Palestinian Theatre: Historical Development and Contemporary Distinctive Identity

Reuven Snir

Haifa University

Introduction

Most Arab scholars and western orientalists have emphasized that Arabs did not know theatre before the nineteenth century. They consider a theatrical tradition of foreign origin to have twice reached the eastern Mediterranean: first, the Hellenistic theatre that arrived in the wake of the Greek and Roman conquests of the Near East; and second, the Arab imitation of western theatre that had come into being in the nineteenth century. In contrast, some scholars have recently concluded that there already existed a secular and live theatre in the pre-modern Arab world before the nineteenth century (Moreh, 1992). Notwithstanding this controversy (Snir, 1993b), the pioneering Arab ventures into modern drama clearly occurred in Egypt in the middle of the nineteenth century, although the very first attempt was Syrian: after visiting Europe, the Syrian Christian merchant Mārūn al-Naqqāš (1817-1855), being impressed particularly by Italian opera, in 1848 wrote and produced at his own house in Beirut a play entitled Ri'āyat al-Bakhīl (The Story of the Miser) which drew heavily on Molière's L'Avare, though it was not a direct translation and involved a great deal of singing (Landau, 1958, pp. 57-58). After Mārūn al-Naqqāš's death, his nephew Salīm al-Naqqāš (d. 1884) moved the theatrical troupe to Alexandria. Since the middle of the nineteenth century the influx of Syrian Christian men of letters into Egypt, where they pioneered free journalism and various cultural activities, was a contributory factor to the lead taken by that country in the Arab renaissance in the nineteenth century. This was due in part to the stimulation provided by Bonaparte's expedition at the turn of the century, and in part to the drive for modernization embarked upon by the dynasty of Muḥammad 'Āli (1769-1849). Indeed, from the nineteenth century Egypt became the center of the theatrical movement in the Arab World and produced the first notables in the modern Arab theatre, such as the Egyptian Jew Yaʿqūb Ṣanūʿ (Jacob Sanua) (1839-1912) and the Syrian Abū Khalīl Ahmad al-Qabbānī (1836-1902), who was the first Muslim to rise to prominence in this field. Both these men produced their plays in Egypt.

Palestine, on the margins of the Egyptian cultural center, has never been a center for any modern cultural movement in the Arab world during the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. Moreover, the cultural activities in Palestine prior to the First World War lacked any political strand, in the form of Palestinian consciousness, which has since become an integral element of Palestinian literature (Peled, 1982, p. 141). In this sense Palestinian literature is not exceptional, since no particular Arabic literature written before World War I can be identified as national in the modern political sense. Up to that point Palestinian literature bore marks of cultural consciousness of a very special nature, but did not reflect the subsequent political consciousness (Snir, 1992b). Nevertheless, Palestinian literary historians and cultural
critics have recently taken pains to show that Palestine in the second half of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth was the center for a distinctive cultural revival. The information they provide is significant but cannot be isolated from the larger context of the search for roots, or "the invention of tradition" (Hobsbawm & Terence, 1983, pp. 1-14). This phenomenon has been widespread since World War I throughout all of the nation-states in the Arab world, and has been very common in recent years among the Palestinians as a part of their efforts to strengthen their national identity and promote their hopes of establishing their independent state (Snir, 1990, pp. 244-245). "The process of vernacular mobilization," states A. D. Smith, "must first discover an ethnic past that is serviceable for present needs and then create a unified and distinctive consciousness and sense of ethnic community and of politicized common culture" (Smith, 1991, pp. 132-133). In the Palestinian case this means accentuating a separate culture personality and distinguishing it from the wide, inclusive Arab identity. In the West Bank, for example, the cultural revival in the early 1970s included the foundation of the quarterly Journal of Society and Heritage. The publication of this journal since 1973, as one Palestinian intellectual stated, was a concrete expression of the "pressing need to recognize and preserve the Palestinian national identity in the face of the cultural and national annihilation as attempted by the Zionist Israel" (Ashrawi, 1976, p. 9). The current Palestinian search for roots, as part of strengthening the national identity, is not limited to literature: for example, Palestinian newspapers have started special folklore sections with invited contributions from readers. The folklore here is less a subject of historical and literary study, and more a vital and dynamic force in society as well as a symbol of the determination of the Palestinian people to gain their right to self determination as a nation with a distinctive culture and history.

It is only since the 1920s that Palestine became a fertile ground for certain cultural activities, especially in the field of poetry. The development of theatre was very slow, particularly taking into consideration the circumstances of the growth and emergence of modern Arabic theatre and dramatic literature. This article attempts to outline the historical development of the Palestinian theatre on the margins of the Egyptian cultural center. Was there any serious Palestinian theatrical activity before the 1970s? Or should we accept the harsh judgment of Palestinian critic Ḥanān Mīkhā‘il Ashrawi in the middle of the 1970s that "Palestinian literature cannot boast of a single written play of any merit, despite several attempts" (Ashrawi, 1976, p. 55). In addition to a description of the historical developments of Palestinian theatre and dramatic literature, an attempt will be made to indicate the distinctive traits and characteristics of contemporary Palestinian theatrical activities as well as to present in some detail one of the most prominent of the pioneering printed plays in the final phase of the development of the Palestinian theatre. The analysis of this play also provides an introduction to the nature of the theatrical movement among the Palestinians, its main thematic and poetic traits and its major sources of influence.

I. Before 1948: First Attempts

Palestine, as mentioned above, was removed from the main cultural activities in the Arab world throughout the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. Literary historians and cultural critics have attributed this vacuum to such political and socio-economic reasons as the severe economic conditions in Palestine, the widespread illiteracy, the absence of educational institutions and the general cultural
backwardness (al-Sawāfīrī, 1979, pp. 17-31). No Palestinian literature, or any other particular local Arabic literature, bearing distinctive marks of national identity can be found in the nineteenth century. Some poets were writing poems praising the beauty of places such as Nazareth or Haifa, but without any reference to political circumstances (Peled, 1982, p. 146). Only after the revolution of 1908 and the promulgation of the Ottoman constitution of that year did Palestinian national consciousness begin to emerge, but Palestinian literature was still trailing behind the pioneering literatures of Egypt and Lebanon. The general cultural atmosphere in Palestine till the 1920s was characterized by backwardness, as indicated by the literary historian Kāmil al-Sawāfīrī: "Palestine was living in all-encompassing darkness of ignorance, a plain scientific backwardness, and widespread illiteracy among its children" (al-Sawāfīrī, 1979, p. 31). After the First World War, the cultural atmosphere began to change: Palestine started witnessing a cultural revival, encouraged both by the political revival, particularly in light of the Zionist activity and the economic revival, due to the British mandate over Palestine. This atmosphere was stimulated by the opening of schools and educational institutions, public libraries, cultural clubs and societies, publishing houses, newspapers and periodicals, literary organs and the growth of intellectuals trends. In the period 1919-1921 no fewer than 15 new Palestinian newspapers appeared (Sulaymān, 1988, p. 15). This revival, concentrated especially in Jerusalem and Haifa, encouraged the development of literary salons by established families, where young poets, writers and dramatists were invited to read their works. In addition, a revival occurred of folk and religious culture which combined such theatrical elements as the Ḥakawātī (the storyteller), who used to tell tales from folk literature, mainly from A Thousand and One Nights, Shāʿir al-Rabāba (the singer of the rebāb i.e., a stringed instrument with one to three strings); the itinerant storyteller with Sundūq al-ʿAjab (The box of wonders or the Magic Box); the religious festivals like the traditional Mawlid (the Prophet's birthday) or the Mawālid (The birthdays of saints); and the night-time shows presented during the fast of Ramadan. Theatrical elements were also combined in the popular peasant culture like the dabka dances, in which a group of dancers, with linked arms stamp out the rhythm and sing; and in the zajal, i.e., the popular Arabic poetry in strophic form, all of which were performed on special occasions such as weddings and feasts and even at funeral rituals. However, these folk and popular activities never developed into theatre in the western sense and only with the rise of a professional Palestinian theatre during the 1970s did they become associated with theatre in the western sense.

An important forerunner of the first attempts at theatrical activities in Palestine were the performances of the Khāyl al-Ẓill (Shadow Plays) i.e., a type of puppet theatre in which flat articulated figures are manipulated between a strong light and a translucent screen, so that the audience sees only their shadows. Most of the performances of this type of theatre were given during the month of Ramadan, when local troupes were competing with performers from the neighboring Arabic-speaking countries. The Arabs of the Old City of Jerusalem in particular, both young and old, were known to be especially fond of Karagöz.² In the month of Ramadan 1944, for instance, these shadow plays in Jerusalem were directed by a Syrian performer. They were presented twice nightly, the first show being intended for children and the second for adults with a background at times historical and at others satirical (Landau, 1958, p. 38).

One of the major stimulations for the Palestinian cultural revival, including the
theatre, was the foundation of Mahatat al-Quds or Idhā‘at Filaṭīn (Palestine Broadcasting Station), which began broadcasting on 29 March 1936. The Arabic section of this station, headed by the most prominent Palestinian poet prior to 1948, Ibrāhīm Ṭūqān (1905-1941), encouraged men of letters, poets, playwrights and actors to broadcast their works (al-Sawāfīrī, 1979, pp. 66-72; Ṭūqān, 1985, pp. 118-128). The play Shamshīn wa-Dalī‘a (Samson and Delilah) by Naṣrī al-Jawzī (born 1908) was the first to be broadcast from the station. This was also the period in which the geographical position of Palestine on the margins of the culturally prestigious Egyptian center helped to encourage the development of Palestinian theatrical activities along with stimulating other cultural activities. Egyptian literature, poetry and prose, newspapers and periodicals, visits of dramatic and dancing troupes, and the pioneering Egyptian cinema, were an important catalyst for the local revived Palestinian culture. For the Palestinian intelligentsia, as for any other intelligentsia in other Arab countries, Egypt was the recognized heart of culture for the Arab world. Palestinian intellectuals were not only reading Egyptian newspapers and periodicals but also contributing to them. Palestinian writers were publishing their works in Egyptian publishing houses and even the eminent Palestinian writer Ishaq Mūsā al-Ḥusaynī (1904-1990) published his famous and controversial novel Mudḥkikrāt Dajāja (Memoirs of a Hen) (1943) (Snir, 1989, p. 134) in a publishing house in Cairo and asked the leading Egyptian writer Ṭaha Ḥusayn (1909-1973) to write the introduction. Some of the first Palestinian dramatists used to publish their works in Egyptian magazines like al-Ḥilāl and al-Muqtataf, before publishing them in the local arena (Landau, 1958, p. 103). The influence of Egyptian culture upon the growing Palestinian culture in those years was intense: the local audiences flocked to watch the performances of Egyptian troupes which visited Palestine⁴ and later became the nucleus for Palestinian audiences who "demanded" local and original performances. Consequently, groups of amateurs, especially students, began producing and performing plays or dramatic texts. The Palestinian writer and dramatist Imīl Ḥābibī (born 1921) notes that when he was a school student he acted the role of the thief in a play based on The Hunchback of Notre Dame (Urian [in press]). Yet almost all the dramatic activities were limited to amateurs and took place within clubs and schools without being developed into professional troupes. The dramatic texts were based mainly on translations and adaptations of famous western plays in addition to texts based upon Arabic literary texts from the non-canonized folk literature. Very few original texts were used, but if so they were generally didactic plays staged for social and religious purposes. Frequent insertion of well-known verses from ancient Arabic poetry into these plays indicates their didactic nature. Due to social and religious considerations only a few actresses participated in these theatrical activities and female characters were generally converted into male ones.

With the growth and development of the urban middle classes, some serious attempts were made to initiate professional theatrical activities. One of the first professional troupes was Firqaṭ al-Jawzī (The al-Jawzī Troupe) established by Naṣrī al-Jawzī (born 1908) in the middle of the 1930s. Naṣrī came from a noted Gaza and Jerusalem family, known for its cultural and theatrical activities. His troupe was the first to broadcast dramatic texts from the above-mentioned broadcasting station, which both encouraged and directly and indirectly accelerated theatrical activities (al-'Awdat, 1992, pp. 93-94). Imīl Ḥābibī, who was working at the beginning of the 1940s in the Arabic section of the Palestine Broadcasting Station, notes that actors recited the dramatic texts in live broadcast (Urian [in
press]). Naṣrī, who continued his intense theatrical activities till 1947, wrote several original plays, including \textit{al-Shumū' al-Muhtarīqa} (The Burning Candles), a four act social moral drama about the suffering of children caused by their father's unhealthy lust.\textsuperscript{5} In his ceaseless quest for new ways to develop the newly emerging local theatre he was also the first Palestinian dramatist who wrote for children. Among his contributions in this field was the play \textit{Dhakā' al-Qādi} (The Wisdom of the Judge) describing a famous trial before the Calif Hārūn al-Rashīd. In one of his essays prior to 1948, entitled "How Can We Encourage the Palestinian Theatre", he mentioned more than thirty troupes active in Jerusalem alone bearing symbolic names like \textit{al-Nahḍa} (The Awakening), \textit{al-Taqaddum} (The Progression) and \textit{Iḥyā' al-Funūn} (The Revival of Arts).\textsuperscript{6} These troupes, most of them amateur, generally preferred to stage productions based on translations and adaptations of English and French plays. Although the local audiences showed some interest in these plays, rarely was any play performed more than once.

Naṣrī’s brother Jamīl al-Jawzī (born 1917) also contributed to the growing Palestinian theatrical movement and in 1937 even established a theatrical troupe within the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) in Jerusalem making use of translated texts as well as his own original material. J. M. Landau, who watched one of the plays staged at the YMCA in 1946, testified not only to the unsuccessful production, but also to the attitude of the spectators who could "not distinguish between sitting in a café or in a theatre."\textsuperscript{7} After 1948 Jamīl al-Jawzī continued his activities in the field of theatre and in 1952 he published dramatic texts in East Jerusalem (al-'Awdat, 1992, pp. 91-92). Both brothers resolutely pursued their interest in the theatre but since 1948 they have resided in Jordan, and concentrated not on practical theatrical activity but mainly on the historical aspects of Arabic, and especially Palestinian theatre.\textsuperscript{8}

Another prominent figure of the newborn Palestinian theatrical movement before 1948 was Jamīl al-Bahrī who was also a prominent journalist and the owner of the journal \textit{al-Zahra}, published in Haifa, in which he used to publish his dramatic works. Among these was \textit{Qātil Akhihi} (His Brother 's Murderer), a play in three acts, staged in several theatres in Palestine and Syria. In his translated plays he used to omit the female roles for lack of actresses, as well as to insert verses from Arabic poetry, according to his didactic and educational inclinations (Sayegh, 1990, p. 159; Landau, 1958, p. 103).

Palestinian theatrical and dramatic activities, like literature in general, were very limited prior to 1948. First attempts were marked by European influence, whether in translation of texts or adaptation. As many of the plays were intended to be staged in schools or by groups of students, the didactic nature of this theatrical activity was dominant. Moreover, Palestinian theatre before 1948, like Palestinian prose, was not generally involved in the national struggle. Prose in general,\textsuperscript{9} let alone the theatre, was barely concerned with politics, and concentrated on didactic aims and entertainment. Direct involvement in the struggle was at that time typical only of poetry, which remained the dominant genre in Arab culture till the middle of the twentieth century. Palestinian poetry served as a weapon in the political struggle and was overwhelmingly concerned following the 1917 Balfour declaration, with the anti-Zionist and anti-British campaign. It expressed the innermost desires and fears of the Palestinian community and its emotions regarding the Jewish threat and the prospects of the foundation of a Jewish national home in Palestine. Although, like many other Arab poets, Palestinian poets before 1948 also wrote dramatic texts, especially verse-drama, only a few of these plays were staged
successfully. Among those writing for theatre before 1948 were the distinguished poets Burhān al-Dīn al-‘Abbūshi (born 1911), Muḥyī al-Dīn al-Ḥajj, ʿĪsā al-Ṣafādī (1897-1974) and Muʾyyad Ibrāhīm al-‘Irānī (1913-1987) (al-ʿAwdat, 1976, pp. 34, 357-358, 430-431). The constraints of the dramatic genre in that period, however, did not allow its development as a weapon in the political struggle.

