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MOURNING AND EXILE IN FEDERICO GARCÍA LORCA AND JAWAD AL-ASSADI'S THEATER

by
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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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This study examines how and why Jawad al-Assadi's theater is similar to but different from Federico García Lorca's, and it introduces al-Assadi to a broader audience on a global scale as it compares his work to that of a well-known Spanish poet and playwright. This thesis is the first comparative study that examines the influence of García Lorca on al-Assadi primarily by focusing on the themes of mourning and exile in both playwrights' written texts. This research finds that the melancholic women in both playwrights' plays repeatedly mourn their dead family members, and unconsciously mourn their own marginalization and exile. In contrast to García Lorca's plays, al-Assadi's protagonists are able to leave together their oppressive house/country (except in *Sonata al-Junun*, whose two main characters die). The theme of mourning is an influence of the milieu in which both playwrights grew up: Catholic Granada and Shi'a Karbala. The cruelty in al-Assadi's plays exceeds that in García Lorca's, and this cruelty, which borders on theatrical, is an allegory for the playwrights' societies, where they lived as marginalized and exiled people.

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Dedication

In loving memory of Dr.Antoine Joseph Khabbaz

For his unconditional love

And for teaching me to 'always' be who I am

I. INTRODUCTION

When I was introduced to Federico García Lorca's *Blood Wedding (Bodas de Sangre)* in the Latin American Modernity seminar given by Robert Myers at AUB in 2017, I recognized thematic aspects that are common to not only Spanish culture but to that of the Arabs. The plot, settings, and language of *Blood Wedding* strongly reflect the connection between Arab and Spanish cultures. On April 15, 2018, this connection between the Arab and Spanish cultures was brought to light in *Latin American, al-Andalus, and the Arab World*, an international conference at the American University of Beirut.[1] In the village of Hammana, as the opening event to this conference and in coordination with AUB's Theater Initiative, CASAR produced an adaptation of García Lorca's *Blood Wedding* in Lebanese colloquial Arabic.[2] This production of *Blood Wedding*, "a site-specific promenade theater experience," also demonstrated "the intimacy and parallelism of Spanish and Arab culture" because of "the ease with which its plot, stage settings, and language were rendered into Lebanese" ("A Site-Specific Theater Experience in Hammana" 2018). This production highlighted, once more, the importance and impact of García Lorca as a playwright on the Arab world.

The intercultural exchange between Spain and the Arab world has been continuous since the establishment of al-Andalus, a part of the Umayyad caliphate in Spain from 711-1492. In Andalusian times, the Arabs contributed to cultural and literary growth in Granada. Spanish authors also influenced Arab writers even long after the fall of Muslim Iberia. One notable Arab

[1] Organized by Robert Myers with the assistance of Amy Zenger, this international conference (April 15, 17, and 18, 2018) was sponsored by the Prince al-Waleed bin Talal bin Abdelaziz al-Saud Center for American Studies and Research (CASAR) with the Ph.D. Program in Theater and Performance at the CUNY Graduate Center and the Martin.

[2] *Blood Wedding* was produced by Robert Myers and the Theater Initiative of AUB, and it was directed and translated by Sahar Assaf.

figure whose work is influenced by Spanish author Federico García Lorca is Jawad al-Assadi. By examining the work of the well-known Iraqi director and playwright, I expand the scholarship surrounding the influence of the poetry of García Lorca on Arab poets.

Most scholarship surrounding Jawad al-Assadi's work deals with the influence of Shakespeare and other great European writers on his theater. In a chapter of her book *Hamlet's Arab Journey*, Margaret Litvin studies how Jawad al-Assadi appropriated and rewrote Shakespeare's *Hamlet* to reflect his disappointment with Saddam Hussein's regime in his play *Forget Hamlet*. Litvin's "global kaleidoscope" theory posits a "model of literary appropriation" in which "each reading and rewriting is created in active dialogue with a diverse array of readings that precede and surround it" (6). Therefore, al-Assadi's *Forget Hamlet* is the product of al-Assadi's different experiences with and exposure to Shakespeare. Litvin acknowledges that the play "evokes Saddam Hussein's Iraq," and examines how it does so by focusing on the changes al-Assadi made to Hamlet and Claudius' characters (209). She points out that al-Assadi's Hamlet is even more passive than his Shakespearean counterpart. In doing so, she argues that al-Assadi emphasizes how powerful and ruthless Claudius has become by making him the central character in *Forget Hamlet*.

In addition to Shakespeare, another writer that Jawad al-Assadi was influenced by was the French playwright Jean Genet. In "Jawad al-Asadi," a chapter in the anthology *Modern and Contemporary Political Theater from the Levant*, Robert Myers and Nada Saab examine *Hammam Baghdadi* by Jawad al-Assadi, focusing on the political aspects of the play. They claim that it "synthesizes dramatic elements from Eastern and Western theatrical traditions, the form of the European Theater of the Absurd (especially Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*), a

traditional Arabic setting (a so-called Turkish bath in Baghdad), and a series of jarring and violent personal experiences linked to the regime of Saddam Husayn and the 2003 American-led invasion and occupation of Iraq" (298). In addition to Beckett, Myers and Saab mention Jean Genet as a source of inspiration. They point to parallels between Genet and al-Assadi, who were both involved in advocating for the Palestinian cause. Also, al-Assadi staged Genet's *Les Bonnes* (*The Maids*) in Beirut as well as in Paris in the 1990s (305). Furthermore, al-Assadi's play *Sonata al-Junun* draws upon *The Maids* because the servants in both plays dream of killing their employer. However, al-Assadi changes Madame's character into that of the Master. He also changes the ending when the two servant sisters die while their Master lives. I will not be looking into the parallels between Genet and al-Assadi's plays. Instead, I look at the parallels between Federico García Lorca's *Blood Wedding* and al-Assadi's *Sonata al- Junun* because the influence of García Lorca on al-Assadi's work has been minimized. By pairing García Lorca with al-Assadi, I demonstrate the presence of a continuous link between the cultures of Spain and the Arab world.

My study is original because it focuses, for the first time, on the influence of García Lorca on al-Assadi's plays. It examines how the theme of mourning in the theater of García Lorca and al-Assadi is, in part, a result of their being exiled and respectively marginalized and penalized (for who they were) in Granada, Spain, and Karbala, Iraq. In her review of al-Assadi's *Nisaa fi al-Harb (Women in War)*, Arwa Itani argues that al-Assadi "always takes us" to García Lorca's world. Itani refers to al-Assadi's fondness for García Lorca's work but does not elaborate on how García Lorca influenced him in more detail (17).[3] My research examines how

[3] In 2011, al-Assadi presented *Women in War* at Babel Theater in Beirut.

García Lorca's tragedies, mainly *Blood Wedding* and *The House of Bernarda Alba*, influenced al-Assadi's theater, especially *Nisaa al-Saxophone (Saxophone Women), Hammam Baghdadi (Baghdadi Bath), Nisaa al-Harb (Women of War),* and *Sonata al-Junun (Sonata of Madness).*[4] However, before delving deeper into my research, it is important that I give a brief biography of al-Assadi.

Al-Assadi was born in 1947 in Abbasiyya, Karbala, to a poor Shi'a family.[5] At a young age, his maternal uncle, Khudayr, introduced him to Spanish literature in general and García Lorca's works and political views in particular. In 1971, al-Assadi moved to Baghdad, joining Baghdad's Theater Academy. In 1976, two years after his graduation, he left for Sofia, Bulgaria, to pursue a Ph.D.in Theater Directing. After the murder of his brother Abdallah in 1983, his family and friends advised him not to return to Iraq. After completing his Ph.D., he moved to Damascus and worked with the Palestinian Theater and al-Masrah al-Ummali (Theater of the Working Class). In 2004, after the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime, al-Assadi returned to Iraq and established the Gilgamesh Art Center, but he had to leave Iraq in that same year due to almost nonstop hostilities (Assaf 52-3). Al-Assadi went to Lebanon and founded Babel Theater, which also did not survive because of the political and economic situation there. He left for

[4] Al-Assadi is notorious for rewriting his own work. He often changes the titles of his plays and the name, role, and dialogue of his characters to suit his audience. *Women of War* (2003) and *Women in War* (2011) are mostly the same play, but al-Assadi changed the women's nationality from Iraqi in *Women of War* to Syrian in *Women in War* after the start of the Syrian uprising. For more on this play, see Appendix.

[5] Karbala's religious significance is due to the Battle of Karbala (680 CE), in which al-Hussein ibn Ali, the Shi'a leader and grandson of the Prophet Mohammad, and his small party were massacred by the Umayyad Caliph Yazid's much larger force. Hussein's tomb, in Karbala, is one of the most important Shi'a shrines and pilgrimage sites, as the editors of Encyclopedia Britannica writes. For more on this, check https://www.britannica.com/editor/The-Editors-of-Encyclopaedia-Britannica/4419.

Algeria and Morocco but now lives once more in Iraq. While in exile, al-Assadi staged García Lorca's *Mariana Pineda, Yerma,* and *The House of Bernarda Alba.*

Reading Yair Huri's article "In Your Name this Death is Holy": Federico García Lorca in the Works of Modern Arab Poets" inspired me to examine how and why García Lorca's rural tragedies influenced al-Assadi's own dramas after I noticed al-Assadi's allusions to García Lorca's *The House of Bernarda Alba* and *Blood Wedding* in his plays *Nisaa al-Harb* and *Sonata al-Junun*. I saw that the theme of mourning features heavily in both playwrights' theaters, in large part, because of the influence of Ashoura in Karbala, and the Holy Week in Granada. Thus, this comparative study will discuss thematic and formal elements that are common to both García Lorca and al-Assadi's tragedies. To do so, I explore how the theme of mourning and its subthemes manifest themselves in García Lorca's plays and al-Assadi's. What are the differences between them?

García Lorca and Arab Poets

García Lorca (1898-1936) was a Spanish poet, musician, painter, lecturer, and playwright from the "colorful and vibrant south" of Spain (Edwards 1). He was the son of a wealthy, hardworking farmer, who owned large farms in Fuente Pakiros, Granada.[6] In 1920, García Lorca met and became friends with the surrealist artists, Salvador Dali and Luis Buñuel, during his stay in Madrid. While he was there, García Lorca was exposed to new artistic movements and ideas, and Madrid's famous theatres and cinemas stimulated his creative imagination (Edwards 3).

[6] Granada was the last Islamic Arab kingdom in al-Andalus to surrender during the reconquering war (*Reconquista*) that was led by King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella.

However, Dali and Buñuel's mutual attraction to surrealism led them to dismiss García Lorca's "too traditional" work and to exclude him from their friendship (4). Depressed by this and by other aspects of his life, García Lorca left Spain for a while. Between 1929 and 1930, he spent nine months in New York and three months in Cuba (4). In 1932, he founded and became the artistic director of La Barraca, a touring theater company made up of university students supported by the government of the Second Republic (137). La Barraca had a significant effect on García Lorca's writing. He wrote the rural trilogy *Blood Wedding* (1933), *Yerma* (1934), and *The House of Bernarda Alba* (1936) while being its artistic director.

In the article, "In Your Name this Death is Holy: Federico García Lorca in the works of Modern Arab Poets," Yair Huri examines the impact of Federico García Lorca's poetry on the 'leftist' Arab poets between the 1950s and the 1960s after the Arab defeat in 1948. Badr Shakir al-Sayyab, Mahmud Darwish, Abd al-Wahhab Bayyati, and Salah Abd al-Sabur were influenced by the imagery and themes of García Lorca's work, and they dedicated poems to him, a martyr who became an icon. The speaker in al-Sayyab's poem "García Lorca" refers to motifs in García Lorca's work like the olive tree and the moon as symbols of Spain and death (Huri 4-5). Also, the speaker in Darwish's poem "Lorca" and Abd al-Sabur's poem "Al-Mawt fi Gharnata (Death in Granada)" perceives García Lorca as a sacred, loved, and mythical figure (6). Huri examines where Granada is pervasive in García Lorca's work. One can see that the setting of García Lorca's play *Dona Rosita the Spinster*, which is set in Granada, points to the effect of the Andalusian city on his poetry and theater (2). Like Huri, I will examine the impact of Granada on García Lorca's work. However, I will focus on how the influence of the Holy Week is manifested in García Lorca's plays *Blood Wedding* and *The House of Bernarda Alba*. Adding to

Huri's scholarship, I will study the impact of García Lorca as a playwright on the Iraqi playwright Jawad al-Assadi, while I explore how the theme of mourning and its subthemes of death and exile are manifested in García Lorca and al-Assadi's theater.

Like Huri, in her article "Federico García Lorca and Salah Abd al-Sabur as Composers of Modern Ballads," Aida Azouqa looks at how García Lorca influenced Salah Abd al-Sabur, another Arab poet of the 1950s. She argues that García Lorca's poetry collection *Gypsy Ballads* influenced Abd al-Sabur's poetry collection *Al-Nas fi Baladi(People in My Country)* and conducts a comparison between the two poets. While lamentations are present in both poetry collections, Abd al-Sabur mixed lamentations with the *Mawwal*, a traditional, popular, and sentimental Egyptian ballad which is characterized by a steady beat. Azouqa contends that Abd al-Sabur used the Egyptian mawwal, which concentrates on the tragedy of the "folk hero," to address the distress of the Arabs at the time (195). Like Azouqa, I examine the influence of García Lorca on Jawad al-Assadi. Unlike Azouqa, I focus on the effect of García Lorca as a playwright (rather than a poet) on the theater of al-Assadi, particularly the similar and dissimilar ways in which mourning and exile are manifested in the theater of these two playwrights.

Mourning

Much of al-Assadi's theater is concerned with the major theme of mourning, as well as its related themes of melancholy, violence, and exile. The rituals of Ashoura in Karbala, and the murders of his family members dramatically influenced al-Assadi's theater. Ashoura, which means the tenth day, commemorates the martyrdom of Imam al-Hussein in Karbala. Ashoura's rituals seem strictly religious, but, according to al-Assadi, they were also protests against Saddam Hussein's

regime, and instilled the love of theater in him. He not only mourned al-Hussein but also had a more personal reason to mourn an immediate family member when in 1983, al-Assadi's brother, Abdallah, was killed after being kidnapped and imprisoned for six months in al-Hakmiyya prison because he did not enlist in Saddam Hussein's army at the allotted time.[7] Another tragedy struck when al-Assadi's other brother Hussein and his nephew, Irtiqa, who was in his teens, were also kidnapped while they were driving a bus. Both of them were later murdered and "thrown into a large hole with many other dead bodies" (qtd in Assaf 54). The traumatic deaths of al-Assadi's family members were major events that influenced his theater as most of his plays deal with the dangers of an ongoing cycle of violence in which his characters die terrible, but easily preventable deaths. The characters who are left alive then mourn the loss of their loved ones.

