

# East-West Identity Unmasks the Mistaken Ideology of American War on Iraq: A Critical Analysis of *Baghdadi Bath* and *Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo*

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**Abstract**—The study aspired to investigate the human trauma of a society in wartime and thereafter. It focuses on literature that seeks to reflect life as it should be. However, literary works here deal with catastrophic dramas that depict Iraqis who generally suffer from the negative repercussions of the American Crisis and the extreme underdevelopment and poverty at that time. In this paper, the audience faces the disaster in two dramatic works: *Baghdadi Bath* (2005) by Jawad al-Asadi and *Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo* (2012) by Rajiv Joseph. They are a good example that depicts the nightmare experienced by all Iraqis during the war. Speaking about the disaster of war, we guess that the disaster may have human roots. The disaster of war on Iraq, in particular, is taken for analysis. The researchers try to denote the nature of man at the time of the disaster. The paper explores the relations between the ideas of war and the world we face and refers to Baghdad's brutal past and its confused present. It also inspects the real reasons behind the war and records the human condition in the consequences of the American invasion of Iraq. To narrow the field of investigation, the researchers have chosen disaster at war, especially the American war on Iraq in 2003, and its results for the study. The paper steps down war and violence and assures peace for people depending on different perspectives.

**Index Terms**—American, Baghdad, East, Arab, Tiger

## I. INTRODUCTION

The two plays are selected for their strong representation of the war crisis in Iraq, reflecting the harsh circumstances of people and animals. They also help in illustrating the actual political, social, and economic connotations of the American ideology of the war. One of the advantages of having an Arab dramatist write about war is that he is more likely to represent it with realistic composition and in a declarative manner because he is fully aware of the whole process. This vantage point, in portraying the image, makes it credible enough for a wide range of audiences, initiating insights into the facts behind the war objectively. It also lends them the chance to live and see how awful is that life during wars, and how American soldiers, ignoring the culture and the nature of Arabs, dehumanize Iraqis and break the rules protecting human dignity during the war. In similar lines, the presence of an American playwright who also deplores acts of violence and rejects the American war on Iraq, confirms the fact that the war has a hidden political aspiration and economic dimension. The author explains that the US war was a major mistake, increasing the power of terrorism and the number of victims. He added that the war on Iraq was systematic with a view to eliminating Saddam Hussein's regime and destabilizing the Middle East.

## II. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The article provides ways to explore the connection between literature and disaster. The literature of catastrophes is a meaningful concept if we contemplate it from a human perspective since catastrophes, with their political and social concepts, could be grasped if they are accompanied by personal calamities and encountered as existential situations tormenting people. "Mankind has also coined new disasters like war, fire, accidents, shipwrecks, nuclear explosions, electric accident etc. leading to terrible casualties" (Joseph et al., 2016, p. 289). The priorities of the theatre in the

history of mankind have been associated with the catastrophes to which villages, cities, and countries have been subjected. The article raises questions about the human conditions, war violence, and transcendence in the modern world “the young soldiers have transformed from kids to killers, the interpreter has turned from gardener to traitor in his own land. No one can make sense of the inhuman acts surrounding him” (Joseph, 2010, p. 3). The two works of the research serve as a literary attempt to avoid wars and save human beings from more upcoming conflicts, and a call to deal with disaster in a rational manner. It is an attempt to rid the world of the negative effects of war on a society where no one can understand the inhumane acts around.

By examining the two works of study, one recognizes that from the point of view of most Arab authorities, the American war on Iraq isolated the people from the theater, which is considered the link between Iraqis and life and one of their most important sources of knowledge. Arabs know for sure that the stage has remained marginalized and it flourishes only when it praises and promotes media and political programs. From here, the researchers believe that the Arab theatre has been living for a long time in fatal isolation, which has caused the lives of people in this region of the world to become more blackened, painful, and bitter, saying the doors were closed before peaceful coexistence among each other. That is why theatre has remained far from the social and human life of our Arab countries. Not to mention the closure of a large number of theaters and cinemas in the Arab world. The researchers note that most Arab societies have become defeated and deprived of civilian life. Iraqi people have been isolated and left behind by the international community; they have been marooned upon this barren land for too long.

