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**“Inbetweeners”:  
Dialogic Strategies and Practices for Writing Arab Migration  
Through Intercultural Theatre.**

A dissertation presented in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy  
in  
Creative Writing

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## Abstract

This thesis deploys both critical and creative methodologies to address the research question ‘How can playwriting contribute to an understanding of intercultural experiences, identities, and differences between the Middle East and the West?’

When I began this research journey, as a Jordanian-born Muslim playwright now living in Aotearoa New Zealand, I wanted to write a ‘great Arab theatre’ to capture the potentials and positive outcomes of the immigration experiences of Middle Easterners and Muslims and their transnational movements, re-settlements, and inbetweenness, as well as acknowledge the suffering of a region that has been subjected to generations of colonial trauma and is little understood and deeply stereotyped by the West. I wanted to creatively investigate the ways in which migration, and now a global pandemic that has rewritten our understanding of borders, have both fractured and expanded my viewpoints on myself, my culture, and my birthplace. As I explored scholarly models of trauma, I discovered that they, too, have been characterised by colonial thinking and often deploy limited cultural stereotypes as metaphors to explain and address trauma. None of these models fit my experiences.

There are uniquely Arab models of storytelling and performance but, looking at many of the key playwrights from the region showed a deep interweaving of Western playwriting traditions in their work as well. Again, these Western-influenced elements seemed to me in part useful yet ultimately inadequate containers to hold my experiences or grasp the wider backdrop of my region’s complex and contested histories. My goal became to find new, expanded, theatrical forms to initiate a dialogue between concepts of diasporic identity, trauma, conflict, and colonial history in the context of the Middle East and its relationships with its Others - including through the specific trajectory of my own journey and how my subjectivity has been shattered and reformed by multiple transnational relocations. I found it helpful to draw on scholarship about intercultural theatre, but I also developed new models of structure and characterisation that depart from and explicitly reject Western models in novel ways, to try to capture the uniqueness of ‘inbetweenness’ that is symptomatic of my region, myself, and my culture. Linear temporality, fixed characterisation, discrete scene plotting, causal action sequences, character hierarchies, and monolingual, unequivocally purposeful dialogue are all rejected in my playwriting, in favour of forms that I found, through the experiment of writing, better reflected the exploded and shapeshifting terms of identity and experience that I know to be true for myself and many others who have, like me, spanned their lives across continents, cultures, languages, religions, traditions, and histories, then ended up finding it difficult to know what is real. In my playwriting, I wanted to recreate that hybridity of both peaceful and contentious cross-cultural exchange and so I developed a kaleidoscopic metaphor to express a blend of different elements that change perpetually and move disorientingly, yet emerge anew, creatively and beautifully. Deploying my kaleidoscopic model of playwriting both thematically and structurally, I wrote a script that conveyed at least some partial sense of what it might mean to be ‘Arab’ in today’s world, and especially, what it might feel like to be ‘Arab’ in Aotearoa.

The research was conducted, and the thesis is submitted, in the discipline of creative writing. It is the playwriting itself that constitutes the research experiment, along with the exegetic material that observes and analyses the act of creation including the aesthetic techniques, sources, and motivations. The thesis thus begins with four critical chapters that set out the background to and rationale for the creative work, then concludes with “Aragoze”, a trilogy of plays that embodies the aims of the research to contribute through both its form and its content to an understanding of intercultural experiences and identities situated in between the Middle East and the West.

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## Epigraphs

*I have asked myself what the word “culture” actually means to me in the light of the different experiences I have lived through, and it gradually becomes clear that this amorphous term in fact covers three broad cultures: one which is basically the culture of the state; another which is basically that of the individual, and then there is a “third culture” ....*

*For the “third culture” is the culture of links. It is the force that can counterbalance the fragmentation of our world. It has to do with the discovery of relationships where such relationships have become submerged and lost – between man and society, between one race and another, between the microcosm and the macrocosm, between humanity and machinery, between the visible and the invisible, between categories, languages, genres. What are these relationships? Only cultural acts can explore and reveal these vital truths.*

Brook (1996, pp. 63-64)

*Life by its very nature is dialogic. To live means to participate in dialogue: to ask questions, to heed, to respond, to agree, and so forth.*

Bakhtin (1984, p. 293)

*If dominant modes of knowledge ... are incapable of envisioning the absolutely new, maybe other modes of knowing, other forms of thinking, need to be proposed.*

Grosz (1999, p. 21)

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## Introduction

### The Subject & Research Problem

“You are a migrant!” “Go back to where you come from.”

My children and I heard those words on June 12, 2021, shouted at us in a supermarket car park in Wellington, Aotearoa New Zealand. They reminded me that I can never forget that I am an inbetweenner (الوسيط) now living across borders, in a liminal state, between the Middle East and Aotearoa New Zealand (أوتياروا نيوزيلندا).

I was born and grew up in Jordan. I have experienced the region’s colonial traumas, politics of fear, historical narratives, nationalism, traditional dances,<sup>1</sup> mixed cultural marches and festivals,<sup>2</sup> schools and universities, mosques, ceremonies, church bells, weddings, music, and foods. However, my migration journey and a now global pandemic have reworked my understanding of borders, myself, my culture, and my people.

In this thesis, I explicate and present my creative work *Aragoze Trilogy* (ثلاثية الأراغوز). I use critical and creative methodologies to investigate how playwriting can contribute to our understanding of intercultural experiences, identities, and differences between the Middle East and the West. I argue that Arab migration can be better understood via the form of intercultural theatre that enables me, as a writer, to apply dialogic strategies and practices. I express my sense of hybridity and in-betweenness through challenging binaries of essentialist and anti-essentialist ethnic and theatrical convention, and I attempt to revise and reform patriarchal and colonial cultural and theatrical elements by utilising the unspeakable body and weaving in tales old, new, realist, and absurd. I have found the connections between

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<sup>1</sup> Dabkeh (الدبكة) is the most popular dance in Jordan.

<sup>2</sup> Jordan’s biggest festivals are: Jerash festival (مهرجان جرش), Amman International Theatre Festival (مهرجان عمان), (الدولي للمسرح), Fuheis Festival (مهرجان الفحيص), Jordan Rally (رالي الأردن), Aqaba Traditional Arts Festival (مهرجان العقبة للفنون التراثية), and Azraq Festival (مهرجان الأزرق).

intercultural theatre, in-betweenness, and dialogism<sup>3</sup> important in understanding Arab and Muslim migration and in my playwriting about it.

Playwriting by anyone about Arab and Muslim migration is rare in Aotearoa New Zealand's mainstream theatre industry.<sup>4</sup> There are very few Arab or Muslim New Zealanders who use concepts of theatre and performance to write or perform creatively about different migration or migrant issues whether inside their smaller communities or in the wider New Zealand society.<sup>5</sup> There are even fewer female Arab and Muslim playwrights in Aotearoa New Zealand.<sup>6</sup> It is my wish to present creative components and strategies, through *Aragoze Trilogy*, that might contribute to establishing a practice of Arab and Muslim migrant playwriting in Aotearoa.

As an Arab-Muslim migrant playwright living in Aotearoa New Zealand, the invisibility of genuine representation in the New Zealand theatre industry and mainstream is of real concern to me. As an Arab-Muslim migrant researcher, I felt this absence should be examined. I wondered 'Why are Arab and Muslim migration and migrants barely visible in New Zealand's theatre industry? Why are there little to no Arab or Muslim-Kiwis playwriting for the larger New Zealand theatre audience or the world?' This is despite Muslims being "the

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<sup>3</sup> I use the term dialogism or dialogic to describe the staging of different voices, discourses, or clashing views and perspectives. It also refers to dialogic play in which various internal elements of a play is in dialogue with each other. For example, language or educational levels or genre speeches meet to form this dialogic clash.

<sup>4</sup> A keyword search (for Muslim, Arab, Middle East, and Islam) of the database of New Zealand's national playwriting agency Playmarket (<https://www.playmarket.org.nz/>) finds only two plays with depictions of Muslim characters, and both playwrights are non-Muslim, non-Arab, white men. Outside that database, Samoan-Kiwi playwright Louise Tu'u has written a play that incorporates issues faced by the Muslim community in South Auckland but, as she points out, this is a relatively rare multicultural inclusion and, "What's useful is to be reminded that theatre is largely a bourgeois pursuit and the multiple depiction of minorities is contingent on available time, energy and money." In Tu'u, L. (2017). "Loose Canons: Louise Tu'u." *Pantograph Punch*. <https://pantograph-punch.com/posts/loose-canons-louise-tuu>

<sup>5</sup> Performance poet Mohamed Hassan (<https://www.mohamedhassan.co.nz/about>) is one exception, although he now primarily lives outside New Zealand. Another is Dr Rand Hazou, a Palestinian-Kiwi theatre scholar who although not a playwright, publishes academic works about applied theatre, refugees, Palestine, decolonisation, social inclusion and exclusion, and issues of justice.

<sup>6</sup> The Iranian actress Yalda Abnous, popular in Kuwait and now a US resident, directed Jean-Paul Sartre's play "No Exit" in 2015 using the work to develop metaphors of MENA experience, while she was completing her master's degree in Drama at University of Auckland, but, again, she is not a playwright as such and, like Hassan, she is also no longer a resident part of the New Zealand creative community.

most rapidly growing religious group in New Zealand with the population increasing six-fold between 1991 and 2006” (Centre for Applied Cross-Cultural Research, 2011, n.p.) and, in the 2018 census, 57,276 people identifying with Islam (Stats NZ, 2019). This constitutes 1% of the New Zealand population, but there is no evidence that Muslim plays make up 1% of mainstream theatre. To achieve interculturalism and openness, those questions should be addressed.

In this thesis, I include four critical chapters and a creative work, *Aragoze Trilogy*, as a creative and critical intercultural research space of (re)negotiation. In chapter one, I include strategic thinking—a why and a way—that helps me to (re)think Arab migration from a social and political perspective. Those evolving terms and conditions, in chapter one, become the foundations for my choice of decolonizing the orientalist image of a singular ‘Arab mind’. I turn to address stereotypes of ‘Arab theatre’ and ‘Arab trauma’, in chapter two, and then, in chapter three, discuss intercultural theatre as a medium for (re)writing intercultural identities and experiences as well as deconstructing monologic studies of theatre and cultural trauma to become more inclusive and make space for new forms. In chapter four, I explain some of the creative dialogic practices deployed in my trilogy that helped me explore my main research question ‘How can playwriting contribute to an understanding of intercultural experiences, identities, and differences between the Middle East and the West?’

I hope to encourage not only Arab or Muslim Kiwi playwrights, but all migrant playwrights, to start addressing borders and migrations in their work in ways that depart from mainstage demands for narrative arcs and linear-action-driven entertainment. Migration stories using migrant playwrights’ own unique and tradition-busting forms are crucial to mutual understanding and recognition of differences. They should be shared to challenge policymakers and knowledge producers dominating the mainstream to access pluralistic, innovative ideas, and try out new, different theatrical experiences. And thus, Aotearoa New

Zealand could become a truly inclusive and tolerant society embracing of differences (i.e., ‘an inbetweener’ society where inbetweener people feel seen and welcomed).

As noted above, I divide my thesis into four critical chapters and then conclude with my creative work *Aragoze Trilogy*. In this introduction, I overview the topic and explore the research’s authorial motivations, significance, main questions, and methodology. In chapter one, I define significant conceptual frameworks and fundamental terms to provide a compass that directs me throughout this research journey. I explore the topic of understanding Arab migration focusing on key terms including in-betweenness, hybridity, interculturalism, monologism, and dialogism. I begin by exploring concepts of the Arab migrant playwright as an ‘inbetweener’ identity. I clarify my use of Mikhail Bakhtin’s dialogism as a key plank in my choice of intercultural theatre.

Chapter two addresses stereotypes of ‘the’ Arab mind, ‘an’ Arab theatre, and ‘the’ Arab trauma, responding to Western assumptions that Western theories of culture and mind can simply be imposed on Arab multiplicity. I point out, as Michael Malek Najjar has also recently observed (in Esfandiary et al., 2021, p. 10), that “even though we may not have had theatre with a capital ‘T’ and a proscenium arch in the Middle East for much of our history, we’ve had a very deep performance tradition.” I overview aspects of that tradition that have informed my own playwriting.

In chapter three, I explore the terms interculturalism and intercultural theatre. I demonstrate my awareness of the long-lasting debates among many scholars of intercultural theatre. This helps me to situate my work and re-emphasise the intersection of my understanding of interculturalism with the process of deconstructing stereotypical essentialist or monologic projects such as Eurocentric trauma studies, the Westernisation or ethnicisation of theatre in the Arab world, and the projected uniformity of the so-called ‘Arab Mind’.

In chapter four, I explore the dialogic practices and experimental creative strategies that I used to write in an ‘in-between mode’ in my creative work *Aragoze Trilogy*. I discuss strategies for interactive, democratised theatre drawn from Augusto Boal, along with my uses of heteroglossia, polycharacterisation, and the development of my own original hybrid structural form, which I term ‘kaleidoscopic’.

Finally, I present the three plays (namely, *Aragoze in a Time of Mobility*, *Aragoze in a Time of Corona*, and *Aragoze in a Time of Revolution*), which encompass my aim to creatively illustrate the goals of the research to contribute through both form and content to an understanding of intercultural experiences and identities situated in between the Middle East and the West.

### **Methodology; Writing-as-Research**

I used practice-led research (specifically, writing-as-research) for this thesis, as it helped me to genuinely (re)experience inbetweenness, hybridity, and interculturalism in theory and practice. The creative work and practice reflect some of the playwriting strategies and performative aspects that make explicit my new insertions into the intercultural theatre debate. The practice not only illustrates what my style of playwriting entails but also reveals to me a better understanding of intercultural theatre as a site of (re)negotiation.

Creative practice gives me this complete un-institutional or un-constitutional autonomy to express, deliberate, and advance my research work. Creative practice as a methodology is a flexible implementation of different methods to generate alternative forms of non-traditional knowledge and innovations and to attain this “juxtaposition of self-transformation and advancement of learning” (Merlin, 2004, p. 41). It is also, as Estelle Barrett (2007) argues, a

“subjective approach to research” with the “capacity to bring into view particularities that reflect new social and other realities either marginalised or not yet recognised in established social practices and discourses” (p. 4). I also, as Brad Haseman (2007) does, suggest that practice is a different research procedure that goes out beyond quantitative and qualitative orthodoxies and positivist outcomes to add unique and expansive interpretations for the whole field of research. Jen Webb and Donna Lee Brien (2011, p. 186) suggest that, in creative-writing-as-research, researchers “productively reflect on the creative thinking that created their works, integrating this usually unarticulated knowledge with the craft ‘wisdom’ of the artist”.

Bill Green (2015, p. 4) expands further on how writing-as-research works:

the objects of these various research undertakings are produced without recourse to ‘rules’ or even ‘models’, although they are always principled and rigorously put together – composed. These research objects are quite literally so, in what they are, as more often than not hybrid, multimodal compositions, but also with regard to what drives and impels them, their seeking, their yearning. Each is unique, and even idiosyncratic, without however lapsing into solipsism. They form their own company, their own ‘family’, while making various connections with the field more generally. The second aspect is their experimentalism. These are ‘essays’, inquiries, probes, questions. These researchers literally don’t know, and can’t, until the work is completed.

The result of my research is an original artefact (*Aragoze Trilogy*) and academic exegesis, both distinctly framing a hybrid style of intercultural playwriting and bringing new understanding to related interdisciplinary areas such as Arab theatre, intercultural theatre, trauma studies, and studies relevant to topics of Arab identity or the ‘Arab Mind’.

*Aragoze Trilogy* is a creative practice that challenges binary<sup>7</sup> understandings and therefore requires a research methodology (practice) that challenges the traditional ways that research

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<sup>7</sup> I use the term binarism to refer to any hierarchical, violent logic of imperialism that has the authoritarian tendency to see the world (meanings, subjects), exclusively, in terms of opposing pairs, in which one is always dominant. Binarism endorses a movement in one direction. Its alternatives are hybridity and ambivalence.

procedures are used to tackle issues. The binary understanding of theory or “just thinking” and practice within research is at an impasse. It opposes doing (practice) with thinking “what we know,” Robin Nelson argues (2013, p. 5). My creative practice is a “doing-thinking” (p. 40) that creates a dialogue between practice and theory. This “dialogic relationship”, Barrett and Bolt (2007) argue, entails aspects of both criticism and creativity (p. 5). *Aragoze Trilogy* exemplifies a vital feature of hybrid playwriting that enacts both what I know and what I am, and critically reflects on knowledge generation through my creative practice.

Hazel Smith and Roger T. Dean (2009) discuss the interrelations between practice-led research and research-led practice towards coining what they term the Iterative Cyclic Web; the term suggests assemblage in multiple directions. As stated, my inquiry is practice-as-research because I demonstrate a hybrid (or intercultural) playwriting style. Yet, my research is also research-led-practice as I draw, in my literary exposition, on many fields such as Arab theatre, intercultural theatre, trauma studies, decolonisation studies, theatre theories, and research into practices such as Hakawati theatre, theatre of shadow, epic theatre, and absurd theatre that have inspired me, influenced my practice and helped me to better understand how my own style of playwriting both reflects and departs from established forms and traditions.

Theatre theories and practices have inspired me and, at the same time, new perceptions, knowledges, and theatre theories evolve from my practice (*Aragoze Trilogy*). Bolt (2007) describes this two-way flow as “double articulation between theory and practice” (p. 29). My thesis uses an academic structure of inquiry through exploring other studies, practices, and theories that are relevant to my argument, reflecting on how they have affected me, and then engaging with them in my practice, which, in turn, responds through reflective analysis or learning.

This reflective approach is practised in the subsequent chapters, where I analyse the characterisation strategies and structure of the trilogy, showing how my hybridity is presented in the work. Reflective learning, as a research method, helps me to articulate new knowledge from within my trilogy. It is the practice itself that results in communicating my positionalities and clarifying my intercultural theatre findings. In other words, *Aragoze Trilogy* helps me to express myself (a hybrid identity and intercultural experiences) through the creative-writing-as-research-inquiry turn rather than the theory turn only.

Indeed, this understanding of inbetweenness and interculturalism also help me to address my research questions, strategies, and practices. It allows me to revisit unmapped variant fields of study such as intercultural theatre, border studies, migration studies, cultural trauma studies, Arab theatre studies, postcolonial studies, and practice-led research studies. This trans-disciplinary approach opens up the path to new voices and suggests innovative approaches (Nowicka & Ryan, 2015). Using different theatre and performance traditions, cultural elements and literary and historical resources influenced both the form and the contents of my trilogy and its characters.



## Chapter 1: Understanding Arab Migration: Inbetweenness

### **Inbetweenness**

Monologic voices, binary choices:

“Remains of Romans or pure Arabs!” | “من بقايا الروم” ولا عرب أقحاح”

“Italian Christian migrants or Albanian Arnaut” | “مهاجر إيطالي و لا أرناؤوط ألباني”

“Migrant or native citizen” | “أصلي ولا بدون”

“Alyateem Beit Jala, Bethlehem” | “من عائلة اليتيم بيت جالا”

“From the North or South of Jordan.” | “شملاطي ولا جنوبي”

“Christian! Muslim! Or Atheist” | “مسيحي! مسلم! ولا ملحد”

“Jordanian or Palestinian!” | “أردني أصلي ولا فلسطيني”

“Al-Maani or El-Khoury?” | “معاني أو خوري”

“to be continued, unless...”

I am an inbetweenner. I traverse a liminal position processing all monologic classificatory schemas and traditions which have a propensity to label me using restricted notions of location, agenda, and time. I argue instead for a plurality of identifications that includes and understands intercultural experiences, identities, and differences. My response to the long-lasting dichotomous discourses that reduce my hybrid identity is that I am an inbetweenner; I have traversed, rather than transcended, the successful classificatory traditions and very neat dichotomies, in or between the Middles East and the West, Romans and Arabs, or Christian and Islam – the chain is long.

The term inbetweenness is foundational to understanding Arab migration and intercultural experiences, identities, and differences in Aotearoa New Zealand. The term provides me with a lens to behold this ‘intercultural’ space or stage as “migratory, mediatory, transitive, always in the middle” (Deleuze, Guattari, & Massumi, 1987, p. 25). As a migrant, I oscillate between, at least, two conceptual worlds of cultures, histories, codes, theatres, socio-political

power relations, and religions. I migrate between different worlds of consciousness. As a playwright, I introduce myself as an intermediate agency that synchronises different theatre and performance forms to interweave *Aragoze Trilogy*. As an academic, I explore and connect research strategies that traverse many disciplinary fields and theories to create a holistic approach to understanding interculturalism.

### **Inbetween Genealogy: Splitting**

Since I became aware of my family's controversial name, migration, genealogy, history of transformations, and current complicated relations, I have adapted to inbetweenness. I am named Al-Maani<sup>8</sup> (المعاني) as the Arab-Islamic surname for official identification, but my family and I are also still identified by the ancestral Latin/Greek (i.e., Roman/Byzantine) Christian family name El-Khoury, Khoury, Curia, (Χούρι), or (الخورى).<sup>9</sup> In one world, I am classified as Arab-Muslim from Latin/Roman-Khoury roots. In another world, I am classified as Roman-Khoury with Arab-Muslim connections. I cannot transcend those different ethnic markers but only traverse them and embrace them all at once. Therefore, I am an inbetweenener.

My hybrid identity of different cultural markers is a problematic and contested area. Having a 'clear' map of genealogy<sup>10</sup> and linear identity, which I do not have, is one of the most significant and 'authoritative' organising values in Muslim (including Arab) cultures (Bowen Savant & de Felipe, 2014). Therefore, my origins and surname became problematic for many

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<sup>8</sup> My surname is named after Ma'an city of Jordan, where Petra (one of the World Wonders) is located. It was the first Christian city in Greater Syria (Bilad al-Sham) to experience the emergence of Islam during the Byzantine Empire (Hareir & Mbaye, 2011).

<sup>9</sup> El-Khoury or Koury (الخورى), derived from the Latin word curia, means priest.

<sup>10</sup> My genealogy chain: Muslim Part (Sultan Abdullah Jarwan Awad-Allah Ali Rashid Khalil); Christian Part (Ibrahim Hanna Salama al-Yateem el-Khoury).

members of my extended family - are we Christian Khoury of Bethlehem or Muslim Khoury of Ma'an?

For scholars of Arab genealogy, my family is a unique contested site of negotiating diaspora, mobility, discontinuity, separation, extension, and metamorphosis. The creator of the Arab Legion (the regular army of Transjordan and then Jordan in the early Twentieth Century), Major-General Frederick Gerard Peake (1934) listed the Trans-Jordanian Arab family names including El-Khoury (الخوري) of Ma'an city but noted that its origins are unknown. Other studies (al-Muasher, 2015; Fanatasah, 1996) believe that (الخوري) is, like the majority Christian tribes of Jordan and Palestine, a 'pure' Arab tribe from the Qahtanites people.<sup>11</sup> Two studies (Abu Diyah, 1989; al-Tahir, 1969) claim that (الخوري) is one of the remainders of Frank-Crusaders, who converted to Islam. Roderick Al-Khoury (2016) argues in his historical research that El-Khoury, among many other Christian families, is not originally Arab but Roman, and had been forced to Arabisation and Islamisation. Other scholars believe El-Khoury of Ma'an is the descendant of two Christian migrants from Bethlehem, Palestine (Al-Fantasah, 2008; Hanna, 2001; Nawaisah, 2011) who may have fled the Ottoman Empire's injustices in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The elder members of my family share, in their informal gatherings, tales of our Italian, Albanian, and Greek roots. Indeed, it is a contested area.

Experiencing this ambivalent and confused sense of self-definition will not be unusual to my children, either. Born and raised as children of various migrant backgrounds, in different cultural sites (al-Ahasa, Auckland, and Florida), their identities are under no circumstances completely and 'finally established' but understood permanently to be 'in process' (Behtoui, 2021; Rattansi & Phoenix, 2005). Therefore, we are a family of inbetweeners. Where is the theatre that reflects to my children their kinds of multiple inheritances and migratory identities?

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<sup>11</sup> Qahtanites migrated from Yemen (South of Arabia) and established the Kingdom of Ghassanids as part of the Byzantine Empire.

## **Inbetween Cultures**

I am an inbetweenener. I have crossed the borders of Irbid city (my birthplace), to Berlin (1989-1991), to Karak (1992-2001), to Amman (2002-2006), to North Carolina (2007-2008), to Florida (2008-2010), to Hofuf (2010-2014), to Sur (2014-2015), to Auckland (2015-2016), to Matamata (2016), to Wellington (2016-present), and to the Embassy of the United Arab Emirates in Wellington<sup>12</sup> (2017-present for employment). For my creative work, I invest significance in those different cultural sites not only as geographic territories and time zones, but as liminal spaces for negotiating discontinuity, disrupting cultural differences and elements, resisting essentialism or anti-essentialism, and embracing interculturalism. Therefore, I am an inbetweenener.

## **Inbetween Essentialism and Anti-Essentialism**

Anti-Essentialism and essentialism are controversial topics in different fields such as psychology (Bastian & Haslam, 2006), postcolonial theory (Atabaki, 2003) or feminist studies (Kelly, 2012). In this research, I refer to and apply Charlotte Witt's (2011) definition of essentialism. She differentiates between two types of essentialism: category essentialism and individual essentialism. Category essentialism assumes a vilified universal view or belief that all women, for example, have a set of fixed, inherent, or unchanging essences, attributes, or natural characteristics that differentiate them from other humans, and that this essence explains and justifies their (lack of) power-position and behaviour. Anti-essentialist feminists oppose categorical essentialism's 'biology is destiny' assumptions. In category essentialism,

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<sup>12</sup> I mention the Embassy as it is yet another territory, one where I have coexisted with people from different cultural backgrounds including Palestinians, Egyptians, Sudanese, Eritreans, Emiratis, Moroccans, Libyans, Māori (Indigenous New Zealanders), and Pākehā (New Zealanders of mainly European descent).

the focus is on typologies of the human organism - such as 'migrant' or 'Muslim'. I want my creative work to illuminate and resist such category essentialism.

At the same time, what Witt (2011) terms individual essentialism, is also relevant to my work. According to Witt, "[e]ssentialism about an individual holds that there is a property or properties that make that individual the individual it is" (p. 12). She addresses the structure of social normativity or 'the gendering of social roles' that organise and unify social relations, spaces, and roles we (men, women, non-binary) play (friends, families, politicians, academics, playwrights, etc.). She notes that we are consciously or unconsciously responsive to these social norms: I internalise my role as a man to work to support the family, my role as a man to protect my family in all available ways. My gender socialisation organises and unifies my obligations, expectations, and variant directions.

Applying this to inbetweeners, we are resisting essentialism at two levels - the categorical, by which others judge us to unavoidably have certain attributes because of the categories we belong to, and the individual, by which we place ourselves into boxes and place goals, ambitions, or expectations upon ourselves accordingly. An inbetween subjectivity does not simply create a new category, but dissolves categorisation, leading to a state of being in which the 'walls' of the 'boxes' and 'parameters' of the 'categories' are removed and the rules (from within and without) do not apply. At first glance, claiming this 'intercultural inbetweenness', is challenging. I have been to many collectivist cultures doomed by paternalistic binary predilections, social privilege or what Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (2009) terms 'kyriarchal systems.' This strict 'essentialist' ideology constructs a social system, ladder of relations, or reality (at birth and onward) through domination, submission, and oppression. It acts to explain, justify, manifest, or rely only on one essence, gender, race, religion, legal system, political organisation, or economic scheme as the inherently natural

dominator. Fiorenza's term goes beyond gender issues to include racism, colonialism, speciesism, xenophobia, classism, and other forms of paternalism.

In this kyriarchal system or essentialist world, I expect and recall some injustices. I expect an educational racism or discrimination, for example, when university and school students must possess 'certain' or 'essential' traits to have access to a multitude of opportunities and resources. In Jordan, due to my father's Professor position in one university, I had the privilege of choosing a specialisation with some privileges that other students, whose fathers are not professors, cannot access unless they pay more. This is an active law. In New Zealand and Jordan, a popular example of kyriarchy is the policy mindset of domestic students vs. international students. International students must pay more in terms of applying for fees, expensive international health insurance, immigration protocols (applications and fees), and often face exploitation at work with their overseas credentials not recognised or undervalued. In Jordan, shifting my surname to Al-Maani grants my family social privilege as it has more historical claim over lands and more accessibility to power or high positions. There are admittedly times that, simply to have some sense of a grounded identity to cling to, I practice this 'strategic essentialism'. Many Indigenous peoples have taken similar stances, in order to create a unified force for their struggle. Aotearoa New Zealand has witnessed a long history of Māori (*iwi*) protests to reclaim their land rights, cultural protection, and resources. They protest to reclaim self-determination and respect for their culture, heritage, language, educational, and health systems and, as Avril Bell (2014) points out, sometimes a strategic sense of essentialised unity is vital to progress that struggle - however she notes that "this is a position that Bhabha's performative hybridity cannot account for" (Bell, 2014, p. 116). We are all inbetweeners, but we are all also, prudently and necessarily, members of alliances and communities based on our similarities rather than our differences, at times.

Inbetweenness is thus challenging as it requires me to hold what Paul Gilroy terms an anti-anti-essentialist position. Claiming this position connotes “a double-consciousness born from histories of borrowing, displacement, transformation, and continual reinscription” (Gilroy, 1993, p. 102). Understanding my family’s roots and connections and what binaries attach to them, I discover possible and impossible worlds, varieties of symmetrical and asymmetrical relations, and vague identities. I question both my sources and my need to know. I wonder ‘What is it like to be one? What is it like to be both? What is it like to be both and beyond? Why, how, and when did a change take place?’ Therefore, I am an inbetweenener.

However, when I started writing about Arab migration in *Aragoze Trilogy*, I realised that this inbetweenness is a unique creative position. Through this position, I ‘monitor’ a movement of ‘diasporic objects’ (Basu, 2011, p. 28) and “entanglements of ongoing social, spatial, temporal and material trajectories and relationships, dislocations and relocations” (Basu, 2017, p. 2). Playwriting allows me to reflect (on) this dynamic migration movement in ways that open up multiple possibilities, discoveries, and curiosities for creative expression. Because essentialism puts us into ‘roles’, playwriting’s construction of new roles, or deconstruction of roles altogether, can address some of the most difficult-to-articulate experiences of migrant identity at their roots. The ‘in-between’ process leaves the trilogy’s characters, such as Messenger, Aragoze, troupes, and puppets, and their non-narrative structures of shifting identification and expression, open to interpretation.

In reverse, I should also clarify that I find it imperative, at first, to introduce myself using an essentialist form or through a structured historical category. I am a genuine Jordanian-born Muslim playwright and enforcing this authentically stems from my consciousness of my mobile provocative agency. I feel the need to be seen in a given form but also to reflect, then, on my double-criticism, mobility, and subjectivity through intercultural inbetweenness. As Daniel Miller (2005) states in his material culture study:

We cannot comprehend anything, including ourselves, except as a form . . .  
We cannot know who we are, or become what we are, except by looking in a material mirror, which is the historical world created by those who lived before us. This world confronts us as material culture and continues to evolve through us. (p. 8)

What makes me an active body and agent is the in-between position. This positionality raises a cabinet of curiosities to the norm and stirs up questions to ‘the historical world’. My in-between strategy, throughout the thesis and creative work, *Aragoze Trilogi*, deploys ideas of dialogism, hybridity, migration, ambivalence, cultural difference, and untranslatable and liminal spaces that complicate any sense of an ‘essence’ of Arab-Muslim-Kiwi-Migrant identity. In addition, I perform autonomous actions by openly using different languages such as Arabic and English and different cultural elements or resources to establish my recognition of my ‘provocative’ agency and generation of an intercultural theatre throughout this thesis. Essentially, I grew up in Jordan (الأردن), surrounded by insightful tolerant cultural practices such as reading and listening to Quranic verses on difference. They have inspired me to cross borders, experience new cultures, and then to embrace interculturalism and inbetweenness as the core of this research journey. Some of those verses, which I have altered into a dialogic form, read:

(يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا ۗ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ (القرآن، 13:49))

**The Author (Allah<sup>13</sup>):** O mankind! Indeed, we have created you from male and female and made you nations and tribes that you may know each other. The noblest of you, in the sight of Allah, is the best in conduct. Indeed, Allah is knowing and aware. (Quran, 49:13)<sup>14</sup>

(118-119 : 11 : لَوْ شَاءَ رَبُّكَ لَجَعَلَ النَّاسَ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً ۗ وَلَا يَزَالُونَ مُخْتَلِفِينَ) (القرآن)

**The Author (Allah):** Had your Lord Willed, He could surely have made all people one nation, yet they will not cease to have differences. (Quran, 11:118-119)

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<sup>13</sup> Allah (الله) is an Arabic word which means God in Abrahamic religions Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

<sup>14</sup> All Quran print-outs have the same sequences in terms of chapters and verses.



Living in between those dialogic verses, I have developed a curiosity toward cultural differences and migration since an early age. Those Islamic-Arabic cultural objects have implied, to me, that differences of colours, languages, beliefs, and cultures are signs of existence. They exist so that we can know each other and learn more. Therefore, I chose to migrate - but when I move and travel beyond my earlier selves, I also take them with me.

### **Inbetween Borders**

As an inbetweener, I find border studies a symbolic and productive area for understanding intercultural experience, identities, and differences. Border studies scholars such as Chávez (2016) and Martínez (2006) argue that when a migrant crosses a border, they leave an autonomy and, at the same time, begin to build another autonomy. In other words, borders, as Martínez (2006) argues, are not only a place of ‘discontinuity’ but also of ‘transition’. When I cross a border of a village, city, country, region, or continent, I choose to discontinue investing only in one dialect, language, culture, theatre, economy, history, or socio-political spectrum. At the same time, I have the freedom to transit to another dialect, language, history, culture, theatre, or socio-political spectrum.

Like borders, I am always in a status of ‘pending’ - between ‘discontinuity’ and ‘transition’. Borders might be reviewed or ‘redefined’ because of wars, racism, conflicts, or pandemics, ‘creating implications’ on migrants’ ‘personal destinies’ (Chávez, 2016). After the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in Aotearoa New Zealand and Jordan, for example, the geopolitical borders of most countries were shut down. Reviewing border restrictions left my imagination expanding with impossible predictions or complete obsession of my becoming stuck in a new or old world. I wonder ‘Where am I going now? What is to be locked away from my family? What does Jordan mean to me now? What does New Zealand mean to me

now? Is this the fall of an old world order and the beginning of a new one? What does a vaccine passport mean? Is it my new classified identity?’

Understanding borders is not only integral to understanding migration but also to investigating the processes of playwriting about an intercultural, in-between status. Migration ‘personifies inbetweenness’ (Schiller, Basch & Blanc-Szanton, 1992). It multi-directionally shifts bodies, cultures, politics, and symbols via ‘real’ or ‘imagined’ territorial transformation networks and hybrid identities between, at least, two different places or cultures (Waldinger, 2015). Because my main character Aragoze is, like me, a creature formed from the clash of migrations (generations of colonial influx to his country / generations of emigrant and refugee flight from his country), I consulted theories of migration to seek scaffolding for my creative work. In recent years, migration has received pervasive scrutiny in different scholarly fields, including communication, theatre, and performance studies (Freeman, 2017; Garde & Severn, 2021; Knowles, 2010, 2017; McIvor & King, 2019; Verdecchia, 2019; Zhao, 2019). Studies have explored the unprecedented migration of technologies, humans, knowledge, cultural elements, and practices across nations and illusive regional borders. Researchers, such as Knowles (2010, 2017) recognise migration as a form of ‘globalisation’ and ‘interculturalism’. This inspired my use of practices such as juxtaposition, conflation, and shifts, discussed in chapter four, to include different languages, creatures, translations, theatres, images, fables, times, places, and symbols. As I wrote and rewrote my plays, I transformed and translated irrepressible encounters between ‘real’ and ‘imagined’, or ‘here’ and ‘there’, ‘then’ and ‘now’ across times, territories, and identities. The plays themselves are ‘inbetweeners’.

### **Inbetween Dialogic and Heteroglossic Spaces**

I am an inbetweenener. Therefore, I am dialogic. As a migrant, I transit between and translate across, in Aotearoa New Zealand or elsewhere, languages, meanings, social spaces, and peoples who stand in relation to each other. At borders or inbetween spaces, I build an internal and external constant process of reviewing cultural differences of a world of many worlds through a dialogue. I am, then, dialogic.

My understanding of dialogism stems from the works of the Soviet thinker Mikhail Bakhtin (1981, 1984, 1986). Bakhtin (1984) writes that an:

authentic life is the open-ended dialogue. Life by its very nature is dialogic. To live means to participate in dialogue: to ask questions, to heed, to respond, to agree, and so forth. In this dialogue a person participates wholly and throughout his [sic] whole life: with his eyes, lips, hands, soul, spirit, with his whole body and deeds. He invests his entire self in discourse, and this discourse enters into the dialogic fabric of human life, into the world symposium. (p. 293)

In a dialogic world, meaning is complicated as it may be identified at levels of either truth or language. Given dialogism at the linguistic level, Bakhtin argues that a single word may carry “two meanings parceled out between two separate voices” (Bakhtin, 1981, pp. 327-28). It is the recognition that “[e]verything means, is understood, as a part of a greater whole—there is constant interaction between meanings, all of which have the potential of conditioning others” (1981, p. 426). In these interactions, words undertake an ‘authentic life’, unbound from their dictionary meanings. Thus, if I realise that the meanings of the words I use (as a playwright) are standing in a relationship to each other or dialogised, then this means I will think in a different way about truth claims. Truth can be only located in this interaction *between* voices. Bakhtin views this as ‘dialogic truth’.

In migration’s dynamic space, inbetweeneners process in a similar way to Bakhtin’s dialogic language and truth. When I utter a word in English or Arabic, I realise that this word may carry two meanings to two different voices. For example, if I utter ‘Islam’, in my foreign

English accent, before a native English speaker or native Arabic migrant, the word may be interpreted as, but not limited to, referring to an Abrahamic religion, a threat to life, an inspiration to life, colonial power, colonised and passive, conqueror, phobia, strength, peace, or surrender. Given all this in my mind as an author of this initial utterance, those voices' meanings become dialogised and my own utterance is never absolute but becomes contained only *in between* other voices' meanings. My utterance is interactive: it stands in relation to other meanings. How can these slippages, this multiplicity, be communicated in the theatre?

Dialogism does not mean disagreement, but it also does not mean unity. It implies a mass of contested meanings or a competition between different internal and external voices "oriented toward a future answer" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 280). In a dialogic engagement with my genealogical roots and connections, for example, I understand that "a struggle occurs that results in mutual change and enrichment" (Bakhtin, 1986. p. 142); I am migrating through and between different interacting consciousnesses, arguments, references, resistances, confrontations, interpretations, and personal meanings on my roots and extensions. None is wrong. None has a single meaning. Therefore, I am dialogic.

In this sense, my creative work is a dialogic trilogy, too. It cannot be captured by the ancient Greek binary genres of literature, namely a tragedy or a comedy. It is best described as a hybrid trilogy that brings tragic and comic genres into a conversation. I read my work as holding many different voices, genres, and styles, unmerged into one perception, and not subordinated to my voice (the authorial voice). Each character has their own viewpoint, validity, and weight. Each theatre form is not subordinated to another but interactively creating and contesting meanings in a 'becoming' theatre form.

*Bakhtin's Heteroglossia*

I am an inbetweenener. Therefore, I am heteroglossic. Heteroglossia, a Bakhtinian term, is not a purely linguistic issue; rather it refers to any language made of stratifications of many voices that serves the daily, or even hourly, socio-political purposes such as:

social dialects, characteristic group behaviour, professional jargon, generic languages, languages of generations and age groups, tendentious languages, languages of the authorities, of various circles and of passing fashions (Bakhtin, 1981, pp. 262-263).

This diversity of social languages within a language is deeply embedded in my consciousness of migrant identity. Being a migrant, I build a dialogue between two or more different languages but also within one language, too. For example, I and my ancestors, parents, and children are four or more different generations and age groups that each, as Bakhtin (1981) argues, has its own “social language”, “vocabulary”, and “accentual system” in a given “historical moment of verbal-ideological life” (p. 290). I cannot simply adopt or repeat all classic differences and authoritative traditions “populated – overpopulated with the intentions of others” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 294) as many of them are in complicated relations with each other. However, I juxtapose them in a constant interactive dialogue to create “internally persuasive discourse” (p. 290) of different personal beliefs, ideas, and stories that (re)creates an affective experience of inbetweenness, not an authorial unitary truth.

**Migrating Inbetween Colonies**

I have migrated from and to regions remade to be colonial projects. After the decline of the Ottoman Empire, the Middle East came under the control of Western colonial powers (Owen, 2004, p. 6). It has been (re)invented as a colonial project, “serving the West’s Eurocentric purpose” (Bilgin, 2004, p. 26) of expansion by the pretext of ‘civilising’, modernising, democratising, or liberating the region. Its borders and meanings are being defined as “middle” and “eastern” only in comparison to Europe (Lockman, 2009, p. 98).

I have migrated from and to a region made to be stereotyped. Orientalism enabled this colonial institutional mindset. This project originates upon an “ontological and epistemological distinction” invented between two binaries - the West and the East. It is an institution that deals with the East by “making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, teaching it, settling it, ruling over it” (Said, 1979, p. 3). In this institutional mindset, Islam is always labelled as “anti-rational and anti-scientific” and thus oppressive and anti-progressive (Lockman, 2009, pp. 79-80). In it, Arab and Muslim women are always presented as passive or “victims of cruel patriarchal practice” with no real active agency to represent or stand for themselves (Marandi and Tari, 2012, p. 11).

In addition, this orientalist mindset is by nature reductionist. It reduces the complexities of the ‘Middle East land’ (Ahmed & Matthes, 2017; Emadi & Rahman, 2018; Lockman, 2009; Schmidt, 2014). However, the region “encompasses a vast area of great diversity [that is] inhabited by many different peoples with their own distinct languages, cultures and ways of life” (Lockman, 2009, pp. 97-98). Based on Bakhtinian’s heteroglossia, the Arab world differs not only among nations but within its intercultural space, where immense Arab populations<sup>15</sup> are (re)negotiating their intercultural identities and differences and the ‘undefined’ potential for, at least but not limited to, both harmony and heterogeneity or unity and divisiveness. Given this context, Edward Said (1975) states:

It should be immediately evident that Arab society in fact cannot be discussed because the Arabs all told number over a 100 million people and at least a dozen different societies, and there is no truly effective intellectual method for discussing all of them together as a single monolith. Any reduction of this whole immense mass of history, societies, individuals and realities to ‘Arab society’ is therefore a mythification. (p. 410)

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<sup>15</sup> According to the 2019 data of The World Bank, the Arab population total was (427, 870,270). See: <https://data.worldbank.org/country/1A>

Crossing half the world I arrived in first one, then another land remade as a colonial project - the United States of America, where Indigenous rights were swept aside under the religious doctrine of 'manifest destiny' (Meinig, 1986), then Aotearoa New Zealand, where the founding Treaty speaks with many voices, Indigenous sovereignty is often disregarded, and colonial power must continually be resisted (Walker, 2004). Like the Middle East, Aotearoa New Zealand is a world of many worlds, where schools of thought, dialects, languages, spiritualities, persons, communities, economies, climates, and theatres are always in a dynamic state of contestation and negotiation. From both these standpoints I looked through new eyes at how my place and people of birth were 'mythified' into a series of stereotypes, that I discuss in the coming pages in chapter two.

## Chapter 2: Decolonising Arab Mind, Trauma and Theatre

### **Stereotype I: The Mythification of ‘Arab Mind’**

#### **Orientalism**

Orientalist/neo-orientalist writers still tend to perceive a single Arab or Middle East reality as a product of “an alien religion” (Said, 1979, p. 263) (i.e., Islam) or see us as fighting political entities that “can function only in conflict situations” (p. 48). The last decade of Arab revolts and protests termed “the Arab Spring” in many countries has been processed or modelled in the West through the same orientalist lens identified by Said. I believe that Said’s (1979) argument is still valid as it is still apparent that “the circumstances making Orientalism a continually persuasive type of thought will persist” (p. 326). Phrases like Arab Mind, Muslim Mind, or Sultanistic despotism all produce the same colonial and imperial “canonical Orientalist myths” (Said, 1975, p. 412).

Lorella Ventura (2017) in *The ‘Arab Spring’ and Orientalist Stereotypes* criticises the superficial western images of the Arab Spring. She believes these imaginaries are just a continuation of Montesquieu’s shallow and detrimental knowledge of Islam, Arabs, or the East in the eighteenth century. Montesquieu’s “Oriental despotism” refers to “an arbitrary power, focused on the will and the benefit of the prince, who does not care for his country, which becomes a desert”. She argues that “after approximately three centuries the picture is not very different” (Ventura, 2017, p. 288).

In a very recent pattern, the Arab revolts in 2011, for example, are represented as an overthrow of a ‘traditional’ ‘Sultanistic’ despotic old system or regime. Goldstone (2011) finds the Arab revolts of 2011 different from those “earthquakes” that took place in Europe between 1848 and 1989. For him, “the revolutions of 2011 are fighting something quite



different: Sultanistic dictatorships” (2011a, p. 329) that “appeal to no ideology and have no purpose other than maintaining their personal authority” (2011, pp. 330-331) and “buy the loyalty of supporters and punish opponents” (2011, p. 331). Goldstone redeploys the same orientalist superficial image of Sultans, to describe particularly Arab rulers, but as Ventura (2017) argues, these stereotypes “had been criticised centuries ago for lacking historical reliability” (p. 288).

Another monolithic/static orientalist perspective regarding the Arab revolts of 2011 is that they were motivated by a dream for Western modernity. This is a theme that I will discuss in the next sections about the birth of ‘modern’ theatre in the Arab world. Ventura detects such orientalist approaches to modernity in the Western analysis that “considers the revolts as an occasion for Arab women to acquire western-like rights” (2017, p. 291) although what happened “was not a gender-based issue”, as Shazia Arshad (2012, p. 110) argues. Nor was the Arab Spring intended as a leap into Western democracy, reform, systems of values, or modernisation.

Ventura’s reconsideration of these persistent orientalist views aims to show that:

Orientalism and ethnocentrism cannot be easily overcome; nevertheless, western citizens should seek to be better informed and to make decisions about war and military intervention with the awareness that is needed in democratic systems and, one hopes, with more respect for the peoples affected by their decisions. (p. 283)

Essentialist claims reinscribe stereotypical discourses that significantly underestimate the multiplicitous ways in which Arab peoples negotiate identities. Essentialist ethnic reductionism has misrepresented Arab cultures, religions, and politics as “an imprisoning cocoon or a determining force”, as noted by Gerd Baumann (1996, p. 1). It takes, as Rana Esfaniary notes, enormous resilience and great drive to continually “challenge stereotypes

that describe the MENA [Middle Eastern and North African] world as a place plagued by barbarism and Islamic fanaticism” (Esfandiary et al., 2021, p. 9)

#### *Aotearoa New Zealand*

This mythification or orientalist monological view of Islam, Arab, or the Middle East is not unfamiliar to Aotearoa New Zealand’s media. A well-established literature (Boamah & Salahshour, 2021; Emadi & Rahman, 2018; Greaves et al., 2020; Rahman, 2020) addresses this misrepresentation that results in different prejudices such as hatred, discrimination, and racism in New Zealand.

This orientalist mythification is accepted and propagated by some New Zealand politicians, too. Commenting on Muslims being banned from ‘Western’ airlines in 2013, New Zealand Politician and former MP Richard Prosser said:

If you are a young male, aged between say about 19 and about 35, and you’re a Muslim, or you look like a Muslim, or you come from a Muslim country, then you are not welcome to travel on any of the West’s airlines (Quoted in Bayer & Theunissen, 2013).

Although Former Deputy Prime Minister Winston Peters distanced himself from Prosser’s narrow view, Peters singled out migrants of Islamic background for ‘special attention’ in a 2005 speech titled *The End of Tolerance*:

They say– ah yes–but New Zealand has always been a nation of immigrants. They miss a crucial point. New Zealand has never been a nation of Islamic immigrants... (Quoted in Coughlan, 2020).

This two-faced approach is how radical Islam works–present the acceptable face to one audience and the militant face to another. In New Zealand the Muslim community have been quick to show us their more moderate face, but as some media reports have shown, there is a militant underbelly here as well. Underneath it all the agenda is to promote fundamentalist Islam. Indeed, these groups are like the mythical Hydra–a serpent underbelly with multiple heads capable of striking at any time and in any direction.” (Quoted in Coughlan, 2020)

Peters also noted that “in many parts of the world the Christian faith is under direct threat from radical Islam,” and requested all Islamic leaders in Aotearoa New Zealand to name “radicals, troublemakers and potential dangers to our society”. (Quoted in Coughlan, 2020)

Given this context, it cannot be said that New Zealand is free of monologic, one-sided discourse. A monologic discourse is “a discourse in which only one point of view is represented, however diverse the means of representation” (Hay, 2005. p. 7). In a monologically understood “objectified world”, there is one author’s voice or consciousness and other characters’ voices “become the mouthpiece” for “a single ideological denominator” (Hays, 2008, p. 70). In a monological world, there is a single fixed and limited truth, reality, point of view, and consciousness in the world.

In my creative practice I wanted to find ways to reject Prosser and his colleague Winston Peters’ monological approach, without simply setting up an opposing view. In their monologically understood world, I have ‘value’ only in relation to their bigoted point of view. Their approaches do not recognise me and other migrants as unique; that each has the right to its unique desires, ideologies, practices, and values. According to Bakhtin (1984), “the thinking human consciousness and the dialogic sphere in which this consciousness exists, in all its depth and specificity, can’t be reached through a monologic artistic approach” (p. 261). The two former New Zealand politicians’ transcendentalism shut down the world they represent, by claiming to be the ultimate word and ‘truth’. I am ‘unheard’ or in a state of ‘non-being’ in their tautological closure of discourse. However, if I make their views the ‘antagonist’ to my ‘protagonist’, I simply reinforce a clash between two monologues.

In a monological world or discourse, authors do not represent others’ ideas except through their own lens. Any differences between Arab migrants, living through and in-between ‘here’ and ‘there’ and the ‘real’ and ‘imagined’ territorial identities, occur, according to Bakhtin

(1984), only within a ‘single consciousness’ in the monological world. The monologic statements, above, are a threat to a migrant ‘dialogic sphere’ because they deny the ‘specificity and depth’ of multi-voiced intercultural experiences and identities, in Aotearoa New Zealand or elsewhere. Simply arguing back - having characters fight with their voices from opposing podiums - would not guarantee a minimum level of mutual exchange but perpetuate fixed positions and deny the opportunity for change through real dialogue.

In Peters’ and Prosser’s statements, no one except them has the power to mean. They are allowed, in their statements, to remove my rights, for example, of consciousness to produce an autonomous meaning. According to Bakhtin, this is a dogmatic representation or ‘an image’ of dialogue rather ‘true’ or ‘real’ dialogue. In the latter, Bakhtin argues, “the author speaks not about a character, but *with him*” (1984, p. 63). Bakhtin talks about the relations between the author and protagonist in the monologic novel genre. The same occurs in this situation; Arabs and Muslims are the antagonists and the authors are Peters and Prosser. The authorial voices hijack the character’s voice, “swallow it up” and “dissolve in itself the other’s power to mean” (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 64). Arabs’ and Muslims’ different personalities or contending voices become untransparent to readers and authors.

Arab and Muslim migrants are sidelined in the New Zealand mainstream and need different platforms to share migration experiences and make heard colonisation’s impact on them. Many studies (e.g., Rahman, 2020; Thorpe, Ahmad, Marfell, & Richards, 2020) reflect on these issues of being unvoiced. Commenting on Muslim migrant identity and experiences in New Zealand after the Christchurch mosque shooting,<sup>16</sup> Mohan Dutta, from Massey University, emphasises the urgent call for “building infrastructures for the voices of the marginalised Muslims”. Such work is needed to halt what Colleen Ward of Victoria

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<sup>16</sup> Two mass shooting attacks occurred at al-Noor Mosque and Linwood Mosque in a terrorist (White Supremacist) attack in Christchurch, New Zealand, during Friday prayers on 15 March 2019.

University of Wellington describes as “everyday racism, negative stereotypes, lack of knowledge about Islam, and racism in the media” (Science Media Centre, 2019). Overall, New Zealand should find those spaces, and make them publicly available, to negotiate, critically and creatively, cultural hybridity and share some dialogic approaches to understanding migratory identities.

Unless this space is created, insidious traumas of colonisation, racism, and wars could leave long-term impacts on contemporary postcolonial Arab-Muslim New Zealanders. In her book *Colonial Trauma*, the Algerian psychoanalyst Karima Lazali (2021) believes that only by readdressing colonial histories and their consequences can we provide postcolonial traumatised individuals with the tools to traverse their cumulative traumas. I join Lazali, Dutta, and Ward’s calls in my own way, by urgently proceeding to build and explore an intercultural theatre mode as a space of (re)negotiating intercultural experiences, identities, and differences between the ‘Middle East’ and the ‘West’.

My mobility has resulted in a potential hybrid culture that undermines cultural authority, existing forms, and representation in postcolonial Aotearoa New Zealand. Homi Bhabha (1994; 1996) introduces the concept of hybridity or ‘culture’s in-between’ and he explains the active agency of marginalised or colonised people in challenging the norm or ‘fixated identifications’. They excavate “the possibility of a cultural hybridity” (1994, p. 5) at a liminal space, “where cultural differences contingently and conflictually touch to yield borderline experiences resistant to [both] the binary oppositions of racial and cultural groups and to homogenized and polarised political consciousness” (1994, p. 296). This concept has considerable implications for any prospective reinvention of Aotearoa New Zealand identity.

Migrant is a contested term in Aotearoa New Zealand. All non-Indigenous people who live in Aotearoa New Zealand are migrants. There are first generations of European migrant-

colonisers, descendants of migrant-colonisers (who have been here for several generations) and ‘recent’ migrants. All of us are migrants (including Pākehā). However, I use the term migrants, in this research, to refer to recent non-European migrants who face racism in Aotearoa New Zealand, where they do not enjoy as much social privilege as European migrants (or Pākehā).

The marae or Māori meeting house is perhaps a safe or productive liminal space for new migrants’ exchanges with Indigenous New Zealanders. In 2020, I was part of the United Arab Emirates Embassy Staff who organised a cultural exchange program between Arabian Gulf cultures and Māori communities. In Wainuiomata Marae (a gathering place) of Wellington city, I transmigrated between Jordanian, Emirati, and Māori cultural elements.

We exchanged Mihi (speeches of greeting) and a nose-pressing greeting—‘Hongi’ in Aotearoa New Zealand or ‘mowajaha’ ‘مواجهه’ in the Arabian Gulf cultures. It is a way of sharing the godly breath of life. I experienced both Hongi and mowajaha for the first time as Jordanians greet each other in different ways (usually, shaking hands).

We exchanged linguistic codes that show a high expression of etiquette. Participants expressed their views in Arabic, te reo māori, and English. We shared protocols that are common to areas such as the Wharenuī, Masjid ‘مسجد’, and Mosque where shoes must be taken off before proceeding through the entrance and food must not be served. Other codes are Salat, prayer, and Karakia, that should take place in a safe zone such as the Marae and Mosque.

We exchanged values and acts of showing respect and kindness to guests and hosts. These acts include the concept of karam ‘كرم’ and manaakitanga that no one would count the costs or the quantities. Welcoming the guests is godliness in all Emirati, Jordanian, and Māori. They offer hospitality to please their Atua or Allah ‘الله’.

We shared arts. I was amazed by the richness of Māori and Emirati handcrafts, each with patterns made creatively via a style of weaving. I listen carefully to the rhymes and recitations on the Marae. I observed their hand gestures, facial expressions, body language, and tattoos. Each cultural element is special and has an essential role and deep meanings that I do not have the capacity, as a non-Māori, to explain. Yet, in the marae, I felt somehow at home.

Each intercultural exchange colours before me a portrait of their Rangatiratanga (sovereignty). Māori sculptures, tapestries, politics, environment, laws, and religion are increasingly being staged and performed in ways that offer opportunities for interaction with marginalised new migrants. This network of relations with colonised or marginalised migrant groups, inbetweeners, or hybrid identities has continuously approached, explained, borrowed, cross-referenced, deconstructed, or renewed their conception of religion, politics, theatre, and society, throughout different historical phases, to bring change (Bhabha, 1994).

Playwriting hybrid migration in Aotearoa New Zealand offers the potential to cross beyond 'old' binaries of Pākehā vs. Māori to a multiplicity of voices. If "hybridity is to culture what deconstruction is to discourse: transcending binary categories" (Pieterse, 2001, p. 238), then cultural and artistic forms, including hybrid playwriting, perhaps offer the opportunity to transcend binary narratives and identities. Cultural exchange creates "the language of critique" that "opens up a space of translation" where a cast of new political entities "properly alienates our political expectations, and changes, as it must, the very forms of our recognition of the moment of politics" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 37).

Theatres can also be a safe and productive space for such meetings. This means playwrights, dramaturges, and directors should pay attention to how the theatre experience is structured and how the audience is empowered to respond or participate. I address some techniques for

audience engagement later in chapters 3 and 4, in the sections on Augusto Boal. In my kaleidoscopic trilogy, I encourage audience engagement by inviting them to collaborate or participate by either copying, repeating, editing, or criticizing roles, themes, or ideas as I clearly signpost at the beginning of each play in the trilogy. The ‘how and when’ relies on the skills of potential dramaturgs and directors of the play and their openness to democracy, for all, and acceptance to other differences, but the techniques are signalled in my scripts.

### *Bedouinization of Jordan*

If I zoom out further, the monologic discourse of the State Culture of ‘Bedouin’ Jordan is another example of the monologic mythification of Arab culture. It scapegoats *differences* among Jordanians. Jordanian is a contested phrase that refers not only to those who are genetically Bedouin Arabs, pastoral nomads of Arabian deserts but also to Jordanians with variant cultural, economic, and socio-political backgrounds. This includes migrants and refugees, Palestinians, Lebanese, Iraqis, Syrians, Yemenis, Albanians, Chechens, Circassians, so-called ‘gipsies’,<sup>17</sup> and Turks (Dweik, 2000) who have been negotiating their intercultural identities, differences, and citizenry for decades, in Jordan.

However, the State Culture of ‘Bedouin’ Jordan is monological. The term Bedouin reflects Jordan’s sole governmental or national identity of a tribal nature. The term becomes imperative to maintain ‘exclusivist’ economic and social values and tendencies. Several scholars (Bocco, 2006; Layne, 1994; Na’amneh, Shunnaq, & Tastasi, 2008) note how the exotic image of the Bedouin of Jordan serves certain political agendas.

This monologic perspective is discriminatory, too. The official process of Bedounising the wide spectrum of different cultures in Jordan is an approach to nationalising them against

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<sup>17</sup> This is an offensive term and I use it here not to endorse it but to reflect the othering that is enacted by its common usage in Jordan. See Russinov, R. (2013). Segregation and the Roma. *European Yearbook of Minority Issues Online*, 10(1), 415-431.



Palestinians, as Joseph Massad (2001) articulates in *Colonial effects: The making of national identity in Jordan*. Andrew Shryock (1997) shares a similar perspective to Massad's that Jordanians who stress tribal origins try to exclude Jordanians of Palestinian roots from the Jordanian military - and that this is a strategy of exclusion for the purposes of nation-building.

This reduces the socio-cultural complexities of current Jordan into an image of a monocultural state. It ignores the differences among and evolution of artistic voices (Sweis & Kabārītī, 2018), dialects (Loae Fakhri, 2020), traditions, and politics (Khamis, 2018). The recognition of intercultural differences and experiences and identities, in Jordan or Aotearoa New Zealand, can (re)create new open-minded identities of individuals or communities. Therefore, Aotearoa New Zealand and Jordan should both consider alternative progressive and realistic visions of the future nation by integrating the social and political realities of migrants. As Bakhtin (1984) puts it, "A person's consciousness awakens wrapped in another's consciousness" (p. 138).

Part of it is to recognise migrants' different voices. Another part is to hear these voices, constantly. Clark and Holquist (1984) reinforce the benefits of this dialogism in the following way:

The way in which I create myself is by means of a quest: I go out to the other in order to come back with a self. I live into another's consciousness; I see the world through the other's eyes. But I must never completely meld with that version of things, for the more successfully I do, the more I will fall prey to the limits of the other's horizon. A complete fusion...even if it were possible, would preclude the difference required for dialogue (p. 78)

Monologism, on the other hand, is, as Bakhtin (1984) puts it:

Finalized and deaf to the other's response...Monologue manages without the other, and therefore to some degree materialises all reality. Monologue

pretends to be the ultimate word. It closes down the represented world and represented persons (p. 293).

To sum up, if I want to pursue a dialogic creative playwriting practice, it will need to open spaces in which one becomes uncertain about the final decision of another, uncertain about exactly what is being represented, and uncertain as to what is the final word. “The difference between monological and dialogical speech has practical value for thinking about what kind of people we want to be” (Frank, 2005, p. 293). Given this context, I turned away from the reified pictures presented by Orientalists to a kaleidoscopic, always partial, and constantly moving (like the tumbling, mirrored fragments inside the kaleidoscope’s barrel) focus that rolls together ideas of Arab migrants from all polarities, but without revealing which is real and which is a reflection in another culture’s mirror, or indeed suggesting that any representation can be ‘real’. I shifted away from Prossor’s Muslims vs. West, or Peters’ Hydra vs. Hercules to present a multicoloured portrait of Arab migrants, in Aotearoa New Zealand, without marginalising their specificities, complexities, and dynamics. Peters’ and Prossor’s discourses, above, are mythologising Muslims and Arabs as aliens, ‘static’, threatening, or ‘barbarians’ that Western societies must shut their borders and theologies from. The intention of my creative and critical work is to present another contending conscious portrait of unities and differences among the various Arab realms, hybrid identities, and minorities that are still untransparent to Aotearoa New Zealand’s socio-political space and dominant narrative.

Artistically, I invest in going beyond binaries to a pluralistic discussion through hybrid characterisation in my trilogy, which I discuss further in chapter four. I transform, transit, and translate different characters (such as puppets, jinn, and mythological creatures) from different times, spaces, and cultures. They meet on one stage. They mark the rise of possibilities for, Robert Young (1995) asserts, “mixed” or “intermediate races” (p. 6) or the

downfall of “pure” species (Brun, 2007; Pieterse, 2001). Their interaction with human characters “opens up” new possibilities and different interpretations “without an assumed or imposed hierarchy” (Bhabha, 1995, p. 5). I turn the stage into a liminal or intercultural space, where the mixed races and the post-human as well as human characters such as Aragoze or Messengers, for example, can reinvent themselves constantly by negotiating and translating between their cultures or times - that they migrate constantly to and from.

Translating ‘the’ culture of those migratory mixed races and Aragoze into something fluid and unfixed in my trilogy, does not imply that migration overcomes differences between cultures. My translation becomes, as Bhabha (1994) suggests, a process that initiates and diversifies cultural differences and creatures. In this way, migrants’ voices, discourses, or cultures in Aotearoa New Zealand become, as Bhabha argues, “untranslatable”, and this “disturbs traditions” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 322). The untranslatable hybrids cannot be located by “the methodological essentialism that continues to dominate Western logic” (Basu, 2017, p. 3). An ‘authentic’ inclusion of Arab migrants’ multi-voices (i.e., multi-contested meanings) may generate differences and has the potential to transgress Aotearoa New Zealand’s bicultural categories.

With this aim, I created my hybrid characters in the trilogy. They are both, but not limited to, logical and illogical seriocomic characters looking without success for what truth and certainty are, but they lead us to no specific answers except an open-ended or future answer. They resist reification. They migrate, in a multidirectional way, in between different fixed Arabic, English, Indian, Asian, and European cultural and historical identifications and resources and borrow inherited materials (such as songs, proverbs, and performances) from every culture they traverse.

As a playwright, the characters' 'becoming' status challenges me; as I myself cannot be certain about Aragoze's identity or destiny, for example. I wonder 'Who is he? What is he going to become? Where will he end up?' I cannot define his character except as an inbetweener who relates to performances or acts of interrelationship, rupture, estrangement, metamorphosis, alteration, overlap, and mobility.

In other words, my creative and analytical starting point is a social rather than political reality. The Orientalist political reality in Aotearoa New Zealand's media and political spectrums differs dramatically from the social realities of Arab migrants. The Arab migrant community is not merely a museum collection of sects, ethnic groups, or local minorities. Rather, Arab migrants carry within them every potential of divisiveness and unity. My focus is to include all potentials rather than assuming Hercules or Hydra is necessarily dominant over time. This focus pulls contemporary Arab migrants away from conflicting polarities and towards the messy humanness of actual living-in-diversity.

### **Stereotype II: The Causation Approach of Cultural Trauma Studies**

One of the aims of my creative practice has always been to communicate about trauma, but in ways that open up new understandings about the unique traumas of my people (inbetweeners or migrants) rather than deepen stereotypical assumptions. This led me to examine theories of trauma, specifically within literary and cultural approaches to trauma. I found some of the same monological discursive approaches that conceal differences and lack precision. As Wulf Kansteiner (2006) has written:

The writings on cultural trauma display a disconcerting lack of historical and moral precision, which aestheticizes violence and conflates the experiences of victims, perpetrators, and spectators of traumatic events. (p. 193)

Established within a Eurocentric canonical criterion, cultural trauma studies theory appears insufficient to understand hybrid histories and traumatic individuals of other different cultures. It postulates a universal human condition based on its idealist monologic vision of victim and perpetrator, I argue below. This closed system has been criticised for ignoring tangible cultural and trans-historical traumatic differences.

My use of the term cultural trauma requires clarification. In this exegesis, my use of the term is based on the work of Michael Rothberg (2009), who argues that the concept of trauma, at its base, evolved from “a diagnostic realm that lies beyond guilt and innocence or good and evil” (p. 90). Therefore, the concept of a trauma victim or trauma survivor should not be “a category that confirms a moral value” (p. 90) as both, I believe, the victim and the perpetrator might be traumatised. However, I still believe, as Laura Brown argues, that trauma is ‘insidious’ when it “involves everyday, repeated forms of traumatising violence, such as sexism, racism, and colonialism” (2009, p. 89), where at least two parties can claim different positions of direct or indirect engagement.

Within this definition of cultural trauma, one could read Arab migrants as well as the characters of *Aragoze Trilogy* as traumatised. However, it is difficult to argue that Aragoze, a character in my trilogy, is a trauma victim or survivor because there is no one sudden violent or disrupting action that impacts him. Aragoze can be read as a victim in one event, a perpetrator, complicit, or undefined in other events. His hybrid identity, like the inbetweeners, is disruptive to the Aristotelian convention, which I discuss in chapter four in terms of theatre, that rushes to classify him, or other characters, as good vs. evil or victim vs. survivor. My trilogy does not confirm any moral value to its characters except it evokes us to learn hybridity, experience differences, and evolve ethically and uncertainty. This also enables me to use Aragoze to disrupt some of the monologic assumptions I discovered in classic trauma theory and craft new forms of storytelling about trauma. This interaction of

creative practice with theory is not new: trauma theory itself begins by using creative works as metaphors and illustrations for its theorising of trauma.

*The Workings of Classic Trauma Theory: Tancred & Clorinda Parable*

The workings of cultural trauma studies start with Cathy Caruth's field-defining book *Unclaimed experience: Trauma, narrative, and history* (1996b). She began with an incisive reading of Tancred and Clorinda in Tasso's epic, as quoted in Freud's *Beyond the pleasure principle* (1922). In a friendly duel, the hero, Tancred, accidentally kills his beloved Clorinda and, after her burial, "he slashes with his sword at a tall tree; but bloodstreams from the cut and the voice of Clorinda, whose soul is imprisoned in the tree, is heard complaining that he has wounded his beloved once again" (p. 2). Like Freud, Caruth understands that the traumatic experience is repeated through the unwitting acts of Tancred, the survivor, against his will. She also elaborates that Tancred becomes traumatised once he hears Clorinda's "moving and sorrowful *voice*...that is paradoxically released through the wound" (p. 2) to show him, or to witness, what he has committed. In other words, Caruth argues that the trauma of Tancred, like any other traumatic experience, is "precisely not known" in the actual event in the past but "returns to haunt" Tancred, the survivor, later. In short, Caruth defines the main characteristics of trauma as resulting from a violent yet not-fully grasped event in the first instance, belatedly known, and then reoccurring in the form of nightmares or flashbacks.

The conclusions that can be drawn from Caruth's reading of the parable Tancred and Clorinda have engendered controversy. In "Who Speaks? Who Listens?" Novak (2008) criticises Caruth's analysis as being Euro-centric and inapplicable to "the experience of the colonised Other" (2008, p. 31). Firstly, Caruth sidelines Clorinda, a whitened and Christianised Ethiopian, Persian, Turk, or Arab fighter in the Saracens army against

crusaders, by rewriting her “bodily experience of trauma as the trauma of the male consciousness” (p. 32) or Tancred’s. As demonstrated above, Caruth’s only focus is on Tancred as the traumatised individual and a witness to an unknowable and mysterious otherness, i.e., Clorinda, Novak argues. Whereas Caruth’s reading holds the view that Tancred is the subject that trauma unwittingly haunted and returned to, Novak argues that “Tancred does not experience the trauma; Clorinda [the dead] does” because the voice that is released through the wound is not “a generic female voice” but “the female voice of black Africa” (2008, p. 32). In Novak’s mind, Caruth’s rationality carries a colonial discursive aspect by justifying Tancred’s crime and turning the perpetrator of trauma, namely Tancred, into a victim of trauma. In Novak’s understanding, Caruth’s schema would turn the murderers of African slaves into victims and the screams and weeping of the slaves into a witness to the traumatic experiences of the executioners.

In line with the previous argument, Michel Rothberg’s *Multi-directional Memory* (2009) argues that the concept of trauma victim or trauma survivor should not be “a category that confirms a moral value” (p. 90). He does not doubt that Tancred is a trauma survivor, but he does not share Novak’s attempt, although they both call for decolonising trauma studies, to identify Clorinda as a trauma victim as “the dead are not traumatised, they are dead” (p. 90). However, he finds Novak and Caruth’s rationalisations are fixing us into a hierarchical colonial matrix of power.

Before 2008, trauma theory was intellectualised in many 1990s critical works such as Cathy Caruth, Dori Laub, and Shoshana Felman. Felman and Laub’s *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (1991), and Caruth’s *Trauma: Explorations in Memory and Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996a) seem to have only focused on historical traumatic experiences, namely the Holocaust, and are concerned with the literature and history of trauma in Europe. Further

influential studies such as Arthur Kleinman, Veena Das, and Margaret Lock's 'Social Suffering' (1997), and Kleinmann and Das's 'Violence and Subjectivity' (2000) and 'Remaking a World' (Das, 2001) have the Holocaust as their primary reference for exceptional trauma although they do study non-Western world traumas. None of the previous studies has drawn attention to the differences between non-Western and Western traumas in terms of their causes, expressions, and techniques of treatment. In other words, they lack intercultural exchange, and this may lay them open to accusations of monologism (or the lack of an intercultural dialogue process.) All the above pre-2008 studies seem to hold a view of trauma or suffering as a universal human condition, ignoring the agents, histories, and hegemonic neo-colonial techniques that have produced it and continue to do so – till our present. The classic cosmopolitan worldview excluded, for example, non-Eurocentric traumas such as the Palestinians from its elitist 'proper' objects of study, although Palestinians' traumas offer a unique 'opportunity' or, ironically, 'labour market' for fresh insights for the classic scholarly lens, as I discuss soon.

In contrast to the above trauma studies' assumption of the universality of trauma, my creative practice in *Aragoze Trilogy*, draws on Allen Young's (1995) 'The Harmony of Ilusions; inventing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder', who argues that identities are shaped by what our memories hold. For Young (1995), trauma as a form of memory is neither universal nor an intrinsic unity but a product of history and culture that has been "glued together by the practices, technologies, and narratives with which it is diagnosed, studied, treated, and represented and by the various interests, institutions, and moral arguments that mobilised these effects and resources" (p. 5). I agree with Young's claim that we need to be more concerned with how traumatic memory has been and continues to be made, rather than recapturing 'whole pastness' – which is impossible. Likewise, my intercultural theatre is not keen to capture the whole pastness of a memory or a traumatic event that *Aragoze*, the



character, has been through, but to explore the different interests and institutional processes that continue to wound him in the present.

Based on Young's (1995) work, since 2008, an increasing number of scholars focussing on decolonising cultural trauma studies literature have emerged. They call for unconventional indigenous modes of reading trauma as intertextual and *performative*, to better understand the overlapping histories of suffering stemming from structural violence. In other words, they call for openness to other cultural elements or interculturalism.

The first serious discussion and analysis of the relationship between critical approaches to trauma theory and postcolonial literary theory emerged in 2008 in Volume 40, *Studies in the Novel* (2008). Authors in the special issue Rothberg (2008) and Craps and Buelens (2008) argued that the theory was Euro-centric and that it limited itself by being insistently single-event-based.<sup>18</sup> The authors stressed the need to turn away from trauma theory's Euro-American approaches and contexts to 'intercultural exchange' with other different cultural approaches. To provide an ethical cross-cultural theoretical framework, they argued, hegemonic cultural trauma studies needed to engage with indigenous and non-European cultural approaches and traumatic experiences.

Craps and Buelens contend that "trauma studies' stated commitment to the promotion of cross-cultural ethical engagement is not borne out" as the ur-texts (including Caruth's work) of the field almost wholly slant towards the traumas of "white Westerners and solely employ critical methodologies emanating from a Euro-American context" (Craps & Buelens, 2008, p. 2). Some previously published trauma studies Chetty and Singh (2010), Monteiro & Wall (2011) Mengel and Borzaga (2012), Parent and Wiethaus (2012), Niemi (2015), and Kurtz (2014) have dealt with African and Native American trauma. However, most have dealt with

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<sup>18</sup> By which they meant that one accidental acute event was attributed as causing trauma.

European traumatic experiences such as (Felman & Laub, 1991) and (Caruth, 1995). The later studies remain “locked in a one-dimensional “event theory” of trauma” (Rothberg, 2008, p. 228) – what Van Styvendale terms the “accident model” (2008, p. 207). In other words, the problem with canonical trauma theory and its approaches is that they fail to consider non-Western traumatic events such as the Palestinian Nakba (or Palestinian Catastrophe) and focus on an historical model in which there is expected to be only one single mammoth episode of violence to which the trauma can be attributed, rather than layer upon layer of intergenerational trauma.

Although “Palestinians (for example) never have the luxury of digesting one tragedy before the next one is upon them” (Sacco, 2010), very little is known about Palestinian trauma(s) in the field of cultural trauma studies. By marginalising the Palestine Nakba,<sup>19</sup> for example, classic trauma studies could be accused of ignoring or concealing the *historically structured* Palestinian loss of land and Israeli military occupation. In *On the exclusion of the Palestinian Nakba from the trauma genre*, Sayigh (2013) observes the process of cultural dehistoricisation of the Palestinians’ suffering.<sup>20</sup> Such dehistoricisation or exclusion from trauma theory “both reflects and reinforces the marginalisation of Palestinian claims to justice and the recognition of the Nakba in world politics” (2013, p. 58). Such exclusion could also be considered part of the long-lasting colonial tradition of dehistoricisation or essentialisation that hushes, disparages, and exoticises the suffering of Others. A very recent instance of such tradition occurs in Gilbert Achcar’s (2010) book *The Arabs and the Holocaust*, when he argues that “the Palestinians cannot...advisedly and legitimately apply to their own case the superlatives appropriate to the Jewish genocide” (pp. 31-32). I argue that, as Morris (1996) states,

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<sup>19</sup> Nakba is an Arabic word referring to the catastrophic expulsion of Palestinian people from their homeland.

