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**Hamlet's  
Phantom in the  
Arab World**  
Arab Hamlet

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*HAMLET'S PHANTOM IN THE ARAB WORLD*

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## Dedication

The past two years summed up a journey of a lifetime, it was not the easiest time of all, and indeed we have all witnessed much better days.

Still despite all that, the opportunity granted to me at Ca' Foscari University of Venice, is something I will always be thankful for. An opportunity to learn from amazing professional professors who taught us lessons behind the textbooks. An opportunity to live and experience life in the charming city of Venice and meet people from all over the world.

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With All Love!

Nour

## Abstract

In this study, we will be providing an overview of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* presence in the Arab world. This thesis provides a brief overview of the formation and establishment of the Arab theater. It provides an understanding of Arabs' reception and perception of Shakespeare's work. It presents the methods of translation used in translating Shakespeare and the sources of the texts used in translations and adaptations. After presenting a brief discussion on the translation and adaptation of Shakespeare, we will focus on *Hamlet's* reception and adaptation in the Arab world. This section discusses the reasons and aspects behind *Hamlet's* popularity and preference by Arabs. It introduces a variety of translations and adaptations of *Hamlet* in Arabic and the sources of the play the writers, critics, and translators relied on. This thesis will present Arab influence and fascination with Hamlet the hero and *Hamlet* the play itself, along with presenting several adaptations and translations of the play discussing the differences and similarities with Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. The study will focus on providing a thorough analysis of *Hamlet Wakes Up Late* by the Mamdouh Adwan, as well as a discussion of the play, character analysis, language analysis, and political messages. Finally, this thesis will analyze two adaptations based on *Hamlet Wakes Up Late*, which are an adaptation by Cornell University having the same title and another one titled *Hamlet A While After* by the Jordanian Zaid Khalil Mustafa. The study shows how the different sources of the play, the difference in language perception, religion, culture, society, and politics play an important role in translation, appropriation, and adaptation of Shakespeare in general and *Hamlet* in specific. It also highlights the importance of the play within the Arab world and how it is present in many forms and aspects of Arab culture.

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## INTRODUCTION

Hamlet's journey in William Shakespeare's *The Tragedy of Hamlet* has a significant meaning in the play. Hamlet was banished to England, and his journey led him to self-discovery and self-awareness in which he was finally ready to take an action. Hamlet returned to Denmark after his ship was attacked by pirates, a changed man determined to revenge the death of his father. The journey of *Hamlet* the play, *Hamlet: Globe to Globe* had a different flavour, unfolding in a tour that lasted more than two years. Shakespeare's Globe performed *Hamlet* in 197 countries from 23 April 2014 until 23 April 2016, celebrating at the time 400 years of *Hamlet's* tragedy. The play was performed in the Arab world and left a significant mark. In Iraq, for instance, the Globe was the first foreign cultural visitor in decades. It was the first company to bring men and women together in Saudi Arabia, and in Somaliland the Globe became the first foreign company to stage a full play in 23 years. *Hamlet* was also performed outdoors in Sudan to an audience of 3000 at the National Theatre in Khartoum. The play even reached refugees in the Arab world as it was performed in the Zaatari refugee camp on the borders between Syria and Jordan, as well as being performed to Yemeni people in Djibouti. It was also staged in Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia, Oman, Qatar, Sudan, Syria, and Palestine.

*Hamlet: Globe to Globe* has indeed brought the Prince of Denmark to the Arab world; however, this is not the first encounter of Arabs with Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Shakespeare's presence in the Arab world was influenced by local language, culture, and religion, although the Arab theater establishment was influenced by the West. The formation of an Arab theater was and still is a question of interest for many scholars. As explored in chapter 1, scholars linked the lack of establishment of an Arab theater in history to several factors such as social, religious,

civilization, mental reservations, and technical-linguistic factors. The early perceptions and reception of Shakespeare's work in the Arab world are tied to the history of the Arab theater. Arabs worked on translating Shakespeare's works during the late 19th century and early 20th century. In translating Shakespeare, Arabs faced many challenges, as detailed in chapter 1, such as access to the original English language texts, mastering of the English language which led to the use of copies of an intermediate language rather than the original text. The method used in translation affected the final product in Arabic as a group of translators worked on preserving the original text, while another group attempted to translate the meaning.

Translating Shakespeare's works enriched the Arabic language and influenced many Arab writers in producing works similar to Shakespeare's works or inspired by them. When it comes to *Hamlet*, everyone has something to say about it and has their own take on the play in terms of how it relates to society and culture. Other than the three current versions of the play, First Quarto, Second Quarto, and First Folio, *Hamlet* in the Arab world originated from a variety of sources. Translations and adaptations of *Hamlet* in Arabic were discovered to have come from a variety of sources, including Russian, French, and - though not substantially - English. This tragedy, with its complexity and depth, was given special attention to by Arabs. The issue remains, however, as to why *Hamlet* was chosen out of all of Shakespeare's plays, and what lies behind those selections. The interest and attention given to *Hamlet* comes from the political aspect of the play which Arabs have adapted to fit their political beliefs, and was thought to be appropriate to the Arab society. Writers, critics, and translators have been fascinated by *Hamlet's* fourth soliloquy, in particular, which has been translated and interpreted to such a degree that it has strayed from Shakespeare's original words and meanings. To this day, political pieces repeat and cite Shakespearean terms to depict the situation of the Arab world.



The many versions of the play, including the original British text and foreign translations and adaptations, as well as international and national politics, influenced the way Hamlet was moulded and interpreted by Arabs, resulting in the development of an Arab Hamlet. In Chapter 2, a sample of plays adapted from the French, Russian, Multifaceted Hamlets which are inspired by more than one source of the play, and a non-Hamlet Hamlets which are adapted from non-Shakespearean Hamlet will be explored, to highlight the differences in the adaptations based on the source the writer, director, or translator had relied on. The Arab world witnessed what Margret Livtin has called the Hamletization of the Arab hero or, in some cases, the Arabization of Hamlet. In the first case, Arabs were influenced by Hamlet on the psychological and political level, while in other instances Arabs took some elements from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* but decided to create their own *Hamlet* which gave birth to the Arab *Hamlet*.

*Hamlet* holds such a particular position in the Arab culture that several translations and versions of the play have survived. In Chapter 2, a section is dedicated to the play's successful and recent adaptations. Political satire, musical comedy, and farce have all been produced in the Arab Hamlet tradition. The plays analyzed in chapter 2 are: *Ophelia Is Not Dead* by the Moroccan Nabyl Lahlou; *A Theatre Company Found a Theatre and Theatred "Hamlet"*, by the Jordanian playwright Nader Omran; *Forget Hamlet* written by the Iraqi Jawad El-Assadi; *Hamlet in Trouble* written and directed by the Lebanese director Charbel Khalil; *The Al-Hamlet Summit* written by Sulayman Al-Bassam; *I Am Hamlet* by the director Hani Afifi; *Hamlet, the Mad Prince*, written and directed by the Lebanese Gerard Avedisian; and *Hamlet Palestine*, written by Amani Youssef Ismail.

A detailed analysis is given for Mamdouh Adwan's adaptation of the play *Hamlet Wakes up Late*, a political satire that conveys the situation in the Arab world at the time; it predicts events that are to take place following the publication of the play. This play was recognized as one of the

most successful adaptations of *Hamlet* in Arabic. It was translated into English by Margert Livtin in the book *Four Arab Hamlet Plays*. The Arabic original play and the English translation had influenced, as discussed in Chapter 3, the production of two other plays which were based on Adwan's adaptation and Shakespeare's original play, with an original touch by the directors. The first adaptation was also titled *Hamlet Wakes up Late* and was produced at Cornell University by Rebekah Maggor. The second adaptation, by the Jordanian Zaid Khalil Mustafa, was titled *Hamlet A While After*.

The aim of this dissertation is to examine Shakespeare's presence in the Arabic world, in particular *Hamlet's* translations and adaptations, with an emphasis on the play *Hamlet Wakes Up Late*. The first chapter, "*Hamlet's Expedition in The Arab World*", discusses the history of the formation of the Arab theater, underlying the main factors that affects its development. Subsequently, the chapter gives an overview of Shakespeare in the Arab world which includes the early translations of *Hamlet* and how they reached Arabs. Lastly, it includes an overview of *Hamlet* and the Arabs, indicating the reasons why it is of such importance, providing an overview of the sources of *Hamlet's* translation and of the presence of *Hamlet* in Arabic daily discourse.

Chapter two, "*Hamlet's Spirit in The Arab Theater*", includes *Hamlet's* adaptations in Arabic, providing a quick overview on the plays adapted from foreign (non-English) sources of the play. This is followed by an analysis of the effect of Hamlet on fictional Arab heroes, also examining a number of adaptations of the play. The second part of the chapter gives a detailed analysis of the play *Hamlet Wakes Up Late*, a summary of the play, character and language analysis, and a discussion of its political messages.

Finally, chapter three, “A Newly Born Hamlet”, studies the adaptation *Hamlet Wakes Up Late* at Cornell University, as well as *Hamlet A While After*, which is also based on *Hamlet Wakes Up Late*.

This study ultimately shows how the different sources of the play, and the differences in language perception, religion, culture, society, and politics, all played an important role in the translation, appropriation and adaptation of Shakespeare in general and of *Hamlet* in specific. It also highlights the importance of the play within the Arab world and how it is present in many forms and aspects of the Arab culture.

This study will focus on Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* in the Arab world. *Hamlet* in the Arab world has many forms and faces; the British *Hamlet*, the foreign *Hamlet*, and *Hamlet* as presented in political articles.

## Chapter 1: *HAMLET* EXPEDITION IN THE ARAB WORLD

Shakespeare's influence crossed the borders of countries and continents, it overcame all obstacles to be, without doubt, a global landmark. In the Arab world, Shakespeare has a different kind of presence; his presence is influenced by local language, culture, and religion. This chapter will explore the origins of the Arab Theater and its early establishment, briefly introducing the influence of the West, in particular Europe, on the formation of the theater in the Arab world. The history of the Arab theater is linked to the early perceptions and reception of Shakespeare's work in the Arab world. This study will focus on Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in the Arab world. *Hamlet* in the Arab world has many forms and faces; the British *Hamlet*, the foreign *Hamlet*, and *Hamlet* as presented in political articles.

### *A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ARAB THEATER*

The origins of the Arab theater have been of interest to many scholars. The study of the origin of an Arab theater is an issue that cannot be limited to the scope of activity of individuals, which includes writers, directors, and even the theater itself. Instead, the Arab theater has become more of a collective concern, in which a theatrical movement is interlinked with many origins and influences (Al-Alusi 2021:6). In the study, which was published in Arabic, Dr. Ghoneim attempts to understand the phenomenon of theater in the Arab world by linking it to the structure of society, in its psychological, social, and culture aspects. The social and psychological background greatly influenced the emergence of the theater and affected its growth and prosperity in societies and among people. The social and psychological formation in some regions of the world caused the late appearance of the theater, or lack thereof, of the theatrical phenomenon in general.

In “The Phenomenon of Theater Among the Arabs”, Dr. Ghoneim reveals that most of the people around the world who established a civilization of some kind were aware of the phenomenon of the theater: “They all had a form of theater. But the question that arises here is why a form of theater did not appear and had not grown among the Arabs?!” (Ghoneim. 2011:159).

The question about the origin of the theater has been of interest to many Arab scholars, who reviewed some of the characteristics of the Arab heritage and referred to some of its aspects as a form of theater. They realized that Arab literary and civilization history has a theater of a special kind. These scholars argued that the Greek-European model of theater is not the sole form and that other kinds of performances can be considered as a form of theater. Many theatrical "phenomena" prevailed in Arab history, which were researched and detailed by many theatrical critics and theorists. The most prominent study published in Arabic was by Ali Uqlah Arsan, “Theatrical Phenomena of the Arabs” which confirms the existence of different representational forms and rituals that carry theatrical manifestations, such as mourning processions in Ashura<sup>1</sup>, religious memorials, and the Good Friday<sup>2</sup> celebrations. However, these forms remain very far from the theater in the Aristotelian sense and from its modern developments. Researcher Ali Al Rai considered the *Shadow Fantasy Theater* that appeared in the Abbasid period<sup>3</sup> as a special single theatrical form, despite the existence of Roman theaters in some Arab cities. In an article published in 1999, Al Rai believed that theater as a standout

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<sup>1</sup> The day Ashura is observed on the 10th day of Muharram to mourn the death of Imam Hussain, the son of Hasrat Ali and the grandson of the Prophet. He was martyred in the Battle of Karbala on the day of Ashura in 680 AD.

<sup>2</sup> Good Friday is a Christian holiday commemorating the crucifixion of Jesus and his death at Calvary. It is observed during Holy Week as part of the Paschal Triduum.

<sup>3</sup> The Abbasid Caliphate was the third caliphate to succeed the Islamic prophet Muhammad. It was founded by a dynasty descended from Muhammad's uncle, Abbas ibn Abdul-Muttalib, from whom the dynasty takes its name.

art for Arabs was not part of the social culture in the Middle Ages and modern times. He explained that Arabs were introduced to theater from Europe in the same way as they were introduced to other products or technical skills. Al Rai described it as nothing original, but an imitation of artistic phenomena that Arab intellectuals saw in Europe and replicated in their countries. This imitation is clearly reflected in the work of Arab playwrights and writers and in their uncertainty in search for an artistic reference.

Scholars linked the lack of establishment of an Arab theater to several factors such as social, religious, civilization, mental reservations, and the technical-linguistic factor.

**The social factor:** holders of this justification believe that the Arabs Bedouin<sup>4</sup> social status had affected the establishment of a theater. The theater is an urban art that needs stability and urbanization, which the Arabs did not have during pre-Islamic times, as they were moving regularly and did not have the opportunity to settle.

**The religious factor:** holders of this opinion believe that the religious beliefs of Arabs was a simple paganism before the introduction of Islam. As such, religion was not established around the thought that tries to explain the world and human relations with their creator and the soul. Defenders of this view explain that Arabs were different and did not base their beliefs on developing ceremonies that led to the emergence of the art of acting. Arabs' religious beliefs were simple unlike, for example, the case of the Greeks or the Romans practicing the ritual worship of the wine-God Dionysius or Bacchus.

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<sup>4</sup> The Bedouin, Bedouin or Bedu are nomadic Arab tribes who have historically inhabited the desert regions in the Arabian Peninsula, North Africa, the Levant, and Mesopotamia. However, the Arabian Peninsula is the historic and original homeland of the Bedouin Arabs.

**The civilization factor:** This theory was developed by Zaki Tulaimat, an Egyptian theater pioneer, who connected the civilization factor to the religious factors.

Zaki Tulaimat believed that,

Arabs did not know the theatrical forms because considering the civilization situation for Arabs was at a preliminary stage and was not yet prepared for development and progress, Arabs were in constant movement in search of water and suitable places for grazing. When Arabs knew the Greeks culture and heritage they seized to translate their theater as it is a pagan literature (Ghoneim. 2011:169).

Mahmoud Taymour and Amin Al-Khouli supports Tulaimat's opinion. Mahmoud Taymour states that "The Arabs did not know the theater during the era of ignorance, because they used to live in tribes, sporadic, primitive life, and the flourishing of theatrical art depended on the emergence of a level of civilization in human societies". (170)

As for Amin al-Khouli, he believed that:

Arabs' life, the Bedouin life, did not support in the formation and existence of theatre in pre-Islamic Arabic literature. As in the case of the Greeks, Arabs were introduced to Greek literature pre-Islam through translation, nevertheless Arabs did not delve into it and were more involved in philosophy. As Islamic life does not embody any artistic features that the theatre needs, as it is neither musical nor fine art. (Khouli. 2011:21)

**Mental** reservations: the holders of this opinion believe that Arabs focus on the bigger picture and their minds do not tend to analyze, while theater depends on an analytic mentality. As such theater was contrary to the Arabs' mentality as they defined white as white, black as black; as for grey and the status of in-betweenness, these are all conditions that were psychologically uncomfortable for Arabs. Only when Arabs reached the synthesis of the analytical mind, and practiced science and knowledge, they then produced theater.

The researcher Suhair Al-Qalamawi, who believed in this hypothesis, stressing on the fact that theater was created when Arabs reached the synthesis of the analytical intellect and applied science and knowledge, Al-Qalamawi once stated that:

Those who say that the Arab mentality is synthetic, while the Western mentality is analytical, put divisions that are not approved by modern science, for there is no mind that discovers and then becomes silent and does not move towards installation and invention. The opposite is true, a mind that puts things together cannot be separated from that discovers and analyzes. The Arabs, like other people, worked in analysis and synthesis, and they are two processes that the mind does not function without them. The mind itself, which does the analysis, does the synthesis. (2011:171)

**The technical-linguistic factor:** founders of this belief tend to argue that the Arabic language is a stagnant language which does not appeal to the theater. Scholars view the language of the theater as full of liveliness, flow, and liberty. Arabic is a language that lived, grew, and flourished in the shadow of kings and princesses, and not in the shadow of the people, therefore it did not obtain the needed vitality and flow required for theatrical language.

In “The Phenomenon of Theater Among the Arabs”, Dr. Ghoneim *says* that the suffering of the people in the Arab region from oppression and alienation through prolonged stages in time made them lose their will to act and to create anything in general, including works of literature and theatre. He explains that Arabs became satisfied with everything that happens to them. They live in humility and submission, and they do not think about a confrontation of any kind against the forces controlling them. Accordingly, these psychosocial mechanisms of the people in the Arab region cannot produce a theater or a sense of drama. On top of that, Arabs do not seek to concretely get rid of the suffer or eliminate what affects them, except with wishes and hopes. They do not believe that confrontation will have the desired result and instead they try to adapt themselves to the new situation and reality.