Here springs the significance of declaring the real tendencies and intentions of the American government through a literary representation of two plays, under discussion, whose titles are promising and indicative of that claimed ideology. The researchers, through this paper, want to prove that the essence of Arab’s vision of war theatre lies in the theatre’s contribution to rebuilding a new-style civil society and creating a new Arab human being that fathoms considerably the culture of war and the theatre of peace in a real way.

### III. DISCUSSION

#### A. *The Thematic Function of Baghdadi Bath by Jawad Al-Asadi*

Jawad Al-Asadi (1947 –) is an Arabic writer of Iraqi origin and a major twentieth-century playwright. Pertaining to the Post-World War II generation, Al-Asadi is always concerned with Iraqi suburban troubles to expose the grim reality and demolish the false American stability. In that sense, *Baghdadi Bath* brings Americans to the atmosphere of chaos and danger experienced by the Iraqi capital Baghdad after the US invasion of Iraq. The play displays the story of two Iraqi brothers (Majid and Hamid) who represent the Iraqi people in their different views of resistance against the American occupation. The two brothers are seen as victims of two tyrannical rulers: Majid is the victim of Iraqi dictatorial president, Saddam Hussein; also, Hamid is the victim of the brutal American conquest of Iraq. The two brothers have different tendencies; however, the shadow of sadness is the only objective equivalent that gathers Iraqi people. The play sheds light on the type of bus drivers who work between Amman and Baghdad and aims to examine the nature of this kind of people. Through a history full of pain, it monitors the transformations of bus drivers’ life in Iraq during the American conquest.

Coming close to his theatrical and reflective style, Jawad al-Asadi refers to Iraqi reality after the occupation with all its repercussions on public life and highlights the state of contradiction in this reality employing two different perspectives towards the occupation. Majid, the older brother, is a pragmatic opportunist and opportunity hunter, who cooperates with the devil for his livelihood, worked with the former regime, and now works with the Americans. In this regard, Hamid criticizes the American invasion and the humiliating way Americans deal with Iraqis:

HAMID: ... You put all your buses at their service and fired me. ...I would be ashamed to work for them....you have become their pet dog.

MAJID: My profession is my master.

HAMID: They occupy your country and you consider them the noblest God’s creatures.

MAJID: With their help I buried my poverty. (Al-Asadi et al., 2008, p. 112)

Thus, Majid puts his car in the service of transporting supplies and equipment to and from prisons, and sees the occupation as a winning bargain to revive his trade and business, especially after losing his dreams of learning and becoming a famous singer. Whereas Hamid, the younger brother, was a head-confused person who was kept captive by fear and terror. He witnessed bloody events that took hold in his memory and formed a kind of guilt complex towards the Iraqi people. Hamid had been forcibly involved in mass massacres under threat and murder. He was also the victim of greed and exploitation by his older brother, who usurped his rights, abandoning his family to the extent that he had not participated in the funeral of his father, or even visited his elderly mother.

In his dramatic approach, Jawad al-Asadi sought to reveal what these two characters felt before and after the occupation. He discloses their past and illuminates the dark sides of their persona. Al-Asadi reflects the Iraqi human psyche that is trapped between its nostalgia and the past and involved in a harsh reality seen as irrelevant to its cultural history. In the play’s first scene, the event takes place in an abandoned bathroom, where the large space refers to Iraq’s devastation after the occupation. In this direction, al-Asadi breaks through the past with all its good and bad events, revealing each character’s components and the intellectual conflict between them. The two brothers manifest opposing forces and different views concerning the American attack on Iraq. However, they were shocked by the brutal