II. 1948-1967: Uprooting, Decline and a New Start

Following 1948, the greater part of the Arab urban intelligentsia, the traditional and social leadership and most of the property owners abandoned the territories of the State of Israel. Those who remained were generally from the poorer or the uneducated village populations. All the cultural activities, including the newly developing theatre, were uprooted (Snir, 1990, pp. 247-248). Many of the exponents of the young Palestinian theatre left the country, giving an impetus to the development of the newly emerging theatre in Jordan (Landau, 1958, pp. 97, 103). Cultural activities among the Palestinians in Israel as well as in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip were very limited during this period. The immense shock in the wake of the defeat, the fact that the Palestinian majority in Palestine had become a minority in Israel, the political limitations as well as the difficult economic and social circumstances under which the Palestinians were living, whether in Israel or in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, prevented Palestinian writers, poets and dramatists from working freely. Moreover, since theatrical activities require more than merely writing texts and publishing them, the political and socio-economic circumstances had greater effect than in other cultural fields, and thus ruled out any real progress in the first years following 1948. All that remained from the promising Palestinian theatre of the 1940s, were a very few amateur troupes, mainly within clubs and schools.

Nevertheless, Palestinian culture, which had emerged and started crystallizing before 1948, did not totally disappear, though it crumbled into two segments - outside Israel and within it. Those Palestinians who were uprooted from their homes following the war and had become refugees suffered the greater shock and were preoccupied in their daily struggle for existence in the refugee camps, whether in the West Bank or in the Gaza Strip. Despite the educational system established by the United Nations Relief and Working Agency (UNRWA) (Sawāfīrī, 1979, pp. 79-80), significant cultural activities, certainly in the field of theatre, were almost totally absent from the camps. Due to political and economic reasons the fate of the permanent citizens of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip till the 1960s was mostly similar. The Hashemite rule over the West Bank and the Egyptian rule over the Gaza Strip was overtly and directly involved in suppressing the publication of any worth-while literature, especially that of political or social significance. Direct censorship plus control over educational and social institutions, clubs, and all cultural activities, along with relentless political persecution, succeeded in maintaining what one Palestinian critic described as "a standard of ignorance and superficiality of alarming dimensions" (Ashrawī, 1976, p. 3). Only the regimes' mouthpieces or writers of trashy third-rate literature succeeded in getting their works published, while an underground movement remained scarce and did not reach a significant audience.

Within Israel the 1950s did witness certain cultural activities, especially due to the efforts made by the Israeli establishment to encourage "positive" cultural activities. The vacuum created by the disappearance of the urban cultural elite was partially filled by Jewish writers and poets who had emigrated to Israel from Iraq.
Some Iraqi Jews with acting experience produced Arabic plays, the first of which, staged in October 1956, was the famous verse-drama Majnūn Laylā (The Madman of Laylā) by the eminent Egyptian poet and playwright Ahmad Shawqi (1868-1932). Jews who had immigrated from Egypt, with a certain amount of real theatrical experience, also contributed to the revived local Arabic-speaking theatre and their first production concentrated on the life of oriental immigrants in Israel (Landau, 1958, p. 103).

Since theatrical activities before 1948 were initiated as well as consumed by the urban elite classes, the crumbling of this elite society following the war was almost a death blow to the young Palestinian theatrical movement. Nevertheless, shortly after the war cultural activities among the Palestinians within Israel were showing signs of revival in two opposite directions: one sponsored by the establishment and the other sponsored by the Communist party. Several literary organs stood at the disposal of those who were close to the establishment, such as the newspaper al-Yawm (established 1948 and closed in 1968), the weekly Haqiqat al-Amr (established 1937 and closed in 1959) and the monthly al-Mujtama' (established 1954 and closed in 1959). The Histadrut - The General Workers' Union - played an major role in the Arab sector during these years, organizing and launching "positive" local Arab cultural and literary activities. Needless to say these activities did not include any criticism of government policy and avoided dealing with controversial problems. The "positive" cultural and literary activities were initiated and cultivated by means of prizes and literary competitions, as well as through The Arab Book Fund acting under its aegis. This fund, for example, published the book In the Festival of Literature (Agasi, 1959) containing Arabic-language literary and dramatic works, which had earned prizes in the 1958 Histadrut competition. The book, whose introduction illustrates the effort to produce "positive" literature (Agasi, 1959, pp. 1-3), includes two short plays, both using the Palestinian dialect in the dialogues. The first, entitled Tatwwur al-Qarya al-'Arabiyya fi Isrā‘il Khilāl 'Ashr Sinīn (The Development of the Arab Village in Israel in Ten Years) (Agasi, 1959, pp. 119-129), was written by a Palestinian playwright from Nazareth who preferred not to reveal her name. It goes without saying that this play, as reflected by its title, is a good example of the above-mentioned "positive" literature. It is the story of a couple, Abū 'Ali and Umm 'Ali, who had been living before 1948 in one of the villages in Palestine. They had left their village following the "war of liberation", as the 1948 war is described in the play. After ten years they returned to Israel to visit their previous birthplace on a symbolic day, the 15th of May (on 14 May 1948 the State of Israel was declared). The two Palestinians, amazed by all the development that had occurred in their ancient village during their absence, promise at the end of the play to inform their relatives outside Israel about the miracles and the wonderful projects in the Israeli Arab villages. The play, portraying the development brought to the "primitive" Arab villages by the Israeli authorities, seems to be pure propaganda without any redeeming literary value and illustrates the nature of the cultural activities sponsored by the establishment. The second play included in the book is Fatât al-Yawm (Today's Young Women) (Agasi, 1959, pp. 130-142), written by Hābib Ibrāhīm Karkābi (born 1929), from Shfaram. The play, whose events take place in Nazareth in April 1958, deals with the improvement in the conditions of women in Arab society in Israel since 1948, and its evident message was to serve the aims of the establishment's propaganda exactly like the first play. Karkābi has continued to be active in the field of Arabic-speaking theatre in Israel and during the 1970s published
Palestinian scholars have totally overlooked the "positive" cultural activities sponsored by the Israeli establishment. Moreover, the fourth volume of *Encyclopaedia Palaestina*, dedicated to studies about various aspects of civilization, including theatre, generally ignores the period of 1948-1967, dealing only with the cultural activities before 1948 and after 1967 (Sayegh, 1990. Cf. 'Alyan, 1992).

Not all the cultural activities in Israel during this period, however, were sponsored and directed by the establishment; there were also the leftist writers of the opposition. These writers were active within the framework of the Communist Party, whose intellectuals had not abandoned Israel following the 1948 war, unlike most of the Palestinian elite. The leftists writers faced many difficulties and obstacles and the establishment employed various means to disrupt their cultural and literary activities. Furthermore, the establishment's implicit ban on Communist writers, Jews or Arabs, inspired those writers close to the establishment to refuse to collaborate with them. Such a polarity was naturally reflected in the literature and readership of both trends, with each having its own writers and audience. The journals of the two camps were fiercely competitive, but the Communist journals stood out, particularly *al-Ittihad* (established 1944) and *al-Jadid* (established 1951), for their quality and wide circulation. These journals provided avenues of expression for promising new poets and writers - hence the predominance of Communist literary figures as pioneers in modern Palestinian literary tradition. Along with the Dār al-Ittihad publishing house in Haifa, several other progressive publishers contributed to the increasing output of Palestinian literary figures opposed to the establishment. The lack of freedom and the censorship imposed on leftist writers did not prevent their works from gaining high popularity among the masses within Israel and later, particularly from the mid 1960s, even outside it. The Israeli attempts at suppressing this kind of literature not only failed entirely, but even produced contrary results. The charge of endangering the "security of the state", exploited frequently against outspoken Palestinian writers, only enhanced the popularity of those writers and showed them in heroic light.

The leftist writers did not hesitate to raise their voices in protest and to deal with subjects considered taboo by the establishment sponsored press. The latter was thus perceived by local Palestinians as the trumpet of the ruling party, and even as anti-Arab. In contrast, a preoccupation with political and social problems was dominant in communist writing. In order to evade censorship, heavy symbolism was sometimes used, which gradually detracted from the literary value of Palestinian literature. The communist literary writing generally conveyed a world view whose universality rejected the narrow confines of nationalism and preached equality of rights for all peoples, and justice and equality in all human societies. The two opposing literary trends were in fact sharing a striking, black-versus-white, dichotomy; but while for those close to the establishment, this dichotomy contrasted the dark past with the joyous present, for the Communist writers it was social and universal, between a dark present filled with oppression and a Utopian future ruled by justice. The writers of both groups, each from their own viewpoint, preached coexistence, peace and brotherhood and believed in their realization. Prominent writers, like Imil Ḥabibi, frequently emphasized in the 1950s the obligation of Arabic literature in Israel to "carry the banner of Jewish-Arab brotherhood." They were stressing Jewish-Arab cooperation not only in times past but also for the present and future, as well as praising the contribution of Jewish writers in this field (Snir, 1991, p. 168).
The first Palestinian printed play in Arabic to be published in Israel after 1948 was entitled *Zalâm wa-Nûr* (Darkness and Light) (1954), written by Mishil Haddâd (born 1919) and Jamâl Qa‘wâr (born 1930) both of whom were close to the establishment. The play, betraying a didactic trend, describes the struggle of a student in a secondary school in Israel wanting to study at the university, despite his father's blindness and poverty. The didactic aim of the play, as indicated in the introduction (Haddâd & Qa‘wâr, 1954, pp. 5-6), directs the plot towards culminating in the student's success despite all the difficulties facing him. Another pioneering play published in Israel in the 1950s was the two-act *Sirr Sharazâd* (The Secret of Sharazâd) (1958), by Najwâ Qa‘wâr Farah (born 1923), dealing with the character of Sharazâd. The playwright, distinguished by her penetrating studies of human emotions, was one of the first female writers in the Arab sector in Israel. Since the 1950s she has also published several volumes of short stories and a collection of poetry in prose (Moreh, 1967, p. 169; Moreh & Abbâsi, 1987, pp. 174-175), in addition to another play entitled *Malik al-Majd* (The King of Glory) (1962), based on the life of Jesus of Nazareth.

The actual Arabic theatrical activities in Israel in the 1950s were limited to troupes of amateurs, particularly in schools. Only in the 1960s did these theatrical activities start developing rapidly, first in playwriting and later on in the field of staging. A prominent dramatist has been Salîm Khûrî (1934-1991) who has published several plays (Moreh & Abbâsi, 1987, pp. 76-79; Moreh, 1974, pp. 47-50). His first play, *Amina* (1960), was based on historical events and preaches, through its eponymous heroine, love and brotherhood among people. His second play was *Warîth al-Jazzâr* (The Heir of the Butcher) (1960) and one of his most interesting recent plays, *Ba‘da al-Aswâr* (After the Walls) (1983), shows the clear influence of the German dramatist and poet Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956). Salîm Khûrî is also prominent in being one of the forerunners in establishing a Palestinian children's theatre.

Till the 1960s Arabic-speaking theatrical activities for children were limited mainly to amateur troupes in schools. For lack of space we shall not deal in this article with the development of the Palestinian children's theatre, except to mention that since the 1960s this field has been developed extensively, as part of the development of Palestinian children's literature (Sayegh, 1990, pp. 239-251). Plays for children have been presented in recent years by professional troupes in various frameworks. In addition, the Arabic section of Israeli television has played a major role in encouraging Arabic-speaking theatrical activities for children. One of the great successes of this section was the series *Sâmî wa-Súsû* (Sâmi and Sûsû), in which the leading roles were played by George Ibrâhîm and Labîbâ Darînî.

The theatrical activities in the Arab sector in Israel were concentrated in Haifa and Nazareth, both dominant centers of the Palestinian intelligentsia and culture. The establishment of Beit Hageffen Arab-Jewish center in Haifa and the Frank Sinatra center in Nazareth in the early 1960s indicated some change in the attitude of the establishment toward the culture of the minority. Rather than encouraging "positive" culture, a genuine attempt was made to stir up local cultural activities. With regard to theatre, the Jewish actor Arîch Elîas was sent to Nazareth where he established a local troupe with the assistance of Palestinian theatre people. This troupe staged several plays for al-Masrah al-Hadith (The Modern Theatre) (established in 1965), prominent among which was the famous above-mentioned verse-drama *Majnûn Laylâ* (The Madman of Laylâ) by Ahmad Shawqi.
Theatrical activities among the Palestinians outside Israel were very limited in both playwriting and staging. Nevertheless, some theatrical activities were held in the West Bank, and especially in the framework of the summer festivals in Ramalla and al-Bira. The director Tāriq Maṣārwa even established a local troupe which staged some plays. Several important dramatic texts were written in the 1960s by Palestinian playwrights outside Israel, prominent among whom was Ghassān Kanafānī (1936-1972). Among the plays he wrote before 1967 was *al-Bāb* (The Door) (1964), which tells the story of a young man torn between his ideas and the possibilities of acting upon them (Sayegh, 1990, p. 222). The foundation of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1964 prompted cultural activities aimed at strengthening Palestinian consciousness, including the foundation in Damascus of Jamʿiyat al-Masrah al-Filastīnī (The Association of Palestinian Theatre) with three prominent aims: stimulating national awareness; presenting experiences of the revolution on the stage; and reviving the Palestinian heritage (Sayegh, 1990, p. 223).

III. After 1967: Reunification and the Growth of Professional Theatre

The period after the 1967 War marks paradoxically, despite the defeat of the Arabs, not only the political and literary reconciliation of the two segments of Palestinians - those in Israel and those in the West Bank and Gaza Strip - but also the dawn of the era of optimism and rebellion and the revival of Palestinian culture. Palestinian theatre developed in this period extensively and drama in the western sense, written and staged by professional Palestinian theatre people came into being. This is also the period marking the end of the involvement of the establishment in the cultural arena of the Arab sector in Israel. The reunification of the Palestinians and the removal of the borders between Israel and the territories strengthened the Palestinian identity of the Israeli Palestinians, making the writing of "positive" literature almost impossible. Moreover, the Palestinian intelligentsia within Israel were beginning to search for means of strengthening their national identity and consolidating their cultural relations with their brothers in the territories. This phenomenon was also accompanied by a change of view in Arab general public opinion, and especially the poets, writers and critics, towards Israeli Palestinian literature. Following the initial shocked response of the Arab writers to the heavy defeat in 1967, they gradually became aware of activities of cultural resistance exercised by the Israeli Palestinians writers, and especially poets. From being considered in the 1950s almost as traitors by the Arab world because of their readiness to accept Israeli citizenship, they had now become heroes after the 1967 War. The new political and cultural circumstances disclosed the literary activities of Israeli Palestinian literature, especially poetry, to Arab public opinion and brought a worldwide reputation and fame to some of the poets. Palestinian literature written in Israel became the central topic of discussion in literary circles and has been widely studied in various Arab countries. Local Palestinian poetry began to be broadcast on various Arab radio stations, translated into European and Asian languages and incorporated into poetry anthologies. Later, novels, short stories and plays, also became popular in the Arab countries (Snir, 1990, pp. 253-257), to such an extent that Mahmūd Darwish (born 1941), the most prominent contemporary Palestinian poet, felt obliged in 1969 to voice his dissatisfaction with the injustice critics in the Arab world had done the Palestinian literature by avoiding any objective criticism. These critics, in their readiness to accept unconditionally anything which was Palestinian as a positive contribution to the
spirit of the nation, prompted a leading Palestinian critic to declare in 1976 that "Palestinian literature is not a spoiled child or mentally deficient person for whom all sorts of excuses and rationalization are to be made. It is responsible enough to demand honesty and responsibility from its readers and critics" (Ashrawi, 1976, p. 58).