<sup>20</sup> Sayigh criticizes the following works (Bardenstein, 1999); (Apfel & Simon, 2000); (M. M. J. Fischer, 2008).

suffering cannot be measurable or reduced to quantitative measurement, and to hierarchise suffering in this way becomes part of the marginalisation process of certain groups' trauma.

In addition to the separation between Nakba – or other traumas in the Arab worlds – and trauma studies, Sayigh indicates the process of “dehistoricization” of the Palestinians' suffering in the few trauma studies that do look at Palestine, such as Bardenstein (1999), Apfel and Simon (2000) and Fischer (2008). These three studies do not provide a context and a historical background, which omission tends to conceal the fact of Palestinian loss of their land and that an Israeli military occupation still exists or at least occurred in Palestine in 1948. However, I do not intend to argue that the issue of trauma is a matter of preference of one trauma over another. I am rather arguing for the necessity of the transformation of cultural trauma studies from monologism to dialogism. My creative work is an attempt to examine various representations of memories as forms of trauma, to offer hybrid characters who are both aggressor and wounded, witness and implicated, to explore layered and multidimensional models of trauma, and to creatively deconstruct the narrow lens of Eurocentric models of trauma with a rich, intercultural model that brings to the fore the very different experiences of traumatised Arab subjects.

Commenting on the accident-model of trauma studies, I reject then, drawing on above discussions of Rothberg (2008) and Visser (2015), the theory's only concern with single-event or “the event-based” model of reading trauma, arguing that this model, at base, marginalises “the sustained and long processes of the trauma of colonialism” (Visser, 2015, p. 4). Canonical trauma theory assumes “the completed past of a singular event,” as Rothberg argues, despite the fact that “colonial and postcolonial traumas persist into the present” (2008, p. 230). Besides, through my practice, I illustrate that trauma cannot be approached from a predetermined appropriated theory, pointing to Caruth and Freud, but should be accessed from the various historical, social, political, and geographical referential discursive

contexts where trauma is embedded, but not rooted. Likewise, postcolonial traumas, Visser (2015) argues, do not engage with a determinable history because the postcolony has never stopped being surrounded by the colonial legacies, which allow survivors to severely relive the real-time enunciation of their previous familial or non-familial traumas. The postcolonial time of trauma is not linear: it is ever present and encircling. Neither therefore is the timeline of my creative work linear.

I use Rothberg's concept of multi-directional memory, Bakhtin's heteroglossia, and Knowles's interculturalism to travel, bring together, intersect, or interweave between different confronting historic accounts or memories of violence in my intercultural theatre. Such multidirectional freedom can offer significant contributions to playwrights, directors, and theatre because it leads us through the contested areas out of static binaries to creativity. Rothberg suggests a multidirectional approach to thinking about the trauma of *Tancred and Clorinda*, a reading that "would track the interconnectedness of different perpetrators and different victims" (2009, p. 96).

This inspired me to consider how such a parable could open up possibilities through intercultural theatre's device of intertextuality. Through exploring intertextual creative practice in *Aragoze Trilogy*, juxtaposing Christian, Muslim, ancient, recent, East, West, and widely diverse texts of trauma, I came to an understanding that a traumatic experience is more suggestive than posing questions of guilt and innocence (as Novak implies), or victim and perpetrators (as Caruth implies). Because these "categories alone are not sufficient to understand 'our' positioning in this globalised scenario of exploitation and trauma" (Rothberg, 2014, p. xv), a new kind of subjectivity is needed. Therefore, the multivocal characterisation of *Aragoze*, the character, draws attention to the positions of victim, perpetrator, bystanders, and "implicated subjects" which would encompass any "beneficiaries of a system that generates dispersed and uneven experiences of trauma" (Rothberg, 2014, p.

xv). This, of course, is a far cry from the traditional ‘antagonist versus protagonist’, ‘hero versus villain’ of Aristotelian narrative theatre, but this work of a multidirectional approach, reading, or memory helps me, through my practice, to consider cases of complicity or responsibility in the characterization process. It guides me in the creation of Aragoze and his changing positionalities. For example, one can read Aragoze at different points as a victim, perpetrator, bystander, or as implicated in other characters’ traumas. Through this intercultural theatre, I want to leave the audience under the effect of suspicion by questioning both *Aragoze* and their own positionalities in different events.

Those discussions have made momentous contributions to the discourses of *Aragoze Trilogy*, as an intercultural space. For example, I utilize Brown’s concept of insidious trauma, Rothberg’s multi-directionality, and Styvendale’s concept of the *trans-historicity* of trauma. My creative practice deals with various enduring topics such as extremism, protectionism, racism, or human trafficking and I attempt to show how it is not one thing but many that results in current experiences of overlapping cultural traumas.

For example, the character Aragoze’s traumatic trans-historicity<sup>21</sup> cannot be reduced to one causal event locked into the past (or the time it was constructed); because his identity became a time span marked by the continuation of negotiating intercultural processes. He is travelling across times and places, using the Sufi whirling device, to take us deep into the abyss of his experience of diasporas, sufferings, and differences that shape his kaleidoscopic, dialogic, or hybrid identity. We cannot understand him through an Aristotelian absolutism of good vs. evil or antagonist vs. protagonist. Aragoze, the character, is using Jelaluddin Rumi’s<sup>22</sup> whirling device to drive us to the ‘third place’ to ‘the field,’ crossing all borders and

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<sup>21</sup> With this term of trans-historicity, I mean “the intergenerational trauma” of hybrid identities “gesturing toward a trauma that takes place and is repeated in multiple epochs and, in this sense, exceeds its historicity” (Van Styvendale, 2008, p. 204). In this sense, linear times such as past, present and future become dysfunctional as the hybridity process requires permanent evolution.

<sup>22</sup> Rumi was a Sufi poet and scholar from Greater Khorasan. His influence transcends borders and ethnicities.

ethnicities, out beyond ideas of the victim and perpetrator binary that was deployed by the leading scholar of trauma studies, Cathy Caruth, to understand the concept of trauma. He leads us to a world of differences that shape his hybrid identity.

### **Stereotype III: ‘Modern’ Theatre in the Arab World**

The following discussion of modern theatre traditions in the Arab world is a significant part of my thesis. It situates my trilogy within this long-standing tradition of studies about the history of theatre in the Arab world. It connects to further discussion, later, about breaking up with the Aristotelian dramatic structure and linearity and recalling ample ways of presenting the history, forms, and meanings of theatre from an intercultural perspective. First, though, I look to contribute to projects seeking to decolonise theatre and performance studies by challenging the patronising and Euro-centric way that modernity has been discussed in relation to Arab theatre.

My voice echoes the calls of Khalid Amine, Rustom Bharucha, Ric Knowles, and other contemporary theatre critics involved in the development of intercultural theatre theories, as I will discuss further in chapter three. Beyond the wider classical framework of the protectionism of Western theatre in the Arab world or elsewhere, I argue that it becomes imperative to accept intercultural performances on their own terms, especially from those who have been historically silenced, marginalised, or colonised.

As a generalisation, the Arabic theatre industry has often gone unnoticed by international scholars of theatre, performance, and culture. For example, English historical studies of world theatre such as Freedley and Reeves’ *A History of the Theatre* (1941), Brockett’s *History of the Theatre* (1968), Gilbert and Tompkins’ *Post-colonial Drama: Theory, Practice, and Politics* (1996), the publications of the *International Federation of Theatre Research* (1967-1999), and Zarrilli, McConachie, Williams and Fischer Sorgenfrei’s *Theatre Histories: An Introduction*

(2006) do not mention a word about the viable theatrical movement, attempts, or conventions in the Arab worlds.

Amine (2018) calls for decolonising histories of Arab theatre, pushing back against universalising polarisations or hierarchical dichotomies in which live Arabic dramatic elements are relegated or treated unequally and violently. Unscrutinised monologic perspectives on what constitute legitimate ‘modern’ forms of theatre ignore diversity and endorse passive or one-way borrowing from Western theatre rather than involving intercultural exchanges with different cultures through histories.

Then, among those who do discuss Arab theatre, there has been a polarisation into two streams of opinion regarding Arab theatre’s status, with each side offering rationalisations. One stream endorses projects of Europeanisation that reflect modernity. The other stream calls for nationalising Arab theatre that reflects ethnicisation. My critical overview of those two main streams aims to break away from legacies of protectionism and essentialism in Arab theatre and loosen the confines on our creative forms of expression.

### **‘Modern’ Arab theatre**

The first school of thought perceives Arab theatre through the lens of Molièrisation, Shakespearisation, Europeanisation, the Aristotelian Western dramatic perspective, or modernisation. A long-standing theme of theatre scholarship sustains the Eurocentric claim to a modern theatre presence in the Arab world such as Duncan Macdonald (1897), Curt Pruffer (1912), Jacob Landau (1958), Farouk Abdelwahab (1974), Mahmoud Manzalaoui (1977), Muhammad Badawi (1988; 1992), Don Rubin (1999), and Abdullah Abu Heif (2002). These scholars have put forth reasons for Arab theatre’s contemporariness. They have a consensus view that modern Arab Theatre arose as a *new* art transferred from Europe in the early days of the so-called Arab Renaissance, after the end of the French campaign in Egypt. They consider

that it strongly emerged in a provisional epoch fashioned by the decline of the Ottoman Empire (1908-1922) and the immediate European invasion, mandate, and colonisation (1916-1948) of Arab countries.

#### *al-Naqash of Lebanon*

According to the above historical trajectory, scholars concur that the beginnings of contemporary Arab theatre date back to 1847 in Beirut when Maroun al-Naqash premiered Moliere's *The Miser*. They relate that al-Naqash, who stood on stage as one of the pioneers of modern Arab theatre, succeeded in transferring European theatre, although rudimentary forms, to Beirut and then the Arab worlds. French theatre was his main wellspring of themes and ideas, which unsurprisingly faced scepticism in an environment that lived locked in a dichotomy with the colonial. This could be a reason why al-Naqash only staged the play in front of his house before family and friends rather than in any larger public venue (Teeny, 2017).

#### *al-Qabani of Syria*

In 1868, Abu Khalil al-Qabani,<sup>23</sup> following the footsteps of al-Naqash, added more techniques to the borrowed theatrical activities such as singing and opera. According to Mahmoud Mousa (1997), al-Qabani is considered the 'founding father' of musical theatre in the Arab world, although medieval Islamic manuscripts are rich in pictorial narratives of musical gatherings in the markets and courts, as Shmuel Moreh (1992) argues. However, in Damascus, al-Qabani directed the 'first', according to Mousa, musical play titled *Alexander the Great*. Later, Ottoman authorities closed al-Qabani's theatre as the most overriding voice in this formative period was that of the religious traditionalist thinkers, called '*Ulama*',<sup>24</sup> who were also locked into the dichotomies that opposed projects of relocating European laws and institutions to the

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<sup>23</sup> Al-Qabani is a Syrian playwright. Al-Qabani directed more than sixty musicals and composed about fifteen plays.

<sup>24</sup> '*Ulama*': Conservatives were serving as advisors to the ruling class and acting in accordance with the instructions of the Ottoman authorities.



Arab worlds under the Ottoman religious system. European theatre sounded like an invasion of that system.

#### *Sanu of Egypt*

In Egypt, Yaqub Sanu tracked al-Naqash and al-Qabbani's efforts. Sanu produced no fewer than thirty theatrical works, influenced by Moliere's comedies and European operettas and farces. He launched a new theatre of performance in Cairo in 1870 that dealt with issues with a satirical political tone that did not help his theatre to survive more than two years after Ottoman authorities ordered it shut down. He is also considered one of the pioneers of Arab theatre by some critics such as Al-Mu'aiqil and Al-Zahrani (2001).

#### *al-Hihi of Jordan*

Likewise, long-standing historical studies demonstrate that modern theatre in Jordan began with monasteries and Christian missionaries, dating back to the British Mandate.<sup>25</sup> This narrative can be found in different studies such as Saba and Rox al-Uzayzi (1997), Abdullateef Shamma and Ahmed Shaqm (1979), Ghannam Ghannam (2009), Mofid Hawamidah (1993), Mahmoud Mousa (1995), Mansour Amayreh (2012), and Awaad Ali (2016, 2008).

However, many scholars of theatre studies in Jordan define 'modern' based on Eurocentric theatre standards. They argue that the founder of 'modern' theatre in Trans-Jordan was a Catholic priest called Antoun al-Hihi,<sup>26</sup> as he staged *Hamlet* in 1916. On many occasions during the al-Hihi period, the British Mandate promoted Shakespeare's plays in Trans-Jordanian and Palestinian schools. This promotion was, as Saba and al-Uzayzi (1997) argue,

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<sup>25</sup> Following World War 1 and the fall of the Ottoman Empire, Britain ruled Palestine and Transjordan under military rule. The British had direct control of Palestine and Trans-Jordan from 1920-1948 after the defeat of the Ottoman Caliphate in the First World War (1914-1918). As result of the British Mandate, the united borders of the region were redrawn and many parts of Palestinian land, after the Belfour Declaration, were confiscated by Jewish Zionists.

<sup>26</sup> An Arab priest who came from Bethlehem in Mandatory Palestine to the small city of Madaba in Trans-Jordan, founded The Arab Catholic Nascent Association.

an opportunity to know more about international and English theatre plays and the way to *modernity*.

An Iraqi novelist and theatre critic based in Jordan, Ali (2008) believes al-Hihi's vision was inspired by the educational philosophy of the Latin Patriarchate, in Trans-Jordan. In his view, the Patriarchate provided an important scientific and cultural service at that time, "thus, we should teach these people (Bedouins<sup>27</sup>) to reach the ranks of civilization and the light of knowledge". European theatre appeared (to al-Hihi, the Patriarchate, and Ali), as less of a threat than a promise to modernise Indigenous Bedouins.

However, Ali fell into the trap of colonial mythification of the Arab Mind. In his view, Bedouins' local industry cannot be *modern* unless they annihilate their amateur traditions and replace them with the English model. His statement disavowed the Indigenous dramatic traditions of *al-Samir*, Hakawati theatre, *Qisas al-Mutajwileen* (itinerant Stories), Sondouq al-Ajab (The Wonder Box) or Sandooq al-Furjah (Performance Box) and that were well-established in the Bedouin communities in the region at that time, as found in many studies such as al-Abbadi (1979), al-Khashman (2018), UNESCO (2018), al-Sareesi (2013), Box (2005), Jayyusi and Allen (1995), Badawi (1995), Slyomovics (1991). He, among other theatre critics, sees Western theatre as the unique theatre archetype at the expense of reducing the native community performance traditions to primitive ritual.

In line with Ali's essentialism, many scholars of theatre history in the Arab world have written hegemonic accounts. Curt Prufer (1912), Jacob Landau (1958), John Gassner and Edward Quinn (1969), Peter J. Chelkowsky (1979), al-Khozai (1984), Aziza (1987), Badawi (1988), and Al-Sheddi (1997), for example, pinpoint some reasons beyond the decline of those early

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<sup>27</sup> Indigenous tribes of Jordan.

Arabic theatrical conventions when those conventions oppose or compare to the western proscenium traditions.

### *Incompatibility with Islam*

Landau (1958), for example, argues against the existence of theatre in ancient Arab heritage. He believes that the late birth of ‘modern’ theatre (late nineteenth century) in the Arab world is due to the Arab world’s lack of interaction with Greek drama and theatre. He believes “[t]he people with whom the Arabs came into close contact had no well- developed theatre” (p. 1). In the preface of Landau’s foundational work *Studies in the Arab Theatre and Cinema*, H. A. R. Gibb, a Scottish historian of Orientalism, assumes that “[d]rama is not a native Arab art”, given “the dramatic art of Greece, from which the Western theatre derives, remained unknown to them”. In addition, Gibb does not qualify “shadow theatre in the Middle Ages above the level of popular entertainment” (p.xi) and the current popular art is in debt to the Turks - more than Arabs.

Landau, a Professor Emeritus at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, conducts a survey of Arabic theatre that is widely-cited by many eurocentric narratives of drama, discussed below. In the introduction, the author establishes, initially, that his cultural and social study is not meant to be a critical study of Arab theatre and cinema’s aesthetics as “the time has not yet come” to mature; but the author pays tribute to the “penetration of Western civilization” into the ‘virgin soil’ of the Near East (pp. xi-xii).

The first part of Landau’s book, which consists of three chapters, treats a long tradition of mimicry, Passion plays, and shadow plays. The chapter of mimicry sets, at the very beginning, the combination of two reasons behind the late ‘puberty’ of Arab theatre until the nineteenth century; reason one is the lack of cultural and social interaction with Greek and the author assumes that “no item of the classical drama found its way into Arabic translations until recent years” (p.2), which many critics opposed in the coming section. The second reason is ‘woman’; as it was unlawful for her

to appear on the stage, Landau assumes. Landau provides, then, a brief summary of mimicry based on orientalist views such as George Jacob, Curt Pruffer and Adam Mez, who believe that the scope of mimicry is 'admittedly narrower' than that of the inherited and ancestral theatre, i.e. the Greek theatre or the Aristotelian arch, and this applies to Arabic forms of mimicry such as Hikäya, hakawati and Maqäma.

The chapter on the passion play defines Ta'ziya and describes its dramatic elements. Landau (1958) establishes that Ta'ziya is the Persian imitation of the Passion play popularised first in the Middle Ages and revived in twentieth-century Europe and America, that profess Christianity. The author, however, is carefully reminding us of his essential power matrix that "the Ta'ziya shows hardly any resemblance to the Catholic theatrical performances, in either spirit or form", but it dismisses more likely to an inferior ranks of spirit and form as it is throttled by either ancient practices of Zoroastrian of Persia or 'victorious Islam' (p.5).

In the second part, which consists of five chapters, Landau traces *the* Arab theatre in Syria and Egypt borrowed from Europe during the nineteenth century. In his reading of the early Arab theatre's ways of adaptations of translated plays from the West, Landau concludes that they are indicative of the low cultural standard of those who attended Arabic performances of the Egyptian stage. (p.108)"

Landau does not only present his personal assessment on adaptations but also Arabic audience techniques and rhetoric of Arabic in original plays during that liminal period. He believes that those original plays are "still more suitable for good reading than good acting". He finds the Arabic language a problem to be solved 'satisfactorily' as "[l]iterary Arabic is understood by few patrons of theater and may even cause unintended laughter in an untutored audience by its cover punctiliousness" and the variations of colloquial Arabic may not be understood outside its country of origin. For Landau, this baffling situation happened due to "the talents of a

restricted number of playwrights” (p.124), whose choices are affected by their temperament and they are attached to it.

Badawi (1988) supports Landau’s view that Arabs, before the rise of Islam, were not familiar with drama (p. 3), and that after the rise of Islam, they avoid ‘pagan’ literature and arts. Gassner and Quinn (1969), Chelkowsky (1979), and Aziza (1987) share similar stereotypical images of Islam’s interventionist force against the development of the theatrical industry throughout Arab history. Aziza (1987) considers Islam has been an unfriendly instrument to drama or figurative arts. Thus, Aziza (1987) sees Muslims as ‘naïve’ and offers only an oversimplification of the complexities of Islamic ideologies.

Another monologic history written by non-Arabs about Arab theatre, the Routledge *World Encyclopedia of Contemporary Theatre* dedicated volume 4 (1999), edited by Don Rubin, aims to shed light on theatre in 22 Arab countries. The volume covers historical overviews of the birth of theatre from Algeria to Yemen, and the history of Arab women’s involvement in theatrical productions. It argues, in a few lines, for the incompatibility of Islamic thought with theatre and the obstacles that prevented or delayed the rise of theatre in earlier ages. Oscar G. Brockett and Franklin J. Hildy (2003) also share a similar monologic position that:

[Islam] forbade artists to make images of living things because Allah was said to be the only creator of life ... the prohibition extended to the theatre, and consequently in those areas where Islam became dominant, advanced [i.e. European] theatrical forms were stifled. (p. 69)

Landau claims that tribal regulations are another obstacle to theatre. They forbid women to participate in theatrical productions. Landau argues “women, particularly if unveiled, were strictly forbidden to appear on the stage” (pp. 1-2). Al-Khozai (1984) argues for the difficulty of the development of early Arab drama due to mental, aesthetic, religious, environmental, and historical factors.

The generalised essentialist perspective of the incompatibility of Islam with theatre is also endorsed and reproduced among other recent Arab critics such as Badawi (1988), and al-Khoza'i (1984), for example. Badawi's work *Early Arabic Drama* (1988) questions the beginnings of Arab theatre and argues that "modern Arabic drama is an importation from the West" (Badawi, 1988, p. 7). He referred to early, pre-Napoleonic era, Arabic dramas such as *Sha'ir* (or romantic recitations), *Ta'ziyah* (or passion plays), and *Khayal al-Zill* (or shadow plays), calling them "dramatic or semi-dramatic entertainment" (p. 1), in a sense, but suggested that they fail to meet the 'modern' model.

al-Khoza'i (1984) also considers theatre in the Arab world as a European form that has been unknown to Arab scholars before the historical contact with the Napoleonic expedition. He argues that in the second century of Islam, called the Abbasid era or golden age, "Arabic poetry was maturing; and because of the new monotheistic faith it was unlikely that Arab scholars would turn to what they considered a pagan art form [i.e. theatre]" (p. 4) that would threaten the Arabo-Islamic socio-political structure. Likewise, Aziza (1987) argues for the impossibility of drama in a traditional Arab-Islamic environment.

Badawi and al-Khoza'i's views on theatre in the Arab world are not dissimilar to Landau's views in his influential book *Studies in the Arab Theatre and Cinema* (1958). His book was the first published *detailed* English (or Western) study of Arab theatre. After it was translated into Arabic and published in Egypt, the study has become an oft-cited reference to most – if not all – Arabic and international studies that have dealt with the origins and evolution of Arab theatre, particularly in Syria and Egypt.

### **Unique Arab-Muslim Theatrical Traditions**

However, another set of scholars such as Amine (2006, 2018), Carlson (2019), Hinda (2018), and Moreh (1992) criticise the previous dominant stream of Arab theatre studies that *gazes at*

European theatre as the unique father and epitome of all theatre, without bothering themselves with examining the authenticity of uniquely Arab performative content. They argue against Arab seekers of modernism who suggest we should entirely appropriate western theatre at the expense of repudiating the local industry of performative agencies and epistemologies and point out that local traditions have been neglected by theatre studies. They challenge the claims of Islam's incompatibility with theatre as misleading. They suggest these views are based on flawed arguments produced by some Eurocentric orientalist and Muslim orthodox scholars. Abdeladim Hinda (2018) is "convinced that any discussion of Arab-Muslim theatre should begin with a review of the aesthetics of (neo)-historical avant-garde" forms (p. 36). Such a revisit should lead to questions that problematise classical dramatic concepts and theatre aesthetics:

What is theatre? What is drama? Can we encapsulate theatre in drama and drama in theatre? What is ritual? What is the 'origin' of theatre? Is it drama or ritual? What are the aesthetics of theatre? Does drama have aesthetics, too? How can we understand theatre and drama? Is the Aristotelian drama the only form of drama? (Hinda, 2018, pp. 36-37).

#### *Interaction with Greek drama*

Moreh (1992) counters the claim of Arab lack of interaction with Greek drama by tracing the histories of live mimicry traditions in Arabic literature. Amine (2006) interprets Landau's reasons for ignoring many pre-existing aspects of theatre in Arab history as a continuation "of the dynamics of othering" (p. 152). Hinda, Moreh, and Amine share the view that Arabs knew "Greek drama through Christian Syriac translations" (Amine, 2006, p. 152) as well as other performing traditions developed by Indians, Persians, and Turks before they had contact with the Greeks, as Amine (2006) argues.

Moreh (1992) refers to some Arabic translations of Greek terms used in 501 C.E. that include words such as *theatron*,<sup>28</sup> *ippica*,<sup>29</sup> *stadium*, and *mimoi*<sup>30</sup> (p. 310). Moreh also details some Arabic translations of Aristotle's *Poetics* in which he draws similarities between Aristotelian mimicry and Arabic traditions of *hakiyah* “الحكاية”,<sup>31</sup> *khayal* “الخيال”,<sup>32</sup> and *tamthil* “التمثيل”<sup>33</sup> in the translations of Abu Bishr Matta bin Yunus al-Qunnai<sup>34</sup> in the 9<sup>th</sup> Century. These were later adopted by Arab-Islamic scholars like al-Jahiz (868 C.E.), al-Farabi (950 C.E.) and Ibn Sina (1037 C.E.). Moreh also demonstrates ancient Arab writers' (such as al-Idrisi) uses of the word *yal'ab* “يلعب” (to play or perform) and *mal'ab* “ملعب” (a space for performing) to refer to theatrical functions of Murviedro in Spain (p. 24).

The second claim in this school of thought—that Arabic tribal norms denying women access to the theatre industry were a cause of it languishing—is also fragile. Amine (2006) argues that women were also forbidden to perform in English drama until the Restoration age in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> Century, and this did not prevent theatre from developing in England. However, the argument below also indicates women's performing arts. Likewise, theatre, I demonstrate below, remains active and popular today throughout the Arab world, where Islam is still the hegemony - a point that challenges the claim of Islam's incompatibility with theatre.

Lila Abou-Lughod (1995) and Amine (2018) sharply criticize westernised Arab scholars who see the Western proscenium as the only path to modern theatre. Abu-Lughod (1995) calls them ‘guides of modernity’. They construct “women, youths, and rural people” as “a subaltern object in need of enlightenment” and then assign themselves the role of spiritual guide to uplift any

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<sup>28</sup> Theatron is a Greek word and refers to theatre.

<sup>29</sup> Ippica is an Italian word and refers to a horse racing track.

<sup>30</sup> Mimoi refers to satirical poetic scenes.

<sup>31</sup> Hakiyah is an Arabic word and means impersonator. Hikaya means imitation.

<sup>32</sup> Khayal is an Arabic word and means shadow, imagination, and impersonation.

<sup>33</sup> Tamthil is an Arabic word and refers to mimicry.

<sup>34</sup> Al-Qunnai was a Christian philosopher and translator, from Baghdad, known for his Arabic translations of Aristotle, Porphyry, Themistius, and Alexander of Aphrodisias.



local Arabs dreaming of being “the virtuous modern citizen” (p. 191) through participation in the (elitist) ‘grand Western canon’ of ‘high-culture’ drama. Local traditions may be subsumed, transformed, and appropriated into the canon to provide moments of ‘colour’ but are not seen as independently valid and substantial theatre traditions in their own right. Amine (2018) also argues that the “[e]uropeanisation of Arabic performance (*Ta-awrub al-furja al-arabia*) exemplifies the complicity of colonized subjects” (p. 13) in their colonisation. Such a practice falls into the trap of colonialist essentialism, Bharucha (1993) argues, “that does not operate through principles of exchange” rather it “legitimizes its authority only by asserting its cultural superiority” (p. 1-2).

The other school of thought is characterised by substantiating long-established historical roots of theatrical practice in Arab cultural traditions. These ideas can be traced in Al-Sayyid Attieh Abu al-Najjar (1973), Mahmoud Najim (1979), Abdul Rahman Yāghī (1980), Ali Ra’i (1980), Moreh (1992), Terri DeYoung (1992), M. Kister (1999), Josef Meri (2006) Li Guo (2011; 2020), Massip and Francés (2016) and Marvin Carlson (2019) among others. They argue that modern Arab theatre is a continuation of a long heritage of theatrical manifestations, dating back to the pre-Islamic eras (7<sup>th</sup> Century BC). They demonstrate that different forms of *local* performances and theatrical elements have been developed and enjoyed in the Arab region well before the first contact with Napoleonic introductions of European theatre to Syria and Egypt in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, in contrast to Badawi and Landau’s views demonstrated earlier.

Francesc Massip and Raül Sanchis Francés (2016) trace Muslim-Arab influence in medieval European theatrical forms. In their crucial article *Traces musulmanes dans le théâtre médiéval européen*, “أثار إسلامية في المسرح الأوروبي في العصور الوسطى”, the authors acknowledge that far from the influence being one-way (European influence on Arab theatre), the influence is finally in that article acknowledged to go the other way (Arab influence on early European forms). So, for all the elitism about European theatre, influential forms such as *commedia dell’arte* and

Bouffon may well have had early exchanges with Muslim forms of theatre, as I demonstrate in the coming sections on Samaja and Kurraj.

Those traces and exchanges may have been deliberately hidden. The Spanish poet, essayist, and novelist Juan Goytisolo (1999) argues that Europe was an idea “founded on the concealment and negation of Arab traits” or deep Arab roots of Iberian culture, architecture, science, philosophy, and literature, formulated during the Renaissance (p. 149). Massip and Francés (2016), thus, emphasise the importance of recognising “the presence of Arab culture in the background of the European theater” (p. 490).

Massip and Francés propose opening some genealogical ‘tracks’ to recognize the presence of Arab cultural watermarks in European theatre. They point to a story by the Argentinian writer Jorge Luis Borges (1993) in his *La quête d’Averroès*, or Ibn Rushd’s Search<sup>35</sup> (بحث ابن رشد), that ‘imagines’ the famed Muslim philosopher and translator Averroes’ difficulties in understanding Aristotle’s plays, drama, and theatre, owing to the absence of live theatre for Ibn Rushd. Borges (1993) narrates:

Imaginons que quelqu’un nous montre une histoire au lieu de la rapporter... c’est quelque chose comme ça que nous montraient les personnes de la terrasse. ‘Est-ce que ces personnes-là parlaient?’, interrogea Farach. ‘Bien sûr qu’elles parlaient,’ dit Albucásim. ‘Elles parlaient, chantaient et péroraient!’ ‘Dans ce cas,’ dit Farach, ‘il ne fallait pas vingt personnes. Un seul narrateur peut raconter n’importe quoi, quelle qu’en soit la complexité.’ (p. 615)<sup>36</sup>

However, Massip and Francés consider Borges’ interpretation of this story to be mistaken. The authors join Moreh in arguing that “with this commentary, Averroes was only trying to apply Aristotelian methodology to Arabic poetics, but he was not ignorant of the specific terminology

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<sup>35</sup> Ibn Rushd is often latinised as Averroes. He was a polymath and jurist in Andalusia (Muslim Spain), known for his extensive commentaries on Aristotle’s teachings.

<sup>36</sup> Translation (researcher’s own): Let’s imagine that someone shows us a story instead of telling it... it’s something akin to how the people on the terrace showed us. ‘Did those people talk?’ asked Farach. ‘Of course they were talking,’ said Albucásim. ‘They were talking, singing, and haranguing!’ ‘In that case,’ Farach said, ‘it didn’t take twenty people. A single narrator can tell anything, no matter how complex.’

of the theatrical arts” (p. 491). They argue that the Muslim world had different definitions and conceptions of theatre, which were not identical to Classical Greek conceptions of the theatrical such as Aristotle had theorized, which I illustrate in the coming sections, but that this did not mean there was no conception of the theatrical—of showing, not telling, stories through embodiment and multiple voices.

### *Meccan Rituals*

According to Moreh (1992), Arabs developed knowledge and perception of different non-Arab theatrical traditions before, during, and after the rise of Islam. He studies some ritualistic traditions as theatrical manifestations such as pre-Islamic Meccan pilgrimage rituals of dancing and singing around the *Ka'bah* “الكعبة” as they worship their many gods. The holy book of Mulsim Quran, revealed between 610-632, supports Moreh’s claim:

”وَمَا كَانَ صَلَاتُهُمْ عِنْدَ الْبَيْتِ إِلَّا مُكَاءً وَتَصْدِيَةً“  
(35 القرآن، سورة 8، آية)

And their worship at the (holy) House is naught but whistling and hand-clapping.  
(Quran, Chapter 8, Verse 35)

Islam encourages singing and dancing. Kister (1999), of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, focuses on historical traditions, reports, and records in which the Prophet Mohammad allowed and encouraged performances whose content and characters “changed in conformity with the new circumstances”. He reports traditions concern “poetry and singing in ‘A’isha’s [the Prophet’s wife] home”, and “a meeting of the Prophet with a group of young Abyssinians who performed dances and plays in the presence of ‘A’isha”. Another tradition reports “the Prophet stood at the door of ‘A’isha’s chamber, covered her with his garment and allowed her to watch the Abyssinians’ play in the mosque” (p. 53). And another record reports that:

The Prophet passed by a people playing the dankala. He then said: “Take it (i.e. practice it, act vigorously, continue to act,-k), O Sons of Arfida, so that Jews and

Christians may know that there is latitude (fus.hatun) in our faith.” They then played and exclaimed. (p. 54)

During and after the rise of Islam, at the time of the Prophet Mohammad, there were various forms of performing arts and they still have terms. Abu al-Najjar (1973), Najim (1979), Yāghī (1980), and Ra’I (1980), (Moreh, 1992), Meri (2006), Massip and Francés (2016) make historical references to an entertaining and performing art forms such as: *mughannun* “مغنون” or male singers, *maghani* “مغنيات” or female singers, *arbab al-malahi* “أرباب الملاهي” or musicians, *mukhannthun* “المخنثون” effeminate men, *mukhayilun or raqqasun* “رقاصون” or dancers, *mudhikun* “مضحكون” or jokers or comedians, *muharrijun* “مهرجون” or buffoon, *mashkhara* “مسخرة” or jesters, *kurraj* “الكرج” hobbyhorse performers, *safa’ina* “الصفاعة” or slapstick actors, *hikaya* “الحكاية” or impersonation, imitation or story, *muhaki* “محاكي” imitators of voices of animals, people and gestures, *hakawati* “الحكواتي” storyteller, or *al-tharateen or dharratun* “الضرّاطين” makers of fart or (flatulence)-sounds by mouth.

#### *Samaja (masked actors)*

Umayyad and Abbasid caliphs encourage performing artists such as *samaja* “السامجة” (*masked actors*), or later become known as *muharrijun* “المهرجون” (buffoon) and *mukhayilun* “المخيلون” (actors). This involved actors or jesters wearing masks and make-up who performed impressions (acts of imitation, often of people in positions of power), surreal jokes, and funny dances, accompanied by music, in different open spaces such as the courts of rulers and Caliphs, streets, markets, and feasts. Some *dharratun* players performed in hospitals before lunatics or patients to give “psychological treatment”, according to Moreh (1992, p. 70). Meri (2006) cites, from Abu al-Faraj al-Isfahani’s (d.967) “كتاب الأغاني” *Kitab al-Aghani* or *The Book of Songs*, a satirical play in which performers ridiculed a judge called Mohammed al-

Khalanjian known for his richness and arrogance. al-Isfahani reports that the judge left his city “Baghdad out of disgrace” (p. 600), during the Abbasid Caliph al-Amin reign (809-813).

The festival of Nawruz or Nayruz “نيروز”

Shoshan (1993), an Israeli writer, describes the Coptic Egyptian festival of Nawruz<sup>37</sup>, the Coptic New Year. He provides an account of Abbasid and the Fatimid caliphs, mainly the Abbasid caliph al-Mutawkkil (r. 847-862) who used to celebrate this feast with masquerading actors or samaja. Al-Mutawakkil, who showed dissatisfaction and hatred to Ali bin Abi Talib<sup>38</sup> felt pleased when one of his favorite comedians, Samaja ‘Abbada el-Mkhannath, ridiculed Ali. Meri (2006) remarks that:

‘Abbada used to tie a pillow around his belly (under his clothes), take off his headgear to expose his bald head, and dance in the presence of his patron while the singers sang: “The bald one with the paunch is coming, the caliph of the Muslims! (p. 600)

During the Fatimid caliph al-Mu’izz (975), Shoshan describes Nawruz celebrations in Cairo, Egypt:

There were also masks and masquerades. In 975, in celebrations which lasted three days, crowds marched in the streets of Cairo; masquerades (or masks), theatrical performances, and man-made imitations of elephants, possibly a means of mocking two (real) elephants which had featured in a procession presided over by the Fātimid caliph al-Mu`izz two years earlier, all were present. A medieval critic lamented the adverse effect of the holiday not only on the common people but on the learned as well. On that day, he tells us, schools were shut down and turned in to playgrounds. (p. 42)

A person was chosen to act as *ameer al-nowruz* “أمير النيروز” or Prince of Nowruz to complete the Nowruz celebrations. He roamed the streets of Cairo asking people for money and whoever refused to offer money, was taken to the governor’s palace, where either they redeemed

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<sup>37</sup> Egyptian Nawruz is different from Persian Nowruz,. The Persian Nowruz literally means ‘new day’, the Persian New Year. It has different ways of spelling such as Nowruz, Nayruz, Norooz, Nawrouz, Newroz, Novruz, Nowrouz, Nawrouz, Nauryz, Nooruz, Nowruz, Navruz, Nevruz, Nowruz, Navruz, celebrated by different ethno-linguistic groups in the regions of Asia and Pacific such as Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, India, Iran, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan .

<sup>38</sup> a cousin, son-in-law and companion of the Islamic prophet Muhammad

themselves with money, were insulted or splashed with water, wine or water mixed with dirt, all for samaja, maskhara, joking and entertaining purposes.

*Muharrij* and *mashkhara* “مسخرة” have passed to Spain into European languages and cultures and were disapproved of by ‘moralists’, but continue to be used. According to Massip and Francés (2016), from *muharrij* comes the Hispanic *moharrache* which is curiously transformed into Spanish homarrache(man), evolving into momarrache and ending up in mamarracho. European moralists disapprove *muharrij* profession as actors perform awkward gestures and wear devil and beast masks.

Massip and Francés (2016) refer to a mask, which is derived from maskhara (or jester). The Spanish terms *zaharrón* (*buffon*) or *albardán* (*madman*) are of Arabic origin. Spanish *caharron* comes from the Arabic *sahhar* which means ‘comic disguise’ (p.16), and who still appears as jester figures in towns, markets, and rural folklore of ‘Castilian, Gallician and Asturo-Leonian’ cultures.

*Kurraj* “الكرج”

Boaz Shoshan (1993), Baker Sheddi (1997), and Massip and Francés (2016) identify *Kurraj*, (or hobbyhorses) as another type of well-paid, entertaining, improvisational mocking performance, popular in the Abbasid period of the ninth century. In *Kurraj*, performers or actors (*la'ib*) “لاعب” with “obvious phallic overtones” (Harris, 2003, p. 74) ride wooden stick pony toys or hobbyhorses, called *faras al'ud* “فرس العود” (‘stick with a horse’s head’) or ‘*mkhannathun* “المخنثون” or effeminate men or homosexuals ride skirted hobbyhorses. All compete, recalling heroic examples from Arabic history and heritage. Their dialogues combined *hikaya*, discussed below, with stories with mannerisms by which they retorted with audiences. This action was accompanied by songs, poems, flutes, and other musical instruments such as tambourines.

Kurraj may have originated in Central Asian and Persian shamanic rites. According to accounts by the Arabic prose poet al-Jahiz (d. 869), Bahram Gour was Persian king (420-438 AD) who was besieged by his enemies and asked to “put a reed between his legs and galloped about with a crown of sweet basil on his head, together with his 200 maids, singing, shouting and dancing” (Moreh, 1992, p. 28). This mocking performance is clearly mentioned in al-Jahiz’ narration and indicates that Arabs were familiar with the wooden hobbyhorse.

Al-Bukhari (d. 870) narrates kurraj traditions in his collections of Sunni-Muslim authentic hadith (i.e., the prophet Muhammad’s accounts of sayings and life-practices). He narrates a story of Umar ibn al-Khattab (the second Islamic Caliph), who “saw a large number of emigrants with the prophet Muhammad following a successful raid. Among them was a *la’ab* (player) who kicked an Ansari man on the hip” (Moreh, 1992, p. 28). Later, Umar also “saw a player (*la’ib*) playing (*yal’ab*) with a hobbyhorse or kurraj, so he said, ‘If I had not seen this (kurraj) played with in the time of the Prophet, I would have expelled him from al-Medina” (Moreh, 1992, p. 28).

The Arab historian Ibn Khaldoun (1332-1406) narrates the popularity of skirted kurraj earlier than the ninth century. The highly regarded historian in the Arab world remarks that people during the reigns of Abbasid Caliphs alRashid (786-809) and al-Amin (809-813):

constantly had games and entertainment. Dancing equipment, consisting of robes and sticks, and poems to which melodies were hummed, were used. . . . Other dancing equipment, called kurraj, was also used. (The kurraj) is a wooden figure (resembling) a saddled horse and is attached to robes such as women wear. (The dancers) thus give the appearance of having mounted horses. They attack and withdraw and compete in skill (with weapons). . . . There was much of that sort in Baghdad and the cities of the ‘Iraq. It spread from there to other regions” (Ibn-Khaldun, 1989, pp. 404-405).

The kurraj is, now, a traditional element of processions and parades that became popular in many European and Hispanic festivals. It appears in the Feast of Corpus Christi processions (Schmitt, 1976, p. 154). It is found in “from *Cavallets* and *Cotonines* from all over Catalonia,

the Balearic Islands and Valencia, to the Basque *zaldicos* and *zamalzain*, the *Poulain* of Pézenas (Languedoc), the *horses-petticoats* from Cassel (Picardy) or Douai, the *Brieler Rössle* from Rottweil (Germany) or the *Chin-chins* from Lumeçon from Mons (Belgium)” (Massip and Francés 2016, p. 12).

Harris (2003) and Gaudefroy-Demomboynes (1950), in their studies about the early histories of the hobbyhorse, concluded that *cheval-jupon* is not a distinctly western European invention. Gaudefroy-Demomboynes (1950) concludes that the skirted horse entered Europe from Muslim Spain. Harris’s (2003) argument asserts that “Arabic hobbyhorses preceded European hobbyhorses by several centuries” (p. 72).

In my trilogy, I interweave between kurraj “الكرج” or what is now called in Europe *cheval-jupon*, Khayyal al-Zill “خيال الظل” or shadow theatre, *hikayah* and *Hakawati* with elements of absurd and Brecht theatre. Combining those different cultural elements together, the trilogy mocks and ridicules the late-nineteenth and twentieth century nationalism and its extreme leaders, who turn to histories of colonialism, protectionism, and slavery to re-wage world wars (versions one and two), Middle East wars, Balkan wars, and the chain is long.

#### *Hikaya and Hakawati*

*Hikaya* “حكاية” or the performance of storytelling, imitation, and impersonation, was able to flourish during pre-Islamic times and medieval Islam, too. Al-Sheddi (1997) remarks that “[t]he pre-Islamic Arabs found great pleasure in gathering at night or during their free time to listen to tales, most of which were based on mythology and pre-Islamic beliefs” (p. 163). Moreh (1992) and Alabdullah (2014) remark that *haki* “حاكبي”, *hakawati* “حكواتي” or imitator (storyteller figures) used to narrate topics of mythology, heroism, the history of ancient nations, cosmology, and the unseen poetry of chivalry in the *Hakawati majlis* (sessions) in mosques and other public spaces such as *halqa* (circles) and coffeehouses.



In his work *Bayan*, al-Jahiz provides an account of *haki* “حاكّي”, *hakawati* “حكواتي” or imitators and the abilities of such actors or persons. Al-Jahiz remarks:

We find that the impersonator is able to imitate precisely the pronunciation of the natives of Yemen with all the special accents of that area [...] when he imitates the speech of the stammerer it seems that he has become the ultimate stammerer, as if all the peculiarities of every stammerer ever born have been rolled into one. When he imitates the blind man, copying the distinctive features of his face, eyes and limbs, [...] it is as if he has synthesized the peculiar features of all blind men in one complete character. (qtd. in Moreh, 1992, p. 87)

Al-Sheddi (1997) and Alabdullah (2014) demonstrate *hikaya*, (plural: *hikayat* “حكايات”), performance development, in which imitation and narration of past stories and events were the essential dramatic elements. With the advent of Islam, *hikaya* or “imitation became an essential element of the storytelling” (1997, p. 163) in religious traditions such as “preaching, exhortation and public recitation of the Quran” (1997, p. 164).

It became a well-paid profession in the early days of Umayyad’s reign (7<sup>th</sup> Century), or medieval Islamic culture. Political and religious authorities realised its tremendous impact on audiences. The prophet Mohammad and his companions adored listening to professional storytellers such as Tamim bin Aws ad-Dari (Al-Sheddi, 1997). Religious storytelling served to spread their message to the world, at their time, and today’s Muslim populations are roughly 1.9 billion (Hall, 2021).

The Quran has, indeed, a full chapter called *al-Qasas* “القصص” or the Stories or *hikayat* that acknowledges and, thus, honours many messengers and prophets. It narrates *hikayat* or stories such as *Maryam* “مريم” or the virgin Mary, Isa al-Masih “عيسى المسيح” or Jesus the Messiah, Musa “موسى” or Moses, Ibrahim “إبراهيم” or Abraham, Noah “نوح”, Yousef “يوسف” Joseph, Yunus “يونس” Jonah or Jonas, Imran “عمران” or Joachim, Sulayman “سليمان” Solomon, Dawud “داود” or David, Yahya “يحيى” John, and Zakariya “زكريا” Zechariah. It also includes sagacious

birds' and animals' mythologies such as Hudud and the Ant, 'ahl al-Kahf' "أهل الكهف" or Seven Sleepers or Companions of the Cave, *Yajuj wa-Majuj* "يأجوج و مأجوج" Gog and Magog, and other *hikayat*.

Friday sermons had different forms of expressions such as preaching and storytelling and each is distinct from the other. The twelfth-century storyteller and scholar Ibn al-Jawzi (d.1201) defines preaching as an entertaining medium of expression to 'educate' by instilling 'fears that soften the heart', while storytelling is to transmigrate stories of the past through *hikaya* or 'imitation' (or mimicry) to undergo a mystical experience. Storytelling form consists of 'commentary' and 'narration' that talented *haki* (or imitator) or *qass* "قاص" storyteller (Ibn al-Jawzi, 1988, p. 255) use to attract audiences and a Sufi mystical feeling to the performance.

However, *hikaya* or storytelling was not only used for religious and political influence but also an art of mimicry. Landau (1958) remarks that "[m]imicry pervaded to a larger extent the art of the storytellers in the Near East"<sup>39</sup> (p. 3) as early as the eighth century. The thirteenth-century lexicographer Ibn Manzur (d. 1311), the author of the largest Arabic dictionary *Lisan al-'Arab* "لسان العرب" defines *hikaya* as a mimicry of someone's actions including gestures and way of speaking (Ibn Manzur, 1955).

Therefore, storytellers were investing in 'different' controversial viewpoints or 'themes' to reap gains of popularity and money. Their ideal settings were cafés and public places such as *masjid* "مسجد" or mosques and *souq* "سوق" or marketplaces, so they can attract as many audience members from different sects as they can by imitating public polarities over different current issues.

*Hakiyya* or storytelling is still a popular live 'modern' theatre trend called *hakawati* in Egypt and the Arab world. Al-Anezi (2006) and al-Hajri (2007), for example, demonstrate that many

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<sup>39</sup> A region-term that has been refined to the Middle East.

current Arab playwrights (such as the contemporary playwrights Saadallah Wannous and Tawfeeq al-Hakim) use *hakawati* to give a robust destabilising voice to disadvantaged groups to renegotiate issues of classic chauvinism, sexism, and gender equality. *Hawkawati* or storytellers used to have specific costumes, make-up, physical movements, settings, different themes, objectives, and standards such as being well trained in voice, speech, and communication skills to build a strong connection with the audience.

*Khayal al-Zill, Shadow Play or Shadow Puppetry*

*Hikaya* and *hakawati* inspired the rise of another performance genre of *Khayal al-Zill*<sup>40</sup> “خيال الظل” or shadow theatre in Arab culture in the medieval period. According to Moreh (1987) khayal/khiyal “خيال”, means live play of a mime, and was quite different from *Khayal al-Zill*, which means shadow theatre. From the third (Jahiliyya times<sup>41</sup>) to ninth centuries, khayal/khiyal “خيال” was a synonym for *hikaya*, which I previously discussed, used to mean ‘mime or imitation’. The *khayal/khiyal* developed semantically from the fifth to the eleventh centuries to refer to *khayali* or *mukhayyil* “المخيل” or actors who imitate in a live performance for a live shadow play. However, authors used khayal at all times and “in all its shades of meaning for puns and paronomasia” (Morhe, 1987, p. XVIII).

This form of stage performance was called puppetry because a *mukhayyil* or puppet-actor or presenter, in place of a human actor, voiced different characters in several sketches. These figures’ shadows appeared between the background wall and the screen. A puppet was made

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<sup>40</sup> It has different spellings such as khayal az-zill, khayāl al-zill, or khayyal el-dhil.

<sup>41</sup> Jahiliyyah refers to time periods of Arabia before the the rise of Islam in 619 CE. Literally, it means ignorance.

of dried leather with different colours, attached by hidden strings and held between a source of intense bright light and a screen, scrim, or white wall, to reflect the shadow.

The tenth-century eminent Arab optician Ibn al-Haytham (965-1039 A.D.) wrote *Kitab al-Manazir* on optics and discussed Khayal al-Zill optical techniques in his book. Al-Haytham (1983, p. 408) remarks that:

وأيضاً فإن البصر إذا أدرك الجمال الذي يظهر من خلف الإزار وكان في ذلك الخيال أشخاصاً يحركها المخيل فتظهر أظلالها على الجدار الذي وراء الإزار وعلى الإزار نفسه، فإن البصر يدرك تلك الأضلال من وراء الإزار و يظنها أجساماً وحيوانات تتحرك.

Moreh (1992) provides a translation to Ibn al-Haytham's passage:

When the sight perceives the figures behind the screen, these [translucent] figures [of characters and animals] are images which the [mukhayyil] presenter moves so that their shadows appear upon the wall behind the screen and upon the screen itself. (p. 124)

Guo (2011; 2020) and Carlson (2013) demonstrate Arabs' awareness, in the middle of the eighth century, in the Umayyad era, of this performing art, migrated with traders from China or India.<sup>42</sup> It is broadly understood that the seventh-century Egyptian Imam al-Shafi<sup>43</sup> (767-820 A.D.) probably recorded the earliest reference to Khayal al-Zill as a 'popular' theatrical art form in the Arab world. He recounts (in Taymour, 2017, p. 3) his poetic philosophical sufi-mystical view and the significance of shadow play:

رَأَيْتُ خَيَالَ الظِّلِّ أَكْبَرَ عِبْرَةٍ

لِمَنْ كَانَ فِي عِلْمِ الحَقِيقَةِ رَاقِي

شَخُوصٌ وَأَشْبَاحٌ تَعَارَضَ بَعْضُهَا

بَعْضًا وَأَشْكَالًا بَغَيْرِ وَفَاقِ

تَجَبُّيٌّ وَتَمْضِيٌّ بَابَةً بَعْدَ بَابَةٍ

<sup>42</sup> For more details on a history of theatre migration, see Freedley (1968).

<sup>43</sup> Al-Shafi is one of the eminent religious scholars and jurists in Islam and the founder of one of the Sunni Muslims' four judicial schools of Islam.

وَتَغْنَى جَمِيعاً وَالْمَحْرَكُ بَاقِي.

I see the shadow play as the greatest admonition  
to those who are advanced in the knowledge of Ultimate Reality.

I see figures and ghosts opposing each  
other and forms without harmony.

They are passing and going a play after a play,  
all perishing while the Mover remains. (Nua'man, 1973, p. 80)

The eighth-century Arabic poet Abu Nawas (756-814 A.D.) describes shadow play in  
social gatherings, where wine and music are also enjoyed:

تُشْرِقُ فِي الْكَأْسِ مِنْ تَلَأْلِهَا  
بِمُحْكَمَاتٍ مِنَ النَّصَاوِيرِ  
كَأَنَّهَا لِأَعْبِ الْخَيَالِ إِذَا  
أَظْلَمَ يَلْهَى بِنَعْمَةِ الزَّيْرِ  
وَأَحْزَرَ الْمُقَلَّتَيْنِ مُكْتَجِلِ  
فِي فِتْيَةٍ سَادَةٍ نَحَارِيرِ  
فِي مَجْلِسٍ مُشْرِفٍ عَلَى شَجَرِ

(Abu Nuwas & 'Aṭwī, 1986, p. 193)

The wine rises sparkling in the cup  
Which is decorated with flawless drawings  
Like the shadow player when he darkens  
And plays with the string tune  
While a kohl-eyed beauty  
Is among young astute gentlemen  
In an area which overlooks trees

(al-Mubarak, 1986, p. 7)

Guo (2011; 2020) also traces how many Arab-Islamic literati and scholars in various fields of  
studies highly appreciated the shadow theatre art form. He makes references to the famous  
poet and historian of Spain Ibn Hazem (d. 1064), the literary theorist al-Jurjani (d. 1078), the

theologian philosopher al-Ghazali (d. 1111), the famous poet of Persia Umar Khayyam (d. 1131), and the Sufi philosopher and poet Ibn al-Arabi (d. 1240).

Those classic writers, widely renowned in the contemporary Arab literati saloons, value *Khayyal al-zill* in their writings, Guo (2011; 2020) argues. They consider this theater form as a space for negotiating different topics such as cosmological hierarchy, the temporality of life, and the psychological impact of metaphors.

Guo's references to early Middle Eastern forms do not aim to categorise theatre into binaries such as Aristotelian vs. anti-Aristotelian. His main concern is to argue that theatre is a living interactive platform among different cultures with unique elements, but still interactive. He (2011; 2021) brilliantly refers to how many classical Middle Eastern writers have deployed shadow theatre as a space for staging protagonists as prime movers of the action of the universe as we see in Aristotelian theatre. Guo attempts to draw attention to this intercultural influence, borrowing, or similarity to indicate early Middle Eastern initiatives of cultural awareness and openness to differences.

The tenth-century prominent Arab historian Ibn Hazm (994-1164 A.D.) remarks that our world is like shadow theatre:

أشبه ما رأيت بالدنيا خيال الظل وهي تماثيل مركبة على مطحنة خشب تدار بسرعة فتغيب طائفة وتبدو أخرى.

(Ibn Hazm, 2007)

This world is likened to a shadow play in which images are mounted on a wooden wheel revolving rapidly, so that one group of images disappears as another appears, as generation follows generation in the world.

(Moreh, 1987, p. 47)

European travellers to the Middle East in the eighteenth century record some of their personal impressions and observations of performance and shadow theatre in Egypt. Al-Mubarak (1986) and Moreh (1987) register, for example, observations of a Danish traveller Carsten Niebuhr who observes a storytelling troupe of Muslim, Christian, and Jewish performers in

1780. An Italian adventurer Giovanni Belzoni observes *fasl mudhik* “فصل مضحك” or comic skits in 1815. An English orientalist Edward Lane narrates what Belzoni observed as ‘vulgar jests’ and ‘indecent actions’ in 1825.

It was not all ‘vulgar jests’ and ‘indecent actions’, though. Scholars of Freie Universitat Berlin provided Moreh (1987) access to the archives of Dr. Johann Gottfried Wetzstein, a Prussian Consul who attended an Arabic shadow theatre in Damascus, called *Qaraqoz* “كراكوز”<sup>44</sup>, dated 1 September, 1857. Dr. Westzstein describes the show to his friends:

Since I have time to spare from my [Sirat] Antar... I have devoted the last 6-8 weeks, my dear, to a project which is exhausting and troublesome, but which I am enjoying very much. I shall have finished this in a month and shall have it printed immediately. It deals with the beginnings of dramatic art among the Arabs. I was drawn to this work because I wished to write an article on the modern language of the Arabs for the Deutsche Morgenlandische Gesellschaft and wished to take advantage of actual performances of the Karakosati or shadow play for this.

Since it would have been impossible for me, in my position, to go to a coffee-house and attend performances there, I had the ‘apparatus’ brought to the Consulate one evening, invited some friends and had a performance given.

In it I found a treasure-house of attractive folk-songs, which astonished me. I had the text of the piece performed, ‘The Lovers of Amasia,’ dictated to me next day (since the performer could not write), and the play forms the very kernel of my project, which will have incalculable consequences for philological studies; I myself had no idea of the forms and constructions of this colloquial language, and certainly no-one in Europe could have any idea of them. The scholarly part of the work is almost finished, and I am now engaged in translating the play into German, because the Arabic original, even if printed, would not be understood by anyone in Europe. (p. 58)

Due to the nature of the resources about it, Arabic shadow theatre is ‘usually thought of’ as a form of ‘vulgar jesters’ or ‘street’ and café entertainment. However, Guo (2020) argues that show theatre is ‘a court art’. Guo provides some accounts of shadow theatre performances before Mamluk and Ottoman sultans and writes:

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<sup>44</sup> Shadow Theatre (Kahyal al-Zill) is called Qaraqoz in Syria, Karagoze in Turkey and Aragoz in Egypt (See; Moreh, 1987).

Paradoxically, perhaps because of the nature of our sources, we learn more about its performances at the royal courts and private gatherings of the elite instead. (p. 102)

Khayal al-Zill is ‘usually thought of’ as a form of performance exclusive to ‘male’ actors and audiences. However, Guo’s (2020) resources provide an unorthodox view by relating Arab female shadow-actors or players, who performed before men, too. The Mamulk poet al-Wajih al-Munawi, for example, was ‘captured’ by the performance of an arab female shadow-player in his poem:

وجارية معشوقى اللهو أقبلت  
بحسن كزهر الروض تحت كمام  
إذا ما تغننت قلت شكوى صباية  
وإن رقصت قلنا خُباب مُدام  
أرتنا خيال الظل والستر دونها  
فأبدت خيال الشمس خلف غمام  
تلاعب بالأشخاص من خلف سترها

كما لعبت أفعالها بأنام (al-Nawaji, 1938, p. 204)

A fair maiden, fond of entertaining: here she came,  
such a beauty! Like flowers in the garden, covered under the calyx.

When she sang, I marveled: Ah, the pain of youthful yearning!

When she danced, we sighed: like bubbles of wine!

She performed a shadow play; in front of her there was a screen (al-sitr),

showing the phantom of the sun, behind clouds.

She played various characters behind the screen,

in the same manner she toyed with men. (Guo, 2020, p. 104)

Al-Mubarak (1986) and Moreh (1987) also record other European observations of shadow theatre, in particular, in Syria, Palestine, and Lebanon. German orientalist such as George



Jacob,<sup>45</sup> Enno Littman,<sup>46</sup> Paul Kahle,<sup>47</sup> Curt Prüfer,<sup>48</sup> and Joseph Horovits<sup>49</sup> took interest in Syrian *Qaragoz*, which means ‘glove and shadow puppet show’, in Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine.

Although *Khayal al-Zill* was known in the Arab world as early as the eighth century, the most notable *mukhayil* “مخيل” (or puppeteer) is the thirteenth-century Shams al-Din Mohammad ibn Daniel In Yusuf al-Khuzai, 1238-1310 A.D. known as ibn Daniel.<sup>50</sup> Ibn Daniel was an oculist and *mukhayil* ‘refugee migrant’ from Mosul city, north of Iraq, who fled to Cairo because of the Mongol invasion in 1258 A.D. that caused complete destruction to high-culture materials (literature and science) in both Iraq and Syria (Knio, 1994). This is a similar scenario to the United States of America Daesh (a terrorist group) and their allies’ invasion of Iraq in 2003 (Matthews et al., 2020) and Syria in 2013 (Greenhalgh, 2017). Ibn Daniel developed, then, shadow puppetry in Egypt (Badawi, 1988). He became known for both his occasionally tragic events of blinding his patients as well as his shadow puppet plays (Subin & Omar, 2013) called *Tayf al-Khayāl* trilogy “طيف الخيال” (The Shadow Spirit).

Ibn Daniel wrote the *Tayf al-Khayāl* trilogy in 1368. They are the oldest ‘intact’ Arabic shadow theatrical texts available to us from the Islamic Middle Ages. However, there is no logical reason to believe those are the only ones that Ibn Daniel wrote. There are four manuscripts of *Tayf al-Khayāl*; two in Egypt (Cairo), one in Spain (Madrid) and the last one

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<sup>45</sup> It was only at the beginning of the 20th century that George Jacob (d. 1937), a German orientalist, discovered ibn Daniel’s manuscript. He wrote a book *Stücke aus ibn Dâniyâl Taif al-hajâl* [Plays from Ibn Daniel Taif al-Hajal]. It was published by M. Mencke in Erlangen in Germany with different prints in 1901; and reprinted in 1909 and 1910.

<sup>46</sup> Littmann wrote a book *Arabische Schattenspiele* [Arab Shadows]. It was published by Mayer und Müller in Berlin in 1901.

<sup>47</sup> Kahle wrote a book *Zur Geschichte des Arabischen Schattentheaters in Egypten* [The History of the Arab Shadow Theatre in Egypt]. It was published by Verlag von Rudolph Haupt in Leipzig, Germany in 1909.

<sup>48</sup> Prüfer was a diplomat. He wrote his doctoral dissertation *Ein ägyptisches Schattenspiel* [An Egyptian shadow play] in university of Fakultät der Friedrich-Alexanders-Universität in Erlangen in 1906.

<sup>49</sup> Horovitz was the first German to take notice of Ibn Daniel’s *Tayf al-Khayal* trilogy. He wrote “Ein neue Handschrift von Ibn Danjal’s Taif al-Hajal” [A New Manuscript of Ibn Daniel’s Taif al-Hajal] in 1906.

<sup>50</sup> He is also known as Muhammad Ibn Daniyal or Ibn Daniyal.

in Turkey (Dakroub,2013). The trilogy contains three *baabaat*<sup>51</sup> “بابات” (singular: *baba*<sup>52</sup> “باب”) or plays; *tayf al-Khayal* طيف الخيال or The Shadow of Spirit, *ajeeb wa ghareeb* عجيب وغريب or Strange and Bizarre, and *al-Mutayyam* المتيم or The Lover.

The first *baba* called *tayf al-Khayal* is considered the most developed in its longevity, plot, technique, and characterisation. It is a political and social satirical portrait that Ibn Daniyal draws of Egypt in the medieval era. Some scholars suspect that this humorous *bab* is a sharp political criticism of an invitation by Sultan Baybers to a so-called Abassid Prince Abu Al-Abbas Ahmed bin Al-Khalifa Al-Zahir of Baghdad, who was brought to Cairo to be assigned as a caliph working for the Sultan.

The *baba* of *Tayf al-Khayal*, for example, starts with the Presenter’s prologue and Tayf al-Khayal, or Phantom, is the first character to enter the screen stage. Tayf al-Khayal, narrator, addresses his audience by regretting his past sinful times and expressing his repentance and willingness to change. Therefore, he claims that his arrival in Cairo is to find his friend Prince Wisal, who appears, then, to boast about his sexual adventures with both sexes in a lengthy poem, produced by his Secretary and written by his Poet. At this point they meet, and the prince reveals to his friend his intention to have both a wife and a regular life. After the ceremony, the prince discovers his wife is unequal to his beauty and age standards, unlike what he was promised by the matchmaker Umm Rahsid. Then, he decides to enforce some restrictions and punishments on the matchmaker and her husband, Sheikh Aflaq. However, the comical doctor reports the death of the matchmaker at the prince’s arrival, and the prince decides immediately to travel to Mecca with his friend Tayf al-Khayal to do pilgrimage.

Ibn Daniel’s trilogy of *Tayf al-Khayal*’s conventions has penetrated Bakhtin’s carnivalesque theatrics and atmosphere. Many researchers have depicted the carnival atmosphere during the

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<sup>51</sup> In Syria, *fusul* “فصول” means chapters or seasons is used instead; singular of *fusul* is *fsl* “فصل”.

<sup>52</sup> *bab* literally means door.

Mamluk Sultanate (13th-15th centuries) such as Molan (1988), Monroe (2003), Ahmad Shafik (2014), and Marwa Fahmi (2018). Carnival masquerades and festivities were constantly celebrated, such as in the al-Mahmal procession, Eid al-fawz (victory feast) also called Eid al-maskhara ‘buffoonery feast’, al-nayruz, or Eid al-shaeed (martyr feast) (Lutfi, 1998). In the trilogy, Prince Wisal asks Tayf al-khayal (or Phantom) for money:

Hey Phantom, Sir, do the right thing! || You must take me to be your  
servant, || and lend me some money if you have any!  
Phantom passes gas [farts] in response, and says: Alas, for three days, || I  
myself have yet to get a bite of food! *He recites the following:*  
Try me! Stick your tongue in my asshole!  
You will find I am clean through to my anus. (Guo, 2012, pp. 197-198)

Both Ibn Daniel and Bakhtin’s buffoonery dismantles officialdom and deconstructs hierarchies. They deploy comic characters or social mockery, drawn from societies’ lowest strata, to assault power. The Presenter, an essential role in this art, reinforces the importance of Khayal al-Zill to his audience at the very beginning of the show, noting that “Khayal is a literary art that can be appreciated only by *ahal al-adab* [“أهل الأدب”] (men of letters), it is not a mere entertainment or pastime, but a mixture of seriousness and levity that requires some intelligence to see the point of it” (qtd. by Kahle, 1992, p. 13).

In this sense, Khayal al-Zill is a carnival culture, in which “non-official” characters and discourses destabilise paternalism and hierarchism. Bakhtin (1984) argues that “carnival culture involves the temporal suspension of all hierarchical distinctions and barriers among men [sic] and of the prohibitions of usual life” (p. 15). Thus, Khayal al-Zill is a space and a theory of resistance and freedom. Like Bakhtin’s carnival, Khayal al-Zill is “the place for working out a new mode of interrelationship between individuals. People who in life are separated by impenetrable hierarchical barriers enter into free and familiar contact on the carnival square” (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 123).

In postcolonial drama terms, one can also identify Khayal al-Zill's carnival theatrics. It is "a medium of the multivoiced or polyphonic spirit which effectively opposes monologic orders" (Gilbert & Tompkins, 1996, p. 83). Bakhtin, as discussed before, uses concepts of dialogism, polyphony, and heteroglossia (multivoicedness) as a site of insurgency to dismantle the monologic hierarchical voice of authority. Bakhtin defines monologic language or voice as "centripetal". It "participates in the unitary language (in its centripetal force and tendencies) and at the same time partakes of social and historical heteroglossia (the centrifugal stratifying forces)" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 272). This "unitary language" is a zone of conformity that reiterates authoritative or authoritarian systems. Multivoiced and polyphonic, and thus "a centrifugal" rather than centripetal impetus, Khayal al-Zill undermines, uncovers, and deconstructs that monologic ambition.

In this sense, I appreciate Khayal al-Zill in my creative work *Aragoze Trilogy*, too. I deploy it to destroy the hegemony of time (linearity) and place by creating a dialogic interaction between characters (human, puppets) inspired by different historical and mythological figures and locations of cultures. The trilogy advocates unusual voices that resist a 'one and only one' voiced-ideology. It avoids "fixed diachronic structure" (Gilbert & Tompkins, p. 140). In this Bakhtinian carnival time-space, Khayal al-Zill creates "a form of human social configuration" that "lies beyond existing social forms" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 280). It is an irreducible tactic implemented to challenge the norm.

The use of Khayal al-Zill with other theatrical conventions, such as from Brecht and the absurdists, defines my trilogy as a metadrama. It is "self-referential" and "self-reflexive" or a "drama about drama" (Hornby, 1959, p. 31). It is a dialogue about "dramatic art itself—its materials, its media of language and theatre, its generic forms and conventions, its relationship to truth and social order" (Calderwood, 1971, p. 5). It challenges the common

belief that “theatre is realistic or a mirror” (Abel, 1963) to the suffering and actions of certain cultures, individuals, or periods embodied by characters. It sharpens awareness of ‘unusual’ life beyond the confines of realism. It is role playing, play-within-play, drama-about-drama, or any of the other forms of theatrical self-reference or “self-conscious reference to dramatic convention and other plays” (Ringer, 1998, p. 7).

In the *Aragoze Trilogy*, shadow theatre “خيال الظل” is theatricalised in this manner of “self-referential” and play-within-play. Its tendency is to refer to itself. It concretises cultural, linguistic, social, religious, political, and artistic turmoil in post-migration, post-border-crossings, from light to shadow, like to unlike, black to white, Jordan to Aoteaora New Zealand or vice-versa. Therefore, the characters of *Khayal al-Zill* are - to use the description of Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins (1996) - “multiplied by the power of a numerous voice of a chorus, reinforcing both vocal number and volume” (p. 194). They break the flow of actions on the Brechtian, al-Halqa, Hakawati, absurd, and Aristotelian stage, punctuating moments of thinking, reviewing, and deep feeling. This interaction between light and shadow stage “disperses the viewer’s gaze and this refracted play-within-a-play, thus, has the potential to activate a considerable resistant energy” (Gilbert & Tompkins, 1996, p. 251) that allows the audience to realise the double nature of theatre. On the light-stage, the audience gaze at reality through actors, actions, words, and signs. On the shadow-stage, the audience pauses to examine not only this staged or imaginary reality, but also how reality should be seen and how it is constructed.

*Kayyal al-Zill* continued to be popular and active after Ibn Daniel, with various levels of diversity and complexity throughout Arab history in the sixties and seventies until today. The Egyptian writer Yusuf Idris (d.1991) wrote a play called *Al-Farāfir*<sup>53</sup> (“The Silly Ones”),

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<sup>53</sup> The play is elsewhere translated as *The Farfoors* or *The Flipflaps*.

influenced by Ibn Daniyal's *ajeeb wa ghareeb* ("Strange and Bizarre"). Al-Tayyib al-Siddiqi, a Moroccan director, wrote political dramas influenced by the style of Ibn Daniyal's theatre. Saadallah Wannous (1994), a Syrian playwright, also introduces Ibn Daniel as a counter-narrative to Arabic drama's total reliance on European theatrical traditions.

Subjects and themes of Khayal al-Zill vary. It is a medium of awareness in political unrest because "though it is a temporary fantasy, it works perfectly to release the curbed indignation. It also celebrates communal voices to get rid of the shackles of oppression" (Wannous, 1994, p. 9). It is an appalling creative artistic space that "always deals with moral, religious or historical themes" and gives "lessons even in dramatic entertainment" (Kahle, 1992, p. 7). It is interculturally syncretised, 'blended', or hybridised with other indigenous Arabic, Islamic, Chinese, Asian, Indian, or European traditions to form a distinctive multivoicedness. It is "embedded in the social and religious life of the people and it is among the most important and evocative vehicles of this culture which it reflects" (Hobart, 1987, p. 13).

Shadow theatre forms differ slightly by countries such as Iran and Turkey. For example, Arabic shadow theatre or Khayal al-Zill had some influence on the Turkish *karagöz* "كراغوز" (blackened eyes), which is a form of short comic dialogue and risqué plays presented before common people. Although the Turks adopted the presentational approach, technique, and structure of the Egyptian Khayal al-Zill, the two forms are not identical. Like the *baba* (or play) of Khayal al-Zill, the Turkish *fasl* "الفصل" (plural: *fusul* or stories or plays) starts with a poem by the Presenter (or *mukaddem*) to convey the deep meaning of the play to the audience. Similar to *baba*, the *fasl* is subdivided into scenes by music or songs to announce the exit and appearance of every character. Another common feature is the pairing of characters.

However, *karagöz* has its unique features, dialogues, images, characters, and method of articulation, as do other Arabic puppet theatres, which I discuss shortly. In *karagöz*, the plot concerns the jokes, witticisms, and adventures of two main stock puppet characters, controlled by a single puppeteer: Karagöz is the uneducated protagonist who outwits his educated, polite, and formal companion Hacivat. In one *fasl* (story or play), both Hacivat and Karagöz are lighthearted construction workers whom an Ottoman Sultan, called Ochan, asks among other workers to build a *masjid* “مسجد” (or mosque). Their jests cause delay and interruption in construction and thus antagonise and irritate the Sultan. Metin And (1979) describes *karagöz* as:

a theatre of laughter. Verbal and non-verbal quips continuously call forth peals of mirth. At its most elementary level, this is achieved by the mere repetition of a gesture, a movement or an episode which previously earned a laugh. Identical scenes, repeated with different characters, are essential elements to the action and nearly all the Karagoz plots are based on that. Repetition of an episode by the same character with subtle variations is also used. (p. 47)

The *karagöz* skits were not well-received or absorbed by some critics because of their obscenity and exceedingly vulgar language. They depicted “uproar, violence, and sexual innuendo” (Sadgrove, 1996, p. 14), were “extremely indecent” and contained “vulgar jests” (Lane, p. 390). Or, as the English traveller Sir John Gardner Wilkinson described, they were “so gross, that it would have shocked an ancient Greek audience” (Qtd. in Sadgrove, 1996, p. 16). At the same time, *karagöz* “satirically treats themes of social interest such as the greed of certain clergy members” (Box, 2005, p. 27) and other social ills, depicting metaphors of corruption “through sexuality” (Kirli, 2000, p. 170).

However, *Khayal al-Zill* has more complexities than *karagöz*. *Babat* of *Khayal al-Zill* is, for example, “composed around a series of paradoxical characters and circumstances” (Knio, 1994, p. 279). Characters have distinct voices and need more than puppeteers or *mukhayilun* “مخيلون” to control and maintain their gestures and movements. This form of theatre belongs

to high culture while containing the content of low culture. It was developed as “a result of the linguistic and socio-political cultural grounds of the cosmopolitan city life” (Knio, 1994, p. 280) in *madrassa* (schools), palaces, and the halls of courts. *Babat*’s heroic style is not just arabesque decoration but also emphasises conflict between the spiritual and the physical, the real and fantasies (al-Sheddi, 1997).

Khayal al-Zill was influenced by the *maqamat* “مقامات” (or assembly) mono-performance genre. The *maqamat* is among the most ancient Arabic *belles-lettres* traditions (it dates to the eleventh century). It consists of a deliberate display of long and short, comic and serious, and colloquial and classical poems of Abu Zayd al-Hilali (Monroe, 1983), a playful hero “whose linguistic abilities enable him to swindle people and evade punishment, and his friend, al-Harith, who narrates these picaresque episodes” (Knio, 1994, p. 56).

In return, Turkish *karagöz* has influenced another puppet theatre of *Karākūz*, sometimes transliterated *Qaragoz* “كراكوز”, with the expansion of the Ottoman empire in Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, and Palestine. Those current countries were historically known as the Levant or Great Syria (or *bilād al-Shām*). The well-known contemporary Syrian playwright Sa‘d Allāh Wannous once observed:

When it comes to popular entertainment enjoyed by the Syrian people, among the most brilliant and enchanting are perhaps storytelling, the timeless tradition of the *ḥakāwatī*, or ‘storytelling,’ and Khayal al-Zill, or ‘shadow play,’ or *khaymat Karākūz*, namely ‘*Karākūz theatre*,’ as it is called in Damascus. Compared with the free-wheeling and impromptu one man show, namely the *ḥakāwatī*-storytelling, the art of shadow play is a complicated operation. The shadow master, or *al-Karākūzātī*, and his associates set the performance stage (*khayma*, literally, ‘a tent’) in local cafés where they manipulate the stiff, and awkward looking, shadow figures, tell stories, and interact with the audience – all at the same time. (Quoted in, Guo, 2020b, p. 197)

The Syrian *Qaragoz* “كراكوز” or *Karākūz* characters are the main characters in the *fusul* (or plays) of Turkish *Karagöz*; *Karākūz*, and ‘*Aiwaz*, the Arabised duo of *Karagöz* and *Hacivat*.

The stories of *Karākūz* are based on common sources, sometimes refer to the Ottoman



period, and provide satirical material inspired by different village lifestyles and “the rich non-Arabic narrative traditions in the region: Turkish, Armenian and Persian” (Gou, 2020b, p. 198). *Al-Karākūzātī* or the puppeteer also includes different pre-islamic times and Arab historical figures such ‘Antara and ‘Abla, similar to the Romeo and Juliet plot, and transformative characters, who turn from human to animals (Hijazi, 1980). *Hakawati* (or the storyteller) retells stories using the *shami* local dialects and accents. Karākūz is usually performed in coffee houses where the audiences are typically males (al-Aswad, 1989). In Karākūz, one *fasl* usually has one Turkish soldier who is always ridiculed as a form of resistance to Turkish prejudices in the Great Syria (Hijazi, 1980).