environment around them. “The sound of explosions, the putrid blood, and a gold tooth” (Myers & Saab, 2019, p. 311) in a pool of urine are normal rubbles of the foreign invaders. In the second scene, the show moves into an area that represents the boundary between Amman and Baghdad. In this space, al-Asadi proves the fictitious political elections where the Iraqi citizen experiences humiliation so much that Hamid loses his dignity and cringes on the Americans, who control the borders, to introduce a billionaire man who intends to stand for elections, to obtain a material gain. Yet the billionaire dies at the border and his body turns into a nightmare that sickens Hamid and elicits Majid’s nerves. Thus, al-Asadi expresses the process of corruption related to the cross-border bodies. Majid asks his brother to convince the American recruiter that they are carrying a prestigious body who is supposed to be the candidate for elections, but Hamid is revolted by the idea and the American recruiter. After a violent dispute between them, the younger brother decides to return to Amman, while the elder is interested in the exhumation of a body blow. In the third scene, the event takes place in the large space of the first scene itself where Hamid tries to purify himself from blindness which may lead to personal insight into the havoc of the American war on Iraq. The show concludes with the disappearance of the two characters as if they are covered by the steam in the bathroom. Accordingly, the play is an effective means of expressing the desperation suffered by Iraqis.

In his presentation of the play, al-Asadi uses the cinematographic image of the steam in the bathroom; he goes through performance and verbal and visual images to confirm that his play establishes a scenographic aesthetic platform through the Baghdadi Bath environment which inspires and motivates everyone. He creates a symbolic relationship between nudity in the large space and the stripping of souls based on the fact that the bathroom is a symbol of the blood bath that Iraqis are living under occupation and inside Baghdad’s gates of Hell.

Al-Asadi reviews the meanings of exhumation, stripping, and fraternal disputes which turn the bath into a breeding ground of suspicion and differences, and make the theatrical performance loaded with the fire and steam of the bath. Giving great consideration to the dramatic effects more than the storylines, the playwright imagines the steam of the bath adding to the purificatory atmosphere of the stage; he uses the image of the running water to reflect and reinforce the reality of the scene. The horrors of the theatrical explosions make the audience close to the show's spirit so that the stage and the gallery turn into a coherent crowd during which al-Asadi lures his audience into acoustic and performative scenes.

The playwright revealed one of the reasons he wrote the text *Baghdadi Bath*, it was the killing of his two brothers, who were working as bus drivers on the road (Baghdad, Damascus, and Amman), due to the sectarian conflict developed into a brutal fighting. So, as far as possible, he tries to paint an image of two brothers (bus drivers) who meet in a bathroom to wash. They began to stone and wash harshly, “I brought the same loofah and stone ... I’ll scrape your body as father scraped mine until your filth goes down the drain” (p. 312). Here, the two brothers begin to expose the misery, agony, and pain that have been directed to the Iraqi people through simple tales that generate their differences and problems. Accordingly, the sclerotic, 30-year rule of former president Saddam erased the souls and lives of the Iraqis while the American occupation broke their backs. It became clear that the American soldiers, who came to rescue the Iraqis from Saddam Hussein's tyrannical rule, had their main goal of destroying the remaining prosperous civilization of Iraq and shattering the dignity of the citizens, which was the real purpose of the invasion.

Al-Asadi created realistic plays that feature the themes of violence and abuse of power. Such real plays mirror the psyches of Iraqi citizens who suffer colonialism and the American arbitrary power. *Baghdadi Bath* analyzes the western dramatic tradition that is much related to personal experiences during the administration of Saddam Hussein and the American invasion of Iraq. While he was abroad receiving his education in Bulgaria, al-Asadi got a message from his family that his brother had been killed. The family too advised him not to return to Baghdad, and he stayed in exile until 2004. He returned with a specific object in mind: to create a serious theatre that discusses and expresses life in Iraq after the attack. In her paper entitled *Remembering Cosmopolitan Baghdad in Exile* (2012), Diane Duclos relates an interview with al-Asadi who demonstrates his love for Baghdad, describing his return to it after the American invasion as follows: “I felt as if a butcher had come and cut my city and its political life into pieces. Without the river, I would not have recognized my city” (p. 8). The work explores the lack of feeling of safety and stability, and the boredom of waiting to have one’s fate decided by an unseen power during Saddam Hussein’s domination. The war changed Baghdad to become an untrodden place haunted by severe destruction, sectarian tension, and bombings.

