic freedom in the region in comparison to the Post-Nasserism period in which theatres were limited and controlled by the state.

## Conclusion

The reworking of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in the Arab World in Post-Nasserism and the period of the Arab Spring bears many similarities and differences. In general, the Arab *Hamlets* in both periods gained political relevance and weight through handling political affairs in the region. Since 1970, the Arab World attested political vagaries that impacted the way theatre operates. It became a principal element in the geopolitical struggles and a tool to cast Arabs' hardships under dictatorship and reflect their aspiration for true democracy. Arab *Hamlets* in both periods can be compared and contrasted in content and form.

The adaptation and rewriting of *Hamlet* were provoked and thematically framed by the political status quo and the public feeling in the two periods. After the Arab/Israel War in 1967 and the resignation of Jamal Abdel Nasser in 1968, Arabs witnessed radical abasement of Arabism after fifteen years of national boom adopted by the Arab Nasserists and the socialist Ba'athists. All national ideals were ravaged by the harsh reality resulting from the war, and Arabs realized the impotence of their defence system and the unattainability of their national dreams. It was not only the war that affected the modern political history of the region: the oppressive policies of the Arab regimes aggravated desperation more. They became self-absorbed, maintained the divisive borders between the countries, and created a suffocating economic and political climate for Arabs in the next forty years. The region was glided into real political catastrophes marked by dismemberment instead of Pan-Arabism, autocracy instead of democracy, and Western dominance instead of economic and military independence. They bounded their countries by counterproductive peace accords, failed to return the occupied lands, formed military deals that were used against their people, and signed economic agreements which impoverished people more. Free and patriotic Arabs could not deem someone more responsible for that ultimate debasement than their ambitious and cowardly kings and leaders.

Shakespeare's *Hamlet* was intentionally utilized to reflect the bleak gloominess and desperation felt by Arabs, and one cannot keep a blind eye on the entire political atmosphere that shaped the Arabic reproduction of Shakespeare's play in Post-Nasserism. The agreement Claudius makes with Fortinbras, the enemy of the Danish, in Adwan's *Hamlet Wakes Up Late* is a mocking parallel to Anwar Sadat's Camp David Accord coexisted with the production of the play around 1975. Claudius's "guillotine" that "has

crushed people near and far,”<sup>674</sup> in Jawad Al-Assadi’s *Forget Hamlet* represents the stifling atmosphere of intellectualism under the Ba’athy regime in Iraq and Syria. In Suleiman AlBassam’s *AL-Hamlet Summit*, Fortinbras, invading an Arab country “armed with millions of dollars of foreign equipment,”<sup>675</sup> echoes the American weaponry support for the Israeli state occupying Arab lands, Claudius praying for more petrodollars in the second scene resembles the leaders pocketing people’s money by the oil agreements signed between Arab Gulf countries and Western superpowers, and the English Arms Dealer pushing the Arabic King to sign military accords mirrors the Western hegemony over MENA. The sense of despair also persists in Nabil Lahlou’s *Ophelia Is Not Dead*, but more adjusted to reflect the artistic claustrophobia applied on artists in Morocco and other Arab countries.

In all these reworkings, Claudius, the representation of Arab leaders, is ruthlessly empowered by the passiveness of the inactive Hamlet, a symbol for all Arab intellectuals, clergymen, politicians, and academics who were paralyzed by their fears and desires and evaded their obligations towards their nations. In all these plays, Hamlet shows deliberate indolence in fulfilling the ghost’s commandment. Revenging his dead father and rescuing Denmark are his last concerns. He is not fatigued by procrastination or delay, but his plight is caused by his desire to have a peaceful life. He is addicted to alcoholism and morally corrupted in Adwan’s play, detached and busy reading theologies in Al-Assadi’s *Forget Hamlet*, paralysed and afraid of the pain afflicted on him by Claudius’s police in Lahlou’s *Ophelia IS Not Dead*, and derived by extremism that destroys his country in AlBassam’s *Al-Hamlet Summit*. He is always acted upon by Claudius before he can act. Adwan and Al-Assadi’s plays end with Hamlet being easily liquidated by Claudius, Lahlou’s play ends with Hamlet growing up in his flat afraid while the unstoppable Claudius remains free outside, and in AlBassam’s adaptation, he regrets all his unwise violent actions that ruined Denmark more and immerse it in a civil war.