In contrast to its effect on poetry and prose, the 1967 War did not open immediate new horizons for Palestinian theatre in Israel. The nature of this art and the lack of financial resources necessary for staging plays, in addition to an insufficient familiarity with the dramatic genre, were among the major reasons for its delay in development. Nevertheless, some important plays were published following the war, even if most of them were not staged immediately. Outstanding among them is a verse-drama entitled Qaraqāsh (1970), by Samih al-Qāsim (born 1939), one of the prominent contemporary Palestinian poets (Moreh & ‘Abbāsī, 1987, pp. 181-184). This play is considered to be one of the first printed plays of which Palestinian literature can boast (Ashrawi, 1976, p. 55. See Section VI, below). Theatrical activities in the late 1960s and beginning of the 1970s generally concentrated on the field of writing new original dramatic texts. This phenomenon cannot be isolated from the growth of Palestinian literature in Israel after the 1967 War, but unlike poetry and prose the dramatic text cannot be fully realized without staging. In this regard there were many difficulties, such as the lack of professional actors, and particularly actresses, directors and the mainly insufficient budgets. Plays staged in the first years after the war were mainly by amateur troupes functioning without funding and mostly in the centers of the Israeli Palestinian intelligentsia in Nazareth and Haifa. Although the repertoire of these troupes was based on the repertoire of other Arab theatres, in addition to adaptations of western plays, more and more original dramatic texts were being staged. Among the prominent theatre devotees in those years we can mention Antwān Sālīh and Victor Qamar, who had also been active in the Arabic section of Israeli television since its inception.

After the 1967 War the involvement of the Israeli establishment in the local Palestinian cultural arena decreased following the failure of a similar involvement during the 1948-1967 period (Snir, 1993; Snir, 1993a). Nevertheless, the relevant sections in the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Histadrut continued to employ Arabic speaking Jews in order to start new cultural activities. In 1967 the Ministry of Education and Culture inaugurated in Haifa al-Nāḥiḍ (The Rising) Theatre, which started as an amateur troupe and later became a professional theatre. Its productions, which continued till 1977, concentrated on the 1948 events, particularly the refugee problem, the settlement of Jews in their lands, and minority rights in Israel, in addition to various aspects of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Al-Nāḥiḍ Theatre, which also contributed to the development of the children's theatrical movement, faced many difficulties, like other Palestinian dramatic troupes at the time, and in particular the lack of a sufficient budget. Budgetary restrictions were also behind the closure of al-Masraḥ al-Hadith in Nazareth in the middle of the 1970s. One of the successful theatrical troupes in Israel at that time was Masraḥ al-Ghīrba. Established in Shfaram in 1977, it organized the First Arabic Theatre Festival in Israel in September 1982. Following the festival Rābiṭat al-Masraḥ al-‘Arabi (The Arabic Theatre League) was established on 8 January 1983 in al-Makr.13

The revival of Palestinian culture was not limited to the Palestinians in Israel but also included the territories, constituting another aspect of the reunification of the
two segments of the Palestinian people. Nevertheless, although 1967 was the actual date in which Israeli Palestinians met their fellow Palestinians who until then had been under Hashemite Jordanian or Egyptian rule, the process of discovery and recognition remained rather slow and tentative until the middle of the 1970s. The completion of this process coincided with the October 1973 War, which formed a turning point in the uplifting of Palestinian morale. This was also the period in which the cultural activities of the two Palestinian segments were interwoven, stimulated by a new self-confidence, after years of defeat. This self-confidence later emerged, in the words of Hanân Mikhâ’il Ashrawî - the most prominent Palestinian literary critic of that period - as a distinctly Palestinian energy which was able to withstand the political setbacks of the Arab world and hold its own as a viable force with which the oppressed faced their oppressors and asserted their presence, their rejection of the status quo, and their awareness of their own national identity and consciousness (Ashrawî, 1976, p. 2).

This Palestinian unity was climactically expressed on March 30, 1976, i.e., Yawm al-Ard (The Day of the Land), when the Palestinians both in Israel and the territories declared a total strike and faced Israeli soldiers with rocks and burning tires. The tragic events which the Palestinians underwent in the 1970s - the September massacres of 1971 in Jordan and the Lebanese civil war since the middle of the 1970s - contributed to their cohesion and solidarity. They were convinced that their survival depended primarily on their steadfastness in their own land, and not on external forces. This awareness played an important role not only in the political but also in the social and cultural history of the Palestinians. Moreover, since the 1970s we can speak again about Palestinian culture as a whole, as it was before 1948, rather than the literature within or outside Israel. Both Palestinian segments were becoming closer and more interdependent, despite the various distinctions. This unity was expressed in common cultural interests and in the beginning specifically helped the intellectuals in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip to become acquainted with newspapers, journals and books from throughout the Arab World. Moreover, since there were no copyright laws between Israel and the Arab countries, works by Arab and Palestinian writers, poets and playwrights were printed and smuggled on both sides and pirated editions put out by private publishers were the norm. Thus, the progressive political, intellectual and cultural trends occurring in the Arab world also reached the Palestinians in the territories.

Despite this reunification, a great difference remained in the attitude of the authorities towards the Palestinians in Israel and those in the territories. While most of the restrictions on the Israeli Palestinians were removed, the Palestinians in the territories continued to face the same kind of censorship which had followed the British Mandate emergency laws of 1945 (Sulaymân, 1988, pp. 212-218). These laws, enforced also on the Arab newspapers and magazines in East Jerusalem, were very arbitrary in the 1970s and made frequent use of the argument that a publication was a threat to "the security of the state". In that period, for example, the word "Palestine" was considered threatening enough to be censored, even in West Bank children's textbooks (Ashrawî, 1976, p. 5). Nevertheless, these years witnessed a revival of Palestinian cultural activities in the West Bank, and especially in East Jerusalem, which became the undisputed capital of Palestinian culture. A prominent role was played by the Palestinian press in East Jerusalem, and specifically
al-Fajr (the Dawn), al-Sha'ab (the People) and al-Quds (Jerusalem) (Shinar, 1987, pp. 41, 48-52). These newspapers, recognizing the need to create further channels for literary expression, produced literary sections which have gained immense popularity. The Israeli Palestinian communist newspaper al-Ittihad was banned during that period from being sold in the West Bank, still following the Jordanian laws, according to which the Communist Party is outlawed and possession of any communist material is illegal. Nevertheless, al-Ittihad and the communist literary journal al-Jadid played an important role in the development of the Palestinian national consciousness. Al-Jadid remained the main literary Palestinian magazine until March 1976, with the publication of the magazine al-Bayadir, which soon established itself as the leading organ of intellectual and literary Palestinian life. In it, as in al-Jadid, one can read the works of the major recognized, as well as the most promising new literary figures, and at the same time follow the development of contemporary literary trends. Nevertheless, the Palestinian intellectual arena in the territories and East Jerusalem has continued to suffer from a scarcity of journals and magazines due to the difficulties in obtaining licenses and financial support. Hence, one of the stimulative factors of the cultural movement in the territories was the establishment of several publishing houses, prominent among which was Salah al-Din established in 1974 in East Jerusalem and which soon became the major publisher of West Bank intellectual, literary and political circles. However, the Palestinian cultural revival in the territories was not limited in that period to the printed page alone, and various channels of expression were devised to supplement the gaps and circumvent obstacles to freedom of thought and expression. Poetry reading sessions, panel discussions, seminars and study sessions have become familiar phenomena on a very wide scale, especially in the West Bank. Literary events, such as the traditional Suq 'Uqdash at Birzeit University, have gained increasing audiences.

Several indirect attempts were made in Israel during this period to counter the emergence of nationalist and progressive newspapers, journals and publishing houses. Thus, for example, the authorities sponsored publishing houses which would serve Israeli policy, or those intellectuals who did not come out openly against it. The most prominent of these have been Dar al-Nashr al-'Arabi and Dar al-Sharq (the latter developed into Dar al-Mashriq in Shfaram), both of which are directly connected with and sponsored by the Histadrut and the authorities. The prominent organs sponsored by the establishment in that period were the newspaper al-Anba' (established in 1968 and closed in 1985) and the literary journal al-Sharq (established 1970 and still published).

The above-mentioned cultural background was a fertile ground for the emergence of the most noticeable literary-cultural phenomenon of the 1970s, i.e., the professional Palestinian theatre, which was mainly in the Jerusalem-Ramallah area. The first attempt took place late in 1970 when an amateur troupe called 'A'ilat al-Masrah (The Family of the Theatre) was established in Ramallah and started rehearsals on Samih al-Qasim's above-mentioned verse-drama Qaraqash, until the military authorities banned the staging of the play. 'A'ilat al-Masrah troupe formed the nucleus of the Balalin Theatre troupe established in 1971 by the Bethlehem-born Palestinian director François Abu Sālim and the East Jerusalem poet-singer Muṣṭafā al-Kurd. Abu Sālim, who had returned from Paris after studying theatre there, soon became the major figure in the modern theatrical Palestinian movement. He says of the early 1970s:
When I returned from Paris I wanted to create a Palestinian theater, although friends told me it was not the right time. I knew that I could influence through theatrical-political protest more than through joining some militant organization. I did not go for military training to South Lebanon, because I felt that creating the theater would be more effective in keeping our society intellectually awake, during the long nation-building process. It has not been easy to establish a modern theater. They do not always understand the need for a full company, when one storyteller can enact the entire plot (Shinar, 1987, p. 134).

In addition to Abû Sâlim, the troupe included Sâmih al-‘Abbûshi, Hâni Abû Shanab, Nâdiyâ Mîkhâ’îl, Imil ‘Ashrawî and later also Muṣṭâfâ al-Kurd and the French physician François Gaspard, who settled in Jerusalem and initially made his house the home of the troupe. The troupe looked for ways to develop a Palestinian theatre based upon the idea of addressing the audience in the vernacular (al-‘ âmniyya) and the ability to perform its productions in the towns and villages as well as in cafes; i.e., masrîh al-mâqâhî (cafe-theatre) (Sayegh, 1990, p. 217). On January 22, 1972 the troupe performed the play Qî’at Hayât (A Slice of Life) which met with great success and attracted audiences from all over the territories as well as from Israel. One of the reasons for its success was the fact that it did not hesitate to criticize the social backwardness of Palestinian society, including the status of women. The troupe also produced some of the masterpieces in Palestinian theatre in the 1970s, such as al-‘Âtama (The Darkness); Come, Let me Tell you my Friend; and Nashrat Ahwâl al-Jaww (The Weather Forecast). The same troupe also produced folkloristic shows with dances and songs as well as the musical al-Kanz (The Treasure) and the dramatized poem Yûnus al-A'raj (Yûnus the Lame) originally written by the Turkish poet Nazîm Hikmet (1902-1963). One of the experimental projects of Balâlîn entitled Jarîdat al-Masrah (The Theatre’s Newspaper) - was a short (about five minutes) theatrical presentation given in the vicinity of schools or in the streets. This was in addition to other activities like the foundation of The Balâlîn Friends group, lectures on the art of theatre, popular plays and musicals. The professional nature of the troupe was expressed in its leading role in the week-long First Palestinian Theatre Festival which took place in August 1973 in the basement of Ramallah’s City Hall, an event in which students and other amateur groups presented their works. The festival was organized by the troupe and included sixteen productions (Sayegh, 1990, pp. 221-2; Shinar, 1987, p. 134). In addition to these activities, a temporary splinter group from Balâlîn, entitled Bîlâ-Lîn (Without Mercy), put on the play Muṣârâ’â Ħurra (Free Wrestling) to great acclaim. The Balâlîn theatrical activities were discontinued in 1976 with the deportation of Muṣṭâfâ al-Kurd, one of its founders and major activists.

Several other amateur theatre troupes were formed in the 1970s such as al-Kâshkîl (The Beggar’s Bag) which won acclaim for its play A Sheep and a Half plus Half a Sheep and another troupe, Fîrqiṭ al-Masrah al-Fîlâstînî (The Palestinian Theatre Troupe) for its play al-Ṭâ’ûn (The Plague). In 1973 al-Dâbâbîs (The Pins) was established and won great success for its productions al-Haqq ‘alâ al-Haqq (Blame the Blame) and Dâ’îrat al-Khawf al-Dâbâbiyya (The Foggy Fear Circle), alluding to Brecht’s The Caucasian Chalk Circle. Following the staging of al-Ḥashara (The Insect), the majority of the troupe members were arrested by the authorities (‘Alyân, 1992, p. 84; Sayegh, 1990, p. 219). In 1975 another new troupe was established giving itself the name Šundûq al-‘Ajab (The Magic Box), alluding to
the above-mentioned box of wonders which the wandering Palestinian storyteller used in the folk tradition. This troupe won great acclaim with the production of *Lammâ Injānennâ* (When We Went Insane) but was forced to stop the staging following the arrest of its leading actor Muṣṭafâ al-Kurd. Other troupes which were active in the 1970s were al-Frāfîr (The Birds), al-Masrah al-Jāmi‘î (The Academic Theatre) and al-Warsha al-Fannīyya (The Artistic Workshop). In August 1974 a theatre committee was established within the newly founded Association for Work and the Development of the Arts. The intensive theatrical activities of that period brought also about the development of theatre criticism with the emergence of some prominent critics (Sayegh, 1990, p. 222).

Almost all the plays presented in that period were written by the troupes themselves, and most of these troupes preserved their independence. Financial troubles, lack of qualified actors and attempts by the authorities to disrupt them caused serious difficulties which prompted some of the troupes to stop their activities. The attitude of the military censor to the theatrical movement in East Jerusalem and the territories was very arbitrary. The censor took responsibility for censorship of plays published or staged in the territories, while for plays published and staged in East Jerusalem the responsibility was entrusted into the hands of The Council for the Criticism of Films and Plays; however the Palestinians have argued that the attitude of this committee was basically no different from that of the military censor. Out of 27 dramatic works examined by the committee in the period 1977-1984, only 17 texts were approved, and even these were partially censored (‘Alyān, 1992, p. 86. Cf. Sayegh, 1990, p. 218; Shihâda, 1985, pp. 249-252; Shihâda, 1989, pp. 180-181). In addition, the authorities banned the staging of plays in the territories by troupes from East Jerusalem.

Nevertheless, despite all the difficulties a new national Palestinian theatre was emerging in the 1970s, stimulated by the major Palestinian writers and poets who began to direct some of their attention to this genre. Palestinian theatrical activities in Israel and the territories, and especially in the Ramallah-Jerusalem area in the early 1970s, brought about several attempts to establish a solid national Palestinian theatre. One of the first, albeit unsuccessful attempts made by groups and individuals, was to unite under the name of the above-mentioned Balâlîn troupe. The major event in the development of the Palestinian theatrical movement was the establishment of al-Hakawâtî Theatre in 1977, which was to become a synonym for the national Palestinian theatre. The foundation of al-Hakawâtî and its subsequent various activities were the brightest expression of the cultural unity of the two segments of the Palestinian people.

IV. Al-Hakawâtî Theatre

The establishment of al-Hakawâtî Theatre in East Jerusalem in 1977, a joint project of Arab dramatists, directors and actors from Israel and East-Jerusalem, marked a prominent phase in the professionalization of Palestinian theatre. Al-Hakawâtî was founded and developed by François Abu Salim and a group of theatre people, prominent among whom were ‘Adnān Trābsha, Ibrāhîm Khalâlîyya, Da‘ūd Kuttâb, Muḥammad Maḥāmid, Râdi Shihâda (born 1952), Idwâr al-Mu‘allîm, ‘Īmān ‘Awn, ‘Ammâr Khalîl and the actress and costume designer Jackie Lubeck, Abu Salim's Brooklyn born Jewish wife. Additional actors as well as set designers, lighting professionals and musicians were recruited according to need. Muṣṭafâ al-Kurd, permitted by the military authorities to return in 1982, also joined the troupe. The aim of its founders was to establish a theatrical framework which
would contribute to the strengthening of Palestinian culture, as well as to provide an artistic framework which would intensify the political awareness of the Palestinians and become a vehicle for expressing social and political messages. These messages included not only resistance against the occupation but also protest against negative phenomena in Palestinian society itself. Undertaking the mission to express in dramatic terms the national aspirations of a society under occupation, it could not rely, as had former Palestinian troupes, on a classical repertoire. Nevertheless, in shaping its own stories and style the troupe drew inspiration from folkloric and traditional sources. The fact that target audiences included intellectuals and professional critics as well as villagers, workers and merchants, and that the troupe was operating under the military government's regulations, led it to develop a language of subtle symbols and metaphors, which served as an artistic code between the theatre and its audience, using plot, rhetoric, creative-interactive processes, and institutional structures as channels for its nation-building messages (Shinar, 1987, p. 134).