In Freud's article "Mourning and Melancholia," mourning means both the feeling of grief and its external manifestation, while melancholy "takes on various clinical forms" (243). The correlation of melancholy and mourning appears to be justified by the fact that in some people with a pathological disposition, the same influences cause melancholy instead of mourning. Freud defines mourning as "the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one's country, liberty, and ideal, and so on" (243). Likewise, melancholy is" a reaction to the real loss of a loved-object," but unlike mourning, the melancholic blames himself/herself for the loss of the "loved-object," i.e., that "he [s/he] has willed it" (250-51). Freud argues that mourning, unlike melancholy, is not pathological, although mourning involves dire departures from "the normal attitude to life" (243). Accordingly, any attempt to stop mourning or to treat it is dangerous since mourning is

[7] Rebecca Joubin, Interview 2005; Gisele Khoury, interview 2017, and Jawad al-Assadi, personal interview 2019.

going to be overcome after a time, and since at the completion of the work of mourning, the ego of the mourner becomes "free and uninhibited again" (244-5). Melancholy, like mourning, needs time to be overcome (252). I use "Mourning and Melancholia" as I examine how the theme of mourning and melancholy is manifested in García Lorca's *Blood Wedding* and *The House of Bernarda Alba* and al-Assadi's *Hammam Baghdadi* and *Sonata al-Junun*. How does the main character as an individual show the symptoms of mourning and melancholy that Freud describes? Freud's approach offers an explanation for where the mania and the intense fear of the characters stem from. The characters in both García Lorca and al-Assadi's plays do not have the freedom nor the space to grieve properly, thus their ego becomes damaged and consumed with the interrupted process of mourning. Freud focuses on the psychological manifestation of mourning and melancholy; however, in my analysis, I focus on the general context of each play: what was the cultural context when García Lorca and al-Assadi wrote and set the plays? In *Sonata al-Junun* and *Hammam Baghdadi*, how is mourning manifested differently, and how is the theme affected by playwrights' experiences of the rituals of Ashoura in Karbala, and the Holy Week in Granada?

Violence

When discussing the theme of violence in García Lorca's theater, it is important to look at the historical context in which his plays were written. In "Social War Begins, 1931-1933," a chapter of *Spanish Holocaust: Inquisition and Extermination in Twentieth-Century Spain*, Paul Preston argues that extreme atrocities towards the laborers in the southern Spanish countryside were one cause of the Civil War that broke out in 1936. Rural upper classes believed that poor workers were an "inferior species" (3). And although the decree of 1 July 1931 enacted an eight-hour day,

workers in agriculture often worked sixteen hours per day and were paid "starvation wages," while thousands of other workers were unemployed (11). Preston's chapter provides historical context for García Lorca's *Blood Wedding* and *The House of Bernarda Alba,* which portray the life-threatening financial problems of workers in the Spanish countryside, in contrast to the upper-class landowners who lived lavishly. For example, while the Wife of the poor Leonardo Felix in *Blood Wedding* cannot afford to buy the clothes her baby needs, the Mother of the wealthy Bridegroom wears a very expensive "lace mantilla" and the Bridegroom wears a "large" gold chain when they enter the Bride's house. Furthermore, in the opening scene of *The House of Bernarda Alba,* the servant who scrubs Bernarda Alba's floors seems to be starving. She steals food while Bernarda Alba's dead husband has been put to rest in a coffin adorned with gold.

The poverty he witnessed on his father's farm was not the only thing that made its way into García Lorca's plays, his homosexuality also found a way in. In *Lorca, Buñuel, Dali: Forbidden Pleasure and Connected Lives,* Gwynne Edwards looks at how the highly traditional Catholic society in which García Lorca grew up influenced his sexuality and how he had to live a crisis of conscience as he had to hide his homosexuality from his family and friends. Edwards argues that he channeled his sexual frustration by depicting passionate relationships between men and women in his plays. His research also provides the historical-political background for my analysis of the strained relationship between the main characters of García Lorca's plays. The intense division and enmity between the family members of Bernarda Alba and her discrimination against the poor workers and people of her community allude to the political turmoil in Spain. Between 1932 and 1933, "riots and strikes frequently paralyzed the country, and peasant workers grew more and more dissatisfied with promises of land reform that never

materialized" (144). Because of his leftist views, García Lorca empathized with the dissatisfied peasant workers whom he frequently depicts and gives central roles in his theater.

Maria Delgado suggests, in her book, *Federico García Lorca*, that García Lorca's empathy also extends to the predicaments of the marginalized women and poor workers in a Spanish nation "crippled by social inequalities and fierce gender policing" (3). Delgado examines the theatrical performances of García Lorca's rural trilogy (among other plays), *Blood Wedding*, *Yerma*, and *The House of Bernarda Alba.* She links the dark and enclosed world of *The House of Bernarda Alba* to the intense political unrest when García Lorca wrote his play in Madrid two months before his death at the beginning of the Civil War in 1936. She also contends that García Lorca intended for his play to function as a statement on tyranny at a time when Spain was facing "the distinct possibility of a military coup and a return to dictatorship" (105). Bernarda Alba's dictatorial attitude towards her daughters reflects the tyranny under Francisco Franco and is more "aligned to the patriarchal order, [and Bernarda] has been conceived by directors as a male figure" (105).[8] Further, García Lorca positioned the play as a domestic environment marked by "the internal strife and jealous rivalries caused by enforced imprisonment" of the female characters (37-8). Bernarda Alba's world/house is an enclosed one: "The outside world is perceived through shutters and upstairs windows or as sounds in the distance," (105) and the house is "rarely described as a home, rather a convent or fortress where the daughters are sealed as if in a coffin" (107). Finally, family "functions as a disciplinary institution," where the culture of surveillance in the house affects almost all of the characters and where Bernarda Alba's daughters derive "some perverse sense of comfort in the known routine

[8] In 2009, Lina Abyad translated García Lorca's *The House of Bernarda Alba* into colloquial Lebanese Arabic and directed it, assigning the role of Bernarda Alba to Lebanese actor, Ziyad Ghawi. For more on this see Appendix

of tyranny. They may talk about being free and yet continually prevent each other from escaping the house" (107). Delgado's research provides additional historical context for my study and highlights the enclosed world of the female characters of García Lorca's plays in relation to the political turmoil of the playwright's society. However, while Delgado analyzes performances of García Lorca's *Blood Wedding* and *The House of Bernarda Alba,* I look at the written texts of those two plays. I then pair García Lorca and al-Assadi's plays and examine how the enclosed world in which the female characters live is a reflection of both playwrights' marginalization and exile to determine García Lorca's influence on al-Assadi's theater.

The theme of violence in Jawad al-Assadi's theater is shaped by his experience as a Shi'a living inside and later outside of Baathist Iraq. In the introduction to his book *Republic of Fear,* published initially under the pseudonym Samir al-Khalil, Kanan Makiya argues that the Ba'th legitimized their rule by elevating "the politics of fear into an art form" that made "large numbers of people complicit in the violence of the regime" (xi). As for the punishment, "everything was secret," from the arrest to the charges: "if there was a corpse, bearing in its marks that last record of the whole affair, even it was returned to the family in a sealed box" (xiv). Makiya concentrates on violence and fear, two characteristics of Saddam Hussein's regime. When examining brutality, Makiya describes how commonplace rape was and how rape rooms were used in prisons to humiliate prisoners and their families. I use this source to contextualize Mariam's rape in al-Assadi's *Nisaa al-Harb* for ten days by ten men. I also use it to analyze the fearfulness of the main characters in al-Assadi's *Sonata al-Junun* and *Hammam Baghdadi* since intense cruelty "can turn those who inflict it or who are subjected to it in on themselves, or it can help them reach outward in the urge to remake and affirm life" (xxvii).

The violence both playwrights experienced in their lives permeated into their theater. In "The Theater and Cruelty," a chapter of *The Theater and Its Double,* Antonin Artaud argues against the theater that "limits itself to showing us intimate scenes from the lives of a few puppets" (84). For theater to be a remedy for "the deterioration which [people's] sensibility has reached," people need "above all a theater that wakes [them] up: nerves and heart" (84). It should reflect the pain of people and confront the audience with the cruel side of their lives. Artaud perceives cruelty "in the sense of an appetite for life, a cosmic rigor and implacable necessity, in the gnostic sense of a living whirlwind that devours the darkness" (102). García Lorca and al-Assadi were both influenced by Artaud's theater because their plays unsettle the audience and break the barrier between actor and spectator so that the audience feels that it is in the middle of all of the action. The audience is forced to think about what is happening in front of them, which is what Artaud called for in his theater. I contend that the plots of their plays seem to be variations of the real cruelty witnessed by the two playwrights.

Some scholars have researched the link between García Lorca's theater and Artaud's Theater of Cruelty. In his book, *García Lorca at the Edge of Surrealism: The Aesthetics of Anguish,* David F. Richter examines how García Lorca's plays were surrealist in that they examined, not idealistic, but rather bleak representations of life. When discussing how García Lorca's theater is influenced by that of Artaud, who encouraged a theater based on truth, Richter posits that García Lorca, following Artaudian principles, creates characters that suffer and exist in a state of torment, "based on fully liberated expression" (142). These characters, who feel oppressed by a dictatorial figure (or difficult circumstances), yearn to be free so that they can be themselves. García Lorca's theater portrays the poverty and class conflict between landowners

and farmhands before the Spanish Civil War and contains extremely violent moments that shock the audience. One can find examples of this in García Lorca's *Blood Wedding*. Leonardo Felix yearns for the Bride, but he cannot marry her because he is poor. When he finally expresses that desire to the Bride and they run away together, he is killed. Likewise, al-Assadi's theater also immerses the audience in the action of the play. In al-Assadi's *Sonata al-Junun,* two servant sisters suffer miserably under the Master's control and long to be free of him, which ultimately leads to their deaths. Furthermore, the Master, an allusion to Saddam Hussein, kills his audience, an event that alludes to Saddam Hussein's Purge of 1979. At that moment, al-Assadi involves the audience in the Master's crime, eliminating the need for the stage.

When discussing al-Assadi's plays, it is important to note how the rise of Saddam Hussein and the events that followed it influenced his theater. Like Makiya's *Republic of Fear*, "Iraq's 1979 Fascist Coup," a documentary video narrated by Christopher Hitchens, portrays the extreme violence present in Saddam Hussein's regime. The video describes the events of the political purge of 1979, which occurred immediately after Saddam Hussein became the president of Iraq to consolidate his power. This video provides me with the historical context for the regime's cruelty, which clearly corresponds to the brutality of the Master/Leader in al-Assadi's *Sonata al-Junun* and the colonel in *Hammam Baghdadi*. This violent regime caused al-Assadi to fear for his life and leave Iraq, especially after his brother Abdallah was killed.

Exile

Mourning in these plays appears as a result of García Lorca and al-Assadi's status as marginals and exiles. García Lorca's homosexuality in heteronormative Granada, Spain, played a key role in his marginalization and exile, causing him to identify with women and poor workers of rural

Spain. Likewise, al-Assadi, the son of a poor Shia family, had to leave Iraq after Saddam Hussein, a Sunni, persecuted and killed a large number of Shi'as to maintain his power after he became the president of Iraq in 1979. Almost all of al-Assadi's plays revolve around the subtheme of exile. For example, *Nisaa al-Harb* is a play about three Arab women living as refugees in Germany. The women share stories of their homeland with one another, but their status as refugees does not make them allies, rather it divides them. Ironically, al-Assadi staged this play about exile in Baghdad in 2004 after he returned to Iraq.[9]

In his essay "Reflection on Exile," Edward Said defines exile and examines its effect on exiled authors and their works. Exile is "life led outside habitual order. It is nomadic, decentered, contrapuntal; but no sooner does one get accustomed to it than its unsettling force erupts anew" (149). This unsettling force affects the art of exiles, in that "composure and serenity are the last things" associated with their work (145). In addition, the exile uses willfulness, overstatement, and exaggeration as methods for convincing the world to accept his vision (145). The exiles compensate for their "disorienting loss by creating a new world to rule" (144). Hence, so many exiles are novelists, political activists, chess players, and intellectuals, since each of these occupations entails a slight investment in objects while "plac[ing] a great premium on mobility and skills" (144). Both García Lorca and al-Assadi experienced exile and that is manifested in the intense frustration, madness, instability, and agitation of their protagonists.

In his book *Politics and Palestinian Literature in Exile*, Joseph Farag examines the Palestinian short story during the *Nakba* of 1948 (Arabic for "disaster"), *Naksa* of 1967 (Arabic for "setback"), and *Intifada* of 1987 (Arabic for "shaking off"). Farag's examination reveals the

[9] For more on *Nisaa al-Harb*, see Appendix.

"interplay between the Palestinian literary-artistic production and the political-historical contexts from which it emerges, to which it responds, and into which it intervenes" (17). In Chapter Three "Women, Exile and the Intifada in Liana Badr's *Jahim Dhahabi*," Farag argues that the Intifada's "conspicuous absence" in Badr's *Jahim Dhahabi (A Golden Hell)* indicates the "predicament of exile as Badr's almost exclusively female protagonists struggle to cope with successive displacements, able to view at a distance the momentous events occurring in their Palestinian homeland" (171). Unlike Edward Said, who exclusively studied male intellectuals in exile, Badr is concerned with "depicting the condition of women in exile, decentering the discourse of exile as primarily a masculine dilemma and considering the implications of exile upon women" (184). Both García Lorca and al-Assadi's plays center around the theme of women in exile. However, in García Lorca's work, women are confined to their homes and thus "exiled" from the public sphere. Farag's inclusion of women in the study of the literature of exile gives my research a nuanced perspective to study the exile of women in the plays of García Lorca and al-Assadi.

Scholars have already written about the theme of exile in relation to al-Assadi's theater. In her thesis, "When Theater Becomes Home: The Exile and Theatre of The Iraqi Playwright Jawad al-Assadi," Sahar Assaf discusses the double exile and the double loss of al-Assadi when he left Iraq. During the first exile, which lasted twenty-eight years, Assaf argues, he lost his homeland, but after he returned to a ruined Iraq in 2004, "his idea of home" was destroyed (54). Assaf also contends that *Hammam Baghdadi* is "essentially a play about exile" (67). Like Assaf, I argue that the bathhouse in *Hammam Baghdadi* is a metaphor for a filthy, dangerous prison that represents the state of Iraq under the American-led occupation. Furthermore, the refugees' house

in *Nisaa al-Harb* is a momentary prison for the three Iraqi female refugees. Both the bathhouse and the refugees' home are spaces within the indoor theater that symbolize the state of exclusion from their societies. I expand upon Assaf's research because I look, in addition to the theme of exile, at the themes of mourning and violence in al-Assadi's work. I examine the presence of these themes in al-Assadi's plays in comparison to García Lorca's to determine how García Lorca influenced al-Assadi's dramaturgy.