Arabs in the region cannot produce clear written material to be performed and theater is an art that is evidently based on written texts, whereby the writer connects with the character and goes beyond that by connecting the character with a crisis or a conflict situation of some sort.



This form is not present in the Arab individual and social personality, which is the reason as to why the art of theater remained missing from the Arab region since ancient times, in spite of the availability of many factors that would justify its presence in the ancient civilization of Syria, for example, and in the civilizations of Mesopotamia and Egypt.

Despite the different beginnings and origins of theater from one country to another, scholars of the history of Arab theater firmly agree that this art appeared for the first time when Maroun Al-Naqash presented the play *The Miser* in Beirut in 1847, which was disputed over whether it was a complete translation of the play by Molière with the same title. Alternatively, it was described as an adaptation and was altered after reviewing it, as it came in a simplistic and shallow poetic language (Kamal 2013:127). The play that was staged, combined with the experiences of the pioneers, most notably Abu Khalil al-Qabbani in Damascus and Jacob Sanua in Egypt, encompassed the term theater in its current meaning. The genre of the play is more of a social theater than a political one. The plays that were staged at the time took the form of musical scenes, treated human subjects in a comic, satirical, critical, and lyrical manner. As a result, these adaptations from international texts strayed too far from their sources. Nevertheless, local social affairs of those times were incorporated to accustom people to approach the theater, until the musical theater lost its appeal in the fifties and the so-called modern theater took its place.

#### *SHAKESPEARE IN THE ARAB WORLD*

Shakespeare possesses a distinguished and unique position in both English and World literature. Shakespeare's works were translated into all languages in the world and were given a

special recognition, they were also adapted into many different forms of art. Shakespeare's presence in the Arab world is immense; Shakespeare himself had mentioned the Arab world in his work. In *Macbeth*, Act 1, Scene Three, the First Witch says: "Her husband's to Aleppo gone, master o' the Tiger,". The mention of Aleppo reflects the city's place in the economy of Jacobean England, and Britain's shipping ties in the Mediterranean. Moreover, other references to the Arab world can be found in *Othello*, where it is represented as a place of witchcraft and superstition:

*OTHELLO Act 3, Scene 4*

That's a fault. That handkerchief  
 Did an Egyptian to my mother give;  
 She was a charmer, and could almost read  
 The thoughts of people. She told her, while she kept it,  
 'T would make her amiable, and subdue my father  
 Entirely to her love; but if she lost it,  
 Or made a gift of it, my father's eye  
 Should hold her loathed, and his spirits should hunt  
 After new fancies. She, dying, gave it me,  
 And bid me, when my fate would have me wiv'd,  
 To give it her. I did so; and take heed on't,  
 Make it a darling like your precious eye.  
 To lose't or give't away were such perdition  
 As nothing else could match.

In his final speech before his death in Act 5, Scene 2, Othello also describes his killing of a Turk who had beaten a Venetian:

Soft you; a word or two before you go.  
 I have done the state some service, and they know't.  
 No more of that. I pray you, in your letters,  
 When you shall these unlucky deeds relate,  
 Speak of me as I am; nothing extenuate,  
 Nor set down aught in malice: then must you speak  
 Of one that loved not wisely but too well;  
 Of one not easily jealous, but being wrought  
 Perplex'd in the extreme; of one whose hand,  
 Like the base Indian, threw a pearl away  
 Richer than all his tribe; of one whose subdued eyes,  
 Albeit unused to the melting mood,

Drop tears as fast as the Arabian trees  
 Their medicinal gum. Set you down this;  
 And say besides, that in Aleppo once,  
 Where a malignant and a turban'd Turk  
 Beat a Venetian and traduced the state,  
 I took by the throat the circumcised dog,  
 And smote him, thus. [*Stabs himself*]<sup>5</sup>

Translation played a role in bringing cultures and traditions of different countries together. Arabs worked on translation during the late 19th century and early 20th century. They gave special attention and interest in translating the works of Shakespeare, whereby his plays appeared in different translations. *Macbeth* was the first Shakespearean play to be translated into Arabic during the 1900s, which was achieved by Abdul Malik Ibrahim and Iskandar Gerges, whose translation included many mistakes and was criticized at the time.

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Arab world, Egyptians specifically were conflicted on the viable way to translate Shakespeare's plays. One group followed the Egyptian poet Ahmed Zaki Abu Shadi in his translation of *The Tempest*. The translation method that they followed, preserved the original English text and writer's language, including similes, images, and foreign metaphors, which might sound strange to the Arabic reader. In cases where the original writer's phrases sounded very ambiguous, the translator tended to add an explanatory note for the reader. The other group of translators disagreed on this applied method of translations, they believed that it is significant to illustrate the translated meaning, rather than the words themselves. Therefore, the translator ought to follow the Arabic language structure and style in writing, believing that this method would bring the work closer to the Arab readers' mind and taste.

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<sup>5</sup> Shakespeare plays (Othello) on <http://www.shakespeare-online.com/plays/>

One of the many challenges that writers faced, while translating Shakespeare's plays, was related to the poetic language, based on the fact that during the first three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century it was rare to have Arabic plays composed of poetry. As for Shakespearean plays that were translated into Arabic as poetry, they were almost non-existent, with one exception being the Egyptian writer Muhammad Effat's poetic translation of *Macbeth*, which appeared in 1911. In his book *Shakespeare in Egypt*, Dr. Ramses Awad states that Effat's translation is almost flawless. In this translation Effat was able to convey this Shakespearean tragedy in a sober form of Arabic rhymed and metered poetry. Consequently, the translator-imposed restrictions on himself that the original text allowed him to mitigate. Shakespeare uses Blank verse poetry in all of his plays. The playwright had the freedom of expression which the Blank verse allowed; therefore, Muhammad Effat could have done the same when translating. However, Blank verse poetry was not known at the time in Arabic language, and for this reason the translator chose a more rugged path for himself in his Arabization and use of Arabic poetic meters. Effat translated two of Shakespeare's plays namely *Macbeth* and *The Tempest*, which he entitled *Storm of the Sea*.

In his translation of *The Merchant of Venice* (1922), the Lebanese poet Khalil Mutran was criticized for moving away from Shakespeare's original language and instead using prose for translation. Critics argued that when translating Shakespearean plays, it is preferable to have two versions, the first being a prose Arabic version, comprehensible to all readers; and the second being a poetic version, which is closer to the original text. Mutran was also criticized for his translation of *Macbeth* (1917), which appeared shortly after the very first translation of the play. Mutran's translation of *Macbeth* was written in a high standard Arabic, with which the poet assured its novelty in relation to the original text. However, later it was discovered that the Arabic translation was based on the French translation of the play and not on the original English text.

The availability of the original Shakespearean texts in the Arab world was affected by two main factors. The first factor being that during the early 19<sup>th</sup> century religious missions arrived in the Middle East, mainly Lebanon from Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox religious missions, which had a prominent role in the exposure of Lebanon to Europe in terms of literature and culture. The second factor being the French colonization of Lebanon and Syria during the 20<sup>th</sup> century after World War I. Therefore, the Lebanese translator, Khalil Mutran, had access to the French version of the play before the original English text.

Translators did not return to the original English versions but used intermediate translations in their mother tongue or in other languages. The reason behind it has been explained by Jamal Mohammad El Jaber as, “Either for lack of mastery of the original language of the text while having the desire to work on the text...or for the absence of availability of the original text”. (El Jaber 2005:98). So the indirect translation of the Shakespearean texts from other languages was the rule rather than the exception.

Some critics considered that, due to the many challenges, translating Shakespearean works into Arabic was a risky job. Critics believed that some writers in their translations went beyond the original texts. They believed that writers converted the original Shakespearean text to end up with novels and plays based on their imagination, which they attributed to Shakespeare. Critics believed that the translated plays presented characters on stage that were very different from the original Shakespearean characters.

Regardless of the challenges that accompanied the translation of *Shakespeare* into Arabic, many poets and writers attempted to translate the plays into Arabic. For instance, *Macbeth*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Julius Cesar*, *King Lear*, *Othello*, and *Hamlet*, were published in many different translated copies based on the various methods of translation followed by the translator; from trying

to preserve the original text and its meaning to resorting to the translation of the meaning by merely using similar Arabic proverbs and metaphors that are familiar to the reader, to translating it into prose. In addition to that, translated texts were affected by the source of the text translators used, whether it is the original text, the French version, or any other available language, which was brought to the Arab world through missionary or through colonization.

The influence and exchange between Shakespeare and the Arabs were illustrated through different works, such as Tawfic Hakim's *The Return of the Soul* and Ahmad Shawki's *Leila's crazy*. Hakim was directly addressing or responding to Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, and similarly addressing *Antonio and Cleopatra* in his book *Cleopatra's Death*, which conveys the story from an Egyptian point of view.

Translations and adaptation of any language into Arabic will indeed enrich the language. Translation contributes to the openness of the language in the world literature and in the exchange of cultures. Translating Shakespeare's work was faced by many challenges in terms of the language used and the invention of new phrases and words. Challenges in translating Shakespeare's work were also linked to the use of metaphors and similes, which are associated with cultural, historical, and religious events that Arab readers were not aware of.

In "Translating Shakespeare's Literature into Arabic Language And its reception in Arabic literature", Bin Abdel Nour Ahmed argues that:

After World War II, the Arab League, in collaboration with UNESCO, decided to translate Shakespeare's work to Arabic and publish it, under the supervision of the writer Taha Hussein. During the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century the translation took two forms. One form in which the translator edits and eliminates parts from the text based on the theater's requirements and audience's preference. Whilst the second form translated the text into standard Arabic, preserving the original text, regardless of the audience preference. (Bin Abdel Nour 2019:419)

The Tunisian critic Rafik Daraji argues that the first translator of Shakespeare in the Arab world is the Egyptian writer Najib al-Haddad in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, adding that the first play performed in

Egypt was *Othello*, which was produced by Suleiman Effendi in 1887. (Bin Abdel Nour 2019:418)

According to Bin Abdel Nour Ahmed, the most prominent translators who worked on translating Shakespeare's work at the time are Tanios Abdo, Mohammad Hamdi, Sami El Jardini, Mohammad Lutfi Joumaa, Mohaamd El Sibaai, Mahmoud Ahmad Al Akkad, Mohammad Ahmad Awwad, Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, and Khalil Mutran, who was known to translate for performing purposes. (Bin Abdel Nour 2019:419).

European literature and theater had a prominent influence on Arabic literature and the theater, which supported the Arab theatre evolution. Egyptian theatre is known to be the most established theater, in the Arab world, that worked on adapting Shakespeare's works. This contributed to enriching the literary relationship between East and West, besides the role the Levant theater played in the Egyptian theater's formation through the contribution of Lebanese, Syrian, and Iraqi playwrights, and translators. In fact, the Arab theater of Syria, Palestine and Lebanon played a significant role in enriching the Egyptian theater during the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Maroun Al-Naqqash (1815-1877) was the first to start the Arab theater, and was influenced by the Italian, French, and Turkish, as he learnt the art of directing from the Italians (Bin Abdel Nour 2019:420).

### *HAMLET AND THE ARABS*

Shakespeare's *Hamlet* original English text exists in three different versions which have survived from early dates, known as First Quarto, Second Quarto, and First Folio. According to Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor who edited the Arden Shakespeare *Hamlet* revised edition:

Of the earliest printed texts of Hamlet, three stand out as being significant for the modern editor - those known as the First Quarto or Q1(1603), the Second Quarto or Q2(1604-5)

and the First Folio or F(1623). Q1 is the shortest of these texts, Q2 being as twice the length of Q1 but lacks some famous passages of F's dialogues. (2020:6)

The origins of the play have been of interest to many critics who linked Shakespeare's *Hamlet* to an existing play of a similar name *Ur-Hamlet*. As Cantor argues in a critical study on *Hamlet*.

*Hamlet* being the longest play Shakespeare has ever written and the debate it historically had and is still having over the different copies that appeared and the origins of the play suggesting that the play existed as *Ur-Hamlet*. Most scholars agree that an earlier Elizabethan play on the subject once existed, conventionally referred to as the *Ur-Hamlet*, which was probably written by Thomas Kyd (1558–94). The play was also compared to another tragedy by Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedy* (c. 1585–90), which was by all testimony one of the most popular plays of the English Renaissance and probably the play which established the revenge genre. *The Spanish Tragedy* had considerable similarities with Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, including a ghost calling for revenge and a play-within-the-play, together with a sustained exploration of the themes of madness and suicide (Cantor 2004:25).

Everyone has something to say about *Hamlet* and their own perspective on the play with what falls within the society and cultural aspects. *Hamlet* in the Arab world came from different sources other than the three existing versions of the play. It was found that translations and adaptations of *Hamlet* in Arabic came from various sources such as Russian, French, and - although not significantly - English. Arabs gave particular importance to this tragedy with its complexity and depth. However, the question stands on why *Hamlet* was chosen, from all of Shakespeare's plays, and on what exists behind those choices.

#### a. WHY HAMLET?

*Hamlet* has a special position in the Arab world, the play and the hero are given a special attention and importance. In the book *Hamlet's Arab Journey*, Margaret Litvin explores the reasons behind the Arabs' preference and choice of *Hamlet*. Why follow *Hamlet* in the Arab world? asks Litvin. The answer presented was that considering all the things Arabs have to say about *Hamlet* is an enough reason. Liberals, nationalists, and Islamists have enlisted *Hamlet* for their causes.



Directors and playwrights have welcomed him into their work. Preachers, polemicists, filmmakers, novelists, poets, memoirists - no matter how public or private the message, Arab writers have drafted and redrafted Hamlet to help them express it (Livtin 2011:2).

Hamlet in the Shakespearean play questions the issue of existence in the famous soliloquy of to be or not to be (Act 3, scene 1). This soliloquy is received by Arabs as an expression of the modern Arabs' political dilemma. It questions the collective fate of Arabs' existence whether to be or not to be as a nation. As for the protagonist, Hamlet is considered to be a personification of the Arab hero, the leader going against corruption and fighting for the good of the people in society. The Arabs' perception of Shakespeare's Hamlet is that of the hero, the activist fighting against the brutality of the oppressive regime, an image and understanding of Hamlet from this point of view was the main lead behind the existence of an Arab *Hamlet*. In *Hamlet's Arab Journey*, Margaret Litvin explains that on the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of William Shakespeare worldwide inspirational and cultural activities took place, including in the Arab world and specifically Egypt. In Egypt, Shakespeare's works were translated and Al-Sayyad Biyyar staged *Hamlet* with the World Theater Company at Cairo's Royal Opera House. As Livtin explores, this event took place in Egypt throughout the ruling of the Arab leader Jamal Abdul Nasser and during the time of the Egyptian revolution of July 1952, which ended King Farouq's ruling. Nasser's anti-colonial policy and nationalism had shaped the way Arabs perceived *Hamlet*. However, according to Livtin, *Hamlet* was only popular after 1970, which was after Nasser's death, as the Arab world was not yet ready for this political play and having Claudius as the tyrant, and Hamlet as the hero, was not exactly the perfect fit. Arabs had hoped that Nasser would fulfill his promises of a united Arab nation. Arabs did not criticize Nasser during his ruling time and were hoping for the dream to come true. As Livtin argues:

Perhaps his death finally solved the problem of how to cast Nasser, who never quite fit the part of either a heroic Hamlet or uprising Claudius. He could play Hamlet's father's ghost: awe-inspiring, betrayed, succeeded by men of lesser talent, and continuing to haunt the Arab political imagination (Livtin 2011:52).

Arabs were influenced by the different sources of the play, the original British text and the foreign adaptations of the play, along with the international and national politics which have affected the way *Hamlet* was shaped and perceived, leading to the birth of an Arab *Hamlet*.

#### *b. HAMLET IN TRANSLATION*

Quoting Shakespeare might sound easy for a native speaker, but when it comes to the Arab world quoting relies on the translation. As mentioned earlier, translators either worked on literary translation – word to word from English into Arabic - or on translating the meaning.

When it comes to *Hamlet*, many versions appeared in translation. Take for example the following part of Hamlet's famous soliloquy:

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 heartache and the thousand natural shocks  
 That flesh is heir to: 'tis a consummation  
 Devoutly to be wished-To die; to sleep-<sup>6</sup>  
 (Shakespeare:314-315)

Those lines were translated in different forms based on the translator. For instance, Dr. Mohammad Anani translated it as follows, supporting it with footnotes for further explanation on the meaning and imagery;

أكون يا ترى.. أم لا أكون؟ هذا هو السؤال!  
 فهل من الأشراف للإنسان أن

<sup>6</sup> Based on the Arden Shakespeare Hamlet revised edition edited by Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor 2021 edition

يكابد السهام والنبال عندما ترمي بها أقداره الرعناء؟  
 أم يحمل السلاح ثم يلقي نفسه في لجة الأهوال  
 فينتهي النزال بالهلاك أي بموت لا يزيد عن رقاد؟  
 وبالرقاد ينتهي كما يقال أوجاع الفؤاد  
 وألف صدمة مما تورث الطبيعة  
 لهذه الأجساد!

نهاية ما أجدر الإنسان أن يطلبها: موت هو الرقاد!<sup>7</sup>

Which when translated back into English would be:

To be .. or not to be? this is the question!  
 Is it more honorable for a person to  
 Suffer arrows and arrows when it's thrown out by his reckless destinies?  
 Or take up arms and then throw himself into the abyss of terror?  
 The fight ends with death, no more than a slumber?  
 And with sleep ends, as it is said, the aches of the heart  
 And a thousand shocks from what nature inherited  
 for these bodies!  
 The end of what a person would better ask for: death is sleep!

When translated back into English, it is clear that the translated Arabic text is close to the original text but is not quite the same. “That is the question” becomes, “this is the question”; “Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer..” in the translation becomes the suffering of a person, “Is it more honorable for a person to...”.