The theatre's name alludes to the ancient Ĥakawati i.e., the itinerant storyteller, who would appear in places such as cafes and public squares and present his stories based mainly upon ancient folk tales and legends. He would accompany his tales with gestures and different voices and encouraged his listeners to react and become involved. This cultural institution of the storyteller disappeared in the middle of the twentieth century following the increasing influence of the electronic mass media and the development of modern theatre and cinema. The relation to the ancient Ĥakawati was preserved in some of the activities of al-Ĥakawati Theatre and its traditional techniques, and even in the specific arrangement of the seating at these activities so as to resemble the atmosphere of a public cafe. The adoption of the story-teller techniques by the troupe was an act undertaken to indicate the ancient roots of Arabic theatre, in what was perceived as a new genre which the Arabs, including the Palestinians, had only recently come to know. These techniques motivated some of the original experiments and improvisations by the troupe in its first years. For lack of suitable available dramatic texts, and due to a desire to experiment, the act of playwriting and devising characters and dialogues became a collective undertaking by the actors themselves and was based largely upon improvisation. In addition to the influence of the ancient tradition, western theatrical concepts too were incorporated into the activities of al-Ĥakawati. Brecht, Ariane Mnouchkine and the Theatre du Soleil and le Grand Magic Circus Théâtre of Jérôme Savary, as well as commedia dell'arte and American slapstick, all exerted their influence. The rhetoric of al-Ĥakawati was delivered in Chaplinesque tones, a Brechtian, alienated, "poster theatre" style, and a blend of traditional and contemporary symbols. This rhetoric was undoubtedly adopted in order to reach a wide audience, and the plots were full of traditional and mythical characters whose language and behavior bordered on the vulgar. Brash humor served to depict Palestinian and Israeli characters alike. Thus, Israeli civilians as well as army personnel and the military government were presented in terms as grotesque as the Palestinian characters. The choice of this style, whereby all characters are ridiculed, may have been adopted in order to enable the group to pursue its objectives in relative safety.

The first play produced by al-Ĥakawati, Bismi al-Ĥab wa-l-Ĥam wa-l-Ĥbn (In the Name of the Father, the Mother and the Son), was staged during the 1978-1979 season. The play, in circus style, depicted the violent invasion of modernization and occupation into Palestinian life and illustrates how the stress on the father
causes him to pressurize his wife who in turn pressurizes her children. The play clearly illustrates one aspect which had become predominant after the 1967 War in Palestinian literature in general, namely: criticism of Palestinian society and leadership. The figures, making their first appearance on the stage inside cages, are the husband Atrash (in Arabic: a deaf male), his wife Kharsā’ (in Arabic: a mute female) and their son Muṭī’ (in Arabic: an obedient male). While the training of the female Kharsā’ by the male Atrash is announced as a “special trick”, a clever, intelligent and modern unknown creature, which may symbolize Israel or modernization (Shinar, 1987, p. 135), sneaks his way in and imposes himself on the tamer’s pets. The stranger stays on while the tamer tries unsuccessfully to get rid of him:

OK stranger, time’s up! Get lost! Excuse me folks but this is definitely not part of the act. That stranger is taking over! Hey, wait a minute! Where is Atrash? Muṭī’, get back in your cage! Kharsā’, cook dinner!... The female is on the loose! The offspring is on the loose! I’m losing control!!!... My act! My creatures! My work! My act!!

One of the Palestinian critics stated that in this play there is no difference between the "social backwardness and the military occupation... this society is falling between the hammer of the occupation and the anvil of poverty, economic, social and intellectual backwardness” (Abd Allāh, 1979, p. 16).

Several of the plays were staged by al-Hakawātī before an Israeli Jewish audience, causing a great deal of professional and political interest. Among them Mahjūb, Mahjūb, staged in the 1980-1981 season, gave more than 120 performances. The play, in which the troupe attempted to activate the audience by inciting it against the reactionary character in the play, portrays the Palestinians as a community robbed of their vitality and their creativity:

A new age for the living dead... a foggy murky world where one comes and goes, speaks and writes, buys and sells, plants and ploughs, works and meets, faithfully but uselessly beating the air and striking the wind.

This is the dehumanized world into which the anti-hero Mahjūb steps, soon to understand that such a bare existence holds no more joy than a peaceful death. He gives up and chooses to die but quickly awakens when his companions unfold his life before him. The core of the play comprises the three long nights of his wake during which his life is narrated, interpreted and performed. The sequence of mishaps typical of his life begins when, in the excitement of his birth, his father drops Mahjūb on his head. He leaves school after being reprimanded for asking too many questions. In a series of tragicomic episodes, Mahjūb is made aware that he does not know who he really is. Before 1967 he refuses to stand up for the Jordanian national anthem. He shouts for joy at the radio news bulletin that boasts Arab victory in the 1967 War, but droops in despair when he learns the bitter truth. He outwits an Israeli soldier who stops him at a checkpoint and is subject to interrogation after the colours of the Palestinian flag are recognized among other colours of his clothing. The troupe present Mahjūb’s hilarious adventures to portray Palestinian reality. He is shown as a prospective member of the Israeli Histadrut workers union and as a participant in the Jerusalem municipal elections, who upon being caught voting by a TV reporter states
I didn't vote. I am simply a worker in the building - I sweep the floors.

Mahjüb is also presented as an immigrant who tries unsuccessfully to live in the United States; as a prisoner and as advisor to the late Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat. Reflecting all dimensions of Palestinian life, Mahjüb directs caustic and bitter criticism at the sterile confusion of his brethren's existence and wonders at the contradictions in the occupiers' lives: on the one hand they display military power, social organization, and technological skill, but on the other hand they are obsessed with a ridiculous security ritual. Thus, whenever Mahjüb goes out to dispose of his garbage bag, a voice is heard asking, "Shel mi ze? Shel mi ze?" i.e., a Hebrew phrase meaning "Whose is this?" often heard upon discovery of a suspicious object. The influence of Woody Allen on various episodes of the play is clear, as well as the influence of the novel by Imil Habibi al-Waqā’i’ al-Gharibā fi Ikhtijā’ Sa’īd Abī al-Nahṣ al-Mutashā’īl (The Peculiar Events Surrounding the Disappearance of Sa’īd, the Ill-Fated Pessoptimist [optimist & pessimist]) (Habibi, 1974; Habibi, 1982), in which the Palestinian tragedy is presented through the story of Sa’īd, whose image represents ironically the absurdity of the life of the Palestinian people from the perspective of those who remained after 1948 (on this novel and its adaptation to theatre see below).

Another important play staged by the troupe was Jallī, yā ‘Alī (‘Alī the Galilean) presenting the adventures of a Palestinian villager in Tel Aviv, the very heart of the occupiers' country. A circus-like burlesque style is used to portray a series of episodes in ‘Alī's life, as refugee and stranger in his own country as the:

Tragic son, the naive little boy, the thief in the night, the hot-shot cowboy, the imaginary lover, the silent worker, the steadfast militant, the black and white... as he moves from the village of his ancestors to the city of his colonizers.¹⁹

The question of ‘Alī's Palestinian identity is thoroughly explored upon his arrival in Tel Aviv: being recognized by the "sheriff" he is ordered to leave before sundown. An Israeli friend he meets in the local saloon advises him to adopt in Israeli name, Eli, and thus to evade the "sheriff", to court a beautiful Israeli woman, to work, fight, and play "safely". At the end a couple of Hebrew-speaking thugs enter the stage, shouting that their act will be presented instead, the act called "‘Alī, the Terrorist".

One of the plays staged by the troupe and regarded later as a self-fulfilling prophecy was Alī Layla wa-Layla min Layālī Rāmī al-Ḥijāra (A Thousand and One Nights of the Nights of a Stone Thrower). First presented before the outbreak of the Intifāda, it portrays a confrontation between a Palestinian youth and the military governor, Gidi, who steals the magic lamp from ‘Alā’ al-Din. The narrator indicates:

In the tiniest flash of a second, a military governor, a modern man, having stolen the lamp of ‘Alā’ al-Din, swept us away to his control tower, his headquarters, his palace... I present to you this tale of the magician governor, how he moved us aside and upon his tattered decor, installed himself. I recall it to you in my own Arab spirit and all that has been conserved by my Palestinian memory.²⁰
A series of confrontations portrays the Palestinians enduring and triumphing over one thousand and one nights of oppression and humiliation. Gidi, the military governor, loses awkwardly:

Already a man by the age of ten, the stone thrower child's game with the stones became a gesture of a free man. He saw that nothing remained but the stones themselves to defend his home from the gluttony of the governor, who was gobbling away at the trees, the stars and the sun.  

The struggle is presented as a fight between the Palestinian David and the Israeli Goliath: the Palestinian boy armed with stones is confronting the military governor's well equipped warriors. This struggle, frequently reflected in Palestinian literature since 1967, develops into a Middle Eastern "star wars" with flying carpets fighting rockets and laser beams. The satirical confrontation between the occupier Goliath and the occupied David is associated with the struggle between the traditional and the modern. "If they show us this play," says the Israeli Jewish critic Amos Kenan, "it means that instead of throwing stones at us, they want to talk to us" (Urian [in press]). Nevertheless, the staging of the play brought about the arrest of the leader of the troupe, François Abû Sâlim (‘Alyân, 1992, p. 85).

In November 1983 the troupe of al-Hakawâtî leased the al-Nuzha cinema in East Jerusalem for ten years and converted it into the first Palestinian theatre in the West Bank. Supported by a $100,000 Ford Foundation grant and donations from Palestinian individuals and organizations in the West Bank and abroad, the troupe managed to renovate the building and set it up as their base. The theatre was formally opened on 9 May 1984. The main 400-seat hall, a small 150-seat hall, and additional facilities have enabled the troupe to pursue its objectives as well as to become a facility for other professional and amateur drama, music, and dance groups. Plays are performed in the new theatre by West Bank troupes, such as the al-Jawwâl troupe, Bayt ‘Anân’s ‘Ā’idûn Theatre, the al-Sanâbil troupe and some troupes of children's theatre. Haifa’s Municipal Theatre also staged there Samuel Beckett’s Waiting for Godot in Arabic and Hebrew. Films have also been screened, including Les Enfants du Paradis (The Children of Paradise); the Israeli film Behind Bars; The October Revolution, and Costa Gavras’ Hana K. Musical programs were presented, featuring performances of folk songs, contemporary poems, sing-alongs of popular songs, and nationalist concerts, such as Muṣṭâfâ al-Kurd’s.  

The activities have included art exhibitions as well as cultural and political debates (Shinar, 1987, pp. 132, 139).

The first play to be staged in al-Hakawâtî’s own theatre in May 1985 was Hikâyat al-‘Ayn wa-l-Sinn (The Story of the Eye and the Tooth), one of several successful productions staged by the troupe in the 1980s. The play was directed by François Abû Sâlim with stage design by François Gaspard. Among the actors were Râdî Shihâda, Hiýâm ‘Abbâs and Jackie Lubeck. The play was a landmark in the development of the West Bank theatre as "a nation-building communications medium" (Shinar, 1987, p. 132). Moreover, unlike the previous plays it is more sophisticated, employing more abstract terms, generalized form, surrealist symbols and a wider use of non-verbal techniques. Music, movement, costumes, puppets, lighting and sets are put to work, enhancing a modern theatrical language almost entirely absent from the earlier, more primitive shows, which relied basically on the spoken word. Thus, in the first scene of the play, when tradition is the topic, the musical score is composed of Palestinian country tunes featuring motifs popular...
in the West Bank villages. The second scene, in which modernity is emphasized, is illustrated with contemporary international rock music, while the musical finale toward the end of the show features a majestic choir performance of the "Kyrie Eleison" of Mozart's *Requiem*, perhaps as a symbol of total destruction and hopelessness. Combinations of visual elements are used abundantly to convey the play's grim message. The colorful laundry hanging overhead during the play later turns into grimy rags; the shiny paper used to represent the village square and well becomes paler and paler during the *dabka* dance, in which the elders' bodies disintegrate into inanimate objects. Pessimism reaches its peak when, as a result of the "eye and the tooth" war, the families, dressed in typical clothes resembling uniforms, start wandering around the pile of bodies at an ever-slowing pace; the sacks on their backs become heavier and heavier burdens. The play concentrates on the larger issues of tradition, modernity, identity, war, and peace through a composite process rather than through specific adventures of individual characters. Tradition is blatantly challenged when the two pairs of twins born by the well refuse to comply with the commitment assumed by their parents when they signed the traditional wedding contract upon the babies' birth. The revolt triggers a long bloody feud between the families, which becomes the central axis of the plot. A *sulha* reconciliation ceremony between the feuding sides is imposed on the families in a later scene by the neighbors, in which a traditional *dabka* dance is performed by the elders who did not succeed in forcing their offspring to behave according to tradition. They dance until they disintegrate into an inanimate pile of puppets, which stay put on stage. The past in which the elders determined the younger generation's ways is dead, but it physically obstructs progress, forcing all the action on stage to move around the dead bodies. The atmosphere of appeasement is disturbed again in the second part of the play when a new character, symbolizing Zionism and Israel, makes his entrance. The two sides in the conflict are no longer fathers and sons, but Palestinian and Israelis. The longer their endless war becomes, the greater the losses suffered by both sides, and the weaker they become. The conclusion is far from optimistic: the final words, "how happy are the parents of the bride and the groom on the day of their children's wedding?" refer to Tanza, a Palestinian, and Sarah, an Israeli woman, who fall in love and marry under the shadow of bombs and death. Thus, notwithstanding the common fate of the two sides, no solution is offered to restore mutual respect and normal life. Walking around in blood up to their ankles, the protagonists cannot bring a message of hope for the present or the future.

The outbreak of the *Intifāda* created a new reality for al-Ḥakawāṭī and the troupe went into shock: the artistic framework seemed to be slight indeed in the face of the demonstrations of the masses, the stone throwers, the dozens of Palestinian killed and wounded and the thousands in prison. Moreover, though no restrictions were placed on the troupe itself, it was not permitted to present its work on the main stage of the *Intifāda* i.e., the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. It began to act in a vacuum, unable to reach its audience, although various productions were staged and attempts were made to adjust to the new circumstances. This is why several of its founders and earliest members began to search for other new theatrical frameworks. The original group crumbled and its leader Abū Sālim left for Europe, but not before al-Ḥakawāṭī had succeeded during his few years of intensive activities in arousing Palestinian awareness and contributing to the forming of a political Palestinian consciousness. Moreover, the theatre contributed to the arising of a new generation of actors, of whom several can currently be found seeking their
Palestinian Theatre

own theatrical paths. The great success of al-Ḥakawāṭī was despite, and perhaps because of, the constant attempts to disrupt its activities by the Israeli authorities, the Jerusalem municipality and The Council for the Criticism of Films and Plays. In order to foil these attempts the troupe was sometimes aided by Jewish Israeli theatre people who protested against the prevention of freedom of speech. The success of the theatre outside the Palestinian arena was not limited to the Israeli Jewish domain alone and the troupe also won great acclaim abroad. Since the early 1980s it has conducted annual tours in Israel, the West Bank and abroad, including participation in festivals in England, France, West Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Belgium, Holland, Poland, Scandinavia, Spain and Tunisia. One of the successful productions abroad was the above-mentioned Ḥikāyat al-‘Ayn wa-l-Sinn (The Story of the Eye and the Tooth), staged at the beginning of 1986 in London. In the late 1980s al-Ḥakawāṭī held a long tour of performances in Japan, Europe and the United States, achieving great success according to the Palestinian press.

Al-Ḥakawāṭī has become in recent years, under its new name al-Masrah al-Watani al-Filastīnī (Palestinian National Theatre), the central framework of the Palestinian theatrical movement. Its own original productions have decreased and it has increasingly became a framework for various productions of Palestinian theatrical activities and festivals including puppet and children's theatre. In 1989 the name of the theatre building was changed to al-Markaz al-Thaqafi al-‘Arabi (The Arabic Cultural Center). In recent years a new phenomenon has appeared in Palestinian cultural life: festivals of national Palestinian theatre, prompted and sponsored initially by al-Ḥakawāṭī, are convened throughout the Palestinian centers in Israel and the territories, encouraging the development of this art and opening new paths and horizons.