Methodology

This study will examine how García Lorca influenced the dramatist Jawad al-Assadi. My research aims to explore the interrelation between García Lorca's theater and that of al-Assadi's by addressing the following research questions: How are al-Assadi's plays in dialogue with (as well as inspired by) García Lorca's? How did the milieu in which the playwrights grew up and were later exiled from impact their theaters? How do the themes of mourning, violence, and exile manifest themselves in García Lorca's plays and al-Assadi's? Are there moments in al-Assadi's plays that evoke similar moments in García Lorca's? Are there moments that differ in each playwright's work? To answer these questions, I will first provide an overview of García Lorca's impact on al-Assadi and pair al-Assadi's plays with Lorca's. I pair García Lorca's *The House of Bernarda Alba* to al-Assadi's *Nisaa al-Saxophone* because al-Assadi's play is an adaptation of it. I also pair *The House of Bernarda Alba* with al-Assadi's *Hammam Baghdadi* and *Nisaa al-Harb* because, in all of these plays, the house/hammam separates the characters from the outside world. I also briefly mention García Lorca's *Yerma* in relation to *Nisaa al-Harb* because both women lament the loss of a child, and motherhood is linked to mourning. Lastly, I also pair García Lorca's *Blood Wedding* and al-Assadi's *Sonata al-Junun* because the main characters die

violent deaths after a wedding. In both plays, I look at the thematic convergences between them in more detail by engaging in close reading, analyzing the theme of mourning and its subthemes of violence and exile, and looking at moments in al-Assadi's theater that echo those in García Lorca's.

To provide theoretical background for the comparative nature of my study, I will apply Margaret Litvin's theory of the "global kaleidoscope" to al-Assadi's works, considering García Lorca's effect on him because I am writing about the Arab reception of a foreign author's work. Litvin, in her book *Hamlet's Arab Journey,* argues that Arab audiences came to know Shakespeare via "a kaleidoscopic array of performances, texts, and criticism from many directions" other than the "original" British source culture (2). Her approach provides a "set of questions" that looks at the "appropriator's political, artistic, and philosophical situation and concerns" (7). Like Litvin, I will examine how al-Assadi was influenced by a Western author and how he appropriated or adapted his work. I highlight al-Assadi's "political" and "artistic concerns" as I study the interplay of the themes and subthemes of mourning in his theater. When examining the theme of mourning, I will use Freud's essay "Mourning and Melancholia" to analyze the characters' mental states. When studying extremely violent moments in both playwrights' plays, I use Antonin Artaud's theory of the "Theater of Cruelty" that employs cruelty as the necessary element in theater. According to Artaud, cruelty is an integral part of life and theater must portray this reality. Theater should shock its audience, breaking the fourth wall between the actors and spectators, when depicting the truth of this world.

Moreover, I use secondary sources such as newspaper reviews of al-Assadi's plays to analyze them. I focus on reviews of *Nisaa al-Saxophone* because I did not have access to the

written text of the play. Over the phone, I interviewed a few of the cast members of *Nisaa al-Saxophone:* Yvonne al-Hashem, Jahida Wihbe, and Rif'at Torbey to learn more about the play. They provided me with details about Bernarda's, Magdalena's, and Adela's characters. I also personally met with Torbey to discuss the aims of al-Assadi's theater. I interviewed Jawad al-Assadi on the phone several times for my research. I also met with him in person to better understand how Karbala and exile influenced his theater.

Structure of the Present Study

In the second chapter, I examine the importance of García Lorca as a poet in the Arab world. I also discuss the influence of García Lorca as a playwright on al-Assadi while surveying al-Assadi's staging of García Lorca's *Mariana Pineda* and his adaptation of *The House of Bernarda Alba* into *Nisaa al-Saxophone (Saxophone Women).* Finally, I study García Lorca's impact on al-Assadi's *Hammam Baghdadi (Baghdadi Bath)* and *Nisaa al-Harb (Women of War)* while exploring the theme of mourning and its subthemes, violence, and exile, in both García Lorca and al-Assadi's plays. In the third chapter, I look at how the theme of mourning in García Lorca's *Blood Wedding* and al-Assadi's *Sonata al-Junun (Sonata of Madness)* appears because of the milieu in which the two playwrights grew up. I focus on three main aspects: first, the cultural impact of Granada's Holy Week rituals and Karbala's Ashoura on each author; second, the playwrights' position as minorities in their tyrannical societies (García Lorca being a homosexual and al-Assadi being a Shi'a Muslim); third, the playwrights' status as exiles and how the female characters' confinement in both plays alludes to a state of displacement. Overall, the second and third chapter look at the presence of the larger theme of mourning and its subthemes in al-Assadi's work focusing on moments that echo those in García Lorca's theater.

II. LOOKING AT JAWAD AL-ASSADI'S THEATER THROUGH THE PRISM OF FEDERICO GARCÍA LORCA

> "I do not know why my whole body trembles during my rehearsals of Lorca's plays: is it because his paradise had died like our paradise or is it because we are alike in making a big funeral?"[10]
>
> Jawad al-Assadi

Introduction

Federico García Lorca inspired and influenced contemporary Arab poets who after al-Nakba dedicated poems to García Lorca and alluded to imagery and themes present in his work. Similarly, García Lorca, as a playwright, influenced Jawad al-Assadi, who adapted García Lorca's *The House of Bernarda Alba (La Casa de Bernarda Alba)* into *Nisaa al-Saxophone (Saxophone Women)*. Al-Assadi also staged García Lorca's *Mariana Pineda* and *Yerma.*

In this chapter, I argue that García Lorca's influence on al-Assadi is clear when looking at the themes of mourning, death, and exile while I compare García Lorca's *The House of Bernarda Alba* to al-Assadi's *Nisaa al-Saxophone (Saxophone Women)*, *Hammam Baghdadi (Baghdadi Bath), and Nisaa al-Harb (Women of War).* First, I will briefly discuss García Lorca's influence on contemporary Arab poets. Then, I will examine García Lorca's influence on al-Assadi's dramatic works. To further explore this intertextuality, I pose questions such as: how are al-Assadi's *Nisaa al-Saxophone*, *Hammam Baghdadi*, and *Nisaa al-Harb* similar and dissimilar

[10] *Masrah al-Nour al-Morr [Theater of Bitter Light], 46.* Translation from Arabic into English is mine unless otherwise stated.

to García Lorca's *The House of Bernarda Alba* and *Yerma* with regards to the theme of mourning and its subthemes of violence, death, and exile? How do al-Assadi's plays, especially when looking at the characters and final scenes, differ from García Lorca's? And how did exile and the death of al-Assadi's brother, Abdallah, affect al-Assadi's plays?

Federico García Lorca and Arab Poetry

The intercultural link between the literature and art of al-Andalus and those of the Arab world is difficult to ignore.[11] This intercultural exchange is most evident in Arab poetry as well as in the Arab theater. For example, both Arab and Spanish Andalusian poetry contain symbolic motifs such as blood, trees, flowers, and land. Federico García Lorca admired Moorish Granada, which formed the basis for García Lorca's fondness of elements of Arabic culture that are still present in the architecture of al-Hambra Palace. García Lorca believed that "the sensuous and mystical Arab ethos" was repressed by "the puritanical strictures of triumphant Catholicism" (Huri 2). Reflecting on the fall of the Moorish Granada to Catholic Ferdinand and Isabella in 1492, García Lorca writes, "It was a disastrous event, although they teach the contrary in school. An admirable brand of civilization, of poetry, of architecture, and delicacy unique in the world- all were lost to be replaced by a poor, craven town, a wasteland now dominated by the worst bourgeoisie in Spain" (qtd. in Huri 4).

Since the 1950s, Arab poets have actively engaged with García Lorca's poetry and plays; therefore, García Lorca was a major influence on them and their literary works. They knew that

[11] Al-Andalus is an Arabic name for areas of the Iberian Peninsula that were under the Muslim rule from the early eighth century to the fall of the Granada Kingdom in 1942 and the expulsion of Jews and Muslims from Spain during and after the Christian conquest, *la Reconquista*, launched by King Ferdinand II and Queen Isabella I. For more on this, refer to Jonathan Holt Shannon, *Performing al-Andalus: Music and Nostalgia across the Mediterranean*, Chapter One: "In the Shadow of Ziriab: Narratives of al-Andalus and Andalusian Music," pp.23-68.

García Lorca considered himself "an Andalusian poet par excellence, whose poetry bears strong affinities to classic Andalusian Arabic poetry" (Huri 1). Furthermore, García Lorca's awareness and criticism of social and political injustice—often expressed in his work— most likely led to his assassination by the fascist squads in 1936 (1). García Lorca was seen as a hero in the eyes of leftist Arab poets because he did not side with any political party and because he paid "the ultimate personal sacrifice for his socialist and liberal views" (2).

The imagery and themes present in García Lorca's work tremendously influenced leftist modern Arab poets between the 1950s and 1960s. Examples of such poets are Badr Shakir al-Sayyab (1926-1964), Mahmud Darwish (1941-2008), and Salah Abd al-Sabur (1931-1981) (Huri 1). Al-Sayyab wrote a poem entitled "García Lorca," in which the speaker refers to specific motifs in García Lorca's poetry, including the moon as a symbol of death and the olive tree as a symbol of Spain (Huri 4-5). In 1964, Darwish wrote a poem entitled "Lorca," which opens with the speaker's perception of García Lorca as a sacred and beloved figure. The speaker addresses Lorca with familiarity when he says, "O Lorca." (*Diwan Mahmoud Darwish* 66). The speaker describes Lorca as a "bloody blossom" and refers to his hands, as a place in which the "sun dwells/and a cross is dressed in the fire of a poem" (66). Lorca, the martyr, becomes an icon. Furthermore, al-Sabur's poem "Lorca" portrays the image of the poet as "a heart-glowing mythical figure, who wanders the earth and feeds the hungry and the poor children amongst his people. These poor children live near the fountain in the town square" (qtd. in Huri 6).

Huri is not the only scholar who examines the influence of García Lorca on the Arab poets of the 1950s. In her article, "Federico García Lorca and Salah Abd al-Sabur as Composers of Modern Ballads," Aida Azouqa argues that García Lorca's poetry collection *Gypsy Ballads*

influenced the Arab poet and playwright Salah Abd al-Sabur's poetry collection *al-Nas fi Biladi* (*People in My Country)* (192). One of the examples Azouqa gives is the presence of lamentations in both García Lorca and Abd al-Sabur's poetry. Abd al-Sabur blended lamentations with "elements from the Egyptian popular ballads," known as *the mawwal* (197). Moreover, he used the popular ballad, which addresses the tragedy of the "folk hero" to tackle the suffering of the Arabs at the time (195). García Lorca also wrote about sociopolitical issues in his own ballads, in which the gypsies, or Roma people, suffered discrimination at the hands of the Spaniards.

In addition, García Lorca inspired many 20th century Arab playwrights because he wrote about themes such as imprisonment, abuse of power and resistance, martyrdom, and mourning – themes that became even more relevant after the rise of Arab dictators such as Saddam Hussein, Hafiz al-Assad, Hosni Mubarak, and Muammar al-Qadhafi. One playwright who has been especially influenced by García Lorca's poetry and plays is Jawad al-Assadi.

Introduced to García Lorca's work at a very early age, al-Assadi credits García Lorca as a major influence on his dramaturgy. He was so smitten by García Lorca's work that he repeatedly staged and adapted several plays by García Lorca over the years. In 1985, al-Assadi staged *Yerma* at the Institution of Performance in Damascus and *Mariana Pineda* on al-Masrah al-Ummali (The Working Class Theater) in Homs, Syria. He also rewrote *The House of Bernarda Alba* into *Nisaa al-Saxophone (Saxophone Women)* in 2007 to inaugurate Masrah Babel (Babel Theater), which he founded in Beirut. Like García Lorca's theater, al-Assadi's addresses the central theme of mourning as well as its subthemes of melancholy, mourning rituals, death, and exile.

Al-Assadi's Directorial Staging of García Lorca

In 1985, al-Assadi staged *Mariana Penida* at the Theater of Workers [Al-Masrah al-Ummali] in Damascus. He chose *Mariana Penida* because of its "poetic energy that is hurled at characters who are quenched by hymns of Granada, hymns that commend pain as the common denominator among the Spanish people who have been turned into a bleeding bull under the throes of dictatorship" (Al-Assadi, "Bitter Light" 44). In addition, *Mariana Penida* "stirred a tsunami of mourning, silence, and internal screaming in him," especially because he read it a year after the killing of his brother, Abdallah, who was executed at the hands of Saddam Hussein's soldiers for failing to enlist in military service (43). The play opens with a description of the melancholic atmosphere of Granada, a melancholy that "makes even the rocks/Cry, as they see Mariana Penida/ Die on the guillotine because/She does not confess [the names of the revolutionaries nor the name of her sweetheart, Pedro]" (qtd. in al-Assadi, "Bitter Light" 43). Seeking freedom, Mariana embroiders the banner of the revolution, while her sweetheart, Pedro, has been pursued by soldiers in the streets of Granada (43). In the final scene, Mariana, when escorted to be executed, pronounces that a human is a prisoner who cannot be free, and she commands those who accompany her to stop weeping (47). *Mariana Penida's* themes of melancholy, death, and violence are also present in García Lorca's *Yerma,* a student graduation project which al-Assadi directed at the Theatrical Institute in Damascus, Syria in 1983.

Al-Assadi's Adaptation of García Lorca's *The House of Bernarda Alba*

Before I begin my analysis, it is important to note that I could not find the written text of al-Assadi's *Nisaa al-Saxophone*; therefore, I built my comparative analysis on reviews of the play and on interviews I conducted with al-Assadi and members of the cast of the play. Al-Assadi rewrote *The House of Bernarda Alb*a into *Nisaa al-Saxophone,* and he directed it to inaugurate

his Babel Theater in Beirut, in December 2007. Before watching *Nisaa al Saxophone*, the audience walked through an exhibit that contained twelve paintings by the Iraqi artist Jabr Alwan, who was inspired by *Nisaa al Saxophone* and by *The House of Bernarda Alba* (Bazoun 18). Alwan was based in Italy but came to Beirut and stayed in Babel Theater for three months in order to draw the characters of *Nisaa al-Saxophone.* The double presentation of art and theater was new to Lebanon and the Arab region, although it was not a new phenomenon in Europe (18). Alwan's bright colors contrasted with the dark atmosphere of the play, creating a joyful mood with which the audience was able to receive the characters onstage (18).