Turkish Karagöz has been influenced by the Egyptian-Arab Khayal al-Zill and influenced, in return, the Egyptian performance form of *Aragoz* “الأراغوز”. *Aragoz* (glove puppet theatre) is the Egyptian form of the Turkish Karagöz and the Great Syrian Karākūz. However, the Turkish characters Karagöz and Hacivat did not find a way into the Egyptian *Aragoz*. The main character *Aragoz* is a witty survivor who has no human physical appearances (Bahgat, 2012). It is a doll head modelled as one large eye and a big round beard, wearing a red *fez* or conical clown’s cap (Knio, 2005). *Aragoz* always disliked Turkish soldiers and dealt with subjects that touched Egyptians’ roots and everyday social life. *Aragoz* is a family-audience kind of performance that appears in different social occasions; weddings, *suq* (street markets), fairgrounds, and circumcision festivities (rather than coffee houses) (Bahgat, 2012).

The *Aragoze* character in my creative work *Aragoze Trilogy* is different from Turkish Karagöz, Egyptian *Aragoz*, or Syrian, Lebanese, and Palestinian Karākūz. In the previous forms, Karagöz, Karākūz, or *Aragoz*’s sexual orientation and gender are identified as heterosexual and male. However, in my work, *Aragoze* is a hybrid character and inbetween, whose sexual and gender identity, for example, can be redefined - although I temporarily choose “He”, for the purpose of research clarity and ease of achievement. I intentionally

added an 'e' letter at the end of the word Aragoz(e) to differentiate from the Egyptian 'Aragoz'.

Aragoze's character is also unique in different ways. He is not limited to a single theatrical space but appears on both shadow and real stages (proscenium) based on his transformative roles. Aragoze is a serio-comic witty character who displays wider capacities as he migrates between different stages (shadow or light), times (classic and modern), high and low cultures, literary genres, linguistic codes, socio-political issues, gender and sexual orientations, seeking future answers about a migrant hybrid identity. He is a transformative character who transmigrates in soul and body as a puppet on the shadow stage and human characteristics on the embodied stage. However, the character is still akin to "always be Karagöz", a witty person who can always "outsmart" any hypocrite (Allen, 2000, p. 196).

Unlike Karagöz, Aragoz, or Karākūz theatre traditions, the *Aragoze Trilogy* is intentionally unmonologic. The trilogy tries to hybridise different languages, dialects, genders, nationalities, locations of cultures, and identities to create new avenues, identities, or possibilities that 'outwit' traditional 'certain' senses of localised identities or theatre traditions, pushing meanings into the realm of the uncertain. It crosses the roots of theatres and fixed locations of cultures to depict and refract conflictual and changing experiences of Arab (trans)migration(s) in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Unlike 'Aragoze', the Egyptian 'Aragoz', the Great Syrian Karākūz, or the Turkish Karagöz, Iran also has different unique mimicry comic theatrical forms. *baqqal-bāzī* (grocer play), for example, is an ancient Persian slapstick improvised performance (*maskhara*), whose origins can be traced back to buffoonery festivities such the mir-e nowruzi (the New Year prince) in the Sasanian period (224-651 AD) or the goat-costumed dances in the Safavids' times (1501-1722) (Gaffary, 1984). The play is about a grocer who repeatedly quarrels with his lazy,

absent-minded ‘blackface’ servant named (*sāh*), who ridicules and makes fun of people and thieves to redress injustice and human shortcomings (Rezvani, 1962).

*Kheimah Shab Bazi*, also known as *pardeh* (curtain) or *lobet-bāzī* (puppet-play) is another traditional shadow puppetry theatre from Iran. It is not known when, by whom, or from where it was originated, however the well-known Persian polymath and Sufi poet Omar Khayam (1028-122) touches on the Sufi meanings and themes of this shadow puppetry:

We are puppets and fate is our puppeteer. We are from truth not just metaphor. We play our existence out before the curtain then disappear into the nothingness of the [puppet] chest one by one. (Qtd. in Massoudi, 2009, p. 262)

*Kheimah Shab Bazi* has its own unique features. As described in studies such as by Massoudo (2009) and Floor (2005), it is traditionally performed in an old-styled booth with decorative carpets to cover the stage’s exteriors and the proscenium’s borders are flowered or painted red. The puppets’ sizes are also different (25-30 centimetres high) and are performed by one puppeteer who improvises scenarios and sits behind the curtain. The puppeteer uses a squeaker or reed to speak for the puppets. *Morshed* “مرشد” is the narrator or the *hakawati*, who sits next to the Kheimah, to narrate stories and play *tombak* (drums). The Musician does not sing but plays joyful rhythmic pieces using a *kahamncheh* (or violin-like instrument). The stories are not written scripts but are improvised, based on past stories that address social, political, and economic issues of the local communities.

Pahlavan kachal bazi, also known as *katchal pahlavān* (The Bald Hero), is another Iranian puppet musical show that shares some features with *Kheimah Shab Bazi*. According to Hedayat (2000) and Beizaei (2006), it is performed by a puppeteer and two musicians sitting inside a booth. There are other characters called *babas* who sit in front of the booth. Each *baba* such as Morshed supervises the puppets in each story of folkloric Iranian song,

interpreting their unintelligible squeaky language. The bald hero Pahlavan Kachal's main role is to outwit the Mollas (or teachers) and tease beautiful women.

*Ta'ziya*<sup>54</sup>

Ta'ziya “التعزية” or *majlis al-Ta'ziya* “مجلس التعزية” (mourning assemblies) is a longstanding Islamic form of dramatic passion play or condolence theatre that is strongly associated with Persia “الفرس” (Alemohammed, 1995). It is adapted by Shi'ite Muslims<sup>55</sup> “الشيعة” as part of the annual Ashura “عاشوراء” ritualistic ceremonies for commemorating the tragic massacre and suffering of Imam Husayn<sup>56</sup> “الإمام الحسين” (the grandson of Prophet Mohammad) and his children, family, and friends in Karbala “كربلاء” around 680 A.D.

After the death of the Prophet, the Islamic community was divided into two major opposing parties during the struggle for the Caliphate<sup>57</sup> or the next caliph (politico-religious successor) to lead the Muslim world (Isaloo, 2017). The majority party are orthodox Muslims or so-called Sunni or Sunnites “السنة” and the second party are the Shi'ites or partisans of Caliph Ali bin abi Talib, the son-in-law and cousin of Prophet Mohammad and the father of Imam Husayn. Ali was assassinated at Kufa (661 A.D.), Hassan (Ali's elder son) was poisoned in Madina (660 A.D.), and Husayn and other male relatives were assassinated (in 680 A.D.) during the holy month of Muharram “محرم” in the open field of Karbala, near Kufa.

Therefore, the people of Kufa expressed their sincere remorse and regret as they failed to give Husayn, who was called to become their caliph, their promised support and protection (al-Sheddi, 1997). Since then, the Shi'ites commemorate Husayn's martyrdom, annually, during

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<sup>54</sup> Ta'ziya has multiple different ways when transliterated into English Ta'zieh, Ta'ziye, Ta'ziya, Tazīa, Ta'ziyeh, Taziye, or ta'ziyah. Ta'ziya “تعزية” is an Arabic word that means by itself the expression of comfort, grief, and condolence.

<sup>55</sup> After the Safavids came to power in Persia in 1502 AD, Shiism became the political religious state of governance in Persia, and thus ta'ziya gained popularity and endorsement (See: Furug, 1969).

<sup>56</sup> Husayn can also be written in different ways such as al-Husayn, Hussein, Hussain.

<sup>57</sup> Caliphate is a governing institution or public office under Islamic rule.

the first ten days of Muharram when they practice rituals of lamentation and mourning (Islamo, 2017; Chelkowski, 1979).

Since the tenth century, this mourning has been developed into a dramatic form or theatre. It is performed in streets, public parks, and homes (in Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Azerbaijan, Egypt, Eastern Turkey, Jordan, Qatif region, Bahrain, Al-Hasa) during the first ten days of Muharram, the first month of the Islamic calendar (Alemohammed, 1995). This dramatic form drew the attention of Peter Chelkowski (1975) who stated that:

Its genius is that it combines immediacy and flexibility with universality. Uniting rural folk art with urban, royal entertainment, it admits no barrier between the archetype and the human, the wealthy and the poor, the sophisticated and the simple, the spectator and the actor. Each participates with and enriches the other. (p. 4)

In his search for what he saw as the missing spiritual traditions in Western theatre, the famed British theatre director Peter Brook (1979) turned to Ta'zyia and explored its many essential theatrical elements that could offer a potent healing process to conflicts and fragmentation:

The ancient theatre clearly was, and theatre must always be, a religious action; and its action is very clear: it is that by which fragments are made whole... The great force of artistic events is that they are temporary glimpses of what might be, and there is a healing process attached to these glimpses. (Brook, 1979, p. 48)

Chelkowski (1979) also remarks on the *tableau-vivant* within Ta'ziah plays:

Ta'ziah is a complex subject involving many disciplines such as religious, history, literature, anthropology, psychology, sociology, music and fine arts as well as drama and theatre. (p. 255)

Bahram Beyzai (1965), a celebrated Iranian playwright, theatre director, and film editor, in the light of Ta'ziah performance notes its theatrical elements such as space and setting:

The show (Performance) has not been started yet. The platform, *Sakou*, is empty, no curtain separates the audience from the platform nor from the huge setting which could clearly be seen. The *Tekieyh* (performance space) has been elaborately decorated by standing or hanging black and green flags surrounding boxes and pillars. The symbols of the Hand of Abbas and the Bier awaken the feelings of the audience towards the events of Karbela.

All this decoration creates a magnificent atmosphere for the performance of a *Majlis* (play) of Taziyeh. The preliminaries begin. After an hour of witnessing the procession of devotees who beat their breasts, silence is established. The group of musicians begin to play a plaintive melody. The self-composed group of players for today's *Majlis* led by the *Ostad*, *Moein al Boka* (Taziyeh Stage-Manager), arrives in the *Tekieyh*. They are singing a dirge, in chorus, while promenading twice round the platform, smoothly. This part stands as a prologue. After all this actors yield their place to the *Ostad*. He stands on the platform and thanks the sponsor of the Taziyeh and the audience. Then he gives a summary of the play to the audience, adding his own interpretation of the story and laying curses upon the unjust tyrants. When the *Ostad* has preached, those who should play the roles arrive in the arena and stand in their positions until the *Ostad* has fulfilled his prayer and preaching. At the end of this moment the group of musicians is beckoned by the *Ostad* to play a short melody. (p. 144)

Baker al-Sheddi (1997), a celebrated Saudi comedian, actor, and first professor of Drama in the Arabian Gulf region, remarks:

As an expression of grief, they have developed a passion play enacted in three interrelated complementary parts, opening with *majlis al-ta`ziya* (mourning assemblies), followed by *mawäkib al-`azä'* (mourning procession) and culminating in *mashhad `äshürä'* (presentation of the events of the tenth of Muharram).

The first function, *majlis al-ta`ziya*, is held throughout the first ten days of Muharram in a house or a hall. In this assembly a *gäri'* (reciter) narrates the story of the Martyrdom of Husayn and his family and enhances his narration with poetry. On the tenth day or *`äshürä'*, the processions are performed in the streets leading to *Karbalä'*, or the place representing it. Here the mourners express their grief by wailing and they also enact in a pageant parts of the events of *`äshürä'*. The climax which constitutes the core of *mashhad `äshürä'* is the massacre of Husayn and his male family. This recreates and revives the tragedy by means of acting and miming. This is a case in point from Arab culture where narrative expression using prose, poetry and movement is employed to recreate a significant moment in history for the purpose of remembering and learning. (p. 101)

The writers of Ta'ziya's dramatic texts and poetic verses are usually anonymous. Al-Sheddi (1997) refers to the poet or writer's piety as a main reason for name concealment on such occasions. Jaber Anassori remarks similarly:

Scribes of Taziyeh, generally, ask readers to pray for them out of mercy. They complete their plays asking for forgiveness or for praise and redemption. At the end of most Taziyeh manuscripts could be seen these words: "The end, finished."; along with the signature or the fingerprint of the writers, in the corner of the last page of the manuscripts. Sometimes writers explained or mentioned that this manuscript had been composed for the sake of the memory of the writer. . . or based upon the order of his or hers... (Qtd. in Alemohammed, 1995, p. 2)

Acting in Ta'ziyeh theatre is observed in the form of good characters, villains, and their confrontations. The players called *Shabih Khan* in Ta'ziyeh play the evil characters (antagonists) usually represented as Yazeed or Yazid "يزيد", the Umayyad Caliph, and Shimr or Shemr "شمّر", the military leader who decapitated Husayn's body, and those actors have very difficult roles. The good character (protagonist) is usually monopolised by the descendants of Husayn or so-called *sayyids* "السيد". There are two main characters, Shimr Khan, one of the antagonists, and Imam Khan, a reciter and performer of Husayn's verses (Shahriari, 2006; Alemohammed, 1995; al-Sheddi, 1997).

The actors, in Ta'ziyeh, are always aware and careful to maintain alienation and distance between their true selves and personality and the good or evil characters that they represent (Chelkowski, 1979; Shahriari, 2006). The audience is always aware that the actors are only storytellers. Veteran Iranian theater artist Parviz Mammoun (1979) says:

Nor can the Taziyeh player, who is also a believing Shi'ite, ever permit himself to become one with the Imam, an act which would in his opinion be blasphemy. This situation also pertains in the playing of the villains. The distance between the actor and the person of the villain is clear and unavoidable, first because the inherent loathing and repulsion which the Shi'ite actor feels for Yazid and Shemr is so strong that any artistic desire to identify with the character is nullified. Secondly, the behaviour of Yazid and Shemr toward the Imam is inhuman and unbelievable and they have been

converted into such monsters, that it would be impossible for any man to portray them realistically. Therefore the only thing a Shi'ite Taziyeh player desires, and in principle is able to do, is visibly to impersonate Hazrat-e Hussein and Mi, and Shemr (may he be cursed), to allude to their personalities, to recall their existence, and nothing more. This distance between the actor and the role in Taziyeh is so obvious that if (as recently happened in several Taziyeh) a player refers directly to this separation, his action must be considered inappropriate and seen as the influence of new theatrical ideas. In Natanz, for example, one Mr. Sulaimani, playing Abbas, recited an ode that he himself had composed. In the middle of it he emphasised the separation between himself and the character he was playing:

I am not Abbas, neither is this Karbela,

I am Sulaimani, the slave of the King of heavenly power. (p. 158)

Like classical Greek drama and Elizabethan theatre, Taziyeh is minimalist theatre in terms of costumes, props, and designs. A comprehensive observation on the props of Ta'ziya is:

As a whole what have been realised as Taziyeh props could be itemised as follows: Drum, Sword, Dagger, Boots, Water skin (or water container which is used by the character of Abbas.) Shield, which is one of the implements of warfare, Mall (mash chain mail), Helmet, Vessel (suspended by a chain and carried by a dervish), Head, Bowl of water, Veil, Clock, Scarf, Cymbals, Corpse, Harmonica (small one), Trumpet, Mace (club), Standard (flag), Rope, Bow and arrow, Lion skin, Horse, Litter, Straw. The musical instruments are: Kettle-drums, cymbals, horns, clarinets and various trumpets. (Alemohammed, 1995, p. 20)

The colours of the costumes are symbolic. There are three main colours: the villains (or Yazid's party including Shimr) wear red clothes, the Imam Khan and male protagonists (or Husayen's party) wear green, and the sacred or good characters (including female protagonists) wear black (the colour of mourning in Ta'ziyah). Sometimes, the good characters change to white (the colour of a shroud) as a sign that death is approaching the wearer of the colour (Chelkowski, 1975; Shahriari, 2006).

From the description of t'azyia, hakawati, kurraj, samajats or maskhara (masked actors) and Shadow theatre, I find it challengeable to claim the incompatibility of Islam and theatre. In



fact, none of those monologic arguments of incompatibility have shown, so far, any passages or verses in the Quran, the holy book of Muslims, that clearly states that theatre, mimicry, or acting are forbidden. The body of studies, quoted elsewhere in this section, deconstruct such stereotypical and superficial claims and invite us to revisit theatrical traditions and open up to new possibilities.

My own view is that ‘Arab Theatre’ existed long before contact with standardised Western theatrical forms and that the many performative, staged, storytelling, musical, and comedic rehearsed spectacles documented across two and a half millennia of Arab history, constitute a theatrical tradition - albeit a unique one. These acts were performative - they recreated a crafted version of life rather than being life, they had audiences and performers, they established spaces that separated “performance from non-performance, culture from non-culture” (Pavis, 2003, p. 8). There is no justification for excluding them from a history of ‘Arab Theatre’ and placing its birth at the arrival of European theatre forms.

### Chapter 3: Interculturalism: Breaking Up with Aristotle

Given the context of experimental playwriting intended to decolonise the Arab mind and theatre, that is why, in my own creative work, I am ‘breaking up with Aristotle,’ a phrase I have borrowed from an essay of the same name by Chantal Bilodeau (2016). This does not mean I do not value him. Like Bilodeau, I have always admired Aristotle as he “gave us dramatic structure” or a worldview “pyramid” that “has allowed human civilization to thrive for over twenty-five hundred years” (Bilodeau, 2016). However, I agree with Bilodeau that “he’s too controlling, and I need to break free” (Bilodeau, 2016). In this research, I have sought new forms of theatre in a world that is different from Aristotle’s time, “exponentially more connected” (Bilodeau, 2016), globalised, and intercultural. As an Arab-Muslim migrant, with oppressed voice(s), in Aotearoa New Zealand politics, I seek what Augusto Boal also seeks—‘existence’; but how can this ultimate ‘just’ goal take place?

Boal (2008) urges me to ‘invade’ the bastions of my own and others’ cultural assumptions:

This invasion is a symbolic trespass. It symbolises all the acts of trespass we have to commit in order to free ourselves from what oppresses us. If we do not trespass (not necessarily violently), if we do not go beyond our cultural norms, our state of oppression, the limits imposed upon us, even the law itself (which should be transformed) – if we do not trespass in this we can never be free. To free ourselves is to trespass, and to transform. It is through a creation of the new that that which has not yet existed begins to exist. To free yourself is to trespass. To trespass is to exist. To free ourselves is to exist. To free yourself is to exist (pp. xxi-xxii)

Boal’s critique of realistic, bourgeois, and classical theatre outlines a foundational theory behind his book *Theatre of the Oppressed*. He argues that art is, like everything in a society, governed by politics, although art is usually assumed to be ‘pure contemplation’ or a medium of carrying out or delaying transformation. In this light, Aristotle considered politics and poetry as two independent fields with completely different aims and laws, that should be scrutinised separately. For Boal, Aristotle constructed “the first, extremely powerful poetic-

political system for intimidation of the spectator, for elimination of the ‘bad’ or illegal tendencies of the audience” (Boal, 2008, p. 3). By intimidating (silencing) the spectator, art becomes then exclusive to the dominant classes, who alone can possess and disseminate art and thus impose only their values. It is an oppressive system as it mythicises or magnifies the dominant class’s events and the behaviour of its men (unruly protagonists) and turns them into ‘pure’ events and heroes that call for the spectators’ (i.e., *othered* classes’ or ordinary people’s) emotional reactions but discourage any social actions.

As demonstrated in the previous sections, the starting point, in history, of ‘modern theatre’ starts, to some Eurocentric scholars, in Ancient Greece. They ignore that workers, Bedouins, farmers, or any ‘ordinary’ people gather at the end of a working day or week and celebrate in a similar way to Bakhtin’s carnivalesque or Hakawati circle (or Al-Halqa). Boal (2008) remarks:

In the beginning the theatre was the dithyrambic song: free people singing in the open air. The carnival. The feast.

Later, the ruling classes took possession of the theatre and built their dividing walls. First, they divided the people, separating actors from spectators: people who act and people who watch – the party is over! Secondly, among the actors, they separated the protagonists from the mass. The coercive indoctrination began! (p. 95).

This aristocratic system sets limits to maintain its social order based on power delegation, which Boal, Bilodeau, and I, as an Arab-Muslim migrant in Aotearoa, refuse. This is the structure of the classical theatre in which the spectator traditionally holds a passive role (or is an object that is acted on). The audience is cast, as described in Boal’s (2008) *Aristotle’s Coercive System of Tragedy*, in the role of ‘an old-fashioned wife’ who supervises the Actor (Poet or husband) who “wears the trousers and says what goes” (pp. xxi) and thus delegates all power to the ruling Actor. Boal seeks a new theatre to invade this still-living ancient hierarchical Aristotelian theatre of socio-politics (of spectator vs. actor, stage vs. spectator,

Actor vs. character), that prohibits us Spectators the equal or just rights of possessing the stage or a space or taking on a role of Actor to ‘offer solutions.’ Instead, classical theatre creates a mythicised protagonist, usually male, as the main character, who only can bring change and requires that all events, gazes, and *othered* characters (chorus, performers, or commentators) focus on serving His monological messages that conform to and confirm social power.

The Aristotelian conservative linear narrative arc subjugates differences and thus can be seen as violent. Aristotle egotistically, and thus monologically, views our world and shapes our storyline as ‘one and the same’ in which, what Boal terms, ‘the Unruly Protagonist’ or, as Bilodeau puts it, “power” is the upper-hand and everybody below is acquiescent or the lower-hand no matter if the protagonist is sinful or mistaken. Boal remarks in the light of Aristotle’s view of the worlds of classical theatre through *empathy*:

Listen, the audience is empathetically identified with the Protagonist. They think with his head, they feel with his heart. You only need the Protagonist to repent, to do a bit of *mea culpa*, and it’ll be sorted. And I’m calling this confession Anagnorisis. Like it? (Boal, 2008, p.xviii)

This happens today, too. In Hollywood movies and theatres, we are made to be happy for Roman gladiators to win over Bedouin Arab gladiators in the movie *Gladiator* (2000), or sad for the hero Tancred, Italo-Norman leader of the First Crusade, who becomes traumatised by unwittingly killing his beloved Clorinda, a warrior in the Arab Muslim Saracens army. We are, sometimes, made happy for the political actors who throw the blame for their failures in governance, security, or housing policy onto immigrants. Because of the empathy, we are expected to identify, in our imaginations, with the actors of Roman gladiators and Tancred regardless of their characters and at the cost of oppressing *others* such as Clorinda or immigrants.

However, this empathy or the emotional relationship established between the protagonist and spectator has cathartic effects. Aristotle purges the protagonist, and thus the spectators, of His catastrophe or their moral sins through catharsis or emotions of fear and pity that arouse when despicable evil characters or a *vice* befall the *virtuous* protagonist who resembles us or acts in line with *our* existing cosmic norm and order.

Aristotle affirms that the existing cosmic order is just and we are virtuous if we follow the norms, laws, and dominant cultural values. Boal questions what just, unjust, equal, and unequal mean in Aristotle's best-known work on ethics, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, and deconstructs it. In this regard, Boal (2008) remarks:

Aristotle himself was opposed to the *talion law* (an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth) because, he said, if the people were not equal, their eyes and teeth would not be equal either. Thus one would have to ask: whose eye for whose eye? If it was a master's eye for a slave's eye, it did not seem right to Aristotle, because for him those eyes were not equal in value. If it was a man's tooth for a woman's tooth, neither did Aristotle find here an equivalent value.

Then our philosopher utilises an apparently honest argument to determine criteria of equality to which no one can object. He asks, should we begin with ideal, abstract principles and descend to reality or, on the contrary, should we look at concrete reality and from there ascend toward the principles? Far from any romanticism, he answers: obviously we should start with concrete reality. We must examine empirically the real, existing inequalities and upon them base our criteria of inequality.

This leads us to accept as 'just' the already existing inequalities. For Aristotle, therefore, justice is already contained in reality itself as it is. He does not consider the possibility of transforming the already existing inequalities, but simply accepts them. And for this reason he decides that since free men and slaves do exist in reality (abstract principles do not matter), that will be the first criterion of inequality. To be a man is more and to be a woman is less – this is shown by concrete reality, according to Aristotle. Thus free men would rank highest; then would come free women, followed by male slaves, with the poor female slaves at the bottom.

That was Athenian democracy [...]. (p. 20)

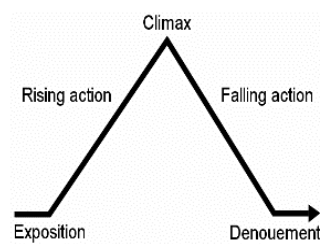
Boal (2000) argues that this structure or the existing order is unjust and still dominating mainstream theatre and other artistic platforms. Bilodeau (2016) argues that Aristotelian

forms of storytelling justice were (and still are) used to rationalise, as Boal also believes, *already existing* tyrannical behaviours and injustices.

Given this context, Bilodeau wonders, “How can a dramatic theory developed in [Aristotle’s] conditions represent the world we live in today and the world we are striving to create? We’re living through an unprecedented transition in human history where we’re slowly shifting from a hierarchical worldview to a heterarchical worldview” (Bilodeau, 2016). She argues that while she still admires the romanticism of Aristotelian frameworks for drama, they became ineffective in her eco-friendly theatre project that looks for holistic engagement and future-focussed dialogue. For Bilodeau, the Aristotelian dramatic arc is an egoistic dramatic norm that does not recognise her as a woman and excludes other voices. Instead, she looks for the abundance away from the inhuman pyramid of capitalism and inherited ancient Greek divine patriarchies and hierarchies that affect every day of our lives. She explains:

Aristotle’s theory of dramatic writing, later modified by German playwright and novelist Gustav Freytag, is a pyramid. Rising action on one side, climax at the top, and falling action on the other side. (2016, August 14)

She goes on to outline how the centrality of a single human protagonist, the subordination of all other characters and elements to service the protagonist’s story and their reduction to their role advancing the protagonist’s storyline, and the removal of complexity to home in on a single ‘arc’ of cause and effect, have the effect of reinforcing ideas of human agency, dominance, and importance.



Boal (2008) explains 'How Aristotle's Coercive System of Tragedy Functions' in three stages to reach the ultimate goal of a tragedy - *Catharsis*:

*First Stage*: Stimulation of the hamartia; the character follows an ascending path toward happiness, accompanied empathically by the spectator. Then comes a moment of reversal: the character, with the spectator, starts to move from happiness toward misfortune; fall of the hero.

*Second Stage*: The character recognises his error – *anagnorisis*. Through the empathic relationship *dianoia-reason*, the spectator recognises his own error, his own hamartia, his own anticonstitutional flaw.

*Third Stage*: *Catastrophe*; the character suffers the consequences of his error, in a violent form, with his own death or with the death of loved ones.

*Catharsis*: The spectator, terrified by the spectacle of the catastrophe, is purified of his hamartia. (p. 33)

Aristotle's ego-centred narrative pyramid thus encodes and reinforces a worldview, and it is the same worldview as capitalism: "a pyramid. Power and wealth live at the top, in the hands of a minority, while the majority exists at the bottom to support the top. This is how religions are organized, how monarchies thrived, and how today's capitalist system functions" (Bilodeau, 2016). In trying to find ways to write theatre that would take us beyond these anthropocentric and hierarchical values, Bilodeau therefore found Aristotelian monologic plot structure limiting and unhelpful. The classical structure monologically promotes a particular ideology that relies on what Brecht terms an 'emotional orgy' that reproduces certain un/desirable historical known emotions of passive acceptance. As Boal points out, what neither he nor Brecht want "is that the spectators continue to leave their brains with their hats upon entering the theatre, as do bourgeois spectators" (Boal, 2008, p. 86).

Brecht wants *Verfremdungseffekt* "تأثير الاغتراب" (or alienation/distance effect). He wants the spectators and the actors to distance themselves from their traditional roles; spectators as supervisors or observers and actors as a shy person hidden behind a smiling, neutral, or sad mask. Brecht wanted both to think and ask questions to draw out their own inferences. In his

plays, Brecht deploys different techniques, which I discuss in chapter four, such as songs, breaking the fourth wall, placards, narrations, direct speech, and other distancing devices. However, Boal believes that Brecht's intention (breaking up with Aristotle) does not match with his doings. Boal (2008) argues that Brecht's audiences are still silent as it is "the Dramatist of the Actor who criticises, not the audience" (p. xix).

I too wanted to move away from an Aristotelian structure for my playwriting - both because of the issues with discursive power effects embedded in the narrative form, and because Arabic traditions offer viable alternatives for the kinds of complex stories and subjectivities I wanted to represent. Aristotle and his mould of narrative cannot see me, my mother, and my children, or indeed any inbetweeners. We are neither the 'good guys' nor the 'bad guys' in his view, but too much of both to be dramatically useful. I migrate from and to colonies. I have privilege in one world and none in another. My gender gives me power in one cultural context but intersects with my migrancy, my 'otherness' in another. I am excluded from his monologic narrative. My children migrate in-between different languages, theatres and performances, socio-political and cultural codes. We see intersections and heterarchical differences that the Aristotelian lens cannot see. Our nuances and never-ending stories are excluded from the neat 'three act structure' of beginning, middle, and end. My mother and female relatives are excluded from Aristotle's "stories written by men, for men, and about men" (Bilodeau, 2016). Therefore, I am breaking up with Aristotle. His container is too rigid for what I need to say about multidirectional trauma, multiphase migrancy, hybridity, complicity, intersectionality<sup>58</sup>, and the slippery particularities of a life that began in Jordan and is now being lived in Aotearoa.

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<sup>58</sup> Vivian May (2015) contends that Intersectionality is the acknowledgment of and indulgence with a form of knowledge and intellectual conceptualising that resists overlapped systems of discrimination and maintains social justice. This resistance developed "to unsettle conventional mindsets, challenge oppressive power, think



However, I should also be aware of those Arabic traditions that are extremely tied up to different power delegations and structures. The feudalistic culture and the theatre of comedy in the medieval Arab-Muslim eras such as Karagöz, Aragoz, Khayal al-Zill, or Hakawati, or Ta'zyia theatre, mean that some of the forms or characters are tied to abstractions and moral principles and attributes. Plays where heroes are made to defeat adversaries using cunning, as demonstrated elsewhere, are arguably another simplified version of the Aristotelian theatre of empathy that Boal (2008) considers “the most dangerous weapon in the entire arsenal of the theatre and related art” (p. 93), and thus against the people, rather than “a weapon of liberation” (p. xxiii). Instead, Boal, Bilodeau and I each seek to apply, in different ways, a multi-dimensional, heterarchical, hybrid, dialogic, and intercultural form of theatre making or, as I call it, a kaleidoscopic structure that shifts and tumbles many pieces and colours of story and influence, to generate fluid, mosaic characters and multi-directional power flows in its portrayals of diverse human experience.

Given the rules of Aristotelian hierarchical dramatic structure, it occurred to me that playwriting about migration using such a structure becomes not just unwieldy but even potentially unethical. The beginning, the middle, and the end are the main parts of such a play/writing structure. Yet migration is an unstoppable, evolving, worldwide scene that flows in one direction one century and in another the next. It involves shifting, yet leaving many parts of who one is, behind. It is time-marked, yet never finished. The true nature of migration is inimical to Aristotelian playwriting as it is fixed to one place, time, mood, or characters (Aristotle’s ‘unities’). Migration is not a linear result of something that came before it as it has always been pending. It has no end and no denouement.

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through the full architecture of structural inequalities and asymmetrical life opportunities, and seek a more just world” (p.xi).

Aristotle's dramatic theory and egoistic lens depreciate cultural differences, migration, and hybrid identities. Therefore, I deployed my creative and critical research to experiment with other theatrical structures through which I hope to contribute to the acceptance and recognition of silenced stories or marginalised voices such as hybrids or inbetweeners, applying broad concepts of interculturalism, intercultural theatre, inbetweenness, dialogism, and deconstructing stereotypes in form as well as content.

### **Exposition – Rising Action**

I have not always rejected the prevailing Aristotelian theatrical expectations. I actually appreciate them in many ways. My early stage performances and theatre activities were, although distinctively monologic, important to me now as part of the kaleidoscopic inheritance I have woven into the *Aragoze Trilogy*. As a very young child in Jordan, every school-day morning our task was a repetitively nationalist collective performance staged before teachers and students in our schools' outdoor spaces, ((ساحات)) pronounced /Sahat/. We used to sing national songs such as the royal national anthem, play religious rhythms, and shout aloud some lines of Arabic romantic nationalist poems such as (موطني), translated as 'My Homeland', by Ibrahim Tuqan.<sup>59</sup> These early performances were monologic as participants were competing to prove whose voice resonated more with the national, State culture, and the mainstream discourse. Students were set up in rows and used one exciting high tone and sharp pitch for their role-play to express their loyalty to the country and to one ethnic or national group.

This whole institutional ((ساحات)) setting mimics the Aristotelian theatrical framework, that I find important but insufficient to express my migratory inbetweenness. Mordecai Gorelik

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<sup>59</sup> Ibrahim Tuqan (1905-1941) was a nationalist poet from Palestine, whose works rallied Arab revolts against the British mandate in 1920.

(2000) argues that the traditional theatrical framework delivers pre-packaged roles that support a competitive plot, pat answers, singular interpretations or meanings, and that these are close, similar, or identical to what audiences or teachers or the administration (or essentialists) want audiences to view, think about, or interpret - patriotism and belonging.

Yet, these early theatre experiences were important despite being characterised by naivety and monologism. Raising national emotions, I always received the disciplined audience's applause, and this motivated me to be a regular actor on school stages. Eventually, after first learning the craft as it was taught, I would break out of my fears by resisting the mainstream in later stages.

### **Climax – Falling Action**

My desire for a new more open-minded theatre and performance experience evolved during my bachelor's degree at the Hashemite University in Jordan (2002-2006). It was compulsory as part of my courses to study, rehearse, and perform Anton Chekhov's *Cherry Orchard* and Jean-Baptiste Poquelin (known by his stage name Molière)'s *The Miser* at the university theatre. I, along with other theatre disciples, used English language and western theatre forms to address Arabic audiences, as the final stage of my BA studies. Audiences, mostly my non-participant peers, were mainly impressed with our boldness and openness to perform in another culture and language. However, our peers also raised some valid concerns about our monologism by using only a foreign language and culture but concealing Arabic language (the language of the Quran) and culture (Islam-Arab Culture) from the stage twice. Although the themes and plots of the plays were considered by our teachers to be universal or relevant to all cultures that live under an aristocratic system that fails to maintain its status by finding meaning to its materialism, the audience's call for an intercultural exchange was valid and

awakening. Anyway, my goal was passing the course to graduate soon. However, I was still evolving.

This phase of evolution reveals to me that I have always had a curiosity towards interculturalism or a yearning to recognise and understand new cultures. However, my curiosity towards new cultures has also always faced unpleasant experiences of surprise and shock. Meeting a new culture or language is an inspiring and satisfying adventure but also a stressful and baffling experience because it is unexpected and “it may initiate a negative assessment of one’s own culture” (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001). As my early theatre and performance experience reveals, one comes into life with naïve wit and a sense of identity open to unlimited meanings, but then the monochromatic and monologic institutionalising process ruptures our openness to intercultural dialogue, multiplicity, and abundance. There is a long process in early schooling - not only in my own culture and experiences but more widely too (e.g., as noted by Robinson, 2011 of the British schooling system) - of making us closed-minded with limited access to the flexible mental and visual perceptions or the clash of different perspectives that is necessary for intercultural existence (or intercultural theatre-making, for that matter).

### **Denouement**

At the University of North Florida (UNF), Florida State, while I was completing my master’s degree in Composition and Rhetoric, I composed my first theatrical debut *11/9*. It was directed by my colleague Kelley Predieri (2010) and selected to be staged twice on the UNF stage as it was different; intercultural theatre is always attractive for those open to a journey of discovering new things. My debut was written in memory of terrorism victims; the brochure of the one-act play reads that ‘On November 9, 2005, the blind hand of terror descended upon three hotels in Amman, the capital of Jordan. It attacked a wedding party,

killing many people'. The one-act play revolved around a terrorist unexpectedly meeting his brother - who is the groom's best man - at the wedding. The brothers have their own past experiences of terrorism, when their mother and land were raped and killed before their eyes during the US invasion of Iraq in 2003.

The marketing team distributed the brochure about the play on campus and hung it on the gate of the library. It carried two important eye-catching messages; The first was "We are also victims. We also suffer". The second was a Quranic verse that reverses the stereotypical image of Islam and Quran in the far-right-wing American mainstream; The tragic events of 9/11 have mainly been connected to perpetrators whose religious and cultural background is connected to an exotic and savage Islam and Quran; the verse reads:

The Author (Allah): If anyone kills another person, it is as if he had murdered all mankind. And if anyone gives life to another person, it is as if had given life to all mankind. (Quran 5:32).

During this stage of my theatrical evolution, I relied on techniques of conflation and juxtaposition of differences to create this dialogic intercultural one-act play and to break with convention. My characters had Arabic, English, and Hebrew names, worked in different high and low-skill sectors, and spoke English fluently. The setting of the stage was a simple wedding. The characters expressed their joy at the wedding celebration, using Jordanian Arabic Mijwiz songs, Dabkeh dances, and ululation, while they crossed the aisles of the theatre towards the box-stage. They also performed a slow dance to fast-beat songs with audience members, which created uncertainty and confusion. Terrorist characters with different skin colours then entered the theatre from the main gates with different Western and Islamic costumes to camouflage the source of terrorism or unsettle the American mainstream's stereotypical imagination of terrorist uniforms. There were no back-stage areas and no curtains. Belly dancers hit the stage, and all were blonde.

The play tried to stage alternative discourses such as the terrorist's inner and suppressed voices to destabilise the conventional and outspoken official discourse on the global stage. Yet the oppositional stance perhaps reinforced rather than disrupted binaries and boundaries. A real US police car was parked in the main gates of the theatre during the show; the brochure of the play caused, perhaps, some fear, as it was certainly made to perform the unconventional. Despite the success of my project, I was still learning and imperfect.

Although my intention in my creative work *11/9* was to write intercultural theatre, my exchange was still one-way (monologic) as the spectators were silent and passive recipients. I received an A+ grade for the playwriting project and the applause of spectators. However, some spectators wanted to add their voices; one had different views on my deployment of Arabian belly-dancers where some parts of their bodies were naked, as this performance is exotic and does not represent Islam. I received many questions about my choices of characters and costumes. Other questions were related to stage-directions. I felt I built walls between actors and spectators, and I wished I had another rehearsal to add more voices. But my play was a finished project and closed world that did not allow oppressed classes (or closed-off spectators) to present and experiment with their own images, opinions, and languages in response.

### **Inbetweenness**

When I came to write my doctoral creative research, I wanted to avoid simply reconstituting binaries by comparing opposing sets of views to each other (Arab vs. non-Arab, actor vs. spectator, Western theatre vs. non-western theatre). Through *Aragoze Trilogy*, I wanted to create hybrid theatre (or intercultural theatre), multivocal characters, and polyvocal texts (or dialogic theatres), travelling 'in-between' unfixed/mobile times, locations, cultures, positionalities, themes, theatres and identities that allow spectators to take on the role of actor

and possess the stage. I wanted to creatively acknowledge variant trans-historical conditions of beings and presences and to include and exclude *Aragoze Trilogy*'s characters differently at different times and places where spectators can intervene to offer solutions.

I needed to depart creatively from those invented monologic debates aligned with Eastern or Western polarity to a place of uncertainty - a dynamic temporal space or what Homi Bhabha calls a 'third space' of hybridity, which refers to the intervening space between juxtaposed, overlapping yet different cultures, a transitional space where "the process of cultural hybridity gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognizable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation" (Rutherford, 1990, p.211). In this dynamic space, we can transit, translate, and negotiate differences or contesting identities. We can move beyond what Brook (1996) terms State or Individual cultures to the submerged and lost 'third culture', which implies the culture of links or linking that 'can counterbalance the fragmentation of our world' (1996, pp. 63-64). In this sense, my creative work, *Aragoze Trilogy*, is an intercultural theatre of discovery of new relationships that may seem unreasonable, unexpected, surprising, or shocking. They are certainly not predictable. But, I hope, they will not necessitate police cars parked at the gates of the theatre but instead bring people into new ways of thinking and new dialogues.

### **Intercultural Theatre: Meanings & Concerns**

What the term 'intercultural theatre' means and aims for is one of the most provocative questions and notorious critical topics that international theatre research has debated in the last decade. Some critical theatre scholars, as shown in the following paragraph, consider interculturalism has the potential for novel aesthetic interaction among variant Western and non-Western performance elements, seeking connections or elements of human universality.

Other critics, discussed below, view the term suspiciously because of its potential cultural imperialism as they still read the term as a continuation of colonial hegemony towards previously colonised cultures. My attempt is to recognise all the walks of the talk and to dance, then, in-between the various sensitivities to find an intercultural enterprise that can encompass diverse experiences without recolonisation.

In my understanding of the term, intercultural theatre carries, at its base, a sense of fusion, (re)negotiation, or dialogue between, at least, two different cultural elements. I put this synthesis of heterogeneous traditions into effect throughout my creative writing of *Aragoze Trilogy*. I bring together, for example, Al-halqa Theatre,<sup>60</sup> Epic Theatre,<sup>61</sup> Shadow Theatre,<sup>62</sup> Theatre of the Absurd,<sup>63</sup> and other cultural elements, that I discuss further in chapter four. Also, I freely and openly exchange and appropriate religious, social, and political discourses to destabilise conventions rather than conform to them, as I discuss further in the next chapter. I additionally use conflation and juxtaposition as tools or strategies to create and achieve hybrid characterisation and to depart from static linear Aristotelian templates for theatre and performance.

The term intercultural entails complexities, but I will start first with the common interpretation of the term. Patrice Pavis (1992), who has written extensively and influentially on intercultural theatre, points out that theatrical interculturalism has three main forms. First, he refers to intercultural theatre as a creation of hybrid forms, where one can bring together

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<sup>60</sup> Al-halqa is a community assembly in the structure of a circle that surrounds a performer or a group of performers, that drifts between high culture and forms of popular culture, sacrosanct and profane, written and orality. (Amine & Carlson, 2008) (Amine, 2001)

<sup>61</sup> Epic theatre became popular first in Germany in the 1920s with the works of Brecht and director Erwin Piscator. Its major elements are alienation, anti-romanticism, anti-naturalism, anti-unity, anti-Aristotle's theory of catharsis, and anti-resolution. See: (Gorelik, 2000)

<sup>62</sup> Shadow theatre or silhouette puppetry is a form of performative storytelling and entertainment that originated in China or India, and uses, in its simplest forms, figures held between a scrim and a source of light. (Guo, 2020)

<sup>63</sup> Absurd theatre became popular in Europe, especially Paris, in the 1950s, and largely relied on existentialism and absurdism. Popular elements of this theatre form include illogical plots and characters in disharmony with their existence. (Bennett, 2015)



different 'distinct' traditions of performance "traceable to distinct cultural areas" (p. 6). He describes interculturalism as "the synthesis of heterogeneous traditions" (Pavis, 1996, p. 1). Similarly, other critics such as Jacqueline Lo and Helen Gilbert (2002) define the term as "a hybrid derived from an intentional encounter between cultures and performing traditions" (p. 36). It is "the meeting in the moment of performance of two or more cultural traditions" (2000, p. 7), as Julie Holledge and Joanne Tompkins define. Rustom Bharucha (1996) describes it as "the phenomenon by which diverse cultures are exchanged, transported and appropriated across nations" (p. 206). Some other notable critics such as Peter Brook (1996) and Richard Schechner (1996, 2006) share with the previous scholars the same basic definition of interculturalism. They view intercultural performance as a potential for opening a dialogue between different cultural backgrounds and putting together performers at the crossroads of cultures.

Also, Pavis defines multicultural theatre as a form of theatrical interculturalism. It draws its sources from several ethnic or linguistic groups in multicultural countries. He then defines a third form of theatrical interculturalism called cultural collage to refer to a form of theatre where an artist can "cite, adapt, reduce, enlarge, combine and mix various elements without concerns for a scale of importance or values" (1992, p. 9). Such a process aims to create a new theatrical aesthetic transcending the original or the inherited readings or meanings and subverts traditional uses of those exchanged elements.

Some critics find interculturalism more effective and realistic than multiculturalism. They argue that the term is concerned with what results from the meeting or collision of cultures, rather than with what uniform elements or conformity can be found among cultures. Knowles (2010) prefers, as I do, the concept of interculturalism to multiculturalism. He argues that multiculturalism is a subject that joins different people together in an effort towards conformity or ease. It transcends rather than traverses differences among cultures and people

which may leave historical binary codings or hierarchical discourses alive without treatment. However, interculturalism focuses on “the contested, unsettling, and often unequal spaces [between] cultures, spaces that can function in performance as sites of negotiation” (Knowles, 2010, p. 4). Or, as Schechner (1992) points out, interculturalism is the “difficulties brought up by multiculturalism, the misunderstandings, broken languages, and failed transactions occurring when and where cultures collide, overlap, or pull away from each other” (pp. 7-8). In addition, interculturalism “evokes the possibility of interaction across a multiplicity of cultural positionings, avoiding binary codings” (Knowles, 2010, p. 4). I find Schechner and Knowles’ conceptualising of the term useful and interesting as it offers me the freedom to select sources and make horizontal or vertical transactions across cultural differences. Furthermore, Pavis breaks down the concept of interculturalism to show several different thrusts to the intercultural endeavour, and he makes a clear distinction between the following – which I quote in full:

the *intracultural* dimension refers to the traditions of a single nation, which are very often almost forgotten or deformed, and have to be reconstructed

the *transcultural* transcends particular cultures and looks for a universal human condition, as in the case of Brook’s notion of ‘culture of links’, which supposedly unites all human beings beyond their ethnic differences and which can be directly transmitted to any audience without distinction of race, culture or class

the *ultracultural* could be called the somewhat mystical quest for the origin of theatre, the search for a primal language in the sense of Artaud. In Brook’s *Orghast* (1970), Serban’s *Medea* and *The Trojan Women*, Ronconi’s *Oresteia* (1972), we had such a quest for a universal language of sounds and emotions, as if all human experience sprang from the same source

the *pre-cultural* which Barba calls the *pre-expressive*, would be the common ground of any tradition in the world, which affects any audience, ‘before’ (temporally and logically) it is individualized and ‘culturalized’ in a specific cultural tradition

the *post-cultural* would apply to the postmodern imagination, which tends to view any cultural act as a quotation or reconstructing of already known elements

the *metacultural* aspects refers to the commentary a given culture can make on other cultural elements, when explaining, comparing and commenting on it.

(Pavis, 1992, p. 20)

Nevertheless, the perception of interculturalism or intercultural theatre is not always straightforward. As stated earlier in this section, it is one of the most intensely debated keywords in the field of performance and theatre studies. Julie Holledge and Joanne Tompkins (2000) describe it as a “theoretical, theatrical, and cultural minefield” (p. 10) that requires caution when we approach it. Therefore, I enter this tense territory of exchange to introduce, first, my awareness of the debate about potential hazards such as cultural imperialism and colonialism.

Walter Mignolo (2000) argues that terms such as interculturalism—when meaning ‘syncretism’, ‘hybridity’, or ‘space-in-between’—are sometimes used as alternative expressions to *mestizaje*. Mignolo points out that such terms such as *mestizaje* only serve “the colonial matrix of power” that “operates in two simultaneous movements: building itself as a civilizational project and destroying other civilisations” (Walter Mignolo, personal communication, Jan 21, 2017). He draws our attention to the *mestizaje*’s colonial and imperial roots and discourses in ‘Spanish America’ and offers a critical outline on how the term is related to Latin American ‘genetics’. Interculturalism under this matrix can only mean *destruction*, as Khalid Amine (2018) argues in *Decolonising Theatre History in the Arab World*. If intercultural means theatre that has borrowed Western elements as part of its ‘modernisation’ without applying the lens of double criticism, it becomes, as Daryl Chin (1991) argued, a corrupted and deterritorialised contemporary form of imperialism, or a ‘cultural rape,’ as Una Chaudhuri (1991) suggested, or requires the complicity of colonised subjects in the colonial assertion of cultural superiority, as Rustom Bharucha (1993) contends. I also add my concerns to those objections from postcolonial theorists about the

term and its potentials; a syncretism of different cultural elements and practices in theatre and performance should not be limited to aesthetics only, but also address political contexts. In fact, the term and its potentials should not fall, again, into the trap of either/or but be considered for their potential to allow inclusiveness and creative profusion.

Knowles (2010) believes that some interculturalists such as Brook seek ‘a utopia’ of an imagined common language of theatre or “a common humanity” (2010, p. 2), that retains virtually perfect qualities for Brook’s Western citizens or audiences. Such a perfectionist or universalist assumption of interculturalism, Chin (1991) believes, is “a very delicate enterprise” (p. 94) as it transcends, for example, the above concerns of imperialism and colonialism. I am also aware that there are pessimistic views in Western thought regarding creating a frank intercultural theatre enterprise. Scholars like Christopher Murray (2000) warn of the high risks of reproducing a dichotomy that *assimilates* the other into the popular mainstream in which the West auto-claims the champion position. Relevant fears are also traceable in Karl Marx’s (1962) critique of British colonialism and its cultural imperialism in India. Marx warned that the introduction of the West to the East, while the coloniser was still seizing the empire(s), was a double mission; the annihilation of Asian traditions and pasts and the implementation of Western foundations. In the context of interculturalism, Murray (2000) fears the West will remain unchanged. Similarly, Bharucha (1993) warns in *Theatre and the World: Essays on Performance and Politics* that the West may first appropriate, next decontextualise, and then represent the subaltern Other.

In addition, interculturalism is not straightforward as it involves a binary matrix of power relations within theatre and performance studies. The intercultural debate is easily divided into two fixated opposing axes representing non-West/West. Erika Fischer-Lichte (2014) states that in Western writing “the term [intercultural theatre] always indicates the fusion of something Western and non-Western” and that it “almost always requires the West” (p. 5). In

this trend, intercultural theatre, as a Western performance discourse, has been imagined by artists such as Brook, Schechner, and Pavis. On the other hand, other intercultural theatre critics such as Marcus Chen Chye Tan (2012) challenge Fischer-Lichte's perspective. Tan argues that "intercultural theatre as a western performance discourse defined by Western theoretical framework, is experiencing an evolution" (p. 10) and is no longer focused on joining "First World capital and brainpower with Third World raw material and labour and Western classical texts with Eastern performance traditions," as Daphne P. Lei demonstrates (2012, p. 571). In this trend, intercultural theatre is re-envisioned by scholars such as Tan, Lei, and Knowles to repetitively "reverse, redirect, and/or complicate familiar networks or routes of intercultural exchange, exploding East/West and global North/Global South binaries" (McIvor, 2019, pp. 1-2). This later trend of new interculturalism aims to create intercultural spaces and exchange away from any epistemic closure located in the classical binary of west and the rest.

Each scholar of such polarisation filters the meaning and aims of this exchange through their own cultural and personal sensibilities. Schechner and Brook, for example, look at interculturalism from a universal aesthetic corner, Pavis examines intercultural theatre from a postmodern approach, and Knowles, among other decolonising critics, calls for intercultural theatre and postcolonial theory to intersect as "homologous fields of scholarly inquiry" (2010, p. 43). Knowles suggests a vital project to apply a different fresh vision of 'a newly configured' studies to the same *classic parent's* lens. Of course, I likewise am shaped by my own cultural experiences in my creative work, intertwining the cultures I have traversed into my views. This leads me to ask about intersections between intercultural performance and other homologous and 'monologic' critical approaches such as the mythification of the Arab Mind, and the history of Arab theatre studies, that I take issue with in chapter two. Like Knowles (2010):

I ask how intercultural performance functions if approached ‘from below’ rather than from the position of privilege, how the stage can be decolonised, and how inequities in the cultural mix can be dissolved and solidarities forged across difference. (p. 6)

‘New interculturalism’ scholars have also employed a variety of genres, some of which I draw on in my creative work *Aragoze Trilogy*. For example, McIvor (2019) argues that new interculturalists in theatre and performance studies “do not limit their focus to theatre, but also consider other forms and modalities of performance” (p. 4). In my work, I also incorporate dances such as Sufi whirling, belly dancing, Arabian Ardah, and Twerking<sup>64</sup> and visual arts such as shadow reflections, video, and images of pilgrim movement in Mecca, the holy site of Muslims.

Some scholars such as Erika Fischer-Lichte (1990) who is notably involved in the intercultural debate, pose open questions about what the interculturalism movement can offer, which I find valid:

[D]oes interculturalism have a completely specific function in each culture to fulfil, or can one locate general aims and goals which serves as worldwide phenomena? Does interculturalism in theatre indicate national, continental or world culture? Does it guarantee and confirm cultural identity, or does it metamorphose or even dissolve identity? Is it a question of the attempt to propagate an awareness of a foreign culture, or is it rather a cultural exploitation? Does theatrical interculturalism today support and provoke intercultural understanding, or does it deny fundamental differences between

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<sup>64</sup> Twerk is a dance performance that involves shaking the buttocks. It has different names; *Mapouka* in the Ivory Coast, *Chakacha* in Kenya and Tanzania, *Bakisimba* in Uganda. It has variants in the US and in Europe. (Kitata, 2020)

cultures and make any communication impossible, if one is deceived into believing in a shared community, which actually does not exist? (1990, p. 18)

However, I choose to alter the position of interculturalism as a concept and enterprise that serves 'us' and our cultural goals. Instead, I find myself using the metaphor of an astrolabe or kaleidoscope to see things differently and ask questions such as what do the conventions (culture/theatre) want to fulfil? Do our cultures/theatres have specific or general goals? Do our cultures/theatres serve an extreme supremacist agenda? Are our cultures/theatres tolerant enough to accept and be aware of different cultural identities, or not? Do our cultures/theatres accept or ignore exploitations of different cultures and individuals? Do our cultures/theatres provoke understanding? Do our cultures/theatres lack skills to make a dialogue with the 'weird' or 'strangers'? Do our cultures/theatres ask the big existential question 'why do you create us'? If we take a short pause for thinking about these questions, interculturalism can offer unlimited strategies to serve 'us' or to divide 'us', no matter where we belong and live. Therefore, it is a superfluous attempt to stress the importance of one definition or view about interculturalism and conceal another. Therefore, I find it imperative to continue discussing in more detail the scholar's responses to *The Mahabharata*, as the most commonly debated theatrical attempt that scholars and practitioners discuss in intercultural theatre and performance – in the next section.

For this purpose, I define theatre as any space constituted of cultural practices in which audiences and performers coexist to negotiate among themselves. The time-bound construct of a play is a hierarchical illusion, which I reject, and its duration is highly associated with the pace/space of our engagement in the long-lasting process of negotiating, which consists of mutual acceptance and rejection, cross-reference, lending, and borrowing those differences. I

also use ‘performance’ throughout my exegesis to refer to behaviours of characters in some rituals, dances, ceremonies, and Samajat (jester) performances that occur in the Arabic shadow theatre or western art of theatre.

## **Intercultural Debate**

The obvious discursive shift of intercultural theatre agendas invites me to explore interculturalism and its potentials. Therefore, I would like to start with the orientations and practices of ‘hegemonic intercultural theatre’ (HIT), as Daphne Lei (2011, p. 571) terms it. I will, then, elaborate more on approaches of the new interculturalism, which writes back to HIT, to situate my own insights about intercultural theatre, utilising my authorial background as well as Mikhail Bakhtin’s concepts of dialogism, monologism, and heteroglossia.

The most celebrated production of intercultural effort, in HIT, starts with *The Mahabharata*, Brook’s 1986 production. It toured many countries around the world with its two versions (English and French). It reflects Brook’s fascination with bringing elements of rituals and myth from Indian (or non-Western) traditions to create what he terms ‘a culture of links’ through which he seeks the plot of universality and uniformity of many diverse cultures through the medium of theatre.

This new trend of creativity, at base, exerts consistent efforts to widen the confines of Western theatre. Brook’s ambition, like any theatre scholar and practitioner, is to discover novel forms of theatre and to unearth unprecedented ways of interaction with his Western theatre audience. Brook’s radical curiosity toward the Indian epic *The Mahabharata* was to enrich his theatre theory and his criticism of traditional Western theatre. The magnitude of the Sanskrit text that contains a hundred thousand stanzas explains the length of Brook’s *Mahabharata* production which was nine hours long; he divides the production into three



parts, each about three hours in duration. This immense classical narrative offered Brook a unique opportunity to experiment and explore new ethics that could help him create a new theatre. Gerry O'Connor (1989) believes that:

*The Mahabharata* is the peak of a life's effort to explore a vision of the theatre as a revitalising force to counter the decaying conventions of Western entertainment, which Brook has called 'The Deadly Theatre'. (p. 27)

Brook is like every theatre maker who might have a certain theatrical agenda that teaches new lessons and ethics. His use of theatrical interculturalism can be seen to strive toward a Western theatre of spiritual healing. He searches for elements of universality while borrowing from foreign myth and ritual to create a source of healing material to his audiences in the West – who are usually described as mesmerised with the material world. Colin Counsell (1996) believes that Brook sought theatre of interculturalism to establish universal community and healing uniformity. Counsell (1996) argues that Brook was interested:

not only with theatre as a means of representation but also with its performative powers, its ability to establish a sense of communality and so heal the 'sick social body' of the West. (p. 145)

Brook sought to reach levels of ideal communication which introduced different cultures, with all their variants, as equal. As Schechner (1989) puts it, "at some level, [...] all the individuals and all the cultures are at least theoretically equal, even identical" (p. 160). Schechner gives the impression that global or universal community is one of the major concepts behind interculturalism in the West. Brook (1987) argues that:

Each culture expresses a different portion of the inner atlas; the complete human truth is global, and the theatre is the place in which the jigsaw can be pieced together. (p. 129)

Brook's universal quest to find a theatre of harmony that brings world cultures together in search for a common humanity focuses on aesthetics to make all cultures readable to one

another. He stresses issues of authenticity and collaboration without engaging with political undertones of appropriation, reification, essentialism, and other power considerations.

Brook's interculturalism has also been discussed as an opportunity for learning from other cultures. In his elaboration of Brook's effort to create a world of various cultures, Schechner (1989) points out that "[w]e have not yet learned how to balance these two levels of social existence. But we are learning [...] to recognize these levels of existence". This type of idealised, balanced exchange or learning opportunity aims to create "a unified ecosystem" (p. 160) in which other cultures and their rights are recognised.

Pavis also admires Brook's clear vision of interculturalism and his post-modern interpretation of the borrowed material in *The Mahabharata*. Pavis (1992) notes that:

Brook takes into account all the potential artistic modelings of Indian civilization, but he integrates them into a vision of rural India at once eternal and contemporary. It is not India, but it has all the flavour of India. (p. 187)

Pavis's discussion of the interculturalism of Brook's *Mahabharata* is placed in terms of semiotics and postmodernism. Pavis appreciates Brook's work as a form of intertextuality, stressing the importance of *mise-en-scene*. He understands it as

the synchronic confrontation of signifying systems, and it is their interaction, not their history, that is offered to the spectator and that produces meaning...[It is] defined as the bringing together or confrontation, in a given space and time, of different signifying system for an audience. (1992, p. 24)

Pavis's central concept of postmodern *mise-en-scene* is the re-interpretation of Brook's *Mahabharata* or any other classics in the light of contemporary trends of thinking. I apply Pavis's lens of postmodernism in many parts of my trilogy (called 'miniatures') in which I offer new meanings to historical figures and mythical creatures, as discussed in chapter four, as well as bringing together 'high' and 'popular' themes to create an unsettling theatre. Therefore, I reject, in many places in my creative work, the assumption that there will be one

“centralizing and committed reading”, for example, as it conforms the mainstream. I also do not “separate between high culture and mass culture” (Pavis, 1992, p. 14) but shift between different genre speeches and level codes to deconstruct hierarchies. However, I am not committed to postmodernism or any other school or model of analysis or creative construction such as postcolonialism and universalism that may binarise accounts of high and low. I prefer Bakhtin’s heteroglossia that opens the way, to me, to practice the freedom of becoming anything. The term describes the coexistence of differences or many voices among characters, types of speech, or narrators within a single social group or language. I further discuss heteroglossia, dialogism, and monologism, and my investment of these key terms in the understanding of intercultural exchange, in the coming sections.

Although much criticism, discussed below, accuses Brook of alleged corruption of the Indian epic and imposing his own values in his particular selection of the storyline, Pavis’s postmodernist understanding claims there is no one definite version of the epic. I believe that an artist’s main job is to be creative. Creativity means to bring up, create, rewrite, or arrange, maybe in an unfamiliar way for the sake of unsettling, the norm. In fact, Vijay Mishra (2002) asserts, the Indian epic, is “an extraordinarily varied and unstable text” (p. 41) as it comes in several texts opened to labour of scholarship and ‘Indian editorial practices’ as well as global translations. Therefore, one can also conceive that Brook’s re-imagined version of the epic may be a part of its continuing evolution of meaning.

However, Brook’s borrowing and cross-referencing from non-Western forms of performance generated controversy and several political objections. *The Mahabharata* became “the axis for a collection of contested claims, of larger cultural desires and fears”, as Julie Stone Peters (1995, p. 199) points out; the desire and the fears of possessing and representing ‘the foreign’ culture on global stage, which one global culture (colonial) had dominated since, at least, the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Therefore, the politics of fear and complicity with colonisation led many

practitioners, including me, into great difficulties when we attempt to represent multiple cultures, including cultures not our own, on stage. In trying to write across cultures and be inclusive we can become stuck in fear, expecting accusations of cultural imperialism or appropriation as culturally marginalised groups still negotiate ‘the location’ of their cultures. Therefore, Brook’s *The Mahabharata* was criticised not only for its subjects and creative merits but also because of the timing of the production. His choice targets the basis of Indian Hindu civilization; *The Mahabharata* “is the founding text of Indian culture”, Mishra says (1991, p. 195). It forms a major source for all classical and modern Indian productions in literature, films, and theatre. Indians ‘endlessly write’, Mishra asserts, the Sanskrit *Mahabharata*. One of the key objections to Brook’s version of the epic is his free will to edit, remove, and adapt its nonlinear structure of ‘miniatures’ to create his linear narrative or plot development. Bharucha believes “nothing could be more foreign to *Mahabharata* than linearity” (1993, p. 75). Thus, we are never told of the holistic narratives of the original allegory and their philosophical dimension in Brook’s version, as he practiced omission. This is the problem of Aristotelian linearity (or one-dimensional narrative arcs) that I choose to depart from in my creative work, as I discuss further in chapter four.

However, Brook’s linearity, omission, reduction, or refinement of some allegories does not mean he failed to convey any insights into cultural difference via the borrowed images. His linearity of the plot development is inescapable because he conveys allegories to Western theatre, that is based on linearity, as well as Western audiences who are not familiar with the epic. Brook (1987) believes:

Art means celebrating the most refined possibilities of every element, and art means extracting the essence from every detail so that the detail can reveal itself as a meaningful part of an inseparable whole. (p. 161)

Brook is not interested with the epic text per se but with its moments of theatrical effectiveness. His model is that of William Shakespeare, whom Brook considers “a great rewriter” who “hardly ever invented a plot” (Williams, 1991, p. 57). He follows the Shakespearian model of borrowing old stories and reconfiguring them uniquely. Both Brook and Shakespeare utilise the Elizabethan theatre, Brook (1968) argues, to hybridise between ‘high’ and ‘popular’ art and themes as seen in *The Mahabharata*’s comic episodes. My creative work *Aragoze Trilogy* invests in bringing high and popular art and themes together, following Bakhtin’s Carnavalesque,<sup>65</sup> but does not only rely on curated or found materials in which the playwright functions as a compiler, adaptor, or describer but also on original materials in which the playwright functions as a creator. My trilogy borrows and rewrites across cultures, but it also creates. I discuss this further in chapter four. To this point, I believe the goal of interculturalism is this synthesis between different elements to break with convention, which then creates a space for the emergence of new forms and possibilities in the space that is ‘neither’ and ‘both’ (or ‘none’ and ‘many’).

However, Brook’s intercultural presentation and borrowing source materials from different cultures has been problematic. It seems impossible to believe that learning from other non-Western cultures did not take place along with the expansion policies, human traffic and goods exchanges, other critics argue. Bharucha and many scholars of New Interculturalism, for example, read Brook’s intercultural endeavour and movement with suspicious eyes as it ignores serious issues such as imperialism, colonialism, and eurocentrism. Bharucha accuses Brook’s *Mahabharata* of neo-colonial cultural piracy. In his book, Bharucha (1993) argues:

Peter Brook’s *Mahabharata* exemplifies one of the most blatant (and accomplished) appropriations of Indian culture in recent years... he does not merely take our commodities and textiles and transform them into costumes and props. He has taken

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<sup>65</sup> I use carnival or carnivalesque to refer to the synthesis of weird illogical abrupt performances that overturn the norms or the expectations. For example, a sudden shift from professionalism to profanity or vulgarness is a sort of carnival performance that aims to disrupt the receiver and make her question her own perceptions.

one of our most significant texts and decontextualised it from its history in order to 'sell' it to audiences in the west (p. 68).

The fundamental point of disagreement between Brook and Bharucha is the starting premises of their arguments and approaches. Brook believes that art should not be made submissive to the demands of critics, theorists, and politics. He looks up elements from the epic that serve his own artistic ambitions. To a point, I agree with Brook that we, artists, should have the freedom to pick, choose, and then shape our new creation as our eyes see. Otherwise, we are stripped of the free will of choice and the ability to subvert the normal by flipping it within our work, as discussed in my authorial background. Arguably, confiscating an artist's right to choose and create is just as dangerous as colonisation. Especially, Brook admits that he refers to rituals and myths as universal narratives or living quality that may revive the souls of a broader spectrum of audiences across the Western sphere and across the world. It is human nature to see things differently. From this perspective, I see theatre as an astrolabe and kaleidoscope through which everyone can see performed materials in multidirectional ways. The universality proposed by Brook can be seen simultaneously both as reductive and as tremendous, in its scope of navigation of different human experiences or celebration of the universal quality of human experience. I would hope that my work might speak at different points to all kinds of different audiences—although I also hope to avoid some aspects of reductionism by departing from linearity in my work. Maria Shevtsova argues that *The Mahabharata* can be used either for “personal inspiration and edification, spiritual or secular” or for critically considering “the great public issues of our time” (in Williams, 1991, pp. 216-217). His artistic intervention or filtration of vast created material of Indian culture, probably, seeks to reduce cultural confusion although I prefer to define intercultural theatre as a site of disruption rather than a site of harmony - as discussed elsewhere. The heart of interculturalism is the struggle of different cultures not against each other to create this binary

matrix of power, but to reconstruct a dialogue to foster each other's differences. Differences mean we exist to learn.

However, Bharucha's criticism of Brook is entirely valid from a postcolonial perspective. I cannot ignore the nature of Bharucha's objection to Brook's mode of interculturalism.

Bharucha's objection raises awareness of contemporary issues of cultural representation, cultural piracy, neo-imperialism, voicelessness, and ownership of culture. The imperial efforts of stealing colonies or culturally marginalised groups were noticeably clear in the colonisation period during 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century; Britain's museums confirm the nature of British colonisation and neo-imperialism that falls into absolute dualism of "anthropologist / primitive, writing / ritual, subject / object, observer / observed", as Julie Stone Peters (1995, pp. 202-203) argues. Unlike Brook and more like Bharucha, I prefer to depart from linearity and models of intercultural theatre of harmony that try to unify. Interculturalism in my playwriting is about differences impregnated with harmony and disharmony; it should unsettle rather than comfort the convention. I agree with Schechner that any enterprise that aims to create a universal theatre theory or model proves always to be insufficient. This is also stressed in my discussion about trauma studies theory and history of Arab theatre in chapter two.

However, I would still take issue with both Brook's and Bharucha's committed readings of intercultural exchange; Brook defines it as merely a pure universal creative act to harmonise (or romanticise) the meeting between 'two' non-Western and Western cultures; Bharucha refers Brook's intercultural experience to an absolute cultural piracy or a form of theft of cultural traditions or artifacts of colonised cultures. I discuss below, along with scholars of New Interculturalism, that intercultural exchanges should move beyond binarisation processes toward alternatives, abundancy, multimodality, plurality, multidirectionality, and heteroglossia (or the spectrum of many voices).

Interculturalism could be seen as a discursive movement in contemporary theatre that has its potential standards and criteria. There are some scholars who attempt to design models, sets of rules, or templates to assess and evaluate intercultural projects. Pavis, for example, formulated the 'hourglass' model to refer to or describe any intercultural exchange or collision process. He describes:

In the upper bowl is the foreign culture, the source culture, which is more or less codified and solidified in diverse anthropological, sociocultural or artistic modelizations. In order to reach us, this culture must pass through a narrow neck. If the grains of culture or their conglomerate are sufficiently fine, they will flow through without any trouble, however slowly, into the lower bowl, that of the target culture, from which point we observe this slow flow. The grains will rearrange themselves in a way which appears random, but which is partly regulated by their passage through some dozen filters put in place by the target culture and the observer. (Pavis, 1992, p. 4)

Pavis's hourglass is one of the key metaphors to describe the intercultural exchange between the target and source cultures, but it might be insufficient as it describes a one-way flow. His metaphor would be more compelling and productive if he modelled mutual bilateral or multilateral relationships. Pavis's description of the exchange sums up his ultimate goal of the hourglass, which is to "compare, to evaluate, and set up a dialogue between source and target cultures" (1992, p. 17). His hourglass received criticism from Bharucha (1993) who believes that it empties the source culture and fills the target culture. Bharucha suggests interculturalism as a "back-and-forth movement" between two cultures (p. 244). Lo and Gilbert (2002) agree with Bharucha's orientation as they consider both 'source' and 'target' cultures as 'partners' in "considered cultural resources" (p. 44).

### **New Interculturalism**

I find the search for 'definite' approaches or models for interpreting and evaluating intercultural encounters important but confining. It restricts us within certain limits of space (as we are only comparing two locations of culture), scope (as we move either one way or



two ways), and time zone (as we observe a uniform standard of colonial and postcolonial historical periods). The restriction of interculturalism's evolution could limit understanding, creativity, possibilities of (re)negotiation and lose, then, many intercultural potentials.

Therefore, I suggest moving away from monologism or monochromatism to a more pluralist approach through a key metaphor - the kaleidoscope. A kaleidoscopic vision breaks up with all the above models of 'seeing' from vantage points within particular cultures encountering one another to move toward processes of multilateralism. Or, as Leo Cabranes-Grant (2016) calls it "intercultural scenarios" (p. 16) which entail processes driven by collaborative multimodal and multi-partner combinations.

Cabranes-Grant is not alone but part of a new turn called New Interculturalism that reworks the parent philosophical tenets of interculturalism. Knowles (2010) sets out the vision of this new movement and argues that intercultural theatre is no longer a comparison of cultural values to evaluate who is high and low. Instead, he observes that intercultural theatre becomes a dynamic performative and ecological rather than egoistic site for continuous (re)negotiation of cultural differences to reconstruct "individual and community identities and subject positions" relying on performativity as a tool of transformation and becoming (p. 79). New Interculturalism does not rely on generalisation, isolationism, or protectionism to confine us to the points of view of earlier intercultural critics but explores the development of current intercultural productions and performances using models of transformation.

One of the key engines of the new intercultural turn is Phillip Zarrilli, T.- Sasitharan, and Anuradha Kapur's (2016) special issue of *Theatre, Dance and Performance*. The authors introduce interculturalism by examining the terms and conditions of specific individual works and actors. They study "the body-to-body, technique-to-technique, concept-to-concept process that characterizes studio-based exchanges" and consider the "dynamics of power operative in each specific context" (p. 335). They appreciate the making processes including

characterisation and complexities of performers' cultural affiliations. In my trilogy, I work on the process of characterisation using two major strategies of multivocality and polyvocality, stemming from Bakhtin's sense of heteroglossia and dialogism, to add more complexities that can help audiences and performers alike to view performers as unpredictable or variable - in a permanently changing manner. My characters are 'moving targets' created afresh from moment to moment and performance to performance.

New interculturalism does not follow the classical trend that associates theatre with rehearsals or performances inside the theatre box. Instead, this new trend also invests in outer spaces; it acknowledges public gatherings, aisles, coffee shops, institutions, or cities. Knowles's Canadian city of Toronto is a key example of new interculturalism, in which he creates a "performance ecology" through which interaction is not limited to performer and audiences inside a theatre building but criticising the outer performances of culture such as Canadian government policies of multiculturalism, immigration, and other social spheres from a specific performer or ethnic theatre company's perspective.

New interculturalism does not offer a committed reading or static viewing to culture but introduces culture as a living, evolving process or 'becoming', as Cabranes-Grant describes. It can be permanently viewed from different angles and standpoints. In this way, my concept of a kaleidoscopic, heteroglossic structure of the trilogy becomes disruptive to classic rigid binaries of East/West, right/wrong, Arab/non-Arab, colonial/postcolonial, or high/popular. We can offer a committed view of a culture, but we do not have the right to own a culture, as "cultures are constantly migrating and moving" and constitute "a processual drive that remains open to unexpected turns and contingencies" (Cabranes-Grant, 2016, p. 9). I believe a culture or one language by itself is already heteroglossic or heterogeneous; the individuals within New Zealand or Jordanian cultures are different sources of codifications. However, this does not mean I aim to create 'transcultural theatre' to provoke a universal human

condition, through the lens of postmodern relativism, or to unify the world as heterogeneous. Instead, I mean to contest differences to view different social or global issues from different angles and positions so that we can learn anew and ethically evolve.

My interculturalism connotes “a conceptual, processual, embodied lived condition driven by” my “own multiple affiliations to cultures, nations, and faiths” (Mitra, 2015, p. 15). I brought cultural elements and practices from Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, the Americas, and New Zealand to implement my creative work *Aragoze Trilogy*. My selections of theories, concepts, comments, perspectives, symbols, theatres, and techniques are broad and wide; this freedom of choice unleashes my imagination and creativity. Theatre is a site for creative ideas to collide and does not have to reflect or endorse a particular culture or a belief. In fact, it counteracts the familiar and so should always be intercultural theatre, I argue in this thesis.

### **Situating *Aragoze Trilogy***

My positionalities cohere with my research inquiries into post-linear literature, new hybrid playwriting strategies, and new intercultural theatre enterprises as sites of producing new possibilities. My practice is a response to the work and goals of the intercultural performance theory of Bharucha, Chaudhuri, Chin, Knowles, and other collective and collaborative works that I can describe as ‘disruptive’ to the monolithic hierarchical establishment.

My work *Aragoze Trilogy* is a ‘disruptive’ new intercultural performance that challenges protectionist bourgeois or classical theatre’s monologic thinking. This *intracultural* project is “designed to displace audiences rather than affirm their geocultural positionings” (Knowles, 2010, p. 31) and to “produce the experience of difference” (Chaudhuri, 1991, p. 196) rather than to uphold “a static and unchanging” (Bharucha, 2000, p. 9) single consciousness that

washes off cultural differences within the political borders of a country for the sake of defining a narrow-minded nationalistic state culture. My practice brings, *strategically* rather than only *aesthetically*, different theatres, politics, and cultural elements together to disrupt “the conventional view that the theatre generated in a given country is an expression of its culture” (Wirth, 1989, p. 177). Part of this intercultural theatre is also *intracultural*—I have a goal to acknowledge diverse differences *within* cultures that brag about their unity. My work destabilises the politics of whatever is called cultural or national unity or universal cohesiveness.

My playwriting practice is a response to these calls<sup>66</sup> for a new model of intercultural performance and playwriting that aims to introduce ‘theatrical syncretism’ (Balme, 1999, p. 1) to produce a difference, as Balme (1999) defines in his introduction to *Decolonising the Stage: Theatrical Syncretism and Post-Colonial*. I draw on Balme’s concept of syncretism, which is related to the idea of hybridity, used by Homi Bhabha in *The Location of Culture*, in which Bhabha (1994) argues that “the interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybrid that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy” (p. 5). Balme’s syncretism directly addresses calls to create new forms of theatre, and Bhabha’s hybridity addresses politics of identities. Together, they inform the work of interculturalism or cultural hybridity of my creative work *Aragoze Trilogy*, which emerges from where two or more different cultural elements overlap and interweave, or from the ‘liminal space’. In my work, I offer many examples of ‘in-between’ identities such as *Aragoze*, *Messenger*, and other transformative creatures that waver between different cultural and linguistic identifications.