V. Contemporary Palestinian Theatrical Activities

The first festival of Palestinian theatre was held from 26 December 1990 to the end of January 1991 in East Jerusalem, which had consolidated its position as the center not only of Palestinian political activities but also of Palestinian cultural activities. Another festival, entitled Theatre Week, was held in December 1992 and included seven monodramas presented by troupes from the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and Israel. Similar festivals were also held in Nablus, Ramalla, Bayt Sāhūr, Bethlehem and Bayt Jālā. Prominent among the plays staged at these festivals was Imil Habibi's Umm al-Rūḥābikiyā (The Junk Dealer), based on one of his own stories (Habibi, 1985, pp. 23-28), directed by the Israeli Palestinian Yusuf Abū Warda and performed by Bushrā Qaramān. The play, which was first presented at the Acre Festival, tells the story of Hind, a junk dealer who, following the 1948 War, refused to emigrate to Lebanon with her husband and children but chose to stay in her home in Wādī al-Nisnās in Haifa. She recalls her memories of childhood interwoven with feelings of blame for the Palestinians who left their homeland as well as for those who chose to stay. The events in the short story upon which the play is based occur immediately after the 1967 War, but the events in the play have been adapted by Ḥabibi to occur in 1991 (Shalhat, 1992, p. 12).

There were three other outstanding plays dealing with the Palestinian tragedy presented at these festivals. The first of these was al-‘Akash (The Gravedigger) written and performed by ‘Adnān Ṭarābsha and directed by Riyāḍ Maṣārwa. The play is about an Israeli Palestinian who decided following the outbreak of the
Intifāda to live in the West Bank. After trying to find work in various places he begins to work as a gravedigger, since this job is the most widespread in the new situation of the Intifāda, in view of the large numbers of dead of all ages. In this monodrama the actor interwove several storytellers who tell the same story in different ways with perspective variations à la Rashomon. The second play was 'Amīd al-Kahrabā (The Electricity Pole), written by the Palestinian Israeli dramatist and critic Anṭwān Shalḥat (born 1956), directed by Salim Daw and performed by Makram Khūrī. The play is a satire dealing with the Palestinian tragedy through a meeting between a man living far from his homeland and an electricity pole on the verge of breaking, thus illustrating the Palestinian fate. This meeting takes place on a stage decorated in the blue-white colors of the Israeli flag, which enhances the man's awareness of his reality. This reality creates the sense of frustration experienced by the Palestinians in view of the exploitation by the Jewish state, the constant Jewish immigration into Israel, the hypocritical preaching for Jewish-Arab brotherly love and solidarity as well as the hypocritical behavior among the Palestinians themselves. The third play was al-Zārub (The Narrow Lane) directed by Fu'ād 'Awād and performed by Sāmiya al-Bakrī, who tells the story of her childhood in Acre. The spectators become acquainted through the play with the Israeli-Jewish attempts to efface the Palestinian heritage and civilization as well as the changes in the nature of the various Palestinian places including their renaming - a subject that has recently become very prominent in contemporary Palestinian literature.

In addition to the above-mentioned plays the festivals included al-Māsā' al-Akhir (The Last Evening) produced and directed by 'Abd al-Ju'ba and Kāmil al-Bāshā and performed by Kāmil al-Bāshā as well as al-Mī'taf (The Overcoat) (based upon Gogol's famous short story) produced by Usāmā Miṣrī, directed by Makram Khūrī and performed by Khālid 'Awwād, and Kafka's A Report to the Academy performed by 'Āmir Khalīl.

Various theatrical activities have also been held within a more general framework, such as the First Jerusalem Festival for Culture and Arts held in the middle of 1992. In addition to presenting Palestinian folklore in various fields, several theatrical troupes staged dramatic works: at the al-Qāṣaba Theatre Sāmiya al-Bakrī presented the above-mentioned al-Zārub and another troupe presented a play for children. The Palestinian National Theatre staged the above-mentioned al-Mī'taf. Troupes from the Gaza Strip were invited to participate in the festival and one of them, the Amal (Hope), presented al-Mahsūm (The Determined), written by Nābil Sāq Allāh and directed by Sā'īb al-Saqqā. Another troupe from the Gaza Strip, the al-Munādīl (The Fighter), was prohibited from entering Jerusalem to participate in the activities of the festival. The intensification of Palestinian theatrical activities since the 1970s further encouraged prominent Palestinian writers and poets to contribute to the field of playwriting by writing new dramatic texts and sometime even accompanying the various stages of production. The most prominent contemporary Palestinian prose writer, Imīl Habībī, wrote the play Luka' ibn Luka' (Luka' the Son of Luka') (1980), considered to be one of the central dramatic texts written by any Palestinian playwright. It tells the story of the Palestinian tragedy from 1948 till the Camp David accord, in three acts or three sessions in front of the above-mentioned Sundīq al-'Ajab (The box of wonders or the Magic Box) of the itinerant storyteller. One of the prominent activists in al-Masrāḥ al-Hadīth (The Modern Theatre) in Nazareth in the 1970s was Suhayl Abū Nuwārā, whose play Zughrūdat al-Ārād
Palestinian Theatre (1976) was one of the first of the few printed Palestinian plays which were aware of the technical problems that accompany an actual stage production. This is a play of obvious symbolism in which an old, sick father wants to stay on the land but is having a hard time in persuading his educated children to remain (Ashrawi, 1976, p. 55). The poet 'Abd al-Latif 'Aql (1942-1993) from Nablus, who has emerged since the late 1960s as one of the more mature and original poets in the West Bank (Ashrawi, 1976, pp. 38-42), began in the late 1970s to direct his attention to dramatic literature. One of his prominent plays is al-'Urs (The Wedding), which was staged at Bethlehem University in June 1976, and the printed text of which was published in 1980. The play, which is a history of the Palestinian tragedy, was directed by the playwright himself. Hence, 'Aql was able to carry out exactly his own stage directions which insist on "the unnecessary use of theatrical devices in the staging of the play. The music and the lighting are not for creating effects but are participating in the dialogue and expressing what it cannot express" ('Aql, 1980, p. 1). This was one of the few plays staged in the 1970s that also appeared in printed form, since although theatre troupes staged numerous plays in that period, not a single troupe published its plays. Several reasons were behind this phenomenon, among them the fact that the plays were written generally in a group effort and rarely existed in a finished or polished form. The plays are also rarely memorized precisely as most theatre troupes believe that plays are dynamic and changing, and hence improvisation and last minute changes were quite frequent. In addition the written script had to be submitted to the censor, and therefore most plays were adulterated in writing although the actors and actresses were generally quite aware of the full version. Most plays also included songs and since these do not have to be submitted to the censor, the written script usually did not contain parts which were sung. Nevertheless, one cannot totally reject the literary nature of the Palestinian theatrical activities in the 1970s (Ashrawi, 1976, p. 56). Indeed, the absence of written and faithful scripts and the affinity to the oral tradition brought these activities closer to the type of socially and politically oriented cultural activities which were and still are very popular in the territories as well as among the Palestinians in Israel. However, the basic orientation of these theatrical activities was nonetheless western.

The participation of Palestinian Israeli playwrights, directors and actors in the above-mentioned theatrical activities sponsored by Palestinian troupes from East Jerusalem and the West Bank is just one of the prominent phenomena in the consolidation of the new Palestinian consciousness after the 1967 War. It is a united culture with no distinction between the literature written in Israel or in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Since the middle of the 1970s Palestinian politically oriented directors began staging plays with clear political messages that did not distinguish between the two segments of the Palestinian people. The most prominent of these are Riyād Maṣārwa (born 1948) and Fuʿad ʿAwād. Maṣārwa, who was expelled from the Beit Tsvi theatre school because of his communist activity, studied in East Germany where he was heavily influenced by the Brechtian theatre. He staged several plays, prominent among which is Rijālī al-Shamas (Men in the Sun) first performed in Nazareth in 1976. The play was based on the novel of the same title by Ghassān Kanafānī (1936-1972) (Kanafānī, 1963; Kanafānī, 1978), in which the ideology of "armed struggle" was expressed based upon the two rejections: the rejection of the possibility of absorbing the Palestinians into other Arab states and the rejection of the existence of Israel. This work has long been regarded as a brilliant portrayal of Arab attitudes towards the Palestinians in the period before
the 1967 War, censuring of those who sought individual solutions without being actively committed to the collective national problem. Three separate narrative strands are gradually drawn together toward the final tragedy through three Palestinians of different generations who want to break away from the refugee camps and endeavour to find work in Kuwait in order to support their families. Because of the difficulty in obtaining a visa to travel to Kuwait, they have to be smuggled by various middlemen across the Iraq-Kuwait border, being cheated at every turn. A water-tank lorry driver, Abû Khayzurân, rendered impotent by a previous war-wound, agrees to smuggle them in his water-tank. But at a crucial point, with the sun beating down, he is delayed at the border in a futile discussion about his supposed girlfriend in Basra. Rushing to cross the border and open the tank, he finds his three passengers suffocated. He unloads the bodies at the closest municipal garbage dump, stripping them of all their valuables. Why, he wonders, didn't they beat on the side of the tank? Another prominent play written and staged by Masârwa, al-Mawja al-Tâsi’â (The Ninth Wave), was produced with a Belgian theatre troupe. This is a theatrical collage propounding the Palestinian side and their struggle to survive while criticizing the Israeli side. The staging of this play, based on Lorca's Blood Wedding (1935), faced difficulties with the Israeli censorship which attempted to ban it. Among the reasons given was that the play "bears a racial message, and is anti-Jewish, anti-Zionist and anti-Israeli... and can cause extremism or violation of the public order."

‘Awad, in his turn, is responsible for one of the most successful plays staged in Arabic in Israel: Mughâmarât Ra'â al-Mamlûk Jâbihr (The Adventures of the Head of the Mamluk Jâbihr) written in 1969 by the Syrian dramatist Sa‘d Allâh Wannûs (born 1940). Influenced by the German director Erwin Piscator (1893-1966) (Ballas, 1980, pp. 225-231), Wannûs' dramatic works generally show a preoccupation with self-reflection and introspection, theatre inside theatre, in addition to the involvement of the audience with what is happening on the stage. This play, adapted and directed by Fu‘âd Awad, won first prize at the Acre Festival of Alternative Theatre. It used both Arab folklore and modern western techniques to close the gap between the stage and the audience, in a kind of a play-within-a-play. The storyteller in the play, set in a local cafe, tells the story of Jâbihr who lived a thousand years ago, acts as narrator and advances the plot but also criticizes, judges, observes and warns. The second level of the play is the tale of Jâbihr as performed by the actors. Since the play presents the past within the present and bears a relevant social message, the cafe's nargillah smoking clients react to the story during the performance and afterward and compare it to their own reality. The play emphasizes the importance of the responsibility of the nation for its own fate through the tale of the struggle for authority between the caliph and one of his ministers in Baghdad. This struggle is apparent to the entire nation, which does not interfere, despite its suffering. Through the punishment of the opportunist Jâbihr, the playwright criticizes the apathy and unwillingness of the nation to take a stand, thus bringing a bitter end upon itself. ‘Awad notes that when he and ‘Adnan Tarâbsha jointly adapted the play for the stage they wanted to emphasize that he who sells his soul to the devil and betrays his people will inevitably come to such a bitter end. In order to express this message they made certain changes, most of them emphasizing the direct link between the stage and the audience, such as developing the character of the cafe's owner, replacing the storyteller with the character of the director, and incorporating puppet theatre, masks and dance (see ‘Awad's comments in Urian [in press]). In the original version of the play the story-teller is the old traditional
shāʿir (poet or story-teller), being asked repeatedly to recite a certain story, while he insists that that particular story is not suited to the times (Ostle, 1975, pp. 170-171). In 1982 ‘Awad staged another adaptation of the above-mentioned Men in the Sun by Kanafānī at the Department of Theatre in the Faculty of Arts of Tel Aviv University. He was also responsible for the directing and the sets of al-‘Aṣāfīr (The Birds) staged in the al-Nuzha - al-Ḥakawātī Theatre, which was active in the 1980s alongside the main troupe of al-Ḥakawātī. This play, written by Ibrāhīm Khalāyila, tells the story of the Intifāda in a symbolic way through a hunter of birds who regards all the people around him as birds, without any solid land beneath their feet. He persecutes both an old man, who does not struggle against his fate, and a young man who, in contrast to the old man, does struggle for his freedom which he succeeds in obtaining at the end. The troupe, which included the dramatist himself in the role of the hunter, together with Ismāʿīl al-Dabbāgh as the young man and Saqr Salāyima as the old man, presented the play abroad during a European tour. Recently ‘Awad was busy directing rehearsals for Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet at the Khan Theatre in Jerusalem. This production bears a political message not only because a young Israeli Palestinian actor - Khalīfā Nāṭūr - plays the role of Romeo, while a young Jewish actress - Orna Katz - plays the role of Juliet, but also because the Palestinian Romeo speaks with his Montague family in Arabic while speaking with his lover in Hebrew!

The Palestinian theatrical movement is now a united movement with interwoven branches in Israel and the territories. Nevertheless, despite the cultural reunification of the two Palestinian segments and the intricacy and interlacing of their theatrical activities, one cannot overlook the delicate position of the Israeli Palestinian theatre people in initiating the Palestinian national theatre, including the al-Ḥakawātī. In addition, Israeli Palestinian actors are also active in the Hebrew-speaking Israeli theatre. Moreover, in contrast to the absence of any real involvement of Arab writers and poets in Israeli Hebrew literature (Snir, 1991a; Snir, 1991b; Snir, 1992), we find in Israeli Hebrew theatre and cinema an intense involvement of Palestinian actors acting in Hebrew-speaking plays and films, and not only playing the roles of Arabs or oriental Jews. Prominent among these actors are Yūsuf Abū Warda, Makram Khūrī (born 1945), Muḥammad Bakri (born 1953), Suhayl Haddāb, Salwā Naqqāra, Bushrā Qaramān, Rāṭib Awāwida and Khalīfā Nāṭūr (born 1965). Some of them are permanently employed or frequent participants in established Israeli theatres, and especially in Haifa Municipal Theatre, which is known for fostering cooperation between Jewish and Palestinian actors. Outstanding among these actors are Makram Khūrī, who has belonged to Haifa Municipal Theatre since the mid 1970s, Yūsuf Abū Warda, who has appeared in many plays in the theatre since the beginning of the 1980s and Muhammad Bakri, who has participated in recent years in several plays. These actors have also played leading roles in several Hebrew-language plays, in some of which they successfully concealed their Arabic accent, apparently following voice training. For example, in 1993 Khūrī played the role of the father of the bride in the play The Italian Straw Hat totally concealing his original accent and in the same year Bakri played the role of Phil in the play Hollywood attempting, not always successfully, to conceal his Arabic accent. Nevertheless, the great achievements of these actors remained those in which they remained true to their native accent. For example the crowning achievement of Makram Khūrī was his performance in the role of Michel in the televised adapted version of Amnon Shamosh’s novel Michel Ezra Safra and Sons (1978) a role which contributed to his being awarded the Israel
Prize in 1988. Bakri reached his peak in The Pessoptimist, an adapted version of Habibi’s above-mentioned novel (see below).

There are several reasons for the intense involvement of the Israeli Palestinians in Hebrew theatrical activities, in contrast to their minor activities in other Hebrew cultural fields such as poetry and prose. The participation of some Arab actors in Hebrew dramatic activities would appear to be due to practical reasons, as well as commercial ones, related to the need to use Arabic-speaking actors to act the roles of Arabs. There are many such roles in the Israeli theatre due to the number of plays dealing with the political confrontation and the fact that the relations between the Arabs and Jews constitute a focus of interest for Israeli intellectuals. Moreover, the nature of the dramatic genre makes the involvement of Palestinians in the Israeli Hebrew theatre different in comparison to their minor involvement in other cultural fields. The actor is not responsible for the text but merely performs a text written by another, hence avoiding the problem of identity and preference suffered, for example, by the poets. The very decision of the poet to write his poem in Hebrew and not in Arabic indicates his internal cultural preferences, which may even betray a more general inclination, keeping in mind the Jewish alleged norm of Hebrew literature and the Islamic norm of Arabic literature (Snir, 1992; Snir, 1993c). In contrast, participation by a Palestinian actor in a play does not mean any identification with the text. Thus, it is no coincidence that there are no Palestinian dramatic texts written originally in Hebrew and that most of the plays presented by Palestinian actors in Hebrew are translated texts. Moreover, the Palestinian actor in an Hebrew-speaking play feels that he is contributing to the national Palestinian cause; all the more so when he plays the role of an Arabic character. The Israeli Jewish playwrights and scriptwriters tend to be careless in depicting Arab characters, their customs, gestures and ways of expression, and the Arab actor can help to amend these roles (cf. Salim Daw’s comments in Urian [in press]).