Also, Hamlet’s relationship with the apparition of his father, a representation of Nasser’s figure demanding the remembrance of his national dream and rescuing the Arab World from the oppressors, cannot be any worse. The absence of the ghost in Lahlou, Al-Assadi, and AlBassam’s plays, while the refusal of Hamlet to meet and listen to it in Adwan’s play, all echoed the gap between the apathetic Arabs and their father, Nasser. Hamlet does not only avoid the ghost in these plays but deletes all testers of truth because

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<sup>674</sup> Al-Assadi, “Forget Hamlet,” 271.

<sup>675</sup> AlBassam, *AL-Hamlet Summit*, 5:33.

he does not want to know it. He does not believe Ophelia's story when she informs him about seeing the murder from her window in Al-Assadi's play, he cancels the *Mousetrap* that might help him discover the truth in Adwan's *Hamlet Wakes Up Late*, and neglects the play about the poisoning of Socrates by which Hamlet can catch the conscience of Claudius and make him feel guilty of killing the wise people in *Forget Hamlet*. Even the solo performance he acts in *AL Hamlet Summit*, is not wisely done, and his essential aim is to enrage his uncle and make his mother shameful of her marriage. Among Hamlet's corruption, apathy, paralysis and unwise behaviour, Denmark, a symbol for the corrupted Arab countries, remains corrupted and ruined.

With the advent of the Arab Spring after 2010, the political paralysis and stillness felt in Post-Nasserism was gradually replaced by a sense of hope and persistence to change the political status quo. A close political change and economic improvement are felt during the uprisings; despite the serious causalities occurring here or there. A sense of Pan-Arabism and unity was renewed. The Arab Hamlet registered a new presence on Arabic stages, but this time as a hero. Seven adaptations, except for Daraji's *Hamlet vs. Ophelia*, idolized the heroic Hamlet and saw a parallel between his heroism and the brave Arab youths fighting and enduring pain to re-establish justice in the revolutionary Arab countries. The image of the absolutely powerful and ruthless Arab leaders, seen before in the image of Claudius, is challenged by Hamlet's persistence and yearning for justice. Claudius is ruthlessly executed by Hamlet in Urwa Al-Araby's *The Syrian Hamlet* and Hani Affefi's *I'm Hamlet*, and Hamlet performed noble actions equal to his revenge, and his procrastination and madness were still monitored to achieve his heroic conclusion; i.e. putting things right again in the rotten country. The revenge, fulfilled in the end for his father, echoes the successful overthrowing of many Arab leaders and regimes. Hamlet fighting for justice in the previous two adaptations, dying bravely in Mustafa's *Hamlet After A While*, and combating state corruption in Fahad ALHoushanei's *Hamlet! Leave My Head*, were not painless, but his ability to maintain values and morals among all that corruption and fear is the base of his heroism.

The symbolic significance of Hamlet is exemplified in his ability to resemble the ordinary Arab female and male more than princes this time. Hamlet, in post-Nasserism, is of courtly blood and a representation of the high-ranking people, but Hamlet in the Arab Spring is also one of the poor Arabs, the one who went down to the streets and managed to overthrow the corrupted regimes. The characters could not express their agonies in his eloquent speeches in Mohammad Farouq's *Goodbye Hamlet*, but they can perform his

noble actions even without words. The characters, coming from the poor districts in Egypt, do not have problems miming Hamlet's role to rescue the country. Another image of the commoner and poor Hamlet is seen in Hani Affefi's *I'm Hamlet* in which the poor riders of the train act Shakespeare's heroes and heroines. Also, Hamlet's tragedy in the Arab Spring is not mainly a personal one, it is a state tragedy and re-establishing justice is the most important goal. In Hayder Abdullah AL-Shatery's *In Waiting for Hamlet*, the Ghost announces that Hamlet's responsibility "is greater than the issue of a throne, even though they stole it from him. I did not come for that... The throne was not his first concern, even though he is the legitimate heir to it."<sup>676</sup>