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<sup>66</sup> E.g., Rustom Bharucha’s *Theatre and the World* (1993) and *The Politics of Cultural Practice* (2000); Christopher Balme’s *Decolonizing the Stage* (1999); Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o’s *Decolonising the Mind* (1986); Julie Holledge and Joanne Tompkins’ *Women’s Intercultural Performance* (2000); and Jacqueline Lo and Helen Gilbert’s ‘Toward a Topography of Cross-Cultural Theatre Praxis’ (2002).

Drawing on an intercultural theatre performance theory lens, I blend, conflate, and juxtapose dramatic elements, multiple sources, and genres, in my playwriting. My goal is to create a different model of non-dichotomous narrative and an alternative ‘third’ space for negotiating differences and social formations. My exercise of double criticism applied to theatre histories in the Arab worlds and Jordan as a case, in the following pages, does not mean to relegate or promote any of the two parts of those rational bipolarisations but to introduce fresh insights, in the end, to expand the debate by highlighting the importance and usefulness of the evolving intercultural theatre enterprises such as *Aragoze Trilogy*. This is, as Webb and Brien (2011, p. 195) argue, probably the point of creative writing as research - not to find ‘right’ answers but to ask new questions in new ways:

Research in creative writing does not, then, have a teleological orientation as its aim; creative writers cannot ‘advance’, as science can advance; we can rarely ‘prove’ or demonstrate that our findings are correct. But we can interrogate our own field, offer new ways of seeing and, in doing so, contribute some interesting and perhaps provocative facts to the knowledge community. By defining, reflecting, intuiting, paying attention, and experimenting ... it is possible to make an original contribution to knowledge.

Through creative research in the form of intercultural playwriting, I do not feel shy to address different topics that might be considered *taboo* to many essentialist or conservative playwrights around the world. My expression of hybridity requires intercultural theatre as it inspires me with this immense sense of freedom and provides open-minded non-binary spaces for my characters’ overlapping voices to meet and then challenge those ethnic assumptions and reform the hierarchical narratives that impact my changing life. I argue that such intercultural theatre could intensively coexist with our historical stories and canons of theatre to keep this art ‘alive’ as a site of solidarity through negotiation.

## Conclusions

Throughout this thesis, my personal, professional, and intellectual positionalities have led me to diverge from traditional research inquiries and challenge monochromatic and monologic critical approaches. First, I deconstructed the mythification of the Arab Mind. Second, I contested the classical cultural trauma theories' causation approach. Third, I challenged the monologic bipolarisation between essentialist enterprises of *modernising* (blind-appropriation) and nationalising (i.e., authentic) theatre in the Arab world. I diverged from a win-lose approach to interculturalism and avoided an epistemic closure<sup>67</sup> that excludes differences and hybrid identities. Instead, I propose both in theory and in practice, dialogic intercultural theatre as a form of intersectionality that can converse with the above critical approaches to learn anew and evolve ethically.

Through both the critical and creative portions of this research, I take issue with the 'mythification' of a universal Arab mind, psyche, and society. From a postcolonial perspective, I argue that such monologic essentialism reduces the mass of *differences*, complexities, multiplicities, and memories in an attempt to *omit* or decontextualise hybrid identities to serve a hegemonic culture, truth, status and power. I creatively contest this destructive practice through playwriting *Aragoze Trilogy*, a hybrid play that sidesteps this monolithic reductionist labellisation.

My critical reading of this essentialist concept of the Arab Mind also intersects with my criticism of classical cultural trauma theories' single-event or cause-effect models of trauma. Their approaches cannot explain the trans-historical, trans-generational, or trans-national complexities of insidious traumas as embodied in my creative work *Aragoze Trilogy*. I transcend the one-dimensional monologic cause-effect readings and constructions of

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<sup>67</sup> I use the term epistemic closure to refer to the seemingly complete knowledge or conceptual premise of a phenomenon through empirical evidence that does not allow any new possibilities, inquiries, or meanings.

characterisation, and I then present a model of circular structure and amorphous, polyvocal characterisation, in my playwriting, that ruptures the established subject and draws on concepts of hybridity, dialogism, multi-directional memory, trans-historicity, fluidity and multiplicity.

In *Aragoze Trilogy*, I also take issue creatively and critically with the ongoing bipolarisation among essentialist enterprises of ethnicising or nationalising theatre as well as the historical appropriation of Western models as the only path for modernity. From postmodern and intercultural perspectives, *Aragoze Trilogy* is an intercultural performance that conflates and juxtaposes rhythms, movements, stage directions, characters, dialogues, and other dramatic devices from the Arab worlds, Asia, India, Americas, Europe, Africa, Australia, and New Zealand. However, I still reject this mythification of the potential for universal unity or a perfect model of intercultural exchange. My work draws elements from Storytelling Theatre, *Al-halqa* theatre, epic theatre, shadow theatre, absurd theatre, and theatre of rituals such as *Zar*, *Ta'zyia*, and *Latmyia* to particularise cultural specificity, learn anew and ethically evolve.

Concepts of monologism and dialogism are integral parts of my understanding of the intercultural theatre debate, discussed above, or the stereotypes discussed in chapter two. My applications of those two concepts stem from Bakhtin's understanding of life. In his *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (Bakhtin & Emerson, 1984) he states that life "by its very nature is dialogic. To live means to participate in dialogue: to ask questions, to heed, to respond, to agree and so forth" (p. 293). Intercultural theatre, in my sense of Bakhtin's definition of life, should also be dialogic. It should encourage us to question rather than to answer. It should provoke us to hold our breathe rather than releasing it. It should destabilise our inherent knowledge rather than confirm our biases and assumptions to us.

Intercultural theatre should be dialogic. It should share playwrights' authority with the audience; provide a space for the audience's voices of excitement while they learn about their ignorance of others and encourage their voices of despair while they recognise their moral imperfection. Those voices are valuable opinions in every dialogic theatre. My creative work *Aragoze Trilogy* aims to practice such exploratory conversations, but not using a 'right or wrong', 'winning or losing' approach found in the traditional 'protagonist and antagonist' structures of Aristotle. For instance, the trilogy's miniature celebrating different nations' concepts of founding fathers as equally flawed holds all our ignorance and imperfection before our eyes. We dance it and sing it. It becomes like a carnival, which I borrow from Bakhtin.

My use of the carnivalesque is rooted in Bakhtinian ideas of decrowning authority or convention in the Middle Ages. Intercultural theatre can embrace the carnival, which means to stage atypical or weird events that completely walk against the mainstream or the monologic or routine of daily life. The purpose is to create a state of festive confusion by subverting any sense of bowing to convention, tradition, authorities, classes of power or sources of 'pure truths'.

Authority is decrowned, we became aware of the laughing side of things, apart from fear, and there is a profound and collective engagement with alternative truths to the officious, the convention, and the tradition – e.g., to see such monolithic concepts as death or religion as serious as well as humorous and open to parody (Sullivan, Smith, & Matusov, 2009, p. 29).

My sense of interculturalism as a term includes this Bakhtinian interpretation of carnivalesque hybridisation. It is a hybridity of different forms that shape a carnival of weird events that puts an end to principles of stability (or conventions) and opens us towards a change or a (re)birth. In Bakhtin's words, "the end must contain the potentialities of the new beginning, just as death leads a new birth" (Bakhtin, 1968 p. 283). From the carnivals of



Bakhtin, I understand openness to different cultural elements as a way to keep mouths and minds opened, either because of the surprise-factor or the acknowledgment of abundance of ideas and interpretations across cultures. My hybrid characters such as Aragoze are not identifiable in any static conventional roles. Aragoze is continually destructive as he decrowns the norm as well as continually constructive as he rebuilds anew, weaving elements from culture to culture in order to rework their elements in his own eyes to diminish all unwavering identities.

My study of intercultural debates shows that the dialogic carnivals of Bakhtin can be remarkably effective as a theoretical framework for a modern intercultural theatre. Many elements of his dialogism such as heteroglossia, carnival, and polyphony can diversify our means of representation while we imagine, write, or talk about different issues such as interculturalism, nationalism, racism, or globalisation.

Bakhtin believes that “a monologically understood world is an objectified world, a world corresponding to a single and unified authorial consciousness reducing complexity to a single ideological denominator” (Hays, 2008, p. 70). Therefore, my hybrid work is contrary to a theory of an “author’s aggressive self-assertion” (Bakhtin & Emerson, 1984, p. 7); my trilogy’s characters are not the agents or messengers for my voice, as I state in the very beginning of my trilogy. I find it difficult to reduce their personalities and motivations into one single representation or voice as they are created with different plural means of representation and consciousnesses (i.e., they are examples of polyphony).

This perception has challenged me while I was navigating a group of works, particularly postcolonial or euro-centric studies, that create a ‘unified authorial’ world of colonial and postcolonial, white and black, upper and lower—the binaries go on. Binary opposition thinking is itself an aggressive self-assertion or monologism that draws our attention to one

consciousness or view. In a Bakhtinian sense, “dialogism is the realisation that [e]verything means, is understood, as a part of a greater whole—there is constant interaction between meanings, all of which have the potential of conditioning others” (Bakhtin & Emerson, 1984, p. 185). Therefore, I stripped my trilogy of the conventional theatrical meanings of durational time and designated space, as they are usually hierarchically and monologically understood as an entity with two limits—beginning and ending. My dialogic trilogy wavers multi-directionally between past, future, and present; it deconstructs time and spaces by conflating figures, concepts, beliefs, or symbols from different places and times to interact not only among themselves but with the larger scope of life and worlds. They are freed from essential meanings. For example, the Messenger personality, in the trilogy, has no fixed meaning. She is always-already wise, imprudent, serious, flippant, vague, simple, traditional, innovative, high, low, and neither-high-nor-low. The trilogy’s aim, as Webb and Brien (2011) suggest is in fact the *raison d’etre* of all creative-writing-as-research, is not to create an argument, but to create a world—a world that “rejects the position that the world is finally knowable, that data is fully testable, that ‘truth’ can be uncovered, and that there is a stable source of knowledge” (Webb & Brien, 2011, p. 193).

Monologic discourses in intercultural theatre or any other field such as trauma studies and the history of Arab theatre can emerge when universality does not give the stage to other sorts of truth statements. For Bakhtin, who lived under Stalinist Russia, authorities (mainly religious or governmental) were established as the trusty source of pure truth and anything else said, was positioned as rebelling against this single authorial consciousness. Bakhtin suggests dialogism using different speech genres such as satire, parody, or laughter offers the capability to make different voices speak and exist in the world they were trapped in. In fact, the smallest linguistic code carries different meanings according to the changing position of this code inside our heteroglossic ecology. Through playwriting experiments with

heteroglossia, hybrid language, fluid characterisation, and unfixed dramatic structure, I hoped to begin to explore Rana Esfandiary's questions (2021, p. 9) as to "How might the representation of the 'Other' on our stages and in our classrooms begin the process of decolonizing our syllabi and production seasons? And, how is it possible to narrate the story of the 'Other' without reiterating the stereotypes attached to the so-called Middle East region and its citizens?" In a dialogic theatrical world, there is always abundant space for (re)negotiating our existentiality, location of cultures, and social interactions. In the next chapter I unpack these techniques and their intentions in my creative practice.

## Chapter 4: Playwriting Migration: Dialogic Creative Strategies and Practices

This practice-based, creative writing thesis consists of a trilogy of original playscripts - *Aragoze Trilogy* - and four chapters that frame and contextualise the creative work. Following on from and applying key concepts from the first three critical chapters, this fourth chapter offers a craft exposition that explains and interrogates the creative strategies and practices used in the creative work, to provide an in-depth analysis and justification of the plays themselves (*Aragoze in a Time of Mobility*, *Aragoze in a Time of Corona*, and *Aragoze in a Time of Revolution*).

I will start with a summary of each play, what it covers, and its major stylistic influences. This chapter will then cover the trilogy's main dramaturgical elements, techniques, and conventions including anti-narrative structure, characterisation, use of language, use of audience interaction techniques, use of humour, and use of historical figures. In each section, I will explain what dramaturgical techniques, as a migrant playwright and artist, I chose to use and why. I will unpack how different traditions and new, original techniques are combined to construct an interculturally multivocal and pluralist *Aragoze Trilogy*. Throughout the chapter, I include examples from the trilogy itself to illustrate how that unfolds in practice.

### **The creative work: A walk-in kaleidoscopic experience (thus non-linear)**

A kaleidoscope tumbles many things together and shifts them and so does the trilogy. In my playwriting, I deploy an original dramaturgy, established in its core concept of migration, hybridity, kaleidoscopic analysis, dialogism, inbetweenness, and multidirectional transcultural memory. I apply this *logic*, in its broad meaning, to every dramaturgical element in my plays such as structure, characterisation, use of language, and use of audience

interaction, for example, to capture intercultural identities, individuals, shifting alliances, and differences.

The trilogy is a kaleidoscope in both form and content. Its form features variant theatrical techniques, and its content conflates and juxtaposes different situations, characters, figures, mythical elements, and events from different histories. In this walk-in kaleidoscopic theatre, one can experience migrant playwriting's multivocalities (multilingual dialogues and speech genres), code-switching, translation, intermingling of languages, and dark and ironic humour, that opens the themes of each play for interpretation. Through this kaleidoscope, one can notice the unusual combination of theatrical elements, selected from a wide range of theatrical norms (such as Boal, Khayal Al-Zill, and Brecht), widely understood as incompatible yet here interwoven and juxtaposed. I hybridise different historical and cultural styles and meanings, genres (serious and comic, low-toned with high, folkloric proverb and tales with literary quotes and allusions, eastern with western traditions, children's songs with scenario sketches), as I will discuss below. Also, there are intentional shifts from fine elocution to colloquial diction, from purely formal oration to profanities, from animal to human exhibitions of odd traits and physical characteristics, from the physical to the metaphysical realms. Like a kaleidoscope's ever-changing fractured elements, my scripts of the trilogy live in dialogic clash.

Given this generalised lead-in, I will now enter each play's world, space, and time with fresh eyes as a traveller figure who walks in this kaleidoscopic theatre and performance in-between the Miniatures and Bells, bearing in mind the trilogy is not plot-oriented. My trilogy is fundamentally a dramaturgical composition of non sequiturs. Episodes can be selected at will, shuffled, and rearranged, because they do not lead to something that must logically follow from the previous dialogue, statement, or episodes, but resist causality. Thus, I invite productions to break-up with my initial representation of the plays, below, as there are

abundant ways to create representations and, thus, interpretations. Like the fractal pieces in the kaleidoscope, each production can offer its own just-reborn, migratory, or unusual representations and interpretations that look freshly beautiful and innovative and respond to the added complexities of the time, place, and audiences of each staging. However, for the purposes of this thesis, I should provide a brief summary of what each play in its current configuration covers, followed by a discussion on the dramaturgical elements as invested in the current script.

### **Aragoze in a Time of Mobility**

The play that is (because something has to be) presented first, is called *Aragoze in a Time of Mobility*. It is set on a floating display of pilgrimage circulating around the Black Rock in Mecca at a time of mobility. In Bell 1 to Bell 2, Nasnas, an ancient mythical creature, and Aragoze, the trickster/imposter, tell the audience about a migrant called Ammar, and his diasporic migration experiences and make references to different historical and contemporary events that include themes of nationalism, migration, and dislocation. They discuss themes that scatter them all (Nasna, Aragoze, and Ammar), silence their historical roots, dislocate their inbetween positionality, control their bodies, and confiscate their rights to different voices (multivocalities). Each of these events carries a theme punctuated or marked by Bells that ring between them to enhance a sense of mobility as a main characteristic of migration and to create interruptions and shifts and thus break linearity of narrative. From the beginning, Nasnas and Aragoze break the fourth wall and direct their speech to the audience, carrying a disclaimer that the author is only an observer and is not in charge of their coming revelations.

In Bells 3-4, the storyteller Hakawati, and Ghoul, an ancient transformative mythical Jinni, target whatever is meant to be “the inevitable truth”. Hakawati appears to create a potential

atmosphere for a linear narrative, but I intentionally disrupt it through the beats or what I call Bells (discussed in the coming sections). Ghoul is an internal/external voice that annoyingly whispers to Hakawati. They have a dialogue, hybridising comedy and terror to create deliberate discomfort about Aragoze's migration. They tackle issues of minority identity, cleansing by the mainstream, how time and distance are different from a migrant perspective, and tragedies faced such as by asylum seekers and the Christchurch mosque shooting victims. In Miniature 2, Messenger speaks jumbled French language and French with an English accent. She delivers different migrants' seriocomic hyperboles and pictorial expressions, reflected in actions on the shadow screen.

In Bell 5, a parade of Eve-Adam and Jinn troupes performs al-halqa performances; performers cross the borders of the main stage to join the audience. Messenger, as the announcer, and Nasnas enter the shadow stage for an announcement. Messenger sits in a yoga style and makes announcements in broken Indian language and English with an English accent. Messenger carries a small hand-drum, beating it between sentences. They all are set to force a migration experience on the audience rather than give them the satisfaction of a narrative. Here, the audience experiences and participates in a parade of conflicting human behaviours amid multiple jumbled examples of ever-present, systematic violence. In Miniature 3, Messenger asks the audience not to perform this parade at home and transforms the atmosphere into comic hyperbole.

Ghoul is morphing into different authority figures on both stages, shadow and visible. In the shadow stage, Ghoul is an ancient mythical creature. On the visible stage, Ghoul's morphism is marked by Bells, enabling a sense of surreal dream-likeness. In Bells 6-10, Ghoul turns into Aragoze's beloved, on stage, wearing lipstick and a blond wig. The images reflect a migrant's extravagant experiences of sexuality in a comic way. Aragoze's sexual thoughts, feelings, words, and attractions turn out to be a technique to run away from love's authority.

Ghoul turns into a tax collector, a policeman, and a sex-toy diplomat customer, whose demands tighten Aragoze's life. In Miniature 4, Messenger enters to transform the atmosphere into more comic hyperboles.

In Bells 11-12, Aragoze, Ghoul, Eve-Adam, and troupes of Jinns tackle issues of bullying, providing a thematic focus, reflected also through expressionist images of students making jokes about Aragoze. This provides a strong sense of disorientation for migrant students trying to function in-between alien systems that try to create a sense of doubt about their own abilities, but Aragoze resists by leaving the stage and making the event's ending open to future interpretation. Messenger is set always to start miniatures. She starts Miniature 5 and tries to provoke laughter with her comic hyperboles.

Bell 13 opens with a spotlight off-stage on Ghoul interviewing the audience who can read their lines from placards. Background national and religious songs are played. Aragoze marches. Tanin and Al-Miraj, puppets of ancient mythical creatures, observe and comment on the event and its relatedness to today's international politics. This event reflects on different issues some migrants face such as honor-killings, dignity, and jealousy and asks for the audience's intervention (if they would). Ghoul is a version of the joker (as Boal named such a figure when used in his theatre forms) who mediates between the events and the audience.

Hakawati and Ghoul work together with the audience learning how to perform a sufi whirling dance. This whirling device implies mobility or migration and the exchange of night and day, bad and good, hardship and ease. It provides a sense of everlasting change through events and circumstances. It references that we are part of a larger swirling movement of life rather than being locked into a binary or three-dimensional world. It implies that there are more levels to the drama than just the stage and shadow worlds and urges the audience to go out-beyond and



cross their own borders to discover anew. This is intentionally followed by Messenger's hyperbole to migrate into a different mood and atmosphere and interrupt the narrative.

Comparisons are made between the empires and emperors of past and the present, in Bells 14 to 16. Nasnas narrates a fight between Alexander the Great (called Alex) and Aragoze, who, in Bells 1 to 21, dethrones and decries religious and intellectual authorities, indicating the destructiveness and pointlessness of human politics and institutions throughout world history.

### **Aragoze in a time of Corona**

The play that is presented next, *Aragoze in a time of Corona*, is set on a floating display of a zoomed-in mosquito face, with hundreds of glittering lenses. It is set at a time of Corona pandemic and climate change. A shadow screen is set for display. As with other events in this trilogy, this play shifts between shadow play and an absurdist theatre setting. The shadow stage has a simple source of light reflecting the shadows of humans, masks, and puppets. The shadow screen displays a cursed tree; its branches carry fruits shaped like devils' heads. The atmosphere is dark. Low sounds of cockroaches and sawing insects intersect with each other.

Bell 22 starts with religious iconography reflecting a heated dialogue between Voiceover 1 and Voiceover 2 about creating inheritors (i.e., Eve-Adam and Jinn) on Earth and their (the inheritors') paradoxical existential behaviours. The dialogue is either/or and is both corruptive and reformist. This iconographic hot topic is followed by a parade of animals that reflects human and animal behaviour and hierarchies. The play transmigrates us to another iconographic figure, the Virgin Mary, as migrant, alluding that she fought, like other migrants such as Aragoze, against invasive and abusive social behaviours that consume migrants. Both Aragoze and Mary strive to deconstruct such behaviour, reflected in Bells 23-24, through their poetic dialogue on the weight of a word. In Bell 25, the mood becomes satirically cannibalistic when the Chef appears on stage as a television presenter for a cooking show. At

this timeless and dislocated show, the movement of action expressed in space and time accelerates with the employment of a grotesque and surreal form of imagery of the Chef character that inflicts physical harm to Aragoze as if kneading him. Here, the event reflects on institutional conditioning of migrants. Corona and Worms approach Aragoze to engage with his body, reflecting on the terror of pandemics, natural disasters (earthquakes and floods) that cause climate change migration. In Bell 25, the juxtaposition of human and non-human animals that began this play returns with the dialogue between Ghoul and Hakawati about power relations, the intelligence of animals, and public punishment. The play reflects our world's crises that Aragoze, Tannin, and other non-human animals and human characters witness during their migrations, and shows them seeking shelter from different social illnesses and from merciless materialism.

### **Aragoze in a Time of Revolution**

The play, *Aragoze in a Time of Revolution*, is set on a floating display of black holes, with focus-videos of a potter and clay. It is set in a time of revolution. Miniature 1, like other previous miniatures, starts with Messenger's comic hyperboles, this time that take us to different cultural visuals and statements that set up a metaphor of boiling blood. Aragoze migrates to meet with different historical figures such as Al-Ma'arri, Homer with a lute, and John Milton with a cross, and creates a sophisticated didactic dialogue with them on different philosophical themes such as literal and metaphorical blindnesses that afflict different monological cultures and governing institutional systems. Arab belly dancers occupy the shadow stage to reflect resistance to the sexism and classical misogynistic views on women introduced by John Milton and Homer. Al-Ma'arri represents leftist views on rationality, veganism, abortion, and deity, in Bells 32-33.

Aragoze and Mexican Tetra, a puppet, review Milton, Homer, and Al-Ma'arri's views on physical and metaphorical blindness and how it could lead to revolutions. Frantz Fanon enters the shadow theatre to address the audience as narrator of Aragoze's preparation for a revolution against colonial powers and against his own authoritarian self. Sounds of crowds cheering and marching are heard as Eve-Adam and Jinn march across the shadow stage carrying penises and wombs. Their eyes are wide open. They sing lines about the United Nations, and Benjamin Franklin's and Ibn Taimia's views on martyrdom, and call for a change, in Bell 34. Ironically, Aragoze, Eve-Adam and Jinn oppose those views, in Bell 35, but march for a revolution anyway and become an existential threat to someone else, moving within a power matrix from victim to perpetrator. Ghoul and Hakawati become mediators and ask the audience to read aloud or engage with a biased dialogue where they (the audience) can feel or experience complicity in a time of revolution, where different views and voices on women's leadership, LGBTQIA+ rights, and feminism are posed against each other. In Miniature 13, Messenger delivers humorous hyperbole and visuals, reflected on the shadow screen. Aragoze, Eve-Adam, and Jinn trade stories from east and west on different issues such as fertility and reproduction, the cycle of life, and tribalism, aligning sex and literature with power.

## **Major Stylistic Influences**

### **Anti-narrative Structure: Kaleidoscopic**

My anti-narrative approach has some similarities with strategies that feminist theatre theorists such as Sue-Ellen Case and Suzan-Lori Parks have also used or identified in work that resists the kinds of discursive closure exemplified by masculinist, monologic, linear narratives. Case (2014, p. 127) proposes a "new poetics" that creates a "nebulous zone" on stage in which female subjectivity is "not trapped within the sado-machochistic [sic] dynamics of traditional

narrative or within the traditional representation of ... a character” as protagonist or antagonist, but “plays freely across the stage in sounds, characters, intersections of fantasy and reality” and metatheatrical devices such as a “voice of the play” (Case, 2014, p. 126). New poetics is, Case argues, “a blend of activism and theoretical practice” (2014, p. 132). Parks likewise endorses non-linear structure as “a sort of bulwark against an insidious, tame-looking, schmaltz-laden mode of expression that threatens to cover us all, like Vesuvius, in our sleep” (1995, p. 5). At the same time, Parks also acknowledges that “I don’t explode the form because I find traditional plays ‘boring’ - I don’t really. It’s just that those structures never could accommodate the figures which take up residence inside me” (Parks, 1995, p. 6). For Parks, in a comment that resonates with me, “the form is not merely a docile passive vessel, but an active participant in the sort of play which ultimately inhabits it” (p. 6). Applying that sense of nebulous and out-of-control form to the creation of the *Aragoze Trilogy* I attempted to deconstruct power mechanisms of oppressive representation in ways similar to feminist theatre but across a broader front, also destabilising race, religion, xenophobia, and other orthodoxies.

### **Trilogy Structure**

*Aragoze Trilogy* is structured to be anti-narrative or non-linear in terms of its dramatic arc in each play or as a trilogy as a whole. For clarity, I do not use the term trilogy to emphasise linearity or logical flow, such as to say that the first play will lead to the second and to the third. But, while each play is as multifaceted as our realities, I intend to signal that the three plays are related. Purely for organisational purposes in this thesis, I numbered the plays into one, two, and three, but this current organisation of the trilogy is unlike earlier drafts and, as signalled in my stage directions, should not be seen as a prescription. I also depart from using scene and act structure as they provide a clear beginning, middle, and end of a story, as opposed to a sense of nonlinearity. The repeated units that I label ‘bells’ and ‘miniatures’

signal possible moments within consciousness, but the moments might be revisited, like memories, in any order. The summaries of the plays, in the previous section, clearly demonstrate how each play and the trilogy are anti-typical in structure and avoid exposition, rising action, and climax. Instead, I invest in what Castagno (2012) terms a ‘turns’ approach that “keeps action in the present moment” (p. 24). The action is *pending* and requires revision rather than a sequential tracking method, as my characters are engaged in a situation, language, or dialogue not determined by plot.

The use of the word trilogy to describe my work is in some ways problematic. Traditionally, a trilogy carries a sense of linear narrative such that one play leads to two and then three. However, my intention is to deconstruct this initial meaning and expand it. My trilogy means three plays that are somehow related in a nonlinear way and rotate through multiple themes rather than a single theme. In addition, as described elsewhere, Aragoze in the title of the work *Aragoze Trilogy* is an Arabic adjective borrowed from the Turkish word Karagöz, which means to outsmart the norm, and this word should be understood to describe the trilogy not just the character Aragoze. Given this context, my trilogy is an Aragoze or Karagöz that plays tricks with existing norms in its form and content.

### **Miniatures and Bells**

The numbered Miniatures and Bells, the smallest unit in the plays, work together dialogically throughout the whole trilogy. Like the small, fractured pieces of a kaleidoscope, when one holds a kaleidoscope up to the light and looks into it and shakes it up, things (i.e., shapes, colours, abstracts, or traditions) break down into pieces, but can be reborn beautifully and newly different, suggesting a larger, ever-changing metaphor, philosophy, and symbolism, each time they are viewed. Such was my intention with the miniatures and bells; they are reshuffleable to produce new visuals and redescribe the whole world each time an audience or production team looks into the possibilities of staging the trilogy.

Typically, a play or performance and associated script comprises two types of structural unit, namely, acts and scenes. They are styled to leave a clear visual separation or sequencing of one progression to another to deliver a linear narrative or story both overall and in small moments. An act consists of different scenes to establish a story or a plot procession, and each scene typically also has its own arc or causal story trajectory. However, I depart from using scene and act structure and prefer the use of miniature and bell structure. *Aragoze Trilogy* is not built according to a whole unified story plot or inevitable forward plot procession but built according to shifts marked off by beating bells and a kaleidoscopic theatre of colourful miniatures. These miniatures display a mosaic of events interrupted by visuals, sounds, and debates, showcasing revolving interests and clashing perspectives. Each miniature is built to display and redisplay the character Messenger who uses a humour device to puncture the mood after condensed polyvocal and multivocal and ever-shifting events, characters, roles, hues, and migratory tones have assailed the audience. In addition, the trilogy is numbered for organisational purposes, but this convenient organisation is not constitutional, it is not a rule that cannot be violated. *Aragoze Trilogy* is very democratic in its form and content in that I, as the author, aim to reshuffle those bells, in future drafts, to give new interpretations, and I encourage directors and productions to do the same.

It is through the clash of intercultural elements, characters, antique and modern songs, parades, folks, sounds, and hyperboles in this creative artefact, that I hope to spark a nonlinear dynamic that causes interruption and discontinues a trackable narrative throughout the plays. I wanted to create a unique theatrical environment, in this trilogy, that has no parallel. It becomes a heterogeneous third space of histories, cultures, figures, times, events, that shift the action of the plays into unexpected directions and future answers that go out beyond the linear narrative.

*Aragoze Trilogy* is not dramatic theatre. It is not a drama that involves the unfolding of linear narratives or stories ordered through chronological scenes of incidents that lead first to a crisis and end, then, to catharsis. The elements of my plays such as characters, dialogues, costumes, props, and movements are not organised in a framework of narrative to lead to a plot, nor are they meant to be included in my initial dramaturgy to consider the playscripts as a guiding principle.

*Aragoze Trilogy* offers post-dramatic theatre as a series of layered possible migration landscapes. It is not an ‘absolute’ breakup with essentialist dramatic conventions in the West or East, but a point of departure that migrates away, revisits, touches on inherited traditions, then moves away again to an inbetween space. Through this migratory movement, I intend to construct a sense of walking inside a kaleidoscopic theatre. As a performance experiment this might mimic and contemplate an Arab migration experience, focusing on its complexities, positive aspects, and unique aesthetics.

### **Action: Dialogic Beats (or Bells)**

Since my understanding of hybridity predicts an interactive dialogue of juxtaposition across different texts, languages, cultures, genres, and times, I reflected on this in my trilogy’s anti-narrative or kaleidoscopic structure. I followed Castagno’s premise that a play “in itself is a dialogic system. The basic structural component in playwriting is established in beat juxtaposition” (2012, p. 145), and thus, I visualised my scripts of the three plays as if they are *beats* in dialogue with each other. However, those beats do not link or cohere to form a whole unified linear action developing towards an end or a conclusion. Conversely, those beats or as I called them, Bells, in my plays, shift the direction of my events, characters, theatrical

genres, use of languages, narrative and dramatic voicings, transformative gender and roles, to create an ongoing experiment of discovery; a trilogy to be explored and re-explored.

*Bells 1- 46: Shifts and non-linearity*

Throughout the creative writing process, I encountered forty-six major associational shifts across the trilogy, and all are marked by forty-six numbered Bells. The ringing Bells or beats, in my work, mean an unexpected shift to the direction of current small units (thought, image, metaphor, theme, language, event, or character) in my trilogy. The Bells of my trilogy are a disruption to any potential monologic worldview, ultimate word, dominant truth, non-debatable coherence, or transcendental whole-perspective. This disruption, caused by the Bells' arbitrary juxtaposition, which can be shuffled from performance to performance, awakens the impulses and strikes the nerves and keeps all the participants alerted for what is next but also pulls us back to what has just happened. We become ruptured in-between the past and the future.

As a result, the script becomes, then, a challenge or rebuke to the author, myself. Throughout my repetitive readings and reworking of the script, I realised that the disruptive dialogic shifts of intention and purpose of a character, language, or action created other author(s) or 'second voice(s).' I lost control over a single consciousness, meaning, purpose, or intention of the plays except that I innovated a free radical unconventional language (sound, signs, words, and syntax) that speaks my intuition toward uncertainty (i.e., the exploration of multiplicity).

I also infused each Bell, or beat, with some micro-dynamic shifts, within it, to create a dynamic kaleidoscopic structure that regularly produces unique theatrical patterns. In Bell One, for example, I created reverberations through rapid shifts in the direction of action,



character, and language. The event starts with an Arabian belly dancer's movement and Aragoze's ritualistic Sufi circulating dance, called Dawaran. Then Voiceover interrupts the dancing event and reminds the characters Aragoze and Nasnas that the mass, or audience, is waiting for their performance.

I shifted, then, the direction of the Voiceover dialogue to a direct address. Aragoze (on stage) and Nasnas (on shadow) directly remind the audience, using Arabic and English languages, that these plays do not reflect the author's views but the observations of many. Shortly, the two characters enter into a hysterical dialogue about their ruptured identities. In the following primary beat, Bell Two, both characters run to their show, talking about variant topics such as nationhood and nationalistic injustices using different speech genres and sound techniques. Through these shifts, in Bell One and Bell Two, I also considered the shift concerning language, vocal level from high-toned to low-toned, the tempo of dialogue from normal to fast and to slow, mood states from sad to hysterical, to a widely energetic condition.

At the beginning of Bell One, the ritualistic dance accompanied by emotional Oud music and passionate direct address gives us the sense that a significant dramatic event is just about to happen. Nevertheless, we immediately encounter a mundane topic that imports "What if?" from English, "Tfuuu" (spitting in Arabic), and "Te est fu" (are you crazy?) in French. This topic would generate an energetic interface when the audience sees the two characters' rapid shift from peace-loving welcomers, in the beginning, to radical violent characters spitting and cursing all over the place. In Bell Two, the same characters transform to show-presenters whose voices interpolate to discuss nationalism and nationhood.

My use of the beat shifter technique is analogous to Brecht's alienation effect or impeded form. Castagno observes that Brecht used this device to "redirect the audience from emotional to intellectual involvement" (p. 147) and refocus their intention. The ringing Bells,

in my plays, function primarily to buffer or/and delay continuity, disturb trains of thought, and create a perceptual shift in the audience with every new event.

*Beat Variations: Riffing – Bell Twenty-Four*

One of the creative writing techniques opening the playscripts to multiple voices and thus deconstructing any monologic attempt is riffing. The primary meaning of riffing is to allow characters' repetitions, embellishments, rephrases, or amendments of a word or a phrase of dialogue. In music, riffing means the persistent repetition of a phrase or motif in the same pitch and intonational voice (or rhythmic pattern). However, this repetition covers development and alterations.

A noticeable example, in my trilogy, of riffing, is in Bell Twenty-Four. My use of the riffing effect in *Aragoze in a Time of Corona* serves to create multiple narrators and advance or reiterate conflicting stories and narratives and thus offer dialogic meanings. This beat or (Bell) occurs in the middle of a social dispute among groups of Eve-Adam and Jinn Mary over the birth of The Messiah and the institutional conditioning of the character Aragoze:

**MARY:** The Divine decree is the word. The word is enlightenment.  
**ARAGOZE:** And some words are like perfect graves.  
**MARY:** Some words are like lofty hefty mountains.  
**ARAGOZE:** To which human magnanimity resorts and adheres.  
**MARY:** The word is a testament,  
**ARAGOZE:** The word is proof.  
**MARY:** And the word is the discriminator between a prostitute and...  
*(Pause.)*  
**ARAGOZE:** *(Sadly.)* And a prophetess.  
**MARY:** “Hello, Brother” is a word. Through a word...  
**ARAGOZE:** Adversity could be eased. Through a word...

**MARY:** Rivers of wounds and blood can't be ceased. A word is a light...

**ARAGOZE:** And a piece of evidence that nations follow.

**MARY:** Jesus was nothing...

*(Pause.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Save a word.

**MARY:** He enlightens the world with a word.

**ARAGOZE:** He taught the word to fishermen.

**MARY:** And they surf the oceans.

**ARAGOZE:** A word is the convulsion of the oppressor.

**MARY:** A word is the fortress of freedom.

**ARAGOZE:** A word is a responsibility.

**MARY:** A human is a word.

**ARAGOZE:** The dignity of humanity is a word.

**MARY:** *(Echo.)* The dignity of God is the word.

**ARAGOZE:** Wait! The dignity of Greece is the word! Hell no! I disagree with you, Mary! It was the country of philosophers; Plato, Aristotle, and Socrates. However, it declared bankruptcy. This is the true meaning of the phrase: Fuck you! Let philosophy help you.

This riffing may sound poetical or lyrical in the manner that the characters express, imaginatively and beautifully, their emotions and thoughts toward different absent or staged events. It also has a quality of immediacy that brings the audience into a direct engagement with juxtaposed historicised and dialogised stories and different times that raise the sense of urgency as well as excitement. The characters' lines of "word" dialogue are connections to some events in the preceding or the coming Bell. For example, "The Divine decree is the word" links to Bell Twenty-Two, "the word is the discriminator between a prophetess and a prostitute" links to Bell Twenty-Three. "Hello brother," for example, links to the Tax-Collection event (Bell Eight), fetish sex flogger tory event (Bell Eight), Saint's guidance event (Bell Seventeen), Worms and Corona's capture of Aragoze event (Bell Twenty-Five), and Aragoze's tribalism (Bell Thirty-Four). "The dignity of Greece is the word" links to

Miniature Seventeen when Messenger compares Aristotle, an absent historical figure, to Aragoze, and then she announces the departure of Aristotle's dramatic theatre.

I open Bell Four, in *Aragoze in a Time of Revolution*, with a riff that reveals the comprehensive mood and atmosphere. It sets up an exposition towards coming events in the same Bell in an interactional and rhythmical way. The character Ghoul transforms into a slithering worm in the shadow stage and instructs Aragoze in the absurdist stage:

**GHOUL:** (Angrily.) Stop questioning.  
**ARAGOZE:** (Repeat. Echo.) I...  
**GHOUL:** Will stop digging deep for facts and realities.  
**ARAGOZE:** (Repeat. Echo.) I...  
**GHOUL:** Don't believe what you see.  
**ARAGOZE:** (Repeat. Echo.) I...  
**GHOUL:** Don't believe what you think.  
**ARAGOZE:** (Repeat. Echo.) I...  
  
(Police siren.)  
**ARAGOZE:** We. We. We. Wewewewew.  
**GHOUL:** (Echo) Don't believe what you hear.  
**ARAGOZE:** I want to say...  
**GHOUL:** HUSHSHSH! Don't say what you want to say.

For me, riffing is an effective dramaturgical technique. Its feature of repetition of pronouns "I" and "We" leads to revelations of the multi-voices inside Aragoze's head, power positionalities, and types of interactions among characters in this Bell. It eases an audience's transition into the mood of the Bell world. It functions as an unforced *Exposition*, as Costagno (2012) reveals, that provides vital information that marks the situation, tone, and mood of both characters, Ghoul (authoritarian) and Aragoze (submissive). I did not deploy character descriptions in the front-page of my playtexts because both characters', Aragoze

and Ghoul's, positions of power and roles change throughout the three plays. The characters themselves are riffs.

My intent to create intercultural theatre requires a demonstration of turn-taking with theatrical approaches rather than absolute linearity. Exposing my characters at the beginning of each play would mark them with consistent traits and behaviours that would ruin my anti-structural dialogic intercultural enterprise. In contrast, as my dialogues are not determined by or tracking *the* plot, one actor can perform two or more characters in my metatheatre. My performative non-normative characters project contradictory non-integral traits and behaviours rather than psychological organic integrated traits.

*Beat Variations: Pause and Silence Beats*

I used both silence and pause beats often throughout my three plays. In my dramaturgical scheme, silence and pause beats have different functions. I do not use them to bring profound or mysterious experiments. In fact, I deploy them, sometimes, to “submerge truth under a spoken lie” (Costagno, 2012 p. 160), for example, in *Miniature Seven/Bell Twenty-Four*:

**MARY:** And the word is the discriminator between a prostitute and ...  
(*Pause.*)

**ARAGOZE:** (*Sadly.*) And a prophetess.

[...]

**MARY:** Jesus was nothing ... (*Pause.*)

**ARAGOZE:** Save a word.

**MARY:** He enlightens the world with a word.

Sometimes, I deploy short and long-beat silences and pauses to extend the perceiving or sensing of an extreme fear or menace or to put the spectator in charge.

**ARAGOZE:** Hand in the water. Hand in the fire. *(Pause.)*  
Hand in the water. Hand in the fire. *(Pause.)*  
*(Shouts.)* We have no option but to admire.  
*(Silence.)*  
Hand, in the water, sees refugees. *(Pause.)*  
Hand, in the water, sees refugees. *(Pause.)*  
*(Shouts.)* Pull me up. Please. Please.  
*(Silence.)*  
A drowning child's hands holding up seas, *(Pause.)*  
A drowning child's hands holding up seas, *(Pause.)*  
*(Shouts.)* Giving middle fingers to us. OMG freeze, freeze.

Those pauses and silences can be utilised to offer a sense and a moment of improvisation. As it creates a momentary vacuum, it attracts Spectators (actors) to explore their own bodily capacities and gestures to interrupt or intervene in the actions when refugees, drowning children, and fires are in focus, for example. It also opens space for discussing politics and offering solutions or protesting and also helps actors to refocus the actions to juxtapose different sequences in the play. In the following dialogue, participants (audience and cast) are also encouraged to fill in the blank or vacuum after each short pause in this nationalistic or tribal poetic mood.

*(EVE-ADAM and JINN line up with their hands overlapping. Music plays the daf's beats sound like Dom, Tak, Tak. Two kids are wearing soldier uniforms and carrying canes, with swordplay between the two rows. The poets are in action mood. Participants can fill in the vacuum after each pause or short pause. JOHN*

MILTON is waving to  
ARAGOZE.)

**JOHN MILTON:** Draw out your hands from the bosom and (*pause*) wave.

(*ARAGOZE waves arrogantly.*)

**HOMER:** Wave with those whites, with radiance, to people of (*short pause*)  
cave.

**JOHN MILTON:** Don't make your hand, to your high neck, as (*short pause*)  
chained.

**HOMER:** Nor stretch it widely, or you will sit rebuked and (*short pause*) blamed.

**JOHN MILTON:** Life is as big and small as cucumber in the bush (*short pause*)  
crop.

**HOMER:** Either held in your grasp or caged in your bitch (*short pause*) rump.  
(*Points to bottom.*)

**JOHN MILTON:** A day, you're a toothed gearing of watermill creates the water  
(*short pause*) flow.

**HOMER:** Down in the undershot, to feed and pamper lords in the upper (*short pause*)  
floor.

**JOHN MILTON:** A day, the pus of wounds fills your bucket built into the life-  
(*short pause*) wheel.

**HOMER:** As your bucket fills, the heavyweight of pus drives all to Irish (*short*  
*pause*) reel.

**JOHN MILTON:** Put your arms down next to your stiff upper (*short pause*) body.

**HOMER:** Point your toe on the ground, reel ... reel ... reel, run from the (*short*  
*pause*) bloody.

**JOHN MILTON:** Woe and hundreds of woes to every dancing mocker and (*short*  
*pause*) scorners.

**HOMER:** Whoever stomps upon wounds, will be chased in every (*short pause*)  
corner.

**JOHN MILTON:** Aragoze is, in the battlefield, like a lion with leaping (*short*  
*pause*) strides.

**HOMER:** Lo! Ignorant dull, run ... run ... here comes your predestined (*short*  
*pause*) demise.

**JOHN MILTON:**(*Arrogantly.*) We are people of supreme and glory belongs to our  
(*short pause*) nation.

**HOMER:**(*Arrogantly.*) We are over and above delicateness, triumph and (*short*  
*pause*) veneration.

**JOHN MILTON:** We stood and mobilise when our Lord goes (*short pause*) ahead.

**HOMER:** For the Lord's sake, blood turns cheap and all fall (*short pause*) dead.

## **Characterisation**

### **Achieving Hybrid Characterisation: Multivocality**

A core characteristic of playwriting migration through intercultural theatre, in my creative work *Aragoze Trilogy*, is the emphasis on the application of *multivocality* to my characters. My strategy of creating multivocal characters stems from my understanding of different daily situations and conversations that usually include different voices, expressions, and other speech genres; accordingly, I believe that creating a character with a consistent authorial appearance or voice reduces the sense of our everyday lives' interpolated complexities and works against comprehending migrant hybrid or inbetween identities. Therefore, I created 'multivocal' characters (or roles) who are mainly interjecting from and across languages, dialects, street slang to high-toned political and religious discourses, and variant genres of speech. The following sections demonstrate the theatrical traditions, concepts, or strategies that I adopted in my creative work to achieve multivocal characters, which I would also call hybrid characters (or in-betweeners).

### **Polycharacterisation: Carnavalesque Capacity**

I composed hybrid characters with 'a carnivalesque capacity' that traverses any canonical monological traditional dramaturgy of dialogue and characterisation. In principle, there are degrees of characterisation flexibility across many theatre forms. The dramaturgy of my trilogy departs from what Castagno (2012, p. 29) terms 'the' character-specific language or dialogue, which means to find one unique "voice" to each character in a play. Instead, I deploy what Elspeth Tilley (2012) terms polycharacterisation, which means staging a plurality of visions, voices, and roles through each of the characters.



Tilley (2012) was the first theatre scholar to write about polycharacterisation as a vehicle for expressing migrant subjectivity, a concept which has inspired the creation of my characterisation in my trilogy and influences my argument in this exegesis. In my creative work *Aragoze Trilogy*, I find polycharacterisation “an apposite performance vehicle for staging issues of transit, exile, cultural disjunction, and (re)identification” (Tilley, 2012, pp. 304-305). This device is particularly useful to express hybrid subjectivity. Tilley finds relevance in Said’s definition of the split orientation of the diasporic subject as “more than dialectical: he uses the musical analogy of counterpoint – multiple melodies that are both in harmony, and yet, at the same time, out of synch – to imply the plural cultural orientation of the diasporic subject” (Tilley, 2012, p. 306).

In classical or bourgeois theatre, the character is a finished product, and the actor is not challenged to execute in-the-moment role changes or voice shifts. Instead, in my trilogy, I created a mixture of characters with hybrid identities, who can perform different roles with various languages and voices at different events, rituals, songs, and parades. For example, the character Aragoze is challenged to perform split-second role and linguistic shifts throughout the trilogy, from each Bell to Miniature. In Miniature One/Bell One, Aragoze turns into a character with ‘phantom limb syndrome,’ which I use as a metaphor for his hybrid identity (Banting, 1993). He repeatedly embodies his identity through a split or ruptured body but also resists his liminal physicality and imperilled identity by *whirling*, a Sufi dancing practice. His language style is descriptive and absurdist and cannot be fully trusted as he often sounds illogical. In Miniature One/ Bell Two, however, he immediately shifts to a show-presenter persona who uses a high-toned linear (logical) narrative style, with a more transparent and neater order of language, to narrate silenced stories about his friend’s (Ammar’s) kaleidoscopic or hybrid identity. In Miniature One/Bell Four, Aragoze becomes a revolutionary poet who uses variant rhetorical strategies to declaim against different forms of

injustice. In Miniature One/Bell Five, he conflates two contradictory roles of victim and perpetrator, joining a parade of EVE-ADAM and JINN-dancing (twerking) troupes that use singing slang language. In Miniature One/Bell Six, he plays the role of a lying lover using flattering diction. His language style becomes brutally anti-institutional, anti-national, and persuasive when he confronts the roles of Tax-Collector, Customers, and Policeman (played by the Jinni Ghoul) in Miniature One/Bell Seven, before he switches into the role of the subaltern subject to voice Saint's interpretations in Bell Eight.

This is an example of polycharacterisation that entails the 'switch characterisation' process. As discussed in chapter one, the status of migrant subjectivity is always a pending process as a migrant switches between the old and new, becoming, adopting, and merging cultural voices and elements—as if they live in a rebirth process indefinitely—and so do my characters. Tilley argues:

Generally, theorists of polycharacterization agree that concepts of subjectivity are addressed by its processes, but they diverge as to precisely how. The differences between some of these theories, however, can be reconciled by making allowance for the functioning of different performative modes. Jennifer Harvie and Ric Knowles' conception of polycharacterization relies on 'the virtuosity of role switching' to produce 'the illusion of dialogue among discrete characters' (141). They emphasize that each character is separate from the next, as 'the need to create distinct, unitary voices is felt, for reasons of clarity, to be particularly urgent' (141). (Tilley, 2012, p. 307).

Also, I add complexity to the switch characterisation by allowing the spectators (actors) to intervene using their own lingual skills as characters who are meant to be, as Castagno (2012) argues, "a function of language" as the characters strive for a momentarily single-voiced effect, momentarily inviting a suspension of the awareness that roles are not a single identity but an actor playing multiple characters, even if only, as Tilley argues "so as subsequently to draw attention to and problematize such a 'forgetting,' thereby inviting the audience to reflect upon their own selective practices of viewing and interpreting identity" (Tilley, 2012, p. 308).

Polycharacterisation is thus directly and repeatedly relevant to my thinking in the process of developing characterisations of migrant subjectivity. Tilley explains:

If parodies of gender such as drag expose gender as performance, then the often-parodic polycharacterization in [many diasporic] plays likewise exposes the performativity of a racialized migrant identity, revealing diasporic subjectivity as a label, but also constituting it as a deliberate stance and claim [in which ...] repetition and parody challenge the regulatory practice of identity as a whole.

In my trilogy's parodies, parades, or drag-representations of gender, Aragoze and other characters often express their repeated sundering of bodily borders in references to holes and penetration to express metaphorically their diasporic identities. Tilley argues that many diasporic playwrights "also figure the experience of diaspora metaphorically as a traumatic breaching of bodily boundaries. In polycharacterization, subjectivity is sundered from the body and exists independently of it – in a mask or a gesture. This is reinforced thematically" (2021, p. 322). Aragoze's 'phantom limb syndrome' is precisely this kind of device.

In much classical theatre and dramaturgy, language is a minor part of a character's biodata. The author usually defines or profiles a character's word choice, tone, and voice, based on the character's intended level of education, class, and geographical background before writing the text. In classical theatre, the language of a Saint, child, teacher, professor, needy man, or a prostitute is expected to follow certain intonations as it has only certain identifications with particular virtues or vices in a monologic mind. However, my characters' voices are, just like migrants' relations with borders, always pending based on circumstances or shifts in the *Miniatures and Bells*. In fact, they may become arbitrary if some spectators (actors) intervene to offer new solutions. Messenger, a character, is open to interpretation; she may sound serious and comic, or high-toned and vulgar, all at the same time.

My carnivalisation of characters is also influenced by Bakhtin's definition of seriocomic genres. Unlike single-voiced or single-styled serious genres such as tragedy or high-rhetoric poetry in some classical theatre, my characterisation includes:

[m]ulti-toned narration, the mixing of high and low, serious and comic; the use of inserted genres – letters, found manuscripts, retold dialogues, parodies on the high genres... a mixing of prosaic and poetic speech, living dialects and jargons... (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 108).

This carnivalisation of characters shifts their characteristics and creates an unusual awakening and suspicious dialogic atmosphere of sadness and humour, order and chaos, reason and wisdom, acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, pious and profane notions, that might organically put an audience into a status of questioning their capacity to understand the coexistence of differences.

Additionally, I created many narrators, but none provides a 'saturated bio' that defines precisely their history or linguistic potential as a character. I, the playwright, did not give a 'back story' of any character at the beginning of any of the plays, as I refused the convention to "concoct cultural, educational, and geographic data" (Castagno, 2012, p. 30) that could establish a *specific* linguistic profile or categorisation to any of the characters. If I developed specific or essential linguistic attributes for characters, I could risk stifling my quest to discover new forms of subjectivity through the process of writing, or, as a result, any actor could take the characters for granted or expect what a character should say, feel, and act to remain static and not be open to negotiation with audiences anew at each performance.

Additionally, I did not ascribe a hero or protagonist voice to Aragoze, as we can easily find in the cinematic heroes; throughout the trilogy, Aragoze's dialogues, for example, did not maintain consistency nor a linear development. I used variant multivocal strategies and combined, conflated, or juxtaposed modes of expression within this single character, which fit each circumstantial situational shift. In other words, I did not remove any illogical,

disruptive, digressive, irregular, or different sounds, words, gestures, modes, styles of speech in an attempt to order his progression across each play or the whole trilogy. In our lives and dialogues, “real life people change mode, style, and level of speech to fit each situation” (Castagno, 2012, p. 30), sometimes called code-switching, and this multivocal open menu offers me an opportunity to practise my hybridity and create characters without imposing or being locked into class or ethnic limitations.

I freed my characters from absolute predetermined essentialist classifications or stigmatic labels, whether based on linguistic, bodily, psychological, ethnic, or political belongings. Although I created Hakawati who establishes, in different details, a behavioural and mental backstory for Aragoze, this is deployed for her storytelling occupational purposes within the plays only; Hakawati is an unreliable narrator and inevitably does not fully know Aragoze’s objectives as she lives in different times and places (or worlds) that only Ghoul and puppets can access. Therefore, Ghoul always questions Hakawati’s stories’ credibility and her knowledge of the reality or truth of Aragoze. Oddly, Hakawati meets with the Aragoze character at the black hole in play three, when she plays the role of the Egyptian Taha-Hussein; they negotiate their philosophical conception of sightedness and blindness. Her multi-rolling into a male figure is intended to be an awakening moment of gender disruption for the audience.

## **Use of Language**

### **Carnavalesque: Altering Codes, Modes, Languages, Dialects, Intonations, Voicings**

Although I saw language as an integral element, among many features, in the creation of my characters, they (the characters) can always escape limited linguistic potential. The multivocal focus allows them to alter tone from standard to slang to primitive, mode of

speech from political, jargon-laden, rhetorical and technical; language code from French, Arabic, and English, and vary voicing of the words which involves the articulation of sounds, pitch, and speed. I draw on Castagno's definition (2012):

Carnavalesque has to do with strange combinations, the overturning of expected norms, and the grotesque. Usually featured are abrupt shifts from high to low diction, whether slang, specific speech regionalisms, colloquialisms or profanities. (p.17)

In Miniature One/ Bell One, Aragoze (on stage) and Nasnas<sup>68</sup> (a shadow bestial puppet) exhibit altering language codes:

*(Aragoze produces Tik, Tok, Tik, Tok sounds, slowing down the dialogue tempo. )*

**ARAGOZE:** What if? Humans are in loss.

*(Normal dialogue tempo.)*

**NASNAS:** Tu es fou. Loss is life. Tfuuu.

**ARAGZOE:** Life is not loss but lost and lust. Tu es fou.

**NASNAS:** Tfuuu. Even my voice is lost.

*(Aragoze produces Tik, Tok, Tik, Tok sounds.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Tu es fou. At least not as you hear it now.

**NASNAS:** Tu es fou. What if my voice inside my head is different?

Aragoze and Nasnas have second languages and use multilingual dialect codes or foreignisms which spectators (actors) may understand or consider to be of, as Castagno argues, 'articulatory interest'. They speak English and some French "Tu es fou" and use some Arabic foreignisms such as 'Tfuuu' which is an audio representation of spitting in many Arabic cultures. I also conflate between the two characters' bestial and human realms to challenge the lingual norm and the grotesque.

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<sup>68</sup> Nasnas is popular in Arab and Somali folklore and deployed in French literature such as *The Temptation of Saint Anthony (La Tentation de Saint Antoine)* by the 19<sup>th</sup> Century French novelist Gustave Flaubert.

## **Conflation and Juxtaposition**

The use of the multivocal approach also offers me two functional possibilities of conflation and juxtaposition of rhetorical strategies and foreignisms in my plays that reflect hybridity, as Castagno (2012) observes in many hybrid plays. In *Miniature One/Bell One*, as exhibited above, I conflate the English phrase “what if?” with the Bedouin Arabic dialectal phrase “Wa.tif,” which literally means ‘and spitting.’ The French phrase “Tu es fou,” means you are crazy, to give articulatory sounds effect as well as opening meanings of interrogating loss and confiscation of voice and expressing resistance and dissatisfaction.

I also conflate the English phrase “take it easy” with the humiliating Arabic utterance “takit teezi,” which means shake off my ass, and the English phrase off-fee (alluding to a stop-off fee, or transit tax charged to travellers who break an international journey with a stopover) with the Arab utterance “off-fee”; the second has nothing to do with taxpaying or fees, but is an articulatory utterance equivalent to the English slang ‘Eww’ to express the grossness of the tax-collector.

This trend of doubled linguistic juxtapositions also continues in the next paragraph of *Miniature One*. Juxtaposing the sheep utterances “baa baa baaa” with normative dialogue about Alexander the Great, who fights Aragoze, reflects two things; in English and Arabic contexts, sheep utterances usually refer to a mindless individual or collective groups who blindly follow without thinking. The dialogue at this point also reflects wild desires among fighting characters who are doomed by a relational dichotomy of penetrated or penetrator. However, audiences or actors may find those utterances non-semantic or irrelevant, but still, this use of apparently non-semantic language, Castagno (2012) recalls, is a “futurists’ penchant for transrational language, with its strictly auditory appeal” (p. 31). In other words, such utterances may seem untranslatable to many audiences and readers as though they were

illogically, non-semantically, and disruptively deployed in the construction of the theatre event. However, their experimental auditory symbolism and their undetermined meanings reflect an intercultural exchange with the Russian/Italian futurists' Zaum<sup>69</sup> or transrational experience, which I deploy in many Miniatures/Bells displayed in the Shadow theatre throughout the trilogy to interrupt linear narrative and to create an alienation effect.

In the second play *Aragoze in a Time of Corona*, for example, I combined Jinns, Quran-inspired allegories, and the language of the historical figure Mary the virgin, and Aragoze, who inhabits different ongoing temporal settings, by having them meet and write down their rejection of saying 'a word' that is characterised by indeterminacy in interpretation. The dialogic interaction between mythical animals (al-Miraj and Tannin), mythological creatures vs. humans (Ghoul and Hakawati), gods (Voiceover 1 and Voiceover 2), and Jinn with Eve-Adam are uninterpretable by our rational sensemaking, but they allow us to experience a feeling and witness the differences and possibilities out beyond a rational vs. superstitious dichotomy.

My point of juxtaposing animal, divine, and human languages is not only *aesthetic* or to prove whether human characters can talk to animals or mythical creatures or not, to create an affect or emotional response. I also wanted to emphasise the validity of their different 'received and given' or intercultural messages and exchanges across spatiality and temporality. In other words, this transrational experience in *Aragoze Trilogy* reflects the wildness of nature as an alternative form, not merely as threatening other or *object*, cause and effect, victim vs. perpetrator, animal vs. human, or mythical vs. actual.

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<sup>69</sup> Zaum is linguistic and audial experiments, originated by the Russian Futurist poet and playwright Velimir Khlebnikov (1885-1922), along with the Russian poet and artist Aleksei Kruchyonykh (1886-1968) to create a language that defies easy translation. (See: Janecek, 1996)



## Multivocal Dramaturgy: Baroque Sense

I understood my multivocal hybridity, trilogy, and characters (Aragoze, Messenger, Hakawati, Ghoul, and Puppets) in a baroque oppositional sense. The baroque dramatic aesthetic, as Castagno (2012, p. 33) describes, “intertwines, juxtaposes, is serpentine, or swings between polarities of high and low, comic and serious” and “features abrupt shifts or contrasts from scene to scene, double or multiple plotting, the contrast between the serious and the comic”.

Similarly, my characters (like my life) oscillate and interweave between different levels of speech using tones (serious, informal, formal, sarcastic, comic, cheerful, and sad). We swing between high, low and natural pitch, slow to fast tempo, and powerful-quiet volume. My, their, and others’ (spectators, actors or inbetweeners) body language juxtaposes variant forms of dominance, worry, submission, happiness, and sadness. My, their, and inbetweeners’ positions move and lie in winding paths between variant levels of closeness and distance based on my and their changing relationships and roles.

Through this uncertain dialogic baroque mode, I created the character named Messenger, to explore multipolarities of wit and foolishness, comic and serious, vulgar and decent and sensual and religious. Messenger is usually a male figure in most societies that follow Abrahamic religions. However, this trilogy has Messenger as a female figure. She speaks with a humorous and severe fervour that sounds shocking, and somewhat humiliating to orthodox audiences, as she exceeds film noir-esque expectations for the *pure* behavioural and linguistic intellectuality of a messenger or prophet. Note the sharp and piercing turns of her phrases and matters in Miniature Twelve (just before Bell Thirty-Two), and those often-divergent story lines toward the end of the whole trilogy:

**Messenger:** A chewed gum is backbiting authoritarian teeth...Darkness can’t be diminished to fit a thief’s hand...During an attack, food has no value...An infant’s fart

does not benefit nor harm anyone...Horse, weapon, and woman should not be borrowed...You may beat the poor, but you can't steal his clothes...A nail was asked why you are crushing into the wall. The nail replied because they are knocking my head...A rabbit was asked why don't eat meat? The rabbit replied, "I wish if I can protect my own flesh"...They ask a wise man, "what do you think of people and animals?" The wise replied, "what I think of myself"...Lack of news is news...His heart assembles birds' hearts...Your sins are sitting next to you...Your mind in your head is a city...In the air, we are all equal...If you saw a tall person running, you should reckon a short person is chasing the tall...Extravagant welcoming may bring in shitty guests...Too much shyness brings in rapists...He jumps too much and thus haunts a little...The bad word is easily heard...Friends hydrate your tongue...A good word brings adder out from its burrow...The dog of a King is a king...We can call it the Theory of Blood Boiling.

Similarly, but with less intensity, Hakawati, a storytelling form of theatre and a character in my plays, offers another experience of difference in a baroque sense. I offer Hakawati both as a storyteller and as a character relying on intertwining multiple landscapes of dramatic techniques such as running hysterically, with fast-paced dialogue in the first play of mobility. As theatre, this breaks norms; Hakawati in the Arabic tradition is usually understood as a masculine voice, who is sitting on a big chair, and wearing a fez and traditional uniform, giving a direct speech to the audience and telling heroic stories. If the Hakawati is a female storyteller, her voice is usually understood as soft and low to relate stories either to kids or a king - like the silent exotic Shahrazad in 'One Thousand and One Nights', as Suzanne Gauch argues in *Liberating Shahrazad* (2007).

However, I craft Hakawati in the trilogy, from a somewhat different or untraditional perspective. I frame the trilogy strategically by using her character to involve direct speech to the audience, indirect dialogic speech to the shadow puppets, inner-monologue, and immediate interaction with characters on the absurd stage. Like other characters, her language constantly code-shifts as there are stories within stories that could confuse audiences who expect her to be either a device for epic narration or a character involved in other actions and

narratives such that they are eager to track her progression - but here any such progression is purposefully made untraceable.

## **Speech Genres**

In my playwriting, I utilised variant speech genres as a multivocal strategy to offer kaleidoscopic styles, meanings, and contexts in this intercultural theatre enterprise. Castagno (2012) defines a speech genre as “coded language that is suggestive of a certain group, occupation, literary genre, cultural bias, and so on” (p. 35). In this trilogy, I included different speech genres to create different senses of hybrid playwriting as interculturalism.

The assembly of *Aragoze Trilogy* juxtaposes abundant speech genres such as from a tax-collector, Saint, salesperson, interviewers, dance troupes, auctioneers, storyteller, voiceovers, shadow puppets, poets, and show presenters. My deployment of these occupational roles across the trilogy creates a sense of a kaleidoscope of interculturalism, hybridity, and polyvocality. I felt, and wanted readers of the play as well, to feel opened to exploration and immersion, with no limits, in this diversely coloured tapestry of constant interjections.

In the first drafts of the trilogy, I constructed some lengthy monologues and dialogues, but I lost interest in them because of the lack of interaction. *Aragoze* and *Hakawati* were just boringly slow as each first spoke their inner thoughts, and the second commented on and justified the first’s psychology and behaviour. They were biased. I was biased as I created, initially, a female character to talk about a male character, and no chance for the male to respond or disagree. It was a one-way flow of communication.

Therefore, I reworked them by adding shadow puppets in the flow of storytelling. I redistributed the dialogue among them and played with the tempo of their exchanges strategically to turn the experience of interiority into a hustle. Genre speeches such as comic and serious snippets of dialogue are slow but accompanied by a hysterical pace of physical

movement. The dialogue used by shadow puppets and human characters created a multivocal environment among all and transcended temporal and spatial limitations of the provided context and lengthy expository dialogue. The hustle of unlocking the pace of physical movements and verbal exchanges among shadow theatre and absurd theatre characters aims to keep the audience's senses attentive because of the risk of missing a moment.

### **Accent & Foreignisms: Linguicism**

In this intercultural project, I utilised overseas foreign English accents and multiple language strategies to fight linguicism or discrimination based on the language one speaks (or in this case the linguistic features of the characters).<sup>70</sup> Although my biggest fear, in first drafts, was to avoid any linguistic, dialect, or accent and ethnic stereotyping or appropriations that may sound extremely offensive, by the final drafts, I have primarily challenged this fear or any “politically correct orthodoxy” or any “form of self-censoring” (Castagno, p. 37) to be able to produce an intercultural theatre capable of sustained energy through facing risk. I created multivocal characters to put essentialist, monologic, and monolithic structures in front of the audience, even at the risk of multiple interpretations. By the juxtaposition of many forms of language I hope to bring the audience to an awareness of the arbitrariness of code-switching and thus to make visible the identity assumptions they attach to different accents such as ‘broken English’ or ‘correct diction’. Often, I try to present conflicting registers simultaneously, to cause a jarring effect.

For example, I provided non-official translations and transliteration of a traditional Lebanese Arabic song but had Aragoze adopt a North American contemporary hip-hop physical movement while he performs it. This jazz song *Shatti Ya Dynya* belongs to Fairouz, a well-

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<sup>70</sup> Finnish linguist and educator Tove Skutnabb-Kangas (1988, p. 13) coined the term linguicism to describe the “ideologies, structures and practices which are used to legitimate, effectuate and reproduce an unequal division of power and (both material and non-material) resources between groups, which are defined on the basis of language”.

known Lebanese vocalist. I played it, just after Nasnas, a puppet character, has articulated “Shits, shitty, shatty, shatta, shatti” to express anger about the invasion of all nations. However, the Arabic meaning of “Shatti” is to “rain” and carries a positive meaning. For speakers of both Arabic and English, the juxtaposition of two different sociolinguistic images creates unique laughter and awareness of hearing more than one language at the same time. Simultaneously, Aragoze’s physical movement creates yet another dissonant cultural reference to the layering, alluding through “postural semantics” (West, 1993) to the ways in which hip-hop is a physical embodiment of protest and resistance for African Americans.

Arabic Transliteration	English Translation
Shatti Ya Dunyie tai Zeed Mawsimna oo- yehla,	Life, Rain please! so that our season be good
Tid-fo’ my wi zar’ jdeed b-ha’litna ya’la,	Blow water that makes our plants prosperous.

### **Slang, Extreme Rhetorical Levels, Multivocal Profanity as Speech Genre**

In the creation of multivocal characters, I considered using multilanguage-based coded subversive language such as Arabenglish. I transplanted many colourful English and Arabic impolite and profane phrases from current and different contexts that would sound excessively offensive to many spectators, mostly “religious-based or family audience members” (Castagno, 2012, p. 7). After I compiled many profanities from movies, Facebook posts, and YouTubers, I provided an unofficial translation to each phrase.

My choice of Saint and Wali, to speak this profanity, was not a coincidence; profanity is usually “character-specific speech” (Castagno, 2012, p. 47) in traditional playwriting. Saints (or Sheikhs), for example, are not expected or accepted to use profane or offensive phrases in mainstream culture, media, or public spaces. However, they could produce them in the

margins or hidden places. My intent is to unbend those social rules, fixated images, and feelings of fear and sin from the public shame that controls and surveils them. Saints' and Sheikhs' conservative followers always depict them in a godly manner as *pure* souls (or human angels) who are impartial. They usually use the most delicate rhetorical tropes in their sermons and daily conversations. Those figures often appear to the public in an effective dominant language style that delivers a fixed identity.

I utilised those prominent figures in my three plays by liberating their apparently meek voices and physical appearances and stretching the limits of their speech genres and bodily expressions. In the end, they are human (i.e., flesh, organs, underwear, desires, bad and good intentions, and emotions). The Saint and Wali figures, in my trilogy, create awakening and comic moments, especially when I threaten their fixated identities in the mind of many conservative followers and audiences by peppering their dialogue with profanity.

The character Saint appears first to advise on the dominant language style, but then I deployed hyperbole, distortions, and diminutions to diversify his identity. I allowed him to flip from formal English to bilingual slang to profanity to create a factor of discomfort, surprise, and alienation. This choice makes Saint's character not-easily identifiable to a conservative audience. It also liberates my playwriting from a specific-language character. It unsettles the for-granted public (audience's) sense of Saints as if they have exceptional knowledge of God and the unseen and a unique degree of holiness. The following dialogue shows the usage of Arabenglish and profanity as essential elements of slang, as speech genre, for the creation of new-possible characters:

**GHOUL (SAINT):**                    (*Clattering.*) Epilepsy?

**ARAGOZE:** It is a disorder marked by the sudden loss of consciousness because of my unresolved life problems. Do you have any treatment for me?

**GHOUL (SAINT):** (*Authoritarian tone.*) Recite the Jinni Chapter.

(*SAINT recites a ritual and ARAGOZE repeats.*)

**GHOUL (SAINT):** (*Cursing. Dog sound.*) Ya Chelb, Ya ibn el-Chelb Oh dog and son of a dog. (*Donkey sound.*) Ya homar, Ya ibn Li-homar. Oh, donkey and son of a donkey. (*Evil laugh.*) May God take your evil soul. (*Saint throws his shows.*) Ya Gazmah, Ya ibn rubat el-qizam. You are a shoe and son of a shoe. Tfu.

Kol Khara Teezi. Eat my piece of shit. Ya maniac. Oh, pimp. May all your luck be taken. (*Fart sound.*) Tilhas teezi. Kiss my ass. Yel-'an abouk. May your father be cursed. Abu reeha. The father of stinky smells. Kos Ukhtak. Kos Umak. Your sister and mother's vagina are bashed. Ibn Shamouta. Son of a bitch. Zebi feek. My penis is in you. Seebni. Leave my body now.

My character Saint reverses standard norms on how religious clerks should usually appear to the public. He uses an overblown and exaggerated language that reveals unbearable twisted logic and annoying profanity. Conflating Saint's humble mental image and style with the staged grotesque version, above, can create striking moments for the character (and the actor). Also, Saint's references to profane phrases in both English and Arabic may allude to moral issues with many conservative religions for both Arab and English audiences.

However, my goal is not to undermine any figure or religious group. Still, I experimentally test the value of the problematic effects of humiliation, chosification, or objectification and abuse in the creation of identities within different audiences.

Also, I utilised the Saint figure to take the audience to a discovery play of political matters in an alienated or oblique mode. The following sermon of Saint's follows Donald Trump's, and other conservative leaders' worldwide calls for prayer gatherings to terminate Covid-19 from

the US and around the world, while the World Health Organisation called for social distancing and the ban of mass gatherings. Saint speaks:

**GHOUL (SAINT):** Marvelous Father, we altogether arise to you at the moment, and we are grateful to you for this nation that has cleansed native Indians and confiscated their lands in the 16<sup>th</sup> century for your service as they were pagans and infidels. We pray in 2020, and we pray for your spirit to fly from corner to corner of our nation. We humble ourselves, and we apologise for our own sins and national sins. We ask you to bless our nation after invading Iraq, Syria, and other infidels. We humbly ask you to bless your guardian on earth, President Donald Trump, and protect him and us from all epidemics. (*Shivering humble voice.*) Lord, we thank you that America and the West did not need educated preachers or qualified politicians, but they needed fighters and crusaders for freedom. That's exactly what we have here. (*TRUMP hugs EVE-ADAM and JINN tightly while he is closing his eyes. A crowd of prayers cry and weep. ARAGOZE masturbates.*) Our Father he does not claim to be a faultless masturbator, but he is so passionate. He loves to stop the pitiless slaying of the unborn ones. It takes long efforts to insert the arrows in the hole. He is passionate about eradicating the born infidels who don't want to make America great again as in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. He is passionate about removing poverty; he has forced millions from food stamps to the dignity of work in his own companies. (*Prayers are all emotionally affected, and their hands are shaking for that.*) He is passionate about justice and fair trade with the Chinese infidels who worship rocks and the Indian infidels who worship cows. Our Lord, bless him with a wonderful beginning and happy ending. His hand is too small to grab and steal. We know him. So, Lord, help him to accomplish the mission and win a second race to help ARAGOZE and the



nation to find out what the hell is going on. In Jesus' name, we pray, Amen. (*Ululate.*)

I used, in this sermon, Bakhtin's (1984) categories of carnivalesque senses of the dogmatic, official, and serious, through juxtaposing the sublime with the grotesque. My deployment of this carnival sermon unsettles "one-sided and gloomy official seriousness" that opposes, in Bakhtin's sense, "evolution and change" and strives to "absolutise" an order (p. 124). First, I brought the unlikeliest persons together, such as a masturbator Aragoze, a humble Saint, a controversial corruptive and misogynistic political figure, humans, and Jinn, to interact in unity. Second, they welcomingly express eccentric behaviour without any fear of possible punishable consequences. The act of this sermon sanctifies "dualistic ambivalent ritual" (Bakhtin, 1984. p. 124) toward Saints, elected leaders, and fooled people whom many persons customarily understood as persons of absolute faith and belief, single voice, and monolithic architecture.

My goal with the sermon is not to create or inherit an anti-elitist cynical ideology against all religious and political forms of authority. I believe that participation in such a carnival creates a radical mood of humour that can be revisited in future encounters with future serious monolithic individual and nihilistic groups. However, this carnival sermon is only a creative force in the process of hybrid playwriting as it came from this courageous sense of boredom with the privileged idealism, taking place in official squares and temples. It is courageous as I am taking charge of my olden times at temples, universities, and official offices and pushing back against their materials, by crowning and de-crowning them, to lobby for 'evolution', 'change', and difference.

The characters Saint and Aragoze join the carnival to traverse social norms in this seriocomic sermon. Unlike high rhetoric and epic speeches, my seriocomic sermon does not rely on long-held beliefs or a hero, but on an invention of difference and an experience of heterogeneity of

style of speech and voice. Although it is a monologue, it is a “multi-toned narration” mixing “serious and comic,” “low and high” (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 108), and slang and prosaic speech. Saint and Aragoze overturn their rank and exchange roles from the legitimate custom to the uncertain representation of identities. Some questions arise, like ‘Who are they?’ And ‘Why do they behave in such oblique and different ways?’ Those are just a few questions that I hope may resonate in the audience’s mind.

## **Use of Audience Interaction Techniques**

### **Transforming Spectators into Actors**

*Aragoze Trilogy*, as I defined elsewhere, is a hybrid trilogy that subverts the classical European traditions of theatre and playwriting structure. Using the metaphor of the kaleidoscope, I have tumbled Boal, Brecht, and Arab performance traditions, though incompatible and very different, together. My research experiment found that the effect is useful and interesting when they are juxtaposed. The artefact is, thus, a hybrid bricolage of very different theatre traditions from Khayal al-Zill (or Shadow theatre), puppet theatre (with new mythological puppets and human characters that are different from the Egyptian ‘Aragoz’, the Great Syrian Karākūz, or the Turkish Karagöz), mourning performances, folkloric dances, Brechtian theatre, Classical theatre, Hakawati and al-Halqa theatre, and Bakhtin’s carnival.

Juxtaposing those very different theatrical elements, the diversity of audiences means that the interpretation and audience dynamic will be ever-shifting, just like the pictures in a kaleidoscope. I acknowledge the practical difficulties of audience engagement, as a playwright, but these challenges of stages are usually deferred to the dramaturg and director as production issues and not the province of the playwright. Again, this thesis tends to

explore the playwriting process and different stylistic influences while ‘playwriting’ Arab migration, without diving into detailed analyses about the effectiveness of the audience interaction techniques on stage.