Not all of the Palestinian actors in the Hebrew theatre, most of whom are graduates of Israeli drama schools, confine their theatrical activities to the Hebrew language alone. They also participate in Arabic plays, whether in Palestinian or Israeli frameworks, as well as in other theatrical activities such as those produced by the Arabic section of the Israeli television. This creates a problem of identity for Israeli Palestinian actors when participating in Hebrew plays, particularly due to the fact that Hebrew culture does not distinguish between the Israeli identity and the Jewish identity. Yusuf Abū Warda, for example, gave expression to this problem some years ago when he was on the verge of resigning from Haifa Municipal Theatre. Abū Warda, known as an actor with a high political awareness, had once been a member of the Israeli Communist Party’s youth movement, and continued to be so even when he was studying at the Beit Tsvi theatre school. Some of his political utterances were very provocative such as; “in every Israeli a small Nazi is hidden.” Many of the plays in which he has taken part had political messages. However, in an interview in late 1991 he stated that he had decided not to participate in any political plays in the future:

> Since the outbreak of the Intifada I have realized that the preoccupation with politics in the theatre is naive. The theatre tried to find a different way, but the expression was isolated from the reality in which we are living.”

Another actor, Salim Ḏaw, feels that because he lived through the period of land
expropriation in the 1950s, he cannot play a role in the theatre or on the screen, without giving expression to these feelings and memories (Urian [in press]). This problem of identity, shared also by the Palestinian writers in Hebrew like Anton Shammās (born 1950) and Na'im 'Arāyidī (born 1948) (Snir, 1992), has increased in light of the extra-theatrical reality, and particularly since the outbreak of the Intifāda.

The problem of identity encouraged certain Israeli Palestinian actors to attempt to create new local frameworks for Palestinian theatre, as in the Beit Hageffen Arab-Jewish center in Haifa. One of the most prominent plays to be staged in this framework was The Play Must Go On, a collage of various satirical works by the Syrian writer and poet Muḥammad al-Māghūṭ (born 1934), based mainly on his play al-Muharrij (The Jester), adapted and directed by Makram Khūrī. The characters in the play are a troupe of itinerant actors who present a kind of theatre-within-a-theatre. In the Israeli Palestinian context of this production the wandering troupe is conceived of as a metaphor for the delicate situation of the Palestinians in Israel. The play opens with the jester pulling the troupe's wagon while bewailing his fortune:

there is no place in the Middle East in which I can set up the flag of surrender...
I am not guilty, I did not betray my people.

Makram Khūrī himself was well aware of the relevance of the play to Israeli reality and does not deny that the story of the jester is in fact the story of the Palestinians in Israel: "the play touches the schizophrenic condition and the problem of identity of the Arabs in Israel." The staging of a play of this kind with these messages and by none other but Makram Khūrī, the winner of the Israel Prize in 1988, and at the established Beit Hageffen Arab-Jewish center in Haifa, serves to emphasize the united nature of the contemporary Palestinian theatrical movement.

All the Arabic-language theatrical activities inside Israel are now an integral part of this movement, contributing to the national consciousness and enhancing the Palestinian identity. These activities are diversified and held within various cultural frameworks, some of them very close or even subordinate to the establishment. For example, in May 1992 a festival of monodramas was held at the Beit Hageffen center. Among the plays staged were al-'Akash (The Gravedigger) and 'Amūd al-Kahrābāʾ (The Electricity Pole), later also staged, as mentioned above, within the framework of the Palestinian National Theatre in the territories. The activities held every year in Beit Hageffen within the framework of the Arabic Culture and Book month also include performances of plays by Arab troupes. In 1993 both professional and amateur troupes from Haifa, Umm al-Fahm, Qalanswa and Kafr Qara' performed in this framework, in addition to amateur troupes from Arab schools in Haifa. On 1 May 1993 the First Cultural Meeting was held in the YMCA building in Nazareth sponsored by the division for Arab Culture of the Council for Culture and Art in the Ministry of Education and Culture. The activities included a pantomime by the actor Sa'id Salāma.

In Israel the mobilization of the theatrical activities for the national struggle is also expressed in a relatively new phenomenon. More and more Hebrew-speaking Palestinian actors are staging plays, most of them monodramas, before Israeli Jewish audiences. All of these plays are politically oriented, forming part of the intensified efforts of the Palestinian national movement, much of them directed by the PLO, to bring to the Israeli Jewish intellectuals the feelings, emotions and
views of the Palestinians. One of the prominent frameworks for theatrical activities in this regard in recent years has been the Acre Festival for Alternative Theatre. The actor Rātīb Awāwīdā, for example, staged in 1981 an Hebrew version of the monodrama *Bayt al-Jūnūn* (A House Madness) by the Palestinian writer and playwright Tawfīq Fayyād (born 1939). The playwright, who was arrested by the Israeli authorities for security reasons and left Israel in 1974, incorporated personal autobiographical elements into the play (Moreh & Abbāsī, 1987, p. 179), especially in describing the attitude of the security forces. The most prominent play to have been staged in Hebrew is *The Pessoptimist* based on the above-mentioned novel by Imīl Ḥabībī (Ḥabībī, 1974; Ḥabībī, 1982), adapted for the stage by Rāmi Livneh and performed by Muhammad Bakrī. The Palestinian tragedy is presented through the story of Saʿīd, a "Pessoptimist" (optimist & pessimist), whose image represents ironically the absurdity of the life of a Palestinian people from the perspective of those who remained after 1948. Comic irony, satire, black and bitter humor, wit and discerning insight into the human and Palestinian situation makes the novel, and the play based on it, one of the best that Palestinian literature has offered until now. Bakrī, who presented hundreds of performances of this play in both Arabic and Hebrew, as well as a tour of performances in the United States, won the Isaac Stern Prize for acting in 1988. Ḥabībī's novel inspired other playwrights too, such as Raʿūf Masʿād (Masʿād, 1989), to adapt it for the theatre.

The Acre Festival is still a prominent framework for Palestinian theatrical activities in Arabic and Hebrew. The 14th Acre Festival held in October 1993 included a Jewish-Palestinian joint production entitled *Ightirāb* (Alienation) staged in Hebrew, Arabic and English. The play, written and directed by Dani Rosenfeld, portrays the feelings of alienation suffered by a group of survivors following an apocalyptic catastrophe. Only after wickedness becomes its own target do the survivors understand that without cooperation they will not survive. Another play at the Festival was an Hebrew adaptation of the novel *Mawsim al-Hijra ilā al-Shamāl* (Season of Migration to the North) (1966) by the Sudanese writer al-Ṭayyīb Ṣāliḥ (born 1929) adapted for the stage by Muhammad Bakrī. The play, a monodrama directed by Uriel Zohar and performed by Muḥammad Bakrī, tells the story of Muṣṭafā Saʿīd, a Sudanese student visiting the west, not as a supplicant but in the role of avenger. Far from being overawed by western culture, he becomes a part of it. Given a teaching post at a university and adopted by British society, he proceeds to exploit its hankering for exoticism through a series of destructive relationships with British women, culminating in the almost ritual murder of his wife, Jean Morris, whose sneering defiance he has failed to tame. Returning home he meets the narrator, Ṣāliḥ, who also visited the west but was overawed by its culture. The play attempts to bridge the gap between England and Sudan i.e., between the north and the south, and its message, as noted by the director, is that the struggle against being patronized is the hardest struggle for human beings. One cannot overlook the similarity between the identity problem of the figure in the play and that of the actor himself, as a Palestinian who has become a part of Israeli society and is even referred to, like the literary figure, as a sex symbol by that society. The monodrama is concluded with what also seems to be a reflection of Bakrī's problematical identity:

There is no place for me in this village. Why am I not packing and leaving? These people, nothing will wake them. Nothing! Whenever happy they say: "I
"ask God's forgiveness!" And whenever weeping they say: "I ask God's forgiveness!" They have learned silence and tolerance from the tree and the river. But as for me, what have I learned? What have I learned?*

Other performances included in the Festival were the above-mentioned monodrama al-Zarûb, performed by Sâmiya Bakri; A Man under his Vine, Jewish and Arabic folkloristic tales adapted and directed by Bilha Feldman with the participation of Jewish and Palestinian actors; Diwân by the Acre Theatrical Troupe; and al-Kawâkbîb (The Stars), a musical troupe from Jericho, who presented a repertoire of songs of peace to celebrate the new breakthrough in the peace process.*

As mentioned above, since its foundation Israeli television has contributed to the Arabic-speaking theatre in Israel. Not only have Palestinian actors participated in its productions but also Arabic-speaking Jews, prominent among whom are Lilit Naggar (Laylâ Najjar) and Jack Cohen, especially in the field of encouraging coexistence. Some were joint Hebrew-Arabic productions aimed at encouraging coexistence, and prominent among these was the series Jîrân (Neighbors), presented in the late 1980s. The dialogue was bilingual, Hebrew and Arabic, with subtitles in both languages. The actors included Gadi Yagil and Ofra Weingarten (Hebrew) and Bassam Zu'mu't and Marlen Bajjâli (Palestinian). Zu'mu't (born 1950), a Christian from Shu'fât, is one of the outstanding Palestinian actors from East Jerusalem who is involved in the Israeli and Hebrew theatrical activities, especially within the Arabic section of Israeli television. He first appeared on television in 1975 with Khalîl Stories, and later had a great success with The Grand Restaurant. He also played in the Beit Lessin Theatre in Tel Aviv in Shmuel Haspâri's Trumpet in the Wadi adapted from the Israeli-Jewish writer Sammy Michael's novel, and as a result faced criticism from Palestinian intellectuals who were perplexed that he had agreed to act in this play.44 However, Zu'mu't now believes he has an important role to play in conveying Palestinian messages through the medium of the theatre to the people in the West Bank, and especially in the refugee camps, despite all the obstacles.45 He recently founded the Palestinian al-Qasaba Theatre in East Jerusalem and in 1993 together with the Palestinian playwright As'ad al-As'ad, the editor of the Palestinian Magazine al-Kâtib, he staged the parody Tâhûnât al-Hawâ' (The Windmill), satirizing not only the Israeli occupation but also Palestinian society.

One of the great problems of the Palestinian theatre, like Arabic theatre in general, is that of the female roles, especially in light of the status of woman in Palestinian society (Abd Allâh, 1979, pp. 93-95). This problem is more prevalent in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and less so inside Israel. In recent years several eminent actresses have appeared, such as Salwâ Naqqâra and Bushrâ Qaramân. However, as Bushrâ Qaramân complains, there are not enough good roles for actresses in which the woman is shown as a human being sharing in all aspects of Palestinian life and the struggle. In most of the plays the female roles are as someone's mother or wife or sister (Urian [in press]). There is no doubt that this situation is a direct result of the status of women in the conservative Palestinian society. The dramatic activities of Salwâ Naqqâra attempt to give expression to the feelings of oppression experienced by women in such a society.46 For reasons concerning moral and social norms and the social structure in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the awakening of Islam and the Intifâda, the difficulties confronting actresses there are more pressing than in the Arab sector in Israel. Most actresses stop appearing on the stage after marriage. Needless to say, apart from acting, all
the other professions in the Palestinian theatre in Israel or in the territories, such as playwriting, translating and adaptation to an Arabic version, directing, producing, set designing, music, scenery, costume designing, choreography, stage movement and lighting are generally restricted to males.

Although the actual Palestinian theatrical movement is active mainly in Israel and the West Bank, Palestinian theatrical activities, and mainly the writing of dramatic literature, is not limited to these areas and Palestinian playwrights throughout the world contribute to this field. One of the most prominent of such playwrights since the 1960s has been the poet and dramatist Mu'n Bsisu (1927-1984), who was active outside Israel and the West Bank. He was born in Gaza, wandered between the Soviet Union, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Egypt and Tunis, occupied several positions in the PLO and its press and publication institutions, and died in London. He published three full-length plays: Ma'isat Guevara (The Tragedy of Guevara) (1969), Thawrat al-Zanj (The Revolution of the Zanj) (1970), and Shamshun wa-Dalila (Samson and Delilah) (1971), as well as several short plays and playlets. His view of Palestine in his plays, as the critic 'Ali al-Ra'i states, is "the simple one of a land unlawfully seized by an alien force, and a people that has been either expelled into the wilderness or subjugated inside Israel, and rendered subservient to the foreign master" (Badawi, 1992, p. 367). In his plays, Bsisu exploits historical, mythical and folkloristic figures and themes representing the Palestinian tragedy and gives them universal meanings. Moreover, he advocates all revolutions seeking to liberate people from the yoke of foreign rule, internal exploitation and the loss of freedom of speech.47 Ma'isat Guevara and Thawrat al-Zanj48 draw a comparison between the Palestinians and the Zanj (Negroes) who lived under the Abbasid empire in untold misery and the Red Indians of North America. The fate of the latter is presented as a grave warning to the Palestinians who stand in the same danger of extinction as did the "redskins". In Shamshun wa-Dalila, which is particularly worthy of consideration, the dramatist succeeds in translating the emotions of anger and sorrow into convincing dramatic terms. The play, a fantasy in some parts, a prophecy in others, gives an impressive picture of a Palestinian tragedy through a family in which the parents, two sons and daughter have different views as to what must be done regarding the situation created by the successive defeats culminating in the 1967 War. One of the sons, Mazin, can no longer tolerate life under the Israelis, and he also brands as futile his father's action in keeping a key and documents proving that he owns a well in Jaffa, since Jaffa and other towns have fallen to the enemy, and an Arab return to Palestine, as promised in the fiery press articles and radio and television programs, is no more than a dream. Mazin therefore decides to run away from such an impossible situation. His brother, 'Asim, holds a different view. To his father's protest that leaving the land to the Israelis was a fatal mistake, he points out that it is the duty of every Palestinian to shape his own destiny with his own hands. Life in exile is just another prison. Of no avail is the wailing of his sister Rim, who is driven mad by her own personal tragedy as well as by the general one. She has lost not only her country, but also her baby in an Israeli raid, when she mistook a bundle she was carrying for the baby, and threw away the latter. Armed revolution, maintains 'Asim, is the only way out, alluding to the above-mentioned Ghassân Kanafâni's ideology of armed struggle. While part one of the play ends with the outbreak of the revolution, part two deals with the 1967 defeat: Israel that has won more Arab lands is now stronger than ever. Nevertheless, the resistance movement has gained momentum. The Israelis try to win over Rim, who is now in their
hands, to their side. If she denounces her friends, she will be allowed to leave and then she can become a heroine overnight by pretending she has escaped. Her interlocutor is a present-day Samson, whose long hair is made of ribbons of bullets. The failure of this new Samson to win Rim over is taken by Samson's lover, a young woman called Rachel (a stereotypical name for Jewish and Israeli women in Arabic literary and dramatic texts), to mean that the new Delilah has robbed Samson of his strength, by once again cutting his hair.

Although they were written in exile, the thematic pivot of Bsisú's plays, like that of the Palestinian contemporary theatre movement in general, still bears a resemblance to the habits of Palestinian literature; i.e., they concentrate on the tragic events of 1948 and their after effects. Furthermore, although the Palestinian theatre is a part of the general theatrical movement in the Arab world, it bears special traits which distinguish it from any other Arabic theatrical movement. The PLO has encouraged the distinctive Palestinian theatre alongside its various cultural activities and maintains an association of Palestinian artists and actors headed by the actor Ghassán Maťar (born 1930). Since 1967 and the reunification of the Palestinians in Israel with their brothers in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, one cannot speak about two different Palestinian cultural, and certainly not theatrical, movements. A good illustration is the above-mentioned short play in verse, Qaraqdáš (1970), by Samih al-Qásim (born 1939), who has directed his concern since the beginning of the 1970s to establishing a Palestinian theatre.