Hamlet's Arabic journey is a journey from anti-heroism to heroism. This is even reflected in the titles of the plays that completely reflect the attitude towards Hamlet. *Hamlet Wakes Up Lately* and *Forget Hamlet* are full of irony and satire, while titles like *In Waiting for Hamlet*, *I'm Hamlet*, *Following the Footsteps of Hamlet* and *Hamlet After A While* reflect the persistent heroism of Hamlet. Another difference is the active role of the ghost which disappeared in most of the Post-Nasserist *Hamlets*. Its permanent existence in Kamel El-Basha's *Following the Footsteps of Hamlet*, his main role in *In Waiting for Hamlet*, and his appearance in *The Syrian Hamlet* and *I'm Hamlet* reflect Hamlet's readiness to take revenge.

Another political aspect discussed in the Arabic *Hamlets* produced in the two periods is the state censorship applied on cultural means in general, and theatres in particular. Theatres and theatre workers were perhaps among the most observed, challenged and marginalized. They suffered from economic hardships, and their dramas were controlled and monitored by the states. No adaptation of *Hamlet* in Post Nasserism is void of the theme of oppression inflicted on artists. In Adwan's play, Claudius orders Polonius to observe Hamlet's play, *Shahrayar*, after he hears from Rosencrantz and Guildenstern about Hamlet's adjustment for the play. In *Forget Hamlet*, Hamlet does not consent to the idea of staging a play about Socrates's massacre by the authority because he is afraid of Claudius's punishment. Lahlou's *Ophelia Is Not Dead* is the most important play that focused on this aspect by dramatizing both Hamlet and Macbeth's state of paralysis resulted after touring them by the state's police. The period also witnessed the proliferation of theatres and comedies void of any political and social role. Such theatres were supported and encouraged by the authorities for their harmless topics. These insignificant dramas that did

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<sup>676</sup>AL-Shatery, "في انتظار هاملت".

not touch upon people's concerns are ridiculed when Hamlet says, in Adwan's play, "I feel like we're playing in a vacuum, ignoring what's going on around us."<sup>677</sup>

The story is slightly different in the period of Arab uprisings, which brought more freedom for theatres. We can see that theatres began to flourish in those countries where the uprising succeeded, especially at the beginning of the Arab uprising between 2010 and 2013. This is seen in the direct criticism to the authorities adopted in the adaptations of *Hamlet* in Egypt between 2011 and 2012, and the performing of the play in Syria for the first time. Even in those countries where the uprisings were suspended, a sense of freedom is granted when the regimes lessened censorship fearing the expected revolutions. In KSA, *Hamlet* is perhaps performed for the first time in *Hamlet! Leave My Head* that tackles the theme of censorship applied by the authorities and religious institutions on theatres and actors. The public performance of *Hamlet* in Jordan by Mustafa in his *Hamlet After A While* is unprecedented. The play also touches heavily on the theme of theatrical surveillance. Even in the time of the Arab Spring, censorship is still generating problems for actors but in a less dangerous manner than before.