García Lorca's *The House of Bernarda Alba* revolves around a dictatorial mother, Bernarda Alba, who sentences her five daughters (who are between the ages twenty and thirty-nine) to an eight-year term of mourning following the death of their father.[12] The daughters are supposed to stay inside their house, occupy themselves with embroidery, and receive no visitors. Bernarda Alba's mother, Maria Josefa, is also kept locked up because she is senile. Enmity, not love, characterizes the relationship between this mother and her daughters and between the sisters themselves, leading to painful division and spying among them. After spying on the sisters, the maid, Poncia, tries in vain to convince Bernarda that a riot or even a catastrophe will unfold if Bernarda does not loosen her oppressive mourning policy. Bernarda refuses to see her daughters' anger towards her and is convinced that they should obey her dutifully. Meanwhile, Martirio and Adela quarrel over their older sister's fiancé, Pepe el Romano, who is also Adela's

[12] The version of *The House of Bernarda Alba* that I use is taken from *Federico García Lorca: Three Plays*. It is translated by Michael Dewell and Carmen Zapata, and published by Farrar, Straus, and Giroux in 1993. For more on *The House of Bernarda Alba* adaptations, see Appendix.

secret lover. Later, she makes Adela believe that she has killed Pepe, which leads to Adela's suicide.

Though Al-Assadi's *Nisaa al-Saxophone* (*Saxophone Women*) is an adaptation of *The House of Bernarda Alba*, it is very different from García Lorca's play. The seven women in *The House of Bernarda Alba* become four in *Nisaa al-Saxophone*: the mother Bernarda, the maid La Pontia, Magdalena, the younger daughter, Adela the older daughter, and the grandmother. Notably, al-Assadi cuts Martirio, the jealous sister, from his play, which changes his plot. By cutting Martirio, whose name ironically comes from martyr in Spanish, al-Assadi ensures Adela will not die. García Lorca's Bernarda is different from al-Assadi's even though they both mourn their dead husbands, and both can be perceived as an allusion to the dictator Francisco Franco and/or Saddam Hussein. García Lorca's Bernarda Alba dominates the final scene as she repeatedly silences her daughters immediately after they discover that their younger sister, Adela, has committed suicide. Bernarda says to her daughters, "we will all drown ourselves in a sea of mourning," commands her daughters not to weep, and orders them to claim that Adela has died a virgin. Only Bernarda's harsh voice can be heard at the end of the play, repeating "silence" three times before the curtain is drawn: "Did you hear me? Silence! Silence, I said! Silence!" (García Lorca, "The House" 288). Because Bernarda is an allusion to Franco, Adela's death is no longer the result of perceived infidelity, but a refusal to live in a dictatorship; it is a political act. Thus, Adela is a revolutionary, a martyr who dies for a cause: freedom.

Al-Assadi's Bernarda is also in deep mourning as she dresses in black. The props also suggest an air of mourning as all of the couches are covered with black sheets. However, Bernada appears to be unable to enforce the harsh mourning policy on her older daughter, Adela,

who ironically wears a bright red dress that reveals her white, sexy body. Moreover, in al-Assadi's play, Bernarda's husband is killed by his younger daughter, Magdalena, whereas in García Lorca's play, the audience does not know how he died. Al-Assadi's Bernarda opens the play singing in Arabic and Spanish. The Arabic song is inspired by García Lorca's poem, "I will not Let the Flowers Wither in my Garden." The Spanish song depicts thousands of bulls and armed men that "pull the town by its shirt" (Wihbe). In the song, the town is personified as a victim of violence who is being dragged by both bulls and men. In her song, Bernarda seems to express her daughters' intense desire to leave their house and its rigid rules, foretelling the conflict with her daughters. Ironically, Bernarda's attitude towards her daughters, mother, and maid appears to be contradictory to the song with which she opens the play. As Litvin's "global kaleidoscope" theory suggests, this adaptation is appropriated according to the political context in which it was written. Bernarda Alba is an allusion to the dictator Saddam Hussein. Unlike in the original text, Bernarda is defeated in the final scene because no one listens to her and she cannot enforce her rules on them, much like Saddam Hussein was after the American invasion of Iraq until his execution in 2006. In the play, even the maid forsakes Bernarda, leaving the latter in an empty house that is about to fall apart (Al-Waziri 11). When her family leaves her, she becomes powerless because her daughters are not afraid of her and she no longer controls them. At the end of the play, Bernarda remains silent and alone.

In García Lorca's text, the younger daughter's name is Adela and she is twenty years old. She refuses to wear black and wears a green dress to defy her mother. She yearns for freedom, confessing to her sister, Martirio, "I'd like to be a harvester, so I could come and go. Then I could forget what's eating away at us" (García Lorca 242). Towards the end of García

Lorca's play, she breaks Bernarda's cane, implying that she is no longer afraid of her. When Martirio reveals Adela's secret love affair with her sister's fiancé Pepe, Adela is distraught. Bernarda Alba then gives Martirio a gun to shoot Pepe as he leaves their barn on horseback. A single gunshot is heard offstage and Martirio claims, "that's the end of Pepe el Romano!" (286). Thinking that Pepe is dead, Adela leaves the stage to hang herself in her room. After Adela runs off, Martirio cruelly reveals that she did not kill Pepe.

Al-Assadi, in *Nisaa al-Saxophone*, however, switches the names of Bernarda's daughters and dramatically changes their roles. In al-Assadi's play, Adela is the older daughter, who also defies her mother's insistence on wearing black by wearing a sexy, red dress that contrasts with the ivory tone of her skin as well as her mother's black dress. Unlike in García Lorca's original text, al-Assadi's Adela is not in love with a specific man, and she brags about her affairs to her grandmother. She even tells her grandmother about the one time she had sex with a horse, which may be an allusion to a very strong and virile man as powerful men are often described as stallions in Arabic. Her grandmother then says, "You are a whore just like me, and that's why you're my favorite granddaughter" (Torbey). In al-Assadi's play, unlike García Lorca's, a woman having sex outside marriage does not lead to her death but is a cause for celebration. Furthermore, al-Assadi's Adela does not commit suicide; instead, she abandons Bernarda Alba's house with the rest of the family, leaving her mother behind. (Al-Waziri 11). Thus, al-Assadi's Adela is a very strong character and refuses to be destroyed – either by women or men. While García Lorca depicts the problem of women being sexually frustrated and oppressed at the hands of their mother, al-Assadi portrays the revolution: women becoming sexually liberated and free from their mother's control.

Moreover, al-Assadi changes Magdalena's portrayal in his play. In García Lorca's text, Magdalena, who is thirty, is the second oldest daughter. She is the most affected by her father's death. At the beginning of Act One, the maids converse about her:

> Poncia: Magdalena fainted during the first response.
> Maid: She's the one who's going to be the loneliest.
> Poncia: She's the only one her father loved. (193)

When she starts to cry after her father's funeral, Bernarda orders her to stop. When she starts crying again, Bernarda shushes her and bangs her cane threateningly. Later on, sick of her mother's demands, she confesses to her younger sister that she would "rather carry sacks to the mill. Anything but sit in this dark room, day after day" (García Lorca 205). Magdalena does not want to be a woman, and would rather engage in manual labor, rather than stay at home all day. When her mother orders her to finish her embroidery, Magdalena curses "being a woman" because, by virtue of her gender, she is locked up in her house and denied the right to even complain about it (206). However, Magdalena accepts Bernarda's iron rule and is shocked when Adela confronts her mother, breaks her can, and claims that she only takes orders from Pepe.

In contrast, al-Assadi's Magdalena is Bernarda's younger daughter. Magdalena's character develops during the play as she goes from being quiet and suppressed to being loud and insane because of her mother's mourning regulations (Al-Hachem). Unlike García Lorca's Magdalena, she hates her father and reveals that she killed him, but without giving the audience any clue as to why she did so. By killing her father, Magdalena is killing the authoritative figure in charge of their lives, an allusion to Saddam Hussein. She also recalls being raped at her father's grave, right after his burial. (Al-Waziri 11). Magdalena's mourning here is toxic, as she

has been defiled at her father's grave. In al-Assadi's tragedies, female characters are often victims of sexual assault. For example, one of the young female characters in *Nisaa al-Harb* recalls being raped by a soldier. In the introduction to his book *Republic of Fear*, Kanan Makiya states that, during Saddam Hussein's regime, rape was weaponized, and rape rooms were used in Iraqi prisons. An Iraqi security employee was paid to rape Iraqi women, for "by violating an Arab or Kurdish woman," he was dishonoring her "entire family name" (xxv-xxvi). Gender violence such as "rape" can also be an extension of colonial/military invasion because women's bodies represent the land. Iraq has frequently been described as the victim of rape during Saddam Hussein's Baathist regime and later during the country's occupation by the United States of America and her allies since 2003.

García Lorca's Influence in Jawad al-Assadi's Theater

García Lorca's Influence in Hammam Baghdadi

Hammam Baghdadi is a play about two Iraqi brothers, bus drivers, who, in a filthy, chaotic public bath, recall their sufferings during and after the regime of Saddam Hussein. Hamid, the younger brother, helps his older overbearing brother, Majid, take a bath. He scolds Majid for working with the Americans, not attending his father's funeral, not feeding his hungry mother, not paying his dues from the bus business, visiting whorehouses, and controlling Hamid's life. When Hamid attempts suicide, which is a common motif in al-Assadi's plays, Majid listens to Hamid's traumatic story about unintentionally being involved in a massacre. As a bus driver, Hamid was forced to ship forty young men from al-Hakmiyyeh prison to an unknown site. Saddam Hussein's colonel made the prisoners line up, and he ordered his soldiers to shoot them. Hamid recalls how he was traumatized by the massacre and passed out. He woke up in the

military hospital and was greeted by the colonel, who informed him that his month's wages were arbitrarily given to the military. After listening to Hamid's story, Majid comforts him. The brothers' roles switch, and they step into the bathtub, the fog and steam around them intensify as they embark on an imaginary trip to an unknown destination.[13]

Unlike Bernarda Alba's daughters, who have distinct names, it is difficult to distinguish between the two brothers based on their names, which have the same pattern, rhyme, and meaning in Arabic. The letters that make up the name Majid (مَجيد) are the same letters that make up the name Hamid (حَميد), except for the letters j "ج" and h "ح," which have the same form, except for the dot that goes with the former. Therefore, when reading the Arabic version, the reader differentiates between each character with great difficulty because the names of these two characters have only slightly different meanings. Their names are two of the ninety-nine names of Allah (the name of God for Muslims and Arab Christians), al-Hamid means the Praiseworthy, while al-Majid means the Glorious One, who is with "perfect power, high status, compassion, generosity, and kindness" ("99 Names of Allah (God)").[14] Each character's name is a duplicate of the other's, alluding to Majid and Hamid being character doubles.[15] In an interview with Rebecca Joubin, al-Assadi discusses "how Iraqis as a whole suffered in the shadow of Saddam's brutal regime and continue to feel pain under the duress of the American occupation" (Joubin

[13] There are different versions of *Hammam Baghdadi.* The one I use was published by Dar al-Farabi in 2017. It is written in Baghdadi dialect and consists of two acts. For *Hammam Baghdadi* performances, see Appendix.

[14] For more on this, refer to these dictionaries: (1) al-Mu'allim Butros al-Bustani's *Muhit al-Muhit*, Maktabit Lubnan, Beirut, 1983, pp.192 and 839; (2) Ruhi al-Baalbaki and Munir al-Baalbaki's *al-Mawrid al-Wasit,* Dar al-'Ilm lil-Malayin*,* Beirut, 2005, pp. 642 and 649; (3) New Oxford American Dictionary, third edition, Oxford University Press, New York, 2010, pp. 42; 739 and 1373.

[15] The characters, Majid and Hamid, have very similar facial features and gestures as they appear wearing the same bathing suits in one of *Hammam Baghdadi* productions by Jawad al-Assadi. Al-Assadi provided a film of this production.

2005). By confusing and doubling the two brothers' names, al-Assadi appears to reflect upon the effect of ongoing suffering on the Iraqis. The occupation of Iraq has branded the people as a whole and made them alike because they have experienced the same trauma.

Violence

Violence is manifested in *Hammam Baghdadi* through the props onstage and the characters' tones at the beginning of each act. For example, at the beginning of Act Two, the violence that dominates the play is foreshadowed by Hamid's loud swearing, as he curses whoever defecated in the middle of the tub: "Animal, son of an animal… Bitch, son of a bitch" (21). In her thesis, "When Theatre Becomes Home: The Exile And Theatre Of The Iraqi Playwright Jawad Al-Assadi" about al-Assadi's theater, Sahar Assaf contends that the violent language and tense relationship between the two brothers "is shaped by the atrocities they experienced under Saddam Hussein's brutal dictatorship, but it continues to be reshaped with the terror they lived under the anarchy of post-Saddam and post-United States-led invasion era" (66).[16] Moreover, the feces left in the tub represents what the American invasion did to Iraq as the Americans completely disrespected Iraq's sovereignty, and left it in an even worse state. It could also represent what Saddam Hussein did when he came to power, desecrating the land and carelessly killing its people to achieve his own goals. Therefore, when cursing the person who did this, Hamid could also be cursing the Americans or Saddam Hussein. Furthermore, the presence of knives and putrid blood in the bath foreshadows the violence to come, which Majid sarcastically describes as "normal" in Baghdad and Iraq as a whole (Al-Assadi, "Hammam" 21-22).

[16] I am not analyzing the same version Sahar Assaf uses for her analysis. Assaf is using the unpublished version of *Hammam Baghdadi* written in Modern Standard Arabic in 2004 after al-Assadi returned to Iraq. This text was translated to English by Robert Myers and Nada Saab.

Like Bernarda Alba's character, Majid, the older brother whose attitude, voice, and gestures echo his military background, is a dictator who abuses his power. In Act One, he berates his younger brother, Hamid, calling him stupid and comparing him to a "donkey" and claiming that Hamid "has eyes that cannot see"(14). Even though Hamid stands up to Majid, Majid still tells him to "obey" his "orders" and "shut up" (14). Likewise, in Act Two, Majid threatens Hamid by telling him that he can "break his teeth" and that even though Hamid has grown up, he will always have to do what pleases Majid. When Hamid stands up for himself again and says, "No… no… you can't make me live according to your wishes," the two brothers fight with one another (40). Physical confrontation and violence occurs not only inside the bath but also outside it as a bomb simultaneously explodes as the brothers quarrel.