VI. Samih al-Qásim's Qaraqdáš

Qaraqdáš is one of the first printed Palestinian plays written with an awareness to the western sense of the genre. The dramatist, one of the most prominent Palestinian poets of our time, intended it originally to be a contribution to the establishment of a Palestinian theatre with high artistic and intellectual mission, and "to impart a political message of great poignancy to the world" (Jayyusi, 1992, p. 254). As mentioned above, Qaraqdáš was also the dramatic text which served to initiate a Palestinian theatre movement. It was first performed in the West Bank after the 1967 War by the troupe 'A'ilat al-Masrah (The Family of the Theatre) from Ramallah. This manifestation of the reunification of the two segments of the Palestinian people has underlined the importance of the play as the first serious dramatic text written after the 1967 War by a prominent Palestinian writer. Qaraqdáš illustrates the beginning of the professional stage in the Palestinian modern theatrical movement. Moreover, through this play one can follow some of the pivotal thematic and poetic aspects of Palestinian theatrical movement, its literary and ideological background and the general universal, as well as particular Arabic sources, of influence and inspiration.

The specific personal and general political and cultural contexts of the late 1960s are essential for an understanding of the play. Regarding the personal context, one cannot overlook al-Qásim's own experiences in the few years preceding the writing of the play, especially in the wake of the 1967 War; his imprisonment at the beginning of the war; the censorship of his literary works (al-Qásim, 1969a, pp. 30-32); and his feeling that "on the fifth of June I was reborn" (al-Qásim, 1969, p. 26). On the other hand the general background of these years also clarifies several aspects relating to the play, particularly in light of the development of Palestinian literature after the 1967 War and following the reunification of the two Palestinian segments. Moreover, there is an unmistakable impact on the play of one of the main issues which occupied the Arabic general literary system in the
late 1960s i.e., the issue of *iltizām* (commitment). That term, considered since the 1950s to be an essential part of the vocabulary of Arab intellectuals and writers, was employed to indicate the necessity for a writer to convey a message, rather than merely creating an imaginative work for its own sake. Although its significance became diffuse and generally denoted a certain measure of nationalism, one of its dominant meanings was the adoption of a Marxist stand (Snir, 1992a, pp. 7-54). The genre of verse-drama chosen by the dramatist was also very popular with committed Arab playwrights in the 1960s, particularly for political criticism.\(^{50}\)

The play's eponymous title, indicates one of the significant sources of influence and inspiration of contemporary Palestinian, as well as Arabic, theatre and literature in general. It alludes to the historical figure of Qaraqūsh, a eunuch whose full name was Bahāʾ al-Dīn b. ‘Abd Allah al-Asadi (d. 1201). Qaraqūsh obtained his liberty and was appointed as an Amir and then chamberlain. In this capacity he served the family of the late caliph and is said to have administered his office with great severity, such as preventing the family of the caliph from increasing by separating men and women. Apart from his strictness and cruelty a series of absurd verdicts are attributed to him in a work entitled *al-Fashūsh fi Hukm Qaraqūsh* (The Book on the Stupidity in the Judgments of Qaraqūsh) (Ibn Mamātī [n.d.], pp. 8-28). These verdicts and judgments, which have nothing to do with statecraft but are court verdicts, are typical and familiar anecdotes, equally prevalent among other nations. This was the historical background to a popular and folkloric figure named "Qaraqūsh" (also called "Sultan" in one of the manuscripts of the above-mentioned book) who became notorious as a byword for cruelty and stupidity.\(^{51}\)

Al-Qāṣim's allusion to that historical figure in the 1960s was a part of a then popular method adopted by Arab poets and playwrights in order to express political and social views. This is, in fact, the strategy of *qinā* (mask), i.e., the presentation of ideas and feelings through ancient figures generally from the Islamic or Arab heritage. Al-Qāṣim apparently adopted this strategy under the influence of famous Arab poets and playwrights and particularly the Iraqi poet ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayyātī (b. 1926), and the Egyptian poets and playwrights ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Sharqāwī (1921-1987) and Šālah ‘Abd al-Šābur (1931-1981). It enabled the playwright not only to avoid censorship but also to give his play a universal meaning (al-Naqqash, 1991, p. 115). In emphasizing this meaning, the dramatist also defines at the beginning of his work the place and time as follows:

The Time: every time
The Place: every place (al-Qāṣim, 1970, p. 7)

In every time and place there exists a tyrant like Qaraqāsh and in every time and place people rebel against his despotic and arbitrary rule. In order to emphasize this universal human aspect three groups - ancient Greek, ancient Egyptians and modern Europeans - move across the stage in dumb show in the opening scene, all tied with chains and undergoing various tortures. The last group, that of the modern Europeans, crosses the stage accompanied by the voice and picture of Adolph Hitler. The scene clearly demonstrates how despotism has had various faces in the course of history but that its logic is one, and a clear analogy is made between all the tyrants in the history of humankind and between the most notorious of them in modern times. Qaraqāsh, representing despotism throughout the centuries, is the slave-driver of ancient Greece and Egypt and alludes to the modern dictator and mass murderer, Hitler. Preaching the philosophy of aggression as a way out of
economic difficulties, Qaraqāsh regards human beings as cannon-fodder and lubrication for the war machine. The allusions to the Nazi characteristics of Israeli behavior are clear and unambiguous, and such allusions are widespread in contemporary Palestinian literature and theatre.

The universal human dimensions of the play and its relevancy to all, including the spectators, is strengthened by a note in the printed text:

The spectators may intervene in the dialogues and express their opinions whenever they want (al-Qāsim, 1970, p. 8).

This note betrays the clear influence of the German director Erwin Piscator who, together with Brecht, whom he greatly influenced, believed that conveying social and political messages was the prime aim of the theatre in a dynamic modern society (Taylor, 1984, pp. 217-218). In his "political theatre", and especially in his experimental productions of the 1920s in Berlin, Piscator encouraged the audience to take an active part in the events on stage. The relevant message of the play is expressed clearly in the overture by the chorus:

In every time
In every place
He comes in the form of a human being
Accompanied by death
While the voice is sounding:
He has lived in every time
He has lived in every place
Qaraqāsh,

The play is divided into four acts, or pictures (lawḥāt) as they are called by the dramatist, each of which opens with the marching onto the stage of two masked men - one laughing and the other crying - bearing a sign with different slogans in each act. The signs state successively (in the third act there are two slogans):

(I) "The false god (al-tāghūt) ascends to the throne on the ladder of hunger."
(II) "Qaraqāsh reaps others' wheat and drinks their wells."
(III) a. "In order to become dictator you must strip the people of their heritage."
   b. "The idea of the removal of the differences between the classes in society is destructive for its originators."
(IV) "When the masses feel the knife cutting their flesh, they have no choice but to think of something to do if they want to continue living."

Mentioning the false god (al-tāghūt) at the beginning of the first act is intended to construct the literary and intertextual context in which the play must be interpreted. When a nation is undergoing a severe crisis, such as the hunger demonstrated in the play, two solutions exist. The first is that of the revolutionary farmer, representing the consciousness of the playwright and the voice of universal justice: the crises can and must be solved by hard work. The second solution is presented by the
despot who calls for attacking the neighbors and seizing their sources. The despot’s figure alludes to the figure of the Dajjāl (the Deceiver) i.e., the False Christ, Antichrist, or Armillus: that evil personage endowed with supernatural powers who will come forth before the end of time and rule in heresy and tyranny for a limited period of either 40 days or 40 years, to be followed by the universal conversion of humanity to Islam. His appearance is one of the proofs of the end of time and he will die at the hands of the Mahdi (the Rightly Guided) or Jesus (Abel, 1965, pp. 76-77). In ancient Muslim traditions the appearance of the Antichrist is preceded by Ashrāṭ al-Sā’a (The Signs of the Resurrection) mentioned in the Qurʾān (47:18). Some of these signs are frequently presented in the form of what is described by E. R. Curtius, who discussed the adaptation of topoi to literary use, as the topos of the "world upsidedown" (mundus inversus). Curtius has illustrated this topos through one of the pieces among the Carmina Burana, a collection of Goliardic poems whose underlying theme is the Horatian carpe diem. In twentieth century Arabic literature this topos, like apocalypticism in general (Emmerson, 1981, p. 3), has become extremely popular, acquiring new functions and sometimes becoming a cliche, "which can be used in any form of literature" (Curtius, 1952, p. 70). It has become imbued with new life in modern Arabic literature and is exploited by many poets, writers and playwrights. The alluded to appearance of Antichrist, generally illustrates the omen boding the coming revolution, which will annihilate oppression and tyranny, and launch a new era. The significant allusions of this topos to "The Signs of the Resurrection" are accompanied in contemporary Arabic poetry and prose by the hyperbolic presentation of an actual or possible rejected reality - be it personal, political, social, ethical, national, rhetorical or even aesthetic-critical (Snir, 1994).

Great use is made of this topos in the play, and especially in scenes which combine realistic but unacceptable conditions and present them as the "world upsidedown". Exploited in order to challenge a state of affairs demanding immediate reform it is intended to forewarn against the dangerous deviation from the desired reality which must be restored. Hence, a nonexistent, reversed, rejected reality is created, illustrating the dangers entailed by this dangerous deviation, unless swiftly corrected. Like the identification of Antichrist with a specific pope or political figure in the middle ages (Emmerson, 1981, p. 7), the Islamic allusions in the play indicate that the Israeli regime was perceived by the playwright, shocked by the 1967 War, as the Antichrist of the 1960s. Moreover, as in Palestinian literature in general, the topos is used here to indicate that a world in which vices have become virtues needs urgent reform. As this topos is inherent in the literary imagination of the Arab poets and writers, it immediately comes to mind when they witness a deviation from the desired reality, as they regard it. The signs of Judgement Day, portended by the "world upsidedown", are no longer in the distant future, but here and now. Thus, the hyperbolic presentation of an actual or possible rejected and horrible reality, in a way which reminds the reader or spectator of these signs, powerfully challenges a situation which demands immediate reform, as manifested in Cassius's words in Shakespeare's Julius Caesar (1.3: 62-71):

Why all these things change, from their ordinance,
Their nature, and pre-formed faculties,
To monstrous quality; why, you shall find,
That heaven hath infused them with these spirits,
To make them instruments of fear and warning,
Like archetypes, the allusions to the "world upsidedown" are, in some respect, the product of the "collective unconscious" of Arab poets and writers, both Muslim and Christian, bequeathed by the Arab and Islamic heritage.

One of the advantages of this topos is that it conceals the writer's own confusions and shifting opinions as he slowly faces reality (Hill, 1971, p. 66). Another advantage is its vagueness and ambiguity: it can encompass attacks on more than one target. The poets and writers who use its symbolism have presumably no consciously evasive purpose in mind. Like those who used the symbolism of Antichrist in seventeenth-century England (Hill, 1971, pp. 44-45), they draw on allegorical habits of mind inherited from the past. Nevertheless, its imprecision allows differing interpretations to be put upon it, either by different people or by the same person appealing to different groups. The vagueness and ambiguity also have camouflage advantages: in Egypt in the 1960s, for example, critics of the local "world upsidedown" were in fact attacking the regime. Nevertheless, even the supporters of the regime could hardly object to a denunciation of this "world upsidedown", as long as it was not too clearly defined. Like sin, everyone was against it (cf. Hill, 1971, p. 45).

Using the topos of the "world upsidedown" al-Qāsīm attempts to destroy the foundations of the political and social world in which the Palestinians are living. He calls for the overthrow of the tyrant, who exploits the people and uses them for the sake of increasing his own wealth and glory. Some saw in the figure of Qaraqāsh a symbol of the Imperialist powers (e.g., al-Naqqaš, 1991, p. 121), others referred to him as a symbol of the Israeli Military establishment (e.g., Sayegh, 1990, p. 223) or even as standing for Moshe Dayan, the noted Israeli hero of the 1967 War (Badawi, 1992, p. 366). The progress of the play from its first act to the last one illustrates the inevitable development of reality, as the dramatist perceived it in the late 1960s: the first act ends with the killing of the revolutionary farmer, who calls for a solution to the internal crisis through hard work and not by attacking the neighbors. Following mock-trials, the people finally rebel in the last act and the peasants kill the tyrant, proclaiming themselves as the only just ruler.

The play bears the evident influence of Brecht and his principal ideas in the theory of drama, and especially of his play The Caucasian Chalk Circle (1943-5). The poetry of al-Qāsīm is in general heavily influenced by Brecht's poetry, drama and political ideologies (al-Qāsīm, 1969, p. 28; al-Naqqaš, 1991, p. 116) and he even translated some of Brecht's poems into Arabic (e.g., al-Qāsīm, 1979, pp. 10-13). Like The Caucasian Chalk Circle, Qaraqāsh could be described as a fairy tale for grown-ups. Outdoor scenes and images of nature abound in both plays, which deal with extremes of goodness and evil, omitting anything in between (Hayman, 1984, p. 80). The influence of Brecht is seen in al-Qāsīm's tendency towards the balladeer: his villainous rulers, his merciless soldiers, his greedy and rebellious peasants and his eccentric judge are characters who might have stepped out of a fairy tale or ballad, but he also brings much of the human experience into focus as he modulates between stylized action and poetic narration.

Al-Qāsīm attempts in Qaraqāsh to present the type of epic theatre advocated by Brecht, Piscator and other German theatre people of the 1920s. According to Brecht, who also stressed the political significance of the genre and its complete exclusion of empathy, the essential point of epic theatre is that it appeals less to the spectator's feelings than to his reason (Taylor, 1984, p. 97). Al-Qāsīm also
exploits one of Brecht's principal theories of drama - the Verfremdungseffekt, known as the "V-Effect" (Alienation Effect often abbreviated to "A-effect"), i.e., the retention of a degree of critical detachment and distance from the play and performance instead of complete absorption by the actor in his role (Taylor, 1984, p. 12). The dramatist exploits various techniques in order to keep the audience consciously aware of the fact that it is a theatrical performance they are witnessing, and to limit their emotional identification and assimilation with specific characters and situations. The instructions given by the dramatist and the directional approach encouraged by him, are that the actor is not required to attempt just to be the character, to present it entirely from the inside and endeavour to lose himself in it, but, while understanding its psychological workings, to present it in such a way as to imply an attitude towards the character. It is interesting to note that the Brechtian "V-Effect" is known from the ancient theatrical tradition of the Arabs in which the actors were dressed to look like the persons they represented, but did not actually represent them i.e., they did not lose their identity as actors (Moreh, 1992, pp. 129, 147, n. 43).

The figure of Qaraqash incorporates the figure of Brecht's Azdak and the myth of Qaraqush, to both of whom were related a series of absurd and stupid verdicts. A woman who lost her son in the war is accused of treason since she is not happy with her sacrifice and Qaraqash's verdict is as follows:

You will stand on one leg for six days...
And before the sixth day you will give birth to
Seven children
The seventh of them will be called up to the army
And the other six will be called up also! (al-Qasim, 1970, p. 66).

This verdict, like his other verdicts (e.g., al-Qasim, 1970, pp. 71-73), is in accordance with the "world upsidedown" situation created by the despot: the bereaved woman is condemned simply because she insists on her right to mourn her son. Similarly, in The Caucasian Chalk Circle, when an innkeeper accuses a stableman of assaulting his daughter-in-law, Azdak condemns the girl for assaulting the man. "Do you imagine you can go around with a bottom like that and get away with it in Court? This is a case of deliberate assault with a dangerous weapon." He confiscates a dun-colored horse he has always fancied, and orders the girl to go with him to the stable, "so that the Court may investigate the scene of the crime" (Brecht, 1969, pp. 76-77).

The similarity between the two plays is also evident in what seems to be at first glance a contradiction between the abundance of scenes of men being dragged to the gallows and between the pacifist messages of both plays and the insistence that wars should and could be abolished. Despite such messages both plays indicate that social injustices can only be removed by revolution. Al-Qasim, like Brecht, reflects his social and political interests and especially his Marxist preoccupations in his satirical attack on bourgeois society and its standards. He preaches Marxism as a socio-political order designed to remedy all the grievances of society. It is not only a local and national struggle but a universal and social one as well (cf. Kanazi, 1989, pp. 135-137).