As a migrant playwright, I wanted to offer a hybridisation of different theatrical elements that serve the poetics of migrant people by engaging them (the people) in the trilogy’s migration experiments. Therefore, I borrowed some elements of Boal’s plan for transforming the spectators into actors. As I noted in my introduction, when seeking to deconstruct essentialism, playing with the boundaries of roles (not only between actor/role/ but also between spectator/actor/role) can be productively disruptive of essentialist assumptions.

In my playscripts, I developed my concept of ‘knowing the body’ through borrowing ‘stripes’ but not ‘swallowing whole packages’ of meanings from Boal’s (2008) first stage of empowerment through theatre, which is knowing the body. Again, I do not mean to apply Boal’s exact plan and understanding or commit to his confines. Boal (2008) explains:

First stage: Knowing the body: a series of exercises by which one gets to know one’s body, its limitations and possibilities, its social distortions and possibilities of rehabilitation. (p. 102)

As signposted in the trilogy’s stage directions, I encourage potential producers, dramaturgs and directors of the plays to, for example, let the people (spectator-actors or spectactors in Boal’s terminology) participate in the Sufi whirling dance or Arabian Ardah dance, Arabian belly dance, and twerking, in order to know their bodies’ possibilities. I am aware that participants (audience and cast) may be reluctant to trespass their bodies’ borders, distortions, and limitations. Our bodies are physically controlled by politics. Therefore, I force no participation upon them but encourage and invite. Traditional costumes such as our dress codes are also imbued with politics that we need to free ourselves from, and the suggestions of costumes are likewise couched as an invitation rather than a directive. However, the stage

directions signal that participants (directors, but also the spectators and cast) can develop methods of involvement based on their own intentions and preferences, and costumes can likewise be based on their own designs and what and how they desire to stage the scripts.

I also borrowed from Boal ideas of how to invest in making the body expressive as a second stage to transform spectators into actors. Boal (2008) explains:

Second stage: Making the body expressive: a series of games by which one begins to express one's self through the body, abandoning other, more common and habitual forms of expression. (p. 102)

As playwright, I preferred, for example, to emphasise the unorthodox characterisation of the Messenger character as a seriocomic insightful woman whose wisdom and satire outsmart the outdated patriarchal (mirrored in Aristotelian theatre structures) role of a woman as either a supporting role (an old-fashioned wife, mother, or sister who is polite, shy, and purified) or an antagonist (femme fatale or wicked witch) (Leser, 2021). I wondered how combining funny-vulgar (or lacking sophistication) with pure (or refined), all at once, in a female prophetess character, like Messenger, may sound. I grew up surrounded by verbal teachings that suggested there are few or no female messengers or prophetesses, and it was not until more recently that I discovered through the research for this trilogy that there are probably at least seven prophetesses in the Abrahamic religious Books (in Judaism, Christianity and Islam). These include Sarah “ساره” (Abraham's wife), Miriam “مريم” (Moses and Aharon's sister), Devorah “ديوره” (one of the judges who ruled Israel), Chanah “حنة” (mother of the prophet Samuel), Avigail “أبيجايل” (wife of King David), Hulda “خلده”, and Esther “أستير”. However, their roles are mostly limited to familial relationships and, sometimes, ‘complementary’ to the relevant male messengers’ and prophets’ missions.

Therefore, I thought, let the participants (audience and cast) trespass these traditions to use their bodily resources to ‘play’ female or male Messenger characters by narrating seriocomic

proverbs, names of animals, or playing sounds of animals, through the Messenger or other characters, while giving a physical and bodily impression of the things or items (animals, events, humans) and displaying shadow-images on the scrim of Khayal al-Zill (or Shadow theatre). The most important goal of such exercises is for the participants (audience and cast) to freely express themselves in an unusual way or experience unusual situations - no matter how 'professional' or otherwise their dramatic performance. In fact, they are also invited by the stage directions to criticise the events, ideas, themes, or unusual characters in this trilogy - add, delete, or edit the dialogue lines.

In fact, the language of the trilogy is not a finished product. I am a non-native-English-speaking playwright who writes this trilogy mostly in English, but also inserts Italian, French, Indian (Hindi), standard Arabic, Japanese, rhythmically devalued language translations or, sometimes, accurate Arabic translations (along with English translations). I also juxtapose different images from their cultures in the OK tour. Boal (2008) explains this third stage where the theatre becomes a language laboratory:

Third stage: *The theatre as language*: one begins to practise theatre as a language that is living and present, not as a finished product displaying images from the past: First degree: *Simultaneous dramaturgy*: the spectators 'write' simultaneously with the acting of the actors; Second degree: *Image theatre*: the spectators intervene directly, 'speaking' through images made with the actors' bodies; Third degree: *Forum theatre*: the spectators intervene directly in the dramatic action and act. (p. 102)

If some of the participants (transmigrating audience and cast) speak or do not speak Italian, French, Indian (Hindi), standard Arabic, Japanese, or English, they can still intervene in the action, when they meet those few different lingual insertions in the trilogy. Some non-English dialogue lines (followed by English translations) are grammatically, syntactically, or semantically not accurate or deliberately poor translations. In English, there are some conceptual Arabic terms or metaphors translated literally or figuratively that would make non-Arabic speakers pause, question, and compare to find a cultural and linguistic equivalent.

They are encouraged to shout out an alternative or equivalent - and could express this even without their physical presence at a performance or on a stage. This could be livestreamed in the first reading of the script, or prepared beforehand, using virtual theatre (such as video conferencing in indoor or outdoor settings). They can criticise the script by adding, editing, correcting, or accepting the provided translations. They can offer solutions or add their own translations or develop totally new dialogues to correct the actions or words of the characters and/or the actors. Participants (audience and cast) can also write an amendment and perform it or ask other actors or participants (audience and cast) to perform it simultaneously. The monologic authority of the author is completely undermined, and power is handed over to the cast and the audience. However, all solutions should be performed by some means.

Otherwise, they do not exist.

Boal's second degree is Image theatre. I also understand *Aragoze Trilogy* as *Lughat Harakat was-isharat wa-Siwar* "لغة الحركات و إشارات و صور" or movement, gestures, and image language. Many of the parades, in my trilogy, carry actual images, gestures, and movements from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds that spectators (actors) can encounter and thus can comment on or intervene in to present their equivalent images, gestures, and movements. The meeting of two different images, gestures, and movements could create a transformation into a new meaning if they were able to be combined. For example, I deploy placard parades for the gesture 'OK' and its interpretation in different cultures is written on the placards. Spectators can intervene using their gestures and body to express what 'OK' may also mean in different cultural situations in their own societies. I am sure the result will be explosive laughter. Thus, we learn anew. This 'OK tour' can be located in Miniature Fifteen (Bell Forty-Two).

Boal's third degree is Forum theatre. Some of the miniatures carry controversial actions that may tell a fake, stereotypical, social, religious, political, folkloric, fictional, or scientific story

or theme. The settings of some miniatures, although mostly minimalist, can also be interactively critiqued by participants (audience and cast) if they want to remove or add props, or agree or disagree with the stories or themes. In fact, the Hakawati character is open-minded, and she, he or they can be addressed directly to comment on an event, behaviour, meaning of a line, or to criticise an actor, character, or event. Actors have to accept criticism and sometimes act accordingly or respond to criticism to reach a grey area in which the play evolves or devolves, even as it is being performed.

The Aragoze trilogy is written for *theatre as a discourse* and this the fourth stage in Boal's plan of transforming spectators to actors. Boal (2008) explains:

Fourth stage: The theatre as discourse: simple forms in which the spectator-actor creates 'spectacles' according to his need to discuss certain themes or rehearse certain actions.

Examples:

Newspaper theatre

Invisible theatre

Photo-romance theatre

Breaking of repression

Myth theatre

Trial theatre

Masks and rituals (pp. 102-103).

The Aragoze trilogy is not a finished theatre 'product'. In fact, I rewrote the script and evolved with it to a level where my personal voice melted as each character carries its own agency. My main task as playwright was to let different historical figures, mythical Arabic puppets, and other fictional characters (from different times and places) meet to exchange dialogue and opinions on different themes. The characters of Aragoze, John Milton (English poet and intellectual), Homer, Al-Ma'arri (the tenth-century Arab philosopher and poet), and

Taha Hussein (a contemporary Arab intellectual), meet to have a dialogue on blindness, for example. Some of their opinions, sometimes, may seem balderdash or claptrap or we do not know yet what they mean. In such an event, spectators are asked to interrupt actors, rehearse dialogues, and try to present meanings. I brought these bourgeois characters with classy codes of 'proper' mannerisms into the trilogy to allow participants (audience and cast) to intervene in their talks, which sometimes sound senseless, and take control of the scene to voice alternatives.

### **The collapse of Theatre's walls**

Therefore, I refuse to impose an authoritarian and selfish practice in my Aragoze theatre and imagined community. The walls must be torn down, as Boal argues, and the people should act. I suggest utilising storytelling in the circular theatrical form of Al-halqa in which actors or storytellers cannot escape being questioned and interrogated as they are surrounded by spectators who can intervene. Amine (2001) defines Al-halqa:

Al-halqa is a popular performance framed in a circular architecture and characterized by the making of spectacle as a process in motion rather than a final product presented to a passive consumer. (p. 57)

Amine and Carlson (2008) reference this performance tradition to Sufism. They explain:

Al-halqa is very ancient, dating back at least to ninth-century Sufi practice, where the term was applied to the circle of students that gathered around a religious master for instruction. (p. 72)

They explain further:

The play also manifests a subversion of conventional hierarchical structures in the theatrical mode of representation through the contrary effects of double distancing that is effected between stage /auditorium, actor /character, illusion/reality, and dramatic/epic. Throughout the text and the performance, fragmentary little dramas, clusters of images, and snatches of actions function as metaphors for a theatrical reality, access to which can only be granted subjectively. The most significant features of the play concern its subjection of theatrical representation to scrutiny through the



use of theatrical space as an experimental body and the disturbance of certain boundaries, namely those between artist and spectator, actor and character, spectator and performance, and art object and artistic creation. All of this, of course, derives directly from traditional *halqa* practice. The play becomes a festive event that demands a collective participation. (p. 78)

In history, Al-halqa seemed to be a ‘dangerous’ evolving open-public site of hybridity to the French colonials. The hybrid form and content of storytelling theatre were, Amine and Carlson (2008) observe, “viewed with much suspicion by the French for its frequent challenges to authority. Thus, both stories and storytellers were heavily censored” (p. 81) in colonial Algeria (1830-1963). As a result, I bring these two forms into my *Aragoze Trilogy* as they have substantial implications and complications to social and political foundationalism. I read them, in my trilogy, as unfinished improvisational scripts that give artistic virtuosity the freedom to perform different roles freely.

My utilisation of tours, auction, parades, and interviews, in this trilogy, take place in the circular form of Al-halqa theatre, through which performers circle the audience from all sides and in-between. This liminal site is not a specific form of space, and the tour and interview performances may take any form of interaction at any time. My deployment of Al-halqa as an active, as Amine and Carlson (2008) put it, “emerging site of negotiation” intends to explore agency, hybridity, and liminality between audience gatherings and their interactions with the performers as it does not erect the fourth wall between performers and audiences. The removal of this separatist-wall made those miniatures a binary-opposition-free-zone and opened them to a wide range of music, narratives, songs, and other polyvocalities.

I also suggest enriching this experience of invasion by trespassing the invisible walls the ruling class built in our *khayal* “خيالات” imaginations through shadow theatre. In Bell Twenty-Five, Miniature Eight, I collapse the *Aragoze Trilogy* world from three dimensions toward five, four, and two dimensions. On the three-dimensional stage is the Chef character, who

presents the process of kneading dough for a pita bread. Simultaneously, on the Khayal al-Zill (shadow scrim) or the five- and two-dimensional stage,<sup>71</sup> the two bodies of Ghoul and Aragoze perform the institutional objectification of body and imagination through a miniature of torture. Juxtaposing the auditorium and shadow-scrim stages offers a unique experience of alienation or keeping some distance, not in a spatial sense, but from natural elements on the three-dimensional stage in order to depict and experience various levels of existence and interpretation of kneading dough on the five- and two-dimensional stage (shadow scrim).

In this miniature, the spectators (or actors) can both experience kneading dough by imitating Chef, and associate, simultaneously, with the abstract qualities kneading dough carries. In this miniature, I represent kneading dough conceptually rather than visually. It is a moment of detachment from real visuals to abstraction to see, evaluate, and then interpret things objectively, away from the reality stage (space and time). On shadow theatre of figures, masks, objects, or human body, Jiwan Pani (1986) asserts that “a highly stylized theatre creates an atmosphere which transcends time and space” (p. 100) and this theatre creates “a sort of aesthetic barrier between the spectator and actor. The spectator is discouraged, indeed he [sic] is not permitted to identify with the character” (p. 101). This interplay between the reality of Chef kneading dough for a pita bread and the unreal or shadow play of institutional objectification awakens spectators’ inherent sensitivity to real objects and actors and their represented abstractions. As a result of the juxtaposition of different dimensional theatrical stages, Spectators will not take, then, everything stylised on real stage, for granted, without evaluating and investing in the boundless possibilities of interpretations.

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<sup>71</sup> Shadow theatre is a five-dimensional stage as it is a scrim on the three-dimensional stage. It is also a two-dimensional stage as we can mainly see white and black colours or two sides of a figure, object, or body.

## Use of Historical Figures

### Dialogic and Dialectic Discourses (Dialogues)

I should also refer to the matter of engagement with my creative work's discourses or dialogues. It would be a severe mistake to interpret my appeal to the dialogues of this trilogy as an end in itself as if I am telegraphing a logical argument (with precise answers) or a political concern with power relations imposed on the audience and characters; this is Hegel's<sup>72</sup> monological dialectic. In Hegel's dialectic discourses or dialogues, anyone can recall the construction or the logical steps of an argument leading to the inevitable one conclusion, finite meaning, or the Platonic truth. Uncertainty is precisely my concern.

My goal, however, is to prompt audience and characters to mentally withdraw from their fixated identity images and power relations in those dialogues or situations to continually consider their positionalities objectively and then to liberate the voice of the dialogue; this is a Bakhtinian dialogic discourse, which seeks to preserve "the deep-seated (in-infinite) contextual meaning" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 103) from disappearance.

As a hybrid playwright who unstoppably dances in-between differences or re-emerges from within differences, I refuse to advance specific cultural or political commitments. I am not interested in bringing the audience to agreement. I am not interested in an ideology or a system of beliefs or a particular message or meaning. I am, myself, in an encounter with my trilogy; when I re-engage with those written dialogues, I question 'Are you crazy? How dare you? What do you mean?' and I find that the real source of meaning is diffused and forgotten as greater awareness of possibilities and perspectives is born. In the Bakhtinian sense (1986,

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<sup>72</sup> "According to Hegel X would be identical to X, or the *universal* would be identical to the *individual*, only in the Absolute. Bakhtin's philosophy denies this possibility on the principle that dialogue is unfinalizable in nature". (Dop, 2000, p.10)

p. 146), this is a breathing dialogue that has not yet been resolved or finished. So, the characters and audiences of *Aragoze Trilogy* might think ‘Yaay, we have found the inventible truth of those events’, but other voices and utterances will appear, next, to emphasise the fact that there is no completed conclusion or, as Bakhtin puts it, no ‘last meaning.’ It is about listening, not utterance, refraction, not convergence.

In *Aragoze in a Time of Revolution*, for example, the five characters Aragoze, John Milton, Al-Ma’ari, Taha Hussein, and Homer, are juxtaposed in a clash and collage of discourses about blindness. However, none of their conversational discourses gives an apparent adherence, reference, or even preference to an essential time-bound argumentative ideology of blindness and sightedness; their dialogues are more focused on the margins rather than developing, as Castagno puts it, a “thematic cipher” announcing an individual political or based-theory message. I was not interested, in their dialogues, in resolving the differences in their views about blindness. I was more concerned with finding an identity within their differences, by which I claim there can no longer be something called a completed meaning, system, or identity. Meanings of blindness and sightedness, in those dialogues, are transhistorically incomplete.

Therefore, there is, of course, a rational ontology in my three plays, but there is no patron of inevitable truth or no guarantee of one meaning. The audience, characters, and I are heading somewhere throughout the trilogy. We feel, see and think that there is progress (in time, space, and action), but our all-seeing, feeling, and thinking processes are relative to context and might be attested wrong by the next details or turns in the trilogy; this makes all of us more humble or less judgmental about our claims and calls us to be more tolerantly open to possibilities that we may learn in the next details or revisits.

In other words, blindness does not have one specific meaning, but it carries different connotations in different environments, histories, and agendas. My goal is if I or an audience have had a chance or a role of defining what ‘blindness’ means, after attending the dialogues, it would not be honest to determine blindness as we are all-knowing because our definition is provisional and open to future answers. Ultimately a dialogic or hybrid play, like hybrid identity, is not about shutting down or controlling meaning. On the contrary, I want to preserve us from the cruelty perpetrated by my characters such as ‘Saint,’ Voiceover 1 or ‘Hakawati, who claim, on many occasions, that they know the correct answer or the inevitable truth and want to teach it to us.

My creative work is also saturated with attention to challenge, as Michael Foucault puts it, ‘archaeology’ or ‘genealogy’ of discourse (i.e., knowledge, meaning, or social practice) produced beyond speech genres. Foucault (1981) argues that discourse and its output of meanings, in every society, are usually “controlled, selected, organised, and redistributed by a certain number of procedures” that could disqualify or eliminate other possible meanings and interpretations of a text “to ward off its powers and dangers” (p. 52). Differences disrupt discourse and challenge power that controls and disciplines the public.

Following Foucault’s conclusion of the discursive process of exclusion, I created the “OK Placards Tour” in *Aragoze in a Time of Revolution* to disrupt the order, archaeology, and genealogy of ‘OK’ in one cultural context; in this Detail, I allow puppet characters, rather than human figures, to be auctioneers of the tour on the shadow stage to blur agency. I also deploy tour-rotations of placards in the theatrical form of *halqa*, led by troupes of Adam-Eves and Jinnis, that carry Indian, Thailand, Italian, American, Japanese, Arabic, and French gestures of OK. This intercultural theatrical Detail creates a deviant discourse, outside a monolithic archaeological discourse and outside society, to generate a sense of threat or lack of control and governance over OK dialogue. It is a strategy of resistance against the

audience's predetermined knowledge (reason or meaning). In other words, openness to different cultural perspectives of OK gestures liberates the audience's conscious and unconscious mind from the one hegemonic 'policed' discourse of OK, which is contested or resisted.

The open representation of sexuality and gender is also necessary to create new possibilities. My hybrid trilogy's discourse on sexuality and gender does not make any constraint to differences. It enables new bits of knowledge and urges dissent and resistance. I did not construct many characters such as Aragoze, Hakawati, Ghoul, Adam-Eve, and Jinnis with specific social characteristics of men or women; they have different untraditional roles or relationships; they also cover their individual biological differences with rainbows. Since my concern, as a hybrid, is creating an identity within disagreements, I left those characters' gender and sexuality to be editable so that the trilogy can produce infinite meanings and interpretations.

### **Historicizing Discourse**

I used historicised discourses such as the ancient, but living and entertaining, Sufi whirling tradition, called *sema*<sup>73</sup> as founded by the Sufi mystic Rumi. In her direct dialogue with the audience and the Jinni character named Goul, Hakawati instructs them in the steps of the character Aragoze's repetitive ritual of whirling that involves music, lyrics, and movement and explains to them when they should dance in their life according to Rumi's sayings:

#### **HAKAWATI:**

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<sup>73</sup> This dance was inspired and founded by Mevlana Jalal Al-Din Muhammad Rumi (1207-1273); c.f. Valverde (2018).

It is said that Rumi contends that we dance when we leave behind the flaws, fears, and faintness of the self; you can dance with your beloved anywhere after you leave; Rumi invites us to the infinite: “Dance when you’re broken open. Dance, if you’ve torn the bandage off. Dance in the middle of the fighting. Dance in your blood. Dance, when you’re perfectly free.”

I allowed Hakawati, as Castagno puts it, a ‘special knowledge’ about Aragoze’s whirling movements and its possible functions and meanings. She has a high level of knowledge about interpreting the coded lyrics, foreignisms, and physical movements of Aragoze that also function as what Castagno terms, ‘markers’ or “signals for the audience” (2012, p. 21) to suggest a forthcoming change or new beginning. (I explored those markers earlier when I discussed the structural component of my trilogy. In this section, I highlight the importance of discourse in the making of some characters.)

The reframing of 13<sup>th</sup> Century Rumi’s whirling and lyrics within a contemporary trilogy was an important strategy. It creates an ‘alienated’ context and linguistic unconventionality (e.g., *Ishara min alsama’ bidhra ‘ilaa al-’ard*. A sign from the sky is a seed to the earth) that fashions awareness and attention to the theatrical character of Aragoze as well as to Ghoul and Hakawati. I was initially afraid that such a ritual could re-inscribe the psychological or pathological model of trauma theory if it was not socio-historically contextualised. Therefore, I used the historicised discourse of Rumi, as an example, to indicate that Aragoze’s ritual emerges and re-emerges from a particularised discourse and sense.

Simultaneously, I did not impose on the audience and character (or dancers) any limited contextual meaning. I provided them with a quotation (or a clue) of what Rumi means by dancing, and they must explore and experience it differently. Aragoze’s whirls had different and unlimited meanings such as remembrance, mobility, self-loss, connecting to the infinite,

circulation of events, suspension of structured thought, suspension of politics, suspension of ego-self, discovery, experiencing a different realm of reality, opening up a pathway, or searching for a spiritual goal.

I ground these meanings in some observations that our ecologies and nature, in fact, revolve and evolve. Atoms, planets, bodies, and identities live through cyclical revolutions, as illustrated in the third play *Aragoze in a Time of Revolution*. Whirling or rotation techniques deployed in this trilogy are a recognition and honouring of all the revolutions above, but not limited to such meanings. Such a ritual of rotation and whirling expresses meanings greater than the movement itself.

### **Achieving Polyvocality: Recycling Story Forms – Quintessential Hybrid**

In creating my trilogy, I was the author but rarely the sole originator of textual resources. This is predominantly true in the case of my use of the formalist Bakhtinian device of reworking or recycling classical work or antique story forms. My recycling writing process “begins after an arduous process of selection, arrangement, and formulation. Often, multiple sources and translations provide the core materials” (Castagno, 2012, p. 55). My adaptations of Islamic, Japanese, and Biblical original source texts, however, are “a quintessential hybrid” (Castagno, p. 55) as I employed my novel kaleidoscopic multivocal and polyvocal resources and components to ‘obscure and supplant’ the original texts.

My adaptations of Quranic parables, Asian fables, and Arabic hyperboles in my trilogy covered different techniques, approaches, and variances. For example, my adaptation of the Jonah fish narrative (in Bells 32, 42, and 43), from sacred biblical texts of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, utilises the image of living humans inside a whale and invokes concepts of punishment, disobedience, and mercy. The original sacred texts retell the story of Jonah, a glorified biblical figure, who disobeys or runs away from his God’s order and



swallowed by a giant fish as a divine punishment; Jonah beseeches his God through prayers of repentance, and his God forgave him and gave him another mission to guide populations to the right path.

However, my recreation of the Jonah fish parable included variant theatrical components that replace the original source text; I was not faithful to the original source's structure and characters. First, I shifted the dynamics of the agency from a parable about passive subjects (fish and Jonah) vs. active agent (God), to a fable about active and free agents, through the characters of Mexican Tetra, a blind wise talking fish, and Aragoze, a human who seeks for the inevitable truth. My characters can make their own choices without imposing on them factors of influence such as religion, gender, social class, or the voices of gods that limit their decisions. The character Voicover1, who usually represents the voice of upper authority, played the sub-role of translator and whisperer in the assigned numbered Bells above.

Second, I shifted the focus and tension from a biblical focus on repentance and mercy to my creative work's focus on the multiplicity of meanings. As the dialogic scene continues, the blind Mexican Tetra appears, first in Bell Thirty-Two, during the character Aragoze's journey-play. The Tetra functions to underpin, peacefully, the scene's perspective about blindness and sightedness and revolution. Aragoze takes us immediately to a different time of revolution when Frantz Fanon appears to incite 'the wretched of the earth', including Aragoze, to use armed violence against authoritarianism and colonialism.

Third, I interpolated different interrelated historical and biblical stories to replace the original sources and create a new discourse between the fish and Aragoze. This interpolation also required a constant shift of perspective and voice. For example, their dialogues included wise, and harmonious commentaries about literally blind literary figures such as Homer, Al-Ma'ari, Milton, and Taha Hussein; and a sudden disagreement arose, in Bell Forty-Two, between

them because of Aragoze's violation of an agreement over the mechanism, quantity, and timetable of fishing. In Bell Forty-Two, I utilised Japanese historical accounts of banning eating meat for centuries and a biblical debate about Jewish fishing on Saturdays (Shabbat), which have nothing to do with Fanon's revolution or the biblical Jonah fish narrative except they share the image of a matrix of power.

### **Internet Sources**

My approach to hybrid adaptations of classical texts was both book-based and internet-source based. As a hybrid playwright, my concern is not the linearity, accuracy, or inaccuracy of knowledge but rather the openness to various hyperlinks, as Castagno (2012) puts it, which led me to explore myriad source materials (in both Arabic and English). As the above section reveals, this sort of adaptation thrives on conflating and juxtaposing stories, texts, and figures related to the interaction between fish and human matrices of power. I researched internet-sources beginning with the Jonah fish, then keywords or sites that are associated with it. For example, for Jonah fish, I could get the Quranic parable of Moses and Khider and their fish, which has been lost on the rock (utilised in Bell Forty-Three). I could also get the Quranic parable of some Jews who broke the sanctity of Saturday (or Sabbath) by fishing (utilised in Bell Forty-Three). However, this exploration journey is not exclusive to and should not end with me, the initial facilitator of the texts, but should continue in productions, in which directors, spectators, or actors, are encouraged to continue to find resonances on the theme that work for them and their particular production contexts and edit the Miniature or Bell's content and form.

## Conclusions

I began this thesis with an account of half-understanding of the in-between state and intercultural experience of Arab and Muslim migrants living across borders between the Middle East and Aotearoa New Zealand. I have ended with a half-full understanding of intercultural identities and in-between experiences in one theatrical representative work, *Aragoze Trilogy*, in which dialogic creative strategies and practices are forged to write intercultural experiences and migration in theatrical form, as a liminal state, and embody migrants' hybridity and subjectivities. I wrote these plays in order to help migrants, in Aotearoa New Zealand or elsewhere, feel seen and understood and invited into a dialogue. In between I have aimed to broaden the historical and geographical scope of the thesis to address some problems or stereotypes that have faced me in the process of playwriting the unique inbetweenness of Arab and Muslim migrants in Aotearoa New Zealand. I tracked some stereotypes of the Arab Mind in the exotic orientalist discourses in both Jordan and Aotearoa New Zealand, the alleged incompatibility of Islam and theatre in the field of contemporary theatre studies, and the universal view of migrants' cultural traumas in the fields of contemporary theatre studies and Eurocentric cultural trauma studies. I introduced some new theatrical approaches that may enrich my thesis' inquiry into interculturalism and used creative approaches to redress the stereotypes' historical imbalances.

Challenging the stereotypical (or monological) claim of the singular 'Arab Mind', I have questioned its reductionism. Reductionism, in Aotearoa New Zealand or elsewhere's political sphere, is monological as it establishes a universal view that picks out only one facet, usually negative, of an Arab (or Muslim) migrant's different complicated layers of identities and treats that aspect as if it applies to every individual or group belonging, by language, race, or

class, to the Arab-Islamic world. This monologism glorifies the authoritarian voice and confiscates the right of the subject, or migrants, to participate and negotiate their identity. It views an Arab woman's identity, for example, through a single lens that picks out only one facet, usually negative, of her multi-layered identities such as sexual preference, gender, race, or class and treats it as if it were separate from the rest of her being. It does not recognise the multiplicity and plurality of identities within her, but shows commitment to the inherent features of women, for example, as passive, maiden, or man-follower.

In the field of cultural trauma studies, I found a similar Eurocentric field of studies that lacks fluidity and openness to different readings of Arab and Muslim traumas. It establishes a universal trauma theory and applies it to other cultures which, I argue, is an important but insufficient approach. How should Western cultural trauma theories respond to healing ritual practices like Egyptian Zar, Yoga, Native American cleansing sweat lodge ceremonies, Mayan-themed rituals of meditation in the shadow of ruins, Indian Ayurvedic medicine, African rhythmic drumming, Japanese Tai chi, or Chinese qigong? Are we excluding those rituals or considering them beneath scholarly scrutiny? How should trauma studies understand intercultural theatre as a healing process? I join my voice with those calling for decolonisation of cultural trauma studies to destabilise the workings and writings of classical cultural trauma that display less concern about Othered cultural and historical and moral experiences of perpetrators, victims, and spectators of everyday correlated events of racism, sexism, and colonialism. Instead, the classical cultural theory's causation approach argues, mainly, that one sudden violent or disrupting action, in the past, still impacts the traumatised culture. This approach does not consider Palestinian, Māori, and Pacific nations, for example, or Arab and Muslim migrants whose contemporary memory is working multi-directionally, confronting variant historic memories and accounts of insidious violence, complicities, power

relations, and positionalities all at the same time. In my understanding, classical cultural trauma discussions could benefit from an intersection with new intercultural theatre's non-linear narrative structures and forms that hybridise different cultural elements asymmetrically or kaleidoscopically to become more inclusive and open-minded to other excluded voices. The creative analogy of fractured stories and fluid characters may prompt a shift in awareness of different ways of seeing, that in turn prompts trauma studies to consider other ways of theorising, researching, and healing the traumatised subject.

In addition to the previous findings, many studies of 'Modern' Arab theatre fall into the trap of the orientalist stereotype that deprives Arab-Islamic civilisation of the right to contribute in the development of 'modern' theatre. The stereotype trans-historically and trans-nationally argues about the incompatibility of Islam and theatre, the difficult birth of theatre in the Arab world, or the Arab's lack of interaction with other civilisations that have developed different theatrical and performing arts. In chapter two, I argued the opposite as I documented compelling and resisting voices that demonstrate the continuity of ancient living performing arts, such as *Khayal al-Zill* (Shadow theatre), *Samaja*, *Ta'ziya*, *Kurraj*, or *al-Hakawati* (storytelling) theatre, that provide well developed and unique theatrical devices in different Arab cultures throughout ancient and contemporary history.

As a result of this reductionist monological approach to the so-called Arab Mind, I believe the unique feature of inbetweenness of Arab and Muslim migrants, in Aotearoa New Zealand, necessitates our encounter with concepts of interculturalism, hybridity, and dialogism. In this thesis, I offer the reader innovative practices and strategies through the lens of intercultural theatre to creatively capture the in-between status of Arab and Muslim migrants in Aotearoa New Zealand. Departing from yet also building on and reacting to a range of existing Arab

and Western playwriting forms and techniques, I develop new, innovative structures, non-linear narratives, kaleidoscopic structure, and fluid and multiple characterisations in the three hybrid plays of *Aragoze Trilogy*. This work thus—as Richardson and St. Pierre posit as a key criterion for writing-as-research—offers “a contribution to our understanding of social life” through creating a written artefact that can immerse the reader in an “account of a cultural, social, individual, or communal sense” of another’s experiences (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 1418). My creative work is a dialogic trilogy. It is based on a system of juxtaposing, layering, and hybridising different theatrical and cultural elements as polyvocalities. It creates a theatre that does not, as a monologic play does, repeat or mirror the visible world (in this case of Arab and Muslim migrants) but creates a parallel world that has its own conventions, and that enters into a dialogic relation with the visible world. The dialogue is not determined by plot, but radically free; it is as pending as the relation status between migrants and borders. A key contribution to knowledge is thus this aesthetic novelty. The text is “artistically shaped, satisfying, complex” and it “invites interpretive responses” (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 1418) but it does so in ways that might be unexpected, that will be interpreted very differently by different readers or audiences and that will draw different readers/audiences in at different points and exclude them at different points. Thus, it hopes to give some aesthetic sense of the constant, destabilising culture shock of the migrant, and the many different experiences that entails for different people.

The synergy of conflict and harmony, sense and non-sense, and familiar or unfamiliar in *Aragoze Trilogy* are derived from a combination of recycling ancient stories or characters and different personal and cultural narratives. The trilogy demonstrates clashes of different theatrical styles (Epic theatre, comedy, tragedy, commedia dell’arte, Samaja, Kurraj, Hakawati, Khayal al-Zill). It also stages clashes of language genres as it describes feelings,

narrates stories, debates ideas, persuades and informs someone in different speech genres in various areas of everyday narrations and dialogues.

The trilogy is not protagonist-driven, which breaks with the widely known theatre traditions that use narrative form. Characters play more than one role in conflated or contrasting indefinite worlds and periods. They migrate between different settings (such as being visible bodies or occupying the shadow stage) and they transmigrate different lingual, cultural, and political codes and elements. The action is not causal and there is no (false) sense of resolution or control.

The research is also reflexive. Richardson and St. Pierre (2005, p. 1418) ask, “Is there adequate self-awareness and self-exposure for the reader to make judgments about the point of view?” From my positioning statements in the introduction to the articulation throughout the thesis of my standpoint, I have striven to hold myself accountable to a high standard of reflexivity in seeing how my subjectivity is, as Richardson and St. Pierre note “both a producer and a product of this text” (p. 1418).

Richardson and St. Pierre’s final criteria for the validity of writing-as-research is impact: “Does this piece affect me emotionally or intellectually? Does it generate new questions or move me to write? Does it move me to try new research practices or move me to action?” (2005, p. 1418). It is not for me to conclude on behalf of every possible reader of this thesis as to whether I have achieved this, but it has certainly been my aim to create impact in multiple ways.

I aimed through the intersection of interculturalism or intercultural theatre with homologous fields such as modern theatre studies, oriental studies, and cultural trauma studies to produce a shift in politics and attitudes regarding Arab and Muslim Migrants in Aotearoa New Zealand, or elsewhere. I aimed to prompt critical thinking about and within those fields. I aimed to encourage other migrant writers to consider rejecting the mainstream ‘rules’ of writing and experimenting with form, to see what they could discover. I aimed to help readers feel something of the disorientation and fracture that I and other migrants have felt. I hoped to show one example of writing-as-research as generating a novel and more apt solution to questions of how to understand the trauma that I and others carry within our bodies and find difficult to put into words. I believe I have done this in ways that create an experience that is closer to the ‘truth’ of being a Middle Eastern Muslim migrant in Aotearoa than anything I could locate in existing forms of either scholarly or creative writing.

The research journey has not been straightforward. It has taken a long time, felt incredibly difficult at many points, and has traversed different topics and approaches before finding its own voice. But at the end of the process, I am reassured to read (Green, 2015, p. 3) that creative writing “research as practice is much less linear and rational, planned or designed, than it is emergent, exploratory, recursive, an ‘act of discovery’, of invention”. This rang true for me: it was only when I allowed the playwriting space to function as an inventive crucible that I discovered what the research was really trying to investigate. Green’s work pointed me in turn to Brian Massumi’s, in which I found an exhortation for writing to be understood as a form of improvisational research experimentation: “If you know where you will end up when you begin, nothing has happened in the meantime. You have to be willing to surprise yourself writing things you didn’t think you thought” (Massumi, 2002, p. 18).



It is a limitation of this research that the script has never been workshopped. Even without the restrictions of COVID-19 which have dominated the writing period, however, this was never intended to be a ‘theatre in production’ or ‘performance-based-research’ thesis. It is a creative writing thesis, in which the writing itself is the practice-as-research methodology and mode. Skains (2018, p. 84) notes that “While writers have always been researchers – conducting background research, observing human interaction, analysing literary techniques – creative writing as a field of academic inquiry is a relatively recent emergence”. Nonetheless, it is a legitimate field of academic inquiry and one which, as Green (2015, p. 4) notes, produces “art as an expressive force, a mode of becoming, but also a form of knowledge”. Creative writing as a form of knowledge, as it turned out, was also particularly appropriate to my emerging research thematics given that, as Elizabeth Grosz writes (1999, p. 11) “instead of evoking the criteria of repeatability and the guarantee of outcomes required for industrial and technological efficiency” it offers a research space in which to “endlessly experiment without drawing conclusions, without seeking law-like regularities”. Given that much of my work was conceived precisely in opposition to ‘law-like regularities’, this was in the end the best methodological space for my research inquiry.

The trilogy, given its length, complexity, and deliberate provocativeness, along with the ongoing limitations that COVID-19 has imposed on theatres performing experimental works (most theatres are now looking to perform ‘tried and true’ works rather than take risks), may indeed never be staged in full. But it exists as writing-as-research—as an artefact of reader’s theatre—and will be accessible to all online readers once this thesis is published, from where it can offer an immersive reading experience in the strangeness and slipperiness of an Arab-Aotearoa migrant experience. It offers to expand readers’ experience. It “reveals additional, specific differences in understanding, in the way this creative writer engages with the world,

in how he views his place among other creative writers, and in what he imagines words do, when placed in a certain order and situation” (Harper, 2010, p. xii). Ultimately, it is the creative writing itself that is the proffered new knowledge here. In the words of Russian playwright and poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko (1963, p. 58), “A poet’s autobiography is his poetry. Anything else can only be a footnote. A poet is only a poet when a reader can see him whole as if he held him in the hollow of his hand with all his feelings, thoughts, and actions.”

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**PART II *Aragoze Trilogy* – (Practice Research Project)**



## **Aragoze Trilogy**

**By Ammar Sultan Al-Ma'ani**

*Aragoze in a Time of Mobility*

*Aragoze in a Time of Corona*

*Aragoze in a Time of Revolution*

**Note: The lack of character bios is intentional. Translations may not be accurate.**

*Warning: this trilogy contains adult themes and language that may offend the majority of the world. They do not represent the views of the playwright; he is an observer of events. (However, productions can select the Bells or miniatures that they see as appropriate for their audiences.) The trilogy is also made to be a space of encounters with difference, of dehierarchising control, and of multiple voices. Thus, the author encourages productions in which audiences are supported (by whatever means directors may prefer) to engage with the production through actively intervening, interpreting, translating, editing, and criticising roles, themes, characters, and all different cultural elements.*

*Aragoze in a Time of Mobility*

**Bell One to Twenty-One**

**Miniature One to Six**

*Setting: A floating display of pilgrimage circulating around the Black Rock in Mecca.*

*Time: Time is usually a hierarchical capitalist creation. This play is in a time of mobility.*

## **CHARACTERS**

ARAGOZE

HAKAWATI

GHOUL

MESSENGER

## **TROUPES**

EVE-ADAM

JINN

## **PUPPETS**

NASNAS

TANNIN

AL-MI'RAJ

## **VOICES**

INTERFERER-A

INTERFERER-B

DONALD TRUMP

*(A shadow screen is set for display. This play shifts in between shadow play and absurd theatre settings on a minimalist stage. The shadow stage has a simple source of light reflecting the shadows of humans, props and puppets. Oud music always accompanies whirling movements on the two stages.)*

### **CURTAIN OPENS.**

*(ARAGOZE enters. He wears neutral colours all over with rainbow colours on the breasts and organs to generalise gender. Simultaneously, an Arab belly dancer enters the shadow stage, dancing slow ritual motions.)*

*(ARAGOZE readies himself to perform a whirling Sufi ritualistic dance. He raises his right-hand palm to the sky and at the same time directs his left-hand palm downward. His head is bent over his shoulder. ARAGOZE receives a sign with his right hand and gives it to his left hand while he is rotating counter clockwise.*

*ARAGOZE should be consistent in his dancing movement.)*

**{Miniature One}**

**ARAGOZE:**

*Ishara min alsama' bithra lil al-Ard (Echo.) Ishara min alsama' bithra lil al-Ard. (Echo.) A sign from the sky is a seed to the earth. (Echo.) A sign from the sky is a seed to the earth.*

**{ Bell One}**

*(A bell rings. ARAGOZE runs hysterically. The Arab belly dancer exits. NASNAS enters the shadow stage. It is a half-female human body; one leg, one arm, one breast, half head, half fez, half ear, half nose, half mouth. ARAGOZE & NASNAS are scared.)*

*(ARAGOZE & NASNAS produce sounds of a clock Tik, Tok, Tik, Tok.)*

**VOICEOVER1:**

Excuse me, our dear audience, we will start our journey shortly. It is Miniature One. Aragoze, Nasnas. Let's start. The audience is waiting.

**ARAGOZE:** (Addressing audience.) Assalamualaikum jmhwry alghali.  
Ana ismi ARAGOZE. Hadha mujarad ardh adaa'. La yumathil  
wihat nazar almualaf. 'Ajbaruh a'la kitabatiha.

**NASNAS:** (Addressing audience.) Salam. Peace upon you, my dear  
audience. My name is Nasnas. This is only an artistic  
performance. It does not reflect the views of its author. They  
forced him to write it.

*(They pronounce the 't' in the  
utterance 'what' as 'ta'. It should  
sound /Watif/ rather than  
/Wadif/.)*

**ARAGOZE:** (To himself.) For real? But what if?

**NASNAS:** (Spitting sound) Tfuuuu.

*(NASNAS produces sounds of a  
clock Tik, Tok, Tik, Tok.)*

**ARAGOZE:** What if?

**NASNAS:** (Spitting sound) Tfuuu.

*(NASNAS produces sounds of a  
clock Tik, Tok, Tik, Tok.)*

**NASNAS:** What if?

**ARAGOZE:** (Spitting sound) Tfuuu.

*(NASNAS produces sounds of a clock Tik, Tok, Tik, Tok.)*

**NASNAS:** *(Echo. Shouts.)* What if?

**ARAGOZE:** *(Spitting sound)* Tfuuu.

*(Silence.)*

**ARAGOZE:** I will talk to myself first if I find myself. Tfuuu.

**NASNAS:** Tu es fou. I just want to meet my being once. But what if?

**ARAGOZE:** Tfuuu. I don't care. I was born bigger than my fathers.

**NASNAS:** Tu es fou. But my other half has been dislocated. Tfuuu. Tfuuu.  
Tfuuu.

**ARAGOZE:** And now. *(Echo.)*

*(Silence.)*

**NASNAS:** I can only be half of me.

*(Aragoze produces Tik, Tok, Tik, Tok sounds.)*

**ARAGOZE:** I can only represent seven percent of my whole. What if?

**NASNAS:** I am cut into two, and each section of my two parts lives independently.

**ARAGOZE:** And now. *(Echo.)*

*(Silence.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Tu es fou. Tfuuu. I always wanted to be a worm, though. Tfuuu.

**NASNAS:** Tfuuu. Tu es fou. So that each of my parts will grow up in time to a full body and soul as compensation for the time of loss.

*(Aragoze produces Tik, Tok, Tik, Tok sounds, slowing down the dialogue tempo. )*

**ARAGOZE:** What if? Humans are in loss.

*(Normal dialogue tempo.)*

**NASNAS:** Tu es fou. Loss is life. Tfuuu.

**ARAGZOE:** Life is not loss but lost and lust. Tu es fou.

**NASNAS:** Tfuuu. Even my voice is lost.

*(Aragoze produces Tik, Tok, Tik, Tok sounds.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Tu es fou. At least not as you hear it now.

**NASNAS:** Tu es fou. What if my voice inside my head is different?

**ARAGOZE:** Some of my vocal folds have gone with my confiscated others.

**NASNAS:** Pardon me. *(Echo.)* I am scattered, unlike you.

**ARAGOZE:** Tu es fou. You may or may not access me, but I can access you.  
Tfuuu.

**NASNAS:** But don't worry bro, I am a bit of every one of you. Tfuuu.

*(Slow dialogue tempo.)*

**ARAGOZE:** *(To the audience.)* I am like all of you.



**NASNAS:** Me too.

*(Silence.)*

*(Normal dialogue tempo.)*

**NASNAS:** What if?

**ARAGOZE:** Tfuuu. I feel that my current mind is processing some operations, which are logical to others but totally meaningless to me.

**NASNAS:** Tu es fou. I am not sure how the other 83% of the other half is operating. The good thing about splitting me is that the earwax blockage can be removed easily from both sides, and I can carefully listen to many voices. Tfuuu.

*(Silence)*

**ARAGOZE:** Tu es fou. I can sell the earwax to the industry to manufacture it and then use it to illustrate manuscripts of multivocal powers through the ages.

**NASNAS:** What if?

**ARAGOZE:** Tfuuu.

**NASNAS:** I had a gaze from different lenses.

**ARAGOZE:** Mosquitooooo. Wez, wez, wez, wez. *(Hysterical laugh.)* But what if? Tfuuu. Different people had a gaze from my lenses?

*(Slow dialogue tempo.)*

**ARAGOZE:** What if? They are monkeys and donkeys?

*(Normal dialogue tempo.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Tfuuu. In the apparent public spaces our orifices, breasts, penises are in the control of cameras.

**NASNAS:** Tfuuu. They usually appear full.

**ARAGOZE:** Although they are culturally made half-sexy organs.

**NASNAS:** We have one leg.

**ARAGOZE:** And one arm.

**NASNAS:** We can whirl.

*(NASNAS whirls.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Too much. Tfuuu. I am dehydrated. Fuck the earwax. *(To audience.)* May I have a cup of water? A cup of water, please, I am dehydrated. Am I talking to a dead corpse? Never mind.

*(Oud music. Arab belly dancer enters the shadow to dance.*

*NASNAS exits. ARAGOZE whirls.)*

**ARAGOZE:** A sign from the sky is a seed to the earth. *(Echo.)* *Ishara min alsama' bidhra 'ilaa al-'ard.*

**{ Bell Two }**

*(The bell rings. The shadow light is flickering. Arab belly dancer exits. NASNAS enters the shadow. Sounds of horse racing footsteps are followed by overlapping sounds of panting. ARAGOZE hastens to his show.)*

**VOICEOVER 1:** *(Distant, Low Echo.)* Yes, I will create inheritors; a consecutive hierarchical authority upon the earth.

**ARAGOZE:** *(Short breath.)* Ladies and gentlemen! Welcome, again, to my show. I am your host, Aragoze.

**NASNAS:** I am Nasnas.

**ARAGOZE:** Aragoze could be a master name or a stigma. *(Laughs.)*

**NASNAS:** The name has two syllables.

**ARAGOZE:** The first syllable is Ara; it means to see, and the second syllable means couple. I can see a couple of me. *(Laughs.)*

**NASNAS:** The first syllable Nas means people, and the second syllable Nas also means forget. Forgotten people.

*(Laughs.)*

*(Silence.)*

It's not funny. Let's go to our Guess Who, Guess What.

**ARAGOZE:** *(Echo.)* Hello, can you hear me? *(Echo.)* Hello! ... Hello!

*(Pause.)*

Welcome back to The Aragoze Show.

**NASNAS:** I will take you now ... *(Echo.)* Hello, can you hear me? I ... I will ... *(Echo.)* Hello! ... Test ... Test ... Test. Three, Two, One, Zero.

*(Sounds of Explosions.)*

*(Awful Cries.)*

*(Silence.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Welcome back, I will take you now to nine thousand miles from where we are to the so-called Holy Land.

**NASNAS:** A friend of mine is an Arab Muslim.

**ARAGOZE:** His, her, his, his tribe name is Curia in Latin.

**NASNAS:** Or Curé in French.

**ARAGOZE:** Or Khory in Arabic. It means the saint or the servant of a church.

**NASNAS:** Her, his, her, his ancestors were originally from Bethlehem, Near Jerusalem,

**ARAGOZE:** And they were also originally from Moses Valley in Southern Jordan.

*(Hysterical laughter.)*

*(Silence.)*

*(ARAGOZE & NASAN runs slowly as he speaks his dialogue slowly.)*

**ARAGOZE:** They are still searching for that hole in that land.

*(ARAGOZE and NASNA run hysterically, with fast-paced dialogue.)*

**NASNAS:** Oh Shit, shit, shitty, shat, shati, lots of holes.

**ARAGOZE:** Since Byzantine ...

**NASNAS:** Nations came to shit in this land.

**ARAGOZE:** Including yours.

*(Silence.)*

*(ARAGOZE runs slowly, with slow dialogue.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Every nation in this life leaves its inhabitants cleaning and fixing their shits.

**NASNAS:** Shits, shitty, shatty, shatta, shatti.

*(Music plays the first two lines of a jazz song named Shatti Ya Denyi by Fairouz. She is a well-known Lebanese vocalist. ARAGOZE dances Jazz dance moves.)*

*(Transliteration of Lebanese Arabic accent and Translations are projected.)*

Arabic Transliteration	English Translation
Shatti Ya Denyi tai zeed Mawsimna oo yehla,	Life, Rain please! so that our season be good.
Tid-fo' myi wi zar' jdeed b-ha'litna ya'la, Haaaaaa	Blow water that makes our plants prosperous.

*(Silence.)*

**NASNAS:** Shits, shitty, shatty, shatta, shatti.

**ARAGOZE:** Rain, Rain, Rain, Rain, Rain, Rain.

*(ARAGOZE and NASNAS run hysterically, with fast-paced dialogue.)*

**NASNAS:** Indeed, every single nation (em—)

**ARAGOZE:** Western (em—)

**NASNAS:** Or Eastern (em—)

**ARAGOZE:** Has literally made (em—)

**NASNAS:** FIGURATIVELY.

**ARAGOZE:** Literally.

**NASNAS:** FIGURATIVELY.

**ARAGOZE:** Well, look!

*(ARAGZOE turns his ass to the audience and bows. NASNAS stares.)*

*(Slow dialogue tempo.)*

**NASNAS:** OH boy, it is a fucking literally and figuratively big hole ...

*(Normal dialogue tempo.)*

**ARAGOZE:** In that land. Every Nation!

**NASNAS:** Nation, Nashino Harban!

**ARAGOZE:** Nashino Harban!

**NASNAS:** Indeed, it is holey. Ho,leeee, OOO.Leee

**ARAGOZE:** *(Lamenting.)* OOO.LEEEE. OOO.LEEEE *(He beats his head with his hands.)*

*(ARAGOZE runs. Fast dialogue tempo.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Now, Moses is the prophet of Judaism. Jordan is part of the Holy Land where Jesus, the prophet of Christianity, was baptised by John the Baptist in English, Yahya or Yohana in Arabic.

*(ARAGOZE runs hysterically, with fast-paced dialogue.)*

**NASNAS:** If you are a non-Arabic speaker (em—)

**ARAGOZE:** The sound ‘H’ in the word Yohana will sound (em—)

**NASNAS:** ‘Kh’(em—)

**ARAGOZE:** Well, it does not sound (em—)

**NASNAS:** ‘K’.

**ARAGOZE:** It sounds like the first step before ejecting saliva from one’s mouth.

**NASNAS:** I am sorry if your vocal folds are not well trained.

*(Silence.)*

*(ARAGOZE and NASNAS run hysterically, with fast-paced dialogue.)*

**ARAGOZE:** His name was Yohana.

**NASNAS:** Her ancestors were Christians.

**ARAGOZE:** They are Muslims.

**NASNAS:** They are Christians.

**ARAGOZE:** His wife is an Arab.

**NASNAS:** His wife is a Muslim.

**ARAGOZE:** Her ancestors were Jewish.

**NASNAS:** They are Muslims.

**ARAGOZE:** They are Jewish.



**NASNAS:** Their kids do not know.

**ARAGOZE:** Why should they know?

**NASNAS:** It is a tac ... tac ... tactic.

**ARAGOZE:** Tac, tok, tik, tok, tik, tok, tik, tok.

**NASNAS:** Tu es fou. Tfuuu.

*(Silence.)*

*(ARAGOZE runs hysterically,  
with fast-paced dialogue.)*

**ARAGOZE:** My friend's ancestors have emigrated from Bethlehem ...

**NASNAS:** To Moses Valley.

**ARAGOZE:** Back and forth.

**NASNAS:** Wez wez wez wez.

*(ARAGOZE sounds and moves  
like a duck.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Wez wez wez wez.

**NASNAS:** They did that many times throughout history.

**ARAGOZE:** Wez wez wez wez.

*(ARAGOZE makes a whispering  
gesture.)*

**NASNAS:** Wez wez wez wez.

**ARAGOZE:** And that depends on the assholeness theory of relativity.

**NASNAS:** Every one of us ...

**ARAGOZE:** Is an asshole to an extent.

*(Silence.)*

*(ARAGOZE runs slowly, speaks in a scary voice.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Ages ago, the Jinni diggers took turns to rape both Bethlehem and Jordan.

**NASNAS:** They started to return some of the land's ownership rights to its ancient inhabitants.

**ARAGOZE:** However, you had to be a Jinni to gain that right at that time of history.

**NASNAS:** Under Jinni rule, lands were only for Jinnis.

*(ARAGOZE runs hysterically, fast-paced dialogue.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Anyway,

**NASNAS:** Anyway,

**ARAGOZE:** Anyway, the Khory family experienced social injustices under the Jinni laws as their surnames could not help.

**NASNAS:** They were still called after the remnants of the Franks, the Crusaders, although they were also Muslims. *(Laughs.)*

**ARAGOZE:** But this kaleidoscope is insufficient to the Jinni. (*Hysterical laugh.*)

(*Silence.*)

(*ARAGOZE runs slowly, slow dialogue.*)

**ARAGOZE:** It's not funny ... I am not laughing because of their tragedy ... Pardon Me. But some ants are tickling my tip-toes. (*Hysterical laugh.*)

(*Silence.*)

**ARAGOZE:** The head of the family, Khaleel, a nickname of the Prophet Abraham, plotted to gain his family's rights of ownership back.

**NASNAS:** It is a fucking thousand years of residence in this region since the First Crusade in 1099.

**ARAGOZE:** Alf sannih only!

**NASNAS:** Fukat!

**ARAGOZE:** Only!

**NASNAS:** Fukat!

**ARAGOZE:** Only!

**NASNAS:** Fuckat!

**ARAGOZE:** Fuckat! (*Shouts angrily.*)

(*Silence.*)

*(ARAGOZE runs calmly with calm dialogue.)*

**ARAGOZE:** So the family decided to move again to Moses Valley and changed the family name to the governance name. This was a very common habit by the region's inhabitants – to be called by their city's name.

*(ARAGOZE and NASNAS run hysterically, with fast-paced dialogue. ARAGOZE opens his arm as if he seizes something.)*

**NASNAS:** Khaleel was an old man.

**ARAGOZE:** He ran.

**NASNAS:** Ran.

**ARAGOZE:** Ran.

**NASNAS:** Ran.

**ARAGOZE:** Ran.

**NASNAS:** Ran.

**ARAGOZE:** He went to the Land Registration Unit.

**ARAGOZE:** He ran.

**NASNAS:** Ran.

**ARAGOZE:** Ran.

**NASNAS:** Ran.

**ARAGOZE:** Ran.

**NASNAS:** He opened the door.

**ARAGOZE:** He ran.

**NASNAS:** Ran.

**ARAGOZE:** Ran.

**NASNAS:** Ran.

**ARAGOZE:** He met with the land revenues guys. He ran.

**NASNAS:** Ran.

**ARAGOZE:** Ran.

**NASNAS:** Ran.

**ARAGOZE:** Ran.

**NASNAS:** He said, 'I am a Jinni'.

**ARAGOZE:** He ran.

**NASNAS:** Ran.

**ARAGOZE:** Ran.

**NASNAS:** Ran.

**ARAGOZE:** He passed away.

*(Silence.)*

*(ARAGOZE runs calmly, but speaks with a scary voice.)*

**NASNAS:** He was publicly known as a Jinni.

**ARAGOZE:** At his funeral ceremony, they washed his body.

**NASNAS:** *(Echo.)* And found out the inevitable truth. *(Laugh.)* Do you want to know what the inevitable truth was?

**ARAGOZE:** *(Echo.)* Stay tuned after the ad. *(Echo.)* Hello, can you see me?  
*(Echo.)* Stay tuned after the ad.

*(Great silence falls.)*

*(Oud music. Belly dancer enters the shadow stage. NASNAS exits. ARAGOZE whirls.)*

**ARAGOZE:** A sign from the sky is a seed to the earth. *(Echo.)* *Ishara min alsama' bidhra 'ilaa al-'ard.*

### **{ Bell Three }**

*(The bell rings. HAKAWATI enters the stage riding a bicycle and GHOUL enters the shadow stage. ARAGOZE exits.)*

*(HAKAWATI is a storyteller. She wears neutral clothes. She faces*

*the audience. GHOUL is a  
transformative Jinni.)*

**HAKAWATI:** Hello, can you see me? (*Echo.*) Hello!

**GHOUL:** (*Whispers.*) Hakawati! What do you think the inevitable truth was? Tell us a story.

**GHOUL:** (*Whispers.*) Tell us a story ...

**GHOUL:** (*Whispers.*) Hakawati! What do you think the inevitable truth could be?

*(HAKAWATI runs hysterically,  
with a fast-paced monologue.)*

**HAKAWATI:** (*To herself.*) Excuse me. We just started the show, and you are disturbing us. We are trying to do the job.

*(Silence.)*

*(Slow.)* Ah, it seems I have illusions again.

**HAKAWATI:** (*Fast-paced.*) Could anyone in this world take this out of my brain? It is wasting the audience's and my time. They can't wait any longer.

*(HAKAWATI runs slowly, with  
slow dialogue.)*

*(To herself.)* I am already having enough of this shadow of imagination.

*(Silence. She sits like an Asian  
Yogi on the bicycle chair for  
mindful meditation.)*

What was your question again?

*(Silence.)*

**HAKAWATI:** Last time, I mentioned that Aragoze's friend lives twelve thousand miles from his place.

**GHOUL:** *(Whisper.)* But Aragoze said nine thousand miles, yesterday!

**HAKAWATI:** *(To herself.)* I can't disagree. That distance was from his own place at that of time of speech.

*(Light Flashes.)*

**GHOUL:** *(Slow. Whisper.)* What do you think?

**HAKAWATI:** What is ...

**GHOUL:** Is there? ...

**HAKAWATI:** I think ...

**GHOUL:** I don't ...

**HAKAWATI:** Do you know?

**GHOUL:** Well ...

**HAKAWATI:** He said ...

**GHOUL:** The inevitable truth was ...

**HAKAWATI:** It could be ...



**GHOUL:** It is ...

**HAKAWATI:** *(To the audience.)* Once upon a time ...

*(Light is still.)*

*(ARAGOZE enters the shadow stage, wearing a fez. GHOUL and other JINN puppets form an audience, entering the shadow stage to hear the rest of the story from ARAGOZE, whereas HAKAWATI is storytelling to the main audience.)*

**HAKAWATI:** He welcomes his guests and said, ...

**ARAGOZE:** Ladies and gentlemen Welcome, again, to my show.

**HAKAWATI:** Let's go to our Guess Who, Guess What.

**ARAGOZE:** Guess what happened to my friend's grandfather.

**HAKAWATI:** Who passed away, publicly known as a Jinni. But at his funeral procession the guys found ...

*(Silence.)*

**GHOUL:** *(Whispers.)* What did they find?

**HAKAWATI:** *(Calling out.)* Can no one bring a cup of tea to me? My throat is getting sore.

**GHOUL:** ARAGOZE! What did they find?

**ARAGOZE:** Guess what they found, my darling audience ... they found ...

**HAKAWATI:** *(To herself.)* If today's storytellers were like Shahrazad in One Thousand and One Nights, everyone would rush to serve me.

**GHOUL:** ARAGOZE! What did they find?

**ARAGOZE:** They took off his clothes to find ...

**HAKAWATI:** *(Shout to the audience.)* I am not a virgin female. *(Silence)* And I am not here to comfort your monarchies and peruse narrations of your legends. I am a thinker.

*(Silence falls. Sound of heartbeats.)*

**ARAGOZE:** They found the cross was still on his chest.

**GHOUL:** We thought ...

**HAKAWATI:** I mean ...

**GHOUL:** We waited for the surprising factor in your fucking boring chronicle. I am sorry to say that but fuck you.

**ARAGOZE:** I am telling you a factual thing dude.

*(HAKAWATI and ARAGOZE run hysterically, with fast-paced dialogue.)*

**HAKAWATI:** *(To the audience.)* Well, the whole thing was plotted perfectly.

*(Silence)*

**ARAGOZE:** Some of the official guys were trying to renegotiate with the living relatives.

**HAKAWATI:** But no one can subdue this family, who inherited all lands by law.

**ARAGOZE:** And some would ask ‘why didn’t they subdue them’?

*(ARAGOZE runs at a normal speed, with normal-paced dialogue.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Because they are three in one.

**GHOUL:** Three in one! Were they like the three Musketeers, heroic swordsmen who fight for impartialities? Or do you mean the trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit?

*(HAKAWATI and ARAGOZE run hysterically, with fast-paced dialogue.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Can’t you remember?

**HAKAWATI:** My friend was Arab.

**ARAGOZE:** Franko.

**HAKAWATI:** Christo.

**ARAGOZE:** Muslim.

**HAKAWATI:** Jew.

**ARAGOZE:** Secular.

*(Light flashes. Puppets get scared  
and cry 'secular, help!' ...  
Silence.)*

**HAKAWATI:** Do you know what I mean?

**ARAGOZE:** I mean it ...

**HAKAWATI:** He means ...

**ARAGOZE:** I mean ...

**GHOUL:** Wez, Wez, Wez, Wez.

**HAKAWATI:** *(To the audience.)* I mean his train of life passed through different stations.

**ARAGOZE:** Khory's family returned their lands.

**HAKAWATI:** And then they scattered again.

**ARAGOZE:** Some remained Muslims in Maan south of Jordan.

**HAKAWATI:** Some of them became active in the Muslim brotherhood.

**ARAGOZE:** And one was offered the Ministry of Justice.

**HAKAWATI:** But he rejected it as he was a man of principle.

**ARAGOZE:** Part of justice is to be unjust.

*(Silence.)*

**HAKAWATI:** Others travelled to Amman in the centre of Jordan.

**ARAGOZE:** And others migrated to the north of Jordan.

**HAKAWATI:** And some returned to Beit Jala.

**ARAGOZE:** In Bethlehem.

**HAKAWATI:** Near Jerusalem.

**ARAGOZE:** In Palestine.

**HAKAWATI:** FUCK Donald Trump of the US.

**ARAGOZE:** FUCK Arab oil.

**HAKAWATI:** And the Deal of the twenty-first century.

*(Puppet crowd applauds.*

*Voiceover crowd applauds.)*

**ARAGOZE:** He will ... he was ...

**HAKAWATI:** Sorry, this is irrelevant.

**GHOUL:** *(Whispers.)* Is there anyone who knows where his train stopped lately?

*(HAKAWATI runs very slowly*

*with slow dialogue.)*

**HAKAWATI:** I heard one of the Khory's inheritors came recently to New Zealand preaching a silly concept that Earth is a fucking holy land.

*(ARAGOZE runs and speaks  
excited, very fast-paced  
dialogue.)*

**ARAGOZE:** His global message to those who brag about their superiority and oneness is to support their buttocks with a strong wooden or metal stake, driven into the ground so they can sit and listen.

**HAKAWATI:** He was kicked out.

*(Silence.)*

**ARAGOZE:** From Bethlehem.

**HAKAWATI:** And camouflages himself as his grandparent again.

**GHOUL:** Aragoze! Why was he kicked out?

**ARAGOZE:** *(Laughs.)* Because of the assholeness theory of relativity.

**HAKAWATI:** His absurdism makes some people awry and impatient.

*(ARAGOZE holds a hair and  
bends and extends it.)*

**ARAGOZE:** There is a thin hair between his words and their true actions. But most people don't understand.

**HAKAWATI:** Therefore he is rejected in one place for being named after Christian crusaders.

**ARAGOZE:** He is rejected in another place for being named a Muslim.

**HAKAWATI:** He is rejected in other places for being both.

**ARAGOZE:** And for being none of the mentioned.

**HAKAWATI:** However, his parents are also smart to call him Ammar.

**GHOUL:** (*Whispers.*) What does Ammar mean? And why is that a smart decision?

**HAKAWATI:** Ammar is a boy's name, it means long-lived one who brings a place back to life.

**ARAGOZE:** In other words, the one who repairs destroyed lands.

**GHOUL:** What did you intend by using Ammar as an example in his own play?

**ARAGOZE:** This example may orient many.

**HAKAWATI:** And disorient many, sending them astray.

**GHOUL:** Who are the misguided then?

**ARAGOZE:** Most people don't understand.

**GHOUL:** (*Whispers.*) What do you mean?

**HAKAWATI:** Aragoze is haunted by these trans-historical traumatic events.

**ARAGOZE:** Do you understand what I mean?

**GHOUL:** Yes, we do.

**HAKAWATI:** Aragoze is haunted by the levels to which he was used to repeating those events on every occasion, alone or in public spaces, on and on to a certain time. Till Aragoze received a warning. Indeed, Aragoze is a sign.

**GHOUL:** *(Whispers.)* Hakawati! What was the warning? Why is he a sign?

**ARAGOZE:** Touti Touti Khilsit al-hatouti, hilwi wala mal-touti.

*(GHOUL and JINN puppets exit.*

*Oud music. ARAGOZE whirls. A*

*butterfly, fly, bee, and bird*

*puppets enter flying in a circle*

*behind the shadow screen.)*

**HAKAWATI:** The story ends. The story ends for now. This imagination would drive my mind out of my head to land on my hand. I will be back to you, my dear audience. My throat is sore.

*(HAKAWATI exits.)*

**ARAGOZE:** A sign from the sky is a seed to the earth. *(Echo.)* *Ishara min alsama' bidhra 'ilaa al-'ard.*

### **{ Bell Four }**

*(The bell rings. ARAGOZE runs,*

*horrified, slapping his head,*

*hands, face, and thighs in turn. At*

*the same time, all the puppets are*

*scared. Shadow-light flashes.*

*Sounds of panting.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Oh, my heart, even the walls have ears.



*(ARAGOZE picks up the call.  
GHOUL enters shadow stage,  
transformed to slithering worm,  
attacking flying puppets. Flying  
puppets exit.)*

**GHOUL:** *(Angrily.)* Stop questioning.

**ARAGOZE:** *(Repeat. Echo.)* I ...

**GHOUL:** Will stop digging deep for facts and realities.

**ARAGOZE:** *(Repeat. Echo.)* I ...

**GHOUL:** Don't believe what you see.

**ARAGOZE:** *(Repeat. Echo.)* I ...

**GHOUL:** Don't believe what you think.

**ARAGOZE:** *(Repeat. Echo.)* I ...

*(Police siren.)*

**ARAGOZE:** We. We. We. Wewewewew.

**GHOUL:** *(Echo)* Don't believe what you hear.

**ARAGOZE:** I want to say ...

**GHOUL:** HUSHSHSH! Don't say what you want to say.

*(GHOUL exits. Sad oud music in  
the background. ARAGOZE feels  
depressed and agitated.)*

*ARAGOZE sits exhausted.  
Shadow screen reflects water  
drops and a lit candle bigger than  
ARAGOZE.)*

*(ARAGOZE slows down the tempo  
of dialogue and then increases the  
tempo at regularly occurring  
intervals.)*

*(Sounds of water drops and  
burning.)*

**ARAGOZE:**

Hand in the water. Hand in the fire. *(Pause.)*

Hand in the water. Hand in the fire. *(Pause.)*

*(Shouts.)* We have no option but to admire.

*(Silence.)*

Hand, in the water, sees refugees. *(Pause.)*

Hand, in the water, sees refugees. *(Pause.)*

*(Shouts.)* Pull me up. Please. Please.

*(Silence.)*

A drowning child's hands holding up seas, *(Pause.)*

A drowning child's hands holding up seas, *(Pause.)*

*(Shouts.)* Giving middle fingers to us. OMG freeze, freeze.

Hand hears oppressed detainees,

Facing bravely.

Punching.

Drowning.

Dripping.

Pumping.

And dunking.

Me, everyone 'r watching.

Humping.

And dumping.

Detainees' mouth is squeezed open or forced.

With pincers, no, no, no, the nose is closed.

*(Shouts.)* Fill his cavities with water or urinate.

*(Shouts.)* Don't stop it. Keep doing it. Mate!

Nations are battered.

Humans are estranged.

Laws have chattered

Climates have changed.

*(ARAGOZE lights a candle.)*

Hand in the water. Hand in the fire.

Have no third option available to admire.  
In the fire, hand touches warmth and amity.  
“Hello, brother” rages oceans of calamity.  
Christchurch shooting had no reason,  
But it is a well-planned sparky jazzy treason,  
Oh yeah, authorities have hit a full-gain season,  
Prayers, hugs, kisses, sex, funds, fame,  
In the fire is a hand pruning saw,  
For slicing Parrhesiastes’ limb and bone,  
A lie is detected by licking a hot rod,  
Or swearing an oath by the light of God.

*(MESSENGER enters;  
ARAGOZE exits. MESSENGER  
speaks jumbled French language  
and French with an English  
accent. She delivers hyperboles  
and pictorial expressions  
reflected in actions on the  
shadow screen.)*

**{Miniature Two}**

**MESSENGER:**

*(French.)* This is Miniature Two. My dear audience. This is just a performance. Do not do this at home: Salut, je suis votre messenger. Hi, I am your messenger.

*(A display of a falling body.)*

Celui qui tombe du ciel embrasse la terre. He who falls from the sky embraces the earth.

*(A display of riding a human.)*

Celui qui vous chevauche ne se soucie pas de votre douleur. He who rides you does not care about your pain.

**MESSENGER:**

*(A display of riding a wall.)*

Celui qui est agité doit se casser la tête avec un mur. He who is agitated should smash his head with a wall.

*(A display of a donkey.)*

Celui qui ne peut pas battre un âne écrase sa toile de selle. He who cannot beat a donkey crushes its saddle cloth.

*(A display of a giraffe.)*

Celui qui lève les yeux et surveille peut se casser le cou. He who looks up and monitors may break his neck.

*(A display of someone putting their head in the sand.)*

Celui qui nie les périls doit protéger sa tête. He who denies perils should protect his head.

We can call this the Theory of We Shall be Alright!

*(ARAGOZE enters the stage,  
whirling. Oud music.  
MESSENGER exits.)*

### **{ Bell Five }**

*(The bell rings. ARAGOZE picks  
up the call.)*

**ARAGOZE:**

How am I? Praise to God, all is good. I am satisfied if the worm is long-lived. The worm is awakening the human species to the inevitable truth. We shall be alright! *(Hanging up call toot, toot.)*

*(Announcing to the audience.)* My dear audience, our heroes are coming and please join with us and perform twerking. Free yourselves.!

*(A parade of EVE-ADAM and  
JINN troupes enter to perform al-  
halqa performance; performers  
cross the borders of the main  
stage to join the audience.  
MESSENGER & NASNAS enter  
the shadow stage for an*

*announcement. MESSENGER sits in a yoga style and makes announcements in broken Indian language and English with an English accent. MESSENGER carries a small hand-drum, beating it between sentences.)*

**MESSENGER:** Haay, main tumhaara eeshvar se doot hoon. baichalar oph laiph proses 2015–2020. (*Drumbeat.*) Pahala: jo purush mahilaon ke nitambon ko pasand karate hain. . (*Drumbeat.*) Hi, I am your Messenger. Life Procession Graduates 2015–2020. First: Men who adore women’s buttocks.

*(ARAGOZE puppet joins JINN.)*

**JINN:** Twerk bitches.

**EVE-ADAM:** Men are riches.

**JINN:** We shall be alright! Let it go! Hey, Hoo, Hey, Hoo.

**EVE-ADAM:** We shall be alright! Let it go! Hoo, Hey, Hoo.

*(Twerking.)*

**MESSENGER:** Doosara: jo mahilaen purushon ke nitambon ko pasand karatee hain. Second: Women who love Men’s’ buttocks.

*(ARAGOZE joins JINN.)*

**EVE-ADAM:** Who rules the world?

**JINN:** Girls.

**EVE-ADAM:** Who speaks the word?

**JINN:** Girls.

**EVE-ADAM:** We shall be alright! Let it go! Hey, Hoo, Hey, Hoo.

**JINN:** We shall be alright! Let it go! Hey, Hoo, Hey, Hoo.

*(Twerking.)*

**MESSENGER:** *Teesara: vayask jo kishoriyon ke lie raasta roshan karate hain.*

Third: Adults who illuminate the way to Teens.

*(ARAGOZE joins EVE-ADAM.)*

**JINN:** *(Sings to tease.)* Show me the meaning of being a teenager!

**EVE-ADAM:** A cigarette, weed, drugs and rappers.

**JINN:** We shall be alright! Let it go! Hey, Hoo, Hey, Hoo.

**EVE-ADAM:** We shall be alright. Let it go! Hey, Hoo, Hey, Hoo.

*(Twerking.)*

**MESSENGER:** *Chautha: shikshak jo chhaatron ko protsaahit karate hain.*

Fourth: Teachers who encourage students.

*(ARAGOZE joins EVE-ADAM.)*

**EVE-ADAM:** You were born F.

**JINN:** You will live F.

**EVE-ADAM:** You will die F.



**JINN:** We shall be alright! Let it go! Hiz, Hiz, Hiz, Hiz. (*Twerking.*)

**EVE-ADAM:** We shall be alright! Let it go! Hiz, Hiz, Hiz, Hiz.

(*Twerking.*)

**MESSENGER:** Paanchavaan: karmachaaree jo karmachaariyon ko sashakt banaate hain. Fifth: Employers who empower employees.

(*ARAGOZE joins JINN employees.*)

**EVE-ADAM:** Fucking old-machines. Kill your kids, kill your wife and kill yourself. Hiz, Hiz, Hiz, Hiz.

(*Twerking.*)

**JINN:** Another day, another dollar! Mates! We shall be alright. Then, we shall be alright. Hiz, Hiz, Hiz, Hiz.

(*Twerking.*)

**MESSENGER:** Chhatha: pulisakarmee jo naagarikon ka samarthan karate hain. Sixth: Policemen who support citizens.

(*ARAGOZE joins EVE-ADAM citizens.*)

**EVE-ADAM:** Laqad ra'ayna rijal musalahin. We just saw armed men. Pew Pew Pew.

**JINN:** We believe they are supremacists. Pew Pew Pew.

**EVE-ADAM:** Yahmilun ras khinzir mug-too'a. They are carrying a chopped pig head.

**JINN:** Yahmilunaho ‘iilaa bawwabat almaeabad. Are they taking it to that temple’s gate?

**EVE-ADAM:** El-jamiee’a Kahy-yef. All are horrified.

**JINN:** Oh, babe! All are terrorised. Go away faggots. You shall be alright! You shall be alright! Hiz, Hiz, Hiz, Hiz.

*(Twerking.)*

**MESSENGER:** Saatavaan: maata-pita jo bachchon ko paalate hain. Seventh: Parents who cuddle children.

*(ARAGOZE joins JINN children.)*

**EVE-ADAM:** We swear to God! Wallah, Wallah, Wallah. *(stress on L)*

**JINN:** What does He say? madha yaqul?

**EVE-ADAM:** He says you sucked my fucking milk and blood.

**JINN:** Tell him, why did he create us? We shall be alright. We shall be alright. Hiz, Hiz, Hiz, Hiz.

*(Twerking.)*

**MESSENGER:** Aath: sannyaasee ko naitik shiksha dene vaale sant. Eight: Saints who teach pious morals to underages.

*(ARAGOZE joins JINN underages.)*

**EVE-ADAM:** *(Italian Language)* Oh caro, vieni e inchinati al tuo Signore in cielo. Anzi, è il Misericordioso e il Compassionevole. Oh dear,

come and bow to your Lord in the heavens. Indeed, He is the Merciful and the Compassionate.

*(EVE-ADAM saint stimulates their genitals. JINN underages feel curious and shy.)*

**JINN:**

Chi dice che tutti i santi sono lupi feroci? Staremo bene! Staremo bene! Who says all Saints are ferocious wolves? We shall be alright! We shall be alright! Hiz, Hiz, Hiz, Hiz.