Ironically, Majid's traits are in sharp contrast to his godly name. Other than his love and compassion for his brother in the final scene, and his love for his deceased older sister (whose body he tried in vain to deliver through the American military checkpoint at the Iraqi border to be buried in her country), Majid is dishonorable and unkind. He crushes his brother both verbally, physically, and financially by not delivering on his promise to buy Hamid a taxi (15). Moreover, Majid appears not to care about his parents. He did not attend his father's funeral, nor did he feed his hungry mother. Majid's relatives and friends also curse him because he has been working for the Americans (34). After he has been accused of being disloyal to Iraq, Majid justifies his actions. He says that he has not been working with the Americans because he loves them, but he *has* to work with the "blue and red devils" so that he can pay off his debts and feed his three wives and thirteen children, who "open their mouths like crocodiles" (34, 38). Al-Assadi, Assaf argues, strips Majid of the fundamental moral qualities of a decent Arab man

because Majid is associated with the Americans. Majid's negative characterization highlights the author's dislike of the Americans. In addition, Majid's name appears to refer to Saddam Hussein's General Ali Hassan al-Majid, who directed military campaigns against the PUK (Patriotic Union Kurdish) in 1988. Michael J. Kelly, in his book *Ghosts of Halabja: Saddam Hussein and the Kurdish Genocide*, writes that these campaigns against the Kurds "claimed between 100,000 and 200,000 lives," destroyed 4000 villages, and practiced "conventional killing by shooting" (32). By working with the Americans, Majid betrays his country and brother much like the sisters in *The House of Bernarda Alba* betray one another. Adela deceives her sister Angustias by having an affair with her fiancé. In turn, Adela is double-crossed by Martirio when she reveals Adela's secret and does not inform her that she did not kill Pepe.

In *The House of Bernarda Alba*, there is no love or forgiveness between mother and daughter or even between the sisters themselves; however, in *Hammam Baghdadi*, brotherly love finally prevails, adding a glimpse of hope to the play. Majid's demeanor finally changes, and he becomes very caring towards his brother after Hamid attempts suicide. Hamid disagrees with his brother and disobeys him like Adela in García Lorca's play, but Majid does not consider him an enemy. In Act Two, Hamid attempts to hang himself, but Majid pleads with him, saying, "I swear I love you,/ […] my love. Relax, relax" (48). Majid rescues him, and a loving bond remains between the two brothers.

In contrast to the two brothers, Martirio, another ironically named character and one of Adela's sisters, in *The House of Bernarda Alba*, expresses no warmth towards Adela. For example, when they fight over Pepe, Martirio rejects Adela, pushing her away, saying, "Don't embrace me! Don't try to soften my eyes. My blood is no longer your blood! I try to think of you

as a sister, but I see you only as a woman!" (283). And, at the end of the play, when asked why she has made Adela believe that she shot Pepe dead, Martirio says, "I would have poured a river of blood over her head" (286). Finally, when Adela commits suicide, neither Bernarda nor Martirio appear to grieve over her death. Instead, Martirio's last words suggest that she is jealous of her sister, who "was fortunate a thousand times over- she had him" (288). Ironically, Martirio's name comes from the Spanish mártir (martyr) – but it is Adela who dies in García Lorca's version. Martirio is also a curious name for a woman as it ends in "o," which is a typical ending for Spanish men's names. Spanish women's names usually end in "a," so García Lorca switches gender here. Thus, the tense, abusive relationship between the two brothers in *Hammam Baghdadi* transforms into a loving and caring one while the relationship between Bernarda Alba and her daughters deteriorates over the course of the play.

Mourning

Like Bernarda Alba and her daughters, Majid and Hamid also mourn family members, but they do so less intensely than Bernarda Alba's family. In Act Two of *Hammam Baghdadi*, Majid and Hamid revere the memory of their dead father, Haj Kadhim. They smell the bath sponge that their father used to clean their bodies with, and Majid prays to God to have mercy on his father. However, unlike Bernarda Alba, Majid does not recite a litany of prayers for his father's soul since they are in a public bath, and their father died a long time ago. Bernarda Alba, on the other hand, gives her husband, Antonio Maria Benavides, an extravagant burial. In the opening scene, when the curtain rises, the church bells toll as the maid, Poncia, enters the stage. These bells have been "mumbling away for more than two hours now," Poncia says. "Priests have come from every town," and the larger the assembly or number of priests, the more influential the

deceased person is (García Lorca, "The House" 193). Bernarda's husband's coffin stands out with "its gold trim and the silk towels to carry it with," and the fact that they could provide Antonio with such an elaborate burial signifies how rich and powerful the family is (198). Right after the funeral service, Bernarda receives visitors at her house, where female mourners occupy a separate space from male mourners. On stage, "Women mourners begin to enter, two by two. They wear black skirts and shawls and carry black fans. They enter slowly until they fill the stage" (198). As the women begin the mourning rituals, Bernarda's maid breaks into a wail. Ironically, this same maid has been cursing Bernarda and her husband just before two hundred female mourners come onstage.

In addition to performing elaborate rituals, Bernarda imposes a mourning period and a dress code to an extreme level as she plans to grieve for eight years. According to Lisa Levy in her article "Women's Expressions of Grief, from Mourning Clothes to Memory Books," in some parts of twentieth-century Europe, a widow wore mourning clothes for two years, while a woman who lost a parent wore them for a year, and the stages of mourning "progressed from simple black dresses […] to grays and purples, often with lace or other adornments, in a phase called half-mourning" (2014). Bernarda's prolonged mourning could reflect the mourning practices of the century she lived in. However, this extended, exaggerated period of mourning in García Lorca's work is obviously influenced by Holy Week in Granada, and it is political and gendered. Mourning is gendered because women are expected to be the "chief mourners in their homes, in large part because their dress is instantly and significantly changeable, "unlike a man's suit that "could take him from wedding to funeral without a change" (Palka 2014). It is political because García Lorca argues against isolating women and against the double standard with which his

society had been treating them, especially with regards to segregation in times of mourning, because García Lorca portrays it so grimly. Al-Assadi gives us a model for rebelling against female segregation in *Nisaa al-Saxophone*.

Like Bernarda Alba, who preserves the rituals of mourning that her father and grandfather had observed, Majid also insists on respecting the burial rituals and sanctity of the dead body. Majid recounts how he had to bury his older sister's body in Damascus, hoping that he will someday rebury it in Iraq when their country is free from "those low people" (al-Assadi, "Hammam Baghdadi" 38). Majid is angry because the American soldier at the Iraqi border insisted on scanning his sister's body, which is placed in a sealed coffin. Majid opposed a scan of the body as even a glance could defile it. Scanning the body would be like having someone touch it in inappropriate ways and is a kind of rape. His sister had gone five times to Mecca to "the house of God" and used to pray and fast "all the time;" in his eyes, she cannot be disrespected (37). In addition, Majid is greatly perturbed because the American border patrol officer did not respect the Iraqi burial rituals. He is also indignant because he could not execute his sister's wish as she wanted to be buried in Iraq, where her bones will be "warmed" (38). Majid's dilemma appears to allude to that of al-Assadi's and many refugees and displaced Iraqis, Palestinians, and Syrians who could not and still cannot go back to their homeland.

Exile

As in García Lorca's *The House of Bernarda Alba*, exile is manifested in the setting of *Hammam Baghdadi*, but al-Assadi's setting is more extreme. Unlike Bernarda's house, through whose window Adela and Angustias communicate with Pepe at night, the Baghdadi hammam that Majid and Hamid use in order to emotionally and physically clean themselves has no windows.

Thus, the two brothers cannot connect to the outside world except by using a phone that suddenly disconnects because of explosions they hear outside the hammam. Like the daughters of Bernarda Alba, Hamid and Majid are not safe, and they are locked up in the bathhouse. When he hears the explosions and knows that he cannot leave the bath, Hamid becomes terrified. Nothing is secure in this bath just as "*nothing* is secure" in exile (Said 141). Like exiles who feel an urgent need to rebuild their broken lives, Majid and Hamid open up to each other about their suffering. The brothers' solidarity, depicted in both the opening and the final scenes, can be read as a representation of the "exaggerated group solidarity" of exiles, and Hamid and Majid's resentment for the Americans who occupy their country clearly appears to allude to the locals' "hostility to outsiders" (141). In a manner similar to the daughters of Bernarda, who are locked up in their house by their mother, Majid and Hamid are locked up in a chaotic, unsafe Baghdadi bath. The chaos that exists in the two characters' relationship, as well as the pandemonium outside the hammam, represent the turmoil in Iraq during Saddam Hussein's regime and the post-American-led invasion (Assaf 57-58). However, Majid and Hamid are finally able to flee their country together. In the final scene, the bathtub the two brothers stand in the middle of transforms into "a quasi-ship that sails in a nihilistic atmosphere amidst rains, winds and honking car horns, where the entire theater becomes like a violent tsunami" (53). This displacement to an unknown location frequently occurs in the final scene of al-Assadi's dramas, except for *Sonata al-Junun,* where he adds a glimmer of hope to García Lorca's work. For instance, *Nisaa al-Harb*'s three exiled female characters leave Germany, *Nisaa al-Saxophone*'s female characters leave Bernarda behind as they look for a new place to live in, and *Sonata al-Junun*'s protagonist, Dalila, secretly packs her bag to flee her master's house, but her older sister,

Wasila, overpowers and kills her. Dalila's plan to escape will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

Nisaa al-Harb

Nisaa al-Harb (*Women of War)* is another play by al-Assadi that details the lives of refugees living abroad who await the approval of their refugee applications. Three young Iraqi and Syrian refugee women, Mariam, Adele, and Fatima used fake European passports to get to Germany. There, they first lived in a refugee camp with many other women, but now only the three of them live in a house as part of a refugee accommodation program. Each character has a traumatic story that she experienced in her homeland and/or while traveling illegally to Germany, but only Adele and Fatima share their stories with their roommates. Mariam privately recounts her story to the investigator when presenting her affidavit during her appointment with him. A tense relationship binds these three characters in exile, but sometimes they offer support to one another when the need arises. Eventually, their applications for residency are rejected, and they wait together near a bus stop, as they have to leave Germany.[17] Like al-Assadi's *Hammam Baghdadi*, *Nisaa al-Harb* also contains parallels to García Lorca's *The House of Bernarda Alba*. It also contains moments that evoke García Lorca's *Yerma*.

Mourning

The theme of mourning is clearly manifested as Mariam recalls and grieves the loss of her brothers and her homeland. Mariam, whose refugee application number is 444, is from Syria. She is a widow on antidepressants, and during the play, she gets even more depressing news: she

[17] There are different versions of *Nisaa al-Harb*. The one I use was published by Dar al-Farabi in 2017. For *Nisaa al-Harb* performances, see Appendix.

has been diagnosed with cancer. In Scene Five, she recalls how her brothers were kidnapped, jailed, and killed in or displaced from Syria. When talking to Fatima, Mariam reveals that she concerned about the safety of her brother, Hussam, as well as her sister and mother in her town which has been devastated by war. When she receives the news of Hussam's death, she feels guilty because she cannot be at her mother's side to support her during Hussam's funeral (Al-Assadi, "Nisaa al-Harb" 92). The circumstances of Mariam's brother's death are similar to those of Abdallah, al-Assadi's brother, who was in his early twenties when he was murdered. Mariam's reaction to the death of her brother echoes al-Assadi's response when he received the news of his brother's murder at the hand of Saddam Hussein's soldiers. However, unlike Mariam, al-Assadi could not think of going back to Iraq because he had been on Saddam's hit list, and his family could not give Abdallah a decent funeral (Al-Assadi).

Like Mariam, Adele, a Syrian refugee whose refugee application number is 933, mourns the loss of a family member. Adele's daughter died at the age of four after being born with a congenital heart defect. When describing the sorrow, she says, "My daughter left on a boat/ from which there is no return./ As if the roof of the entire world fell on my head" (108). Through Adele, al-Assadi grieves the loss of his son, Kouran, who was also born with a heart defect and a foot abnormality and died in infancy (Al-Assadi, "Bitter Light" 55). A similar moment of grief over a lost child occurs in García Lorca's *Yerma*, a tragic play about love and motherhood.

Yerma and her husband Juan live in rural Spain, and she desperately wants a child because she believes it will strengthen her bond with her husband. However, Yerma is unable to bear children, and she feels increasingly jealous of those who have them but do not appreciate how much of a blessing that is. Eventually, she realizes she does not love her husband but loves

her husband's friend Victor. Because she has spent time in the field, presumably talking to Victor, the townspeople gossip about her, and Juan orders his sisters to watch over Yerma and keep her at home. Yerma cannot bear staying inside because the house is empty without a child in it. Juan also succeeds in driving Victor away from town. Yerma then decides to go on pilgrimage, where she will pray for a child to bless their home. While there, she discovers that Juan never wanted children and ends up killing him and also killing her only hope of having a child. [18]

Even though Yerma never has children, the way in which she addresses her hypothetical child is similar to the way Adele describes her sorrow at losing her daughter. In Act One, Scene One, as Yerma sings a lullaby to her imaginary child:

> I tell you, my child - It's true, it's true:
> I am broken and torn for you.
> My womb aches for you.
> An empty cradle, craving you.
> When, my child, are you going to come? (García Lorca 115)

In simple yet profound and inspiring language, Yerma expresses the extent to which she yearns for being a mother. Furthermore, Yerma confesses that it is not fair for her to "waste away here," where "all doors are closed to girls like [her], who grow up in the country" (119,128). Like Yerma, Adele is broken after her daughter's death, but unlike Yerma, doors are not yet "closed" to her as she seeks to start a new life in a different place.

[18] The version of *Yerma* that I use is taken from *Federico García Lorca: Three Plays*. It is translated by Michael Dewell and Carmen Zapata and published by Farrar, Straus, and Giroux in 1993.

The third female character in *Nisaa al-Harb* is Fatima who is also in exile. Referred to by her refugee application number 2250, she is from Iraq. She was a well-known theater actress who left Iraq after she was threatened by Saddam Hussein's regime. Fatima's suffering in her exile is emblematic of the pain of the approximately 52,900 Iraqi refugees in Germany in 2006 and 2007, and an estimated two million Iraqi refugees in the Middle East, with another two million displaced internally ("UNHCR-Statistics" 2007). Andrew Harper, the head of UNCHR's Iraq support unit, writes in his article, "Iraq's Refugees: Ignored and Unwanted," that the current Iraqis' displacement is "the largest displacement crisis in the Middle East since 1948" (170). By the time the militant group ISIS began to infiltrate Iraq in 2014, more than three million Iraqis had been displaced inside Iraq, and over 260,000 were refugees in other countries (Harris 2017).