While all the characters in the play may be regarded as simple illustrations of the dramatist's political and social ideologies, one of the figures, the son of Qaraqash, is an intricate and complicated character: as a noble spirit he falls in love with a
beautiful peasant girl and insists on marrying her, despite the girl's attempt to remind him of the huge social barrier that separates them. Brecht seems to have exerted a strong influence on al-Qāsim with regard to the figures in the play. The character who is reminiscent of Azdak is that of the soldier who replaces Qaraqāsh while he goes to eat (al-Qāsim, 1970, pp. 66-70): "I have not read the books of law," he says to the defendant brought before him, "and the illiterate justice is responsible for removing injustice from you." Like Azdak, the rogue turned judge in *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, this soldier too is a contradictory human being who escapes the rigid formulation of his social and political significance. After hearing the defendant tell of the destruction of his fields by the military and the death of his son in the war, he pronounces his verdict:

```
We know that the justice included in the formal texts
Rules that you should be hanged
But the illiterate justice
Rules that you will take from the state treasury
All which will guarantee your nourishment, till your plants forget
The war vehicles' wheels
And the soldiers horses' hoofs
The justice included in the illiterate regimes adds
That the grief at your dead son is your own right,
Not of a vizier grieved with ink tears on the paper
And since I am an illiterate ignorant of the history of antiquities
And since I am an illiterate ignorant of the geography of the lands
```

The last six lines were chosen by the dramatist to be the motto of the play. It is only natural that on returning to his seat Qaraqāsh accepts the recommendation of the aristocracy and condemns the soldier who replaced him to death, since he "incites the dregs of people against us." The manner in which the soldier dispenses justice reminds us of what Brecht said about the character of Azdak, the ribald, drunken anti-hero, reminiscent of Švejk, elevated to the role of judge:

```
First I had only his lousy jurisdiction, which made poor people come off well.
I knew I mustn't suggest that the normal laws should be bent for justice to prevail, but to indicate that with careless, ignorant, even bad jurisdiction, something emerges for those who really needed law. That's why Azdak had to have the self-seeking, amoral, parasitical features of the lowest, most degenerate of judges. But I still needed an elementary cause of a social kind. I found it in his disappointment that with the overthrow of the old masters, what ensued was not a new era but an era of new masters. So he goes on enforcing bourgeois law, only dilapidated, sabotaged, adapted to serve the unqualified self-interest of the judicature (Hayman, 1984, p. 82).
```

The end of the play confirms Brecht's influence: the vizir is sent by Qaraqāsh's son as a mediator between the prince and his father and when the despot is asked what would be his judgement if a prince in his land should fall in love with a commoner, he unhesitatingly pronounces the death of the lovers and asks that their bodies be carried to him. Discovering that he has unwittingly put his own son to death, he is driven by shock and grief to declare a new war in which his people
will be compelled to take part. However, the people are unable to stand any more of the despot's crimes and an open revolt ensues in which both Qaraqāsh and his minister are killed. A popular rule is soon set up amid universal jubilation and one of the farmers takes Qaraqāsh's seat, with the soldiers throwing away their helmets and joining the farmers in singing and dancing. One of the farmers shouts: "Long live the righteous king!" and all the farmers and soldiers shout: "We are the righteous king! We are the righteous king!" The similarity between this scene and the concluding scene of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* is striking.

*Qaraqāsh*, written in a period during which the dramatist believed that Communism would cure all ills, could be described as a political play. It was written in order to ignite the people and inflame them to act against a political and social order perceived to be rotten. In the play, as in his poems, al-Qāsim builds a dialectic between good and evil, i.e., between the oppressed people and the tyrannical regime. The emphasis is put on the people's power to overcome all misery, all insanity of judgement, and emerge victorious. "In fulfillment of the tradition of the fables of old," as the Egyptian critic 'Ali al-Rā'i states, "a prince loves a peasant girl. Although the result is not at all happy, the young prince's desire that the castle should lower itself a little and the cottage rise a little is achieved, even though the union may be in death" (Badawi, 1992, p. 366). The Brechtian influence in this vision is clear, as it is apparent in other levels of the play in general. This influence, added to that of the ancient Arabic and Islamic heritage seems to illustrate some of the main origins of inspiration for contemporary Palestinian theatre in general.

**Conclusion**

Palestinian theatre, like Palestinian literature in general, has flourished as a direct reaction against suppression of freedom, particularly since the 1967 War. The reunification of the Palestinians in Israel with their brothers in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip after the war, the unification of the cultural movements within and outside Israel, have promoted the emergence of this theatre. Furthermore, the role of Israeli Palestinian theatre people in the rise of the national Palestinian theatre since the 1970s has been decisive. The thematic pivot of Palestinian theatre in general is still, like Palestinian literature, the tragic events of 1948 and their after effects. Although Palestinian theatre is a part of the general theatrical movement in the Arab world, it bears special traits which distinguish it from any other Arabic theatrical movement.

The professionalization of Palestinian theatre has taken a line parallel to the escalation of Palestinian resistance and has lived up to historical challenges, defying the hardships imposed by censorship, geographical isolation and lack of education. Moreover, the theatrical processes and institutional structure have been influenced as much as the content and style by the particular circumstances in which Palestinian theatre has functioned. Political constraints, such as censorship and other forms of control, played a role in leading this theatre to develop a style of collective work. Plays are created, especially in the theatre in East Jerusalem, through a process of improvisation on agreed topics; they do not rely on written texts. Some troupes claim that their plays were written solely for the benefit of the censorship authorities, "who nevertheless fail from time to time, to grasp the real meaning of the messages" (Shinar, 1987, p. 138). Thus, much variation develops during long months of rehearsal and interaction with the audience, until the plays are finally shaped. Palestinian theatre, more than literature, has tried to fulfil the multiple tasks and
Palestinian Theatre

Roles imposed upon it by historical and socio-political conditions. Its main purpose has been to reflect the political aspirations of the Palestinian people. Therein lie both its strength and its weakness: it is a political instrument called upon to raise the level of national consciousness, to incite resistance and revolution, to record the trials and experiences of the nation as a whole, and to prepare for and project a better future. It also has the duty of being the social critic, conducting an exacting self-examination and exposure of the ills and problems of a traditional society trying to meet the challenges of progress and development. Finally, it is a part of the dynamic cultural Palestinian movement with the projected vision of self-help and education directed to and rooted in the masses of the Palestinian people. However, as a leading Palestinian critic indicates, "lacking all types of abstract and material security under occupation, it also lacks the assurance of objective criticism, for most people look to it for its didactic quality" (Ashrawi, 1976, p. 58). Moreover, Arab critics, and even leftist Israeli intellectuals, have been willing to accept unconditionally anything which is Palestinian as a positive contribution to the Palestinian, Arabic and sometimes new Israeli culture. This indulgent attitude of irresponsible panegyric has caused Palestinian writers, poets and critics themselves to demand greater honesty and responsibility from their readers and critics (Ashrawi, 1976, p. 58).

Contemporary Palestinian theatre is developing under the influence of the Arabic heritage, ancient folklore and contemporary Arabic literature but also under the influence of western theatre. A major influence on this theatre is still exerted by Brecht, especially with regard to the essence, contents and techniques of the epic theatre, which appeals less to the spectator's feelings than to his reason. One cannot overlook too the influence of the Hebrew theatre, in view of the fact that many prominent Palestinian actors are graduates of Israeli-Hebrew schools of theatre. Furthermore, due to the nature of this cultural activity which obliges direct contact with the people, the relation between the Palestinian dramatic movement in Israel and Hebrew dramatic activities is stronger than in any other cultural domain. Palestinian theatre has been adopted in its full western image and practice, but the dramatic impulse in Palestinian peasant culture is still very popular, especially that of the Dabka dances, performed on special occasions such as weddings. The two traditions currently exist side by side, and are even interwoven: various plays have combined elements from the peasant culture and some theatre troupes perform in the villages and attract large audiences. Essentially, however, the theatre is a city activity (mainly in East Jerusalem, Haifa, Nazareth and Ramallah), and its audience is the middle class, the educated and the politically aware working class. Nevertheless, the Palestinian theme and the revolutionary orientation of most plays have taken Palestinian drama away from the bourgeoisie and the elite and have made it available to a larger segment of society. Like other cultural and literary activities and productions, drama has become a serious means of political education, as reflected in the activities of al-Hakawatl. This theatre has functioned as a channel presenting some of the most basic dilemmas of Palestinian nation building. The troupe has raised questions of identity without concealing its affinity with Palestinian, rather than pan-Arab or pan-Islamic characteristics; it has given expression to the tradition-modernity dilemma, stating its preference for modernity, without however discarding tradition as a source of inspiration and reliance. Through its activities the theatre has promoted the sumud (steadfastness) principle as a solution to the inevitable confrontation between pride and survival and between the hopes for an independent future and the pressures of occupation; and it has
enhanced the two-front struggle of Palestinian women, both as symbols of Palestinian changing values and as a channel in which Palestinian actresses may enjoy equal rights.

Contemporary Palestinian theatre is developing rapidly although facing various professional problems regarding the troupes, the texts, and the relationship with the audience (al-Asadi, 1989, pp. 192-205) in addition to major budgetary problems. Due to political circumstances Palestinian theatre, like Palestinian cinema (al-'Awdât, 1989, pp. 61-100), cannot fully develop, especially since it still lacks the budget and theatrical infrastructure such as halls in which to perform. Moreover, the severe economic problems in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip resulted at the end of 1993 in decreased theatrical activities, especially of the al-Hakawâti Theatre under its new name al-Masrah al-Watani al-Filastini (Palestinian National Theatre). 53 The Middle East peace process, the breakthrough in Israeli-Palestinian relations and the mutual recognition between Israel and the PLO on 9 September 1993 have given hope not only to the Palestinian people but also to the Palestinian theatre people. They are seeking now to establish their national Palestinian theatre in an independent Palestinian state.

Notes

* Bibliographical items appearing in the Reference list are quoted in the notes in abbreviation. Other items are quoted in full.

1. See, for example, the comments of Ḥabīb Būlus and Imīl Ḥabibī in Urian [in press].
2. Karagöz, a word apparently derived from Qaraqush Saladin's official (see Section VI, below), was originally the chief character of the Turkish shadow play and his figure gave the title to these plays. The Turkish Karagöz was copied by all the Arabic-speaking countries and was introduced into their own shadow theatres, modeled on the Turkish; just as non-Arab countries were similarly influenced by Karagöz while under Turkish domination (Landau, 1958, pp.24-25).
3. See Bama 52 (December 1947), p. 43.
4. Among the famous Egyptian troupes that visited Palestinian was that of the renowned actor and director Georges Abyad, who introduced European classical dramas before and after the First World War (Landau, 1958, p. 78).
5. See Bama 50 (January 1947), p. 110.
8. Naṣr al-Jawzī wrote a book on the history of Palestinian theatre 1918-1948 (al-Jawzi, 1993) and Jamīl al-Jawzī has been active in the press (e.g., his essay in the Jordanian newspaper al-Dustūr, 29 January 1986).
11. See 'Affif Shalyūt's report about the Arabic participation in the Third Haifa Festival for Children's Theatre held in April 1993 (Mawaqif, March-April 1993, pp. 113-119).
12. See his essay "Save Us from this Cruel Love" [Arabic], al-Jadid, June 1969, pp. 2-4.
13. In July 1983 the league published a one-issue magazine entitled al-Masrah (The Theatre) including details about the activities of the festival and aimed at fostering the Arabic-language theatrical activity. An attempt was made in that publication, as well as in the activities of the festival, not to emphasize the Palestinian nature of the theatrical movement, hence, calling it an Arabic theatrical movement. This would appear to have been for fear of the authorities' reaction and due to the close links of some of the participants with the establishment.
14. To evade lack of freedom writers frequently used pseudonyms to hide their identity (Ashrawi,
15. After a famous fair held in ancient times in Mecca in which poetic tournaments were held.
16. On the relation of the Palestinian theatre to the ancient storyteller, which was "the cornerstone for the beginnings of the local theatre" see Shihada, 1989, pp. 173-174.
18. Quotations from the English translation distributed to the audience (Shinar, 1987, p. 135).
19. Quotations from the English translation distributed to the audience (Shinar, 1987, p. 136).
20. Quotations from the English translation distributed to the audience (Shinar, 1987, p. 136).
22. On these activities of al-Kurd see al-Qindil, October 1988, pp. 36-37.
23. According to statistics published by the Association of Palestinian Writers 52 theatrical productions were staged by Palestinians from the territories during the first three years of the Intifada (Filastin al-Tahwra, 20 January 1991, p. 30).
24. For example, staging the plays in day time in order to bypass the frequent curfews imposed by the authorities ('Alyan, 1992, p. 87).
26. For the report about the performances in Japan see al-Yawm al-Sabi', 10 April 1989, p. 32; in Europe see al-Yawm al-Sabi', 15 May 1989, p. 32; and in the United States see al-Yawm al-Sabi', 7 August 1989, p. 32.
28. A short story (1915) by Akutagawa Ryunosuke (1892-1927), which, together with his story "In a Grove" (1921), was made into the classic 1950 film Rashomon, directed by Akira Kurosawa (born 1910).
32. One of the critics wrote in 1976: "No theatre group has ever performed without having one or two of its members in jail" (Ashrawi, 1976, p. 56).
33. Kanafani’s novel was also adapted for the cinema (1973) by the Egyptian director Tawfiq Salih who also wrote the script. The film, entitled al-Makhdu’un (The Misled), has not been widely seen because of censorship considerations and consequently has found a place only in the archives. It is considered one of the important Arabic films due to the high level of directing. On other theatrical adaptations of the novel see Ilan Pappe, "A Text in the Eyes of the Beholder: Four Theatrical Interpretations of Kanafani’s Men in the Sun" in this volume.
34. See interview with the playwright in Kolbo (Haifa), 7 July 1989, pp. 63-65.
35. Cf. Section VI, below; Snir 1994; Snir 1994b [regarding Najib Mahfuz’s short story Taht al-Mizalla (Under the Buss-Shelter)].
39. The play was originally published in 1965. About the play see Sayegh, 1990, p. 222.
41. See Yediot Ahronoth, Supplement, 10 April 1992, pp. 31-33. This assumption was asserted during an interview with the actor and the director broadcast on 3 October 1993 by the Voice of Israel during the Acre Festival.
42. In the above-mentioned radio interview Bakri confirmed that those concluding sentences of the monodrama also reflect his feelings as a Palestinian living in Israel.
43. The difficulties faced by the troupe in entering the festival area, despite the official invitation (according to an interview with the troupe’s members broadcast by Israeli Television on 4
October 1993), illustrates the obstacles posed by the authorities since 1967 in order to minimize contacts between the Palestinians in the territories and those inside Israel.

44. E.g., Muhammad Batrawi in Ha'aretz, Supplement, 15 September 1989, p. 11.

45. See his words in Maariv's supplement, 6 January 1989, pp. 28-29, 42. He also indicated his new orientation in several interviews with Israeli Television e.g., on 2 September 1994.

46. See interview with her in Kolbo (Haifa), 21 May 1993, p. 81, in which she speaks about a new play she was presenting in Bet Hageffen during the Arabic Culture Month in May 1993.

47. See, for example, the foundation of national Palestinian theatre in the refugee camp of 'Ayn al-Ḥilwa in Lebanon (Filastin al-Tahwira, 20 January 1991, p. 27).


49. This play was staged on 16 April 1984 by Firqat al-Masrah al-Watani al-Filastini (al-Ḥakawāṭi) in the First Festival of the Wandering Arab Theatres held in Rabat (16-26 April 1984). It was directed by Jawād al-Asadi who stated that he decided to present this play "in order to illustrate the connection between the revolution of yesterday and the revolution of today through the figure of 'Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad the leader of the Zanj" (al-Ḥurryyya, 13 May 1984, pp. 45-46).


53. From the picaresque novel "The Good Soldier Švejk" (1923) by the Czech novelist and short-story writer Jaroslav Hašek (1883-1923).

54. Al-Ḥakawāṭi was even forced to sell some of its equipment as a result of a budgetary deficit (Ha'aretz, Supplement, 3 September 1993, p. 13).

References

[1. The items are listed alphabetically under the author's known last name.

2. The definite article al is not taken into consideration in the alphabetical order.

3. Titles of scholarly studies in Arabic and Hebrew are translated into English with indication in parentheses of the original language.

4. Titles of Arabic-language literary and dramatic works are listed in the original]


Edinburgh University Press.


Snir, R. (1993c) Original and Translation on the Contact Line (Hebrew). In: S. Somekh (ed.),
Translation as a Challenge - Papers on Translation of Arabic Literature into Hebrew. Tel Aviv University, pp. 21-39.


Nicosia: Bīsān Press.