Furthermore, people were afraid to leave their houses due to the combat that had been released in the city. Danger surrounded people and the call to disband the Iraqi army began. Hamid has expressed the Iraqi people's conscience talking about the slow and painful death that torments them: “I became sick. I puked blood. I lost my appetite. I became pale and thin. I beat my head against the prison wall. I fell to the floor. I cried. They ... threatened to cut my tongue if I ever said a word about what I had seen” (Al-Asadi et al., 2008, p. 118). And in so doing, Iraqi citizens knew that they could be killed at any time, and children were kidnapped for a great ransom. Iraqi theatre now is full of bloody actions which lead to violent massacres. Al-Asadi criticizes Iraq under Saddam Hussein’s regime and dramatizes his family who died at the hands of sadistic torturers. Other citizens, instead of offending Saddam Hussein, they commend him. In writing the play, al-Asadi is particularly seen as affected by the Palestinians who, considering the meaning of being exiled in their country, fight against the occupiers as well as he sees himself exiled and fights against the Iraqi President. The play shows Iraqi society which is torn apart by extreme violence. He explores the themes of madness, violence,

cruelty, occupation, abuse of power, and exile through his painterly plays. Although the two brothers remained in Iraq during the time of occupation, they are marginalized and one feels that they have no existence even in their own country.

Iraqis suffered a great deal from the scourges of war, exclusion, sanctions, and difficult times when men and animals were starving and did not have enough food. Unquestionably, the author directs vitriolic criticism and sharp blame for American politics and bears witness that the war has weakened Iraq and the Middle East. The American administration had foreseen the Iraq war as an easy task and the war ended in a one-sided victory. However, victims must not forget that war has brought slaughter, terror, hunger, and poverty to Iraq and Iraqi civil citizens. It also has heightened the sense of insecurity everywhere in the Middle East.

Public opinion in America was indifferent, providing enthusiasm for the anti-war movement. This confirms the fact that the American war against Iraq did not mean to overthrow a tyrant, confront injustice, or/and remove corruption from the Iraqi people, but it was purely for gaining political and economic interests; namely capturing the country's wealth. All analysts know that the American invasion had much to do with Iraqi oil and imperial bases. So, the "ruthless intervention is sometimes needed to establish or re-establish Western control of the Middle East oil, to ensure that Western oil companies can derive a 'favourable' level of profit (Rai & Chomsky, 2002, p. 101). The war has curtailed oil production and suppressed future investment in Iraq. It also destroyed several Iraqi cities and much of Iraq's refinery systems. However, the war caused great damage on the American side and the costs of the US war on Iraq were much greater than the Iraqi human cost of war.

In reference to the moves that are against the war, "some have even argued that U.S. policy should actually harness this momentum [the war as a chance] to redraw the Middle Eastern map along lines that would make it less predisposed toward conflict" (Wehrey et al., 2010, p. 76). As a result, the play reflects al-Asadi's point of view to find a means of communication and to ethically attain possible means of survival in eastern and western cultures. This interprets the main goal of the study which attempts not only to introduce the realities behind the invasion and reveal the American lies behind the war but also to establish a bridge of cooperation between the two different cultures.

#### B. *The Dramatic Function of Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo by Rajiv Joseph*

The play tackles the brutal effects of war not only on man's psychological side but also on all creatures; the ghost of a Tiger roams the streets of Baghdad to understand the meaning of life and forgiveness while witnessing the bewildering absurdities of war. It deals with real incidents that occurred in the early days of the US occupation of Iraq in 2003. The zoo in the opening scene is subjected to violent bombardment destroying animal cages so that lions can specifically walk freely through the streets of Baghdad filled with destruction. All the animals locked in their cages were killed; only the Tiger remained in the cage in the middle of this chaos. And the city of Baghdad turned into a forest where all forms of murder, thefts, and looting prevailed. American soldiers killed anything moving and stole the contents of presidential palaces.