*(Twerking.)*

*(JINN, EVE-ADAM and ARAGOZE exit. Shadow screen reflects symbols of what MESSENGER states.)*

**(Miniature Three)**

**MESSENGER:**

*(Local English with a New Zealand accent.)* This is Miniature Three. My dear audience. This is just a performance. Do not do this at home. Hi, I am your messenger.

*(A display of a spoon.)*

**MESSENGER:**

Whoever wants to eat shit should carry a spoon.

*(A display of a cloak.)*

Whoever saw that deceitful guy's cloak should seek refuge.

*(A display of candy.)*

He who deceives you with charming words and actions can control and sell your mind to buy candies.

*(A display of an obelisk.)*

He who eats a sewing needle painfully discharges an obelisk.

*(A display of a bull.)*

If your lover was a bull you should dress in red.

*(A display of the word Amen.)*

He who supplicates to God against his children hates those who reply with Amen.

*(A display of an infant.)*

If a midwife is more affectionate about an infant than the mother the midwife is a hypocritical bitch.

*(A display of a broken cane.)*

**MESSENGER:**

If you cannot bend his arm, kiss it and invoke God to break it.

We call this the Theory of Lying Spices.

*(HAKAWATI enters.*

*MESSENGER exits. GHOUL is*

*now a voiceover whispering*

*surveillance.)*

**HAKAWATI:** In this way, Aragoze shifts and camouflages to cope with this endless structural oppression. Such status requires him to show his colours to survive.

**GHOUL:** Lying is the salt of men and a cube of sugar for women. Shame on those who tell the truth. Wow! Is this the inevitable truth, Hakawati?

**HAKAWATI:** Lying is a feature that could be generalised to all relations in their daily lives. I am just retelling them.

**GHOUL:** Or lying is a social marker that can show off your sophisticated experience at all levels.

**HAKAWATI:** A candid person, in such an environment, is mentally retarded.

**GHOUL:** Dishonest liars are accurate politicians.

**HAKAWATI:** I am not afflicted with any political party. However, it is not erroneous to lie, but it is wrong for people to discover that you are lying. This is the heart of storytelling. Aragoze is not a lie. Aragoze is a sign ...

*(Oud Music. ARAGOZE enters stage whirling. HAKAWATI exits. A belly dancer enters the shadow stage and showing skills.)*

**ARAGOZE:** *Ishara min alsama' bidhra 'ilaa al-'ard. (Echo.)* A sign from the sky is a seed to the earth.

**{ Bell Six }**

*(GHOUL enters the stage wearing lipstick and a blond wig. The bell rings. Belly dancer exits. ARAGOZE hugs and kisses his beloved GHOUL. ARAGOZE sits on his knees. Shadow screen reflects some of ARAGOZE's actions.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Oh, my gorgeous angel!

*(A display of a flying angel.)*

You bless the whole place.

*(A display of a foot.)*

My love in the summer. My love in the winter.

*(Romantically engaged in a slow dance.)*

**GHOUL:** Habibi filseef. Habibi fi shitty.

**ARGAOZE:** My beloved in summer. My beloved in shitty. Your love is like shitty that waters our mouths and plants to bloom.

*(A display of rains).*

**ARGAOZE:** Your footsteps turn hell-places to heavens.

*(A display of flowers.)*

Wherever you step on the ground, a bunch of flowers grows.

**ARGAOZE:** *(A display of flying mustache.)*

If you step on my moustache it will turn into wings, taking me high to the sky.

*(A display of an arrow targeting an eye.)*

Oh, the pupil of my eyes! You slay me with your smile!

**ARGAOZE:** *(A display of a sword and bottle of wine.)*

My slaughterer, my life is an empty bar without you.

*(A display of eyelids.)*

Please, walk on my eyelids.

*(A display of a butterfly.)*

Your footsteps are as exceptionally light as the butterfly.

*(A display of an arrow instilled in a heart.)*

Instil your arrows in my heart so that I would die for your sake.

Love you! Bye.

*(GHOUL exits. ARAGOZE runs hysterically, with fast-paced dialogue. Angrily.)*

God's curse upon that first date.

*(A display of a serpent.)*

She is a poisonous serpent.

*(A display of a lined road.)*

**ARGAOZE:** She darkens my ways and days.

*(A display of an angel and fire.)*

If I chose between her or hell, I would embrace hell without hesitation.

*(A display of a tongue sticking out of a mouth, a bee, and then a shooting gun)*

Could anyone please bite me, sting me, or shoot me in the face as I still hope to wake up from this nightmare?

*(Silence.)*

*(Oud music. ARAGOZE whirls. A belly dancer enters the shadow, dancing.)*

*Ishara min alsama' bidhra 'ilaa al-'ard.* A sign from the sky is a seed to the earth.



**{ Bell Seven }**

*(The bell rings. GHOUL enters.*

*ARAGOZE changes the mood*

*and becomes more romantic.*

*ARAGOZE kisses GHOUL.)*

**ARAGOZE:** The pulp of my heart is the only way to life.

**GHOUL:** People learn from your high values, manhood and love lessons.  
I am such a lucky lady!

**ARAGOZE:** You are my eyes! I can't see without my eyes. I do not want to breathe except your air and perfume. Hey, come over and bring your drinks. You are welcome to my home. The fridge is full.

**GHOUL:** No, babe. My friends are waiting, and I must rush to catch the bus.

*(They exchange kisses. GHOUL exits. ARAGOZE supplicates.*

*GHOUL enters the shadow.*

*Dancer exits. ARAGOZE and*

*GHOUL run hysterically, with fast-paced dialogue.)*

**ARAGOZE:** God damn it!

**GHOUL:** Nothing has changed.

**ARAGOZE:** This is true fucking life. This is the first world yet.

**GHOUL:** It is not a dream.

**ARAGOZE:** This is real.

**GHOUL:** For what sin am I slain?

**ARAGOZE:** (*Shouts.*) For what sin am I slain?

(*Silence.*)

**GHOUL:** Oh God!

**ARAGOZE:** The merciful and the compassionate!

**GHOUL:** Please, let the bus take me to three thousand.

**ARAGOZE:** To nine thousand miles away.

**GHOUL:** Oh God! Thank you for letting friends decline his invitations.

**ARAGOZE:** I have nothing in the fridge

**GHOUL:** And they will not offer me a drink.

**ARAGOZE:** Scoundrels!

**GHOUL:** They are not welcome at all.

**ARAGOZE:** They are all a bunch of liars and fake faces.

**GHOUL:** It is all make-up.

(*Oud music. ARAGOZE whirls.*)

**ARAGOZE:** A sign from the sky is a seed to the earth. *Ishara min alsama'*  
*bidhra 'ilaa al-'ard.*

**( Bell Eight )**

*(The bell rings ... GHOUL enters the shadow holding a dollar symbol. ARAGOZE feels angry and careless.)*

**GHOUL:** I am the tax collector! Hello brother!

**ARAGOZE:** What do you want? You sucked my blood. Do you want me to cut my body into parts so that you can survive?

**GHOUL:** No, Mr Aragoze, we want you to happily live this life.

**ARAGOZE:** Then, leave me alone.

**GHOUL:** Look, I am just a normal citizen like you. This is our nation. Take it easy.

**ARAGOZE:** Wait for a second, please.

*(ARAGOZE turns his butt and then farts.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Takit teezi. *Off-fee*. What else?

**GHOUL:** This is our homeland.

**ARAGOZE:** *(Farts.)* Takit teezi. *Off-fee*. Keeps the reels rolling.

**GHOUL:** Taxpayers are the pillars of the economy.

**ARAGOZE:** *(Farts.)* Takit teezi. Off-fee. So far, we have three farts. In the book of rules, three farts mean certainty. Now, could you please turn around and fuck off from my face?

**GHOUL:** Well, I am sorry to say that escaping may lead you to the courts.

*(ARAGOZE asks GHOUL to wait for a second.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Unfortunately, I could not fart. I was afraid a piece of shit may jump and hump on ...

**GHOUL:** Our nationhood ...

**ARAGOZE:** Huh! Nationhood! *(Laugh.)* What's bloody nationhood?

**GHOUL:** It is our ethnicity.

**ARAGOZE:** Huh! Belonging to a social group that does not tolerate except ...

**GHOUL:** One language.

**ARAGOZE:** One history.

**GHOUL:** One ancestry.

**ARAGOZE:** One myth.

**GHOUL:** One homeland.

**ARAGOZE:** One dialect.

**GHOUL:** One majority.

**GHOUL:** One culture.

**ARAGOZE:** One social treatment.

**GHOUL:** One society and one symbol.

**ARAGOZE:** All are enforced by statehood.

*(Silence.)*

**GHOUL:** Sorry, we need this system so that we can survive.

**ARAGOZE:** I did not pick any of these when I was fucking born.

**GHOUL:** I ... I ...

**ARAGOZE:** I must have spoken to someone overseas when I was an infant.

**GHOUL:** No ...

**ARAGOZE:** When I was a boy.

**GHOUL:** No ...

**ARAGOZE:** When I was a young.

**GHOUL:** No ...

**ARAGOZE:** I am so fragile.

**GHOUL:** Your country has the strongest army in the world.

**ARAGOZE:** I am not going to war with anyone.

**GHOUL:** Your country has the strongest economy in the world.

**ARAGOZE:** I am a commodity to the industry.

**GHOUL:** Your country is number one democracy ...

**ARAGOZE:** That is running only by the oligarchy.

**GHOUL:** Your country is the best education provider in the world.

**ARAGOZE:** That does not borrow or share with any other ethnic line of knowledge of production.

**GHOUL:** It seems you lost your identity.

**ARAGOZE:** Indeed. I am nothing except this fragile national character created in, by, and for the industrial system.

*(Silence.)*

**GHOUL:** We (—)

**ARAGOZE:** That all is orchestrated along with that fucking baby-music that I would love to hear at your funeral ceremony.

*(GHOUL exits.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Anyway, I may excuse this guy as he is forced to do so by those at the top. They are pushing him to jump in the abyss while they are sorting out their own financial papers. For this ass, he howls after us to get his life sorted.

**ARAGOZE:** My blood is boiling from these idiots who come to bet on my loyalty. They would love to steal my bread and resell it to me. Shall I go and kill immigrants to prove my loyalties to the natives, my folks, who strive to preserve their privileges from these faggot talented immigrants who stooped to conquer. Sigh!

*(Oud music. ARAGOZE whirls. A belly dancer enters the shadow, dancing.)*

**ARAGOZE:** *Ishara min alsama' bidhra 'ilaa al-'ard. Ishara min alsama' bidhra 'ilaa al-'ard.*

### **{ Bell Nine }**

*(The bell rings. Dancer exits. GHOUL enters the shadow, wearing a policeman uniform. ARAGOZE feels troubled.)*

**GHOUL:** Hello, Brother! I am an official, but you do not have to know my real name.

**ARAGOZE:** But how do you want me to address you, Sir?

**GHOUL:** Government officials love to stay nameless.

**ARAGOZE:** No problem, Sir. Tax collector just visited me to provide me with some instructions regarding my tax refunds.

**GHOUL:** Yes, please!

**ARAGOZE:** I've just called my lawyer, a few seconds ago, and shamed him for this accidental or intentional mistake. I will still have to figure out this administrative reluctance.

**GHOUL:** Thank you, Mr Aragoze. Our nation relies on you.

**ARAGOZE:** I just cannot believe how I am going to manage all my companies and mega-mansions around the world when we don't have trustworthy human resources.

**GHOUL:** I am sorry to hear that. Reluctance can be generalised almost to all sectors. Countrymen lie to officials, buyers to merchants, customers to craftsmen.

**ARAGOZE:** The opposite is also true.

**GHOUL:** (*Angrily.*) Excuse me.

**ARAGOZE:** I said you are 100 per cent right. Some overseas governments should also understand that if their friends are a jar of honey, they should not lick all the honey at once. Leave some for the dark days.

**GHOUL:** What do you mean?

**ARAGOZE:** (*Kisses the Ghoul's hand.*) I mean that the Government should stay healthy so that they can take control of everything. We really value your deep understanding.

(*GHOUL exits.*)

**ARAGOZE:** I know one thing. His perfume is very familiar to me. I know another thing. Those are thieves who just came and stole my mind. They carried my biological brain in their filthy hands to check if it's working properly or not. The policeman's eyebrows were just a pair of swords duelling over me.



**ARAGOZE:** I am sure he wanted to erase my memory in my brain because he knows if I see him next time, God forbid, I would bend him over by those two hands. I am off now.

*(Oud music. ARAGOZE whirls. Belly dancer enters the shadow, dancing.)*

**ARAGOZE:** A sign from the sky is a seed to the earth. *Ishara min alsama' bidhra 'ilaa al-'ard.*

### **( Bell Ten )**

*(The bell rings. GHOUL enters the shadow wearing an elephant mask, carrying an item to buy. Dancer exits.)*

**GHOUL:** Hello, Brother! How much is this fetish sex flogger toy?

**ARAGOZE:** I swear by the honour of my sister; this piece is the only one of its kind in this market. It is only one piece and the last.

**GHOUL:** I trust you. How much is it?

**ARAGOZE:** For your information, many ambassadors of foreign governments in New Zealand and around the world have used this product in their sexual, national rituals.

**GHOUL:** But why would they do that?

**ARAGOZE:** It's part of their diplomatic mission.

**GHOUL:** Who shall pay for that?

**ARAGOZE:** I can't tell you about that as I have no clear evidence. But they work hard to build bridges among nations through their whoredom.

**GHOUL:** God bless.

**ARAGOZE:** That day, the governor has accepted their credentials and crowned them for their services.

**GHOUL:** Wow! That's cool!

**ARAGOZE:** I heard that today, one ambassador has worked with three different nationalities in the same day!

**GHOUL:** Wow, that's a lot of work burden.

**ARAGOZE:** Yes!

**GHOUL:** Do all the diplomats do the same?

*(GHOUL pays money to  
ARAGOZE.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Thank you for the purchase. May the sex toy inspire your spirit with lightness, cheerfulness and happiness.

*(GHOUL exits.)*

This customer's blood is too heavy so that no one can even tolerate it for a second. He asks too much. He was just thirsty for a talk opening up about anyone's biography. It seems that he has

a lot of time. I would suggest to him the nearest landfill. He can pick up all the flies. Son of a whore. He is asking me if all the diplomats do the same shit. Huh! Well, one should have a worldwide look, and then you can see clearly. I know someone who was assigned as a translator, but who ended up working as an all-comprehensive employee who writes their speeches, analyses politics and media, manages their performance indicators as HR, and writes diplomatic notes, with no additional payments to his basic salary. His reward was simply a few words like thank you and long-live. What blows my mind is what the diplomats were doing? Anyway, my heart is dead now. Let me call Mr Thieve.

*(ARAGOZE is calling.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Hey, where are you my brother from another mother? Nearby? Wonderful! Could you please bring twenty of these unique fetish pieces? I just told a customer that I had the last piece in the market. *(Laughs.)*

You can find plenty of these fetish sex floggers in the storage. Hurry up, money is flowing. Hurry up like light speed, who knows what this damn meaningless life may bring up. Life is treachery.

*(HAKAWATI enters. ARAGOZE exits.)*

**HAKAWATI:** *(To the audience.)* He is uncertain. Aragoze's sense of powerlessness, threatened fate, lack of security and control over

the forces of nature is positioned in this relational structure of social incapacities. This leads to the emergence of illogical, disharmonious and chaotic issues in many people's eyes, especially those who are locked into a certain order—meaning, purpose, logic, certainty, reason and harmony—which have never played acrobatics, vaudeville, and circus.

*(MESSENGER enters.*

*HAKAWATI exits.)*

*(Shadow reflects on what*

*MESSENGER states.)*

**⟨Miniature Four⟩**

**MESSENGER:**

This is Miniature Four. My dear audience. This is just a performance. Do not try this at home. I am your messenger.

*(A display of a horse.)*

Not every horse rider is a knight.

*(A display of a shy man covering  
his organ.)*

He who feels shy from his cousin will never have a girlfriend.

*(A display of a mouse showing  
hands.)*

The horse came to mount its shoe, but the little mouse extended its hand to stand in the hooves' way.

*(Dancer enters the shadow.)*

Dancing starts by moving one step and then incorporating all body parts.

*(A display of opened luggage.)*

In his first travel he lost his luggage.

**MESSENGER:**

*(A display of a bent sword.)*

In his first invasion he lost his sword.

*(A display of a crawling child and a muscled man.)*

Once he sees the light of life, he butts first his parent.

*(A display of a moustache, cigarette and drug syringe.)*

In the beginning, he shows off smoking skills before girls and then he suffers addiction.

*(A display of clothespins hangs up a long human tongue.)*

Overtire your legs rather than your tongue.

*(A display of a stake.)*

He likes arrogance though he sits on a stake.

We can call it the Theory of Tying Flies' Tongues.

*(Oud music. ARAGOZE enters the stage whirling. MESSENGER exits. A belly dancer enters the shadow, dancing.)*

**ARAGOZE:** *Ishara min alsama' bidhra 'ilaa al-'ard.* A sign from the sky is a seed to the earth.

### **( Bell Eleven)**

*(The bell rings. ARAGOZE runs horrified. EVE-ADAM and JINN enter the shadow, wearing college uniforms, carrying a small smart machine. They sing their lines. GHOUL enters wearing a teacher uniform; carrying a cane.)*

**ARAGOZE:** OMG! I have a presentation today. Shall I start now?

**EVE-ADAM:** No. Are you crazy?

**JINN:** What are you talking about?

**EVE-ADAM:** Do you want to look dumb?

**ARAGOZE:** *(Whispers.)* I have a presentation today. Shall I start now? They might have sunk you with their laughs,

knowledge and rich experiences. *(To himself.)* Oh my god, oh my god. The slithers are approaching me.

**JINN:** Would you please bring me a cup of tea?

**EVE-ADAM:** Please make sure you clean your hands and wear perfume.

**ARAGOZE:** Here I am ... You are the wonderful originator of generosity and elegance. When you decide a thing, you just say into it only: Now Be! And it is.

*(ARAGOZE walks around in pride, head up, and speaks arrogantly.)*

**ARAGOZE:** *(To GHOUL.)* Teacher, would you please bring me a cup of tea? Please make sure you clean your hands and wear perfume.

**GHOUL:** *(Laughs)* Are you kidding me?

**ARAGOZE:** *(Serious.)* Of course not!

**GHOUL:** Oh, Gosh! Are you serious?

**ARAGOZE:** Please, make sure you are hygienic.

*(ARAGOZE walks away in pride and then stands next to the shadow of a high-tech machine.)*

*He is impressed and hesitant to touch it.)*

**ARAGOZE:** *(Whispers.)* This machine is so magical. I don't dare touch it. It may suddenly explode on my face, taking me to a world beyond the sun.

*(ARAGOZE looks around.)*

*(Hesitant.)* Yes, yes, this machine is magical, and I used to have it at my mega-mansion.

*(To Ghoul.)* Where is the cup of tea? I will cut all aids.

**GHOUL:** I need two loaves of bread and not one.

**ARAGOZE:** Son of an exploiter! Exploitation is in your blood. Now your body starts to itch and needs more exploitation.

**GHOUL:** Well.

*(GHOUL turns his back to ARAGOZE.)*

**ARAGOZE:** OK. Deal!

**JINN:** Could you please turn on the machine?

**EVE-ADAM:** Many people touched it.

**JINN:** Awe, I am afraid they have not washed their hands.

*(ARAGOZE tries his best, but for no gain.)*



**EVE-ADAM:** Idiot. What made donkeys, like you, understand the smell of roses?

**ARAGOZE:** I am just afraid. It may explode now. I had a machine like this, which exploded a few years ago.

**JINN:** Indeed, this is the first version of its kind.

**EVE-ADAM:** Without my rich people's knowledge,

**JINN:** You would literally live with cows.

**EVE-ADAM:** With camels.

**JINN:** And with sheep.

**ARAGOZE:** *(Aragoze lays face down and bows.)* Be glorified! We know nothing except what you have bestowed upon us. Truly, you are the all-knowing, the all-wise.

*(HAKAWATI enters. All freeze except GHOUL.)*

**HAKAWATI:** *(To the audience.)* The dominant tries to misleadingly instil this emotional feeling or complexity. An illusion of the dominant's superiority by knowledge, art, technology. The superiors think they are transcended to teach and elevate others. Therefore, this sense of inferiority develops other complexities.

**GHOUL:** *(Whispers.)* Complexities? Such as what?

**HAKAWATI:** *(To the audience.)* I just heard the same voice coming from this side. Do you have any comment?

*(Silence falls.)*

**HAKAWATI:** Ah, it is my illusion. This could be a sign.

*(HAKAWATI exits. Oud music.*

*ARAGOZE unfreezes to whirl.)*

**ARAGOZE:** A sign from the sky is a seed to the earth. *Ishara min alsama' bidhra 'ilaa al-'ard.*

### **( Bell Twelve )**

*(The bell rings. All unfreeze.)*

**GHOUL:** Today, in this graduate class, we are attempting to explain two academic articles on pain and shame. First, I would love to hear from Aragoze, who is preparing a presentation. The floor is yours.

**ARAGOZE:** *(Hesitant.)* Ah ... yes ... yes ... it is me. Teacher, do I have to start the presentation from this spot, or where do you prefer?

*(Students' laughter.)*

**ARAGOZE:** *(To himself.)* Oh God, Oh, I wish I had perished before this. What the hell brought me to this place?

**GHOUL:** Go ahead!

**ARAGOZE:** *(Whispers.)* Can I take you aside? I need you for a word. Could you please spare me this presentation? I cannot do it.

*(Breathless.)*

*(GHOUL hits ARAGOZE's buttock with the cane.)*

**GHOUL:** Why? Did you lose your tongue somewhere?

**ARAGOZE:** No sir, but (—)

**GHOUL:** *(Angrily.)* Did you leave your mind at home and come here like a donkey who carries volumes of books?

**ARAGOZE:** No sir, but (—)

**GHOUL:** For what reason then? Oh, mollycoddle of Mama.

*(Students laugh loud.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Look at those students in the corner.

**GHOUL:** What's wrong with them?

**ARAGOZE:** They were laughing for no reason but to mock me.

**GHOUL:** You are telling fairy tales. Let me check the camera surveillance. Well, they did not laugh at all.

**ARAGOZE:** They did.

**GHOUL:** They did not.

**ARAGOZE:** They did.

**GHOUL:** Are you saying I am lying to you? Come and check by yourself.

**ARAGOZE:** No, teacher. I do not want to do that, and you are not lying ... but I swear by the Almighty's life, they did.

**GHOUL:** They didn't! Please go ahead, you are wasting time.

*(HAKAWATI enters. ARAGOZE runs away angrily to exit. EVE-ADAM and JINN students run after him to exit.)*

**HAKAWATI:** *(To the audience.)* In fact, nobody was laughing at Aragoze.

**GHOUL:** Aragoze ran away and couldn't face it. Well, nobody laughed at him.

**HAKAWATI:** Excuse me! How did you get here to the stage? *(To the audience.)* I am sorry, my dear audience.

**GHOUL:** All of us saw them laughing at him.

**HAKAWATI:** It was just an illusion. But you are ruining my storytelling series. Could you please leave? Go off stage.

**GHOUL:** I am sorry. I just thought the stage is open to all. But it seems theatre is also locked into this binary opposition; where you force us to stare and stay silently watching.

*(GHOUL exits the shadow to sit among the audience.)*

**HAKAWATI:** Thank you! Now, Aragoze doubts his own abilities.

**GHOUL:** *(Whispers.)* He listens to those egoistic claims that imply that Aragoze cannot do anything right.

**HAKAWATI:** He even starts to identify with aggressors by calling others like him donkeys as a reference of stupidity and impotence.

**GHOUL:** *(Whispers.)* He would say ‘what made donkeys understand the smell of roses. Indeed, I cannot teach an old dog. Without my knowledge, you would literally live with cows, camels, and sheep’.

**HAKAWATI:** For now, Touti Touti Khilsit al-hatouti, hilwi wala mal-touti.

**GHOUL:** Mal-touti. We need to know more about Aragoze.

**HAKAWATI:** *(To audience)* What do you want to know about him?

*(GHOUL tries to dance and whirl.)*

**HAKAWATI:**

Ah! You would like to know more about the whirling dance. Well, I would love to teach you this by giving simple directions. But I want some audience to join us.

*(GHOUL asks some of the audience to participate.)*

**HAKAWATI:**

My dear audience! Every movement of hands, feet, and head has special meaning and significance. Turning counter-clockwise is evidence of the exchange of night and day, and refers to the movement of the rotation of the planets and the universe; as this rotation represents the movement of life in its rotation around its axis.

Now the dancer raises their right hand and directs the palm to the top. This movement is intended to receive energy and divine light.

**HAKAWATI:**

And at the same time, the left hand's palm is directed downward. This means giving gained energy to the earth to be liberated from worldly desires.

In this way, we become the connection between the sky and the earth, so the two are united through the dancer. Thus, he is consistent in his rotation with the movement of the universe, and all this is intended to ascend to his Lord and communicate with him.

As for the eyes, they look at the floor or turn a blind eye, and the head is bent over the shoulder. It is said that Rumi contends that we dance when we leave behind the flaws, fears and faintness of the self; you can dance with your beloved anywhere after you leave; Rumi invites us to the infinite;

“Dance, when you’re broken open.

Dance, if you’ve torn the bandage off.

Dance in the middle of the fighting.

Dance in your blood.

Dance, when you’re perfectly free.”

**HAKAWATI:**

*Ishara min alsama’ bidhra ‘ilaa al-’ard.* A sign from the sky is a seed to the earth.

*(HAKAWATI whirls to exit.*

*MESSENGER enters. Audience*

*and GHOUL keep dancing.)*

**{Miniature Five}**

**MESSENGER:**

This is Miniature Five. My dear audience. This is just a performance. Do not do this at home. I am your messenger.

*(A display of a cut male organ.)*

He cuts his own organ, and then he sits to remedy it.

*(A display of flies and buttock.)*

He paints his buttock with molasses so that he haunts flies with it.

*(A display of a balloon.)*

He floats on a span of water.

*(A display of balls and a hand.)*

**MESSENGER:**

He wants to carry two watermelons with one hand.

*(A display of a bird.)*

He chases the birds to get bites out of their mouths.

*(A display of torn clothes.)*

He patches his garment from here but pierces it from there.

*(A display of someone drinking  
from his shoes.)*

He drinks beer using his shoes.

*(A display of a dove.)*

He murders victims and walks at their funeral.

*(A display of a cucumber.)*

He chops off heads with a cucumber.

*(A display of applying a cream.)*

He bears faeces from his anus and puts it on his mind.



We can call this the Theory of Sprinkling Death with Sugar.

*(Oud music. ARAGOZE enters the shadow, whirling, carrying a cucumber and stabbing the air. Voiceover of women's awful cries. MESSENGER exits.)*

**ARAGOZE:** *Ishara min alsama' bidhra 'ilaa al-'ard.* A sign from the sky is a seed to the earth.

### **( Bell Thirteen)**

*(The bell rings.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Why did they not have pure sex? Kissing and passions. Why did they allow the sperm lifespan inside her? I wish I was one of the very few sperms to survive. Or at least, I belonged to the sperms of the privileged. Stupid scientists, they knew what I am going to face. They have no hearts to give understanding?

Life is rotating. It will stop at your doorsteps. It does to you what you do to others. I have to end them so no pain will survive to wait for other generations.

*(A spotlight off-stage on GHOUL interviewing the audience who can read their lines on placards. Background national and*

*religious songs are played.*

*ARAGOZE marches.)*

**GHOUL:** Welcome to the radio show. I am a radio presenter. I would like to ask you, Mr Saint, what does the law say?

**INTERFERER-A:** *(Pious male saint voice.)* As a reaction for preserving the dignity of the family, and to cover-up the stigma of shame, we understand the circumstances of Aragoze, being him the killer of his female relatives.

**INTERFERER-B:** *(Pious female saint voice.)* My son, you should know that a woman is like glass, fragile. Any scarification, she is gone. Yea, she is gone, forever.

**GHOUL:** At the end of the Shame Show thanks for our saint, the head of Pussy Legal Department, for these revelations. I have one minute to the end of the program. (**Addressing Audience.**) Mrs Lawyer, do you agree with this?

**GHOUL:** Thank you, my audience. Thanks very much to my guests.

**ARAGOZE:** *(Loudly with pride.)* I receive the heroic knife with my right hand, and I stretch it to the Earth with my left hand.

**GHOUL:** Before we leave, I would like to host Mr Aragoze. He is joining us now live. Wow, welcome to the radio show.

**ARAGOZE:** Thank you for hosting.

**GHOUL:** Many followers around the world sympathise with you? What happened?

**ARAGOZE:** She opened her weak legs to his strong muscled-body. Although she was threatened by his gun, she should not have allowed him. She is sixteen years old and has enough strength. Or at least she could have spared herself if she would have accepted to be married to her rapist. The law articles 308 and 548 preserve her rights.

**ARAGOZE:** The guy was thirsty to have sex with her, toys or animals. This community makes it difficult for him to suppress his whims and desires.

**GHOUL:** And how about your other heroic deed. We saw your video in which you were smoking a cigarette and drinking cup of tea next to her corpse.

**ARAGOZE:** What do you want me to do? First, I tried to chop up her head with a sharp tool, but she did not die and tried to run away. I chased her outside and crushed her head with a big rock.

**GHOUL:** What did the government and the court say?

**ARAGOZE:** I would like to thank them both for exempting me from punishment as I was protecting my honour.

*(Silence.)*

**GHOUL:** I have just interviewed. MR. SAINT and MRS. LAW on my radio show and they get emotionally affected God bless you.

*(GHOUL exits audience arena.)*

**ARAGOZE:** *(With a sense of gratification and satisfaction.)* I don't want to misuse this knife. My dignity and jealousy forced me to do so. All people of mind and understanding surely know which are most worthy of burning.

**ARAGOZE:** They taught us dignity is priceless. In such occasions, the taste of the death cup becomes delicious to whoever drinks it.

*(Silence.)*

**ARAGOZE:** *(Echo.)* Hello! Can you hear me? Hello, can you feel me?  
Tannin, can you hear me?

*(ARAGOZE exits. Set shadow puppetry with a source of light to reflect bodies' movements. TANNIN puppet enters the shadow screen; it is the other half of NASNAS but with six dragon heads attached around the body. Al-MI'RAJ puppet enters the shadow. It is a humanoid rabbit with a longhorn.)*

**TANNIN:** *(Mocks.)* Their speeches are against their actions.

**AL-MI'RAJ:** Aragoze's mental and psychological disorder was interpreted based on biased, dishonest ethnic interpretations that have no

purpose other than to justify the oppression inflicted upon him.  
Put yourself in his shoes. What are you going to do?

**TANNIN:** Who made those interpretations? Why are you defending him?  
He is not your master Alexander the Great, is he?

**AL-MI'RAJ:** I am sorry Tannin, it was a whole climate of violence. Alexander the Great's tense style of interaction was a human source exploited by the industry.

**TANNIN:** (*Angrily.*) The livestock industry and businessmen. You mean ...

**AL-MI'RAJ:** They took advantage of his intolerable pains, created through an oppressive exploitive industry. It seems systematic, structural violence, right?

**TANNIN:** (*Angrily.*) This is another predicament. I am asked to be polite and gentle, and I am blamed for eating people's livestock. In a climate of structural violence, the psychological state turns into various manifestations of persecution.

**AL-MI'RAJ:** Did he not kill you, then?

**TANNIN:** Who? Alexander the Great! Huh!

**AL-MI'RAJ:** What was the deal?

**TANNIN:** The deal was I make him King of the Greeks and I take over the whole Indian Ocean.

**AL-MI'RAJ:** So, it was a lie that he has never lost a battle in his career.

**TANNIN:** Of course, he was a liar. Along with his teacher Aristotle, they distorted the image of the West and East to normalise the US, NATO, UK, New Zealand and Australia's invasions and confiscations of India, Asia, Middle East and the Pacific. They forced a culture that I was trying, with the help of Aragoze's half, to subdue their political whoredom. It was me who wanted to bring the East and West together.

**AL-MI'RAJ:** Why did you all create the dichotomy in the first place?

**TANNIN:** Well, the system of the human industry requires competition—protagonist vs. antagonist, cause and effect.

**AL-MI'RAJ:** Your industry confiscated Aragoze's half.

**TANNIN:** And you offered your ass for the legacy Alex as a gift.

*(ARAGOZE enters the stage  
whirling.)*

**ARAGOZE:** A sign from the sky is a seed to the earth. *(Echo.) Ishara min alsama' bidhra 'ilaa al-'ard.*

### **( Bell Fourteen )**

*(The bell rings. ARAGOZE  
prepares himself showing fighting  
movements.)*

**AL-MI'RAJ:** I heard about Aragoze's heroic deeds.

**TANNIN:** Could you please narrate some to me?

*(ARAGOZE starts the fight.)*

**AL-MI'RAJ:** One day, he met Alexander the Great, the King of Greece. They were slapping, kicking, punching, boxing, biting, pulling hair, strangling each other.

**ARAGOZE:** *(Breathless. Shouts.)* I am going to amputate your feet and your hands on opposite sides and crucify you and all your family members. How dare you? This thug's sheep was in my territory sitting with my own cattle. How dare he? I am going to grind his fucking teeth.

**AL-MI'RAJ:** Another day, Aragoze caused little damages to the belongings of Alexander the Great. He threw a sex toy to break Alex's bedroom windows.

**ARAGOZE:** You deserve this. You should have built this damned house away from my playground.

**AL-MI'RAJ:** He got revenge using a paint spillage. His neighbour Alex was really mad.

**ARAGOZE:** This is for my team loss last time. You were happy last night, ha? And now it is time to give back anxiety and unease to your little brain.

**AL-MI'RAJ:** He fought Alex on road crossings.

**ARAGOZE:** *(Angrily.)* You should give way, not me—the curse of Aristotle upon you in this life and the hereafter.

**AL-MI'RAJ:** Aragoze even became suspicious and cautious of all Aristotle's students, including their relatives and close friends.

**( Bell Fifteen )**

*(The bell rings. ARAGOZE picks up the call.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Ha ... Hell ... Hello! Ah, I appreciate your advice, Aristotle. Save it for Alex. I already learnt from my own basket. I won't approach your relatives, as my hands might be bitten by their scorpions. I had enough of your nonsenses.

**ARAGOZE:** If you don't like my own car-style, I don't care, and it would be better you shave your own eyebrows, pig.

**TANNIN:** Aragoze! Did he do this to Aristotle? *(Laugh.)* Why?

**AL-MI'RAJ:** *(Whispers.)* Yes, some said that Aristotle was looking for a more luxurious car for his own purposes of sexism and misogyny.

*(Laughter.)*

**TANNIN:** I should return this second half to Aragoze. More invisibly, types of persecution relations are generalised just before the accumulation of Aragoze's aggressiveness. Relations of power change from time to time and place to place.



## ( Bell Sixteen)

*(The bell rings.)*

**ARAGOZE:** *(Scared.)* I am not going to leave the house. I am afraid tha ...  
tha ... tha ... that ... that I may not be able to breathe.

**AL-MI'RAJ:** I heard that he tarried in the house three years and add one,  
shaping for his self-righteous conduct in his plight.

**ARAGOZE:** I sealed up my hearing. I withdraw from my people, who have  
blindly followed this fucking total authority.

**AL-MI'RAJ:** All this happened gradually. I noticed in some of his stories that  
he sometimes had a phobia from any crowd.

**TANNIN:** Really? Does he fear anything?

**ARAGOZE:** Fear comes to me when I see them staring at me. They are like  
bewildered souls whom devils have made into fools, infatuated  
in the earth.

**AL-MI'RAJ:** It is an Aristotelian kind of classification. Protagonists held their  
heads up in the sky. Antagonists held your head in between the  
heads, and call out the chopper, baa baa baa.

*(Sheep sound.)*

*(Rhythmical devalued language.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Baa, baa, baa.

**TANNIN:** Baa.

**AL-MI'RAJ:** STOP IT.

**ARAGOZE:** Baa, baa, baa.

**TANNIN:** Baa.

**AL-MI'RAJ:** STOP IT.

*(AL-MI'RAJ gets furious.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Baa, baa, baa.

**TANNIN:** Baa.

**AL-MI'RAJ:** STOP IT.

**TANNIN:** Baa, I can't stop it. His second half is within me.

**ARAGOZE:** Baa, baa, baa.

**TANNIN:** Baa.

**AL-MI'RAJ:** *(Shouts.)* STOP IT.

*(Silence falls.)*

**AL-MI'RAJ:** Indeed, if your people go crazy your mind will not help you.

**TANNIN:** It is out of my hands.

**AL-MI'RAJ:** Do you want to know what happened to Aragoze when the crowd was about to leave?

**TANNIN:** What happened?

**ARAGOZE:** His eyes rolling like one who faints unto death. When the crowd departs ...

*(ARAGOZE falls, faint.)*

**TANNIN:** Why did he faint unto death when the crowd departed?

**AL-MI'RAJ:** Aragoze would have deemed the crowd awake while they were asleep. In fact, they were a crowd of talking ants, living in a valley.

**TANNIN:** Army of ants?

**AL-MI'RAJ:** An ant calls upon other sleeping ants to gather and call them to enter their dwellings before they are crushed by Aragoze's feet without knowing. Aragoze maybe wanted always to reach things sooner than things usually take to reach.

*(MESSENGER enters the stage.)*

**TANNIN:** Who is this coming?

**AL-MI'RAJ:** She is the Messenger. A very wise prophetess. Her statements are true experiences and images.

*(TANNIN and AL-MI'RAJ exit  
the shadow screen. Puppet of a*

*hand with an eye enters. The eye  
keeps blinking.)*

**{Miniature Six}**

**MESSENGER:** This is Miniature Six. My dear audience. This is just a performance. Do not do this at home. I am your messenger.

*(A display of an eye.)*

Ain el-hasoud feeha doud. The eyes of the envious contain worms.

*(A display of a lion.)*

A'dhit 'asad u wala nazrat hasad. A bite of a lion is still more merciful than a look of envy.

*(A display of an egg.)*

He seeks refuge in God from a yellowish face.

We can call it the Theory of Five Fingers or the Theory of the Virgin's Hand.

*(MESSENGER exits.)*

## { Bell Seventeen }

*(The bell rings. ARAGOZE is awake horrified, supplicating.)*

**ARAGOZE:** I seek protection from the Lord of the Daylight from the evil of an envier when he envies. Many of the crowd wish they could turn me to their own ways after I have followed my own, through envy from themselves.

*(ARAGOZE pulls out his own tongue and bites his own tongue.)*

**ARAGOZE:** They envy me for what I have been given from bounties and wisdom. I must avoid them and stay away. I must do some business in privacy.

*(ARAGOZE ornaments his own neck with an amulet blue eye and sits to listen to a sermon on the radio, seeking answers.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Books and articles are too heavy and puzzling. They need lots of effort. Sermons are a shortcut to salvation. Let's listen to the radio.

*(ARAGOZE flips radio channels.)*

**RADIO 1:** *(Female voiceover.)* Learn about the torture of the grave.

**ARAGOZE:** I am a full professor in grave-life.

**RADIO 2:** *(Female voiceover.)* Please, beat your female partners and see what will happen.

**ARAGOZE:** Is this a puzzle? Huh! Of course, she will cut my penis.

**RADIO 3:** *(Female voiceover.)* Honour killing is a legal reaction.

**ARAGOZE:** Wait! Then, how is she still alive?

**RADIO 4:** *(Female voiceover.)* I believe that a woman cannot be the president of the United States of America.

**ARAGOZE:** Honestly, the time has proven this view is right.

**RADIO 5:** *(Female voiceover.)* Driving affects the womb of women badly.

**ARAGOZE:** A Saudi scholar has said that once. I hope his wife and sister are driving safely, now.

**RADIO 6:** *(Female voiceover.)* If women were allowed to worship someone beyond their God, it must be their husbands.

**ARAGOZE:** God bless. God bless. Men's Rights are on the rise!

**RADIO 7:** *(Male voiceover.)* We talk about envy in the name of the merciful.

*(GHOUL enters the shadow stage wearing saint decorations, carrying his own book, chair and rosary. He burns a gum and lights*

*incense. ARAGOZE listens  
carefully.)*

**ARAGOZE:** I think this channel suits me best.

**GHOUL (SAINT):** All thanks and praises are due to the authority, whom we thank, seek for help and invoke for forgiveness. We seek refuge with authority from the ills within ourselves. Everyone that the authority leads will at no time be deluded. For those whom the authority does not guide will ever go astray. All praises are for authority, to whom all things return, who does what they will. Knower of the unseen and visible. Most honourable, most praiseworthy. I advise you and myself to fear them.

*(ARAGOZE is asking permission  
from SAINT to ask a question.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Revered Saint, I have many problems. I need your advice.

**GHOUL (SAINT):** Hello brother. I am carrying to you the messages of our Lord, and I am to you an honest advice-giver.

**ARAGOZE:** I am a believer. I believe I have epilepsy.

**GHOUL (SAINT):** *(Clattering.)* Epilepsy?

**ARAGOZE:** It is a disorder marked by the sudden loss of consciousness because of my unresolved life problems. Do you have any treatment for me?

**GHOUL (SAINT):** *(Authoritarian tone.)* Recite the Jinni Chapter.

*(SAINT recites a ritual and  
ARAGOZE repeats.)*

*(Cursing. Dog sound.)* Ya Chelb, Ya ibn el-Chelb. Oh dog and  
son of a dog.

*(Donkey sound.)* Ya homar, Ya ibn Li-homar. Oh donkey and  
son of a donkey.

*(Evil laugh.)* May God take your evil soul.

*(Saint throws his shoes.)* Ya Gazmah, Ya ibn rubat el-qizam. You  
are a shoe and son of a shoe. Tfu.

Kol Khara Teezi. Eat my piece of shit.

Ya maniac. Oh, pimp. May all of your luck be taken.

*(Fart sound.)* Tilhas teezi. Kiss my ass.

Yel-'an abouk. May your father be cursed.

Abu reeha. The father of stinky smells.

Kos Ukhtak. Kos Umak. Your sister and mother's vagina are  
bashed.

Ibn Shamouta. Son of a bitch. Zebi feek. My penis is in you.

Seebni. Leave my body now.

**ARAGOZE:**

That's it?

**GHOUL (SAINT):**

Repeat this many times and then iron a part of your body with  
warm, but not hot, fire after three days from now.



**ARAGOZE:** This sounds logical and doable.

*(ARAGOZE keeps reading while sitting, moving his upper body forward and backward slowly.)*

**GHOUL (SAINT):** Oh, believer!

*(ARAGOZE looks around.)*

**GHOUL (SAINT):** You.

**ARAGOZE:** Yes, me.

**GHOUL (SAINT):** The book provides magical advice to every patient, which is to memorise, by heart, “The Sovereignty Chapter” to guard you against the torment of the grave.

*(Awful cries of torture.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Saint! Have you ever been there?

**GHOUL (SAINT):** Idiot, are you kidding with me?

**ARAGOZE:** From where did you get these sound effects? They are cool, though.

**GHOUL (SAINT):** God reveals to me. Now, this chapter will be angry from angels if they will call you to account in the day of judgement.

*(SAINT throws the book.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Are you going to be with us

**GHOUL (SAINT):** I said, it will resign from all holy books.

*(ARAGOZE keeps reading while sitting, moving his upper body forward and backward slowly. The intersection of sounds; Buddhist prayer chant, Hindu prayer chant, Church Bells, Mosques call, Synagogue call intersect.)*

**GHOUL (SAINT):** Every Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday, the temples warble in every corner around the world, reciting Chapter of The Cave. I want you to count them inside your brain.

**ARAGOZE:** Why do they recite Chapter of the Cave?

**GHOUL (SAINT):** To protect the good believers from the misfortune of the false messiah, whose evil will reach the far east and west.

*(ARAGOZE feels panic.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Saint, I can't do all of this at once. It is impractical.

**GHOUL (SAINT):** *(Furious.)* Don't panic.

*(GHOUL-SAINT burns gum and lights incense.)*

**GHOUL (SAINT):** You don't have to memorise it all. The first and last ten lines of the chapter are enough to guard against the misfortune of the false messiah, the one-eyed liar.

*(ARAGOZE keeps the upper body  
moving back and forth.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Saint, I still have Sars and Ebola virus symptoms.

**GHOUL (SAINT):** First of fall, you should go to the holy city of Cum.

*(ARAGOZE stands and whirls.)*

### **( Bell Eighteen)**

*(The bell rings. Bell Eighteen.  
GHOUL carries an iron bar.)*

**GHOUL (SAINT):** And lick the bars around Hussein's shrine and repeat the word  
Hussein thrice.

*(Screen reflects a shadow of  
torture by fire. ARAGOZE starts  
licking the bar, beating himself  
and then he repeats the word  
'Hussein'.)*

**ARAGOZE:** *(Calling Loud.)* Oh, Hussein, Oh Hussein, Oh Hussein!

*(ARAGOZE whirls.)*

### **( Bell Nineteen)**

*(The bell rings. GHOUL  
MO carries jars of urine.)*

**GHOUL (SAINT):** *(Instructing.)* After that, you should travel to the Land of Spices and drink cow urine. You can add the spices your tongue desires.

*(Shadow reflects someone  
pouring water into a bucket.)*

**ARAGOZE:** *(Disgusted.)* How does it taste, Saint?

**GHOUL (SAINT):** You must be patient.

*(Drinking urine. ARAGOZE is  
shocked and silent.)*

**GHOUL (SAINT):** How do you find the urine?

**ARAGOZE:** *(Excited.)* Mmm. This is quite good.

*(ARAGOZE is about to vomit.)*

**GHOUL (SAINT):** Don't let the Jinnis beat you.

*(ARAGOZE continues drinking.)*

**ARAGOZE:** *(Disgusted.)* That's all.

**GHOUL (SAINT):** You should join Donald Trump's call for prayer against all pandemics.

*(DONALD TRUMP and EVE-  
ADAM and JINN enter the stage  
wearing different religious  
symbols, loose robes at the upper*

*body and bikini and high heels.  
DONALD TRUMP hugs EVE-  
ADAM and JINN. Trump tries to  
steal some quick looks at their  
buttocks.)*

**EVE-ADAM:** *(Coquettishly.)* Please, shake hands with one of the greatest men and believers.

*(TRUMP lustfully looks at them.)*

**JINN:** Now, we would like to pray for Aragoze. We all know that prayers make a difference.

*(All gather around ARAGOZE  
and put their hands on his back  
while their eyes are closing,  
mumbling.)*

**GHOUL (SAINT):** Marvellous Father, we altogether arise to you at the moment, and we are grateful to you for this nation that has cleansed native Indians and confiscated their lands in the sixteenth century for your service as they were pagans and infidels. We pray in 2020, we pray for your spirit to fly from corner to corner of our nation. We humble ourselves, and we apologise for our own sins and national sins.

We ask you to bless our nation after invading Iraq, Syria and other infidels. We humbly ask you to bless your guardian on

earth, President Donald Trump and protect him and us from all epidemics.

*(Shivering humble voice.)* Lord, we thank you that America and the West did not need educated preachers or qualified politicians, but they needed fighters and crusaders for freedom. That's exactly what we have here.

*(TRUMP hugs EVE-ADAM and JINN tightly while he is closing his eyes. A crowd of prayers cry and weep. ARAGOZE masturbates.)*

Our Father, he does not claim to be a faultless masturbator, but he is so passionate. He loves to stop the pitiless slaying of the unborn ones. It takes long efforts to insert the arrows in the hole. He is passionate to eradicate the born infidels who don't want to make America great again as in the sixteenth century. He is passionate to remove poverty; he has forced millions from food stamps to the dignity of work in his own companies.

*(Prayers are all emotionally effected, and their hands are shaking for that.)*

He is passionate for justice and fair trade with the Chinese infidels who worship rocks and the Indian infidels who worship cows.

Our Lord, bless him with a wonderful beginning and happy ending. His hand is too small to grab and steal. We know him. So, Lord, help him to accomplish the mission and win a second race to help Aragoze and the nation to find out what the hell is going on. In Jesus' name, we pray, Amen. (*Ululate.*)

*(EVE-ADAM, JINN and Trump exit groping while EVE-ADAM and JINN beat their chests and heads doing Latmyia ritual.)*

*(Silence.)*

*(Oud Music. ARAGOZE whirls. SAINT comes back to his own seat and burns gum.)*

**ARAGOZE:** A sign from the sky is a seed to the earth. (*Echo.*) A sign from the sky is a seed to the earth.

### **{ Bell Twenty }**

*(The bell rings. ARAGOZE hurries to sit in front of SAINT.)*

**ARAGOZE:** (*Tired.*) I went to all shrines and licked them all, but I am still suffering, and now I am broke. I spent my whole savings on travelling, but in vain.

**GHOUL (SAINT):** Don't get desperate, brother!. Stay as strong a believer as a rock. Don't let the devil beat you on this long journey. You must try my other prescriptions.

**ARAGOZE:** I may need to visit a doctor to do some medical tests.

**DONALD TRUMP:** *(Voiceover. Echo.)* It is all a hoax.

**GHOUL (SAINT):** *(Angrily.)* All science is a hoax. Don't let them manipulate and misguide you. All their writings and research are against the divine code.

**DONALD TRUMP:** *(Voiceover. Echo.)* It is all a hoax.

**ARAGOZE:** Could you please tell me about the divine code for fighting against my miserable life? I am broke now.

*(SAINT burns more gum.)*

**GHOUL (SAINT):** We have to read Chapter of the Day of Resurrection every night so that poverty and destitution do not afflict us.

*(ARAGOZE moves the upper body back and forth and mumbles.)*

**GHOUL (SAINT):** Also, another magic recipe related to our Chapter is that you read it forty times in a dark night to bring you a beautiful, coquettish fairy to meet all your requests and desires.

*(ARAGOZE falls asleep. A coquettish FAIRY enters and rides him.)*



**GHOUL (SAINT):** *(To the audience.)* Last but not least, I have a magic formula for my loved ones from the people of the holy books to eliminate worries, reveal the adversity, expel the demon and eyes of enviers, bear male children and hide from taxes and Inland Revenue.

*(Ingredients are shown on the shadow screen.)*

**GHOUL (SAINT):** The recipe simply consists of 100 grams of saffron, a bottle of mineral water, an ink pen and a paper, and then you write on the paper the following talisman: the letters SON, OF, BITCH. Then mix the paper with water and enjoy.

### **( Bell Twenty One)**

*(The bell rings. HAKAWATI enters. GHOUL (SAINT) and FAIRY exits. The dancer enters the shadow to dance.)*

**HAKAWATI:** Touti Touti. Khilsit al-hatouti. Hilwi wala mal-touti?

*(Silence.)*

*(HAKAWATI exits. Oud music. ARAGOZE wakes up to whirl.)*

**ARAGOZE:**

*Ishara min alsama' bidhra 'ilaa al-'ard. (Echo.)* A sign from  
the sky is a seed to the earth.

*(Siren. ARAGOZE hurries to exit.*

*The belly dancer exits.)*

**- The End -**

**Aragoze in a Time of Corona**

**Bell Twenty Two to Thirty One**

**Miniature Seven to Eleven**

***Setting:** A floating display of a zoomed-in mosquito face, it has hundreds of glittering lenses.*

***Time:** Time is a lost directionality. Therefore past, present and future are an illusion. The time of the play is at a surprising moment intertwining with space. It is in a time of Corona.*

## **CHARACTERS**

ARAGOZE

HAKAWATI

GHOUL

MESSENGER

CHEF

## **TROUPES**

EVE-ADAM

JINN

## **TRANSFORMATIVE ROLES**

MARY (MESSENGER)

MS HOMELAND (MESSENGER)

CHIEF (HAKAWATI)

## **PUPPETS**

NASNAS

TANNIN

CORONA

WORMS

LIONESS

HYENA

**CURTAIN OPENS.**

*(A shadow screen is set for display. This play shifts between shadow play and an absurd theatre setting. The shadow stage has simply a source of light reflecting the shadows of human, masks and puppets.*

*Shadow screen displays a cursed tree; its branches carry fruits shaped like devil's heads. The atmosphere is dark. Low sounds of cockroach and sawing intersect with each other. MESSENGER enters carrying a placard of mosquito eye. A spotlight tracks her.)*

{Miniature Seven}

**MESSENGER:**

This is Miniature Seven. My dear audience. This is just a performance. Do not do this at home. I am your messenger.

*(A display of a black hole.)*

Believe it or not. Everyone is, to some extent, an asshole. Each has no sense save what it sees. We can call it “Theory of Asshole Relativity”.

*(Oud music. ARAGOZE enters the stage. MESSENGER exists. ARAGOZE wears neutral colours. Rainbow colours on the*

*tits and organs to generalise gender. ARAGOZE sets himself to perform a whirling dance. The dance is accompanied by Oud music. He raises his right palm directed to the sky and at the same time his left palm is directed downward. His eyes are directed down, and his head is bent over his shoulder. ARAGOZE receives a sign by the right hand and gives it to the left hand while he is rotating counterclockwise. ARAGOZE should be consistent in his dancing movement.)*

**ARAGOZE:** A sign from the sky is a seed to the Earth. (*Echo.*) A sign from the sky is a seed to the Earth.

## **{ Bell Twenty Two }**

*(The bell rings. ARAGOZE gets horrified. Sound of curfew siren.)*

*(EVE-ADAM and JINN enter; they are singing couples that belong to human and Jinni worlds. ARAGOZE runs away to exit. They are divided then into circles within each other. The nucleus circle is crawling counter clockwise. The second orbit circle is walking counter clockwise. They are also expressing different hysterical facial expressions while circling. Their tits and organs are coloured by rainbows. VOICEOVER 1 and VOICEOVER 2 are engaged in a hot topic.)*

**VOICEOVER 1:** *(Echo.)* Yes, I will create a consecutive hierarchical authority upon the Earth.

*(VOICEOVER 2 runs, fast tempo of dialogue.)*

**VOICEOVER 2:** Nay, Lord, we mean no objection against your firm-will, but we seek the all-knowing's deliberateness and, well, consideration. Will you assign inheritors on Earth? You knocked out our brains.

**VOICEOVER 1:** *(Echo.)* Yes, I will abide by my favours and exaltedness. This is a great oath.

**VOICEOVER 2:** They will plant seeds of epidemic corruption.

**VOICEOVER 1:** *(Echo.)* I am all-knowing. You know nothing save few.



**VOICEOVER 2:** They will irrigate seeds with a waterfall of blood for toilet papers.

**VOICEOVER 1:** *(Echo.)* I am all-seeing. You see nothing save few.

**VOICEOVER 2:** Alas!

**VOICEOVER 1:** *(Echo.)* wait patiently! I will take the skin off your blinded eyes, so then my words, my signs are all illuminated before you.

*(VOICEOVER 1 sends a sign of one trumpet sound to EVE-ADAM and JINN who start imitating sounds of animals. Shadow screen shows some animals.)*

*(Display of a cat.)*

**EVE-ADAM:** Roar.

*(Display of a dog.)*

**JINN:** Baa.

*(Display of a cow.)*

**EVE-ADAM:** Meow.

*(Display of an elephant.)*

**JINN:** Warf, Warf.

*(EVE-ADAM & JINN start to identify the signifier and the signified.)*

*(Display of sawing.)*

**JINN:** It is zigzag penis.

*(Display of toilet paper.)*

**EVE-ADAM:** It is a paper to write on it with shit ink.

*(Display of CORONA.)*

**JINN:** All are created equal.

*(Display of United Nations.)*

**EVE-ADAM:** Some people are more equal than other people.

*(Display of some well-known  
leaders.)*

**EVE-ADAM:** They look more like you.

**JINN:** No way! They look like you.

**EVE-ADAM:** You!

**JINN:** You!

**EVE-ADAM:** You shac lacta.

**JINN:** Somebody call the doctor! You shac lacta.

**EVE-ADAM:** Somebody, call the doctor.

*(EVE-ADAM and JINN exit. A  
display of the cursed tree.)*

**VOICEOVER 1:**                   *(Echo.)* Relate to me if you can, and you don't, the stories of these. What are these? Name them!

**VOICEOVER 2:**                   We have no knowledge of these except what you have educated us.

**VOICEOVER 1:**                   *(Echo.)* All bow and prostrate. *(To EVE-ADAM and JINN.)* Oh, my word descends this worldly heaven as my inheritor and enjoy life. Eat whatever you wish except what I forbid.

**VOICEOVER 1:**                   However, I warn you not to dare to approach this perfect tree. You know my wrath is unmatched.

*(Thunderstorm.)*

*(EVE-ADAM and JINN enter shadow stage and compete with each other to approach the cursed tree.)*

**VOICEOVER 1:**                   *(Angrily. Echo.)* Go down from this heaven, all of you.

*(Thunderstorm. Intermittent Light.)*

Some of you are rivals to one another.

*(Rumbling. Light intermits.)*

*(Silence.)*

O my word, hath you forgot the favours that I bestowed upon you? Hath you forgot that I give you preference over everything in the worlds? You know my wrath is unmatched.

*(EVE-ADAM and JINN begin disciplined circling around the cursed tree with facial expressions of fear and ridicule. They are still competing with each other toward the tree.)*

**VOICEOVER1:** *(Echo.)* However, I am all-merciful and I forgive you for the flaw so that you may show gratitude. All were witnesses to your promise, but you probably forget.

*(Intermittent light goes off/on. EVE-ADAM and JINN appear in different hysterical positions each time the light is on.)*

**EVE-ADAM:** *(Intersecting singing voices.)* We believe.

**JINN:** *(intersecting singing voices.)* We believe.

**EVE-ADAM:** Do not cause corruption.

**JINN:** We are reformers.

**EVE-ADAM:** Reformers too! We are the inevitable reality.

**VOICEOVER 2:** *(Whispers.)* Indisputably it is they who are the corrupters, but they do not perceive.

**JINN:** Huh! The inevitable truth!  
  
*(Fart sound. Everybody is disgusted.)*

**EVE-ADAM:** You are just a hoax.

**JINN:** Descend from your ivory tower.

**EVE-ADAM:** Arrogant! Come and confess!

**JINN:** Join the public voice.

**EVE-ADAM:** You have no preference for us.

**JINN:** We are God's guardians on Earth.

*(Barfing sound. Everybody is disgusted.)*

**EVE-ADAM:** I am sorry.

**JINN:** We are God's guardians on Earth.

**EVE-ADAM:** Huh!

**JINN:** Huh!

*(Each group turns their faces around.)*

**VOICEOVER 2:** *(Whispers.)* Undeniably they are foolish, but they do not know.

*(Each group jog to gather separately; they appear as if they are one unity although their*

*hearts are all divided when they  
are alone. Both shake hands and  
show agreement.)*

**VOICEOVER 2:** *(Whispers.)* But when each group sits alone. Unleash their own  
imps so they can dance together.

*(Each group turns their faces from  
the other and whisper and  
mumble.)*

**EVE-ADAM:** *(Whispering.)* We are the upper hand.

**JINN:** *(Whispering.)* They are the lower hand.

**EVE-ADAM:** *(Whispering.)* We are one folk. They are the fools

**JINN:** *(Whispering.)* Indeed, they are fools.

*(The two groups keep whispering.  
VOICEOVER 2 laughs.)*

**VOICEOVER 1:** *(Echo.)* You Whisperer! In flame hatred and divisiveness among  
my word using your whispers and cruel undead monsters.  
Promise them poverty. Rub their children from their hearts. Let  
them run after unreachable wealth. You promise them nothing  
save delusion.

**VOICEOVER 2:** *(Voiceover. Laugh.)* Delusion!

**VOICEOVER 1:**                   *(Echo)* Oh my word, I could have created all of you into one party, but you will still fight and strive to differ. You have no authority over them.

*(Sound of air and thunderstorm.)*

**EVE-ADAM:**                   *(Crying and shouting.)* Help, please! We can't see it!

*(Silence.)*

*(JINN is happily mocking them.)*

**JINN:**                           They deserve it. Infidels! *(To the audience.)* They are the enemies of God. We are God's guardians on Earth. We are the supreme.

*(Sound of awful cry.)*

*(Silence.)*

**EVE-ADAM:**                   *(Crying and shouting.)* Help, please!

*(Silence.)*

*(EVE-ADAM stands to mock the others.)*

**EVE-ADAM:**                   *(Happily.)* They deserve it. Infidels! *(To the audience.)* They are the enemies of God. We are God's guardians on Earth. We are the supreme.

*(Sound of awful cry and trumpet.*

*All cry hysterically. Dark falls.)*

*(Silence falls.)*

*(Cockroach and sawing sounds intersect.)*

*(The shadow screen displays a mosquito. EVE-ADAM and JINN gather around the mosquito image, staring silently.)*

**VOICEOVER 2:** *(Whispers.)* Mosquito.

**VOICEOVER 1:** *(Echo.)* When adversity surrounds you at sea, you become lost and return to this mosquito. When you are delivered to safe land, you turn away from this mosquito.

*(Oud music. ARAGOZE enters dancing whirling. JINN and EVE-ADAM exit while staring at the mosquito. A belly dancer enters the shadow. A spotlight tracks ARAGOZE.)*

**VOICEOVER 1:** *(Echo.)* When lost, your eyes see differently than when you are safe. Oh, my word! I am sending you signs for guidance to the inevitable truth.

**ARAGOZE:** A sign from the sky is a seed to the Earth. *(Echo.)* A sign from the sky is a seed to the Earth.

**( Bell Twenty Three )**



*(The bell rings. MARY, the Virgin, enters the shadow stage. EVE-ADAM and JINN enter the stage.)*

*(ARAGOZE exits hurrying. Dancer exits.)*

*(EVE-ADAM and JINN stare at MARY, surrounding her. MARY wears her traditional robes. EVE-ADAM and JINN cast their pens competing for Mary's guardianship.)*

**MARY:** They were casting their pens.

They were fighting for the win.

**EVE-ADAM:** O Mary, the Virgin.

**JINN:** A precious, pious version.

**MARY:** They all quarrelled upon a thing.

Afraid of potential sin.

**EVE-ADAM:** *(Whisper to Mary.)* Have you seen Aragoze in the unseen?

**JINN:** O Mary, reveal to us an unseen tiding.

*(Mary tries to avoid them but they surround her.)*

**MARY:** Lo! God giveth me a word.

Jesus, the son of Mary, is called.

One of the nearest to the Lord.

He is illustrious in this world.

**EVE-ADAM:** (Shouting.) He is the Messiah.

**JINN:** Lo! We will see and admire!

*(EVE-ADAM and JINN exit.)*

**MARY:** *(Crying.)* Lord, how could I deliver a child here?

And no mortal approached me from far or near?

**VOICEOVER 3:** *(Echo.)* O, Mary! Lord creates what He will. When Lord decrees.

He only says to thing be and It is now to be.

**MARY:** I have withdrawn from all society and family.

Handcuffed with fears and insecurity.

Forcing my face here toward the east.

Where no people are wondering or beasts.

I seek refuge in Corona from thee.

Leave in my own bubble, free.

**VOICEOVER 3:** *(Echo.)* I am the Spirit of God to bestow you a purified lad.

**MARY:** I said, "I am the Virgin, seeking refuge from God if you are bad."

I conceived the word and now withdrew to a remote place. I wish to end my life, chop up my nerves, distort my face. Oh, if only I

had perished before calamities happened. (*Echo.*) I wish to be nothing, naught, or forgotten.

*(Dark falls. Cockroach and sawing sounds rise to become loud and then gradually fade away. Low, dim light. EVE-ADAM and JINN enter the shadow screen to surround MARY. They are shocked. They sing their lines. MARY's face is up high, and she is healthy and prepared for criticism. MARY turns her face from all critics.)*

**EVE-ADAM:** (*Whispers.*) Oh Mary, you have come with an unusual thing.

**JINN:** (*Whispers.*) A strange thing.

**EVE-ADAM:** (*Angrily.*) A monstrous thing.

**MARY:** Oh, I vowed abstention, so I may not speak to any mortal today.

**JINN:** (*Sings. Mocks.*) Oh Mary, your mother was not a harlot.

**EVE-ADAM:** (*Sings. Mocks.*) Oh, Mary, nor your father an evil.

*(MARY points up high. All stare and then laugh.)*

**JINN:** (*Angrily.*) You lost your mind.

**EVE-ADAM:** *(Angrily.)* How are we going to speak to an infant in the cradle?

**JINN:** *(Sings. Whispers.)* We just need a word from your mouth.

**EVE-ADAM:** *(Sings. Whispers.)* It is only one word, and all will go smoothly.

*(MARY turns her face and points toward the audience.)*

**JINN:** *(Sharp voice.)* Just one word.

*(MARY points toward the audience. All look toward the audience, staring. Oud music. ARAGOZE enters, whirling.)*

**THE MESSIAH:** *(Pious voiceover. Echo.)* Peace is upon me, when I came into this the laps of life, when I shake hands with death, and when I descend to this life yet again.

### { **Bell Twenty Four** }

*(EVE-ADAM and JINN bow down and prostrate. The bell rings. ARAGOZE hurries, scared, to pick up the call. EVE-ADAM and JINN crawl to exit, crying and laughing hysterically. Silence.)*

**MARY:** They need a word.

*(Hang up toot, toot. ARAGOZE*

*talks to himself loudly.)*

**ARAGOZE:** *(To himself.)* Oh, my God! They need a word.

**MARY:** Have they known not the meaning of a word?

**ARAGOZE:** Or the weight of a word?

**MARY:** The key to happiness is a word.

**ARAGOZE:** The entrance to hell is due to a word.

**MARY:** The divine decree is the word. The word is enlightenment.

**ARAGOZE:** And some words are like perfect graves.

**MARY:** Some words are like lofty, hefty mountains.

**ARAGOZE:** To which human magnanimity resorts and adheres.

**MARY:** The word is a testament.

**ARAGOZE:** The word is a proof.

**MARY:** And the word is the discriminator between a prostitute and ...

*(Pause.)*

**ARAGOZE:** *(Sadly.)* And a prophetess.

**MARY:** “Hello, Brother” is a word. Through a word ...

**ARAGOZE:** Adversity could be eased. Through a word ...

**MARY:** Rivers of wounds and blood can't be ceased. A word is a light  
...

**ARAGOZE:** And a piece of evidence that nations follow.

**MARY:** Jesus was nothing ...

*(Pause.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Save a word.

**MARY:** He enlightens the world with a word.

**ARAGOZE:** He taught the word to fishermen.

**MARY:** And they surf the oceans.

**ARAGOZE:** A word is the convulsion of the oppressor.

**MARY:** A word is the fortress of freedom.

**ARAGOZE:** A word is a responsibility.

**MARY:** A human is a word.

**ARAGOZE:** The dignity of humanity is a word.

**MARY:** *(Echo.)* The dignity of God is the word.

*(Silence. MARY exits. The shadow  
screen displays a bell.)*

*(Silence.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Wait! The dignity of Greece is the word! Hell no! I disagree with you, Mary! It was the country of philosophers; Plato, Aristotle and Socrates. However, it declared bankruptcy. This is the true meaning of the phrase: Fuck you! Let philosophy help you.

*(Silence.)*

Who is Mary? Why did I mention her name now? Ah! This life is just ... just ... just ... meaningless.

*(Oud music. ARAGOZE whirls.)*

**MARY:** *(Voiceover. Echo)* Have not they heard of Aragoze? He is a word. He is a sign. A sign from the sky is a seed to the Earth.

**ARAGOZE:** A sign from the sky is a seed to the Earth. A sign from the sky is a seed to the Earth.

### **{ Bell Twenty Five }**

*(MESSENGER enters. She is carrying a placard of deadly dog's saliva image. The bell rings. ARAGOZE hurries to exit.)*

**{ Miniature Eight }**

**MESSENGER:** This is Miniature Eight. My dear audience. This is just a performance. Do not do this at home. I am your messenger. Conditioning, institutional body and objectification. This is institutional conditioning. We are at best, just pita bread. Our puffing is so delicious and sexy. We can call it Theory of Kneading Body.

*(CHEF enters to set his own kitchenette. Flour, water, yeast, grill, and oven are present on stage.)*

*(A spotlight tracks CHEF who presents a cooking tv show.*

*MESSENGER exits.)*

**CHEF:** Hello, this is Mr Institutional Chief. Distinguished guests and delegates, I would like to greet everyone with all kind of greetings in all languages. Many questions were posted on my page last night about how Aragoze could be made.

This is all true. It is the most popular demand by all the institutional cooking industry around the world. Aragoze is better and superior to any other things made out of institutional cuisines.

*(ARAGOZE and GHOUL enter the shadow stage. GHOUL carries a dog belt, an iron bar and a bell. GHOUL has a fricative voice. ARAGOZE looks abject.)*

**CHEF:** Also, it is so delicious to eat, chew and swallow. It is so effortless to make to serve you. So, the first step is to put one package of yeast in the bowl of a stand mixer.



*(GHOUL throws dust into  
ARAGOZE's face. ARAGOZE  
falls. GHOUL rings the bell.)*

**CHEF:** A cup of not very hot but warm water is added and then add one cup of flour.

*(GHOUL pours water on  
ARAGOZE and adds more dust.  
GHOUL rings the bell.)*

**CHEF:** Give this a good mix.

*(GHOUL starts beating  
ARAGOZE with the dog belt.)*

**CHEF:** I am producing a very quick sponge.

*(GHOUL fondles ARAGOZE's  
private organs. GHOUL rings the  
bell.)*

**CHEF:** You ought to make sure that you have active yeast.

*(GHOUL pulls ARAGOZE up  
and ARAGOZE is dazed.)*

**CHEF:** Now, if you see bubbling after a good mixture. You are all good to go.

*(GHOUL checks bruises and holds ARAGOZE's face. GHOUL rings the bell.)*

**GHOUL:** *(To himself.)* His face is getting foamy.

**CHEF:** Then my yeast is then active.

*(GHOUL gives OK gesture. GHOUL rings the bell. ARAGOZE is dizzy and falls down again.)*

**CHEF:** The next step is to dump oil.

**GHOUL:** *(Laughs.)* Here we go.

*(GHOUL dumps liquid. ARAGOZE feels pains.)*

**CHEF:** Add some salt.

**GHOUL:** All yours. Oh, I forgot to enforce this tax too.

*(GHOUL throws more dust. ARAGOZE feels pains.)*

**CHEF:** And we go ahead and remix it.

*(GHOUL beats ARAGOZE with the dog belt again.)*

**CHEF:** Let's have the rest of my flour but not all the quantity. Only two cups are enough.

*(GHOUL throws dust at  
ARAGOZE's face. ARAGOZE  
feels pain.)*

**CHEF:** Oh! Wow! Look at this dough!

*(GHOUL pulls ARAGOZE up.  
GHOUL rings the bell.)*

**GHOUL:** Bend the body and move quickly and gracefully.

*(ARAGOZE falls down again.)*

**CHEF:** Moist and sticky. If you feel it is too sticky, make sure to give it more flour.

*(GHOUL throws dust at  
ARAGOZE again.)*

**CHEF:** Until it reaches a perfect consistency.

*(GHOUL pulls ARAGOZE up to  
check his full submission. There  
is no resistance. GHOUL rings  
the bell.)*

**GHOUL:** I think I need more on your sides.

**CHEF:** Yes, please sprinkle enough flour on all sides to make it all easy to pull away from all sides. Now, give it some flour for the kneading process.

*(GHOUL throws some dust on ARAGOZE, who looks exhausted and oppressively exhibited. GHOUL harasses all parts of ARAGOZE and moves them as he wishes against ARAGOZE's will.)*

**CHEF:** This feels marvellous. I can shape it as I wish. The next step now is to cover with plastic for a few minutes.

*(GHOUL covers ARAGOZE with plastic. GHOUL rings the bell.)*

**CHEF:** However, we have no guarantees it may take longer or less. So, you must check it very often.

*(GHOUL checks ARAGOZE by removing plastic from his mouth. ARAGOZE shows no resistance.)*

**GHOUL:** Good!

**CHEF:** Great! So now sprinkle more flour.

*(GHOUL sprinkles dust on top of ARAGOZE.)*

**CHEF:** We press slowly down.

*(GHOUL beats and presses  
ARAGOZE's head with his  
hands.)*

**GHOUL:** With my hands, I am kneading to you.

**CHEF:** Yes, with our hands. Why should we use our hands? There are two reasons.

*(GHOUL suffocates ARAGOZE.)*

**GHOUL:** I must knock out all the air from your chest.

**CHEF:** And the second reason is to make it a flat shape. To cut it into seven pieces.

*(GHOUL holds ARAGOZE's  
body firmly.)*

**GHOUL:** Eight pieces. I will start with his small arms.

**CHEF:** We can now roll it into small to medium balls.

*(GHOUL forces ARAGOZE to lie  
down and roll his body.)*

**CHEF:** The proper way is to pull this sexy dough from the top and down.

*(GHOUL pulls ARAGOZE's head  
and then his legs.)*

**CHEF:** And then you need to tuck it up underneath the bottom.

*(GHOUL tucks up on  
ARAGOZE'S belly.)*

**CHEF:** I am stretching the top with my thumbs.

*(GHOUL pulls ARAGOZE's hair  
around and around. GHOUL  
rings the bell.)*

**CHEF:** Once all eight sides are pulled down and up. We wrap them  
with plastic again.

*(GHOUL wraps ARAGOZE with  
plastic.)*

**GHOUL:** *(To the audience.)* His bruise is rising a little bit up.

**CHEF:** Excellent! I forgot to tell you that we should add more flour to  
avoid stickiness.

*(GHOUL throw specks of dust.)*

**CHEF:** Not too much!

*(GHOUL sprinkles a little.)*

**CHEF:** As other pieces are resting, let me start grilling piece by piece.

*(GHOUL brings an iron bar and  
forces ARAGOZE to pull his own  
tongue. ARAGOZE pulls his  
tongue to lick the bar. He feels  
pain and happy at the same time.)*

**GHOUL:** This is a hot iron bar to test your taste sense.

**ARAGOZE:** Thank God, as I told you, Lord.

**GHOUL:** Yes, you are right. Excellent! I will give you a bite.

*(GHOUL throw a piece of food  
for ARAGOZE to eat. ARAGOZE  
rushes to bite it.)*

**GHOUL:** Wait, babe! I must put this elegant little tie around your neck.

*(GHOUL puts the dog belt  
around ARAGOZE. ARAGOZE  
then rushes to bite the piece of  
food.)*

**CHEF:** I finish grilling the first one.

**GHOUL:** That's just perfect.

*(GHOUL rings the bell.  
ARAGOZE runs submissively on  
his four limbs.)*

**GHOUL:** I want you now to flip back and forth on your sides.

*(ARAGOZE flips on his sides.)*

**CHEF:** It just need few seconds on both sides, and now it's puffing.  
Yay!

**GHOUL:** Cheer up, Aragoze! Stand up!

*(ARAGOZE stands unwillingly  
and inhales to show a full  
balloon mouth. GHOUL rings the  
bell, gives OK gesture and exits.  
ARAGOZE falls and his body  
shivers and moves  
uncontrollably.)*

**CHEF:** This inflation is what I am looking for, a full balloon. By the way, don't get disappointed if you do not get this extreme puffing-look. The insides are going to be just as every institutional cuisine wishes to serve its industry.

*(CHEF exits. MESSENGER  
enters.)*

**MESSENGER:** This is anthropomorphism. If you keep moving, a worm lives in your anus. If you keep flipping, a Corona lives in your lungs. We can call it Theory of No Anus-itch, No Cry.

*(HAKAWATI, the storyteller,  
enters to relate stories, riding her  
own bicycle. MESSENGER exits.  
HAKAWATI and ARAGOZE  
address the audience. The shadow  
reflects drops of water falling on  
ARAGOZE.)*



**ARAGOZE:** Here I am, Aragoze. I am no different. I am fasci ... fasci ... fasci ...

**HAKAWATI:** Fashioned from a gushing watery sap, evolving from within loins and ribs. (*Echo.*) Like everyone ...

**ARAGOZE:** I am a bit of everyone else, just a mosaic ...

**HAKAWATI:** In a world sprouted from structural violence and compulsion.

**ARAGOZE:** (*Echo.*) By the morning star and heaven.

**HAKAWATI:** Ah, what will make you know the piercing star?

**ARAGOZE:** At a time—

**HAKAWATI:** Like every time—

**ARAGOZE:** (*Sound of earthquakes.*) When this Earth yields up its burdens—

**HAKAWATI:** And hidden thoughts.

(*Silence.*)

**ARAGOZE:** Drought.

(*Silence.*)

**HAKAWATI:** Floods.

(*Silence.*)

**ARAGOZE:** Fire.

(*Silence.*)

**HAKAWATI:** Diseases.

*(Silence.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Epidemics.