The same lines were translated by Mohammad Awad Mohammad as:

الحياة أم الهلاك: تلك هي المشكلة.  
 أكون القل أسمى وأنبى،  
 إذا احتل قذائف القضاء الجائر وسهامه؟  
 أم إذا جرد سلاحه على بحر خضم من الكوارث،  
 فيكافحها حتى يقضى عليها؟  
 الموت رقاد: ثم لا شيء  
 ولئن قلنا إننا بالرقاد نقضي على آلام الفؤاد،  
 وعلى آلاف العلل والأسقام التي تنتاب الجسد،

<sup>7</sup> Available online based on an article published by Shaimaa Gaber in 2019, “When translation failed to convey the psychological suffering of Hamlet!”

إنه إذن لمأرب ينشده المرء بإخلاص،  
الموت رقادة<sup>8</sup>.

Translating it back into English would be;

Life or death: that is the problem.  
May the word be higher and nobler,  
If it endured the shells of the unjust judiciary and his arrows?  
Or if he stripped his weapon on a sea of disasters,  
So he fights it until he kills it?  
Dormant death: then nothing  
And if we say that by sleeping we eliminate the pain of the heart,  
And the thousands of ailments and ailments that plague the body,  
It is, therefore, a desire that one sincerely seeks,  
Dormant death.

The distance that the translator puts between his text and the original is obvious in the opening line: it is no longer “to be or not to be”, the translator has given a personal interpretation of the situation. Furthermore, the suggestion that Hamlet wants to commit suicide and the related question becomes in Mohammad’s translation the “problem”, rather than a mere question. In this version, the translator worked more on translating the meaning, his understanding, and interpretation of the text rather than the original text itself.

As for the third translation which was presented by the poet Khalil Mutran after World War II, it goes as follows:

أكون أو لا أكون؟ تلك هي المسألة! أيُّ الحالتين أمثلُ بالنفس؟  
أتَحْمَلُ الرجم بالمقاليع وتَلْقِي سهام الحظِّ الأُنكد،  
أم النهوضُ لمكافحةِ المصائب ولو كانت بحرًا عجاجًا  
وبعد جهد الصراع إقامةً حدِّ دونها،  
الموت، نوم، ثم لا شيء.  
نوم نستقر به من آلام القلب،  
وآلاف الخطوب التي وَكَلَّتْهَا الفِطْرَةُ بالأجسام،

<sup>8</sup> Available online, taken from an article published by Shaimaa Gaber in 2019, “When translation failed to convey the psychological suffering of Hamlet!”

ونخشاؤه على أنه حقيق بأن نَرْجُوهُ،  
الموتُ رقاداً<sup>9</sup>.

It translates back into English as;

To be or not to be? That is the matter! Which of the two cases is the best for the self?  
I endure stoning with slingshots and receive the arrows of bad luck,  
Or to rise to fight calamities, even if it is a rough sea?  
And after the struggle effort to establish an end to it,  
Death, sleep, then nothing.  
A sleep in which we settle from the pain of the heart,  
And the thousands of sermons that nature has entrusted to bodies,  
and we fear him as true to hope for,  
Death is dormant.

Mutran was criticized for his translation of Shakespeare, which he assured to be based on the original texts. However, critics suggested that Mutran was relying on the French version of the text.

Abbass Mahmoud Al-Akkad translated Hamlet's soliloquy in the following manner:

نحيا أو نموت تلك هي الحيرة. لا ندري أهو أنبل منا وأكرم أن نحمل الضيم من دهر عسوف نصبر على رجومه  
وسهامه أم نهيب بأنفسنا إلى الثورة على ذلك الخصم الغوار بالمتاعب والألام فنستريح منها؟

This translates back into English as:

We live or we die, that is the confusion. We do not know whether it is nobler and more honorable than we are, to bear the grievance of a turbulent age, to be patient with its stabbings and arrows, or to call upon ourselves to revolt against that adversary, engulfed in troubles and pains, so that we may rest from it? (Al-Akkad 2014:337)

As illustrated by Al-Akkad, his translation is that of the collective plural pronoun "we" which differs from the original "I" of the original text. This interpretation is linked to the receipt of the soliloquy by Arabs as a direct questioning of their fate.

Dr. Abdul Qader Al-Qatt translated it as follows:

أكون أو لا أكون.. هذه هي القضية!  
أيهما أنبل في العقل، أن أتحمل فذائف القدر العاشم وسهامه، أو أشهر السلاح في وجه

<sup>9</sup> Available online, taken from an article published by Shaimaa Gaber in 2019, "When translation failed to convey the psychological suffering of Hamlet!"

خضم من المتاعب، وبمواجهتها أضع حدا لها! ..

This translates back into English as:

To be or not to be..that is the issue!

Which of them is nobler in the mind, to bear the shells and arrows of cruel fate, or the most famous weapon in its face?

Amidst the trouble, and by confronting it I put an end to it?. (Al-Qatt 1981:36)

As for Dr. Izz Eddine Ismail, he translated it as follows:

أ كائن أنا أم غير كائن؟ تلك هي المسألة، أي الحالتين أمثلُ بالنفس؟ أتحمّل الرجم بالمقاليع، وتلقي سهام الحظ الأثكد؟ أم النهوض لمكافحة المصائب ولو كانت بحرا عجاجا.

This translates back into English as:

A being I or not being? That is the question, which of the two cases is best for the self? I bear the stoning

Of slingshots, and receive arrows of bad luck? Or to rise to combat calamities, even if they are on the sea clumps (Ismail 1981:142)

The best translation of the soliloquy is generally thought to be that by Jabra Ibrahim Jabra.

According to Dr. Ali Mehdadi in his study “Receiving Shakespeare in Arabic literature through

*The Tragedy of Hamlet*”:

Jabra Ibrahim Jabra is one of the rarest specialists in Arabic literature in translating Shakespearean literature. He has translated five of the tragedies; *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Coriolanus*, as well as *The Tempest*, which are accurate, faithful translations. He provided his translation with the most famous critical studies that dealt with the plays. He also translated the most famous books of Shakespearean criticism as *Shakespeare Our Contemporary* by the polish critic Jan Kot, and the book *Shakespeare and the Autistic Man* by the critic Dillon Janet, and the book *What Happens in Hamlet* by the Shakespearean specialist John Dover Wilson. Wilson is considered as one of Jabra’s mentors as Jabra studied English Literature at Cambridge University in the fall of 1940 with Wilson’s fellow professors; Stanley Bennett, Jon Bennett, and George Rylands, director of *Hamlet* presented by the famous Marlowe Society in 1932. (Mehdadi 2015:42)

The full Hamlet’s soliloquy by Shakespeare is the following:

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 heartache and the thousand natural shocks

That flesh is heir to: 'tis a consummation

Devoutly to be wished- 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,  
 Th' oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,  
 The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,  
 The insolence of office and the spurns  
 That patient merit of th'unworthy takes,  
 When he himself might his quietus make  
 With a bare bodkin. Who would fardels bear  
 To grunt and sweat under a weary life  
 But that the dread of something after death  
 (The undiscovered country from whose bourn  
 No traveller returns) puzzles the will  
 And makes us rather bear those ills we have  
 Than fly to others that we know not of.  
 Thus conscience does make cowards-  
 And thus the native hue of resolution  
 Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,  
 And enterprise of great pitch and moment  
 With this regard their currents turn awry  
 And lose the name of action. Soft you now,  
 The fair Ophelia! Nymph, in thy orisons  
 Be all my sins remembered. (Shakespeare: 314-317)<sup>10</sup>

Jabra Ibrahim Jabra's translation of the full soliloquy goes thus:

أأكون أم لا أكون؟ ذلك هو السؤال  
 أمن الأنبيل للنفس أن يصبر المرء على  
 مقاليع الدهر اللثيم وسهامه  
 أم يشهر السلاح على بحر الهموم،  
 وبصدها ينهيه؟ نموت.. ننام..  
 وما من شيء بعد.. أ نقول بهذه النومة ننهي  
 لوعة القلب، وآلاف الصدمات التي  
 من الطبيعة تعرض لهذا الجسد؟ غاية  
 ما أحر ما نشتهي. نموت.. ننام..  
 ننام . وإذا حلمنا؟ أجل لعمري، هناك العقبة  
 فما قد نراه في سبات الموت من رؤى،  
 وقد ألقينا بفانيات التلافيف هذه عنا،  
 يوقفنا للتروي.

<sup>10</sup> Taken from the Arden Shakespeare *Hamlet* revised edition edited by Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor, 2021 edition.

ذلك ما يجعل طامة من حياة طويلة كهذه.  
 وإلا فمن ذا الذي يقبل صاغرا سياط الزمان ومهاناته،  
 ويرضخ لظلم المستبد، ويسكت عن زراية المتعطرس،  
 وأوجاع الهوى المردود على نفسه، ومماطلات القضاء  
 وصلافة أولي المناصب، والازدراء الذي  
 يلقاه ذو الجدارة والجلد من كل من لا خير فيه،  
 لو كان في مقدوره تسديد حسابه  
 بخنجر مسلول؟ من منا يتحمل عبأ الباهظ  
 لاهتا يعرق تحت وقر من الحياة،  
 لولا أن الخوف من أمر قد يلي الموت،  
 ذلك القطر المجهول الذي من وراء حدوده  
 لا يعود مسافر، يثبط عزم الإرادة  
 ويجعلنا نؤثر تحمل المكروه الذي نعرفه  
 على الهرب منه إلى المكروه الذي لا نعرفه؟  
 ألا هكذا يجعل التأمل منا جبناء جميعا،  
 وما في العزم من لون أصيل يكتسي  
 بصفرة علية من التوجس والقلق.  
 ومشاريع الوزن والشأن ينتهي  
 مجراها ا عوجاجا بذلك،  
 وتفقد اسم الفعل والتنفيذ

Jabra's translation translates back into English as follows:

To be or not to be? That is the question  
 The most noble security for the soul is to be patient with  
 The catapults of the mean age and its arrows  
 Or raises arms on the sea of worries,  
 And by blocking it ends? We die...we sleep...  
 And there is nothing yet... Shall we say with this sleep we finish?  
 Heart anguish, thousands of shocks that  
 Who is nature exposed to this body? desire  
 What we most desire. We die...we sleep...  
 we sleep. And if we dream? Yes, for my life, there is the obstacle  
 What we may see in the sleep of death are visions,  
 We have cast these vanities of convolutions for us,  
 It would stop us for a walk.  
 That's what makes a long life so sad.  
 Otherwise, who is the one who accepts the afflictions and humiliations of time,  
 while humbled?  
 He succumbs to the oppression of the tyrant, and is silent about the arrogance of  
 the arrogant.  
 And the aches of passion that turns back on itself, and the procrastination of the  
 judiciary  
 The arrogance of the first positions, the contempt that  
 He will be met by the one who has merit and skin from all who are not good  
 If he was able to pay his account  
 With a dagger? Who of us bears the heavy burden?



panting and sweating under the dread of life,  
 Were it not for fear of something that might follow death,  
 That unknown country beyond its borders  
 No longer a traveler, discouraging will  
 And it makes us affectionate to bear the abomination that we know  
 To escape from him to the abomination that we do not know?  
 Isn't that how meditation makes us all cowards?  
 And what is in the determination of an authentic color that covers  
 An ill whistle of apprehension and anxiety.  
 And projects weight and affair bends  
 Its course is so distorted,  
 And lose the noun of the verb and the action- (Jabra 1981:5)

Based on the provided examples the play *Hamlet* itself had lost its originality when translated into Arabic. As such Arab readers and audience experienced *Hamlet* as the Arab hero based on the translators' view and interpretations, which sometimes distanced from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. *Hamlet's* fourth soliloquy is of interest to Arab translators who gave it special attention and interpreted it each based on their own perspectives.

### c. HAMLET IN THE DAILY DISCOURSE

Shakespeare's *Hamlet* had a massive influence on Arabs, whether you have read the original play or not you are still exposed to words and phrases from the play. "To be or not to be?" is one of the most famous questions used by political writers to discuss the state of existence of the Arab nation. The second most famous phrase is "Something is rotten in the state of Denmark" which is also quoted by journalists and writers discussing corruption in the Arab world.

"Nakoun aw la Nakoun?" in a collective sense of "to be or not to be?", titled the opening of *Alkaleej* electronical newspaper in 2017. The article discussed the origins of the Shakespearean phrase. However, the answer to the question came in the form of the destiny of Arabs.

The article suggests that:

We, as Arabs, have been repeating this phrase every day until it became an Arab feature that continues to haunt our present and future since we do not want to be, we have chosen

weakness over strength, we have decided to not be the makers of our path, we made up our minds to be dependents in the orbits of others, and we have left our homelands as arenas for terrorism, conflict strategies and interests. The regional and international powers are greedy for our position and our wealth, and we are watching like idiots, or we participate, intentionally or unintentionally, perhaps our heads will be surrendered, or our eyes will be turned a blind eye when the time comes to share the spoils. (AL Khaleej, 2017)

The question of existing as a nation is raised in political articles when it comes to Palestine.

The Palestinian cause goes back to 1948 and is considered by Arabs as the main cause of existence as one nation alongside Palestinians in their fight for the land. Then the question is to be or not to be?

As for the phrase “Something is rotten in the state of Denmark”, it is brought to the front in political articles, which discuss the corruption of the Arab states and the failure in providing any firm position as a nation. Historically Arabs have been oppressed, conquered, and colonized by the powerful countries of the West, from the United States to European countries, which turned life in the Arab world into a constant questioning of existence and presence of a strong nation fighting for its rights. As such the use of the phrase differs according to the timeline it is being used whether it is during a national conference, or during an ongoing debate over a recent incident. As there is always something happening in the Arab region, it would not be easy to sum up and quote all the articles and implication without going deeply into their political consequences. To mention a couple of examples, the journalist Hasan Khader chose to title his article “Something is rotten in the state of Denmark” back in 2009 during the ongoing Palestinian dialogues in Cairo as a way of criticizing it. The phrase comes as the writer’s way to criticize the Palestinian authorities and describing its corruption. Moreover, in an article published in 2020 the Lebanese writer Hanna Saleh quoted “Something is rotten in the state of Denmark” in a direct questioning of what would Shakespeare have written about the failing state of Lebanon.

Decades later, Arabs still find the translated Shakespearean words and phrases as a form of expression. Regardless of the time and context, *Hamlet's* words still find a way to title articles and provide a final answer for ongoing questions.

As shown, theater in the Arab world was not established during the same time as in Europe for several factors discussed earlier in this chapter. When theater finally found its way to the Arab world, Shakespeare was not left behind and the influence and affection between Shakespeare and the Arab world was obvious. In particular, *Hamlet* holds a special place in the Arab world both as a play and as a hero. Hamlet's fourth soliloquy is of interest to writers, critics, and translators who translated and interpreted it to an extent that it sometimes distanced from Shakespeare's original words and intents. Shakespearean phrases are echoed and quoted until this day in political articles to express the situation in the Arab world.

*ADAPTATIONS OF HAMLET IN ARABIC*

The formation of diverse variations of *Hamlet* in the Arab world is primarily due to linguistic differences. The source, the translation process, and the context of the translation resulted in the existence of multiple *Hamlets* in the Arab world. Arab *Hamlets* include both translated versions of the play as well as adaptations in which Arab writers were inspired by Shakespeare to reinterpret the text in light of the politics, ideology, and beliefs specific to the Arab context. Arabs offered an interpretation of *Hamlet* that was sometimes identical to the original British *Hamlet*, but in Arabic, with the original text altered due to linguistic choices made by the translator. Occasionally, Arabs also adapted the play into a genre other than the play's original genre. The drama was also presented in a more straightforward manner that is more appropriate for an Arab audience.

According to Julie Sanders:

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 (compare, for example, Deppman et al. 2004 on 'genetic criticism'). Adaptation is frequently involved in offering commentary on a source text. This is defining terms achieved most often by offering a revised point of view from the 'original', adding hypothetical motivation, or voicing the silenced and marginalized. Yet adaptation can also constitute a simpler attempt to make texts 'relevant' or easily comprehensible to new audiences and readerships via the processes of proximation and updating. (Sanders 2006:18-19)

After presenting the influence of Shakespeare in the Arab world, notably *Hamlet*, this chapter will investigate the many sources of *Hamlet* adaptations: the versions that came from non-Shakespearean sources and those that derived from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. In this chapter, an analysis of Mamdouh Adwan's *Hamlet Wakes Up Late* will be provided.

a. FOREIGN HAMLET ADAPTATION

*French Influence*

The first *Hamlet* to be staged in the Arab world did not possess the dramatic and tragic theme characteristic of the original Shakespearean play. It provided a happy ending which distances the play from Shakespeare's tragedies. According to Margaret Litvin, the Lebanese writer Tanios Abdo presented the first Arabic translation of *Hamlet* in 1901, which included the redemption of misfits in the happy ending of the play (Litvin 2011:62). Critics described that Tanios' translation, in its redemptive qualities, included misfits: *Hamlet* is a well-known tragedy, while the translator adjusted the Arabic translation to end happily similar to a fairy tale, rather than a tragedy.

According to Salma Harlend:

The Alexander Farah Theater Company, which was based in Cairo, produced the play *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare in Arabic in 1901, based on the translation of the Lebanese writer and translator Tanios Abdo. The play was a resounding success, and it remained the only Arab theater production of *Hamlet* in Egypt until 1918. Tanios published his translation of the play in 1902, and it received the same popularity as theatrical productions. A second edition of the same translation was published a few years later. (Harlend 2020)

Harlend's critical article argues that despite the success the play received it was highly criticized by the historians who studied Abdo's text in comparison with the original text. Abdo's adaptation had excluded the tragic essence of the play, as the original long soliloquies and articulated questions were replaced with a lighthearted language and poems that break into singing. The fact of having singing parts illustrates that the writer had willingly decided to modify the original Shakespearean text which resulted in the presence of a cheerful mood that contradicts with the tragedy genre of the original *Hamlet* play. The changes in the language and the mix that Abdo created between the standard Arabic and the poetic language was criticized by Shakespearean specialists. The happy ending, which was received positively by the audience, was also criticized.