Fatima struggles with the idea of living in Germany where the people do not appreciate Iraq, the cradle of civilization, and Iraqis are seen as people without a history or culture. Thus, she contemplates death throughout the play. In Scene Four, she wonders what happens to refugees if they die before their applications are approved by the government. After questioning her decision to come to Germany, Fatima says, "They say that the Swedish and the Dutch are more merciful than the Germans, particularly if one considers the size of the graveyards in Germany"(42). Thus, almost anything, even death, is better outside of Germany where, "they put the dead person in a carriage pulled by blind horses that keep circling the city until daybreak. Then, they lay the dead person in his grave" (42). After comparing the simple funeral rites in Germany and Holland to those of Iraq, she describes burial in exile, saying, "The lowest thing in this life is the burial of the person in a foreign land in silence where there are no wailing women

nor family!" preferring to be buried in her own country (45). Fatima's perceptions of burying a person outside of their homeland reflect al-Assadi's thoughts on the matter:

> The person is reduced to a number, and when s/he dies there, almost no one attends his funeral, unlike the awesome rituals of *ta'ziya* [condolences] in Iraq. When one dies in Iraq, there are the *naddabat* (professional mourners), the weeping, and the presence of the relatives of the dead person. In short, there is a 'carnival' in which the funeral turns into a wedding. (Al-Assadi)

This ritual of *ta'ziya* suggests the influence of Ashoura, where Shi'a Muslims, for ten days (hence the name Ashoura), commemorate and mourn the gruesome killing of al-Hussein, the grandson of the Prophet Mohammad.[19] During Ashoura, mourners participate in a procession or parade, and a group of people performs rituals to mourn the death of al-Hussein. These rituals consist of *majalis ta'ziya* (mourning sessions), visits to the tomb of al-Hussein, dramas that depict the battle of Karbala, and different types of self-mortifications that are practiced mostly on the tenth of Muharram (Chatelard 6).

Violence

Violence is woven into the narratives that Mariam, Adele, and Fatima tell the investigator and one another. In Scene One, Adele describes the violence that erupted in 2011 and the collapse of "everything" in Syria in eighteen months, the exodus of people away from where she lived, and the corpses that filled the streets (23). Adele did not experience direct physical abuse like Fatima

[19] Encouraged by the people of al-Koufa, al-Hussein insisted on his right to be the Caliph, and he rebelled against Yazid, whose father Uthman named as the Umayyad Caliph. Al-Hussein fought *Ahl al-Bayt* [the family of the Prophet, who sided with Yazid] in a plain near al-Furat, in which there was no water. Al-Hussein named this plain "Karbala" because there was nothing there but *al-karb* (anguish) and *al-balaa'* (affliction). In 680CE (61AH), in Karbala, most of al-Hussein's soldiers were injured or killed, and al-Hussein himself died after "an unknown" man beheaded him. This was the second *fitna (*ordeal), which had befallen on Muslims after *al-fitna al-kubra* (the great ordeal) in which Caliph Uthman was assassinated. Consequently, Muslims were divided into many sects. Every year since then, Shi'as go on a pilgrimage to Karbala, where al-Hussein was martyred and buried (see Sobhi Salih's *Nudhum Islamiyya [Islamic Laws]* pp. 268-269 and Geraldine Chatelard's *Najaf: Portrait of a Holy City* pp. 83 and 88.

and Mariam. In Scene Three, Fatima, who, as an opponent of the Saddam Hussein regime, tells Adele the reason she left Iraq. She says, "They [government officers] captured me on one of the streets as I was on my way to the theater to perform in a production of *The House of Bernarda Alba* by García Lorca. They tortured me, physically abusing and humiliating me, for ten days because they wanted to get information on one of the actors I was close to, but I refused to tell them anything" (33). Here, Fatima directly alludes to García Lorca's play and establishes that García Lorca's plays are frequently performed in the Arab world. In her narrative, she also alludes to Ashoura when she mentions that she was tortured for ten days. Her suffering also refers to the suffering of al-Hussein during the Battle of Karbala when he and his followers were ambushed and killed. Unlike al-Hussein, however, Fatima survived the ordeal and was released from jail "by accident" (33).

Like Fatima, Mariam also endured physical and emotional abuse for ten days. In Scene Six, Mariam recalls how, in 2013, on her way home after the Friday prayers, she was kidnapped and raped by ten young men for ten consecutive days. She tells the investigator, "since then I've felt that I am a dirty woman and that all the water of the world cannot purify my body" (100). Mariam was raped on Friday, which is ironically a holy weekday in Islam, and her constant rape by "ten men" for "ten days" mirrors the horrors that the story of Ashoura tells. The close association of a religious ritual with a heinous crime makes her rape even more dark and horrific. Mariam's rape is similar to Magdalena's rape at her father's grave in *Nisaa al-Saxophone*. Mariam's rape occurs during a holy day while Magdalena's rape happens at a sacred religious site. Both of the rapes suggest that in al-Assadi's theater nothing is sacred, almost everything is defiled and destroyed.

In addition to the brutality present in their narratives, violence also governs the interactions between Mariam and Adele. Mariam cannot stand living with Adele because she parties, drinks, and smokes. Adele also spreads slanderous rumors about Mariam to other women. Meanwhile, Adele complains to Fatima about Mariam, who prays out loud every day in the living room, instead of praying privately in her own room, commanding that everyone be silent. Adele believes that Mariam is playing the victim by refusing to take part in house chores because she claims to be sick. Adele is also jealous of Mariam and finds her to be hypocritical because, despite her commitment to a life of prayer, Mariam is friends with a Muslim Bosnian man. Meanwhile, Adele has no one in her life because her boyfriend left her for a Serbian woman. In Scene Five, Adele provokes Mariam when she hints that Mariam and the Bosnian man are lovers. When Mariam refutes Adele's allegation, Adela laughs loudly and says, "You are a liar. Even the letters you read to the refugee women about your love for God are lies" (76). Mariam defends herself, but Adele continues to provoke her. Losing control, Mariam screams, finds a knife, and attempts to stab Adele with it, but Fatima overpowers Mariam and stops her.

The hostility between Adele and Mariam is similar to the enmity that exits between Adela and Martirio in *The House of Bernarda Alba*. Adela hates that Martirio follows her everywhere and knows that Martirio is jealous of her relationship with Pepe el Romano. In Act Three, Martirio confronts Adela about Pepe and says, "Stay away from that man […] that's no place for a decent woman […] that heartless man came here for someone else. You have come between them!" (García Lorca, "The House" 281-282). Martirio accuses Adele of stealing Angustias' man, without acknowledging that she would like to have him herself. Martirio's concern with Adela's actions parallels that of al-Assadi's Adele when she notes that Mariam's friendship with

a man goes against what a decent, veiled Muslim woman would do. Sick of Martirio's hypocrisy, Adela exclaims, "He loves me! He loves me!" (283). Like Fatima in *Nisaa al-Harb,* who confronts Adele after she enrages Mariam, Adela knows that Martirio is jealous of her. Martirio then loses her temper and says, "Stick a knife in me if you like, but don't say that to me again!"(283). One can see that Martirio, like al-Assadi's Mariam, has had enough of Adela, but, unlike Mariam, she does not try to kill Adela with a knife. Instead, she asks Adela to kill her with a knife because she cannot stand hearing Adela say that Pepe loves her. Therefore, here al-Assadi draws on García's theme of violence and builds upon it, representing an attempted murder on stage. However, in al-Assadi's play, no one dies because Fatima puts a stop to the fight between the two women, while in *The House of Bernarda Alba,* no one stops the sisters from destroying one another.

Furthermore, in contrast to García Lorca's play, in *Nisaa al-Harb,* there are moments when the characters feel compassion for one another despite the prevalence of violence. Fatima often acts as a mediator between Adele and Mariam. She is often concerned with both Mariam and Adele's welfare. For example, in Scene Three, she is worried that Mariam is sick, and when Mariam is in pain, Fatima offers to take her to the hospital. The most powerful moment of compassion occurs in Scene Five. After Mariam breaks down and cries when receiving a text message announcing Hussam's death, both Adele and Fatima kiss and comfort her despite the fact that Mariam almost killed Adele earlier in the scene (87). Adele and Mariam also help Fatima. For instance, in Scene Seven, when Fatima cries and loses her balance after she performs her own variation of a passage of *Romeo and Juliet*, they help her get up and find a place to sit. In his book *Politics and Palestinian Literature in Exile*, Joseph Farag points to the parallels

between the protagonist's lack of balance and the confusion of the outside world: "The protagonist's physical instability comes to mirror the instability of the condition of exile itself" (186). Mariam, Adele, and Fatima share similar traumatizing experiences in their homeland and in exile. Thus, they have the same fate, and they stick together although they are sometimes violent towards each other much like the Iraqi brothers, Majid and Hamid, of al-Assadi's *Hammam Baghdadi.*

Exile

Violence and exile are correlated subthemes in al-Assadi's theater. When analyzing the Palestinian novelist Liana Badr's short story *Jahim Dhahabi (Golden Hell)*, Farag writes: "exile is not the only unmentioned ailment underlying the various symptoms from which the Palestinians suffer. It is, at once, the symptoms and the disease" (195). In contrast, al-Assadi repeatedly mentions exile in his play *Nisaa al-Harb,* which is set in a house as part of the refugee accommodation package in Germany. Also, exile's symptoms are manifested in the homesickness and defeat of the protagonists: Mariam, Adele, and Fatima. In Scene One, Adele pretends to be indifferent to whether or not she will get the approval to remain in Germany, saying that she has had the "virus of exaggerated hope" since she was a very young girl and even now she believes she will live a long, happy life (Al-Assadi 12). This line suggests that Adele's optimism is misguided and out of touch with reality. However, in Scene Seven, Adele is homesick, and she says, "Today is my birthday, and I am away from my country," wishing that she could spend it with her family at home instead (101).

Fatima is even more nostalgic than Adele, and she frequently expresses her bitterness because she is an exile who does not "sleep in [her] own bed, [her] own home" (25). The

nostalgia turns into guilt in Scene Two, when Fatima feels ashamed because she is away from her family. Physically, Fatima lives in Germany, but her spirit appears to be in Iraq. In Scene Three, she becomes fearful after seeing many sick and depressed female refugees because she does not want to end up like them. Fatima confesses that, because of her exile, she no longer knows who she is; she has become "nothing" (91). She is devastated because she is forced to live in a country to which she does not relate. Like al-Assadi, Fatima is an exile whose life has revolved around the theater. There is an "obvious interrelatedness between al-Assadi's personal life and his theater," as Assaf points out (54). Al-Assadi's first exile lasted twenty-eight years. He returned to Iraq in 2004, one year after the fall of Saddam Hussein. His return "shattered the idea of home he retained in his imagination during the years of his exile" (Assaf 49). Shortly after that visit, he went into a second "self-exile." In short, *Nisaa al-Harb* is "an elegy about how the foreigner [refugee] lives in the foreign land and European racism. And at the same time, *Nisaa al-Harb* exposes the Arab government that forces its people to migrate" (Al-Assadi).

Conclusion

García Lorca influenced contemporary Arab poets and playwrights, and this influence is especially evident in al-Assadi's theater. Both playwrights deal with the themes of mourning, violence, and exile in their plays. And there are moments in al-Assadi's *Hammam Baghdadi*, *Nisaa al-Harb*, and *Nisaa al-Saxophone* that parallel those in García Lorca's *The House of Bernarda Alba* and *Yerma.* However, al-Assadi's characters are less fatalistic than García Lorca's as they revolt against oppression and violence that are present around them. Al-Assadi's characters also maintain familial bonds in contrast to García Lorca's characters, who envy family members and, in some cases, cause their deaths. In doing so, in most of his plays, al-Assadi adds

a glimmer of hope that is missing in García Lorca's bleak theater. In the following chapter, instead of looking at connections between multiple plays, I will examine how the theme and subthemes of mourning intersect and are manifested in García Lorca's *Blood Weddin*g and al-Assadi's *Sonata al-Junun*.

III. THEMATIC CONVERGENCES IN BLOOD WEDDING AND *SONATA AL-JUNUN*

In his 1914 essay "Mourning and Melancholia," Sigmund Freud defines mourning as **"**the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one's country, liberty, an ideal, and so on" (243). As a result of the death that occurred, the person's ego might be fractured, but if the work of mourning is complete, the ego will be healed. Mourning and melancholy are similar to one another, but Freud defines melancholia as "a reaction to the loss of a loved object… a loss of a more ideal kind. The object has not perhaps actually died but has been lost as an object of love" (245). Freud distinguishes mourning from melancholy, arguing that mourning is a normal reaction, but melancholy is "pathological" (243). In García Lorca's *Blood Wedding* and al-Assadi's *Sonata al-Junun*, the female characters are melancholic and grieve the loss of their family members. Through their characters' mourning, García Lorca and al-Assadi process their own loss as a result of their marginalization in their societies, which were slowly being destroyed because of ongoing conflict.

In addition to the theme of mourning, both al-Assadi and García Lorca's works deal with the theme of violence, which may be extreme in order to shock the audience. Both playwrights were influenced by Antonin Artaud who in his book, *Theater and Its Double*, coined the term Theater of Cruelty

> to restore to the theater a passionate and convulsive conception of life, and it is in this sense of violent rigor and extreme condensation of scenic elements that the cruelty on which it is based must be understood. This cruelty, which will be bloody when necessary but not systematically so, can thus be identified with a kind of severe moral purity which is not afraid to pay life the price it must be paid. (122)

Artaud employs the word 'cruelty' " in the sense of an appetite for life, a cosmic rigor and implacable necessity, in the gnostic sense of a living whirlwind that devours the darkness" (102).[20] He criticizes the theater that entertains rather than depict the cruelty and pain that are an inseparable part of life. His theater strives to showcase cruelty on stage so that the audience may become aware of and address it instead of being passive spectators distracted by beauty and artificial extravagance. Furthermore, Artaud replaced the stage and the auditorium with

> a single site, without partition or barrier of any kind, which will become the theater of the action. A direct communication will be re-established between the spectator and the spectacle, between the actor and the spectator, placed in the middle of the action, engulfed and physically affected by it. This envelopment results, in part, from the very configuration of the room itself. (96)

Artaud's all-encompassing theater is especially evident in al-Assadi's one-act play, *Sonata al-Junun*, which is set in a single room, and it is not divided into numbered scenes. Rather, the playwright changes the characters' clothes and identity and alters the lighting to highlight the passing of time.