Another remarkable difference between the two periods is the role of Arab women in politics. Women in the Arab World have generally suffered from oppression, lack of representation, and the cultural belittling of their physical and mental capacities. This deprived them from assuming high-ranking jobs in Arab countries. The dissenting image of women persisted in the Arabic adaptations of *Hamlet*, produced in Post-Nasserism, through the image of the oppressed and weak Ophelia. For instance, Ophelia, in Adwan's play, commits suicide after becoming mad due to the death of her father. In Lahlou's drama, Ophelia's significant role comes out of the sexual and physical pleasure she gives to Hamlet and Macbeth. In *AL-Hamlet Summit*, she is turned into a terrorist person committing suicide by bombing her body in the civilians. There was little effort to speak for Ophelia in these reworkings produced by male playwrights. Even in *Forget Hamlet*, when Ophelia is dramatized as a strong female character able to confront Claudius and threaten him to uncover the murder she has seen from her window, she ends up restricted by males' power, and incapable of releasing her brother Laertes from the sanatorium or rescuing her beloved Hamlet from death. However, on no occasion Ophelia could escape male dominance and free herself in these reworkings.

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<sup>677</sup> Adwan, "Hamlet Wakes Up Late," 93.

The first time that Ophelia appears as a tuff character who can celebrate victory over men was in Daraji's *Hamlet vs. Ophelia*, which is considered the first reworking by an Arab female dramatist. The image of the strong Ophelia in the play was incited by the new political role women took in the uprising. They accompanied men, harnessed social media and led the demonstrations sometimes. In fact, the success of the Arab Spring in some countries, between 2010 and 2013, could not be achieved without the essential participation of women. In *Goodbye Hamlet*, the male and female characters performing the silent dance together shows this collaboration between the Egyptian women and men in dethroning Mubarak in 2011. Ophelia defends Hamlet and acts nobly against Polonius and Claudius in *Hamlet After A While*. Hamlet is hanged at the end after being caught plotting to perform a play-within-a-play. What is common between these three adaptations is the ability of Ophelia to survive and stay alive at the end.

Another point that can be contrasted between the reworking of *Hamlet* in the two periods is the dramatic form and style. Sarcasm was the domineering tone in the Post-Nasserists *Hamlets* and Hamlet was at the centre of this sarcasm. Hamlet's shortcomings and vices are heavily held up in Adwan's play, and his anti-heroism is bitterly mocked and ridiculed by other characters in the play. Rosencrantz mocks Hamlet's verbal distraction when he asks him: "Why is your talk jumping around like a fish?"<sup>678</sup> Horatio also ridicules his ignorance of all that is happening around him, saying: "events have always preceded him."<sup>679</sup> Gertrude reacts to his verbal threatening in front of Fortinbras as "No [worries]! He's drunk."<sup>680</sup> Similarly in *Forget Hamlet*, Claudius mocks Hamlet's lack of concentration by saying: "[He] is so absent-minded,"<sup>681</sup> and Ophelia belittles his manhood accusing him of being "just a dumb kid. That's how I see you now."<sup>682</sup> Macbeth, in *Ophelia Is Not Dead*, insults his ignorance by saying, "You know nothing."<sup>683</sup> It is not only that, Hamlet mocks his inaction, and he is self-aware of his dilemma like when he announces that he has two personalities: "one vicious, pledged to the dagger, dreaming of salvation and killing Claudius and revenge; the other, a Hamlet disillusioned and full of anxiety,"<sup>684</sup> or when he says "I have no passions for death, nothing heroic, nothing repulsive"<sup>685</sup> in *AL-Hamlet Summit*.

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<sup>678</sup>Ibid, 104.

<sup>679</sup>Ibid.

<sup>680</sup>Ibid, 111.

<sup>681</sup>Al-Assadi, "Forget Hamlet," 250.

<sup>682</sup>Ibid, 254.

<sup>683</sup>Lahlou, "Ophelia Is Not Dead," 21

<sup>684</sup>Adwan, "Hamlet Wakes Up Late," 122.

<sup>685</sup>ALBassam, *AL-Hamlet Summit*, 42:14.