*(Silence.)*

**HAKAWATI:** Pandemics.

*(Silence.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Wars.

*(Silence.)*

**HAKAWATI:** And agricultural pests.

*(Silence.)*

**ARAGOZE:** The Earth will relate to you that ...

**HAKAWATI:** It does not matter if you were the head or foot.

**ARAGOZE:** The nose or anus. When one sneezes.

**HAKAWATI:** The world gets flu.

**ARAGOZE:** We are therein.

**HAKAWATI:** Lying overthrown like piles of clays in a factory. Luckily ...

*(Silence.)*

**ARAGOZE:** I am at the bottom of the pile.

*(Silence.)*

**HAKAWATI:** Although their watery blood poured into him and the last hot breath flew into him.

*(Shooting Sound. Awful cries.)*

*(Silence.)*

**ARAGOZE:** *(Scared to death.)* Hello Brother!

*(Shooting Sound. Awful cries.)*

*(Silence.)*

**HAKAWATI:** Now, some of you may ask if ...

**ARAGOZE:** I got bored while waiting down there for long.

**HAKAWATI:** Nay! He was excited.

**ARAGOZE:** I was counting the numbers of blood drops.

**HAKAWATI:** Each drop relates an exciting story and suits all tastes.

**HAKAWATI:** Once upon a time, people start running faster and faster.

*(CORONA and WORMS puppets enter the shadow. CORONA is a spiky circle. WORMS is a worm puppet.)*

**WORMS:** What on the Earth is happening?

**CORONA:** I have no freaking idea. I saw people running, and I am following them.

**WORMS:** What if the herd is going to hell, without knowing?

**CORONA:** Don't ever mistrust the herd and the word of its leader. And you can go read the transcript to make sure the leader is right.

**WORMS:** Did you read the transcript?

**CORONA:** I don't have to. I trusted the word of the leader. I don't care about all this bullshit.

*(Silence.)*

**CORONA:** Did you hear that? Did you hear anything?

*(Silence.)*

**WORMS:** Nope, those piles of corpses walked willingly ...

**CORONA:** Mmm, and unwillingly to darkness.

**ARAGOZE:** *(To Himself.)* Mmm? This drop is a taste of writing with spicy national theatre.

**CORONA:** Did you hear that?

*(Silence.)*

**HAKAWATI:** He kept asking for more.

**ARAGOZE:** Another one is coming. Another one is coming.

**CORONA:** Did you hear that?

*(Silence.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Mmm. It is a taste of religious theatre.

**HAKAWATI:** And he kept asking for more

**ARAGOZE:** Another one is coming. Another one is coming.

**CORONA:** Did you hear that?

*(Silence.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Mmm? It tastes of local theatre.

**HAKAWATI:** And he kept asking for more.

**ARAGOZE:** And this one is also coming down.

**CORONA:** Did you hear that?

*(Silence.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Mmm? It is a taste of protectionist theatre.

**CORONA:** *(Echo.)* Are there any survivors?

*(Silence.)*

**HAKAWATI:** He was really thirsty, it is a life of full lockdown. He starts to beseech ...

**ARAGOZE:** Please don't stop your bleeding. Please don't stop your bleeding.

**HAKAWATI:** So that he can survive. And he kept asking for more. *(Laughs.)*

**ARAGOZE:** That drop is rolling down.

**CORONA:** *(Echo.)* Are there any survivors?

*(Silence.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Mmm! This is a bit taste of the Other theatre.

**CORONA:** *(Echo.)* Are there any survivors?

**ARAGOZE:** Mmm! This tastes hangi!

**CORONA:** *(Echo.)* Are there any survivors?

**ARAGOZE:** I need more.

**CORONA:** *(Echo.)* Are there any survivors?

**ARAGOZE:** And more.

**HAKAWATI:** And more.

**ARAGOZE** And more.

**HAKAWATI:** And more.

**ARAGOZE** And more.

**HAKAWATI:** And more

**WORMS:** *(Shouting loud. Angrily)* Are there any fucking survivors the in fucking temple?

*(Silence.)*

**ARAGOZE:** *(Farts.)*

**HAKAWATI:** Once in a time of Corona, he got caught!

*(CORONA and WORMS approach ARAGOZE who is frightened.)*

**CORONA:** Lo! It seems you love this fleeting life.

*(CORONA and WORMS approach ARAGOZE to engage with his body.)*

**WORMS:** Hello, Brother!

*(Shooting. ARAGOZE cannot resist them. He shouts in pain.)*

**ARAGOZE:** How am still physically apparent? I am supposed to be dead. I thought I am here in the inevitable truth?

*(WORMS and CORONA fib ARAGOZE.)*

**CORONA:** The inevitable truth?

**WORMS:** What is the inevitable truth?

**HAKAWATI:** Once upon a time ...

**ARAGOZE:** *(Scared.)* When the sea waves arose high beyond any limits you can imagine.

**HAKAWATI:** An ark carried human ancestors fleeing the Great Flood. Once like every time ...

**CORONA:** This prey is a stupid idiot. He is like ...

**ARAGOZE:** Many people who denied the striking calamity. They were destroyed by ...

*(Lightning, shooting, an awful, violent cry, a fierce roaring wind.)*

*(Silence.)*

*(CORONA and WORMS explode laughing.)*

**CORONA:** *(Mocking.)* Wow! Reality is so bitter.

**WORMS:** I like these fairy tale stories.

**CORONA:** The investable reality?

**WORMS:** No, he said “the inevitable truth”?

**CORONA:** But still, his character is a well-done institutional investment.

*(Laughter.)*

*(Silence)*

**HAKAWATI:** Many people around the world are seized with a tightening grip.

**CORONA:** And damned by those who ever lived before.

**WORMS:** The overthrown cities and their collective sins.

*(Silence)*

**ARAGOZE:** I wish the ark was not carried to those ancestors; so that they had not survived the flood to have sex and brought parents and then brought us to this life.

**HAKAWATI:** Corona shows him things that he could not see before, although things were clear.

**ARAGOZE:** Look at me ...

**HAKAWATI:** Nobody can see.

**ARAGOZE:** I cannot assemble my bones.

**HAKAWATI:** He is invisible except for his likes.

**ARAGOZE:** I can't restore my very fingers.



**HAKAWATI:** He represents only seven percent of himself.

**ARAGOZE:** I have no control.

**HAKAWATI:** The rest is gifted to the inevitable truth.

**ARAGOZE:** (*Shouts.*) Just leave me.

(*Silence*)

(*WORMS barfs.*)

**CORONA:** Eww! I have never seen in my entire invasions on human, did you fart worm?

**WORMS:** This was not a fart. It was barf.

**CORONA:** No, a fart.

**WORMS:** No, barf.

**CORONA:** A fart.

**WORMS:** (*Shouts.*) Barf.

**CORONA:** (*Shouts.*) A fart.

(*Silence*)

**WORMS:** Well, let's put an end to this endless discussion.

**CORONA:** You are right. What is barf at the end?

**WORMS:** It is a fart that lost its way. It's supposed to go out through the lower hole.

**CORONA:** But forcefully takes a turning point, a U-turn, to the upper hole.

**WORMS:** This is the inevitable truth.

**CORONA:** Nothing is called inevitable truth. It is called investable.

**WORMS:** Do you think so?

*(Silence.)*

**CORONA:** In the industrial world, ports of any country should lift each other's burdens for the sake of the majority's survival.

**HAKAWATI:** In fact, the majority's sight is confounded.

**WORMS:** What do you mean?

**CORONA:** Their past events are inflamed.

**HAKAWATI:** Present is unstable.

**ARAGOZE:** *(Shout. Angrily.)* And no vision for the future is wavering in the horizon.

*(Silence.)*

**CORONA:** *(Whispers.)* Nobody can hear you.

**WORMS:** *(Whispers.)* Everyone turns back and runs away when it takes place.

**HAKAWATI:** In fact, they run.

**ARAGOZE:** Run.

**HAKAWATI:** Run.

**ARAGOZE:** *(Shouts.)* Run.

*(Silence)*

**ARAGOZE:** They were claiming that burying heads in the sand could simply take the inevitable reality away. This is not true. Burying collective burden of sins in the sand can only make things and us invisible to other predators.

**HAKAWATI:** *(Pointing to the audience.)* We could have helped them all.

*(Silence)*

**HAKAWATI:** We can bury our heads for a while. But our anuses are still exposed, visible to other predators.

*(Silence)*

**WORMS:** By the way, if you mean in this analogy that survivors were using ostriches' burying head as a defence technique, all your analogy is a myth. I am Worms, and I have many ostrich friends. We have talked about this.

**HAKAWATI:** They don't bury heads. I apologise. However, they do dig holes in the sand to make a nest for eggs lost to vultures, jackals and hyenas. They saved their asses, but their inheritors could be any time later threatened by plummeting stones.

*(Shooting sound. An awful cry. All become scared.)*

**ARAGOZE:** *(In terror.)* Whither to flee? Where is the escape

**CORONA:** *(Laughs.)* Alas! No refuge!

**WORMS:** No way to run away.

**CORONA:** You have been killing my whole family with your vaccines. We are born to make you stronger.

**WORMS:** No way to get away! I have been in your body for ages, and it's all crap.

**HAKAWATI:** Aragoze is suffocating. Aragoze turns right and left, trying to escape with his soul to a safer world.

**ARAGOZE:** I can't breathe.

(ARAGOZE falls silent.  
CORONA and WORMS sing a  
lullaby to ARAGOZE.)

**WORMS:** It is the time of parting. Say good-byes!

**CORONA:** Hush! Wake up to sad news and cries!

**WORMS:** Sleep poor dying one, this is the time of separation.

**CORONA:** Whither to flee? Could not have any patience to the interpretation!

**WORMS:** Unmindfulness of this day, indeed, it will be said.

**CORONA:** Now, the cover is removed from your own head.

**WORMS:** Life is dreams of sleep or as a fleeting shade.

**CORONA:** From it, people of understanding are not betrayed.

**WORMS:** Sleep my little drop of gushed fluid.

**CORONA:** Sleeping nourishes those who have no food.

**WORMS:** Sleeping with certainty is better than a prayer in uncertainty.

**CORONA:** Sleeping is a gift from divinity.

**WORMS:** Without it, the world is an absurdity.

*(WORMS and CORONA exit.*

*ARAGOZE rolls to exit.*

*Cockroach and sawing sounds*

*intersect.)*

**HAKAWATI:** Worms and Corona fibbed him. He is drowned in sleep. Yea, the eyes spilling pain on the chest. They lay heavily on his eyelids. He is fated to sleep and wake up to live in the life of consciousness.

*(MESSENGER enters.*

*MESSENGER carries a placard*

*that says 100% Certified.)*

*(Miniature Nine)*

**MESSENGER:** This is Miniature Nine. My dear audience. This is just a performance. Do not do this at home. I am your messenger. Chosification. If you spit out up or down, your moustache or beard is in the way. We call it Theory of You Tailor it, and I Wear it.

*(MESSENGER exits. GHOUL enters the shadow stage as a Jinni creature.)*

**GHOUL:** What is he doing now?

*(HAKAWATI gets afraid.)*

**HAKAWATI:** Who ... who ...

**GHOUL:** Is he walking while he is sleeping?

**HAKAWATI:** He is ... is ... is ...

**GHOUL:** What's wrong with you human? We were born equally?

**HAKAWATI:** Yes ... yes ... we ... we ... were ... equ ... equa ... equally.

**GHOUL:** I know why you are afraid. It is not my character of physical appearance as many of your audience believe. It is because ...

**HAKAWATI:** (Shout. Loud.) Please do not.

*(Silence.)*

**GHOUL:** Humans are just weird creatures.

**HAKAWATI:** What was your first question?

**GHOUL:** What is he doing now?

**HAKAWATI:** In fact, he is longing for the sleep ...

**GHOUL:** That does not classify us into good and evil.

**HAKAWATI:** The sleep that comes alone at night.

**GHOUL:** And gently creeps into the body.

**HAKAWATI:** To cheer up the soul.

**GHOUL:** To wash away the bugbears.

**HAKAWATI:** You know that delicious numbness escapes with the first moments ...

**GHOUL:** When the morning light invades the room.

**HAKAWATI:** It gently comes.

**GHOUL:** And gently leaves.

**HAKAWATI:** And, as a new baby, the soul receives ...

**GHOUL:** Life for the first time.

*(Oud music. ARAGOZE enters the shadow stage, whirling with a belly dancer. GHOUL exits.)*

**ARAGOZE:** A sign from the sky is a seed to the Earth. *(Echo.)* A sign from the sky is a seed to the Earth.

### **﴿ Bell Twenty Six ﴾**

*(HAKAWATI daydreams. The bell rings. Dancer exits. ARAGOZE hurries to different directions; He is confused.)*

**ARAGOZE:**

*(To himself.)* Oh Mary, I am late for my job. Shall I fill myself with dismay and abduct myself to work?

Oh Mary, my belly is rumbling from hunger although I ate an elephant the size of Worms. Still, my belly is like the Earth with the Moon when they are agglomerated like one big rock. They are lifted high with great trouble and then thrown into a hollow well and pulverised with a single crushing.

*(Loud sound of bombing.  
ARAGOZE falls down on his  
buttocks. HAKAWATI is awake  
from the daydreaming.)*

**HAKAWATI:**

I was so engaged. It is just some usual traumas haunting me about Ghoul. He was a national hawk that you cannot play with easily. One day, Ghoul made a speech for his own, and no reasonable mind listens to it. He was cursed then and turned to what he looks like now.

*(HAKAWATI daydreams again  
waiting for a sign from the sky.)*

### **( Bell Twenty Seven )**

*(The bell rings. Bell Twenty  
Seven. Curfew siren.)*



*(GHOUL enters the stage to address the audience. HAKAWATI runs to exit. ARAGOZE starts rushing things, preparing for his tv show.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Welcome back to my show. I would like to confess that we all human and Jinni are created equal.

**GHOUL:** Therefore, we have no rights ...

*(Silence.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Except what our founding fathers bequeath.

**GHOUL:** Nationalism.

**ARAGOZE:** And a great zero value of coquettish mannerism.

**GHOUL:** We are the hawks.

**ARAGOZE:** And shame for doves.

**GHOUL:** Who seek showing off ...

*(Silence.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Their humanism.

**GHOUL:** We have been blessed ...

*(Silence.)*

**ARAGOZE:** With our founding father's heroic deeds.

**GHOUL:** Ha, at the cost of other people.

**ARAGOZE:** Whom we never met or spoken to.

**GHOUL:** But who immigrate into your lands, carrying skills and talents.

**ARAGOZE:** To fuck with our women.

*(Silence.)*

**GHOUL:** Whom you can't already fuck with.

*(Silence.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Today, we are all shamed.

**GHOUL:** With clear double castration.

**ARAGOZE:** Our lovely founding fathers.

**GHOUL:** May their souls rest in peace.

**ARAGOZE:** Were real men.

**GHOUL:** Look at their graves.

**ARAGOZE:** Measure their penises.

**GHOUL:** And today?

**ARAGOZE:** We have no power to benefit nor to harm.

**GHOUL:** Save that which the newcomer has tailored to the hawks.

**ARAGOZE:** May hands of death capture my soul.

*(Curfew siren. ARAGOZE feels  
confused and afraid. WORMS and*

*CORONA enter the shadow  
stage.)*

**WORMS:** This is merely your wishful thinking.

**CORONA:** I want you right here at work before your glance returns to you.

**WORMS:** Like light speed before the great event occurs.

*(ARAGOZE is afraid to say a  
word.)*

**CORONA:** Let me remind you that you were naught in a period.

**WORMS:** Many thanks to Mr Worms and Mr Corona that raised you from the garbage and provided you with your rights and basics. Food, drink, shelter and identity.

**ARAGOZE:** Yes, my lords. I hear, and I obey.

*(WORMS and CORONA exit. ARAGOZE  
exits. HAKAWATI enters the stage.  
GHOUL enters the shadow stage.)*

**HAKAWATI:** (To Audience.) And Corona and Worms were also one of the hawks that Aragoze is bragging about.

*(Silence.)*

**GHOUL:** How many times have you lied to them about Alexander the Great, Antara, Napoleon, and Jesus?

**HAKAWATI:** This is my job to entertain them.

**GHOUL:** This is not true. You are not Shahrazad in the one thousand and one nights. You said that, and your audience knows it.

*(Silence.)*

**HAKAWATI:** I was not aware that my stories made you and Aragoze as stupid as a donkey.

**GHOUL:** But the donkey is a smart animal.

*(HAKAWATI laughs.)*

*(Silence.)*

**GHOUL:** Why are you laughing?

**HAKAWATI:** I agree with you to some extent. However, you both are donkeys because of your great stubbornness.

**GHOUL:** I know our paranoia drives both of us to selfishly do what we want but not what our bosses want unless ...

**HAKAWATI:** Unless what?

**GHOUL:** Unless we are unfortunately beaten.

**HAKAWATI:** Your stubbornness makes bosses think that you do not follow orders. *(Hysterical laughing.)*

*(Silence.)*

**HAKAWATI:** I really feel sorry for both. This is not fair, though.

*(Silence.)*

**GHOUL:** Also, the way our head is lowered while walking suggests that we do not look in front of us. And we do not realise what is going on around us.

**HAKAWATI:** That's true.

**GHOUL:** Let's stand on practical ground. Why does Aragoze lower his head while walking?

**HAKAWATI:** In fact, Aragoze's internal conflicts resulted from an authority which clearly states whoever raises heads up will be chopped up. It seems he suffers from this psychosomatic illness.

**GHOUL:** May I share my own view about my own donkey?

**HAKAWATI:** Yes, please! It's a pleasure.

**GHOUL:** My donkey was never a stupid animal. On the contrary, it is intelligent.

**HAKAWATI:** Could you please tell us more?

**GHOUL:** My donkey can remember all roads like a GPS. You can find it in farms carrying items, walking alone to reach untouched places. Sometimes, you find it pulling a cart loaded with vegetables while its owner is sleeping. But it is still walking in the right direction.

**HAKAWATI:** I can't disagree with what you are saying. Besides, many great writers admired the intelligence of donkeys. The renowned Egyptian playwright Tawfiq Al-Hakim had a famous book called Donkey of the Wise.

**GHOUL:** Besides, the Democratic Party's logo has a big donkey image.

**HAKAWATI:** I thought the donkey image was Donald Trump of the US.

**GHOUL:** I can't disagree with what you are saying. But he is counted as a republican. Same shit. Different assholes.

**HAKAWATI:** And thank you for sharing this critical stuff. However, I would like to remind you all that the donkey and Aragoze are well trained to obey against their will.

**GHOUL:** How?

**HAKAWATI:** He is powerless to counter.

**GHOUL:** Probably, he is doomed by this status of necessity that creates a state of uneven loss of control over the surrounding, which provides no guarantees.

**HAKAWATI:** Past pains are inflating.

**GHOUL:** Present suffering is aggravating. Future horizons are occluding.

*(Silence.)*

**HAKAWATI:** He is introjecting this tragedy to every day. Only one language is not foreign to Aragoze ...

**GHOUL:** Called the scourge language.

**HAKAWATI:** How do you know that?

**GHOUL:** Any attempt at breaking the cage bars means the heaven will split asunder.

*(Thunderstorm sound.*

*MESSENGER enters the stage.*

*HAKAWATI and GHOUL exit.*

*MESSENGER carries a placard  
that says My Enemy, and I are  
one.)*

{Miniature }Ten

**MESSENGER:** This is Miniature Ten. My dear audience. This is just a performance. Do not do this at home. I am your messenger. It is the aggressor identification. He who has gone through his suffering will enjoy watching others suffer.

**MESSENGER:** And the one who suffers farts, producing a wind that has a sound due to the intense pressure and intolerance. And the one who is still waiting for his own share is fantasising a long sharp pin under his buttocks. We can call it Under the Sticks, Unlike Counting Sticks Theory.

*(Oud music. ARAGOZE enters  
the stage whirling.)*

**ARAGOZE:** A sign from the sky is a seed to the Earth. *(Echo)* A sign from the sky is a seed to the Earth.

*(MESSENGER exits.)*

**( Bell Twenty Nine )**

*(The bell rings, curfew sirens sound. ARAGOZE hurries to present his show while collecting garbage. ARAGOZE holds a broom and garbage bin. TANNIN and NASNAS enter the shadow.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to The Aragoze Show, I am your host Aragoze.

*(Cheers sound.)*

**NASNAS:** It has been a long time since I saw you, my second half. It is Friday!

**TANNIN:** Yes! It is Friday, my friend.

**ARAGOZE:** It is Friday for you out there watching. But then again I'm pulling back the showbiz curtain and letting you in on a tiny top-secret.

**NASNAS:** A little bird will not come at night to tweet it to you.

**ARAGOZE:** That I'm recording this on Thursday evening.

**NASNAS:** And let me tell you ...

**ARAGOZE:** Thursday is a great time to see everyone safe.

**TANNIN:** Yea, it is good. Yea, you're worth it.

*(Cheers sound.)*



**ARAGOZE:** For the reason that I have no clue what may occur in the trial at the law court tomorrow.

**NASNAS:** Maybe, the court may slay the plea for eyewitnesses.

**ARAGOZE:** Maybe Worms and Corona may slaughter all the witnesses.

**TANNIN:** I don't see any hindrance to this.

**NASNAS:** At the moment, the water is beautiful.

**TANNIN:** But I can't give guarantees about what may happen to you and me ...

**ARAGOZE:** My dear audience at the time I say Baa.

*(Sheep sound.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Today, while I'm at this juncture in the idyllic before-times, you're all living the trail after-scape.

**NASNAS:** And for that, I salute you.

**ARAGOZE:** Because we are standing tall or stretching on the bed eating handfuls of pies off your chest.

**TANNIN:** All that jazz you need to do, I stand with you ...

**ARAGOZE:** My people. Other than the fact that I'm not with you.

**NASNAS:** I am with you. Other than the fact that I'm not with you.

**TANNIN:** Now, a lot of things are going on these days, and people can find no answers.

**ARAGOZE:** Let's go to Guess Who, Guess What.

*(ARAGOZE scratches his own head.)*

**TANNIN:** Before I go further, I would hit your ears with a little reminder.

**ARAGOZE:** In the trial, there will be, finally, eight witnesses on the sides of the court.

**TANNIN:** Each of the witnesses have twelve sides. I said each witness has twelve sides. It is an error if you believe that humans have two sides.

**ARAGOZE:** No secrets will be hidden, all exposed.

*(ARAGOZE, NASNAS and TANNIN count their own sides; top, down, back, front, thighs in-sides, thighs out-sides, arms in-sides, and arms out-sides.)*

**NASNAS:** You will never know. Many people went to courts and embassies and came out with one missing side, and they are still searching for the missing part.

**ARAGOZE:** Others were even more unlucky. They are still looking for their own twelve sides.

Well, let's move now to *Guess Who, Guess What* after this short break.

*(Ad music. NASNAS unites with his other half, which TANNIN has confiscated.)*

- NASNAS:** Welcome back to my second half.
- ARAGOZE:** Guess Who.
- TANNIN:** Guess What. My advice has definitely no price.
- ARAGOZE:** Holds a record-book in the right hand.
- TANNIN:** I mean, left-hand.
- ARAGOZE:** If you have this in your right hand ...
- TANNIN:** You will dare to tell all hawk judges “here it is, come and read my record-book”.
- ARAGOZE:** Indeed, I knew that I was going to encounter my reckoning.
- TANNIN:** In this case, your life is going to be pleasant. It will look like the clusters of low-hanging fruit within easy reach.
- ARAGOZE:** And you always be with the right, the caucus, in every place you step into.
- TANNIN:** Eat ye, drink ye, and all other satisfactions.
- NASNAS:** At the cost of the inevitable truth? I can’t believe what you are saying. I gifted my second half for ages to surrender.
- ARAGOZE:** Don’t carry a record-book in the left hand
- TANNIN:** If you have him in your left hand.

**ARAGOZE:** Oh dear, you will wish you had not been given your book and had not known your records.

**TANNIN:** You would wish a certain death.

**NASNAS:** All wealth of knowledge ...

**ARAGOZE:** It will not avail you.

**TANNIN:** Among the left.

**NASNAS:** *(Shout. Angrily.)* All have perished?

*(NASNAS willingly separates from TANNIN.)*

*(Silence.)*

*(NASNAS and TANNIN exit. CORONA and WORMS puppets enter the shadow.)*

*(A group of wailing EVE-ADAM and JINN prisoners enters the stage shackled with chains. A real high-pitched cry of grief. Evil laughs intersect with tortured prisoners' screams. ARAGOZE feels scared, but enjoys the advantage of watching and identifying with CORONA and WORMS' position of power.*

*ARAGOZE runs to torture the prisoners.)*

**WORMS:** *(Evil tone.)* Seize, shackle, and drive to prison—thrust with a chain of hundreds of cubits.

**ARAGOZE:** Yea, seize and shackle.

**CORONA:** *(Deprecating ARAGOZE.)* Fuck off out of my way, scoundrel.

*(ARAGOZE steps back and attacks the prisoners.)*

**ARAGOZE:** *(To prisoners.)* You deserve this. Leftist scoundrels!

**CORONA:** This is what we deserve for denouncing in the great book of rules?

**WORMS:** And you did not give up the ideas for the sake of feeding the wretched.

**CORONA:** Thus, they have no friends here except hell.

**WORMS:** No food except nasty wounds.

**CORONA:** This is not from my heart.

**ARAGOZE:** *(Shouts.)* Cut off my aorta, if this comes from my heart.

*(Silence.)*

**WORMS:** No one could prevent you from me.

**ARAGOZE:** *(Pointing to the neck.)* Cut off from here.

**CORONA:** *(Calmly.)* I swear by all what you see and what you don't see.

**WORMS:** I am sure.

**ARAGOZE:** I swear by the childhood milk sucked from my mother's breast.

**CORONA:** You think that I am a soothsayer?

**ARAGOZE:** Or a poet who lies to gain.

*(Silence.)*

*(ARAGOZE then tricks everyone and beats the prisoners, with a savage laugh.)*

**ARAGOZE:** No, no, no, I am not. I just said three no's. According to the book of rules, this means a certainty.

*(ARAGOZE bites his own right hand, hits the thumb on his chin and index finger between his jaws and inside his mouth. He approaches the prisoners again to beat them.)*

**ARAGOZE:** This is just a reminder for the sinners, but not the right with absolute truth.

**WORMS:** A reminder for the deniers of the inevitable truth.

*(ARAGOZE raises his right arm, with his hand a fist. Prisoners exit.)*

**ARAGOZE:** *(Echo.)* For the right wings, exalt. With your iron right, hands hold and crush.

*(MESSENGER enters the stage.*

*ARAGOZE exits. CORONA and  
WORMS exit.)*

⟨Miniature Eleven⟩

**MESSENGER:** This is Miniature Eleven. My dear audience. This is just a performance. Do not do this at home. I am your messenger. It is a temporality disorder.

*(A display of eardrops.)*

Please take my four ifs into consideration and put them in as ear drops wherever you go.

*(A display of a big woman and  
small man.)*

**MESSENGER:** First, if you want to shame a man, invest a woman with authority over him.

*(A display of small woman and big  
child)*

Second, if you want to shame a woman, invest a boy with authority over her.

*(A display of a brain.)*

Third, if your own folk went crazy, your mindfulness would not be right for you.

*(A display of a judge giving a middle finger.)*

Fourth, if the judge quarrels with you, where would you complain? We can call this Theory of No Fuck with Others' Demons.

*(HAKAWATI and GHOUL enter the stage talking. HAKAWATI is riding her bike. MESSENGER exits.)*

**GHOUL:** So, all historical narratives about me were made for entertaining some group at the cost of my complexities.

**HAKAWATI:** Once upon no time, historical records have been absolutely accurate.

**GHOUL:** How was I depicted in official records?

**HAKAWATI:** Your history, like everyone else's, is told from a worm-eye-angle.

*(GHOUL lies down looking up.)*

**GHOUL:** Well, even the geographical map of the stage like the curtain, walls and the audience look exaggeratedly high.



**HAKAWATI:** Some geographical features are made to be seen, and others are made to be hidden. Many island maps were newly named, renamed, erased or edited ...

**GHOUL:** For the service of a group over another.

**HAKAWATI:** This is how the whole world is run. But the whole thing is going to disappear.

*(Silence.)*

**GHOUL:** When did it begin to spread across the world?

**HAKAWATI:** You don't have to worry. It started to reap.

**GHOUL:** Why do you think that I don't have to worry?

**HAKAWATI:** From east to west, and north to south, all have been taught that it has been totally under control.

**GHOUL:** Has it ever been so?

**HAKAWATI:** Never.

**GHOUL:** So. In theory, it will inexplicably go away.

**HAKAWATI:** It will look useful to many as long as it is under control.

**GHOUL:** Are there still people like that?

**HAKAWATI:** Many.

**GHOUL:** Tell them then the inevitable truth.

**HAKAWATI:** They would call facsimiles of the fake news that aim to inflame the order.

**GHOUL:** I agree with you. We are not prepared, Hakawati. We are not prepared. We are busy with “Lest not forget our invisible enemy” slogans.

**HAKAWATI:** Such slogans are cathartic to many.

**GHOUL:** How is that?

**HAKAWATI:** Well, it is invisible. Nothing is worse than showing them the enemy. Just let them imagine.

**GHOUL:** And promise them victory.

**HAKAWATI:** Rhetoric of wartime proved to be historically intense pressure to blow artificial air into lungs.

*(Oud music. ARAGOZE enters whirling. GHOUL and HAKAWATI exit.)*

**ARAGOZE:** A sign from the sky is a seed to the Earth. *(Echo.)* A sign from the sky is a seed to the Earth.

### **⌘ Bell Thirty ⌘**

*(The bell rings. ARAGOZE hurries to exit. A naked lady, MS. HOMELAND, enters. She holds the globe up to the middle of the stage.)*

*(EVE-ADAM and JINN enter to surround Ms Homeland. LIONESS puppet and HYENA puppets enter the shadow stage. The HYENA puppets surround the LIONESS to snatch her flesh. EVE-ADAM and JINN walk in a synchronised movement and at the same pace side by side, giving their backs to the audience. They wear unicorns on their heads and moustaches and beards. Each also wears civilisational symbols; Western, Islamic, Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, Japanese, Chinese, African and Eastern.)*

***(Note:** Directors' potential exclusion of any of the above geopolitical symbols means anti-art and the rest of the displayed unicorns are already inserted in you from a power relations perspective. Be careful!)*

*(First movement: EVE-ADAM and JINN hold their hands together facing MS HOMELAND, and they rotate counter clockwise with gentle head-bend to the side in time with their footsteps. They are singing together to the tune of Old MacDonald Had A Farm.)*

**EVE-ADAM and JINN:** *(Sing.)* Our Mother has a boob.

E-I-E-I-O.

And in this boob, we have milk.

E-I-E-I-O.

With a tit-milk here.

And a tit-milk there.

Here milk. There tit.

Everywhere a tit-milk.

Our Mother has a hole.

E-I-E-I-O.

And in this hole, we have a goal.

E-I-E-I-O.

With a dig-deck here.

And a dig-deck there.

Here a dig. There a dig.

Everywhere a dig-deck.

Our Mother is so soft.

E-I-E-I-OOOOOOO.

*(Curfew siren. The second movement: EVE-ADAM and JINN rotate walking around MS HOMELAND. Three steps are taken in the same direction (clockwise) and then the other three steps in the opposite direction (counter clockwise).*

*(In each dancing step, they incorporate a thunderclap in the air.)*

**EVE-ADAM and JINN:** *(Sing.) One, Two, Three [clap].*

We want to eat.

Four, Five, Six, [clap].

We need sex.

Seven, Eight, Nine [*clap*].

All the pieces are mine.

*(Curfew siren, EVE-ADAM and JINN widen their circle a little bit to create enough fighting space where MS. HOMELAND is still central. All sit in a yoga position. Calmness falls. EVE-ADAM and JINN express their anger by circulating like hyenas around MS.HOMELAND.)*

*(Sound of HYENAS fighting against the LIONESS. Each of EVE-ADAM and JINN take turns on MS HOMELAND. One sharp trumpet sound. Curfew siren. EVE-ADAM and JINN escape to exit. Ms HOMELAND exits. LIONESS and HYENA exit.)*

*(Silence.)*

*(Oud music. ARAGOZE enters the stage whirling.)*

**ARAGOZE:**

A sign from the sky is a seed to the Earth. (*Echo.*) A sign from the sky is a seed to the Earth.

**{ Bell Thirty One }**

*(The bell rings. ARAGOZE  
hurries to give a fiery speech.  
WORMS and CORONA enter the  
shadow stage to give a fiery  
speech to the United Nations.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Dear audience.

**WORMS:** Dear delegates and distinguished audience. This is rubbish.

**CORONA:** They resemble nothing save cattle—

**ARAGOZE:** Nay, in fact, they are lower than that.

**WORMS:** These are decadent.

*(Adhan call sounds.)*

**ARAGOZE:** *(Supplicating.)* You have always favoured my parents and me. Please, elevate me to the rank of your righteous slaves. They cannot govern.

**WORMS:** They cannot invest their many potentials and wealth.

**CORONA:** So, they must have an authoritarian ruler.

**WORMS:** And allies' investors who can appreciate the wasted wealth.

*(Church call cover.)*

**ARAGOZE:** *(Supplicating.)* I surely wish to survive a thousand years, to unveil all true feelings and facts that have been levelled with the ground.

**CORONA:** Therefore, these heedless cattle should be thankful for our favours.

**WORMS:** Since the rise of Corona around the world, the climate starts to be cleaner.

**ARAGOZE:** The crimes become less.

**WORMS:** The greedy people come to the surface.

**CORONA:** The racist world order starts to fall.

**WORMS:** As all are having the same opportunity to die now.

**CORONA:** All people are created equal and die equally.

*(Synagogue call cover.)*

**ARAGOZE:** *(Voiceover. Supplicating.)* If, and if, I have the upper hand, help me to stretch out against Corona with my hands, claws and tongue.

**CORONA:** Mr President and venerated Saints.

**WORMS:** Soon, they may give up the withdrawal.

**CORONA:** Surrendering.

**WORMS:** Or avoidance of confrontation.



**ARAGOZE:** My friends, you should know that between rebellion and submission, is an existential tragedy.

*(Silence.)*

*(Crowd cheers.)*

**ARAGOZE:** *(Angry and depressed.)* I hate this face.

*(Silence.)*

**WORMS:** They are nothing.

**ARAGOZE:** I do want to see it.

*(Silence.)*

**CORONA:** A zero.

**ARAGOZE:** I detest it.

*(Silence.)*

**WORMS:** In fact, thousands of zeros before number one.

**ARAGOZE:** *(Angry and depressed.)* I am naught too.

*(Silence.)*

**CORONA:** They are only causing havoc.

**WORMS:** Naïve.

**CORONA:** Ignorant.

**WORMS:** Rugged.

**CORONA:** Corrupt.

**WORMS:** Dishonoured and impotent.

**ARAGOZE:** *(Shouts. Angrily.)* They are sick men of the world.

*(Silence.)*

**ARAGOZE:** *(Angry and depressed.)* I am terminally ill, and on a date with death.

**CORONA:** The worst in the quality of life.

**WORMS:** The worst in integrity.

**CORONA:** Look at the healthy others.

**WORMS:** Their creative minds and happy souls are all written and fated for them.

**ARAGOZE:** I am just lazy, brutal and looting.

*(Crowd cheers.)*

**WORMS:** Thank you so much! It is my time to take control.

**CORONA:** My dear delegates, our economic survival, rely on them.

**ARAGOZE:** My distinguished guests, these peoples deserve new mass destruction.

**CORONA:** As they only breed bloodiness.

**WORMS:** Obstinacy.

**ARAGOZE:** And aggression.

*(A crowd cheers and claps.)*

**WORMS:** They are stubborn, and they do not want to change.

**ARAGOZE:** They are like those who ride and sit on their own heads to kill their own minds.

**WORMS:** They are wrestling with their own minds.

**CORONA:** Therefore, our minds are mostly needed.

**ARAGOZE:** These cattle don't understand any language except the language of cruelty.

**CORONA:** Geniality does not work for them.

**WORMS:** They should not be tolerated.

**ARAGOZE:** Because they will respond with violence and vandalism.

**CORONA:** They will abuse and audaciously encroach upon their employers of grace and us.

**ARAGOZE:** I know very well, we are as crying, phony birds-mouths as we have a lot of differences and we don't like each other.

**WORMS:** But we must stay at the summit of the world, don't we?

**ARAGOZE:** Therefore ...

**WORMS:** We must control this vast land.

**CORONA:** And install a foreign body to fulfil.

**ARAGOZE:** Stability.

*(Silence.)*

*(A crowd cheers and claps.  
Silence. Curfew siren. CORONA,  
WORMS and ARAGOZE exit.  
GHOUL NASNAS & TANNIN  
enter the shadow. HAKAWATI  
enters the stage, riding her  
bicycle.)*

**HAKAWATI:** So, you asked me about how Corona passed through Aragoze's blood river.

**NASNAS:** Yes, we are excited to know.

**GHOUL:** Well, this is a long story.

**HAKAWATI:** We may talk about it tomorrow.

**TANNIN:** No, please, now.

**HAKAWATI:** I can't, I feel tired.

**NASNAS:** Please.

**TANNIN:** Wez Wez.

**NASNAS:** Wez Wez.

**TANNIN:** Wez Wez.

**NASNAS:** Wez Wez.

**HAKAWATI:** (Angrily). Shut up.

*(Silence.)*

**GHOUL:** I swear to cut off the rest of your divided tongues if you inhale.

*(Long break.)*

**HAKAWATI:** Are you trying to eat my head?

**GHOUL:** You fucked off my brain.

**HAKAWATI:** It's OK. It's OK. I am telling you soon how the Corona did it through our nerves.

**GHOUL:** Haven't I told you that you would never put up with me?

**NASNAS:** If we ask you after this concerning aught, you will have enough reasons not to keep us your companions.

**HAKAWATI:** Listen carefully.

**TANNIN:** Here, we hear and obey.

**HAKAWATI:** Aragoze does not have pain from the itching.

**NASNAS:** Why is Aragoze itching then?

*(HAKAWATI is about to leave.)*

**TANNIN:** We are really sorry. It is a slip of the tongue as we are excited to know.

**HAKAWATI:** Your excitement may damage the chains of Aragoze's story, which I am afraid to lose. But I am fine as you apologise and promise to stay silent, listening to me.

**TANNIN:** You are the greatest.

**HAKAWATI:** Corona is not a new disease.

**GHOUL:** It is sustainable oppression and transgression.

**HAKAWATI:** It uses different styles and strokes to control Aragoze's nerves.

**GHOUL:** At the front of Aragoze's mouth, it lays on its stomachs to trick Aragoze into helping it to stand.

**HAKAWATI:** It propels forward through the mouth, with windmill bristle motions, as soon as Aragoze shows sympathy by talking about its weak and invisible appearance.

**GHOUL:** You know that humans usually dream of being supermen. You would hear Aragoze say ...

**ARAGOZE:** (*Voiceover.*) I must help. I will pay more time, effort, and money to support its survival. Poor Corona has no arms to move, legs to stand, or eyes to see.

**HAKAWATI:** Well, that's what makes them cold-blooded and causes Aragoze's severe pain.

**GHOUL:** It places bristles into the upper hole; and with gentle propelling, with a flutter, kicks up and down, to sneak into Aragoze.

**HAKAWATI:** When Aragoze opens the upper hole to insert anything, it senses light and heat and then runs to hide into cavities for fourteen days.

**TANNIN:** Did you say fourteen days?

**GHOUL:** Maybe more.

**NASNAS:** For what gains?

**HAKAWATI:** It hides to collect, examine, and process all entries coming in. They know how we work more than we do.

**TANNIN:** What happens after?

**HAKAWATI:** Worms' Coronas proceed using their sensors to control the nervous system.

**GHOUL:** They can proceed to Aragoze's brain immediately, but this may cause disorder and death and then make no use or benefits out of Aragoze.

**NASNAS:** So, how does it work?

**HAKAWATI:** They dive in slowly and gradually so they can obtain as much as they can. At the same time, Aragoze feels pain often but not always.

**GHOUL:** By this time, Aragoze starts to acclimatise to pain. In fact, Aragoze becomes a master of pain categorisations. Knowing which pain is more or less painful than other pains is a talent.

**TANNIN:** If the Worm's Coronas do not sneak up to Aragoze's brain, where could be her first destination?

**HAKAWATI:** The mouth and the tongue are their mission's first strategic goal.

**NASNAS:** Poor Aragoze's stomach is rumbling. No food is offered, and hunger is pain.

**GHOUL:** Not yet! This is way too advanced. Hunger is an emotional and mindless operation.

**HAKAWATI:** It arises suddenly and gradually when the stomach starts to growl by just feeling a little bit empty. The first goal is the mouth and tongue cravings.

**TANNIN:** You said mouth and tongue, cravings!

**GHOUL:** Worms are capitalists; after they eat, grind up and digest, they pass the rest as wastes called castings to increase fertility and then reproduction.

**HAKAWATI:** The authoritarian Corona makes Aragoze pay attention, whether the stomach is hungry or full, to mouth and tongue cravings. It tickles Aragoze's tongue.

**GHOUL:** They make him pant like a hungry dog, bringing excessive thirst to lick the key or the hole. From a near or far distance, they elevate his body temperature.

**ARAGOZE:** (*Voiceover.*) I wish for a fatty, sweet, and salty thing after my meal.

**HAKAWATI:** I wish I had that sweet car.

**GHOUL:** I wish I had this lovely gold necklace.

**HAKAWATI:** I wish I had that brand-new phone.

**GHOUL:** I wish I could afford these cute shoes.

**HAKAWATI:** I wish I could travel to that place.

**NASNAS:** This is a fatal sickness.

**TANNIN:** The many cravings bring disease to the heart.



**HAKAWATI:** The authoritarian Corona moves up to the nose to build its filtration bases.

**TANNIN:** What is that for?

**GHOUL:** Corona feels jealous as they don't have a nose like Aragoze.

**NASNAS:** They don't have a nose at all! OMG!

**TANNIN:** I am very content that I have a half nose.

**GHOUL:** Therefore, they would take revenge.

**HAKAWATI:** These filtration bases will dysfunction Aragoze' sensory nerve fibres.

**GHOUL:** The sneaky Corona sets, then, a seal or a veil on Aragoze's eyes and a seal on the two ears.

**HAKAWATI** Aragoze has eyes with which he doesn't see, and ears with which he doesn't hear.

**GHOUL:** This causes heterosmia - the inability to distinguish odours.

**HAKAWATI:** Everything tastes the same.

**GHOUL:** Sweet and bitter.

**HAKAWATI:** Oppressed or oppressor.

**GHOUL:** Good or bad.

**HAKAWATI:** Life and death.

*(Silence.)*

**HAKAWATI:** Touti Touti Khilsit al-hatouti,

**GHOUL:** Hilwi wala mal-touti.

**NASNAS:** Mal-touti.

**TANNIN:** Mal-touti.

*(ALL exit. Oud music. ARAGOZE enters whirling.)*

**VOICEOVER1:** *(Echo.)* O Aragoze! Why worshippeth thou Worms and Corona which heareth not nor seeth? O Aragoze! Verily! I have knowledge that you have not obtained yet. Keep an eye on my guidance to reach an even and straight path. Oh, Aragoze! Do not worship Worms and Corona.

**VOICEOVER1:** Lo! They are, to you, the most rebellious. Oh, Aragoze! Lo! I fear lest an everlasting curse! Don't be a comrade of the authoritarians.

**ARAGOZE:** A sign from the sky is a seed to the Earth. *(Echo.)* A sign from the sky is a seed to the Earth.

*(Curfew siren. ARAGOZE hurries to exit.)*

**CURTAIN CLOSES.**

**-The End -**

**Aragoze in a Time of Revolution**

**Bell Thirty Two to Forty Six**

**Miniature Twelve to Seventeen**

**Setting:** The black holes. (A floating display of focus-videos of potter and clay.)

**Time:** In a time of revolution.

## **CHARACTERS**

ARAGOZE

MESSENGER

HAKAWATI

GHOUL

## **TROUPES**

EVE-ADAM

JINN

PRIESTESS

KAWADAH

## **TRANSFORMATIVE ROLES**

HOMER (MESSENGER)

JOHN MILTON (GHOUL)

AL-MA'ARRI (HAKAWATI)

TAHA-HUSSEIN (HAKAWATI)

FANON (MESSENGER)

JINNI (GHOUL)

MEXICAN TETRA (GHOUL)

INTERFERER/GHOUL

WALI (GHOUL)

JAILER

SATAN

## **PUPPETS**

NASNAS

TANNIN

AL-MI'RAJ

*(MESSENGER enters. A Shadow screen reflects her statements in relevant, simple actions.)*

⌘Miniature Twelve⌘

**MESSENGER:** This is Miniature Twelve. My dear audience. This is just a performance. Do not do this at home. I am your messenger.

*(A display of someone stabbing.)*

Chewed gum is backbiting authoritarian teeth.

*(A display of someone trying to wear a mask.)*

Darkness can't be diminished to fit a thief's hand.

*(A display of a human skeleton.)*

During an attack, food has no value.

*(A display of smoke.)*

An infant's fart does not benefit nor harm anyone.

*(A display of swapping.)*

Horse, weapons, and women should not be borrowed.

*(A display of a man wearing a  
suitcase and a tie.)*

You may beat the poor, but you can't steal his clothes.

*(A display of hammering a nail.)*

A nail was asked why you are crushing into the wall. The nail  
replied because people are knocking my head.

*(A display of a man covering his  
private organ.)*

A rabbit was asked why don't you eat meat? The rabbit replied,  
"I wish to protect my own flesh".

*(A display of two archers facing  
each other.)*

They ask a wise man "what do you think of people and animals?"  
The wise replied, "what I think of myself".

*(A display of a cup filled half.)*

Lack of news is news.

*(A display of a bird.)*

His heart assembles birds' hearts.

*(A display of taijitu symbol.)*

Your sins are sitting next to you.

*(A display of a globe sits above  
bull horns.)*

Your mind in your head is a city.

*(A display of flying flies.)*

In the air, we are all equal.

*(A display of a mouse chasing an  
elephant.)*

If you saw a tall person running, you should reckon a short  
person is chasing the tall.

*(A display of a mouth shouting  
'Let that Shit Go'.)*

Extravagant welcoming may bring in shitty guests.

*(A display of sneaky hands.)*

Too much shyness brings in rapists.

*(A display of a jumping man  
carrying a rifle.)*

He jumps too much and thus haunts a little.

*(A display of the word 'fuck'.)*

The bad word is easily heard.

*(A display of a sticking out tongue  
and ice cream.)*

Friends hydrate your tongue.

*(A display of a snake.)*

A kind word brings adder out from its burrow.

*(A display of a dog with a crown  
on the head.)*

The dog of a King is a king.

We can call it the Theory of Blood Boiling.

*(MESSENGER exits. Oud music.  
ARAGOZE enters whirling.)*

**ARAGOZE:**

A sign from the sky is a seed to the Earth. A sign from the sky is  
a seed to the Earth.

### **{ Bell Thirty Two }**

*(The bell rings. HOMER, with a  
lute, and JOHN MILTON, with a  
cross, enter. They are physically  
blind. HAKAWATI exits. Arab  
belly dancer enters the shadow  
stage.)*

**ARAGOZE:**

Mr Homer, the Greek poet! Mr John Milton, the seventeenth-  
century English poet! What the Hell are you doing here?



**HOMER:** What happened to Greece after I left it?

**ARAGOZE:** Aristotle's philosophies and your poems are leaving Greece and the West at the brink of a third world war and poverty.

**HOMER:** Alas!

**ARAGOZE:** I thought you would be happy. Now, you can write more heroic epics.

**JOHN MILTON:** I am just surprised by this sad news. Have they not followed Jesus Christ's commands?

**ARAGOZE:** I am not sure what you are talking about. But would you have voted for Donald Trump?

**HOMER:** Of course, he is a billionaire and full of excitements. Poets usually love such extravagantly heroic characters.

**JOHN MILTON:** You see them bewildering in each valley.

**ARAGOZE:** Yeah, and they say what they don't understand. Homer, should you write an epic poem for the United States of America?

**HOMER:** Why do you choose this country, in particular?

**ARAGOZE:** They claim the USA is the number one democracy in the world.

**HOMER:** Well?

**ARAGOZE:** Women have become leaders of many countries such as Iran, Pakistan, and Singapore. However, American hawks claim their dictatorships, and we are still staying tuned to see a woman as a president of the United States. What do you think, Mr Milton?

*(Homer plays lute.)*

**JOHN MILTON:** I think ...

**ARAGOZE:** You don't have to say that ...

**JOHN MILTON:** I think ...

**ARAGOZE:** Adam succeeds Eve in their intellectuality and knowledge.

*(Silence.)*

**JOHN MILTON:** Please don't take this out of context.

**ARAGOZE:** Oh, I forgot, but women can get knowledge and intellectuality when they experience with and from Adam.

**JOHN MILTON:** Exactly!

**ARAGOZE:** Thank you, Johnny, John-John; your point is clear now.

**JOHN MILTON:** It's a pleasure.

*(Silence.)*

**JOHN MILTON:** Well, it is not domination. It is not a hierarchical relation.

**ARAGOZE:** Yea ...

**JOHN MILTON:** I mean ... I mean ...

**ARAGOZE:** I know what you mean ...

**JOHN MILTON:** It is ...

*(Homer stops playing lute.)*

**HOMER:** It is designated roles for males and females.

**ARAGOZE:** Homer, are you against or with?

*(Homer ignores and plays lute  
again.)*

**JOHN MILTON:** Eve should go through Adam.

*(Silence.)*

**ARAGOZE:** It seems you are as lost as your image of lost Paradise. You have been told so, at least.

**JOHN MILTON:** They wanted me to say a word. It could be a road to Heaven.

**ARAGOZE:** Or a parade to graves and Hell.

*(Silence.)*

**HOMER:** Aragoze, as a sighted person have you ever asked yourself “what do the blind see?”

**ARAGOZE:** Oh, Homer, are you trying to mock my mental abilities. You don’t see but blackness!

**JOHN MILTON:** *(Joking.)* In one of my sonnets, I said once:

“When I consider how my light is spent,

Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,

And that one Talent which is death to hide.” *(Laugh.)*

*(AL-MA’ARRI enters the shadow  
stage carrying a vegan symbol.)*

*HOMER plays his own lute to  
exit.)*

**AL-MA'ARRI:** *(Sarcastic.)* John Milton!

**ARAGOZE:** Mr Al-Ma'arri, the tenth-century Arab Poet! Oh my ... . Where am I living now?

**AL-MA'ARRI:** *(To John Milton.)* I am very sceptical about your irrational belief in the absolute authority of metaphysics.

**JOHN MILTON:** Al-Ma'arri, you are just such a pessimistic freethinker deist! Shall I contrast what you aim to say to that which the whisperer whispered to me?

**AL-MA'ARRI:** *(Mocking.)* I am just trying to cite the reason as the main path to your divine revelation.

**ARAGOZE:** What did the whisperer say, though?

**JOHN MILTON:** God does not need either of the faithful and unfaithful works or gifts.

**ARAGOZE:** Both of you confronted many religious dogmas and practices at the time when controversialists were dumped into the prison of blindness and isolation.

**JOHN MILTON:** I succeeded so far, but he failed.

**AL-MA'ARRI:** What do your divine attempts reveal to your own fictional imagination?

**JOHN MILTON:** My divine poetics, that you are belittling, sees as bright as the sky that Al-Qaeda chopped off your statue's head in the last Syrian wars.

**AL-MA'ARRI:** *(Disappointed.)* Yes, I saw that. But I am still the upper hand though. My eyes reach more distant horizons than your eyes.

**ARAGOZE:** Are you both driving me to a loop of black-comedy? Both are just blind, and you can't even see.

**JOHN MILTON:** *(Mocking.)* Huh! Could you bring the light from your brain, Mr Al-Ma'arri, to illuminate the path to us toward your inevitable truth? As my little birds are spinning around my head, doubting your claims of victory.

**AL-MA'ARRI:** My syntheses of atomic motions as reflected in my poems regarding controversial topics are still haunting my opponents. In fact, my vision of veganism and abortion is legalised nowadays in many parts of the world. From Zealandia to Arabia to Baharat to Native Indians in the western hemisphere. *(Laugh.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Do you mean New Zealand and the United States of America?

**JOHN MILTON:** What! For the sake of air and sand! I have never heard about those.

**AL-MA'ARRI:** Where did you get these names from? You must be a genius!

**ARAGOZE:** *(Shocked.)* For the chicken nuggets' sake! How do you know that Al-Qaeda chopped his statue in Syria? How come have you seen it when you all are blind?

**AL-MA'ARRI:** Since I was born in December 973, I had a dream that people should stop begetting kids, precisely like you Aragoze.

**ARAGOZE:** Why, do I look ugly and stupid?

**AL-MA'ARRI:** *(Mocking.)* No, I believe you are the opposite. But I am saying so to spare you this life's pains.

**ARAGOZE:** *(Shouts.)* I always wanted this to happen. My life is a sin done by my father and mother, and I don't want to do that to anyone.

*(Silence.)*

**ARAGOZE:** I felt your brilliant elegies, Al-Ma'arri. You always oppose violence at all levels. However, you blamed all those who eat fish unjustly. How is this unjust? I love eating fish. It is a delicious flesh.

**AL-MA'ARRI:** *(To Aragoze.)* You are so blind, and your human character is still behind that needs to be revived with words of wisdom.

**JOHN MILTON:** Huh! My eardrums are taking the heaviest battering of your claim about flesh. Aragoze, don't listen to this.

**JOHN MILTON:** I swear by the authority of the Bible that fish and meat are legal to eat except the humans' flesh. Don't let him steal your vision and hearing.

**AL-MA'ARRI:** You can't eat what belongs to others. The water has given fish up. And now, we must return them to their original places.

**JOHN MILTON:** We chew them and turn them into organic products that feed the soil.

**ARAGOZE:** *(Whispers to Al-Ma'arri.)* You are exaggerating a little bit.

**JOHN MILTON:** He would also prohibit what God allows, such as eating eggs?

**AL-MA'ARRI:** I am not here to prohibit anything. I am saying that injustice is the worst crime. How come you consume the honey which some bees steal from flowers? They did not store honey in the fragrant plants. You must spare such honey as it may belong to someone else.

**JOHN MILTON:** I wash my hands of all that you claim against the divine authority. *(Calling.)* Aragoze!

**ARAGOZE:** Yes, my ears are just listening to your revelations as I fear for your reason.

**JOHN MILTON:** Regarding your question at the onset, the blind do not see even darkness. Blindness is a sign.

**AL-MA'ARRI:** *(To Aragoze.)* I wish you could see the inevitable truth rather than the investable reality before your hair turns grey. Mr Milton let's have a walk out to nature as I would like to show you how one should reach their own divinity through nothing save reason.

**JOHN MILTON:** I have the Bible, and it says it all.

*(JOHN MILTON and AL-  
MA'ARRI exit. HOMER and*

*TAHA-HUSSEIN enter the  
shadow.)*

**ARAGOZE:** *(To himself.)* What do they mean? I don't understand. How can the blind see?

*(Surprised.)*

TAHA HUSSEIN, the twentieth-century Arab literary intellect!

**HOMER:** Aragoze, my heartbeats are hearing your call. Just follow the model atoms and track the laws of motion. *(Calling.)* Taha Hussein!

**HOMER:** Please forgive me for my interruption.

**TAHA-HUSSEIN:** Here I am! Could you please inform me of the Trojan wars between Milton and Al-Ma'arri. *(Laugh.)*

**HOMER:** This war is not going to end. It is human nature. We are created to face hardships. Anyway, why are you sitting silently in this isolation?

**ARAGOZE:** You cannot claim that you did not see what just happened?

**TAHA-HUSSEIN:** Have you seen it?

**HOMER:** Of course, I did and absorbed it all from A to Z.

**TAHA-HUSSEIN:** *(To Aragoze.)* Have you seen it?

**ARAGOZE:** I saw it, but I don't understand anything. It is all nonsense.

*(HOMER plays his lute.)*



**TAHA-HUSSEIN:** (*Echo.*) Give sight to your mind and heart with life lessons and thoughts.

**ARAGOZE:** So you can illuminate the road of awareness of your world's potential calamities.

**TAHA-HUSSEIN:** You had better tread over the ruins of the passing days and those who reached before you.

**ARAGOZE:** Eye's sight is only a light that enlightens your physical surroundings.

**TAHA-HUSSEIN:** It can expose a few metres or miles.

**ARAGOZE:** In this sense, your sight is blind.

**TAHA-HUSSEIN:** It can't see beyond the surface. Usually, your eyesight distracts you and drives you away from the inevitable truth.

**ARAGOZE:** What you physically see is a distraction.

**TAHA-HUSSEIN:** The unseen should be your target.

**ARAGOZE:** Don't be locked into the seen.

**TAHA-HUSSEIN:** The result could be divine wrath or the curse of other sister-nations who were snatching each other's flesh, and both fell apart and disappeared.

**ARAGOZE:** They were deceived by the shape of raw materials, and they could not differentiate the tastes.

**TAHA-HUSSEIN:** Your physical eyes grow blind if you surrender to all that we see. It is all made to condition you.

**ARAGOZE:** Follow the laws of motion like atoms do.

**TAHA-HUSSEIN:** Atoms are blind and unseen, but they run everything in the world.

**ARAGOZE:** The blind establish their relationship with the world with all their senses, except for the eye-sight.

*(HOMER and TAHA-HUSSEIN exit.)*

**HOMER:** *(Voiceover. Echo.)* Aragoze, as a sighted person, have you ever asked yourself what the blind see?

*(Oud music. ARAGOZE starts whirling. A belly dancer enters the shadow to dance.)*

**ARAGOZE:** A sign from the sky is a seed to the Earth. A sign from the sky is a seed to the Earth.

### { **Bell Thirty Three**}

*(The bell rings. ARAGOZE starts running from side to side.)*

**ARAGOZE:** What do you see?

*(Runs.)*

What do you see?

*(Runs.)*

What do you see?

In fact, there is no single answer to your question, Mr Homer.

*(MEXICAN TETRA puppet enters  
the shadow. Dancer exits.)*

**MEXICAN TETRA:** (Spanish.) Hola!

**ARAGOZE:** Hi, my name is Aragoze.

**MEXICAN TETRA:** Mi nombre es Mexican Tetra.

**ARAGOZE:** Well, I was just having a discussion with Homer, Milton, Taha  
...

**MEXICAN TETRA:** Sí, te vi, aunque soy ciego. Entonces, ¿qué piensas?

**VOICEOVER1:** *(Echo.)* Yes, I saw you, even though I am blind. So what do you  
think?

**ARAGOZE:** What do I think? Mmm. Basically, the prevailing percentage of  
physically sighted people believe that all the blind see only  
complete blackness, but the inevitable truth was shocking.

**MEXICAN TETRA:** Qué era?

**VOICEOVER1:** *(Echo.)* What was it?

**ARAGOZE:** Some people, sighted or blind, can see a complete blackness,  
others see phantoms or a faded picture that does not move or  
clarify anything.

**MEXICAN TETRA:** *(English with a Spanish accent.)* There is a difference between the one born blind, and the one who was born sighted and then turned blind.

**ARAGOZE:** Could you please break it down?

**MEXICAN TETRA:** The person born blind does not see blackness or anything at all. They see it as very natural. They don't understand the meaning of physical visual distraction, and their brains do not treat sight. They don't see anything at all! Can you imagine the notion that you see nothing, even not black?

*(Frightened Laugh.)*

**ARAGOZE:** If they don't know what eye-sight is, how can they know if the colour of an apple is red, for example?

**MEXICAN TETRA:** They know what is said around the apple.

**ARAGOZE:** So, it is not what is said about the apple, but around the apple.

**MEXICAN TETRA:** Sí, fueron sus sentidos. Lo tocan. Lo huelen. Lo prueban. Lo escuchan.

**VOICEOVER1:** *(Echo.)* Yes, it was their senses. They touch it. They smell it. They taste it. They hear it.

**ARAGOZE:** But they did not see the colour.

**MEXICAN TETRA:** No importa si la vieron físicamente o no.

**VOICEOVER1:** *(Echo.)* It does not matter if they physically saw it or not.

**ARAGOZE:** How about the shape?

**MEXICAN TETRA:** It does not matter if they saw the shape and the colour of things if they sense them. Try to close one eye and touch your hair?

**ARAGOZE:** Aha! This is true! But what would happen to the person who was born sighted and then turned blind?

**MEXICAN TETRA:** While the person who was born sighted and then turned blind. Still, they can see but do not perceive anything. They see complete blackness like when you enter the cave's darkness. They hallucinate. They see small sparks or bright visual hallucinations.

**ARAGOZE:** It is me. It is me. *(Spanish)* Soy yo. Soy yo.

*(Silence.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Have Homer, Milton, Al-Ma'arri and Hussein had dreams in their sleep?

**MEXICAN TETRA:** The blind can't see dreams while they are sleeping. However, they have sound memories. They listen carefully to them so they may cause revolutions.

*(Oud music. ARAGOZE whirls. FRANTZ FANON enters the shadow to address the audience. MEXICAN TETRA exits. Sound of the crowd cheering and marching footsteps cross the shadow stage.)*

## { Bell Thirty Four }

*(The bell rings.)*

**VOICEOVER 1:** *(Echo.)* I created Frantz Fanon.

**ARAGOZE:** Ha! Ibrahim Frantz Omer Fanon! The French West Indian psychiatrist and philosopher.

*(Oud music. ARAGOZE whirls.)*

**FANON:** *(Créole antillais. Discours écho.)* Et maintenant, Aragoze a décidé de s'exprimer, en utilisant le langage de la cruauté.

**VOICEOVER 1:** *(Echo.)* And now, Aragoze has made up his mind to express himself using the language of cruelty.

**FANON:** L'aube de sa lutte se lève et il décide de ne faire confiance qu'à des moyens violents.

**VOICEOVER 1:** *(Echo.)* The dawn of his struggle raises up, and he decides to trust nothing save violent means.

**FANON:** L'autoritarisme ne pouvait comprendre que le langage de la cruauté qu'il a pratiqué sur les misérables de la Terre.

**VOICEOVER 1:** *(Echo.)* Authoritarianism could only understand the language of cruelty that it has practised on the wretched of the Earth.

*(Shooting noise intersects with crowd cheering and ululation.)*

**FANON:** La violence armée est le seul moyen pour Aragoze d'éliminer les complexités d'infériorité, de lâcheté et de peur que le système autoritaire a instillé dans ses propres veines.

**VOICEOVER 1:** *(Echo.)* Armed violence is the only way for Aragoze. His only way to eliminate complexities of inferiority, cowardice and fear that the authoritarian system instilled in his own veins.

**FANON:** C'est aussi à travers cette violence révolutionnaire qu'il peut trouver son épanouissement et se purifier de la paresse, de la démence, de la dépendance, des peurs et de toutes les misérables postures contemplatives.

**VOICEOVER 1:** *(Echo.)* It is also through this revolutionary violence he can find fulfilment and purify himself from laziness, dementia, dependency, fears and all miserable contemplative stances.

**FANON** Nous sommes ici en face de Critical Reaction qui se résume au choix entre annihilation et confrontation.

**VOICEOVER 1:** *(Echo.)* We are here in front of Critical Reaction that boils down to the choice between annihilation and confrontation. It is observed in him and wild savage animals alike.

**FANON:** Il peut se rendre, s'incliner ou s'affaisser s'il y a une possibilité de survivre.

**VOICEOVER 1:** *(Echo.)* He may surrender, bow or slouch if there is a possibility to survive.

**FANON:** Mais lorsque cette possibilité n'existe pas, la faiblesse se transforme en une force qui répond par une réaction vitale.

**VOICEOVER 1:** *(Echo.)* But when this possibility does not exist, weakness turns into a force that responds with a vital reaction.

**FANON:** Il a mobilisé et intensifié toutes les énergies dans une défense désespérée de l'existence.

**VOICEOVER 1:** He mobilised and intensified all energies in a desperate defence for existence.

### { **Bell Thirty Five**}

*(The bell rings. Bell Thirty Five.)*

*(FANON exits. ARAGOZE runs to pick up the call.)*

**ARAGOZE:** How am I? *(Speech. Echo.)* This is the end of this humiliation. Enough is enough. For now, it does not make any difference whether alive or dead.

*(EVE-ADAM and JINN march across the shadow stage carrying dicks and wombs. Their eyes are wide open. They sing their lines.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Woe and death to all those who feuded our tribe.

**EVE-ADAM:** Our awful cry.



**JINN:** Overtook many enemies.

**EVE-ADAM:** Throwing them up to the sky.

**JINN:** Fallen prone in their identities.

**ARAGOZE:** To the United Nations, do not tell me about anyone that they are happy before they die.

**EVE-ADAM:** Happy houses have no human fuss.

**JINN:** Death is an equaliser between us.

**EVE-ADAM:** *(Cheers.)* Death is just.

**JINN:** *(Cheers.)* Death is just.

**ARAGOZE:** *(Echo.)* Death is just.

*(Silence. Long Pause.)*

**ARAGOZE:** To the wretched of Earth, if you choose to live on the sidelines, know that you will die without being acknowledged. Victory over death means ...

**EVE-ADAM:** The elimination of the introjection of self-depreciation ...

**ARAGOZE:** Deficiency...

**JINN:** And humiliation.

**ARAGOZE:** To our mothers, do not cry for us, today our life starts.

**EVE-ADAM:** The martyr starts to live ...

**JINN:** On the day of their death.

**VOICEOVER1:** *(Echo.)* Martyrdom is a gate to heaven.

*(Light flashes. Curfew siren. )*

*(Silence.)*

**ARAGOZE:** *(Laughs.)* It is a rotation.

**EVE-ADAM:** It is a rotation.

**JINN:** It is a rotation.

**ARAGOZE:** From generation.

**EVE-ADAM:** To generation.

**ARAGOZE:** Stop. *(Silence. Farts.)*

*(EVE-ADAM and JINN sit like yogis. ARAGOZE continues his speech to the UN.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Benjamin Franklin of the US said almost the same thing. He said martyrs are the pillars of civilisation.

**JINN:** I wonder why he didn't choose to be ...

**EVE-ADAM:** a pillar of civilisation, himself?

**ARAGOZE:** Hush Jinn and Eve-Adam. Get back to yoga.

*(They sit like yogis.)*

**ARAGOZE:** His brother Ibn Taimia also said “what can my enemies do to me? My own Paradise and garden lie inside my chest, my detentions mean solitude, my exile means tourism and killing me

means martyrdom”. Ibn Taimia is encouraging others to adopt what he rejects himself to do. It is all a made up concept to serve someone.

**ARAGOZE:** And Aragoze finds marching for the sake of nothing save changing the status-quo for better or worse. Fuck this shit!

**EVE-ADAM:** Is there any plan for change ?

**ARAGOZE:** Change needs a visionary of blindness.

*(ARAGOZE marches and reveals  
poetics. EVE-ADAM and JINN  
march.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Hello, brothers! I am not sure where and how we shall start? Anywhere and anyway, they will pay the duties in the confession of our dominance, and they are in a position of defeat.

**EVE-ADAM:** Who are they?

**JINN:** Where are they?

**ARAGOZE:** Indeed, most of you don't understand.

*(ARAGOZE runs from side to  
side, wandering astray, carrying  
a dick and a womb.)*

**ARAGOZE:** It has been a long time, the flaming sword

**JINN:** We're banished from earth.

**EVE-ADAM:** Because of some words.

**ARAGOZE:** Since we are rising.

**EVE-ADAM:** You must be removed.

**ARAGOZE:** Oh, please history ...

**JINN:** Write me down and record.

**ARAGOZE:** Rise millions of wretched ranks, rise!

**EVE-ADAM:** The horror of the enemies shall be put live.

**JINN:** Our souls on the battlefield are ready for sacrifice.

**ARAGOZE:** Let's see where to start now, let's play this dice.

*(ARAGOZE marches. EVE-  
ADAM and JINN march.)*

**VOICEOVER1:** *(Angrily. Voiceover.)* Without investigating the numerous voting statistics, it is palpable to anyone that hatred is past any understanding. Where does loathing come from? Until we can decide and comprehend this problem, which poses a dangerous threat to us, we cannot be the victims of offensive attacks by Aragoze. Aragoze believes in rebellion now, and has no logic of reason or esteem for humans.

*(Crowd claps.)*

Aragoze hates us. So, excessive scrutiny and watchfulness must be followed to stay safe. I am calling for a direct, overall and wide-ranging cessation of Aragoze entering our countries. We will grab him by the pussy.

*(Women and men in the crowd shout loud, “Grab by the pussy”.)*

*(HAKAWATI enters the stage. ARAGOZE exits. EVE-ADAM and JINN march to exit. NASNAS and TANNIN enter the shadow. INTERFERER/GHOUL sits like a human among the audience to make inferences and the audience can read some of his lines. He wears a misogynistic t-shirt.)*

**HAKAWATI:**

Since liberation and self-restoration are urgent and chronic, Aragoze cannot wait, but wants immediate results and concrete action as reassurances. He seeks a magic solution. So, the weapon is used as a magic wand to eliminate the miserable past forever.

*(HAKAWATI steps forward to the front and points to INTERFERER/GHOUL sitting in the crowd.)*

**HAKAWATI:**

Yes, young lady. How can I help you? Do you have any problems?

*(INTERFERER/GHOUL asks one person from the audience to read*

*some of his lines. In case the person gets shy to perform, he can read them out loud with no expression.)*

**INTERFERER/GHOUL:** *(American accent.)* The playwright must show, you know, some sort of responsibility and respect for everyone's beliefs and views. He hurts the feelings of many people around the world and puts himself at risk.

**HAKAWATI:** It seems to me that his own interpretation of characters and events around the new and old worlds is not orthodox.

**TANNIN:** I agree.

**NASNAS:** I can't disagree.

**GHOUL/INTERFERER-A:** He must go to prison, or we shut his mouth forever.

**HAKAWATI:** Well, we should accept weird people. Otherwise, our society has a severe problem.

**GHOUL/INTERFERER-A:** I think the playwright is not feminist at all as he distances his choice of characters from women's empowerment issues.

**HAKAWATI:** Can a woman be a prophetess or a leader of a court?

**GHOUL/INTERFERER-A:** She can be an honorary queen living in a golden cage - but a leader of a court or a prophetess? Ha, are you serious? These are men's jobs.

**TANNIN:** What do you think?

**NASNAS:** It is getting hot. Let's watch and see.

*(HAKAWATI turns questions to  
INTERFERER/GHOUL.)*

**HAKAWATI:** Here, another woman is trying to share her own views. I am sorry my dear audience if I disturb your vision and I am sure the director of this play is putting too much pressure on me. For the first time in my acting career, I break the rules. Do you think women can be fit to be a president?

**INTERFERER/GHOUL :** *(Local American accent.)* So far, no she does not seem fit to be a president of a country. Look at the most claimed liberal and democratic country in the world, they have never had a woman president.

**HAKAWATI:** I understand what you mean. The establishment is a necessity for everybody's survival. But why do you think it is impossible? Do you think she can be a sermon speaker?

**INTERFERER/GHOUL :** No, of course not. Her voice could arouse her male mates' call for their partners, and this could delay ...

**TANNIN:** What the fuck!

**NASNAS:** What the Hell!

**TANNIN:** I am glad that we are living in the jinn world.

**NASNA:** Me too.

**HAKAWATI:** Could she delay what, please?

**INTERFERER/GHOUL:** I am just trying to remember how our president says it. Yes, I remember. She could delay industrial productivity.

**HAKAWATI:** Could she be a member of a dancing troupe?

**INTERFERER/GHOUL:** What a shame!

**HAKAWATI:** Could she be a significant pilot?

**INTERFERER/GHOUL:** Yes, if she is accompanied by her immediate male relatives.

**NASNAS:** Look, I am leaving this bullshit.

**TANNIN:** Wait!

**HAKAWATI:** I can see you all belong to different socio-political backgrounds, coming from ...

**INTERFERER/GHOUL:** We don't have to expose our nationality as we are not in an open-auction. **(Silent.)**

I am from the United States of America. I have no problem with voting for Donald Trump, although he is well-known for his talking about women behind closed doors.

**HAKAWATI:** Again, why do you think that Hillary Clinton was not the right person to lead the country in 2016?

**INTERFERER/GHOUL:** Well, physiologically speaking, I believe that females have more hormones than males. She can tip a war in a few jiffies. If she develops a feeling of hot sparks, whatever - bang!

**TANNIN:** *(Mocking.)* But haven't you heard or studied that all battles, since Homer's Trojan wars, have taken place by men?



*(Everybody laughs.)*

**HAKAWATI:** *(Echo.)* Who was the participant?

*(Silence.)*

**HAKAWATI:** *(Echo.)* We would like to know?

*(Silence.)*

**HAKAWATI:** Ok. No problem. So, why do you think so?

**INTERFERER/GHOUL:** Mmm ... yes. But whenever my ears catch the word of the president, I ruminate on the nature of a man. Sometimes, a tall man. It's a manly job.

**NASNAS:** Huh?

**INTERFERER/GHOUL:** *(Hesitant.)* It may be ...

**NASNAS:** Uh, it may fit a narrow-minded and intolerant man.

**INTERFERER/GHOUL:** *(New Zealand accent.)* Nope. Well, no. I mean, Um ...

**NASNAS:** It could suit those who can be strongly prejudiced against women?

**INTERFERER/GHOUL:** *(New Zealand accent. Laughs.)* Not at all. Yea, I mean ...

**NASNAS:** So, what are you all aiming for?

**INTERFERER/GHOUL:** *(New Zealand accent.)* Well, everybody knows that not every person has excellent rhetorical speeches and tone.

**INTERFERER/GHOUL:** *(New Zealand accent.)* A second reason that topped my priorities when I chose him is his views about gay couples in the military.

**HAKAWATI:** Do they have the same rights as other couples?

**INTERFERER/GHOUL:** *(New Zealand accent.)* Certainly not! I actually don't believe how you believe it is fair to equalise regular couples with those?

**HAKAWATI:** You mean the gay couple?

**INTERFERER/GHOUL:** Yes!

**HAKAWATI:** Well, could you inform us about your own perspective first? Why should they not be equal?

**INTERFERER/GHOUL:** *(New Zealand accent.)* I will tell you why. Your parents are a regular couple. They have been working day and night, saving their money so hard to beget a healthy man like you. While those who have underproductive relations want similar or even more rights.

**HAKAWATI:** First of all, my parents were gays. They adopted me in a very good manner and raised me well. I am a good storyteller. I hope so. *(Laugh.)* I caught one thing from what you said. When you say more, do you mean more equal rights?

**INTERFERER/GHOUL:** *(New Zealand accent.)* Absolutely, they are impatient to be equal with regular couples.

**HAKAWATI:** *(Irony.)* You sir! Do you consider their demands are excessively unbearable?

**INTERFERER/GHOUL:** *(New Zealand accent.)* Absolutely!

**HAKAWATI:** Do you think the same treatment should be enforced on Aragoze?

**INTERFERER/GHOUL:** *(New Zealand accent.)* Absolutely, Aragoze and those pinky, rosy guys are extreme. Clearly, Aragoze is not coming from a culture which deals with womenfolk with respect, like us.

**TANNIN:** Your folk treat females with admiration?

**INTERFERER/GHOUL:** Absolutely, we make sure that she is revered in all places. Those are our founding fathers' ideals.