Abdo had ended the play with justice as the ghost of *Hamlet's* father appears on the stage to proclaim him king. The curtain finally comes down with *Hamlet's* ascension to the throne, against the backdrop of the echoes of the people singing outside the palace in celebration of justice being served.

The controversies and changes in the text are linked to the fact that Abdo in his translation did not rely on the original text but, on the contrary, on the version by French writer Alexandre Dumas entitled *Hamlet (Thomas)*, which ends happily.

Livtin stated that Abdo's translation was followed by Khalil Mutran's translation which also relied on a French text. As such the translation of the original English text only appeared in 1932 translated by Sami Al-Jredini. Al-Jredini, in turn, was criticized for presenting a static language and a plain text that could not be performed. (Livtin 2011:71).

#### *Russian Influence*

Another source which had an effect on the adaptations and translations of *Hamlet* was Grigori Kozintsev's *Gamlet*, the Russian movie released in 1964 that was itself an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

Livtin in her book argues that the Russian movie had an influence on Arabs due to the political effect on the Middle East, especially Egypt's view of the Soviet Union. As Egyptian playwright-director Mahmoud Abodoma says, his early exposure to *Hamlet* was through the Soviet movie *Gamlet*. Abodoma had watched the film several times without any subtitles at first, while his first encounter with the written *Hamlet* was through a translated copy of the play by Mohammad Hassan al-Zayyat. As such Abodoma's adaptation of *Hamlet*, entitled *Dance of the Scorpions*, was published in 1988 and performed in 1989 and 1991. This was based on the Russian movie rather than the British play. (Livtin 2011:51).

Based on the play version of *Dance of the Scorpions* published in 1988 and performed in 2009, major changes were done to the play, starting from the characters on stage which were limited to the Ghost, Hamlet, Horatio, Polonius, Ophelia, and King Claudius. In Abodoma's version of the play, the Ghost appears only once at the beginning of the play asking Hamlet to revenge him for his death. Ophelia is already dead when the play starts. She appears as a ghost whom Hamlet can see and speak to. She appears to convince Hamlet and pushes him to take action, by visiting the people outside the castle and hear the needs of the farmers and to forget about revenge.

*Dance of the Scorpions* evolves more around the political aspects of the original play. In this version the tyrant king is a greedy person, using Hamlet's hallucinations for his own good, by claiming that he as well has seen the ghost of his late brother. The ghost, as Claudius claimed, asked him to start a war and protect the kingdom and to do so he is collecting taxes from the farmers and money from nobles. As the king is busy with a made-up conspiracy war with Fortinbras, the people will align with the opponent and revolt against the king in arrangement with Horatio and Polonius. At the end of the play Hamlet does kill the king and revenge his father while the ghost of Ophelia asks him not to. After he kills the king, Polonius steps in and stabs Hamlet to death, leaving the throne empty as the theater darkens and both Horatio and Polonius are walking towards it.

During the play Hamlet is seen on a wheelchair in many scenes, to illustrate his inability to take action and to symbolize that this would be the only chair he would claim. Another aspect which differs from the original Shakespearean play is the brevity of the famous Hamlet soliloquies. Longer soliloquies were uttered by the ghost of Ophelia, even the famous *To be or not to be* line, which was said by Ophelia as she recalls for *Hamlet* parts of a soliloquy he previously spoke in front of her.

The play *Dance of the Scorpions* reflects Arab society, the corruption and greediness of the Arab leaders. It foreshadows future conspiracies and made-up conflicts that are being prepared behind closed doors, while the people are helpless and unable to take action. It stands as a political adaptation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

#### *A Multifaceted Influence*

Unlike Abodoma's adaptation which was influenced solely by *Gamlet*, ElSayed Bidayr's adaptation of the play, staged in Cairo in 1964, carried forward a different aspect of the play. Bidayr was influenced by the films by both Russian director Grigori Kazantsev and British filmmaker Laurence Olivier; whereby the first presented a vision that is not devoid of politics, the second has consistently presented a vision that distances itself from the political dimension of *Hamlet's* personality and only focuses on his internal individual struggle. In his adaptation, Bidayr did not present a third vision of *Hamlet*, but rather portrayed a neutral character. Bidayr's *Hamlet* is neither as emotional as the English *Hamlet*, on the one hand, nor as strongminded as the Russian *Hamlet*, on the other hand.

Bidayr was described as bringing a special flavour to the play by distancing it from both the Russian and the British. Bidayr used lights to represent different situations and the ghost never appeared on stage, but rather was an illumination of light as part of Hamlet's imagination. Livtin explains that Bidayr did not have any political aspect or agenda to be portrayed in the play. Critics criticized the play and the artistic touches that Bidayr added at the time, ignoring the classical themes of the play.

The availability of the different sources and versions which influenced the Arabic adaptations of *Hamlet* was referred to by Livtin as the Global Kaleidoscope effect. Arabs were,



after all, exposed to multiple resources of the text based on the time and its corresponding political effects.

*A non-Hamlet Hamlet*

Although Arabs were exposed to multiple Hamlets from the French, Russian, and British traditions, which resulted in adaptations and the birth of different Arab Hamlets, still some Arabs did not meet *Hamlet* yet.

In July 2018, Lebanese theatre director Lena Osseyran presented her play *Hamlet Mechanics* in Beirut. In a call with Osseyran to understand better her views and concept of the play, she explained to me that the play is an adaptation translated from the German play *The Hamletmachine* by Heiner Mueller, which was originally published in 1977.

*The Hamletmachine* is a postmodern play dealing with feminism and communism and the idea of being trapped in a time and situation. It borrows from Shakespeare, T.S. Eliot, and Jean-Luc Godard. The play talks about a revolution that never happened and illustrate what would happen if the revolution actually happened.

Osseyran's adaptation is a three-act play presenting on stage three versions of Hamlet: the vulgar rebellious Hamlet, the sexual Hamlet, and finally the politically committed Hamlet. The three Hamlets are performed on stage by three different actors. Along come three different versions of Ophelia: the passionate Ophelia, the sexual Ophelia, and the rebellious Ophelia. The play consists of monologues that are recited by the six actors. At the beginning of the play aspects from the classical Shakespearean *Hamlet* are recalled through a conversation between Hamlet and Horatio. Their dialogue refers to the Ghost, the skull, and the Queen's wedding, followed by Ophelia's presence on stage. It is not long until Hamlet strips himself of that tragic fate and rises up against the reality around him:

أنا بطلت هاملت. ما عاد بدي ألعب الدور. الكلام ما عم يعني لي. أفكار ي عم تستنشق الدم من الصور. قصتي ما صارت ورائي لي نخط ديكور من قبل ناس غير مهتمين بقصتي لجمهور ولا تعني له شيء حتى أنا ما تعني لي شيء، منهم بطلت أمثل (Osseyran 2018:5).

Those lines are a literal translation of Mueller's play:

I am not Hamlet. I play no role anymore. My words have nothing more to say to me. My thoughts suck the blood of images. My drama is cancelled. Behind me the scenery is being taken down. By people who are not interested in my drama, for people, to whom it doesn't matter. It doesn't matter to me either. I'm not playing along anymore. (Mueller 1979:5)<sup>11</sup>

Osseyran said: "After we are presented with the different Hamlets, Hamlet rebels against reality and speaks about the revolution that did not happen and explains how it would look like if it actually happened".

Relying on a German adaptation rather than the original text is not something new, it is similar to previous playwrights and directors who relied on Russian and French versions. During that era, they relied on different texts based on the availability, and that affected the final product. When Osseyran was asked if she had considered adding elements from the original British *Hamlet* to her adaptation, her answer was: "In this play we worked on a direct translation of Mueller's text without any changes or edits, as it is already a deeply complex play". Adding that: "I don't know the original *Hamlet* play and had neither read nor watched it before".

Time has changed, nowadays anyone can have access to the original Shakespearean text and to translated copies, in addition to the surviving copies of adaptations. Still some Arabs have never read the original *Hamlet* and never encountered the prince of Denmark.

#### b. HAMLETIZATION OF ARAB TRAGEDIES

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<sup>11</sup> *The Hamletmachine* by Heiner Mueller, 1979 Translation: Dennis Redmond © 2001

The Arab world has witnessed what Livtin has called Hamletization of the Arab heroes, or in some cases the Arabization of Hamlet. In the first case, Arabs were influenced by *Hamlet* on the psychological and political level, as it was in the case of Abed El Nasser in Egypt, which affected the way the play was perceived, and, consequently, the Arab hero or leader became Hamlet. In other cases, Arabs took some elements from Shakespeare's Hamlet but decided to create their own *Hamlet* which gave birth to the Arab Hamlet.

In "Hamletization of the Arab Hero", Livtin devoted a space in her book to the work of Alfred Faraj and Salah Abdel-Sabour. Both writers created two Arab heroes on whom the influence of *Hamlet* was evident. Some characteristics of the Shakespearean character were passed on to both the *Tragedy of Suleiman* by Al-Halabi by Faraj and the *Tragedy of Al-Hallaj* by Abdel-Sabour; they were both "Hamletized". According to Litvin, the two writers borrow from *Hamlet* the psychological depth, the inner struggle between action and inaction, the search for justice on earth, living in a turbulent world, the erosion of the self, the hesitant heroism, and the loneliness and subtlety through which Hamlet expresses his moral condition. The points of similarity also involve Shakespeare's linguistic tools: the juxtaposition of opposites, the abundance of riddles, and soliloquies.

In *The Tragedy of Suleiman Al-Halabi*, Alfred Faraj brings back a historical hero for Arabs. Suleiman Al-Halabi was a Kurdish man who assassinated the general Jean-Baptiste Kléber, leader of the French occupation forces in Egypt. He was tortured by burning his hand to the bone before being executed by anal impalement. Al-Halabi's skull was then taken to France for medical students to study the anatomy for "signs of crime and intolerance".

In Faraj's play written in 1965, Suleiman is set to travel to Cairo to study and become a judge. Suleiman's aspiration comes from his notions to ensure justice and punish Kléber. The last

night before he leaves for Cairo, he dreams or, more precisely, envision himself killing Kléber. From there, his journey starts, the journey of Suleiman to Cairo and the people he meets along the way present him with questions of justice on earth and existential questions about the presence of God. All through the play Suleiman is presented with long soliloquies and hesitation whether to take action or not. The characterization of Suleiman is so much like Hamlet in his long philosophical questions, inaction, and seek for revenge and justice. Unlike Hamlet who was seeking revenge for his late father, however, Suleiman was seeking revenge and justice for a whole nation against the oppressor Kléber. The perception of the hero in this play is paradoxical: Kléber was perceived as the hero for the French and the oppressor for Arabs, while Suleiman was the Arab hero and the criminal for the French.

As for *Tragedy of Al-Hallaj* by Abdel-Sabour, Abdel-Sabour also brought back a real historical cultural figure in his play. Al-Hallaj Hussein bin Al-Mansour (858 - 922) is a well-known controversial figure, who lived in Iraq in the middle of the ninth century AD. He was the subject of disagreement between his Sufis peers and the devotees of the common people who considered that the ideas, sayings, and actions spread about him by those who reviled him were untrue. The opposing group considered him a sorcerer and blasphemer claiming Lordship in order to take the place of the Sultan who was believed to be commissioned by God, an unbeliever in monotheism, antagonizing the Sultan who cannot be ridiculed, being a khalifah of Muslims.

Abdel-Sabour's play was written in 1964 and published in 1965. It is made up of 2 Acts, Act one titled "The word" and Act two titled "Death". In the play Abdel-Sabour was inspired by Al-Hallaj's own biography, mainly by the rebelling act of taking off his rag after his return as a pilgrim from Makkah Al-Mukarramah. This act comes from the desire to go down to the streets and meet the common people, from the miserable to the weak, to guide them and call to God and

seek victory and happiness in the Hereafter. This act is considered rebellious as Sufis were to be devoted to God and isolated from the common people. Al-Hallaj is remembered for his Christ-like execution as he was hung on a gibbet in 922 after 9 years of trial. Abdel-Sabour Hamletized *Al-Hallaj* through the *Hamlet*-like situations, heavy riddles, and soliloquies.

Both *Al-Hallaj* and *Suleiman* echo *Hamlet* in the protagonist's loneliness, inwardness, moral and philosophical questioning, and psychological state. The long monologues given to both characters and the situation they are trapped in between life and death, justice and injustice, action, and inaction, are a direct link to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

For instance, in the following excerpt from *Al-Hallaj* the titular character converse with his friend Shebli about the injustice of the world:

*Al-Hallaj*: Al-Hallaj: The Poverty of the Poor  
 The hungry are hungry, in their eyes the words are blazing,  
 I am not sure what they mean.  
 Sometimes I read in them  
 "Are you looking at me?  
 but you are afraid that you will see me.  
 Cursed religion is your hypocrisy".  
 Sometimes I read in it. "In your eyes there is pity, you are afraid that  
 Your pride will be exposed  
 May the most merciful forgive you".  
 My eyes may shed tears at that time: I may be in pain,  
 As far as what fills my heart with fear,  
 And fills my soul with fear and regret.  
 It is the eye that relaxes,  
 The fringe above a hurtful question,  
 "Where is God?"  
 And the captured prisoners are being led by a devastated policeman.  
 A whip has slipped into his hand,  
 he does not know who is in his comfort.  
 He has put it from above the backs of the epileptic prisoners.  
 He has lifted it.

And men and women who have lost their freedom.  
 You have taken them as lords besides God.

How can I turn a blind eye to the world and expect that my heart is darkened?... (2.1:22-23)

According to this extract from *Al- Hallaj's* second act, critics believed that the playwright had worked on Hamletizing his hero through his doubts, indecision, and painful questioning of the presence of God which is one of the many utterances that Al-Hallaj delivers throughout the play.

More recently, in a study Mourad Jad Allah presents what he referred to as *Palestinian Hamlet*, discussing the youth and their role in Palestine which he referred to as *Hamlet*. He compared the Palestinian youth to Hamlet the prince of Denmark, dressed in black while mourning his father and surrounded by disloyal people, his own uncle and mother. In his study, Jad Allah quotes directly from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* to express the current situation of the youth and their role in contemporary Palestine. In a similar manner to *Hamlet*, they are seeking for justice.

In his efforts, Jad Allah had Hamletized the Palestinian youth, quoting phrases and expressions from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and placing it in a different context to express his own thoughts. The following are the lines that the ghost had said to *Hamlet* in Act one:

The serpent that did sting thy father's life  
Now wears his crown. (1.5.38-39)

In his direct quoting here, Jad Allah is not referring to Hamlet and his father. The serpent here refers to Palestinian state officials who are working against the Youth, while the father is the Palestinian youth who are being harmed. In his direct comparison the writer is placing the phrases in a different context to bring a new meaning to the words based on the political and social aspect they are placed in.

### c. SHAKESPEARE'S HAMLET ADAPTATION

As *Hamlet* has a very special place in the Arab world, various translations and adaptations of the play survived. A sample of the successful and recent adaptations of the play will be presented in this section. The tradition of the Arab *Hamlet* has produced bitter and hilarious political satire, musical comedy, and farce. The plays provided below are *Ophelia Is Not Dead* by the Moroccan Nabyl Lahlou, *A Theatre Company Found a Theatre and Theatred "Hamlet"*, by the Jordanian playwright Nader Omran, *Forget Hamlet* written by the Iraqi Jawad El-Assadi, *Hamlet in Trouble* written and directed by the Lebanese director Charbel Khalil, *The Al-Hamlet Summit* written by Sulayman Al-Bassam, *I Am Hamlet* by the director Hani Afifi, *Hamlet, the Mad Prince*, written and directed by the Lebanese Gerard Avedisian, and *Hamlet Palestine* written by Amani Youssef Ismail.

*Ophelia Is Not Dead*

This play was originally written in French in 1968. Subsequently, Nabyl Lahlou produced his own play in 1970-1975. The play is a postcolonial rewriting of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. It is a two-act play with two characters only: Hamlet and Macbeth. The two characters are in fact one person speaking in two voices. In his adaptation, Lahlou focuses on the bipolarity of Arabs through the characters, the monologues addressing the social, political, and religious corruption, racism, national and international political organizations, and failed revolutionary ideologies in the Arab world. The play represents the newly independent Arab countries and the colonizer is not an outsider colonial power but the regime in the country. Lahlou brings in the two tragic Shakespearean heroes, Hamlet and Macbeth, to represent the satire of the Arab state, their enforced paralysis and their acts as they try to amuse each other with the long monologues and questioning, as they express their loss of hope in any reform, change, or freedom in the Arab world.

*A Theatre Company Found a Theatre and Theatred "Hamlet"*

Another adaptation of the play which came as far from politics as that of Lahlou, *A Theatre Company Found a Theatre and Theatred "Hamlet"*, by the Jordanian playwright Nader Omran, was written in 1984. It is a 3-act play which was originally produced for the Festival of Portable Theatre in Rabat entitled "For The Sake of Bringing Arab Theatre to its Roots".

The play is considered a musical comedy, focusing on a troupe and the dynamics between the actors and their director. *Hamlet* becomes the play within a play, when an Arab prince hires this British-trained theater troupe to stage it, in order to trick his usurping stepfather/uncle who married the prince's mother after his father's death.