Hamlet's stillness is ridiculed in different methods in these dramas: irony in Al-Assadi's *Forget Hamlet* as the title indicates, burlesque and comic inversions like the fencing match in Adwan's play in which Hamlet perceived the heroic fencing as a sport incident, or parodies like the time Hamlet carries a wooden horse and announcing his farewell cry to war in *AL-Hamlet Summit*. In these reworkings, light and bitter humour are also utilised for political satire that analogically refer to specific historical moment like Sadat's Camp David or political figures like some Arab leaders. The sarcasm significance comes when directness and political criticism are forbidden and inapplicable under state censorship.<sup>686</sup> Analogical satire is adopted when "the artist is seeking simultaneously to take risks and escape punishment for his boldness."<sup>687</sup> However, there is an inverse relationship between satire and liberalization. When censorship is lessened, satire becomes effete. This is seen in the adaptations produced in the post-2010 era. Satire is replaced by explicit mockery like when an actor, in *Goodbye Hamlet*, quotes directly from Mubark's resignation speech delivered before stepping down. Furthermore, in these adaptations, Hamlet is exempted from this mockery, and it was more directed to Claudius as a symbol for the defeated Arab leaders. Self-mockery is also seen in *Hamlet! Leave My Head* by the actor who revolts against the director, and in *Goodbye Hamlet*, when the characters mock their miserable life. This sarcasm is mixed with humour to lessen the political and economic pain and to turn the painful situation into a ludicrous one.

The scope and shape of reworking *Hamlet* are also different in the two times. It is observed that rewriting is the prevailing method in the Post-Nasserists time, while stage adaptations thrived in the uprising time. This different tendency in presenting *Hamlet* to Arab receivers was not arbitrary but directed by decisive political and artistic factors as mentioned above. The stifling censorship and political surveillance, applied on theatres and actors by the states, restricted the local stage performances of *Hamlet*, and paved the way for the less observed written dramas in Post-Nasserism. Adwan's *Hamlet Wakes Up Late* remained outside the boundary of attention as a text until Margarit Litvin removed the dust over the play in her book *Hamlet's Arab Journey* in 2014. The stage adaptations of Lahlou and AlBassam appeared as performances for the first time in France and Britain, respectively, before arriving at the Arab land. Al-Assadi also wrote *Forget Hamlet* abroad when he fled the Ba'athy Iraq to Bulgaria.

The proliferation of *Hamlet's* stage performances in post-2010 time is not peculiar only

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<sup>686</sup>In Shillington, *Grappling with Atrocity*, 77-78.

<sup>687</sup>Cited in Griffin, *Satire: a Critical Reintroduction*, 139.

to the Arab's interest in the play, but a whole interest in live theatrical performances was noticed with the advent of the uprisings. The passionate interest in theatres is probably attributed to the whole sovereignty that appears in the region and being snatched by force. What is additionally observed, and again not peculiar to *Hamlet's* productions only, is the director's aptitude to avoid linguistic sophistication found in the classical Arabic that was employed heavily in the Post-Nasserists *Hamlets*. The use of dialects that dominated the linguistic style of *I'm Hamlet*, *Goodbye Hamlet*, and *Hamlet After A While*, is attributed to the desire of the stage directors to engage more audiences coming from different backgrounds into the show. The dialect is more successful in achieving theatrical effects like humour and satire than the Arabic standard. The humour is highly sensed in *Goodbye Hamlet* and the different Egyptian slangs, used by the characters, helped in delivering that sense.

The theatrical adaptations in the Arab Spring are full of postmodern theatrical aspects, and the playwrights adopted different styles inside the same play. We see how language is relegated to a minor position in *Following the Footsteps of Hamlet* and *Goodbye Hamlet*. The attention was given more to performative movements like the silent mask-dance performed at the end in *Goodbye Hamlet*. El-Basha in *Following the Footsteps of Hamlet* is much more interested in this physical performativity than the verbal expressivity, and the collective movements of bodies on the stage to create unity among Palestinians was more important to achieve his goal. These postmodern theatrical aspects adopted by Arab adapters aspired to rethink the traditional linguistic and literary aspect of Arabic dramas found in Post-Nasserism.