In the first act, Tom and Kev, two American soldiers, speak at the beginning of the play and show a desire to kill and fire as Baghdad has become a forest in every sense of the word. The motivation of the American soldier to kill resembles the Tiger's motives as a predator. The Tiger says, "What if my cage *had* gotten hit? ... I'm not gonna go traipsing around the city, like the lions did. ... But I think I'd step out for a bit. Hang around the zoo. Hunt something. Kill all the people, kill everyone. Eat them" (Joseph, 2012, p. 10). The Tiger dreams of freedom as he leaves the cage, mocks this world, and expresses the Iraqis' desire for freedom. Tom steals a golden gun belonging to Uday Saddam Hussein with a toilet that was fully made from pure gold. The play is full of sensitive images that reveal the malicious endeavors of the characters and how they deal with each other maliciously:

KEV. You won a toilet seat?

TOM. *Gold* toilet seat. I won the *gold* toilet seat.

KEV. Where is it.

TOM. Somewhere safe. I buried it.

KEV. Where?

TOM. Yeah, I'm gonna tell you, Kev. I'm gonna tell *you*. Somewhere safe. Between this gun and that toilet seat. Back home, I'll be sitting pretty. ... I'm gonna hit eBay with that shit, you know? (pp. 10-11)

This explains the primary motivation and genuine wish behind the attack on Iraq where the occupying forces spread a blanket of fear over the people. Deprived of protesting against political oppression, Iraqis were not free to express their rights and cultural identity. Thus, the playwright explained that the United States invasion was nothing but a commercial transaction coated in blood, murder, and violation of taboos. He confirmed the meaning by employing the element of realism among the characters to express their self-conflict with the status-quo existence in the world of ghosts. "I guess I was always going to die here. I guess that was my fate, from the start. But I would have thought maybe I'd have one good day," the Tiger adds (p. 12). The Tiger gives this message when he first becomes a ghost. It contrasts his final fate, as he believes his life is over but does not give up fighting to survive.

According to Neal Zoren in his review *Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo — Temple Theaters at the Adrienne*, "Joseph's play neatly depicts the human traits — jealousy, fear, rationalization, game playing, revenge, expediency, power — that lead to conflict and war and presents them next to, and in tandem with, the harshness of war that robs many of their basic humanity" (Zoren, 2014). It is part and parcel of Joseph's talent in creating a well-developed

theatrical experience. As a dramatist, he confesses that he aims to provoke the feelings and emotions of the audience so that they may enjoy the work and get the message behind it.

The writer has his own philosophy of understanding the nature of Iraqi citizens who are trying to confront death. We see the dead refuse their doom, chase the survivors, dwell in their places, and practice simple living normally. Although the Tiger was killed at the beginning of the show, it appeared as a ghost in the virtual world to survive and stay in power. The writer regularly resurrects Iraqis through the Tiger's character that comes out of nowhere, hunts down the murderers, and reveals the nature of the characters of Tom and Kev. Consequently, the Tiger is the objective correlative which plays an important role in the structure of the dramatic work and lays out the features of the characters. Musa, an Iraqi interpreter, introduced his sister Hadia to Uday who disagreed with the girl and killed her. The dramatic tension reaches its utmost in Musa and feels a lot of pain when Tom invites him to translate for an official mission. Musa then discovers that it is just an encounter between Tom and an immoral woman.

In the second act, the characters' interactions with the world are varied on different bases. "We're broken, man. You, me, the Tiger. It's like we fell through a prism that night at the zoo and each part of ourselves just separated," Kev later says (p. 52). Joseph agrees with the Arabs' vision that the war on Iraq was barbaric and had other political allegations regarding Iraq's wealth and lands, far from the idea of eliminating tyrants and aggressors. The playwright underscores the failure of the US administration in the war on Iraq, one of the manifestations of the failure of American policies is Tom's loss of his right arm after being bitten by the Tiger. This accident expresses his physical and intellectual failure to manage his role in the US war. Musa also failed to achieve respect for himself. Here, the writer holds both sides responsible for mass destruction because of their disability to manage crises. The author was very accurate in highlighting the images that carry a lot of meanings, showing Tom in the image of a physically disabled person, and presenting Musa as a person who failed to achieve self-respect.