The play opens with the figure of Abu Fawanees ("Lantern Man"), who enters the stage and hands men lanterns and sits commenting on the situation. The opening words overshadow how the play will proceed. The play goes on as the troupe is hired by the prince, as he tries to enforce the issue on the king: "Does this premise remind you of anything, uncle? (Omran 1984:172). However, the king simply avoids conversing with the prince. The queen gets entrapped by the troupe's unintended mingling between art and life. As for Ophelia, she is framed and executed for what is in fact the queen's own crime of dishonesty, but a following virginity exam shows Ophelia to be untouched. The queen's crime in Omran's play is similar to that of the original play, as the queen had married her brother-in-law while her husband had just passed away.

Omran's play illustrates the powerful relationship of the actors and the director, it shows the role of the manipulating actors staging different events to trick the king. The play stages many misfortunes while trying to fulfil the quest of the prince which results in the deaths of many characters. The staged events are complex and cause confusion between the frame of the play and the play itself. At last, after the king and the prince kill each other, the play results in a happy



ending where the actors subdue their oppressive director, claiming the independence of art and refusing to stage didactic political theatre anymore.

*Forget Hamlet*

Written by the Iraqi Jawad El-Assadi, *Forget Hamlet* was originally staged in Cairo in 1994 as *Ophelia's Window*, but it was retitled during its publication in 2000 as *Forget Hamlet*. In his adaptation, El-Assadi wanted to provide a new interpretation and aspect of the play which focuses on the silence and unspoken desires, shifting the focus from the main protagonist to the other characters.

El-Assadi infused his text with Hamlet's original words as translated by Jabra Ibrahim Jabra. However, Hamlet's words were given to other characters such as Horatio, Ophelia, and Laertes. In *Forget Hamlet* the old king is alive at the beginning of the play, the night goes on, Hamlet dances with Ophelia and expresses his love, while Laertes disagrees on this and warns Horatio and Polonius to keep an eye on them as he, Laertes, is blind.

The old king is then slaughtered in his bed, his sudden murder followed by Claudius' marriage with Gertrude. This raises a doubt in Laertes who seeks revenge for the late king which causes him to be banished to a sanatorium. Ophelia consequently is also triggered to seek justice for her brother and the late king, but Hamlet is not bothered with what is happening, he detaches himself from the world and always keeps his head in a book, he acts peacefully and is mostly silent and barely responds to either Horatio or Ophelia as they try to push him to seek revenge.

Gertrude and Claudius respond to the events differently. Gertrude is in constant worry and feels guilty for conspiring and killing the king, while Claudius turns into a tyrant killing anyone who comes his way which raises the fear of the people in the kingdom. At the end of the play, Laertes fakes his own death and returns to the kingdom for revenge in a closed casket, leaving

everyone wondering whose corpse it is. Then Claudius orders for Hamlet to be killed as his self-absorbance and silence became alarming to the former. When the soldiers kill Hamlet, Laertes appears naked and stabs Claudius to death and claims the throne, while Ophelia and Gertrude drink cups of poison and die.

Al-Assadi did not only change the events of the original play, but he also intended to give more space and role to the silent background characters, who have an active role in *Forget Hamlet*. For instance, words of wisdom and messaging were delivered through the Gravediggers who have more than one scene in the play and they hint at the goodness of the late king, the madness of Laertes, and Hamlet's inactiveness.

#### *Hamlet in Trouble*

*Hamlet in Trouble* was written and directed in 1997 by the Lebanese director Charbel Khalil. The play is a comedy adaptation of *Hamlet's* tragedy. Gertrude is presented as a sexual and powerful woman who is unable to live without a man after her husband's sudden death, and orders Polonius to inform Claudius that she decided to marry him. Hamlet is a clumsy boy of 24 years old who still acts as mommy's little boy: his head is bound to a book at all times and is unable to act properly in accordance to his age and stature. The play follows the original text's sequence of actions; however, it is presented in a sarcastically modern way, the outfits, the settings on stage, and the dialogue are modern and far from the original text.

The modernization of the play can be seen in the following features, which differ profoundly from the original: the king was said to be killed by a snake and then it turned out he was poisoned in his ear; Hamlet kills Claudius and Polonius through poisoned chicken; Hamlet and Laertes challenge each other in a boxing match where Claudius poisons their water which is also accidentally drunk by the Queen; and Ophelia loses her mind after her father's death and dies in a

car accident while absentmindedly singing on the highway. Another aspect of modern life is that Hamlet spends time with Horatio watching movies on television. In an attempt to bring the play closer to the modern audience, the director adds news on television about Lebanon and shows political figures in a way of hinting at the corruption that is ongoing in the country.

Aside from modernizing the play, the director added the twist in which Hamlet has been away for 24 years in a religious school and was brought-up by a priest. All through the play at every incident Hamlet quotes the priest who took care of him all those years. In this adaptation, the ghost appears many times and only Horatio and Hamlet can see him. He asks Hamlet to revenge him for his death and to kill Claudius by poisoning his favorite food, chicken. At the very end, everyone is dead. In between life and death, Hamlet asks Horatio to call for the priest to bid him goodbye, it is then that Hamlet discovers that all this time there was no ghost, it was the priest tricking him to kill Claudius and go back to school. The priest argues that after 24 years he has the right to have Hamlet for himself, but Hamlet chooses death over life.

#### *The Al-Hamlet Summit*

*The Al-Hamlet Summit* was written in 2002 by Sulayman Al-Bassam. It is a modern adaptation of *Hamlet*. Al-Bassam's play is based on Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and portrays a Middle Eastern political tragedy. The play was presented in both Arabic and English Language.

The main protagonists have Shakespearean names and live in parallel worlds in modern Middle Eastern settings. The former ruler, Hamlet's father, has been poisoned, and his authority has been usurped by Claudius, Prince Hamlet's uncle and King Hamlet's brother, who bears a striking likeness to Saddam Hussein<sup>12</sup>. The play includes the main Shakespearean characters

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<sup>12</sup> Saddam Hussein is an Arab Iraqi politician, he served as the 5<sup>th</sup> president of Iraq from 1979 until 2003.

Gertrude, Ophelia, Polonius, and Laertes, but their roles are adapted to the Islamic Arab setting. The dictatorship is endangered by Fortinbras' troops lining the borders, just as Denmark is attacked at the start of *Hamlet*, and internally by the 'People's Liberation Brigade,' which has been disseminating leaflets alleging King Hamlet was murdered. Whereas in Shakespeare's play Claudius handles the Norwegian danger through diplomacy, in *Al-Hamlet* Claudius replies with brutality and barbarism.

The West backs Fortinbras' army, which is supplied with millions of dollars in foreign equipment. The West's hunger for Arab oil is at the root of the suggestions of foreign intervention in the Arab world. The West's intervention, along with Fortinbras' threat, is the primary reason for Claudius' concern about protecting the oil pipelines from damage.

Al-Bassam has introduced in a new character the play, the Arms Dealer, who spoke in English even in the Arabic play as he represents the West. Hamlet, Ophelia, Claudius, and lastly Fortinbras all speak with the Arms Dealer. Even if he is arming opponents, he will offer guns to anyone willing to pay.

Similar to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the villain is from within the state. In *The Al-Hamlet Summit* Claudius and Polonius are watchful about signs of a national rebellion. Fundamentalist terrorism is interpreted as a force of opposition and protest. In the play, Hamlet sends letters to Ophelia. Polonius finds catastrophic imagery in Hamlet's letters, and signs of violence which seek for world order transformation through radical actions. Al-Bassam's Hamlet and Ophelia become Islamicized, donning traditional Muslim garb, and are labeled as terrorists by the ruling authority. Ophelia is linked to the Palestinian cause and dies in a suicide bombing attack. Hamlet adopts the Arabic Muslim look with the beard and the long jellabiya dress, shoots Polonius and is seen at the end leading a liberation army.

The difference between Islamic fundamentalists and terrorist militants is personalized and represented by Hamlet. Hamlet is fantasising about his bloody revenge which is closer to a terrorist act, while he is presented on stage as an Islamic fundamentalist. This was explicitly described and expressed through the insertion of the Holy Quran's language in the play:

I bear witness that there is no God but Allah and that Mohammad is his messenger... I will clean this land, I will make it pure, I understand, I do understand, but I will cleanse it for you, I will prepare it for your return, even if it costs me my life, I will clean it, 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. (Al-Bassam, 82:61)

### *I Am Hamlet*

*I Am Hamlet* by the director Hani Afifi was produced in 2009, starring Mohamad Fahim as Hamlet. The director based his play on the translated texts of *Hamlet* by Muhammad Awad Muhammad, Ghazi Jamal, Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, and Dr. Muhammad Anani. The director aimed at presenting the suffering of *Hamlet* as that of every Egyptian youngster.

This adaptation lacks the philosophical and psychological depth of the original. The director has kept the key scenes from the original play such as those of Ophelia and Gertrude, Hamlet and the Ghost, and Hamlet's confrontation with his mother.

The play begins with a dream where Hamlet is laying on his bed struggling with the voices coming from behind the curtain, asking him to get rid of the ongoing events in the Arab world including killings, violence, and the control of the West, and to reject all the slogans pursued by the Arab regimes. At the same time we see on stage, on a background screen, that the modern Hamlet is wandering in the Egyptian alleys and crowded streets surrounded by tall buildings. He is exploring and showing the problems of the Egyptian man until he reaches a neglected library on the sidewalk where he finds the play *Hamlet*. From there, the actual play starts with the

introduction of modern life with mobile phones, video cameras, western dance, and modern Egyptian songs. The director's vision is to express the current reality by focusing on the actor's body, taking advantage of his visual creative energies, from sadness to devastation.

The modern aspects of the play are illustrated through the outfits of the actors and the use of text messages between Ophelia and Hamlet. These new aspects, however, contradicts with the main events of the play which were kept untouched such as Hamlet's trip to England and his fencing with Laertes.

The scene of the play within the play was replaced by a troupe singing modern Arabic songs, the language used was a combination of standard Arabic and spoken Egyptian dialect. In addition, sarcastic comments were added to the dialogue, affecting the tragedy theme of the play.

*I Am Hamlet* is the expression of every young person in the modern Arab world, the director's vision being to show the struggle of youth. Youngsters in the Arab world are living an ongoing nightmare characterized by corruption, destruction, and inhumanity, which *Hamlet* could express. The play however, in name and characters is that of Shakespeare, but in presentation it is closer to the Arab world and different from the original play in its complexity and depth. The play does not convey many of the themes of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* such as betrayal, doubts, mistrust, and the searching for truth. However, *I Am Hamlet* is illustrating and presenting a mirror image of the average youngster in the Arab world without conveying any of the reasons behind this situation and without suggesting any action or solution for it.

*Hamlet, the Mad Prince*

*Hamlet, the Mad Prince* was written and directed by the Lebanese Gerard Avedisian in 2019. The play is an adaptation relying on Jabra Ibrahim Jabra's translation. The play was

presented in Lebanon in 2019 as a monodrama with one actor on stage and two silent supporting actors.

The play was written in standard Arabic language. The Lebanese actor Refaat Tarabayeh conceived the play as one Act instead of the original five Acts. He played the role of Hamlet while also switching to the role of the narrator to explain and narrate the events that had led the prince of Denmark to madness.

The presence of the silent actors in black on stage helped Hamlet to express his situation, and the events were presented on stage through the use of black and white paintings by the painter Jean-Marc Nahas, bearing the features of internal violence and conflict through semi-muted faces, blemished eyes, and muffled screams. All the main characters were brought on stage through the narration of both the narrator and Hamlet's.

The Lebanese director had reduced the complex five-act play into a one-act play presented with the aid of paintings to express the depths of hamlet's inner conflict.

### *Hamlet Palestine*

Published in 2016, *Hamlet Palestine* is a novel written by Amani Youssef Ismail, a young writer from the Gaza Strip in Palestine. This is her first novel, for which she was inspired by Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. *Hamlet* is present only in the title of the novel, as the story revolves around two siblings, Ahmad and Hasan. Hasan was born right before his father was imprisoned while Ahmad was born during the presence of his father in prison through sperm being smuggled from the prison to the outside world.

The story starts with Hasan's resentment for his brother and jealousy for this new creature taking all the attention. The time passes and the two brothers grow up fast and take two different

paths. Ahmad follows the insurgent path like his father, while Hasan's jealousy drags him to work as a spy against his brother and finally getting Ahmad to be imprisoned as well.

Although *Hamlet* is only present in the title of the novel, the writer worked on borrowing from the themes of the play such as Claudius's betrayal and murder of his brother, conspiring with Gertrude, his brother's wife. In the novel, this betrayal is instead an individual act carried out only by Claudius against his brother. Another theme from *Hamlet* that the writer borrowed was that of doubt: similar to Claudius's doubt that Hamlet might be aware of the former's guilt, Hasan feels the same towards his brother, but rather than sending Ahmad away as Claudius did with Hamlet, Hasan decided to take his wife to live far away from his family.

In *Hamlet*, Hamlet avenges his father and both Claudius and Hamlet are dead at the end of the play. In the novel, Ahmad forgives Hasan who passes through a cleansing redemption phase which ends with the two siblings joining forces against the spies, where Hasan works as a double agent to trap one of the main leaders of the spies.

The novel is written in Arabic, alternating in style between prose and poetry, while borrowing from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* the title and the two themes of betrayal and doubt.

In this section of the chapter, a selection of the adaptations has been explored; the plays were chosen at random to present a wide sample of how the play was interpreted based on the time and place of the adaptation. The goal was to demonstrate how the adaptations deviated from the original tragedy in many different ways.

### 1. 1 ONE OF THE MANY HAMLETS

After looking at the broad setting of *Hamlet* in the Arab world, a deeper examination is given of one of the most important post-modern adaptations; Mamdouh Adwan's (1941-2004) hypertext of *Hamlet wakes up late* (1976).



Mamdouh Adwan is a poet and writer who is widely regarded as one of Syria's most prolific writers. He was recognized for being an intelligent and spirited writer who used poetry, drama, literature, and translation to break the silence and discuss controversial topics.

Adwan's writing style was easygoing, straightforward, and approachable. He authored more than eighty books, many of which are still printed and published, and some of which are still utilized as a series of screenplay even after his death.

He was born in the Syrian village Qayron near the city of Hama, on November 23, 1941. He attended primary, preparatory, and secondary school in Masyaf - Syria. He then joined the University of Damascus to study English literature and graduated in 1966. Concurrent to his university studies, Mamdouh Adwan worked for Al-Thawra newspaper in Damascus. Following a battle with cancer, he died on December 19, 2004, in Damascus, at the age of 64.

Adwan left behind many publications of poetry. He authored eight poetry collections, which were collected in two volumes. He wrote 26 plays, the most important of these were the plays *The Trial of the Legs Who Did Not Fight*, *Night of the Slave*, *Hamlet Wakes Up Late*, *Monsters Don't Sing*, *The Mask*, and *The Arrest of Turaif Al-Adi*. The series of screenplays, several of which became well-known, totaled around 18 works. During his career, he also published 2 novels and eight books covering literary, historical, political, and social issues. Finally, he translated 25 books into Arabic, among these are Ronald Bacon's *The Poet in the Theater*, Nikos Kazantzakis' *Report to Greco*, George Armando's *The Return of the Seas*, and Nancy Lindisfarne's short story *Dance in Damascus*.

a. *HAMLET WAKES UP LATE*

*Hamlet wakes up late* is an Arabic adaptation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Adwan has successfully transformed his version of the text into a well-written two-act drama that retains the same major characters but adds new events, characters, themes, and verses.

Like nearly all others in the Arab Hamlet tradition, *Hamlet wakes up late* is an allegorical political satire in which every significant act refers to a political upheaval in the Arab World. In Adwan's play King Claudius kills King Hamlet, weds the murderer's sister-in-law Gertrude, usurps the throne, and plans to form a peace deal with the country's opponent Fortinbras. In the politically rotten state of Denmark, the adultery of the inebriated Hamlet with the tempter Ophelia is extremely metaphorical. According to the play, Hamlet and his friends refer to the intellectual citizens in the Arab world, those citizens appear to be unaware of the persecution carried out by the state and prefer to spend time in drinking and fornicating rather than engaging in politics. Hamlet and his friends, in fact, appear to be drinking every night.

The following lines from the play illustrate that serious topics are discussed over a drink, but these are ignored in favor of drinking:

Guldenshtern: Don't worry about those thefts, dear. God will call all the thieves to account and press them into hell.

Rosencrantz: Oh yes. He'll press them, and ferment them, and distill them, and let us drink them. (Laughs noisily) (1.2:5-8)

Adwan used a play within a play technique that was already in use in the source material. In the original play, Hamlet invites King Claudius and Queen Gertrude to watch the play "The Murder of Gonzago". This play is used as a trap to reveal Claudius' guilt for murdering the king. The play comes as a verification of the story, as Hamlet asks Horatio to observe the king's reaction during the play which would prove him guilty or not: "The play's the thing / Wherein I'll catch the

conscience of the King.” (Act II, Scene II). In the play that is being staged there is a conversation taking place between the Player King and the Player Queen. According to the Player King, the Queen will have a second spouse after his death. The Queen, on the other hand, insists on being a widow. Following the Player Queen's departure from the stage, the King's nephew Lucianus comes on and injects poison into the ear of the sleeping King, Gonzago. Claudius therefore observes as a spectator the staging of his crime. He believes Lucianus' words was composed by Hamlet himself. Claudius gets out of his seat, shouts for light, and walks away. Following Claudius's response to the performance, Hamlet is convinced that he is the assassin who killed his father. He now wishes to exact vengeance on Claudius.

In Adwan's adaptation, Prince Hamlet is a playwright and actor who seeks the truth throughout his playwriting. Prince Hamlet and his friends are putting together a play based on the famous Arabian Nights story of the monarch Shahryar.