Another difference from the pre-2010 *Hamlets* is the inconsistency in the performances. By the inconsistency, I mean the heterogeneous style in the same play seen in the post-2010 adaptations; like the different strategies of the theatrical self-reflexivity. Metatheatricality is also seen in *Hamlet! Leave My Head*, *Goodbye Hamlet* and *In Waiting for Hamlet*, and *Hamlet After A While*, breaking the fourth wall is seen in *The Syrian Hamlet*, transgressing the border between the fiction and the real by addressing the audience directly is demonstrated in *Hamlet! Leave My Head* and *Goodbye Hamlet*, realistic and stylized acting were adopted in using the big statue of the ghost in *Following the Footsteps of Hamlet*, the speaking head in *Hamlet vs. Ophelia*, and Hamlet's multiplied characters in *Hamlet vs. Ophelia*. The difference between these adaptations and previous rewritings is the ability to sense the effect of theatrical self-reflexivity and to see how the performative aspects of the mise-en-scene step forward to convey the political message.

The postmodern strategies have political aims and influence the audience to make changes in their own real life. The plays sacrificed the authenticity of their traditional theatrical aspects and undertake an enstranging dimension to capture the audience's conscience quickly.

The reworkings are also different in their closeness to Shakespeare's text. The Post-Nasserist reworkings of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* are closer to Shakespeare's text from the adaptations produced later. In most of the reworkings in the period between 1970 and 2010, the attempt to follow Shakespeare's plot and structure is hugely marked. This closeness to the Shakespearean text, disregarding the few changes that occurred here or there, was perhaps due to Jabra's influential translation or to the intention of the Arab dramatists to introduce Shakespeare's *Hamlet* to their audience without much alteration at that time. Except for Lahlou's *Ophelia IS Not Dead* that has its own different linguistic style and structure, Adwan, AL-Assad, and AlBassam's dramas relied heavily on Jabra's translation. It is not only that, but they maintained almost the same plot with some alterations, remarkably seen in Hamlet's character, adding one or two characters (like the Actor in Adwan's play or The Arms Dealer in AlBassam's play,) and omitting few minor characters like in AL-Assadi or AlBassam's dramas. In later dramas, like *In Waiting for Hamlet*, *Goodbye Hamlet*, *Hamlet vs. Ophelia*, *Hamlet! Leave My Head*, and *Hamlet After A While*, only the title of Shakespeare's play with few lines are used. This method gave the dramatist more space to adjust the play to their political atmosphere.

Disregarding these differences in dealing with *Hamlet*, the general purpose of reworking the play in the Arab World between 1970 and 2020 is similarly political. The study reached to the point that this reworking is hugely impacted by politics, and it is hard to read and understand the Arab *Hamlets* in isolation from the political changes in the region. The play has influenced and been influenced by this aspect. It has received much attention from Arabs who adjusted the play for their own political circumstances. Hamlet, as a character, represents all political, social and religious figures like Muslims, non-Muslims, liberals, and conservatives who reside under political oppression. Other characters from Shakespeare's play were also employed to symbolize leaders, women, friends and enemies. The play reflects on all miseries caused by internal and external political conflicts that shaped the modern history of the political Arab World, and it does not help Arabs express their agonies only, but the reading and understanding of Arab *Hamlets* mutually help understand the modern political history of the region and the theatrical experience in the Arab World. The play had and still has great importance in the region, and helps locate

Arab theatrical history in a broad international sphere.

This study tried to understand part of *Hamlet's* journey in the Arab World. Still, there are undoubtedly untouched points that fall out of the study's scope. If the study traces the political reworking of Shakespeare's play from 1970 to 2020, it still does not cover the whole issue. Arab political struggle never ends, and many Arab *Hamlets* will be produced and need further studies in terms of their content and form. Furthermore, if theatrical adaptations are part of *Hamlet's* journey in the Arab World, it also registered other presence in social media, fiction, poetry, graffiti that might intrigue other researchers. The study tried to establish a critical background about the political significance of the play in the Arab World, but the play's journey needs more critical studies in the sphere of the socio-political changes that occurred and are still occurring in the region.

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