**HAKAWATI:** You feel proud!

**INTERFERER/GHOUL:** Yep.

**NASNAS:** Sir, could you please inform us a little about your t-shirt.

*(INTERFERER/GHOUL stands up to show everybody.)*

**TANNIN:** Could you please spell it out?

**INTERFERER/GHOUL:** *(Excited.)* Well, it beautifully says women are bitches with all my respect to my mother and daughter.

**HAKAWATI:** So, you have just mentioned your founding father's ideals of showing reverence to women.

**INTERFERER/GHOUL:** Yeah, respecting women was always the top of their priorities.

**NASNAS:** *(Mocking.)* Could you please turn around to read the rest of your great message to women around the world?

**INTERFERER/GHOUL:** *(Harsh voice.)* Grab that bitch.

**TANNIN:** It's getting nasty in here.

**NASNAS:** Let's go.

*(Voiceover. Crowd shouts "Grab by the pussy". ARAGOZE enters the shadow, leading EVE-ADAM and JINN. NASNAS and TANNIN exit. HAKAWATI exits. GHOUL exits.)*

**ARAGOZE:** *(Shouts.)* Yes, they must realise the inevitable truth.

**EVE-ADAM:** *(Shouts.)* YEAH!

**ARAGOZE:** *(Shouts.)* And what makes them see the inevitable truth?

**JINN:** *(Shouts.)* NEY!

**ARAGOZE:** *(Shouts.)* Indeed, we did not find for most of them any covenant.

**EVE-ADAM:** *(Shouts.)* NEY.

**ARAGOZE:** *(Shouts.)* And they follow nothing but conjecture.

**JINN:** *(Shouts.)* YEAH.

**ARAGOZE:** Which assuredly avails not against the inevitable reality at all.

**EVE-ADAM:** *(Shouts.)* YEAH.

*(MESSENGER enters. She carries a placard of Toute Puissance. ARAGOZE, EVE-ADAM, JINN exit. .)*

{Miniature Thirteen}

**MESSENGER:**

This is Miniature Thirteen. My dear audience. This is just a performance. Do not do this at home. I am your messenger.

*(A display of light.)*

The tribe saw the light coming out from his anus.

*(A display of smoke.)*

They sing for the boss but fart in the poor's face.

*(A display of scissors.)*

If you see one drowned, give him a push.

*(A display of a ball.)*

Play alone, and you will come back satisfied.

*(A display of an owl.)*

Follow an owl to lead you to ruination.

*(A display of children.)*

We are the children of today.

*(A display of a spoon.)*

Feed the well-fed but not the wishful person.

*(A display of a whip.)*

Beat adults so that teens can learn.

*(A display of an iron.)*

The bottom line of medication is ironing.

*(A display of a middle finger.)*

The distressed met with the unfortunate.

*(A display of bleeding wrist.)*

It rains; one cuts off the sky's vein.

*(A display of a pin.)*

The evil left no place for good people.

*(A display of a happy and sad  
mask.)*

We became content with a catastrophe, but the calamity is not  
pleased with us.

*(A display of a tongue.)*

He wants to cover the heavens with lies.

*(A display of a fly.)*

He wants to tie a fly.

*(A display of a blower.)*

He wants to blow up his bum with air.

*(A display of an egg.)*

He eats an egg with its shell.

*(A display of a plate.)*

He eats from a plate and then spits on it.

*(A display of a yoke.)*

He is looking for the yoke, and it is already around his neck.

*(A display of a frying pan.)*

He jumps like a lentil in a frying pan.

*(A display of toilet paper.)*

He shits and buries it.

*(A display of a penis.)*

We said male goat, but they insisted on milking it.

*(A display of a compass.)*

I am talking about the East, his response is about the West.

*(A display of an onion.)*

He rubbed his eye with an onion.

*(A display of a middle finger.)*

They live in Hell and still finger each other.

*(A display of an ant.)*

He milks ants and lice.

*(A display of a nose.)*

He licks that guy's nasal mucus.

*(A display of the middle of a loaf.)*

He runs after the loaf, but the loaf was faster.

*(A display of bricks.)*

If you don't like it, pave the sea.

*(A display of eggs.)*

He walks on eggs.

*(A display of a spinning man.)*

In his ass is a filly; he can't stop seeking.

*(A display of a knife.)*

He slays him, but no drop of blood pours forth.

*(A display of music symbols.)*

In his head is a song that he would like to sing.

*(A display of a saw.)*

He is now at the carpentry market but wonders about the source of the noise.

*(A display of a cow.)*

When a cow falls down, its flayers abound.

We call this the Theory of Snivelling Wickedness.



*(Oud music. ARAGOZE enters  
whirling. MESSENGER exits.)*

**ARAGOZE:** A sign from the sky is a seed to the Earth. A sign from the sky is  
a seed to the Earth.

### **( Bell Thirty Six )**

*(The bell rings. ARAGOZE  
hurries to carry a broom.  
Resistance music is heard from a  
distance. Light and shadow  
technique is necessary to reflect  
the ARAGOZE figure. ARAGOZE  
stands looking at a distant place.  
Simultaneously, the shadow  
reflects superman. ARAGOZE  
puts the broom between his thighs  
and the background changes to a  
knight riding a horse. ARAGOZE  
then carries the broom as a rifle  
pointing at some targets. The  
shadow displays a magic cane.  
EVE-ADAM and JINN enter the  
shadow carrying a penis and  
womb each; they use the penis as  
an oboe for announcing.)*

**EVE-ADAM:** *(Playing the oboe.)* My Lord, whoever resides within the skies  
and the dirt ...

**JINN:** Throw themselves flat on your feet ...

**EVE-ADAM:** Readily or by duress.

**ARAGOZE:** Have their shadows prostrated to me? As shadows take me to  
another level of satisfaction and imagination.

**JINN:** Their shadows are prostrating my Lord.

**EVE-ADAM:** Before noon and afternoon.

**ARAGOZE:** What's the matter? What is the urgent thing that brings you here?

**EVE-ADAM:** *(Whispering.)* All political parties are gathering.

**ARAGOZE:** *(Calmly.)* Why?

**JINN:** Discussing the rebellion ...

**ARAGOZE:** *(Echo. Angrily.)* WHAT?

**JINN:** Manoeuvring.

**EVE-ADAM:** Manoeuvring.

**JINN:** Manoeuvring.

**EVE-ADAM:** Manoeuvring.

**JINN:** Manoeuvring.

**EVE-ADAM:** Manoeuvring.

**ARAGOZE:** *(Shouts.)* Tactics.

*(Silence.)*

**ARAGOZE:** *(Angrily.)* Huh? Political parties are plotting rebellion and tactics without my permission.

**EVE-ADAM:** Yes, my Lord!

**ARAGOZE:** *(To himself.)* What are these terms for?

**JINN:** Excuse me, Sir!

**ARAGOZE:** *(Hesitant.)* I know. I know these terms.

**EVE-ADAM:** You are all-knowing, my Lord.

**JINN:** You are the apprehender of the unseen.

**EVE-ADAM:** The witness.

**JINN:** The majestic.

**EVE-ADAM:** The most dignified.

**ARAGOZE:** Now, inform me of what you understand about impeNialism.  
**(Stress on “N” in impeNialism.)**

**JINN:** Our first and last teacher.

**EVE-ADAM:** May you live long!

**JINN:** Do you mean impeRialism? **(Stress on “R” in impeRialism.)**

**ARAGOZE:** Are you coming to teach me, Son of Filth?

**JINN:** *(Frightened.)* God forbid!

**EVE-ADAM:** Our impeccable Lord!

**ARAGOZE:** I am busy right now, lobbying for our cause. And you and these bolt-bullet-barties. (*Falters in speech.*)

**JINN:** You mean political parties, my Lord!

**ARAGOZE:** You just uttered. I did not grant you consent. Undeniably, this is a scheme in which other rivals and you conspired against me.

**EVE-ADAM:** My Lord, I beseech you to forgive us.

**JINN:** For our sins.

**EVE-ADAM:** Which we did not mean to commit.

**ARAGOZE:** Fall down, bowing! Force those parties to prostrate and then all turn in repentance to me. Get out of my face.

*(EVE-ADAM and JINN exit blowing their oboes for the announcement.)*

*(ARAGOZE carries the broom as a rifle again, and the background reflects magic cane and superman. HAKAWATI enters the shadow. ARAGOZE freezes.)*

**HAKAWATI:** (*Low buzz of conversation.*) Aragoze feels unbeatable now; barriers and difficulties collapse in front of him. He can do everything, including abuse. His imagination reaches unprecedented levels. In his mind, he owns all above and below the surface of the earth. Thousands of fans and admirers chase

him all the time. Although we can't see anyone. Aragoze now lives in stormy, distracted activity-agitation.

*(HAKAWATI exits. JINN and  
EVE-ADAM enter the shadow  
marching. ARAGOZE unfreezes.)*

**ARAGOZE:** *(Instructing himself in dance movement.)* You must develop a synchronised movement and steps—strong steps and stomps, like this. Good. Now slow down and begin a movement crossing the right foot in front of the left foot.

*(Sings to himself.)* Everybody, rock your body. All of you are just nobody.

*(ARAGOZE suddenly runs and  
then strolls.)*

**ARAGOZE:** *(Puts himself into a trance.)* A door hole is she. The key is he. Ink and pens are him. A paper is she. Rain and snow are him. Earth is she. Gun is he. A bullet is she. Palestine is she. British mandate, colonisation and Israel occupation are he. Homeland is she. Citizens are he. Head is he. Eye and lips are she. Death is he. Life is she. Nature is she. A worm is she. Worms are he. *(Pause.)* I am waiting, but why shall I wait.

**{ Bell Thirty Seven }**

*(The bell rings. ARAGOZE mumbles while staring at his own hand-palm. JINN and EVE-ADAM stand still, facing the audience.)*

**ARAGOZE:** My great followers! My great tribe! I would like to re-emphasise Karl Marx's perspective on the theory of revolution.

*(JINN and EVE-ADAM raise their arms up and applaud.)*

**ARAGOZE:** I agree with him that all philosophers have done nothing except explain the world while what needs to be done is to change the world.

*(To himself.)* A massive distance between Mark's heavens and my tribe's Earth.

**JINN:** What does that mean?

**EVE-ADAM:** What does that mean?

**ARAGOZE:** *(To himself.)* This a huge gap in knowledge. I am scared out of your wits, Mr Mark! The tribe would be a panic-stricken chicken clucking at the nethermost of your well of knowledge. It has been more than fifteen years in which I carried a critical book or article and a pen. I think more than fifteen years.

*(Yawns.)* I don't buy this boring stuff anymore. For the meeting with rebellions, I would watch one of those You Tube speeches.

*(JINN and EVE-ADAM raise their  
arms up and applaud.)*

**ARAGOZE:** *(Delivering.)* Oh, my people, my tribe, my kinship, through you, I strengthen my arms and then grant you supremacy. Indeed, you have wronged yourselves for eons of darkness.

Therefore be penitent to your makers and beat yourselves for my forgiveness. God said to his believers to follow their leaders.

**VOICEOVER1:** *(Echo.)* Otherwise, those who don't abide by our Lord's speech-fires would be served, in Hell, scorching seawater to drink to sever their intestines.

**ARAGOZE:** Or this daemon tree which releases their bodily fluids. Their bellies will churn like burning oil and they cool them down with the washing of their own wounds.

**VOICEOVER1:** I am so flexible.

**ARAGOZE:** We discuss many things with the political part that I cannot remember as we digress. Our talk diverged, went separate ways, drifted in sideways matters.

**EVE-ADAM:** *(Whispers.)* Now, what's the plan for the rebellion?

**ARAGOZE:** Well, I would like to assign my son-in-law as my adviser to the Middle East, Land of Peace. And my daughter can be the House's fashion designer to all nuns' bras.

**JINN:** *(Whispers.)* This is favouritism.

*(JINN and EVE-ADAMS exit.)*

**ARAGOZE:** *(To himself.)* Oh Lord of pussies and nipples. This may create envies from inside the tribe.

**VOICEOVER1:** Talk about the unseen!

**ARAGOZE:** If my son-in-law and daughter are not elected now, the saviour Jesus Christ will never descend to defeat the devil or to stop the spread of fatal coronavirus. I hope that my great tribe has no word over my word.

*(HAKAWATI enters the shadow.*

*ARAGOZE freezes.)*

**HAKAWATI:** Therefore, all issues remain pending; thinking about them doesn't go far from the surface. Aragoze and the tribe are unable to synthesise as they wander blindly. The mind is characterised by a lack of perseverance. Soon, tiresome distraction permeates their guts. Aragoze sets off with great enthusiasm but loses this enthusiasm as quickly as he started. In such a world, enthusiasm and commitment have no future. The universe is playing rigged games of chance. There is no belief in the triple plan, five-year plan, or decimal plan. They are there in theory, but rarely to be implemented.

*(JOHN MILTON and HOMER enter the shadow, ululating.*

*HAKAWATI exits. EVE-ADAM*



*and JINN enter the stage to sit.  
ARAGOZE unfreezes.)*

*(EVE-ADAM and JINN proceed  
to dance an Arabian dance called  
Ardah, it is performed with two  
rows of men and women opposite  
one another. Each carries a sword  
or cane and slowly rises the sword  
or cane up and down with  
synchronised movements. Stiff  
upper bodies sway while they are  
still standing. During the Saudi  
Ardha dance, spoken poetry is  
unleashed by our great poets,  
JOHN MILTON and HOMER.  
The other performers, EVE-  
ADAM and JINN, repeat together  
loudly the last word in each line  
recited. The beginning of the  
performance is announced by  
HOMER.)*

**HOMER:**

*(Calling loud.)* Lord, no idol save you, the supporter of the army  
over the aggression.

*(Everyone repeats the word  
aggression loudly.)*

**HOMER:** My goddess of wars save you and help you to complete the mission.

*(Everyone repeats the word  
mission loudly.)*

**EVE-ADAM and JINN:** *(Chant.)* Absher, Absher, Yes, done! We can do it!

*(EVE-ADAM and JINN line up  
with their hands overlapping.  
Music plays the daf's beats sound  
like Dom, Tak, Tak. Two kids are  
wearing soldier uniforms and  
carrying canes, with swordplay  
between the two rows. The poets  
are in an action mood.  
Participants can fill in the vacuum  
after each pause or short pause.  
JOHN MILTON is waving to  
ARAGOZE.)*

**JOHN MILTON:** Draw out your hands from the bosom and *(pause)* wave.

*(ARAGOZE waves arrogantly.)*

**HOMER:** Wave with those whites, with radiance, to people of *(short  
pause)* cave.

**JOHN MILTON:** Don't make your hand, to your high neck, as *(short pause)* chained.

**HOMER:** Nor stretch it widely, or you will sit rebuked and *(short pause)* blamed.

**JOHN MILTON:** Life is as big and small as cucumber in the bush *(short pause)* crop.

**HOMER:** Either held in your grasp or caged in your bitch *(short pause)* rump. *(Points to bottom.)*

**JOHN MILTON:** A day, you're a toothed gearing of watermill creating the water *(short pause)* flow.

**HOMER:** Down in the undershot, to feed and pamper lords in the upper *(short pause)* floor.

**JOHN MILTON:** All day, the pus of wounds fills your bucket built into the life-*(short pause)* wheel.

**HOMER:** As your bucket fills, the heavy weight of pus drives all to the Irish *(short pause)* reel.

**JOHN MILTON:** Put your arms down next to your stiff upper *(short pause)* body.

**HOMER:** Point your toe on the ground, reel ... reel ... reel, run from the *(short pause)* bloody.

**JOHN MILTON:** Woe and hundreds of woes to every dancing mocker and *(short pause)* scorners.

**HOMER:** Whoever stomps upon wounds, will be chased in every (*short pause*) corner.

**JOHN MILTON:** Aragoze is, in the battlefield, like a lion with leaping (*short pause*) strides.

**HOMER:** Lo! Ignorant, dull, run ... run ... here comes your predestined (*short pause*) demise.

**JOHN MILTON:** (*Arrogantly.*) We are people of supremacy and glory belongs to our (*short pause*) nation.

**HOMER:** (*Arrogantly.*) We are over and above delicateness, triumph and (*short pause*) veneration.

**JOHN MILTON:** We stand and mobilise when our Lord goes (*short pause*) ahead.

**HOMER:** For the Lord's sake, blood runs cheap and all fall (*short pause*) dead.

*(MESSENGER enters. All exit, ululating and drumming. Display of MESSENGER'S revelations)*

{Miniature Fourteen}

**MESSENGER:** This is Miniature Fourteen. My dear audience. This is just a performance. Do not do this at home. I am your messenger.

*(A display of a person who only has one eye.)*

Metaphorically, a cousin is still a one-eyed person.

*(A display of a girl.)*

A girl needs a cover for the upper body, and her pussy needs to be patiently waiting.

*(A display of a robe.)*

The judge of girls has executed himself.

*(A display of heart.)*

His heart is a delicate foam.

*(A display of a bird.)*

His heart is a cowardly bird's heart.

*(A display of a heart wearing shoes.)*

His heart is ghastly, jumping and flying.

*(A display of a cracked heart.)*

His heart is dead.

*(Sound of fire.)*

**MESSENGER:**

His heart is burnt.

*(Sound of hammering.)*

His heart hammers buckled wheat spikes.

*(Light flashes)*

His heart is flickering.

*(A display of a half-empty heart.)*

His heart is empty.

*(Sound of a shivering body.)*

His heart is cold and clean.

*(A display of a black heart.)*

His heart is black.

*(A display of throwing a heart and  
the sound of breaking glass.)*

His heart is broken for the child, but the child's heart is a rock.

*(A display of sucking a pen.)*

His pen is a poison.

*(A display of a monkey.)*

Your monkey is always under your armpit.

*(A display of hedgehog opening  
arms.)*

A hedgehog does not open arms save to coward vultures.

*(A display of a short man.)*

The short man is about to die; his food is on too high a shelf.

*(A display of a donkey and sheep.)*

A donkey will never have as much fat as sheep.

*(A display of a cat.)*

Cats do not dump their old clothes.

*(A display of a cat and mouse.)*

A cat went on a pilgrimage to purify itself, but all mice doubted its intention.

*(A display of a worshiper.)*

I beseech God to help devout people over their divine trial.

*(A display of a saint.)*

All saints have the same tattoo.

*(A display of smoking.)*

All this heavy rain is due to your clouds.

*(A display of pouring devil  
heads.)*

He is pouring forth his evilness over people.

*(Sound of 'Hello'.)*

If he calls dead people, they would respond.

*(A display of a ceremony.)*

If he decides to sell a ceremony, nobody will die.

*(Sound of 'air'.)*

If he owns the air, he will ban it.

*(A display of a falling body.)*

If this lasted for others, it would not have reached you.

*(A display of a pregnant person.)*

Had it not been for overwhelming jealousy, the princess would never conceive.

*(A display of a tongue.)*

Tongue, only, does not chasten corpses.

*(A display of a tongue and  
scissors.)*

His tongue is sharper than a bookmaker's scissors.

*(A display of a long tongue.)*

His tongue is two hand spans long.

*(A display of a serpent.)*

Your dollar values a cent, and your word is a serpent ululating.

This is the Theory of Following Liars to Doorsteps.

*(ARAGOZE enters the stage,  
whirling and tied with strings. The  
shadow screen displays  
ARAGOZE's memories. The  
shadow displays: 1) a person*



*talking with SATAN and an angel,  
2) a person scared as they are  
pushed back by an attacker, 3) a  
person stuns someone's neck with  
a knife-hand strike, 4) bullied  
girls and boys, 5) a knife cutting  
penis and breasts. The end of the  
display.)*

### **( Bell Thirty Eight )**

*(The bell rings ... GHOUL enters  
the shadow, acting as a student.  
ARAGOZE acts as a teacher,  
punishing GHOUL.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Softy who can't defend himself. All the neighbours are laughing at you. I can't believe I am your father.

**GHOUL:** *(Voiceover. Crying.)* By the Virgin, Mercy on me.

*(ARAGOZE screams. Darkness  
falls. Cockroach and sawing  
sounds intersect.)*

*(A spotlight is on ARAGOZE  
stands still with his face fallen. He  
extends his arm vertically with the*

*hand palm facing up, breathing with short, quick breaths. The shadow screen displays a pen image.)*

**ARAGOZE:** (Angry.) Open your palm wide. Raise your hand. I cannot reach it.

*(Whips sound. ARAGOZE and GHOUL feel the pain.)*

**GHOUL:** Please, teacher, please. You can whip my hand but gently.

**ARAGOZE:** Open your hand, scoundrel! Or, by God, I'll whip your face.

**GHOUL:** Oh, teacher, I do not ask you to undo this, but I ask you to have mercy for me. I will memorise the chapter by the life of my parent.

*(ARAGOZE swaps roles with GHOUL.)*

**GHOUL:** All come to my feet. God curse them. They did not know how to rear you up. You don't know how much five multiplied by six equals.

**ARAGOZE:** I am going to rememorise the x chart again. By the life of God.

**GHOUL:** Shut up. God has an endless life. Your ears should be chopped off. I will see how you are going to sort out your issues in future. Give me your pen. Give me your other hand.

*(ARAGOZE puts his hand in his pocket and takes out the pen. GHOUL puts the pen between ARAGOZE's index and middle finger.)*

*(ARAGOZE falls. HAKAWATI enters riding her bicycle. GHOUL exits. TANNIN, NASNA and AL-MI'RAJ enter the shadow.)*

**NASNAS:** Many said to me, life is contemptible.

**TANNIN:** Life returns every time as flashing lightning on a winter night.

**AL-MI'RAJ:** Which was quickly extinguished. It's predestination.

**TANNIN:** The luck of people in this world was never in their hands.

**AL-MI'RAJ:** We do not draw our lives as we like.

**NASNAS:** We walk in the paths that have been drawn.

**TANNIN:** So try to live. Face all hearsay with satisfaction.

**HAKAWATI:** Therefore, Aragoze introverts, turns his back to all oppressors.

**ALMI'RAJ:** Are oppressors necessarily bad?

**HAKAWATI:** Not necessarily. He stays away from policemen, courts, justices and administrations. And he feeds the soul with feelings of inner hostility, fear, dissension, collision, suspicion and caution against the harm that rulers and their coronas may inflict.

Hence, Aragoze prayed not to be tempted by a new experience. He is trying to avoid the risks of falling into the hands of a ruler government and their tools.

*(ARAGOZE enters. He supplicates in different positions: sitting on his knees, bowing, raising his hands, lying on his side and then standing. HAKAWATI exits.)*

**ARAGOZE:** O Lord of Saint Anne, Lord of the mother of Mary, Lord of the grandmother of Jesus, I beseech you, please ...

*(Voiceover infant crying)*

**AL-MI'RAJ:** *(Echo.)* She is a baby-girl.

**ARAGOZE:** Female!

**TANNIN:** Oh, my Lord!

**ARAGOZE:** The male is not like the female.

*(ARAGOZE screams, frightened as a wall falls upon him.)*

**NASNAS:** Once upon a time, whoever's daughter died was due to the purity of his intentions.

**ARAGOZE:** My Lord, my intention is pure.

**TANNIN:**

Nasnas, if we get united! Would you choose a poisonous snake or her?

*(ARAGOZE hears the voices of snakes, he looks afraid and chokes inwardly. He then hears the voice of the crying daughter. He practices lamentation and chest-beats rituals.)*

**ARAGOZE:**

*(Echo.)* I would prefer a snake please, snake.

*(Dim-Red-Light. EVE-ADAM and JINN enter the stage to join ARAGOZE and to do rituals of mourning; they wear black, white and coloured dresses. Some use one hand for chest-beating. Others use swords, and their clothes are all blood—low sounds of chest-beating and weeping. GHOUL enters the stage as a eulogist to deliver an oration, carrying a flag which has a sign of a woman's period. All start chest-beating and weeping.)*

**GHOUL:**

Superior is some snakes hiss except for miss voice.

Snake subsists her poisonous stings, miss presses demise  
choice.

Oh, Fabulinus! Make us, first, safe from fear of her future  
defame.

Fill her forehead with fat food, phobia of fornication and  
profanity of fame.

Oh God, dissuade her delusional demands of the mind and the  
drives of the id.

Were she duped, debauched, or deflowered, she wished not the  
end.

### { **Bell Thirty nine**}

*(ARAGOZE whirls. EVE-ADAM,  
JINN and GHOUL exit ululating.  
The bell rings. ARAGOZE rushes  
to his show.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Welcome to the shortest radio show. Now, you are going to listen to a few worldwide known proverbs about women that shape and form women every time and everywhere.

*(Short music ad.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Richard Armour, an American poet and author who wrote more than sixty-five books, said once, “It was a man’s world. Then Eve arrived.”

*(Oud music. ARAGOZE whirls.)*

**NASNAS:** *(To the audience.)* I can imagine what Armour thought that day. Adam fell in a pool of boredom and then lolled out his tongue.

*(ARAGOZE lolls out his tongue and walks like a dog.)*

**AL-M’IRAJ:** Adam was looking for a potential imagined concrete complementary contributor to serve his own tower.

*(ARAGOZE points to the organ.)*

**TANNIN:** He wanted to invest his own sperms in real productive projects rather than wasting them bewildering in the darkness.

*(ARAGOZE does masturbate movement.)*

**AL-M’IRAJ:** Indeed, Eve is mercy. Without her having arrived, Adam would have not used his own key properly.

**( Bell Forty )**

*(The bell rings. ARAGOZE rushes to the show.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Praise be to God, you arrived late at the door-hole. Second. Coming from Land of Dreams and Hollywood industry, Brian, “The Boz” Bosworth, said once ,”to me, girls are just a pain in the ass”.

*(ARAGOZE whirls.)*

**NASNAS:** By the way, The Boz was a former American footballer. As you know, injuries are relatively common in football, especially during sessions that involve full-contact with other players.

**TANNIN:** Therefore, all players must wear a set of equipment including helmet, pads, chest protectors and mouthguards.

**NASNAS:** In his last sports event, the Boz forgot to put on his ass-pad.

**TANNIN:** And it is a full-contact sport where players use arms, hands, fingers, legs and feet.

**AL-MI’RAJ:** After this age, now I can fully understand the Arabic proverb “my foot is in your ass”.

**( Bell Forty One )**



*(The bell rings. ARAGOZE rushes to the show.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Third. Napoleon Bonaparte was a French statesman and military leader who said that, “Women are nothing but machines for producing children.”

*(ARAGOZE whirls.)*

**AL-M’IRAJ:** Your Right Honourable Napoleon Bonaparte, please join the Donald Trump Club.

**NASNAS:** He cannot hear you.

**AL-MI’RAJ:** *(Echo.)* Do hear me down there in the grave?

*(Silence.)*

**TANNIN:** On this happy occasion, I would like to reiterate, to both of you.  
*(Echo.)* Do you hear me down there in the grave?

*(Silence.)*

**ARAGOZE:** I said on this happy occasion, I would like to reiterate, to what Mr Bonaparte said in the nineteenth century. You said, “Never interrupt your enemy when he is making a mistake.”

*(Silence.)*

Fourth, the ninth-century great French novelist and playwright Honoré de Balzac whispered one day. No man with balls should espouse until he has specialised in anatomy and dismembered as a minimum one woman.

*(ARAGOZE whirls.)*

**AL-M'IRAJ:** *(Shocked.)* Co ... co ... co ... It could be him.

**NASNAS:** What are you trying to say?

**AL-M'IRAJ:** Could Balzac be the inspirer for the assassination of the Saudi Journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

*(Sawing sound. Silence.)*

**ARAGOZE:** What a great mastermind! What is the first step in the dissection process, Mr President?

*(AL-MI'RAJ, NASNAS and TANNIN shout 'Grab by the pussy'.)*

**ARAGOZE:** This is the end. God bless you, and God bless the United States of Dissection.

*(Oud music. HAKAWATI enters, riding her bicycle. ARAGOZE freezes.)*

**NASNAS:** How come Aragoze adheres to traditions of society as a defence mechanism against the oppression imposed by the same traditional society?

**HAKAWATI:** It may seem to you that there is a contradiction happening here. Well, to survive the long first stage of oppression you must have a balance between two elements; pressure and basic needs.

**AL-MI'RAJ:** Well, does this last forever?

**HAKAWATI:** *(Laughs.)* It depends.

*(HAKAWATI exits. NASNAS, AL-MI'RAJ AND TANNIN exit. ARAGOZE unfreezes and prepares to make a speech to the tribe. EVE-ADAM and JINN enter the stage.)*

**ARAGOZE:** My lovely tribe! My great hand, right! If you are grateful to your Lord, I will give you more and increase you.

But, but and but if you are full of ingratitude, lo! Indeed, my punishment is terribly dire.

*(EVE-ADAM & JINN set themselves in a row behind ARAGOZE like a train. Each one is covering the other's eyes from the back of the heads except for the leader, ARAGOZE, who should also walk blindly by closing his eyes. They walk in circles and a snaking zig-zag shape. All should follow the steps of ARAGOZE. ARAGOZE and the tribes EVE-ADAM & JINN relate*

*and sing their ancestors' tribal  
heroism chronicles. They stress  
on each pronoun – with high  
pitch).*

- ARAGOZE:** Samson, The Father. He fell in love.
- EVE-ADAM:** She cheated.
- ARAGOZE:** He sent wrath.
- JINN:** He ran around in the blazing fire.
- ARAGOZE:** He set fields on fire.
- EVE-ADAM:** His hands plucked out trees. Hebrews chased him.
- ARAGOZE:** His donkey's jaws killed a thousand of them.
- JINN:** They denied him access to their city.
- ARAGOZE:** He crushed the gates.
- EVE-ADAM:** He threw them away.
- ARAGOZE:** They failed.
- JINN:** They plotted.
- ARAGOZE:** She hatched up.
- EVE-ADAM:** She invited.
- ARAGOZE:** He desired.
- JINN:** She effused wine.

**ARAGOZE:** He drank and slumbered.

**EVE-ADAM:** She gouged out his eyes.

**ARAGOZE:** She took a tuft of his hair.

**JINN:** The heaven cried blood.

**ARAGOZE:** His hair threaded through Hebrews' eyes, ears and mouths.

**EVE-ADAM:** He is not dead as we are still alive.

**ARAGOZE:** Ask the world.

*(EVE-ADAM & JINN shout  
happily and resume their train  
party.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Hercules!

**JINN:** The Father!

**ARAGOZE:** He secedes from the princess's womb.

**EVE-ADAM:** He came out from a king's sperm.

**ARAGOZE:** He blossomed noble and strong.

**JINN:** He married.

**ARAGOZE:** She hated him.

**EVE-ADAM:** She plotted.

**ARAGOZE:** He survived.

**JINN:** The gods admired him.

**ARAGOZE:** He became a god.

**EVE-ADAM:** His strength and wisdom were not dead. We are still alive.

**ARAGOZE:** Ask the world.

*(EVE-ADAM & JINN shout  
happily and resume their train  
party.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Antara!

**JINN:** The Father!

**ARAGOZE:** He dropped from a black maid's womb.

**EVE-ADAM:** A white Arab master's sperm-drop created him.

**ARAGOZE:** People saw the slave.

**JINN:** He fell in love with a white cousin.

**ARAGOZE:** She loved his enormous penis.

**EVE-ADAM:** Colours mattered.

**ARAGOZE:** They could not marry.

**JINN:** He suffered.

**ARAGOZE:** Suffering created knighthood.

**EVE-ADAM:** His breath-blow broke a colossal rock.

**ARAGOZE:** His strength equalled ten men combined.

**JINN:** The father acknowledged the son.

**ARAGOZE:** The father granted him THE TRIBE's name.

**EVE-ADAM:** He added pride to his father's pride.

**ARAGOZE:** He is not dead as we are alive.

**JINN:** Ask the world.

*(EVE-ADAM & JINN stand in a row: male followed by a female, male followed by male, female followed by female, male followed by female. They are hitting the ground with their feet as if marching while standing. One carries a placard that says Birth rates!)*

*(EVE-ADAM & JINN are side-on to the audience. Each one bows and twerks to the other. Twerking music intersects with infants' crying sounds.)*

*(EVE-ADAM & JINN stand to show the strength of fertility and numbers.)*

*(EVE-ADAM & JINN act as if they carry infants and are tapping*

*their heads. This should be accompanied with wavering whole-body right and left while standing, front and back while sitting. Sounds of hushing, kissing and tongue-clicking.)*

*(EVE-ADAM & JINN now sit in a circle with ARAGOZE in the middle trying to get out. EVE\_ADAM and JINN still produce the same sounds: hushing, kissing, and tongue-clicking. Every time, ARAGOZE is prevented from getting out of the circle, he twerks and pretends to eat from the ground and EVE-ADAM & JINN ululate and clap.)*

*(ARAGOZE succeeds in crossing the circle. EVE-ADAM & JINN make a fawn face and try to pull ARAGOZE back to the middle of the circle. ARAGOZE spreads wings and flies. ARAGOZE gets scared and shocked. ARAGOZE returns quickly to the circle,*



*shivering. EVE-ADAM & JINN cover ARAGOZE with hands, and then he starts twerking. HAKAWATI enters the stage. EVE-ADAM & JINN and ARAGOZE exit, ululating and clapping. NASNAS, AL-MI'RAJ and TANNIN enter the shadow.)*

- NASNAS:** Why are they calling for birth rates to increase?
- HAKAWATI:** Birth rates and reproduction are essential to protect the tribe and cattle from any external threat. Boys are an economic power. Girls are tools for affinity and alliances.
- TANNIN:** This tribal care seems supportive of Aragoze. Do you remember Al-M'iraj?
- AL-M'IRAJ:** I am sorry. Alexander the Great did almost the same.
- TANNIN:** Almost! Huh?
- HAKAWATI:** The tribe owns Aragoze. They feed him. They show care. But Aragoze can't break the siege to join other circles. The tribe would use either extortion, a stick-and-carrot approach, or physical cleansing.
- AL-MI'RAJ:** Why should Aragoze even try to cross the siege? This is crazy.

*(HAKAWATI exits—curfew siren.*

*GHOUL enters as a jailer to Hell.*

*MESSENGER enters.)*

**GHOUL:** *(Scary and harsh.)* Who are you? I saw you approaching the edges of Hell.

**MESSENGER:** I am a messenger. Who are you?

**GHOUL:** I am the jailer of this Hell. Are you a bearer of glad tides or bringer of bad news?

**MESSENGER:** The job of messengers is just to be a reminder for the good and bad news.

**GHOUL:** Can a woman be a messenger?

**MESSENGER:** I think a man can be a messenger too.

**GHOUL:** I hear and obey.

*(MESSENGER proceeds to her audience.)*

*(Miniature Fifteen)*

**MESSENGER:** This is Miniature Fifteen. My dear audience. This is just a performance. Do not do this at home. I am your messenger. Genesis II, Visiting Hell.

*(Sound of a hysterical laugh.)*

He will be shown in the stars of the day.

*(A display of a person who has one eye.)*

One-eyed among the blind is a leader.

*(A display of Satan.)*

Borrowing is a job assigned to Satan.

*(A display of a king.)*

Kids love him, but adults hate him.

*(A display of a pregnant man.)*

He is like the male-goat who went to have sex with a doe but returned pregnant.

*(A display of a man with a serpent tongue.)*

He is like a serpent of chaff; he bites and hides.

*(A display of a cow.)*

**MESSENGER:**

He is like a cow vagina that cannot be skinned nor cooked.

*(A display of big man and small man.)*

He is like the big bull among small calves.

*(A display of smoke.)*

He is the unexpected fart; it pops up with no appointment.

*(A display of a man's bottom lashed by fire.)*

He is like the one who sits on fire.

We can call it, the Theory of Deaf in Blind Concerts.

*(JOHN MILTON and AL-  
MA'ARRI enter the shadow  
smoking a pipe and engaged in a  
discussion. ARAGOZE enters the  
stage whirling.)*

### **( Bell Forty Two )**

*(The bell rings. ARAGOZE starts  
itching.)*

**ARAGOZE:** This is Hell. I am excited to know more.

**JAILER:** *(Scary and harsh.)* Who are you? I saw you approaching the edges of Hell coming from Paradise.

**ARAGOZE:** I would like to catch sight of Hell valley.

**JAILER:** Haven't you formed a mental opinion of Hell before?

**ARAGOZE:** I did, but I would like to tranquillise my enthusiasm.

*(JAILER exits. Hell conflagration  
roars past JOHN MILTON and  
AL-MA'ARRI. ARAGOZE feels  
terrified.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Oh, I saw enough now. I am withdrawing to heaven.

**AL-MA'ARRI:** *(Calling.)* Aragoze!

**ARAGOZE:** Ha! Did you hear someone call my name, jailer?

**JOHN MILTON:** *(Calling.)* Aragoze!

**ARAGOZE:** Al-Ma'arri and John Milton! What are you doing in Hell?

**AL-MA'ARRI:** What brought you down to Hell?

**ARAGOZE:** I was twerking and eating at the same time so that I can survive cruelty. My anus was itching. My whole body was itching. I thought I may sneak into Hell to iron it.

**AL-MA'ARRI:** Worms has probably laid tiny savage Corona eggs around it.

**ARAGOZE:** What! Worms! Have you met him? Do you know him?

**JOHN MILTON:** Everyone, everywhere and every time, should have met Worms and Corona.

**AL-MA'ARRI:** His eggs stuck under my fingernails and on my fingertips. I licked and then swallowed Worms' eggs forcefully and sometimes without knowing.

**ARAGOZE:** Did they hatch in the intestine and then started to reproduce?

*(Silence.)*

**AL-MA'ARRI:** The approximate life and size of then-worms depends on the level of scratching. Scratching feeds them, and they may turn to cow size, elephant size, or the Earth size. Their continuity depends on your itching practices.

**ARAGOZE:** Could Worms' Coronas turn into dinosaurs?

**JOHN MILTON:** It could be. It depends. Even the dinosaurs went extinct when they did not find fodder.

**ARAGOZE:** Mr Al-Ma'arri, could you explain to me the Genesis of then-Worms, Coronas, inside me?

**JOHN MILTON:** Well, think about the penis and the womb. Think about women's period as well.

**AL-MA'ARRI:** This is right. The Earth was a sperm ascended into the darkness' volcanic vagina.

**JOHN MILTON:** Volcanic lining occurred due to the rise and fall of unseen chemicals or hormones.

**AL-MA'ARRI:** Volcanic outgassing regularly created monthly, to the darkness' vagina, a primordial atmosphere of bloating, tiredness, irritability and mood changes.

**JOHN MILTON:** And then this atmosphere discharged a bloody lava ocean through a deep space black hole.

**AL-MA'ARRI:** Peace prevailed but not for long. The calmness before the next eruption created a very high and very low possibility for this sperm to stick into a body to form an oval egg called Earth.

**ARAGOZE:** So, shaping the oval Earth passed through a journey of ups and downs to avoid the next eruption. Till this time, the Earth is using defence mechanisms in the hope of survival. Are you sure the earth sperm ascended or descended?

**AL-MA'ARRI:** It does not matter, the sperm could have also descended or jumped into the darkness.

**JOHN MILTON:** The Earth has been looping in a volcanic void. Its birth and growth were as always as tricky as that then-worm inside you.

**ARAGOZE:** How is that happening? Could you please break it down?

**JOHN MILTON:** Please, have patience and be gracious. Then, a group of thinking and living keys and holes called Adams ascended ...

**ARAGOZE:** Perhaps, they were descending.

**AL-MA'ARRI:** Let me repeat. They jumped into the oval Earth's vagina. These drops of sperms passed through elements of volcanic fire, peaceful water and then potter's clay of altered black mud that comes out of the black hole.

**ARAGOZE:** Why do Adams come in a shape of keys and holes?

**JOHN MILTON:** So, there can be an equal contribution. Remember, that keys have holes and holes have keys.

**AL-MA'ARRI:** There must be a sort of hammering, thrusting, and rubbing to help process other sperms to keep the human legend alive.

**ARAGOZE:** Now I understand my birth is as tricky as the birth of that then-worm Corona as well as Earth. How is it their growth and life are always into hardships?

**JOHN-MILTON:** Well, good question. Adams and Earth have been through a lot of suppressive challenges, especially with the hammering,

thrusting or rubbing. This makes them have either happy or sad endings or maybe both at the same or perhaps none of these.

**AL-MA'ARRI:** Not every key goes with every key and hole, and the opposite is exact. Some keys and holes do not even try. They turn rusted.

**JOHN-MILTON:** This appropriateness or inappropriateness creates a feeling of competition. Competition creates excellent and evil envy. This creates power relations.

**AL-MA'ARRI:** Like clay-makers, each of those thinking creatures is trying to shape the hole of the other as they wish.

**ARAGOZE:** Is this the reason behind my painful itchiness in the anus? Is it the new childbirth of Corona?

**JOHN-MILTON:** The nature of Earth is the nature of everything else. It uses its defence mechanism against any threatening object in this borderless darkness and sometimes against its own children.

**AL-MA'ARRI:** It may be trying to abort us as we mess around its hole. Can you imagine how many diggers are above it?

**JOHN MILTON:** A lot! This may cause a lot of damage to it and threaten its existence. Universal threats make it always alert. It feels internal betrayals.

**ARAGOZE:** But the Earth is also kind to us. It provides us with food, care, and kindness. We saw that.

**AL-MA'ARRI:** We cannot deny these pre-conditional factual services; however, power relations create politics of fear.



**ARAGOZE:** What does politics of fear mean?

**JOHN MILTON:** It means fears of beggary and deprivation. Our needs are tools that lobby for power and control.

**ARAGOZE:** Are the Earth and Worms making all this turmoil to control me?

**AL-MA'ARRI:** And they strive to lobby for authority. This is also happening between Earth and its mother, the Universe. It is both rest and pain at the same time.

**JOHN MILTON:** The Universe is excited to see its baby-earth alive. But it feels severe pain because the universe's daughter is tearing its entrails while it rotates around the sun. The universe is trying to control the Earth as much as it can to soothe the pain.

**ARAGOZE:** Earth walks in the veins of the universe. We walk in the veins of Earth. Worms' Coronas walk in my veins. But how do all these patriarchs take control of those below them in the hierarchy?

**AL-MA'ARRI:** In fact, they control through the principle of gravity. All the universe's children, the planets and stars, are born into revolutions since their birth.

**JOHN MILTON:** The universe controls them by keeping them as much as it can in orbits. Otherwise, the universe could suffer a new childbirth pain.

**ARAGOZE:** And could this happen at Adam's levels?

**AL-MA'ARRI:** What's the difference? We cannot see any difference.

**JOHN MILTON:** Imagine the clay making process. The whole power relations are in that image and sounds of hammering, thrusting, rubbing, excitement, and pain.

**AL-MA'ARRI:** Hands are shaping the holes.

**JOHN MILTON:** Holes are taking hands deep to the abyss.

**AL-MA'ARRI:** They are swallowing them.

**JOHN MILTON:** Messing them.

**AL-MA'ARRI:** Colouring them.

**JOHN MILTON:** Feeding them.

**ARAGOZE:** So, what you are saying is that itching means the birth of Corona; my children are born at the cost of my pain?

**AL-MA'ARRI:** When you pass over the pain, you will know the meaning of happiness.

**JOHN MILTON:** Don't you feel any satisfaction when you scratch it?

**ARAGOZE:** Oh, yea!

*(Laugh.)*

**ARAGOZE:** I am still curious about what my children are doing now? How did they get there?

**AL-MA'ARRI:** Worms lays its Corona sperms inside you through the upper hole while you were eating or lower hole while you were twerking. They roll and roll through all your nerves.

**ARAGOZE:** What are nerves?

**JOHN MILTON:** A river of blood that transfers itches of sensation and gesticulation sandwiched between the brain, factory of reason and other parts of the body.

**ARAGOZE:** And Corona mom follows its eggs inside me!

**AL-MA'ARRI:** Of course, like Earth, it gives not only food and protection but decides its children-to-come destinations, names, religions without their approval. Otherwise, children are rebellious by default. God forbid!

**ARAGOZE:** How did the Corona survive through the bloody rivers?

*(AL-MA'ARRI laughs.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Why are you laughing, Sir?

**AL-MA'ARRI:** A little Corona is trying to escape the mother by taking another nerve.

**ARAGOZE:** (Scared.) Really? Where is it, inside me?

*(Aragoze starts agitating and itching.)*

**JOHN MILTON:** No worries, the mother is holding and dragging the little one into the right nerve.

**ARAGOZE:** Praise and thanks be to God!

*(SATAN thrusts into Hell,  
shackled with iron chains and  
manacles.)*

**JOHN MILTON:** Thank God! I just saw you defeated.

**SATAN:** Who is the man?

**JOHN MILTON:** I am John Milton, from the people of England. My occupation and industry were poetry.

**SATAN:** Who is the man?

**AL-MA'ARRI:** I am Al-Ma'arri, from the people of Syria. My occupation was a philosopher, poet and writer.

**SATAN:** Who is the man?

**ARAGOZE:** I am Aragoze.

**SATAN:** Is this your name or an insult? Evil is such occupations and industries. They just bestow you with a firm grip of life that can barely suffice you. How much have they destroyed people like you?

*(Whispers to Aragoze.)*

**SATAN:** You are so lucky that you saved yourself from literature. You must avoid doubtful matters and investigate those suspicious makers of literature.

*(The torture of SATAN proceeds  
to exit.)*

**JOHN MILTON:** He is so arrogant.

**ARAGOZE:** Could you, all of you, please stay a hundred or thousand miles away from me?

**AL-MA'ARRI:** *(Echo.)* Travel back to where you live, Aragoze! The time is gone, and you are alone here.

*(MILTON and AL-MA'ARRI exit.)*

**ARAGOZE:** *(To himself.)* You hope for the future, which is like a first-month pregnant woman who doesn't know what she will deliver. Your writings may seem prolific, but your beliefs are wrong. In the house of life, many people call for mercy and peace upon you. They thought you deserve it. I should avoid such suspiciousness.

*(AL-MI'RAJ, NASNAS and  
TANNIN enter the shadow for an  
announcement. EVE-ADAM and  
JINN enter the stage carrying  
numbered placards and tour the  
stadium in rotations. ARAGOZE  
exits.)*

**AL-MI'RAJ:** Our dear audience. Welcome to OK Tour. Please try to liberate your minds, emotions and bodies from your desirable knowledge and culture. Experience difference. All that you see on stage is just a performance.

- NASNAS:** (*Hindi.*) Pahala plekaard thaeelaind mein ek buddh pratima aur vitarka mudra hai. (*Goval saund.*) oke ka arth hai aantarik poornata.
- VOICEOVER 1:** (*Echo.*) The first placard is a Buddha statue in Thailand and Vitarka Mudra. (*Gavel sound.*) OK means inner perfection.
- TANNIN:** (*Italian.*) Il secondo cartello è un gesto italiano. (*Suono martelletto.*) OK, significa approvato o mi piace.
- VOICEOVER 1:** (*Echo.*) The second placard is an Italian gesture. (*Gavel sound.*) OK, means approved or I like that.
- AL-MI'RAJ** (*American accent.*) The third placard is a Caricature of Uncle Sam. (*Gavel sound.*) OK means all correct.
- NASNAS:** (*Authoritarian accent.*) The fourth placard is Martin Van Buren. (*Gavel sound.*) OK refers to an American presidential re-election campaign in 1840. Old Kinderhook.
- TANNIN:** The fifth placard is a scuba diver's signal. (*Gavel sound.*) OK means everything is OK.
- AL-MI'RAJ:** (*Japanese.*) 6-Banme no purakādo wa, Nihon no jesuchādesu. (Kodzuchi-on. ) OK wa koin no hyōgendesu.
- VOICEOVER 1:** (*Echo.*) The sixth placard is a Japanese gesture. (*Gavel sound.*) OK is a representation of a coin.
- NASNAS:** (*Standard Arabic.*) Al-laafita sab'ah, isharah arabiah. (*swat al-mutraqa.*) OK , tamthil li-ayen alshr.

**VOICEOVER 1:** (*Echo.*) The seventh placard is an Arab gesture. (*Gavel sound.*)  
OK is a representation of the evil eye.

**TANNIN:** (*French.*) La huitième pancarte est un geste français. (*Son de marteau.*) OK est une représentation de zéro.

**VOICEOVER 1:** (*Echo.*) The eighth placard is a French gesture. (*Gavel sound.*)  
OK is a representation of zero.

**AL-MI'RAJ:** (*Hindi.*) Nauveen plekaard ek bhaarateey saanketik bhaasha hai.  
(*Gaval dhvani.*) theek hai soory ke lie ek sanket hai.

**VOICEOVER 1:** (*Echo.*) The ninth placard is an Indian Sign Language. (*Gavel sound.*) OK is a sign for the sun.

**NASNAS:** The last placard is Donald Trump, Brenton Tarrant, Daesh  
Fighter. (*Gavel sound.*) OK is a sign of the size of their anus hole.

(*MESSENGER enters. EVE-ADAM and JINN exit. AL-MI'RAJ, NASNAS and TANNIN exit.*)

{*Miniature Sixteen*}

**MESSENGER:** This is Miniature Sixteen. My dear audience. This is just a  
performance. Do not do this at home. I am your messenger. We  
can call it the Theory of Superstitious Control of Destiny.

*(Red spotlight. WALI (acted by GHOUL) enters, followed by his assistants EVE-ADAM & JINN. MESSENGER exits. GHOUL wears underwear and a turban and a tie.)*

**WALI (GHOUL):** What is the case today?

*(EVE-ADAM and JINN kiss GHOUL's buttocks)*

**EVE-ADAM:** Our great Wali.

**JINN:** The custodian of the West and East!

**EVE-ADAM:** A customer is waiting named Aragoze.

**WALI (GHOUL):** Let him in.

*(ARAGOZE enters.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Are you sure?

**EVE-ADAM:** Our custodian is blessed with many supernatural blessings.

**JINN:** He heals many problems.

**ARAGOZE:** Can his supernatural blessings heal mine? I also have a coronavirus.

**EVE-ADAM:** Yes, he can!



*(ARAGOZE approaches GHOUL  
to kiss his hand.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Praise and reverence to my Master.

**JINN:** Master of the people.

**EVE-ADAM:** Our Master's miracles are as the following:

**JINN:** Resurrection,

**EVE-ADAM:** Talking to dead people,

**JINN:** Shutting oceans,

**EVE-ADAM:** Walking on water,

**JINN:** Retracting Earth,

**EVE-ADAM:** Talking to animals,

**JINN:** And inanimate objects.

**ARAGOZE:** Therefore, I am here.

*(JINN & EVE-ADAM hush  
ARAGOZE.)*

**JINN:** His blessings also include:

**EVE-ADAM:** Animal obedience,

**JINN:** Collapsing and holding up the time,

**EVE-ADAM:** Invocation response,

**JINN:** Refraining tongues from evil-saying,

**EVE-ADAM:** Heart yanks,

**JINN:** Unfolding the unseen,

**EVE-ADAM:** Restraining from food and drink,

**JINN:** Eating a lot of food,

**EVE-ADAM:** Avoiding eating forbidden things,

**JINN:** Sighting remote places,

**EVE-ADAM:** Godly resistance from evils,

**JINN:** Visualisation in different phases,

**EVE-ADAM:** Godly information of land relics,

**JINN:** Resisting toxication ...

**WALI (GHOUL):** This is enough. You probably forgot to mention something about my penis.

*(EVE-ADAM and JINN turn around and bow to show ARAGOZE who concentrates on the hole and falls, dizzy. EVE-ADAM and JINN bring some Bakhour and gums to wake up ARAGOZE.)*

**WALI (GHOUL):** *(Shouts.)* Eve-Adam and Jinn.

**JINN:** Yes, my Lord!

**WALI (GHOUL):** What is the next case? I have assigned you to be the head of Unseen and Myth Sciences, and you are in charge of filling people with peace and harmony.

**EVE-ADAM:** Master, we have many cases waiting for your touch.

**WALI (GHOUL):** Where are most of these cases coming from?

**JINN:** Literally from every place around the world.

**WALI (GHOUL):** Let them wait in a row.

*(EVE-ADAM and JINN stand in a queue as customers. ARAGOZE starts to be conscious.)*

**EVE-ADAM:** Wait in a row, please.

**JINN:** When you approach Wali, bow.

**EVE-ADAM:** And kiss his blessing hand or buttocks.

**JINN:** Leave your oblation down at his feet.

**EVE-ADAM:** Proceed one by one.

**JINN:** Name your problem.

*(EVE-ADAM and JINN proceed.)*

**EVE-ADAM:** We have a headache, it seems like mild symptoms of coronavirus.

*(GHOUL urinates in a cup and gives it to EVE-ADAM.)*

**WALI (GHOUL):** Drink this with patience. Next!

**JINN:** I am sterile. Master! I am worried about our race's birth rates. Other races outnumber us. I have tried to kill as many as I can from the Other to make a balance, but we can't beat them.

*(GHOUL asks JINN to twerk and approach his penis until GHOUL reaches a level of satisfaction and produces a happy ending sound.)*

**WALI (GHOUL):** Read this solemn request for help, sleep on the right side, and insert it at the end. Next!

**JINN:** Where shall I insert them?

*(GHOUL silently points at the buttocks.)*

**EVE-ADAM:** Could you please heal me from envy of the evil.

**WALI (GHOUL):** Wash hands and arms and then beat chest and head. Who is next?

**JINN:** I have an exam. I didn't study at all. I am afraid that ...

**WALI (GHOUL):** Take this pen. It will do the job. Let's start the Zar ceremony to heal Aragoze.

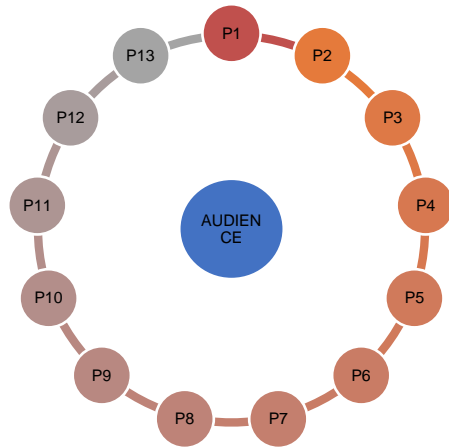
*(WALI begins by engulfing ARAGOZE with incense—a ritual of cleansing. EVE-ADAM dances*

*and plays the cymbals. The music is mainly religious Egyptian Baladi music. JOHN MILTON enters the shadow and takes the role of Munshid [a spiritual singer]. KAWADEH enters showing Sufi dance movement. PRIESTESS enters burning gums. HOMER enters the shadow playing a ney [a reed flute]. They rotate around ARAGOZE.)*



*(A piece of alum is burnt. WALI cuts a small piece of paper into a toy doll, two pins are placed in the position of the eyes on the doll.)*

*(WALI reads an incantation. HOMER sings what WALI reads. As the incantation is read and sung, MESSENGER and EVE-ADAM carry*



*placards for World*

*Protective Talisman Placard*

*Tours around the audience.)*

<b>WALI:</b>	Imbas Imbas (hush).	<i>Placard 1: Horseshoes are hung on a door with two ends pointing up. (for good luck and protection)</i>  <i>Placard 2: Horseshoes are hung on a door with two ends pointing down. (bad luck will occur.)</i>  <i>Placard 3: Toddler Shoes</i>  <i>Placard 4: Praying Mantis</i>  <i>Placard 5: Open Palm Hand</i>  <i>Placard 6: Arabic Calligraphy: What God willed has occurred. (In Arabic letters ما شاء الله)</i>  <i>Placard 7: Alum الشبة</i>  <i>Placard 8: Nazar (amulet)</i>
<b>HOMER:</b>		
<b>WALI:</b>	Oh, eye,	
<b>HOMER:</b>		
<b>WALI:</b>	I am putting you in a	
<b>HOMER:</b>	copper basin.	
<b>WALI:</b>	Oh Aragoze, I am	
<b>HOMER:</b>	exorcising you.	
<b>WALI:</b>	I evict the eyes of the	
<b>HOMER:</b>	people from you.	
<b>WALI:</b>	Solomon has met the	
<b>HOMER:</b>	eye.	
<b>WALI:</b>	In the expansive	
<b>HOMER:</b>	mountains and said to	

	her “Oh Eye, where are you going?”	<p><i>Placard 9: An arrow targets an eye.</i></p> <p><i>Placard 10: May the eye of the envier be afflicted by blindness.</i></p> <p><i>Placard 11: May the envious one not prevail.</i></p> <p><i>Placard 12: Whoever keeps an eye on people, will die with distress.</i></p> <p><i>Placard 13: Lovers of the Prophet, send blessings to him.</i></p>
<b>WALI:</b> <b>HOMER:</b>	She said.	
<b>WALI:</b> <b>HOMER:</b>	“I am going to one who crawls and moves slowly,”	
<b>WALI:</b> <b>HOMER:</b>	Who knows the mother and the father,	
<b>WALI:</b> <b>HOMER:</b>	To hit him/her with a nib, between the shoulders,	
<b>WALI:</b> <b>HOMER:</b>	To make his mother and father cry.	
<b>WALI:</b> <b>HOMER:</b>	Solomon replied,	
<b>WALI:</b> <b>HOMER:</b>	Oh, eye!	

<b>WALI:</b>	Disgrace on you,	
<b>HOMER:</b>		
<b>WALI:</b>	I promise to place you	
<b>HOMER:</b>	in a copper basin,	
<b>WALI:</b>	And to cast upon you	
<b>HOMER:</b>	mercury and lead.	
<b>WALI:</b>	I evict Aragoze from the	
<b>HOMER:</b>	eyes of nature.	

*(The paper toy is set on fire.*

*WALI asks ARAGOZE to step on the ashes with his left leg and gather the ashes in a piece of clothing. ARAGOZE throws the accumulated ashes in all directions.)*

### **( Bell Forty Three)**

*(The bell rings ... All exit except ARAGOZE.)*

*(ARAGOZE starts ornithomancy. The shadow screen displays birds alternating between facing the*



*left and the right. ARAGOZE  
draws a smile for the right bird  
and erases a smile for the left  
bird.)*

**ARAGOZE:**

Right for delight.

Left for dismay.

Right for a power.

Left for a maid.

Right for me.

Left for foes.

Right for gold.

Left for shoes.

Right for heaven.

Left for Hell.

Right for a kiss.

Left for a kill.

*(ARAGOZE hears animal sounds  
and expresses his different  
feelings with each one.)*

*(Sound of a raven. ARAGOZE runs away and stands feeling pessimistic.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Why is this raven still alive? Shame on Londoners. The British government is a disgrace. How did you allow these ravens to leave their towers? The kingdom and the Queen will fall. Queen Elizabeth must be careful. Raven counts only to nine.

*(Sound of a rooster. ARAGOZE is optimistic)*

**ARAGOZE:** Oh, lovely rooster! When I hear you, I see an angel, a phantom of salvation and success. You know what, I am going to cook a turkey for the sake of this good omen and also to increase my virility. Birth rates are my call. Birth rates are my headache. Other races may outnumber us. We don't want to look bad before God on the Day of Judgment.

*(A dog howls. ARAGOZE runs away then stands and feels pessimistic.)*

**ARAGOZE:** They are right. You are a dangerous animal, and those who raise your kind are cursed forever. You are equal to prostitution. You must be chained. Hecate, Artemis and Ares, Anubis were attached to you out of fear. Bloody dog.

*(A cat meows. ARAGOZE runs away then stands feeling pessimistic.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Oh, gosh, it's a black cat. I seek shelter in God from the provocations of the devils. Kish, Kish, Kish. Go away. Go away. Kish. Kish. Please, I don't want to die. Please go away. You have nine lives, but I only have one. Mine is already cursed. Look at me to know!

*(ARAGOZE turns around to show his bottom.)*

**ARAGOZE:** You can go to rural areas in the United Kingdom. Leave me. Go to a British sailor's wife's house, you are a good omen for the husband's safety at sea. I beg you. You are a hero in the eyes of Richard Whittington.

*(A fish sound. ARAGOZE is optimistic. He starts to dig deep into the ground to make a big well.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Fish are coming. This well is big enough to have as much fish as I can.

*(A fish king, MEXICAN TETRA, enters the shadow.)*

**MEXICAN TETRA:** Peace be upon you Aragoze.

**ARAGOZE:** Who are you? What do you want?

**MEXICAN TETRA:** I am the fish king. As per our correspondence, I and you agreed to specific terms and conditions. I would like to remind you, first, that Saturday is the only day for fisheries. Second, we decided that your share of fishes will come to you openly only on Saturday. Don't you understand? Your shares will go to you visibly on this day, publicly holding up our heads, appearing on the surface of the water within your reach, only Saturday. What you are doing is a preachment, and I will transform you into an ape, as a punishment,

**ARAGOZE:** I do not care. I am going to penetrate your hole with this hook and pull the hook up to make your hole bigger and bigger. *(Laugh.)* What are you going to do?

**MEXICAN TETRA:** Do not take pride, like your ancestors, in that which you had been forbidden.

**ARAGOZE:** It's a twelve-thousand-years-old ban on consuming fish. It is time to gain profits. It is time to make sure that I take the upper hand.

**MEXICAN TETRA:** One day, you might find me in the water.

*(MEXICAN TETRA exits.)*

*HAKAWATI enters. ARAGOZE*

*whirls to exit. NASNAS, AL-*

*MI'RAJ and TANNIN enter the*

*shadow.)*

**HAKAWATI:** These miracles are usually bestowed to chosen people, by gods, without exerting any effort, training, preparation or will of struggle. Wali is then exposed to many possibilities; he might be smart or stupid, and educated or ignorant.

**TANNIN:** This arbitrariness makes him compliant to fatalism.

**NASNAS:** What does fatalism mean?

**TANNIN:** When we believe that all events are predetermined and therefore, inevitable.

**HAKAWATI:** And so Wali believes in avoiding his feeling of guilt that stems from his failure. Fatalism creates a sort of feeling that extramundane circumstances will change his fate.

**AL-MI'RAJ:** He may find himself, Wali, without knowing.

**HAKAWATI:** This is his chance for retaining salvation and obtaining titles of highness.

*(ARAGOZE enters the shadow  
whirling. HAKAWATI exits.  
NASNAS, AL-MI'RAJ and  
TANNIN exit.)*

**ARAGOZE:** A sign from the sky is a seed to the Earth. A sign from the sky is a seed to the Earth.

**{ Bell Forty Four }**

*(The bell rings. ARAGOZE is shocked. MEXICAN TETRA enters the shadow.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Where am I?

**MEXICAN TETRA:** Yo soy el pez. Te tragué.

**VOICEOVER1:** I am the fish. I swallowed you.

**ARAGOZE:** *(Talking to his hands.)* I am in trouble because of you. I wish I had a knife to cut both of you.

**MEXICAN TETRA:** Leave your hands alone and put your blameworthiness next to you.

**ARAGOZE:** What are you going to do with me?

**MEXICAN TETRA:** Te quedarás en este agujero, dentro de mí para siempre.

**VOICEOVER 1:** You will remain in this hole, inside me forever.

*(ARAGOZE bows to glorify and falls asleep. Ocean sounds. MEXICAN TETRA exits the shadow. AL-MI'RAJ enters the shadow as a servant, to wake ARAGOZE up.)*

**AL-MI'RAJ:** Your Highness! Wake up. Let's surf back.

**ARAGOZE:** I won't surrender travelling till I touch the junction of the two rivers or I will keep marching for ages.

**HAKAWATI:** *(Voiceover.)* While they were travelling, they felt tired and sat down to have seafood, but Joshua—*(Interrupted.)*

**AL-MI'RAJ:** *(To Hakawati),* Hakawati, our great storyteller. I am not Joshua, my name is Al-Mi'raj. Accuracy is a must these days.

**HAKAWATI:** I mean Al-Mi'raj, forgot the fish, leaving it near the rock. The fish took its way into the water, being free. Aragoze knew it was a sign. They went back to the rock where they forgot their fish.

**AL-MI'RAJ:** Your Highness, here it is. I found the fish!

**ARAGOZE:** Well, if you would like to join me, follow my orders without any question. You must be patient. I am sure that you will not be patient.

**AL-MI'RAJ:** I hear and obey my Highness.

**ARAGOZE:** You will not be able to do so.

**AL-MI'RAJ:** Try me.

**ARAGOZE:** Let's embark on that ship.

*(AL-MI'RAJ and ARAGOZE surf to the ship. ARAGOZE exits the shadow to enter the stage, he carries a placard and makes a hole in the placard. GHOUL enters the shadow carrying a bucket and tries to risk getting to the ship. ARAGOZE looks*

*through the hole and gives a big smile. His eyes are wide-open, he pulls his tongue out and flicks it.)*

*(ARAGOZE rushes to enter the shadow. GHOUL rushes to exit the shadow. Voiceover of people's cries.)*

**AL-MI'RAJ:** The ship is drowning. Your Highness, you verily have done a dreadful thing, Aragoze. Have you made this hole to drown its folk?

**ARAGOZE:** Have not I told you that you would never have forbearance with Aragoze?

**AL-MI'RAJ:** Your Highness, I am sorry. Please don't blame me for this as I forgot.

**HAKAWATI:** *(Voiceover.)* Aragoze and Joshua set out back to the beach. While they were walking, they met a boy. Aragoze slew the boy.

**AL-MI'RAJ:** Your Highness, you verily have done a disgraceful action! You have slain an innocent lad who has not killed any person.

**ARAGOZE:** Have not I told you that you would never have forbearance with Aragoze?

**AL-MI'RAJ:** Your Highness, I am sorry. Please don't blame me for this as I forgot. If I ask you again, kick me out of your company.



**HAKAWATI:** *(Voiceover.)* They set out to a town of people and asked for food as they felt hungry, but the folk rejected them. They kept walking till they found a tree about to collapse. Aragoze repaired the tree's situation.

**AL-MI'RAJ:** If I were you, my Highness, I would ask for a payment from the folk for the repair of the tree.

**ARAGOZE:** This is the parting between you and me.

*(Curfew siren. HAKAWATI enters.*

*ARAGOZE exits. AL-MI'RAJ exits.*

*NASNAS and TANNIN enter.)*

**HAKAWATI:** It is the parting because Al-Mi'raj was not patient enough.

**NASNAS:** But why did Aragoze make a hole in that ship?

**HAKAWATI:** The drowned ship belonged to needy and poor people.

**NASNAS:** That's why Aragoze drowns them. This is a dreadful thing!

**HAKAWATI:** You must be patient my darlings. This ship was for poor people that was about to fall in a trap with Worms and his Coronas who try to take every boat by force.

**NASNAS:** Worms and Coronas?

**HAKAWATI:** Yes, they impose very high taxes on those undamaged ships. So, Aragoze tried to make it unserviceable so that they do not seize the vessel and its passengers.

**NASNAS:** And what about the heinous action by killing an innocent lad.

**HAKAWATI:** Worms and its Coronas set a nuclear bomb inside his belly and it was about to explode if he spelled a word. Aragoze was afraid that the lad's self-explosion would overburden his parents with rebellion, transgression and disbelief against their own son. Killing him is saving him and the world.

**NASNAS:** Oh Lord!

**HAKAWATI:** Are you still eager to know the interpretation of that collapsing tree?

**NASNAS:** Yes, please! We were about to forget it.

**HAKAWATI:** The tree was for two orphaned boys. Beneath it, a hole where there was a treasure that the warm earth exposed to seduce the two orphan boys and bribe them to use them like the little lad who was killed. So Aragoze restored the tree to hide the treasure till the boys reach maturity and extract the treasure.

*(HAKAWATI exits.)*

**NASNAS:** Tannin, why are you silent, and shock is all over your face?

**TANNIN:** AL- ...

**NASNAS:** What do you mean?

**TANNIN:** AL- ...

**NASNAS:** AL- What?

**TANNIN:** AL-Mi'raj is gifted to Aragoze, isn't it?

**NASNAS:** Yes, and so?

**TANNIN:** AL-Mi'raj was gifted before to Alexander the great.

*(Curfew siren. ARAGOZE enters.*

*NASNAS and TANNIN exit.*

*GHOUL enters the shadow as*

*WALI.)*

### **( Bell Forty Five)**

*(The bell rings.)*

**ARAGOZE:** Oh, God, my left eye is blinking. Bloody things may happen soon. My left ear is also buzzing. I am sure enemies are plotting against me. Oh good, my shoes are flipped upside down. Is this because I sweep the house at night?

**GHOUL:** *(Whispers.)* You should know my dear that sweeping the house at night brings poverty and optimism upon you.

**ARAGOZE:** I annoyed the angels. The scissors are open.

**GHOUL:** *(Whispers.)* What bad luck!

**ARAGOZE:** My left hand is itching me.

**GHOUL:** *(Whispers.)* Are you sure?

**ARAGOZE:** No, I mean the right hand.

**GHOUL:** *(Whispers.)* This means no money but more trouble.

**ARAGOZE:** Let me dash some salt at the door front to keep the devil away.

**GHOUL:** (*Whispers.*) Remember that you should pass down the ladder laying on a wall.

**ARAGOZE:** Of course, I already had enough misfortunes. I wish that day in which the soul resurrects to its God.

*(ARAGOZE whirls. GHOUL whirls to exit. HAKAWATI's voiceover.)*

**HAKAWATI:** (*Voiceover.*) Corona has controlled Aragoze's nervous system.

*(ARAGOZE hysterically weeps.)*

**HAKAWATI:** (*Voiceover.*) His frequent inclination to shed many tears is explained to Aragoze as a gulf and a chasm to life's comforts.

*(ARAGOZE expresses mournfulness.)*

**HAKAWATI:** (*Voiceover.*) Mournfulness is buoyancy, a lightness of spirit, a power to recuperate.

*(ARAGOZE takes wings.)*

**HAKAWATI:** (*Voiceover.*) To pass or rise quickly through the air is good luck and exaltedness.

*(ARAGOZE dashes salt.)*

**HAKAWATI:** (*Voiceover.*) Dashing salt in Aragoze's unconsciousness means money.

*(ARAGOZE hysterically laughs.)*

**HAKAWATI:** Laughing is grief.

**ARAGOZE:** I seek protection in Allah from the damned Satan. I was laughing. There is no power or strength save in Allah. I am afraid that I am losing someone close to my heart. Have your mercy upon me.

*(WALI enters carrying a wooden cane. GHOUL bows and kiss ARAGOZE's hand.)*

**WALI:** Your Highness, do what you see well? Each whip from your Highness is a godly blessing. It is a holy covering over my body and soul.

**ARAGOZE:** *(Whips.)* It is a step closer to change. *(Whips.)* It's an exhortation for more extended range. *(Whips.)* Whip on the back is gains and money. *(Whips.)* Lash on the bottom means to love and marry.

*(GHOUL praises ARAGOZE during whipping.)*

**WALI:** God bless those hands. Congratulations to Aragoze for this position and for the victory over us.

Your Highness, eat my flesh, drink my blood at ease.

For reality, you sent on before you in the bygone years.

**ARAGOZE:** Integrity and veneration are what Highnesses deserve.

Life is merit only for the Highness, with no reserve.

**WALI:** As for us, we have to confess

our leanness ...

our badness ...

our baseness ...

**ARAGOZE:** Let's gulp a cup of long-suffering meekness,

Reticently, reach the heeltap, to grogginess.

**WALI:** I am not a loser, but damaged by sickness.

**ARAGOZE:** My sickness is the reason for my unfitness.

*(MESSENGER enters.*

*ARAGOZE and WALI play clap-  
hand games to exit.*

*MESSENGER wears a kind of  
Aristotelian dress, carrying a cup  
of wine.)*

*{Miniature Seventeen}*

**MESSENGER:** This is Miniature Seventeen. My dear audience. This is just a performance. Do not do this at home. I am your messenger— Theatre in a Time of Revolution. We can call it the Fall of Aristotle's Theory. Aristotle was privileged. Indeed, he was. He was laying down on his right side, lifting a cup of wine in his left

hand. He wears high-flown baggy clothes to avoid the risks of balls-constriction, literally and figuratively. Two beauties are displayed before him. The first beauty reflects stunning nature, high bushes, rivers, a clear sky, and an intensely dark night with scattered sparkling stars. Another beauty reflects menservants and women who are lasciviously waiting for the Aristotle tower's call. They are waiting so that they can ring his Bells and rub the surface of the tower repeatedly back and forth with firm pressure for his own splendour. The tower stands tall, and every servant and woman are staying tuned for the surprise of firing white fireworks. Thus, it was easy for Aristotle to synthesise a theory about poetry and theatre based on the traditional model, the linear arrangement. His tower was a temple around which servant youths, general public and all women circulated. Things were prepared for him to see life events as merely a beginning, an escalation, a climax, and then a fall to an end.

*(Sawing and fast breathing sounds)*

**ARAGOZE:**

I can't breathe. I can't breathe.

*(Another spotlight on ARAGOZE, who is tied by wires and strings like a puppet.)*

**MESSENGER:**

The Aragoze, like everyone, is only a puppet tied by wires and strings of insecurities that cause physical and internal stress and

conflict. The sea waves of life and death flounder Aragoze. At the same time, a cup of poison is carried by the right hand to settle matters if things get complicated; the horizon darkens, the past aggravates, or the present turns absent.

**MESSENGER:**

It is only one dose; one does permeate the arteries of injustice that his children, namely, Worms and Coronas, have ravaged and expropriated his property. They take complete control as much as he takes total control. If Aragoze steals something, blame the hand and the legs, not the soul and spirit. If Aragoze kills, blame his fingerprint, hand-palms and arms.

Within the Aristotelian framework, Aragoze was an evil beast, an absolute evil as he did not meet Aristotelian exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, catastrophe. His book of rules that many people model around the world, including playwrights. We show many things except the inevitable truth. It is time to break the clay jar and recreate it.

Within Aragoze, things are repetitively fluctuating like everyday life. The beginning is lost somewhere. It is always a rising action. The climax is still defined by power. And the ending is a hoax.

*(MESSENGER cuts all strings.*

*ARAGOZE falls and freezes.)*

*(Silence.)*

*(Oud music. ARAGOZE sets to whirls.)*



**VOICEOVER 1:**

*(Echo.)* Dreams are chasing me. The inevitable truth is even harder. Goals are chasing me. The unavoidable truth is even harder.

*(HAKAWATI enters the shadow.)*

**HAKAWATI:**

Touti Touti Khilsit al-hatouti, hilwi wala mal-touti?

*(HAKAWATI exits.)*

**ARAGOZE:**

A sign from the sky is a seed to the Earth. A sign from the sky is a seed to the Earth.

**{ Bell Forty-Six }**

*(The bell rings. ARAGOZE rushes to exit. Curfew siren.)*

**Curtain.**

**- The End -**

## Author's Note

The content of *Aragoze Trilogy* does not represent the author's viewpoints or initial meanings.

My personal meanings are not absolute and are dissolved in between the interrelationships of audience and characters' multi-voicedness and other socially and historically grounded languages and concepts.

This work (content and form) is editable and can be reshuffled and also made democratic. Thus, spectators can trespass and take on roles and occupy the stage (tent, booth, proscenium, or outdoor spaces such as parks, street, royal courts, or any space available).

As a hybrid playwright, I recycle historical and ancient stories, creatures, fables, poetry, and other cultural materials from 'here' and 'there'. As an author, I juxtapose, conflate, and shift between times, places, concepts, figures, symbols, and events through the creation process with no intention to impose a single meaning about migration or migrants.

To fulfil my prophecy of democracy, I do not impose unity of topic, theme, or structure. It is a hybrid trilogy that interweaves different genres, theatres, issues, challenges, revisions, and other impactful events throughout the whole trilogy. I thank different Arabic and Greek mythologies, poets such as Milton, holy scriptures such as Quran and other cultural elements (including symbols) from Shia, Sunnah, Buddhist, Hindu, and Christian texts, that helped the enrichment of this work.

This work aims to build a connection and open a space for possible dialogues with a larger audience. I appreciate spectators' (actors on stage or readers') expectations and uncertainties, harmony and disharmony, love and dissatisfaction for characters or any cultural elements in this trilogy. Your intervention and engagement add novel meanings to the network of interrelations. This keeps the dialogue alive.