Shahryar is a good modest king who was happily married, one day Shahryar found out that his sister-in-law was cheating on his younger brother with the slaves followed by the truth that his wife was also cheating on him although he truly loved her. Shahryar was shocked by the truth and killed both his wife and his sister-in-law. From that night on Shahryar married a virgin every night and killed her before dawn to protect himself from being betrayed. Families took their daughters and ran away from the kingdom to protect them from the king. Except for his minister's daughters, in which one of them Shahrazad offered herself to marry the king. She had a plan of telling a story to the king without reaching the end so the king was excited for to hear the rest and decided to kill her on the next day once the story is completed, but each time she finishes a story and start a new one right away keeping the king eager to listen. This lasted for 1001 Nights as the king fell in love with her and decided not to kill her.

In Hamlet's play Shahryar's wife based on Shahrazad actually betrays him. Adwan's decision not only gives the play an Arabian flavor, but it also foreshadows Hamlet's suspicions of a conspiracy. In both plays, the original source and the adaptation, the play within a play comes as a foreshadow of the truth and a trigger for action, as Claudius's reaction to the staged play confirmed Hamlet's suspicions. In the adaptation, Hamlet reforms the play to become a tool to confirm his doubts of his mother's betrayal and Claudius crime..

Throughout Adwan's play, Hamlet is constantly rewriting and updating the manuscript he is working on whenever he discovers a clue to his father's death mystery. Hamlet used the manuscript as a tool to confirm his suspicions by inserting scenes to the play which are linked to the current situation he is living. When he learned of his mother's marriage to the king, he suggested adding a scene to the play in which a woman wearing a shawl sits at a grave, blowing to dry the dirt.

Hamlet: Let me tell you my idea. You, Rosencrantz, are walking down the road. Hunting or whatever. You see a woman sitting close to a new grave, fanning the air with her dress. Lorenzo, you sit down and be the woman. Act out what I say.

Lorenzo pretends to fan the air of his dress over the grave

Guldenshtern: What does this mean?

Hamlet: Rosencrantz will ask her the meaning of this behaviour, and she'll tell him: This is my husband's grave. Then Rosencrantz will ask her: So why are you fanning it? And she'll respond: To make the dirt dry faster. Memorize the words, Lorenzo. Then Rosencrantz will ask her again: And why are you in such a hurry for the dirt to dry on your husband's grave? And she will answer him: Because the dearly departed made me promise not to love another man before the dirt on his grave was dry. (1.12:9-21)

In this scene Hamlet is accusing his mother of the haste marriage to the king right after his father's death and before the dirt on his grave had dried. This insertion and alteration of Shahryar's story is not the only change Hamlet did. When he realized that his friend Rosencrantz was interacting with King Claudius, he suggested adding a scene to the play about his friend's betrayal.

Hamlet: Thanks for your information. I've finally learned that you're in the habit of sitting and conversing with the king. Please inform him that I need to make a change to the play. There's a scene where a friend betrays his friend in the play. (1.17:22-25)

Hamlet felt betrayed when he walked in and found his friend accompanying the King and Polonius. In *Hamlet wakes up late*, Hamlet is unaware of the reality and the events taking place in the kingdom, both inside the castle and outside it. Adwan's Hamlet is an artist busy in preparing plays, and is portrayed as an alcoholic, drunken artist. As such, the small encounters and knowledge of things happening around him have affected him and he illustrates them through the changes he adds to the play.

*Hamlet wakes up late* conveys many messages that are appropriate for the Arab context, which fall mainly under social and political issues illustrated by the additional characters Adwan added to the play, Lorenzo and The Actor, the metaphors of the peace agreement with Fortinbras as perceived in the Arab world, and the changes done to the main characters themselves.

#### *b. CHARACTER ANALYSIS*

This adaptation differs from the original play and matches the situation in the Arab world at the time of the play. The play holds lots of political messages which have affected the way the characters are presented, and many changes were introduced to align them with the adaptation. In Adwan's play, Horatio is playing two characters at the time, Polonius is a two-faced character, Ophelia is different from the innocent woman that Shakespeare introduced, Hamlet himself is far from the original British Shakespearean Hamlet and holds here a very different personality associated with the political events and changes in the Arab world at the time of the play. Two additional characters were introduced to the play: Lorenzo, Hamlet's friend, and The Actor, an

anonymous character introduced to fill the place of Laertes in the play “Shahryar” that is being developed by Hamlet.

*Horatio*

Adwan’s play takes the form of a memory, flashback events which take place before the play has even started. As such the first distinguishable character that appear on stage is Horatio, who is Hamlet’s friend in the Shakespearean play. Here, he becomes both the narrator retelling and commenting on the events and the incidents and a character in the play.

Horatio becomes the narrator of the play per Hamlet’s request, as the latter dies in a fencing scene at the beginning:

HAMLET: Horatio. m My friend. I’ve got no one left but you. Stay beside me, my friend. I am going soon and I won’t trouble you anymore. I know I haven’t carried out my duty completely, but I’ve tried. Haven’t I? I did what I could. Defend me, Horatio. Be fair when you tell my story- because they’ll tell it any way they please. You tell it too, tell it to all the people. They’ll judge me justly. You’ll do it. Won’t you? Tell me you’ll do it. (dies) (1.1: 39-45)

*Polonius*

In *The Tragedy of Hamlet*, Polonius is the chief of counsellors working closely with king Claudius and doing all that it takes to safeguard his own position in the kingdom. He uses his daughter Ophelia to eavesdrop on Hamlet and to know what happened to him, to serve Claudius in trapping Hamlet and stopping him from taking any action against him.

Polonius: You Know sometimes he walks four hours together here in the lobby?

Queen: So he does, indeed.

Polonius: At such time I’ll loose my daughter to him.

Be you and I behind an arras then,

Mark the encounter: if he loves her not

And be not from his reason fallen thereon

Let me be no assistant for a state

But keep a farm and carters. (2.2:158-164)

In *Hamlet Wakes up Late*, Polonius is double-faced, working on serving the king but at the same time pushing Ophelia towards Hamlet as he is the real heir to the throne.

OPHELIA: He was talking to me about Hamlet.

POLONIUS: What about him?

OPHELIA: Laertes says we should reconsider our idea.

POLONIUS: All your life you'll be like that: limited in ambition.

LAERTES: True, my ambitions do not extend to the throne.

OPHELIA: He says the throne is—

POLONIUS: Let him speak. What is it, Laertes?

LAERTES: This throne you're dreaming of is balanced on top of a volcano. You don't know how much hostility people feel toward the throne.

POLONIUS: They're hostile to the man sitting on it. The whole apparatus is working to make Hamlet the desired alternative in the people's minds. At the appropriate moment Hamlet will become the king, but only after your sister is in place to become the queen. (1.19:9-21)

Polonius is an opportunist working on different sides to keep his relationship and connections good with both the king and Hamlet, as such whatever happens he will not lose his position in the kingdom, and through Ophelia, he would be part of the ruling family.

### *Ophelia*

Ophelia in turn is presented by Adwan as a shallow character, following her father's will and orders, obeying him to trap Hamlet and marrying him to become the Queen. In Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, on the other hand, both her father and Laertes asks her to stay away from him, which she does, although she is deeply in love with Hamlet and is strongly affected when she sees him after a while and he has gone mad. 'Oh, my lord, my lord, I have been so affrighted' (2.1:73). After Hamlet murders her father and she loses both her lover and father, Ophelia is driven to madness and commits suicide. Although she is obedient, however, in *Hamlet Wakes Up late* Ophelia is not the innocent girl as presented in *Hamlet*. Here, Adwan presents her as Hamlet's girlfriend, and they meet in secret when she leaves her room's window open for him to sneak in;

OPHELIA: I was afraid something else of yours had dried up! (endearingly)  
 Hamlet. Didn't you forget something?  
 HAMLET: (indifferent) Did I forget to kiss you?  
 OPHELIA: Didn't you forget something else?  
 HAMLET: What?  
 OPHELIA: To apologize to me.  
 HAMLET: For what?  
 OPHELIA: You stood me up last night. Why didn't you come? I left the window open for you and sat down to wait until I fell asleep in my chair. (emotionally)  
 Thank God no thieves broke in! Hamlet. Where were you? (1.6:15-24)

Ophelia presents the corruption and conspiracies which takes place in the Arab world and in its politics in detail as she tricks Hamlet and goes off the pill to get pregnant, forcing him to marry her:

HAMLET: Not cruel? What is cruelty, then? My father dies. My mother marries my uncle a month later. The war stops. The enemy enters the palace. Friends become spies against me. Ophelia secretly goes off the pill and gets pregnant to force me to marry her. What is cruelty, then? You're traitors, all of you. (2.8:34-38)

### *Lorenzo*

Lorenzo is an additional character introduced by Adwan. Lorenzo is one of Hamlet's friends working with him on Shahryar's play which Hamlet is developing. The introduction of Lorenzo into the play serves as an additional element to the political theme of the play. Lorenzo is the revolutionist, the political activist who is aware of all the things happening around the kingdom. He ends up being imprisoned, tortured, and executed by Rosencrantz. Rosencrantz, who is considered a friend by Hamlet and Lorenzo, betrays their friendship, spies on his own friends, practices oppression and is unjust towards his friends and country for the sake of the king.

### *The Actor*

The Actor is Horatio's friend, he is introduced into the play to fill the place of Laertes as he leaves for France to pursue his studies. The actor remains unnamed throughout the play, yet he



appears in several scenes and gives the most powerful speeches. The Actor comes from the lower level of the community from outside the castle. It is intended to remain unnamed, as this character can represent the whole oppressed, underprivileged lower class.

GUILDENSTERN: What's your preferred beverage?

ACTOR: Sir. Poor people don't command the whole lexical range of the language. Some words are not part of their vocabulary. "Prefer" is one of them. (1.13:16-18)

This actor is the nexus between the royal court and the public. He speaks and gives Hamlet hints on what's going outside the walls of the castle, he explains him the rumors about poverty and corruption.

HAMLET (to ACTOR): Really?

ACTOR: Yes, sir. You have a good reputation with the people. They say that you're the most honorable one at court.

HAMLET: Thank God. And what do they say about the rest of the court?

(ACTOR, embarrassed, looks at HORATIO)

HORATIO: Say it. Don't be afraid.

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. (1.13:47-55)

### *Ghost*

The ghost in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is a pivotal figure who propels the plot ahead by revealing the truth to his son and driving him insane. Although the ghost appears in Adwan's rendition, it remains mute throughout the play, leading Hamlet to a deeper struggle than becoming insane.

Due to the difference among contexts, development, and the modern 'notions' of ghosts, in *Hamlet Wakes Up Late* the ghost appears only for Hamlet, unlike Shakespeare's *Hamlet* where the ghost is seen by several characters. In Adwan's version, the ghost only comes to Hamlet, and no one believes him; instead, everyone claims that Hamlet is either hallucinating or drunk.

Furthermore, his mother, Queen Gertrude, says, "Hamlet needs a doctor." This perception of a ghost scene highlights the major difference in 16<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>- century beliefs in ghosts.

*Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Hamlet's friends who play minor roles in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. However, they are given much more importance in Adwan's play, as not only do they spy on Hamlet and his friends, but they also imprison, torture, and perform executions in the name of the king.

(From the opposite side of the stage, enter ROSENCRANTZ followed by GUILDENSTERN, leading LORENZO, who is in shackles, his face is covered with blood.)

HAMLET (shouting as though stabbed, running toward them): Rosencrantz. What are you doing? ROSENCRANTZ (coldly): Leading this traitor to prison.

HAMLET: Lorenzo? What has he done?

ROSENCRANTZ: He was inciting the people to curse Fortinbras.

HAMLET (to ROSENCRANTZ): Despicable! Have you no shame? (2.6:1-6)

*Hamlet*

Of the many changes and introduction of characters into Adwan's play, Hamlet is the most significant one. Hamlet is a selfish prince who is blissfully unaware of the dismal realities of his people. Hamlet is too preoccupied with drinking and artistic pretensions to observe the rise of a cruel plutocratic dictatorship.

Hamlet comes as a representation of the intellectual Arab youth in the 70s at the time when the play was written. The timing of the play has a major effect on the way the play was appropriated by Adwan, as it comes at a significant time after the Arabs' 1967 defeat in the six-day war. Hamlet is the artist occupied with his own work of art, busying himself with friends, joy, and drinking. He starts drinking more and blames his father for leaving him behind like this. When he starts to wake

up and notice the world around him, it is too late, a metaphor for intellectuals who always wake up late for action.

He is surrounded by spies from his small circle, as Rosencrantz is spying on him for the sake of the king. Moreover, his girlfriend Ophelia is tricking him to marry her so she would become the Queen, the king killed his father and married his mother, and his kingdom is drowning in corruption and poverty, while a peace agreement is being signed with the enemy Fortinbras.

The unexpected events have led him to start changing and to wake up and take action. His first encounter with the ghost of his father had led him to drink more and then dig for his father's corpse to assure that he is buried there, which in turn led him to more drinking.

HAMLET: I want a drink.

HORATIO: It isn't good for you to drink so much, Hamlet.

HAMLET: Save the advice, Horatio. My throat is dry.

(Hamlet finds a bottle, takes a big swig from it until Horatio takes it away from him. Hamlet leaves the bottle and walks around staggering and lamenting.)

HORATIO: What happened, Hamlet?

(no answer)

HORATIO: Answer me, Hamlet. What happened?

HAMLET (about to cry): I saw my father.

HORATIO: Have you started imagining him again?

HAMLET: It's not my imagination, Horatio. I saw him. I went to his grave and I saw him.

HORATIO: Why did you go to the grave?

HAMLET (tired): It came over me, Horatio. Wherever I turn I see his image. I wanted to make sure that he wasn't leaving his grave and coming out to me. I can't stand it anymore. I was drinking with them and suddenly he appeared in front of me, as usual. I got up right away and rushed to the cemetery. (1.3: 3-19)

Hamlet goes deeper into drinking as things around him are revealed by the Actor's comments on the situation of the kingdom, the knowledge that his friends are spying on him, and that Ophelia is off the pill to trick him into marriage, as well as Fortinbras' visit to the kingdom.

HAMLET: What's the exact nature of its sensitivity?

QUEEN: After these many years of wars, it's the first time Fortinbras is visiting us.

HAMLET (roars): Fortinbras? Did you say Fortinbras? The one visiting us is Fortinbras? So all these preparations are to welcome Fortinbras? O! (1.17:10-13)

Hamlet ends up attending the visit at a later stage, when Fortinbras is present at the dinner table reciting parts of the gospels while paraphrasing and adding his own words to the passages. At this incident, Hamlet shows a religious face too, reciting and memorizing the gospel.

*c. LANGUAGE ANALYSIS*

In terms of language, as a poet Adwan was able to successfully imitate the Shakespearean feature of including poetic speeches, as the scene of co-recitation of a poem by prince Hamlet and Horatio demonstrates:

Horatio (faces the audience):  
 Like panicked fish we swim around a lake,  
 Whose water is drying up  
 And whose plague-stricken surface  
 Bleeds into our reckless dreams,  
 Brays like a nightmare in our chests  
 And we, like the fish  
 In an evaporating lake,  
 We turn...

Hamlet (alone):  
 Why do I feel so constrained? So repressed?  
 Like a berserk fish that jumps, irritated, out of putrid water  
 Or leaps out, scared of a whale,  
 Throws itself on dry land,  
 Trembles for a while, then dies. (1.3: 46-59)

As well as being eloquent, these poems highlight Hamlet's mental and psychological state, revealing how befuddled he is becoming as a character and how he is experiencing a similar paralysis to the Shakespearean Hamlet. The poem also deals with the futility of life, which is a major theme in both texts.

Adwan's drama has intertextuality not only with Shakespeare's Hamlet, but also with the Bible. Adwan's version is replete with Christian biblical references, which he used to imbue his

own Hamlet with certain Jesus-like attributes. The scene of the dinner organized for Fortinbras is an apt example of this, where Hamlet is summoned and refuses to enter via the main door, preferring instead to enter through the windowsill whilst justifying his choice with precise quotations from the Gospel of Matthew:

HAMLET (appears, sitting on the windowsill)  
 Beware, my lords. You are drinking blood.  
 OPHELIA  
 Hamlet!  
 QUEEN  
 Why are you entering from there?  
 HAMLET  
 Enter by the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction.<sup>13</sup>  
 FORTINBRAS  
 Splendid! Splendid! He recites the Gospels wonderfully.  
 (applauds warmly)  
 HAMLET (continues, ignoring his comment and coming down from the window)  
 Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? (reaches the banquet table and takes a piece of bread) Then he broke bread and said: Take. This is my body<sup>14</sup> (2.3:1-12)

The plot benefits greatly from the resemblance between Jesus and Hamlet, especially near the end. In order to save everyone, Adwan's Hamlet is executed, being sacrificed for the land and for the cause of a better life. In Hamlet's death by the poisoned sword during the fencing challenge, he sacrificed his own life, becoming a martyr and Horatio becoming the narrator of the story, he becomes an idol for other youth. Hamlet died as a victim of the state, the victim of the corrupted king and falling state, his death knowing that the people love him would cause an upheaval in the community. It would cause more youth to follow after his steps and to take an action.

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<sup>13</sup> Matthew 7 13.-Trans.

<sup>14</sup> Matthew 7 15-16.

As such Adwan worked in terms of language on two levels, the first one illustrated by him as a poet in an imitation of the Shakespearean language rather than a direct translation of the soliloquies and speeches, even the most famous soliloquy of “To be or not to be” was excluded from this adaptation. On a second level, Adwan’s text is infused with inter-textuality from the Bible, those passages helping to set up the character of Hamlet, explaining his state as that of a victim and bringing Hamlet close to the figure of Jesus as the sufferer and sacrificed.

*d. POLITICAL MESSAGES*

The play was published a couple of years after the Arabs’ defeat in the 1973 war. On the Jewish holy day of Yom Kippur, October 6, 1973, Egypt and Syria started the Yom Kippur War, also known as the October War, the Ramadan War, the Arab-Israeli War of October 1973, or the Fourth Arab-Israeli War. It began on October 26, 1973 and ended when Ramadan, Islam's holy month of fasting, ended. The clash had one diplomatic goal: to persuade a chastened—but undefeated—Israel to negotiate on terms that would benefit Arab countries. Finally, in order to safeguard their respective friends, the US and the Soviet Union engaged in an indirect conflict.