Likewise, Jean Genet greatly influenced al-Assadi as he, like Artaud, shocks his audience by presenting cruel aspects of life and by applying loud sounds, cries, screaming, and hyperbolic gestures. Bloody, diabolical scenes are very common in Genet's theater. According to Robert Myers and Nada Saab, Genet also supported Algerian independence and Palestinian liberation and who visited Palestinian refugees in Lebanon" (305).[21] Al-Assadi also worked with Palestinian theater for ten years. He advocates for the Palestinian cause because he was exiled

[20] This "living whirlwind" is referred to as a "vortex" in other translations of *The Theater and its Double* from French to English.

[21] See Myers and Saab's Chapter "Jawad al-Assadi" about al-Assadi's life and plays focusing specifically on *Hammam Baghdadi.*

and unable to return to his homeland. In 1994, he staged Genet's *The Maids* under the title *Al-Khadimatan* in Beirut. Al-Assadi's *Sonata al-Junun* echoes moments of *The Maids* in that the two sisters' diabolical actions shock and confuse the audience. Thus, Genet's play might be the obvious intertext for al-Assadi's. However, one of the reasons I pair *Sonata al-Junun* with García Lorca's *Blood Wedding* is because García Lorca's influence on al-Assadi has been minimized and needs further exploration. By looking at al-Assadi's oeuvre through the lens of García Lorca, one gains more insight into the playwright's psyche and broadens the spectrum of comparative studies when looking at Spain and the Arab world.

When examining the influence of a foreign writer like García Lorca on an Arab one like al-Assadi, it is interesting to look at the variety of cultural influences that affected al-Assadi and how García Lorca becomes an inspiration for his work. Margaret Litvin's approach provides a "set of questions" that looks at the "appropriator's political, artistic, and philosophical situation and concerns" (7). García Lorca was important to al-Assadi, and Arab poets and playwrights respected and venerated García Lorca in their works because he spoke up for the marginalized and the oppressed. Al-Assadi's work also depicts the struggle of the poor and the exiles. Since both playwrights deal with similar sociopolitical concerns, it is only natural for their theater to contain moments/dilemmas that overlap with one another. In this chapter, in addition to Litvin's theory of the "global kaleidoscope," I will use Freud's theory regarding mourning and melancholy and Artaud's Theater of Cruelty as guides for my analysis of García Lorca's *Blood Wedding* and al-Assadi's *Sonata al-Junun* as I examine the thematic convergences between their plays.

García Lorca, al-Assadi, and Mourning

The theme of mourning is, in part, a function of the milieu in which García Lorca and al-Assadi were reared. García Lorca grew up in a Catholic, pagan, and Islamic Granada; al-Assadi grew up in Shi'a Karbala, the holy city to which Shi'a pilgrims go during Ashoura to commemorate the martyrdom of al-Hussein. Thus, mourning and its subthemes are a function of García Lorca and al-Assadi's status as minorities and exiles. García Lorca was the son of a wealthy family, but his homosexuality in heteronormative Granada, played a key role in his marginalization, leading him to identify with the most vulnerable of people such as the women and the poor workers of rural Spain. He was a revolutionary poet (and playwright), standing on the side of the poor and advocating for their right to be able to "eat and work" (qtd. in Huri 2). In 1933, García Lorca wrote *Blood Wedding,* whose premise he based on a 1928 newspaper account detailing an honor killing in the Spanish countryside where the upper classes' cruelty toward laborers was extreme (Edwards 140; Preston 11).

Al-Assadi was the son of a poor, Shi'a communist family. When Saddam Hussein, who was a Sunni, became the President of Iraq, he killed a large number of Iraqi Shi'as to secure and maintain his power, and the Shi'as, who were the majority of the Iraqi population, became increasingly excluded from power. Countless Iraqi Shi'as were persecuted, imprisoned, executed, or exiled. Al-Assadi himself went into exile when his family advised him not to return to Iraq after the imprisonment and death of his brother, Abdallah. For ten years of his almost thirty-year exile, al-Assadi worked as a theater director with the Palestinian National Theater in Damascus, Syria, a theater that has been famous for its minimalistic style (Al-Assadi, "Jawad al-

Assadi fi al-Mashhad"; al-Assadi, *Theater of Bitter Light* 332 and 336).[22] The plays al-Assadi wrote, adapted, and directed dealt with themes like mourning, death, defeat, and exile. He even staged García Lorca's *Mariana Pineda* and *Yerma* and adapted García Lorca's *Bernarda Alba.* In 1999, al-Assadi published *Sonata al-Junun,* but he never staged it.

Under the larger theme of mourning, the sub-themes of violence and death, exile and defeat, and marriage (as a counterpoint to mourning) also frequently appear in both *Blood Wedding* and *Sonata al-Junun*. In this chapter, I argue that the themes of mourning and its subthemes overlap and are manifested in García Lorca's *Blood Wedding* and Jawad al-Assadi's *Sonata al-Junun* in various interesting ways. One can see García Lorca's influence in al-Assadi's play when looking at moments that parallel those in García Lorca's. In both their plays, female characters mourn family members in accordance with different religious rituals informed by the authors' diverse cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, violence appears in these plays mostly manifested through the characters' aggressive dialogue or props such as knives, daggers, and a guillotine. Moreover, the theme of exile appears in each play in the form of the deliberate exclusion of women from the public sphere, forcing them to stay at home and turning the house into a prison.

Accordingly, one might ask: did García Lorca directly or indirectly influence al-Assadi? If so, in what ways is García Lorca's influence evident in al-Assadi's plays? To answer these questions, in this chapter, I will compare and contrast how the theme of mourning and its sub-themes are manifested in both *Blood Wedding* and *Sonata al-Junun*. I will structure the chapter

[22] The minimalistic Palestinian theater does not depend on elaborate architecture or dazzling lights or ornate decoration. It mainly depends on the actor. See Jawad al-Assadi's al-Masrah wa al-Philastini al-ladhi fina (*Theater and the Palestinian within us)*, al-Ahali li al-Nashir, 1992, p.25.

thematically according to three themes: mourning, violence, and exile. Within each theme, I will start by analyzing García Lorca's play before moving onto al-Assadi's and then compare the two. However, before moving onto the analysis, I will provide a brief summary of each play below.

Blood Wedding

In early 1933, García Lorca wrote *Blood Wedding* (*Bodas de Sangre).* The play starts with the Bridegroom, a young, wealthy landowner calling his Mother and asking for a knife as he plans to leave for his vineyard. His Mother curses knives and everything that might kill a young man, and she curses the Felix family whom she blames for the death of her husband and older son. Afterward, the Bridegroom reminds his Mother of his plan to propose to the Bride, a wealthy young woman, who was in a relationship with Leonardo Felix, a poor young man, who is now the husband of the Bride's cousin. Although Leonardo Felix was young when his family killed the Bridegroom's older brother and father, the Bridegroom's Mother hates him. She is wary of her son's marriage to this Bride because she is still connected to Leonardo Felix. Also, due to widespread violence, the Mother fears for her son's safety. The Bridegroom convinces his Mother that the Bride is a good girl and goes with her to propose to the Bride. After the parents brag about their children's qualities, the Bridegroom sets the date of the wedding without consulting the Bride, who, up to this moment, has not been included in the whole marriage process.

Later, the Bride approves of this arranged marriage, even though she still lusts for Leonardo Felix. Leonardo then appears at her house and persuades her not to marry someone she feels nothing for and make the same mistake he did. Despite his efforts, the Bride marries the

Bridegroom. However, during their wedding reception, she elopes with Leonardo Felix. Enraged, the Bridegroom chases them, hoping to restore his family's honor. The play ends with the death of these two young men, a loss that is collectively and intensely mourned by the Wife of Leonardo Felix, the Mother of the Bridegroom, and the Bride.[23]

Sonata al-Junun

Al-Assadi's *Sonata al-Junun (Sonata of Madness)* is a play that tells the story of two miserable sisters, Wasila and Dalila, who act as servants to their paternal cousin whom they call Master. The play starts with the two sisters embroidering while sitting on a bed in the corner of an empty room in silence. Suddenly, they stop embroidering, and Dalila, the young sister, expresses that she is afraid. Wasila comforts and advises her to pay attention to every word she says. The two sisters appear to be controlled, imprisoned, and surveilled by the Master whom they also refer to as the Leader.

Throughout the play, Dalila tells her sister several stories of how their Master had killed people with no remorse. Wasila, who is afraid for her sister's life, repeatedly advises her not to say anything that might offend their Master and consequently cause both of them to be punished. Their fortunes take a brighter turn when their Master survives an ambush after the two sisters assist him in taking a bath. He sends the two sisters expensive dresses and a letter, rewarding them for their indirect role in his survival and promising both of them endless love and a very happy life. Wasila and Dalila then daydream of marrying their Master as a result of his promise

[23] The version of *Blood Wedding* that I use is taken from *Federico García Lorca: Three Plays*. It is translated by Michael Dewell and Carmen Zapata, and published by Farrar, Straus, and Giroux in 1993.

in the letter. At the same time, they also think of ways to torture and kill him to avenge themselves.

The two sisters set up a mock wedding ceremony in which the Master-statue, when transformed into a Leader, speaks and chooses to marry Dalila, a choice that creates extreme competition and enmity between the sisters. Trying to convince Wasila not to be upset because their Master did not marry her, Dalila poses as a hag and tells her the story of how her young son, Faras, was imprisoned and killed by their Master. Afterward, while Wasila and Dalila fight over who should own a portrait of the Master, it falls and breaks. The shattering of the Master's portrait triggers more division and violence between the two sisters. Wasila decides to punish Dalila, who now wants to rebel against her abusive Master. Because Dalila insists on leaving their house/prison, Wasila, posing as a judge, claims that the rebellious Dalila has committed an act of blasphemy, a crime punishable by death because she no longer worships her Master. Dalila becomes suicidal because she cannot leave the house and would rather die than remain there. Wasila persuades Dalila not to kill herself, but she makes up her mind to kill Dalila because Dalila no longer wants to serve the Master. She then brings in a guillotine to execute Dalila. In that same moment, however, an unseen Voice reads out a court verdict which sentences Dalila and Wasila to death because they have been found guilty of conspiring against the Leader. The Voice claims that the proof of their crime is right before their very eyes: the Master's shattered portrait.[24]

Convergences in the Themes of Mourning and Melancholy

[24] The version of *Sonata al-Junun* I use was published by Dar al-Farabi in 1999 in Modern Standard Arabic, and unlike most of al-Assadi's work, he has not staged it yet.

Melancholy women in *Sonata al-Junun* and *Blood Wedding* repeatedly and poignantly mourn their family members who were victims of violence, and they also unconsciously mourn their own imprisonment. In both plays, female characters mourn to process their losses. Mourning becomes part of their lives, a ritual which has been informed by religious rituals such as the Passion of Christ in Catholicism and Ashoura in Shi'a Islam.

Blood Wedding

In *Blood Wedding*, the Mother of the Bridegroom continuously mourns the death of her husband and her eldest son, cursing their killers, the Felix family. In the opening scene, she first grieves over her husband, who "smelled like carnations" and whom she enjoyed "only three short years," telling her son, the Bridegroom, that if she "lived a hundred years, [she] would talk of nothing else" (García Lorca 6). The hyperbole, "I would talk of nothing else," is a rhetorical expression of the Mother's infinite grief at the loss of her husband. She also expresses her grief over her older son's death, asking, "How can it be that something as small as a pistol or a knife can destroy a man who is like a bull?" (6-7). Convinced that losing a strong young man to violence is not fair, she ends her speech, saying, I will "never be quiet." Her grief is so intense that desperation "stings [her] eyes and the very tips of [her] hair!" as if it is rooted in her body (7). Her son, irritated with his mother's hyperbolic expressions of grief, asks her loudly, "Can't we be done with it?" Shocked at her son's suggestion, she says,

> No, we can't be done with it! Can anyone bring me back your father? Or your brother? […] My dead ones, covered with weeds, silent, turned to dust. Two men who were like two geraniums! The killers, in prison, alive and well, gazing at the mountains. (7)

Even though it has been ten years since their death, the Mother's "work of mourning" has not yet been completed, so the son's interference in his mother's mourning is "useless or even harmful" because one overcomes grief after a certain time (Freud 244). In this case, it causes the Mother of the Bridegroom even more agitation. If one interrupts the mourning process, the pain will be unresolved, and the ego will not be healed. One needs to express his grief for it to be appropriately processed, and because the son attempts to stop her from mourning, he is blocking her ability to come to terms with her loss.

In *Blood Wedding*, the theme of mourning also manifests itself in the color black and other dark colors the characters wear, which many Catholics in the south of Spain wear during Holy Week as they mourn the death of Jesus. In the opening scene, the neighbor, who visits the Mother of the Bridegroom after her son leaves for his vineyard, wears a dark dress. And, in Act One, Scene Three, during the first visit to the Bride's house, the Bridegroom's Mother "is dressed in black satin" while her son wears "a black corduroy suit" instead of being dressed in brighter colors to announce the joyous occasion of a family union (27). Even on her wedding day, the Bride appears wearing "a turn-of-the-century black dress" in Act Two Scene One (53). It is ironic that the Bride is wearing black instead of the traditional white dress, and this indicates either that the Bride is in mourning (perhaps for her dead mother) or that she is unhappy with the arranged marriage, which feels like a death sentence. Finally, in Act Three, Scene Two, after Leonardo Felix and the Bridegroom kill one another, they are described as "young and dark" (99). During the wedding-turned-funeral, a woman "dressed in black" comes to offer her condolences to the Bridegroom's Mother, and the Bride wears "a black cape" over her dress which has now become more appropriate for the occasion (99-100).

Mourning reaches its climactic moment in the final scene in which the Mother mourns her dead son, the Bridegroom. At the doorway, while putting her hands on her forehead, she asks, "Is there no one here? My son should be answering me!" (99). The Mother, stricken with grief, is in denial. She knows that her dead son is not there and cannot answer her but insists that he does. She continues saying, "My son should have been here. But now my son is an armful of withered flowers. Now my son is a dark voice behind the mountains" (99). In his death, her son has "withered" and is unreachable, becoming a "voice behind the mountain." Metaphors, like the ones present in the Mother's speech, are prevalent in elegies, during which the audience may weep with those who mourn their loved ones. However, the Mother forbids her neighbor from crying during her moving speech, saying, "Quiet! […] Quiet, I said! […] Will you be quiet? I want no weeping in this house" (99). The Mother, who does not want to appear weak in front of others, cries when she is alone. Unlike her neighbor whose tears come only from her eyes, the Mother's tears will come "from the sole of [her] feet, from [her] roots—and they will burn hotter than blood" because she is mourning her son's death with her entire body and soul (99-100).