Musa, who created beautiful forms in Uday Saddam Hussein's Palace, is the same one who shattered these beautiful things when he facilitated the destruction of Hadia, his sister, at the hands of Uday. If we suggest that the golden toilet seat symbolizes the luxuriousness of palaces from which Iraqis were deprived, the golden gun represents power and tyranny. That is why Musa searched for physical personal gain at the expense of his homeland when he refused to hand Uday the golden gun unless Uday brought him a set of weapons. Musa aims to earn money; he is nothing but a servant of Uday and the Americans. This scene coincides with Majid's scene in the play of *Baghdadi Bath* in this paper. Both characters belong to the occupied country, but work for the invaders and themselves. Musa admits that he became another man as he kills Tom in the last scene.

It is a political play that is interested in analyzing many characters who interact under specific influences. Americans returned home from the Iraq War suffering from post-traumatic symptoms that condemn the violence and indiscriminate killing against Iraqi citizens. Many Americans expressed their rejection of what had happened in Iraq. This emerged when one of the American soldiers' parents raised the American flag inversely when he knew that his son, an army fighter, had tortured and killed Iraqi prisoners unjustly; it is a sign of sadness and disappointment. That war negatively affected the American and Iraqi arenas becoming part of the public psyche of terror, fear, and the collapse of many human values. Also, in addition, the play challenges the stereotypical classification of things and moves to satirical realism where the play returns separate heads from their bodies and displays a Tiger capable of speaking. The theatre hall is transformed into a surgical lounge where the operations take place, and the audience hears the patient's cries and sees his wounds bleed; the spectator then participates in the experiment and feels pain. Thus, the writer manages to present all images that have been affected by ruin and destruction.

The play proved that the Tiger is a world-class symbol for the Iraqi people, the Tiger says: "What if my every meal has been an act of cruelty? What if my very nature is in direct conflict with the moral code of the universe? That would make me a fairly damned individual" (Joseph, 2012, p. 33). Here, the Tiger represents Iraqi resistance to American power and criticizes the absurdity of war. When the invading soldiers transferred the Tiger to a cage at the Baghdad Zoo, the Tiger attacked Tom and bit his hand. Kev shot the tiger, but his soul came out of the body mocking, insulting the soldiers, killing people in the streets, raiding houses, filling up detainees, and destroying the country's historical and urban landmarks. The play condemns the US military occupation of Iraq and secretes two different types of the public: the hapless Iraqi people, and the cooperators who thought they could only get rich at the expense of social and human values. Finally, the play blames the United States for not fulfilling democracy's promise and violating all values. Lucy Komisar concludes: "the play is about war and repression exercised by the strong against the weak" (Komisar, 2011). This confirms the intentions of the power seekers to control and dominate the helpless and innocent victims since they could not fight back and defend themselves.

According to Frederic Wehrey, the critical evaluation of the two pieces is pivotal to show that "the war has created new societal tensions and political dynamics that have arisen inside the Middle Eastern states themselves" (Wehrey et al., 2010, p. 4) especially since the two writers do not follow the traditional dramatic portrayal of war victims. Rather they depend on an associational technique that helps the audience to gradually engage in the action. In that sense, America's image has declined in the eyes of most Americans and they never would have accepted it even in the most difficult wartime circumstances. Expressing his opinion on the US invasion of Iraq, American playwright Sam Shepard, a well-known writer and author of *States of Shock*, which dealt with the First Gulf War in 1990, says that Americans convinced public opinion that the war was a good job and that it was heroic. He confirmed that public opinion was

watching the war on television and was safe. In her book entitled *Anti-war Theatre after Brecht: Dialectical Aesthetics in the Twenty-first Century*, Lara Stevens stressed that:

The selected playwrights and theatremakers share a common and self-conscious interest in how we as Western spectators respond to remote conflict as we watch it being played out on our television sets, in newspapers and online. By staging the real-life spectacle of the 'War on Terror' outside the normative and highly controlled frames of the mainstream media, these plays not only express dissatisfaction with the Western governments that wage war, they also imagine new and alternative possibilities to violent conflict". (2016, p. 2)

In similar lines and in his dramatic show of the theatrical capabilities of *Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo*, Rajiv Joseph agrees with Shepard and Stevens. However, he moves the scenes from the TV room to the ghost-haunted battlefield and the smell of death as reflected in the Tiger scene when he bits off Tom's hand and Kev shoots him with the golden gun. Joseph is a critical writer whose work moves in an unexpected direction to turn the details of everyday life into high-end art images of the realities of the world. Thus, this technique adds to the dependability of the personal experience, increasing one's visibility to the scenes.

### C. Post-War Arab Vision

Arabs' vision of the post-war theatre has changed much since the American war on Iraq. Arab intellectuals know that Iraqis and Americans call for more effort to understand each other. It is a challenge that can be done through the theatre. This paper calls for Arabs to create a cultural and aesthetic theatre that attracts and informs the public who believes that theatre is the true bread of their human lives, and that theatre is nothing but writing about life in a way other than ignorance and illiteracy. "The public reaction to the plays proves the effectiveness of theatre upon the audience; and the public's need of theatre to reflect their reactions towards what has happened in Iraq" (Al Shammari, 2016, p. 223). Arabs prove that non-Arabs must understand that freedom is as valuable as a loaf of bread and food. The characters give a good example of that valuable comment when they search for social, political, and intellectual freedom. Consequently, highlighting the importance of having a theatre as a means of communication that brings together the conflicting parties, helping to replace war with peace is an achievement of this paper. Providing insights into the grim picture behind the war on Iraq is another objective because it reflects the view of Arabs and the Middle East in the post-war era. It is a neutral view that reflects the Arabs/Iraqis who have experienced all the violence. It is with this in mind that the researchers borrow the words of Milan Rai and Noam Chomsky in their book entitled *War Plan Iraq: Ten Reasons Against War on Iraq*, they say "In public, Washington and London insist that the conflict with Iraq is over disarmament. In reality, however, 'disarmament' is a cover for the overthrow of Saddam Hussein. Thus, when Iraq invited the head of UNMOVIC to Baghdad for talks ... the US position was that 'There's no need for discussion'" (Rai & Chomsky, 2002, p. 200). It is a kind of security force abuse and illegal detention, especially after the events of September 11, in which the US government tried to drain Iraq on the pretext of denuclearizing and ending the tyrant's rule, but their lie was debunked. Moreover, the paper manages to establish a humanitarian image of Iraq that may differ from the image given in different media platforms.

Americans must understand the scale of pain and suffering caused by the occupation of Iraq. Iraqis live in a state of alienation and bitterness in their country. They used to have a long history of setbacks and defeats which started with the war with Iran. Wars continue unabated from the occupation of Kuwait to the collapse of the state in 2003 with the advent of the United States Army which appointed ambiguous leaders in government. Unfortunately, Iraq's wealth then has been stolen and become a hostage in the hands of the American invaders. Old and new wars, notably the American war on Iraq, put the Iraqi theatre and culture in the ongoing political impasse people live in today. Successive authorities and governments in Iraq have run wars for thirty years. Arabs have since witnessed a state of cognitive and human blindness followed by a demolition of the Iraqi personality which was once a model of culture, consciousness, dignity, and integrity.