The previous Arab-Israeli battle, the Six-Day War (1967), saw Israel seize and occupy Arab lands such as the Sinai Peninsula and the Golan Heights, and was followed by years of intermittent combat. Anwar Sadat, who became Egypt's president shortly after the War of Attrition (1969–70) ended, made efforts to establish a peaceful settlement provided Israel returned the territory it had taken in compliance with UN Resolution 242. Israel refused to accept the terms, and the conflict escalated into a full-fledged war in 1973. The war ended with the two parties signing a cease of fire agreement under the international countries pressure.

The war did not instantly influence the dynamics of the Arab-Israeli conflict, but it did have a significant impact on the course of an eventual peace process between Egypt and Israel, which

concluded with Egypt receiving the whole Sinai Peninsula in exchange for enduring peace. The battle cost Israel, Egypt, and Syria a lot of money since it killed a lot of people and crippled or destroyed a lot of military equipment. Furthermore, while holding off Egypt's attempt to retake the Sinai Peninsula throughout the war, Israel never rebuilt the Suez Canal's allegedly impregnable defences that Egypt had demolished on October 6. As a result of the battle, the two nations were forced to coordinate withdrawal plans in the near term, highlighting the urgent need for a negotiated permanent solution to their ongoing disagreements.

In order to sustain the cease-fire between the two nations, a disengagement agreement signed on January 18, 1974 permitted Israel to withdraw its soldiers into the Sinai, west of the Mitla and Gidi crossings, and Egypt to reduce the size of its military on the canal's east bank. A United Nations (UN) peacekeeping force established a buffer zone between the two armies. A third agreement, reached on September 4, 1975, added to the Israel-Egypt accord, which included a further army withdrawal and the expansion of the UN buffer zone. Israel and Egypt made history on March 26, 1979, when they signed a durable peace accord that resulted in Israel's complete withdrawal from the Sinai Peninsula and the restoration of relations between the two nations.

The presented historical and political events influenced the play, as the Queen's hasty marriage to Claudius right after the king's death, and the visit of Fortinbras to the kingdom and the talks of the economic exchange between the two countries, can be compared to Sadat's visit to the Knesset and the sign of the peace agreement with Israel right after the war ended.

The play symbolises the failure of Arabs in reclaiming Palestine, as that of the youth represented by Hamlet and his friends failing to make any significant change in terms of the ongoing policies in the kingdom, where Hamlet ended up on trail and was executed and Lorenzo was tortured and also executed.

The silent ghost of the belated king is that of the martyrs of 1973 war who seem to have sacrificed their lives for a wasted cause and a lost war. They died in a war that was crowned with a peace pact between Egypt and Israel.

The friend of Hamlet introduced by Adwan in the play, Lorenzo, represents the rebellious Palestinian youth. In the play, Lorenzo was captured by the king's spies, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, and this situation represents how the Palestinian youth are captured by the Palestinian policeman through an assistant who spies on their own people and friends, and assists in capturing, torturing and executing them.

The discussions between Claudius and Fortinbras to sign an exchange agreement represent the talks between Egypt and Israel for the peace talks.

The last political message is represented by the addition of the character of the Actor, the nameless character, who is aware of everything that is going on in the kingdom inside and outside the castle's walls but is helpless and nameless, representing the Arab nation who is witnessing the current and reoccurring political situation but is unable to do anything, vulnerable, powerless, and unable to take an action.

*e. CONCLUSION*

“All the world's a prison”, Adwan's Hamlet quotes from Shakespeare's Hamlet in the second Act of the play. This simple sentence illustrates the political corruption of the kingdom. It refers to the nature of the Arab world, as a prison where political leaders are corrupted, they rule by force and dictatorship, where youth are imprisoned when they express their thoughts, and good people die and are executed for a lost cause. It confirms that this adaptation of the play has a well-defined political aspect:



HAMLET

The country has narrowed to touch the borders of my heart, and my heart has enough worries to fill up the whole country. What's the point? Why do you want to send me away?

QUEEN

I'm afraid he'll get angry at you one day and hurt you or imprison you.

HAMLET

All the world's a prison. What does the prisoner care if he is moved from one cell to another? (2.10:27-32)

Adwan has appropriated the play to fit the political situation of the Arab countries, and to represent the loss and defeat of the Arab nation in being united. It represents the corrupted society, and the lost souls for a lost cause, the injustice that anyone who attempts to take an action would be subjected to. It represents those who are aware of the world's injustice and unfairness but are too vulnerable to take action.

In Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the prince overcomes his own thoughts, and acts, though tragically, to avenge his father. On the other hand, Adwan's Hamlet is judged helpless and despondent. Hamlet is on trial by the end of the play, and he sees his father's ghost, but the conversation takes on a different tone than usual; this time, Hamlet has given up, blaming his father for abandoning him in such a cruel world, and he is nothing more than a dust in the wind, a goat that fell and suddenly a thousand knives are placed around its neck.

The play's title itself *Hamlet Wakes Up Late* represents the intellectual Arab youth, who in the play are represented mainly by Hamlet and his friends. They represent the elite youth of the kingdom who are keeping themselves busy with art and drink, but when they were finally aware of what is going on around them, it was too late. Adwan intended to criticize how intellectual Arab youth are usually unaware of what is going on around them and when they finally wake up it is too late.

Chapter 3: A NEWLY BORN *HAMLET**AN ARAB HAMLET AT CORNELL*

*Hamlet Wakes Up Late's* success exceeded the borders of the Arab world and was recognized as one of the most important adaptations of Hamlet in Arabic. *Hamlet Wakes Up Late* was translated by Margert Livtin and published in the book *Four Arab Hamlet Plays*. Livtin's English translation was an opportunity for Rebekah Maggor, assistant professor at the Department of Performing & Media Arts at Cornell University, to set up a show of *Hamlet Wakes Up Late* at Cornell in 2017.

In a Note on the adaptation of *Hamlet Wakes Up Late*, Rebekah Maggor says:

In adapting *Hamlet Wakes Up Late* for a contemporary English-language production, I respected the Syrian and Elizabethan sources of the play, while also engaging with our own “interesting times.” In the adaptation of the language and the integration of a musical score (by Syrian-born composer Kinan Abou-afach) I aimed to create a mocking mashup of modern-day elites together with Elizabethan decadence, and subtle, but palpable references to the original Syrian context. (Maggor 2018:3)

In Maggor's adaptation some of the original Shakespearean phrases were inserted in the text based on The Arden's edition of *Hamlet* (2006). In Act 1, the inserted phrases were mainly from Act 5, scene 2 as follows:

HAMLET

O villany! Ho! let the door be locked!

LAERTES

It is here, Hamlet: Hamlet, thou art slain

No medicine in the world can do thee good

HAMLET

O, I die, Horatio.

HAMLET

Horatio, tell my story...

Report me and my cause aright to the unsatisfied.

(5.2)

Adwan's play is made up of two Acts, and in her adaptation Maggor inserted the above lines referring to Hamlet's death scene into the first act of Adwan's play. In Act 2, as part of her main additions, Maggor ensured to insert into Hamlet's soliloquy the most famous phrases from Shakespeare's Act 3 scene 1, which Adwan had eliminated: *To be, or not to be, ... The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely, ... to grunt and sweat under a weary life... Take arms against a sea of troubles and by opposing end them!... But that the dread of something after death (The undiscovered country from whose bourn No traveler returns) puzzles the will... shuffle off this mortal coil... "To die; to sleep— perchance to dream" ?...*

Maggor also removed a couple of sentences from Adwan's adaptation, such as Guldenstern's sentence in Act 1; "This Shahryar character is no role model. What kind of parable is that for an audience?". In her adaptation she simplified slightly the English language to make it closer to the youth and the contemporary audience, since Livtin translated it with the aim of keeping the originality of Adwan's standard Arabic language. This process of simplification is illustrated in the below examples:

Livtin's translation;

Guldenshtern: Don't worry about those thefts, dear. God will call all the thieves to account and press them into hell.

Rosencrantz: Oh yes. He'll press them, and ferment them, and distill them, and let us drink them. (Laughs noisily) (1.2:5-8)

Maggor's adaptation;

GULDENSTERN No need to worry about theft, my friend. God will call all the thieves to account and stomp them into Hell.

ROSENCRANTZ Oh, sure. Stomp them, and ferment them, and distill them, and let us drink them! (Laughs noisily)

Livtin's translation;

Hamlet: Let me tell you my idea. You, Rosencrantz, are walking down the road. Hunting or whatever. You see a woman sitting close to a new grave, fanning the air with her dress. Lorenzo, you sit down and be the woman. Act out what I say.

Guldenshtern: What does this mean?

Hamlet: Rosencrantz will ask her the meaning of this behaviour, (1.12:9-13)

Maggor's adaptation;

HAMLET Here's my idea. You, Rosencrantz, are walking down the road. Hunting or whatever. You see a woman sitting close to a new grave, fanning the air with her dress. Lorenzo, you sit down and be the woman. Act out what I say.

GUILDENSTERN Is there some symbolic meaning in this?

HAMLET Rosencrantz, you ask her: What's the meaning of this behavior?

Livtin's translation;

Hamlet: Thanks for your information. I've finally learned that you're in the habit of sitting and conversing with the king. Please inform him that I need to make a change to the play. There's a scene where a friend betrays his friend in the play. (1.17:22-25)

Maggor's adaptation;

HAMLET Thanks for the information. I've just now learned that you're in the habit of sitting and conversing with the king. Please inform him that I need to make a new change to the play. There's a scene I'm adding where a friend betrays a friend.

Those minor changes in the words and phrases between Livtin's translation and Maggor's adaptation aimed to ease the way the play is presented by youth on stage.

A noticeable addition to the text is the inclusion of Boris Pasternak's poem "Hamlet" (1946). During the production, lyrics are sung by Hamlet and recited by the Queen from the poem "Hamlet", translated by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky:

HAMLET

The hum dies down. I step out on the stage.

Leaning against a doorpost,

I try to catch the echoes from far off

Of what my age is bringing.

The night's darkness focuses on me

Thousands of opera glasses.  
 Abba Father, if only it can be,  
 Let this cup pass me by.  
 I love the stubbornness of your intent  
 And agree to play this role.  
 But now a different drama's going on,  
 Spare me, then, this once.  
 But the order of the acts has been thought out,  
 And leads to just one end.  
 I'm alone, all drowns in pharisaism.  
 Life is no stroll through a field. (*Hamlet Wakes Up Late* Program 2017)

In a note on the adaptation Maggor explained that the addition of those lines which the Queen recites serves as a hint of her rejection of the development of the new regime and her desire to connect with the growing revolutionary movement outside the palace walls.

Finally, one of the major changes included in the play is the change of Polonius's role from a male to a female character. This change is not simply of gender, as Maggor wanted it to have an impactful effect, as Adwan's female characters, Queen and Ophelia, were not given much power and importance. This is especially relevant when considering Ophelia, a follower of her father's steps, an obedient daughter doing all what her father asks her to do. With the change of Polonius from a father to a mother, it gives a different sense to Ophelia's obedience.

Maggor did not alter Adwan's text and the only change regarding Polonius was a simple change of gender. This was enough to turn the balance of the character, transforming Polonius into a fierce character in the adaptation, as she is a successful leader while also performing her role as a mother. This change affected Ophelia as her weakness was switched into agreement and

admiration of a daughter for her mother. The desire of Polonius to see her daughter in a place of ruling and power added a new meaning to *Hamlet Wakes Up Late*. It signifies that woman can either seize power for themselves or, contrarily, “become the plaything of a formidable cadre of chauvinist male politicians”, as Maggot has noted. Polonius’ plan leads Ophelia into independence and power. Polonius as a woman illustrates a contradiction of women’s roles in comparison with the Queen, in which the former is in charge of her own life and destiny while the latter is under the mercy of her husband the King.

The adaptation brought to the stage a new flavor to the play by mixing the Elizabethan source with the Arabic adaptation in a new vision. The play was performed as a musical, integrating a musical score by the Syrian-born composer Kinan Abou-afach and intermixing customs of both the East and the West. As such, the play presented a mix between the past and the present.

#### *HAMLET A WHILE AFTER*

*Hamlet A While After* (2018) is the title of a play by the Jordanian Zaid Khalil Mustafa. It is an adaptation of Adwan’s *Hamlet Wakes Up Late*.

Mustafa’s adaptation, a play composed of eight scenes, introduces a mix between the original Shakespearean play *Hamlet* and Adwan’s *Hamlet Wakes Up Late*, with the addition of Mustafa’s own vision. In Mustafa’s adaptation, Hamlet is in struggle at three different levels: the first is with the king and the government itself, the second is with an unknown enemy, and the third is a struggle with himself. The theater itself is used as a tool to spread awareness to the community. Throughout Mustafa’s adaptation, Hamlet is writing with the aim of delivering messages to the community about the current situation, about freedom, nations, and the land.

In an interview that I carried out with Mustafa, he said that: “In Adwan's adaptation of the text of *Hamlet* (Shakespeare), he presented a dramatic treatment in harmony with the political variables and it provided an approach to the rapid chain of events that changed many paths in our Arab reality. He tackled those events in 1976 and predicted a series of collapses that actually occurred a year after he wrote his text, and kept occurring for fifteen years after he wrote it. On the other hand, Adwan questioned in his text *Hamlet Wakes Up Late*, the relationship of the real intellectual youth with their society and surroundings, and vice versa. In my adaptation, *Hamlet A While After*, I presented the same question, but the time has come for the Arab intellectual, after being defeated for a long period and due to the absence of his vanguard role in influencing their society, to actually change and theorize for a better life, and to return to seize his place and bring about a real revolution of thought. As a matter of fact, in the play Hamlet decides to write a text that deals with the idea of the conspiracy that was plotted against him from the moment his father was killed, in order to expose the corrupt and corruption, as it is said in the play (“A revolution in people’s heads is better than a revolution in streets paved for death”).

In terms of characters, the introduced characters on stage are reduced to Hamlet, Ophelia, the King, the Queen, Ophelia’s father, two actors (Rose and Gold), Polonius and a musician. In terms of names Mustafa kept the original names of Hamlet and Ophelia while the others’ names were unmentioned throughout the play. As such, the viewer was unaware whether the actors hold the same original names as in the play. As for Hamlet’s father, Mustafa gave him the name of Abel. As a result, the king’s name would be Cain, linking it back to the biblical story of Cain and Abel, Adam and Eve’s sons. As in all the historical and religious stories where Abel was killed with three stab wounds, in the play Hamlet, similarly, suffered from all the three stabs of his father (Abel) as

if he was stabbed, however, the stabs were illustrated by the king killing his brother and claiming the throne, Hamlet's mother marrying her brother-in-law right after the death of Hamlet's father, and the political changes which occurred in the kingdom after Abel's death. Hamlet screamed and rolled through the dust of the ground, of which the stage was evidence as Mustafa wanted theater itself to have a role in the play. This addition of the Jordanian director added a new vision to the play.

Hamlet was presented by the playwright and director similar to his character in *Hamlet Wakes Up Late*, Ophelia is presented as an actress and dancer whom Hamlet would meet through one of the theatrical shows and falls in love with her. Hamlet's drunken friends from *Hamlet Wakes Up Late* are replaced by two nameless female actresses following Hamlet's instructions as he makes changes of Shahryar's text throughout the play and rehearse the suggested scenes. The director hinted at other known characters within the play, as when Hamlet knew that the actresses are spying on him for the king and calls them Brutus and Judah.

The play is presented as a mix between music, dancing, and acting, in which all the characters are to pretend to play music and hold an instrument at some point during the performance even if they do not play it. As such the play opens with the pianist announcing the start of the play before all the actors are presented on stage, the king plays the violet, and Ophelia's father plays a percussion instrument.

When Mustafa was asked about his choice in giving music such importance in the play he said: "In my theatrical experiences in general, which we produce with our troupe *theater on the wood*, we do not deal with music as a complementary element in theatrical performance. We are still, of course, examining the dialectic of the relationship between theater and the audience, and



we are working diligently to restore the brilliance of theater as it is a daily act and a social necessity. After our deep study of the theatrical experience in Jordan since 1918, which is the first indications of theater in Jordan, by both the scholar and the late historian Rocks Bin Zaid Al-Azizi and his companions, Antoun Al-Hayhi and Zakaria Al-Shomali, until the founding of the Jordanian theater family in 1965, the Jordanian theater family was established as part of the Jordanian university, and after that until the beginning of the millennium in which we live, the relationship of the theater with the audience remained intermittent according to the interruption of the theatrical experience and its complete lack of contact with the audience. This occurred despite the connection of the Jordanians with music, which accompanied the Jordanian through the different stages and evolution of the forms of life as it evolved from being a Bedouin pastoralism community and then to the rural community, reaching the city, urban form of life. Through all these stages, music remained connected to the community and developed with the evolution and progression of the community context. From here we found that the main basis for the return of the public to the theater is its association with live music and its presence in terms of form on the one hand, and the presence of its content in terms of the type of music (Maqam, instrument) on the other, with a focus on developing melodic forms in line with the idea of the show and its intellectual and aesthetic treatment. As such we observed and we are still observing the audience interacting with our shows, to the extent that we are now presenting our new show (*Happened in Heaven*), which is an experimental show. This was first presented at the 28th Jordan Theater Festival last November 2021, and we are still presenting it on stage and celebrating a huge audience every night”.

In his adaptation, Mustafa didn't only include music as an important factor of the play but he also borrowed from the Palestinian heritage (popular songs), which the Queen sings during the play. This can be seen in the opening of scene two:

الأم: " تغني " .. أعيشك في المحل تينا وزيتا .. والبس عريك ثوبا معطر  
وأبني خرائب عينيك بيتا .. وأهواك حيا وأهواك ميتا  
وإن جعت .. أقتات زعتر  
وأمسح وجهي بشعرك الملتاع ... يحمر وجهي المغبر  
وأولد في راحتك .. جنينا ... وأنمو وأنمو وأنمو وأكبر

The mother: "sings." ... I live for you in the shop, figs and Olives...and wear a fragrant dress.,

And I will build the ruins of your eyes as a house.. and I desire alive,  
and I desire you dead

And if I get hungry.. I eat thyme

And I wipe my face with your shiny hair... My dusty face turns red

And I would be born in your palms.. a fetus... and grow and grow  
and grow and grow larger

Scene two also features a Palestinian popular song, in the middle of a conversation between Hamlet and his mother:

الأم : " تغني " .. هلّت ليالي السعد هلّت .. واللي عليها الحنة تحنّت  
لوما الحيا لوما الشمات .. لوما كلام المسعدات  
لنام أنا والذيب وحدي  
زالت همومي في مماته ... والهّم على قلبي بحياته  
ابنوا على المقتول خيمة .. وايامه الغيرات ولّت

Mother: "sings" ... The happy nights are gone... and the one who wears the henna is bent

If there is no life, if there is no gloating... if there is no talk of the aides

The wolf and I would sleep alone

My worries are gone with his death... and the worries on my heart with his life

Build a tent over the slain...and his days of dust are over

As for the content of the play, it refers back to Adwan's text and emphasizes that Hamlet is working on Shahryar's story but it is no longer like the original story, as can be seen in the following extract taken from scene one:

روز : يا أختي والله مفعوله عكسي ، ما في بحوارنا شي عن شهرزاد وشهريار .  
 ذهب : مات الأب  
 روز : انقتل الأب  
 ذهب : تغيّر لون الحبر في قلمه ، وصارت قصة حياته وموت أبوه مسرحية

Rose: My sister, oh my God, it has an opposite effect. There is nothing in our conversation about Shahrazad and Shahryar.

Gold: The father died

Rose: The father was killed

Gold: the color of the ink in his pen changed, and the story of his life and the death of his father became a play

The play holds many political messages of the conflicts in the Arab world, the ongoing wars and death, hinted at through the Queen's words such as "we are tired of death and blood, and we are eager for peace and celebration". Also, the actors' rehearsals, where two actors are fencing and the first is ensuring that the land is theirs while the other claims that they are the chosen ones and the rulers of the land, hint at the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. In scene 6, Polonius welcomes the kingdom's previous enemy to the wedding of the king:

بولونيوس : بالحب كله .. بالصفاء كله .. بالسعادة كلها .. نرحّب بعدو الأمس ، وصدق اليوم وأخ الغد ، الزعيم الكبير يائير ، إن لهذه اللحظة تاريخاً من الجهد المخلص الذي حققناه ، وإنني إذ أتوجّه بالشكر إلى العظماء الذي حققوا هذه المعجزة ، أشكر حظي الذي جعلني إبناً لهذا الجيل ، الذي منحني هذه الفرصة التاريخية بأن أشهد هذا الحدث العظيم ... تستطيع يا سيدي أن تعتبر نفسك بين أهلك ، وأحب أن أوضح لك بأن رؤيتك بيننا تجعلنا نتذكر الماضي المقيت كله ، فنشكر الله على خلاصنا منه كما أننا حين نراك ، نتذكر شهداءنا الذين قدّموا أرواحهم فداءً للوطن ، وحين نتذكرهم نطلب لهم الرحمة من الله ، ولما كان وجودك يا سيدي هو سبب الذكرى ، وطلب الرحمة ، فإن لك بهذا ثواباً عظيماً .

Polonius: With all love...with all purity...with all happiness...we welcome yesterday's enemy and today's friend.

Tomorrow's brother, great chief Yair, this moment has a history of sincere effort that we achieved it, and as I thank the great men who achieved this miracle, I thank my luck who made me a child of this generation, who gave me this historic opportunity to witness this great event... Sir, you can consider yourself among your family, and I would like to explain to you seeing you among us makes us remember the whole abhorrent past, so we thank God for our deliverance from it.

Likewise, when we see you, we remember our martyrs who gave their lives for the country, and when we remember them, we ask God for mercy, and since your presence, sir, is the reason for the remembrance, ask for mercy, for this will give you a great reward.

When Hamlet falls in love with Ophelia, they work together to present a play that would spread awareness to the community about oppression, freedom, and social and political issues. As Hamlet says to his mother in scene two of the play:

هاملت : بنتور يا أمي .. بنتور لَمَا العين تسرح ، والخيال يفيض مسرح ، بنتور لَمَا المخ يركز  
مطرحه ، ويبنى على الأشعار غثية لهالوطن الولود ، بنتور لَمَا بيرعم المولود .

Hamlet: We revolt, my mother... We revolt when the eyes are released... And the imagination overflows with theater... We revolt when the brain concentrates its place and builds on poems songs for the newborn womb, we revolt when the newborn sprouts

During their conversations, Ophelia encourages Hamlet to write and write more to present on stage content that would make a change and create awareness in the people.

Scene three, for instance, is the following:

أوفيليا : اكتب  
هاملت : وشهرزاد ؟  
أوفيليا : اكتب عن الوجد اللي بغلي تحت طوب الأرض .. مثل حكايا المحرومين المجروحين  
المغدورين ، اخرج على الخشبة ألمهم ، مرة على مرة على مرة ، بصير نترك هتاف  
على لسان البشر .. وخطى اقدمهم ما بتترد عن مسرحك .

Ophelia: Write

Hamlet: And Scheherazade?

Ophelia: Write about the pain that boils under the bricks of the earth...The stories of the deprived and the wounded, the betrayed, bring their pain to the stage, one time after the other, your prose will become cheers on the tongues of human beings... and their footsteps will not depart from your stage.

*Hamlet A While After* includes the original to be or not to be soliloquy with the difference that Ophelia is the one who says it with the Queen's intervention to question it and hopes for life and happiness and not death.

In this adaptation, Hamlet himself performs in the play at the King and Queen's wedding to reveal the truth of his father's death. This act sends him straight to the rope of the gibbet. Hamlet's words upon hearing his death sentence is:

هاملت: مت واقفا ، أو مت كما كنت ، أرحم بأنك تستطيع اليوم أن تختار موتا .

Hamlet: Die standing, or die as you were, show them that today you can choose to die.

Hamlet's last words before being executed are:

هاملت : في ليلتي الأخيرة التي أرتل فيها دعاء الدقات الثلاث  
 رأسي ثقيل ، فالنصوص أنهكته حبا ، واللصوص اغتالوا حلمه بغضا  
 يا قاهر الديجور ، أنر لي درب موتي وهيئ لي زفافي بالمصاييح  
 لا ترم ضوءك خلف جسدي ، فأصير شبعا كالظلال الشاحبة  
 هذا أنا أعلوا على الأحياء حيًا بعد موتي ، وكل ظل بعد موتي كاذبا  
 اغمر وجوه العابرين الآن ضوءا ، أظهر لنا كم يستطيع المرء أن يغتال ضدّه  
 فيكون حيًا ، يعلو على الأحياء حيًا بعد موته.

Hamlet: On my last night in which I recited the prayer of the three chimes  
 My head is heavy, the texts exhausted it with love, and the thieves assassinated his  
 dream with hatred

O conqueror of the darkness, enlighten me the path of my death and prepare my  
 wedding with lamps

Do not cast your light behind my body, for I will become a ghost like pale shadows

This me above the living, alive after my death, and every shadow after my death is  
 a liar

Now cover the faces of the passersby with light, show us how much one can  
 assassinate his enemy

So he is alive, rising above the living alive after his death.

The play ends with Hamlet hung in the air above a table of judges while the poem of the Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish is recited:

تُنْسَى، كَأَنَّكَ لَمْ تَكُنْ

تُنْسَى، كَأَنَّكَ لَمْ تَكُنْ  
تُنْسَى كَمَصْرَعِ طَائِرٍ  
ككَنِيسَةٍ مَهْجُورَةٍ تُنْسَى،  
كحَبِّ عَابِرٍ  
وكوردةٍ في الليل .... تُنْسَى  
أنا للطريق... هناك من سَبَقَتْ خُطَاهُ خُطَايَ  
مَنْ أَمْلَى رُؤَاهُ عَلَى رُؤَايَ. هُنَاكَ مَنْ  
نَتَرِ الكَلَامَ عَلَى سَجِيَّتِهِ لِيَدْخُلَ فِي الحِكَايَةِ  
أَوْ يَضِيءَ لِمَنْ سِيَأْتِي بَعْدَهُ  
أَثْرًا غَنَائِيًّا... وِحدَسَا  
تُنْسَى، كَأَنَّكَ لَمْ تَكُنْ  
شَخْصًا، وَلَا نَصًّا... وَتُنْسَى  
أَمْشِي عَلَى هَدْيِ البَصِيرَةِ، رُبَّمَا  
أَعْطِي الحِكَايَةَ سِيرَةً شَخْصِيَّةً. فَالْمَفْرَدَاتُ  
تَسْوُسُنِي وَأَسْوُسُهَا. أَنَا شَكَلُهَا  
وَهِيَ التَّجَلِّي الحُرُّ. لَكِنْ قِيلَ مَا سَأَقُولُ.  
يَسْبِقُنِي غَدُ مَاضٍ. أَنَا مَلِكُ الصِّدْقِ.  
لَا عَرْشَ لِي إِلَّا الهَوَامِشُ. وَ الطَّرِيقُ  
هُوَ الطَّرِيقَةُ. رُبَّمَا نَسِيَ الأَوَائِلُ وَصَفَّ  
شَيْءَ مَا، أَحْرَكْتُ فِيهِ ذَاكِرَةً وَحَسَا  
تُنْسَى، كَأَنَّكَ لَمْ تَكُنْ  
خَبْرًا، وَلَا أَثْرًا... وَتُنْسَى  
أنا للطريق... هناك مَنْ تَمْشِي خُطَاهُ  
عَلَى خُطَايَ، وَمَنْ سَيَتْبَعُنِي إِلَى رُؤَايَ.  
مَنْ سَيَقُولُ شِعْرًا فِي مَدِيحِ حَدَائِقِ المَنْفَى،  
أَمَامَ البَيْتِ، حَرًّا مِنْ عِبَادَةِ أَمْسٍ،  
حَرًّا مِنْ كِنَايَاتِي وَمِنْ لَغْتِي، فَأَشْهَدُ  
أَنْنِي حَيٌّ

وَحُرُّ  
حِينَ أَنْسَى !

(<https://www.aldiwan.net/poem9320.html>)

Which is translated as:

**Forgotten As If You Never Were**

Forgotten, as if you never were.

Like a bird's violent death

like an abandoned church you'll be forgotten,

like a passing love

and a rose in the night . . . forgotten

I am for the road . . . There are those whose footsteps preceded mine

those whose vision dictated mine. There are those

who scattered speech on their accord to enter the story

or to illuminate to others who will follow them

a lyrical trace . . . and a speculation

Forgotten, as if you never were

a person, or a text . . . forgotten

I walk guided by insight, I might

give the story a biographical narrative. Vocabulary

governs me and I govern it. I am its shape

and it is the free transfiguration. But what I'd say has already been said.

A passing tomorrow precedes me. I am the king of echo.

My only throne is the margin. And the road

is the way. Perhaps the forefathers forgot to describe

something, I might nudge in it a memory and a sense

Forgotten, as if you never were

news, or a trace . . . forgotten

I am for the road . . . There are those whose footsteps

walk upon mine, those who will follow me to my vision.

Those who will recite eulogies to the gardens of exile,

in front of the house, free of worshipping yesterday,

free of my metonymy and my language, and only then

will I testify that I'm alive  
and free  
when I'm forgotten!  
(<https://archmemoryblog.wordpress.com/2015/05/04/-forgotten-as-if-you-never-were/>)

With those words the play ends with the execution of Hamlet who is not forgotten, and a new Hamlet will be born if not now, *a while after* and contradicting the fact that in reality Hamlet since Shakespeare and until this day has not been not forgotten and is born and reborn in many forms.



## Conclusion

In *Hamlet without Hamlet*, Margreta de Garzia says: “*Hamme*, as the earliest dictionaries establish, derives from the Germanic word for home. A hamlet is a cluster of homes: a kingdom in miniature.” In summary, based on the presented adaptations of *Hamlet* in Arabic, it could be said that Arabs have taken Hamlet as their home, the cluster of Arab countries and, in a collective manner of thinking, the idea of being one nation. A home in sense of addressing the political, social, and existential crisis of Arabs as a nation. The Arab nation is searching for the truth, truth of being and existence, it is a nation lost in nostalgia and myths as corruption rules the scene in a chaotic society. *Hamlet* refers to every Arab country, where the ruler, Claudius, is leading the country following the deaths of political opponents such as King Hamlet and many innocent deaths; where the corrupted politician, Polonius, is a selfish man seeking a better rank; where there is one person that knows everything, Gertrude, but decides to be silent and be part of the corrupted world. Ultimately, there is the Hamlet of the country representing the oppressed nation, with its lack of action and inability to revolt against the political reality and take action. It is the oppressed nation being stabbed in the back by those who are supposed to be friends, and trying to face the enemy who is no longer an enemy for the corrupted country. Hamlet in the Arab word is the hero, the defeated hero who lost the battle of the right against the corrupted nation, Hamlet represents the youth of the country, in particular the intellectual Arab youth who are delayed in understanding the situation and when things are clear for them to take an action, they are mostly too late.

As presented in this dissertation Arabs have taken their *Hamlet* or Hamlet in an interchangeable manner, in which an interest was given to *Hamlet* despite the Hamlet, they were interested in the plot, in the characters in which Arabs appropriated to their own societies, they were interested in Hamlet the prince, the hero, they were interested in the state of Hamlet. At times,

Arabs detached Hamlet from the play and dealt with the hero alone and at other times they were more interested in the political aspects of the play regardless of Hamlet himself. They adopted and appropriated Hamlet from different sources of the French, German, Russian, and English traditions. Hamlet in the Arab world was molded and appropriated to fit the culture, traditions, and aspects of the Arab society. It is perceived and understood based on the translators, writer, and director's visions in which sometimes they have detached from the Shakespearean Hamlet and gave birth to a new Hamlet or, in certain cases, to the Hamletization of the Arab hero. A newborn Hamlet, based on the original play, but fitting more the issue in discussion, as in *Hamlet Wakes Up Late* that focuses on the political aspects of the play, and foreshadows events including the role of youth within the Arab society at the time the play was written. This was followed by *Hamlet A While After*, which further highlighted the role of the Arab youth in society and focused on the political issues and conflicts of the Arab world. In both *Hamlet Wakes Up Late* and *Hamlet A While After*, Hamlet referred to the Arab intellectual youth and their detachment from contemporary society, where they did not notice the issues and when they finally woke up and took action, it cost them their lives, similar to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, where Hamlet's revenge had cost him his life.

Hamlet dies seeking revenge for his father, he dies as a hero and his reputation lingers on, with his loyal friend, Horatio, carrying his story and word of his deeds. Similarly, Arab youth and heroes sacrificed their lives for a cause, a dream of a nation without corruption and conflicts. They all become *Hamlets*, they become a story, they become homes and sources of inspiration for future Hamlets.

## Appendix

1. The day Ashura is observed on the 10th day of Muharram to mourn the death of Imam Hussain, the son of Hasrat Ali and the grandson of the Prophet. He was martyred in the Battle of Karbala on the Day of Ashura in 680 AD.
2. Good Friday is a Christian holiday commemorating the crucifixion of Jesus and his death at Calvary. It is observed during Holy Week as part of the Paschal Triduum.
3. The Abbasid Caliphate was the third caliphate to succeed the Islamic prophet Muhammad. It was founded by a dynasty descended from Muhammad's uncle, Abbas ibn Abdul-Muttalib, from whom the dynasty takes its name.
4. The Bedouin, Bedouin or Bedu are nomadic Arab tribes who have historically inhabited the desert regions in the Arabian Peninsula, North Africa, the Levant, and Mesopotamia. However, the Arabian Peninsula is the historic and original homeland of the Bedouin Arabs.
5. Shakespeare plays (Othello) on <http://www.shakespeare-online.com/plays/>
6. Based on the Arden Shakespeare Hamlet revised edition edited by Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor 2021 edition
7. Available online based on an article published by Shaimaa Gaber in 2019, When translation failed to convey the psychological suffering of Hamlet!
8. Available online, taken from an article published by Shaimaa Gaber in 2019, “When translation failed to convey the psychological suffering of Hamlet!”
9. Available online, taken from an article published by Shaimaa Gaber in 2019, “When translation failed to convey the psychological suffering of Hamlet!”

10. Taken from the Arden Shakespeare Hamlet revised edition edited by Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor, 2021 edition.
11. The Hamletmachine by Heiner Mueller, 1979 Translation: Dennis Redmond © 2001
12. Saddam Hussein is an Arab Iraqi politician, he served as the 5th president of Iraq from 1979 until 2003.
13. Matthew 7 13.-Trans.
14. Matthew 7 15-16.

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#### Direct Interviews

The Lebanese Director Lena Osseyran / also provided the text of the play adaptation *Hamlet Machine*

The Jordanian Director and Playwright Zaid Khalil Mustafa/ also provided the text of the play adaptation *Hamlet A While After*

The Syrian-Jordanian Actor and Director Najwa Kondakji / also provided pdf excerpts from studies and books on Arab theater development and history

Assistant Professor at Cornell University Rebekah Maggor/ also provided the text of the play  
adaptation *Hamlet Wakes Up Late*