Even so, it does not mean that Baghdad now has no real and young generation who has a tremendous desire for cultural and theatrical advancement. However, this generation is handcuffed and should challenge the power of authority which finds no meaning in the idea of the theatre. This situation has caused enormous damage to various aspects of Iraqi life, and the Occupation Government has placed Iraq in a large prison. Many Gulf Arabs and Arabs, particularly those around Iraq, argue that the 2003 invasion of Iraq, even if the region got rid of Saddam Hussein's madness, allowed Iran to intervene and control the political decision in Mesopotamia. It is sad to say this is the Iraqi reality today, and yet often, Arab dramatists and intellectuals try to light a candle of hope to illuminate some space of the gloomy frightening images that surround Iraqis from all sides. To sum up, Arabs' argument here reflects Iraqis' sense of suffering and the wish to identify themselves as innocent citizens who are forced to live during wartime against their will.

## IV. CONCLUSION

Critical analysis of these two plays reflects their impact in inducing a relative shift in the perspective of the war in general, particularly as they do not depend on the usual melodramatic portrayal of war gains and losses. Rather they rely on a well-balanced representational approach that allows the reader to gradually engage in the war outputs and know the main aims behind the American war. With this in mind, the audience now knows that America uses brute force to gain

Iraq's wealth and land and enhance its future security. This point invites a quick reference to the paper's main idea; namely the rejection of war and welcoming peace for people. The Arab public agrees with the writers that the two plays condemn violence and destruction and that war affects all aspects of life. The two plays are not only a rejection of Iraq's war but also of the idea of war which expresses a scene of doomsday. Hence, Arabs denounce the war and its causes and call for the theatre of peace. They reject political violence and intellectual and physical terrorism. This is not merely the attitude of Arabs but also the attitude of the thinkers to the growing generations to spare them the idea that war is the solution. Since the specter of the Gulf War, the war against Iraq and the Vietnam War are still in the memory of the victims of those wars who have suffered the cruelty and scourge of war, the role of theatrical performance is important in raising awareness through objectively portraying war as a danger that attacks innocent people. The paper also helps open new horizons for reconstructing Iraq and reconciling the nation. So, the dramatization of war through plays began to get the community engaged in creating a new way of thinking in people to wake them up to the reality of the crises they face and improve the lives of vulnerable victims.

As a result, the article traces the anti-war movement and the negative effects of war through a discussion of two respective plays that address the topic by two different playwrights but with one perspective, assuming a more objective approach. The playwrights, one Arab and the other American, are anti-war activists who agree with their vision of war against Iraq. They showed up at a time when a lot of anti-war activists were backtracking in confusion since the capture of Saddam Hussein. The writers express their refusal to use bombs and claim that actions in Iraq should have been controlled and supervised by human rights organizations. Both of them see Americans as outsiders who "should not intervene, because foreign intervention generally makes things worse – but also because it's none of their business" (Dyer, 2008, p. 2).

In this regard, the two authors fill the gap and tell the story from a common essential point of view, incorporating stage directions with verbal and visual images to enhance the overall dramatic portrayal.

The war on Iraq ended and the Western party lost this round despite all its political, economic, and industrial gains in the region. I confirm that America, a great power-today, lost its place in full view of the world as the sole global superpower governing the world. This great force refused to acknowledge the loss and its consequences. According to Gwynne Dyer in his book entitled *After Iraq: Anarchy and Renewal in the Middle East*, "It's hard to know what to call this strange period when the American and British invasion of Iraq has clearly failed, but the men who ordered the invasion have not yet admitted failure and the consequences of their failure have not yet become clear" (p. 69). The two plays are an innovative way of depicting the nightmare experienced by all Iraqis and an attempt to save defenseless civilians who have suffered violence and grinding poverty for far too long and remained powerless. In a word, it is a unique chance that we discuss the culture of peace which denotes the very essence of the efforts to save humanity from the negative effects of war and to promote peace and security. Knowing that each disaster gives practical lessons to save human life, "literature [represented in the two pieces of study] can also be viewed as a guide in helping man kind to deal with disaster in a realistic and rational manner" (Joseph et al., 2016, p. 293). That is why Arabs' postwar vision calls on all international human rights organizations to protect innocent populations so that future generations will live in tranquillity, free from hunger, armed conflict, and disease.

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