At the end of the play, the Mother of the Bridegroom, the Wife of Leonardo Felix, and the Bride, three women from the same agricultural community collectively mourn their two dead young men: the Bridegroom and Leonardo Felix, who kill each other "over love" on a "fated day, between two and three o'clock" (104). The Mother of the Bridegroom and the Bride mourn a dead man without mentioning his name. Neither woman, although devastated, attacks a specific person or a party as both of them blame fate and uncontrolled violence for the loss of their loved ones. Mourning the two men, the Mother of the Bridegroom overcomes the stage of anger and reaches the state of acceptance. Now, violence has become her enemy. Through the Mother and the Bride's mourning, García Lorca grieves the loss of the young men in his community.

The mourning in this final scene also alludes to Passion of Christ, especially Good Friday rituals, a drama which was, and still is, enacted in the streets and churches of Granada during Holy Week. The Passion drama, in which Catholics commemorate and celebrate the martyrdom of Christ, influenced García Lorca. Good Friday rituals are manifested in the repeated references to the cross. In a Catholic wake, the cross is displayed and repeatedly praised. In the final scene, after the little girl announces that "they're bringing them [the two dead men] now," the Mother of the Bridegroom confesses that it is "the same-/The Cross! The Cross!", implying that death is as common as the cross in her community (104). The women, however, respond to the Mother's wailing by praising the cross saying, "Sweet nails,/ Sweet Cross,/ Sweet Name-/ Jesus" (104). García Lorca utilizes anaphora when he repeats the word "sweet" in three consecutive lines. He also uses an oxymoron when he describes death as "sweet" to create an atmosphere of spirituality during the mourning process. The performances during Good Friday showcase the suffering and death of the martyr, Jesus, and consequently encourage their audience to model their lives after Jesus on sacrifices and suffering. These dramatic tableaux, as Marta Weigle and Thomas R. Lyons argue, are not "literal enactments either of scripture or Way of the Cross devotions," even if human actors play roles in quasi-Passion plays (243).[25] Holy Week observances, Weigle writes, are "not only rituals of spiritual transformation for religious individuals but also important expressions of communion and community. They reconfirm basic interpersonal ties which make continued existence both possible and significant" (246). By

[25] Marta Weigle and Thomas R. Lyons' "Brothers and Neighbors: The Celebration of Community in Penitente villages" discusses how the Brotherhood of Penitentes continues to sponsor both private and public observances during Holy Week, such as the penitential processions, which used to include self-flagellants and bearers of the cross, stations of the cross, readings and dramatic tableaux that commemorate aspects of Passion of Christ, pp. 238-42.

weaving in details from the Holy Week in the mourning practices present in the play, García Lorca emphasizes the importance of maintaining communal ties in a fractured society.

Sonata al-Junun

Like the Mother of the Bridegroom in *Blood Wedding*, Dalila, in the opening scene of *Sonata al-Junun*, is melancholic and fearful. Dalila's melancholy manifests itself in her opening lines, where she confesses that she feels like "a woman coming out of death" (Al-Assadi, Sonata, 13). She also asks, "Am I living in death now?" to try and make sure that she is still alive (13). Dalila's melancholy is "in some way related to an object-loss which is withdrawn from consciousness" (Freud 245). In this case, the "object-loss" is Dalila's loss of freedom after she has been imprisoned in one room and living in fear of her Master. Because of her melancholy, Dalila's "ego itself" has become "empty and poor" (245). Dalila's obsession with death is a symptom and a cause of melancholy and foreshadows her demise as well as that of her sister.

Likewise, Dalila's melancholy is manifested in the terror that is evident when she talks about or refers to her Master, who is nameless and whom the audience never sees in the play. In the cast of characters, the Master is listed as the sisters' paternal cousin, but the sisters never refer to him as such. He never enters their room; instead, the sisters hear his voice, talk to his shadow, or talk to a statue and a picture created in his likeness. Therefore, he treats the sisters like prisoners in solitary confinement, which makes them even more frightened of him. In the opening scene, Dalila expresses her fear to her sister, saying, "Sister... I am afraid… I feel as if I am chased by a blind force… Fearful I am" (Al-Assadi, *Sonata* 14). The circular structure of the sentence that starts and ends with the word "afraid" as well as the metaphor of the "blind force"

both indicate Dalila's intense lifelong feeling of dread, and the cycle of fear is continuous, unbroken.

Additionally, in the opening scene, Dalila's melancholy is manifested in her anxiety and despair about how she and her sister are going to live the remainder of their lives. Her sadness "culminates in a delusional expectation of punishment" (Freud 244). She begins imagining a "pillar of blood" and fears that she is being followed by a "blind force" that is "always" watching her (Al-Assadi 14). This pillar of blood is an allusion to their violent Master and his rule that is supported and maintained by the blood of the people that he kills. Her sister, Wasila, not quite caught up in the same emotions, warns Dalila of possible punishment in case the Master appears (14). Both Dalila's internal melancholic state and the external possibility of being punished places her in a vulnerable state that eventually leads to her death.

Mourning is most clearly manifested when Dalila recalls the untimely, cruel death of her young son, Faras. His name is symbolic as Faras is the Arabic word for horse, a symbol of freedom, power, and desire. In an attempt to convince Wasila that she should be thankful that their cruel Master did not marry her during the mock wedding ceremony, Dalila, posing as a hag, tells Wasila how their savage Leader (the Master), tortured and killed him. Dalila begins her narration by distancing herself from the Leader and adds the demonstrative noun "this" (هذا) to refer to him as "your man" (رَجُلُك).[26] Then, Dalila recalls how they "forcefully pulled [Faras] from the street, without any previous notice, to the encampment of death […] The horse, the bird of the fire and thunder has become broken and slaughtered" (38). Unlike the son's death in *Blood Wedding*, Dalila's son was imprisoned and tortured for months before he was killed, and his dead

[26] At this point in the play, the sisters are fighting over the Leader. Wasila becomes angry when the Statue/Leader speaks and chooses to marry Dalila during the mock wedding scene.

body was dealt with no respect. Dalila's lament about the disrespect for her son's body almost certainly alludes to the gravity of Saddam Hussein's violation of the custom of providing an honorable burial for the dead. Dalila ends her confession with an emphasis on her hatred for the Master, now Wasila's man, saying, "In this manner, this man with whom you are fascinated, presented me with a gift from him on Christmas Eve… a horse of ashes, a horse of ashes… a horse of ashes…" (38). Dalila's intense mourning suggests the influence of the religious rituals of Ashoura in Karbala on al-Assadi. For ten days, women and men wail, and houses are covered in black. The image of the horse also suggests the influence of Ashoura on al-Assadi, who was impressed with horsemen who drew their swords during the Ashoura processions (Al-Assadi, "Jawad al-Assadi: Director"). The fact that the horse is made of ashes highlights the contrast between Faras' life and death. Before he dies, he was strong, but, in death, he has become weak and powerless. Moreover, like Dalila, who grieves over Faras, al-Assadi continues, as he has said in various interviews, to grieve over his dead brother, Abdallah. In 1983, Abdallah was kidnapped, imprisoned for six months in al-Hakmiyyeh prison, and killed by Saddam's Baath totalitarian regime (1979-2003), who believed that Abdallah was disloyal (Al-Assadi, "Al-Assadi fi al-Mashhad"). Like the Mother of the Bridegroom in *Blood Wedding*, Dalila is infuriated with her son's killer and expresses her terrible loss by highlighting her son's greatness.

Like in *Blood Wedding*, melancholy in *Sonata al-Junun* is manifested in the dark atmosphere of the play and the mania of the two sisters. Except for the two beds on which the two sisters silently sit and embroider in one corner, the set is empty. In the opening scene, the lack of props suggests the absence of necessary daily accommodations and a state of loss, mourning, and melancholy of Dalila and Wasila. In the final scene of *Sonata al-Junun*, as in the

final scene of *Blood Wedding*, the room is white. However, while the unadorned, white room of *Blood Wedding* alludes to a church, the room in *Sonata al-Junun* turns into a grave after the two beds and chairs are covered with white sheets. And, unlike in *Blood Wedding*, the color black is not present in *Sonata al-Junun*. Al-Assadi does not provide details about the sisters' clothes either.

The most remarkable characteristic of melancholy is its tendency to turn into mania, the opposite of melancholy (Freud 253). The two sisters' manic behavior is a consequence of their melancholy. Dalila and Wasila's intense screams and movements when they fight with one another to prove who loves the Master most stand in sharp contrast to their initial calm and melancholic state in the opening scene. Further, Wasisla forbids Dalila from leaving their home.

> Dalila: "Where is the knife? I will slice my body in half."
> Wasila: Here it is. Slice what you wish. Stab yourself here in front of me.
> Dalila: Do you want to enjoy the shedding of my blood?
> Wasila: My sister's blood is like honey. I will lick it and smear it all over my body (55).

The sadomasochistic relationship between the sisters reaches its peak at the end of the play where Dalila wants to inflict pain on herself and commit suicide, while Wasila welcomes the idea of her sister's pain and eventual death. Wasila becomes a Dracula-like figure who enjoys the taste of blood. After Wasila announces that she is the only one who will decide her sister's fate, the melancholic Dalila attempts to stab herself. Wasila forcefully prevents Dalila from killing herself and surprises her with a long "deadly kiss," after which Dalila screams (55). Wasila's kiss is deadly in the same way that Judas' kiss that betrayed Jesus in the Mount of Olives is. The kiss is the turning point of the play because Wasila, like Judas, is about to commit a heinous crime, which leads to her sister's death. Like the homoerotic moment at the end of *Blood Wedding*, in this moment, Wasila's long kiss is homoerotic.

A similar moment of sadomasochistic behavior of two female characters occurs in García Lorca's *Blood Wedding* during the funeral scene. When the Bride visits the Mother of the Bridegroom to pay her respects for her son's death, the Mother of the Bridegroom acts as if she does not recognize the Bride, so she does not "dig her teeth into her neck," (García Lorca 101). Wasila's "lust for blood" echoes the Mother of the Bridegroom's desire to kill her daughter-in-law. The Bride then begs the neighbor watching them to "let her! I have come so she can kill me and I can be buried with them" (101). She does not want the Mother of the Bridegroom to kill her with her bare hands, but with "grappling hooks, with a sickle, and with all [her] might, until it breaks on [the Bride's] bones," (101). Dalia's masochism at the end of *Sonata al-Junun* also echoes the Bride's desire to die, and this moment illustrates how al-Assadi was influenced by Lorca's theater.

Unlike the Bridegroom of *Blood Wedding*, no one mourns Dalila. When Dalila wishes for death that would set her free of the Master, Wasila beheads Dalila using a guillotine. Immediately after that, Wasila hears the sound of footsteps getting closer, and then a voice reads out the death sentence of both sisters. After the death sentence is pronounced, the stage falls silent. The lack of time and space between their deaths allows no space for mourning, and the play ends on a García Lorcan note. In contrast, in *Blood Wedding*, both the Mother of the Bridegroom and the Bride can express their grief during the wake.

As a counterpoint to the themes of death and mourning, and in a manner similar to the wedding reception in *Blood Wedding*, al-Assadi's play contains a joyful mock wedding that is filled with music, dance, and song. Right after the Master/Leader's letter arrives promising to shower the two sisters with "kisses, great love, and happy life," as long as they live together,

Wasila and Dalila competitively daydream of marrying their cousin (28). During the ceremony, they dance "lively and madly," and four puppets wearing dresses enter, accompanied by refreshing music (28). Unlike the Bride, who is anxious and tense during her wedding reception, Wasila and Dalila are enjoying themselves during the wedding ceremony. They are thrilled to be marrying the Master because that would mean an end to their life of servitude. In contrast, the Bride is unhappy and does not want the Bridegroom to touch or come near her. When he invites her to dance, she is in anguish and declines, preferring to "lie down for a while," all the while insisting that the Bridegroom remains with the guests (García Lorca 72).

The mock wedding scene in *Sonata al-Junun*, like *Blood Wedding*, is ironic because this wedding is associated with punishment and death rather than celebration. The beginning of the mock wedding is the only delightful moment in *Sonata al Junun.* However, instead of living a happy life as the Master/Leader has promised them, Wasila and Dalila die because they accidentally break the picture of their Master/Leader when rehearsing the wedding ceremony. Al-Assadi provides the wedding ceremony that is missing from *Blood Wedding*, which only depicts the wedding reception. But instead of having two martyred young men, two young sisters die because of their unintended crime. Like the deaths of the two men in *Blood Wedding*, Wasila's murder of Dalila is homoerotic, and this parallel demonstrates the influence García Lorca had on al-Assadi's theater.

Convergences in the Themes of Violence and Death

Violence and death are common to both *Sonata al Junun* and *Blood Wedding* and the presence of the themes in both García Lorca and al-Assadi's plays relate to the violence they experienced or witnessed in their societies. While *Sonata al-Junun* draws on the violence that is present in *Blood*

Wedding, I assert that the violence in al-Assadi's play is more gruesome because al-Assadi alludes to the repulsive crimes perpetrated by Saddam Hussein regime in his work.

Blood Wedding

Blood Wedding can be read as an allegory of the society of southern Spain. The historian, Paul Preston, in his book *The Spanish Holocaust*, details how, in the 1930s, the Spanish rural upper classes considered the landless laborers "sub-human," or an "inferior species," which was one cause of the Civil War that erupted in 1936 (3). In spite of the decree of 1 July 1931, which imposed an eight-hour day in agriculture, workers often worked sixteen hours per day without being paid for the extra hours. Tens of thousands of landless laborers were unemployed, while "starvation wages were paid to those who were hired" (11). And while the right-wing press reported the incidents of the theft of crops and animals with outrage, the left-wing press reported with equal indignation the death of workers against whom firearms were used (11). The heavy presence of violence and death in the play point to the atrocities that laborers experienced in the Spanish countryside are set in sharp contrast to the luxurious lifestyle of the landowners. For instance, the Wife of Leonardo Felix lacks the money to buy the clothes her baby needs, while the Bridegroom's family lacks for nothing as the Mother of the Bridegroom "wears a lace mantilla" and the Bridegroom "a large gold chain" when they enter the Bride's house. Likewise, the Mother of the Bridegroom, who rails against the landless family of Leonardo Felix, appears to underline this discrimination against the landless laborers, although the Mother mainly attacks the "bad blood" of the Felix family. The Mother of Leonardo Felix is also aware of the discrimination against the poor, saying, "Two wealthy families are going to be joined," after a

girl tells her that the Bridegroom "came to the store, and he's bought the best of everything!" for his Bride (García Lorca 24).

Furthermore, denying Leonardo Felix the chance to marry the rich Bride because of his poverty seems to be an act of discrimination against the impoverished laborers. He confronts the unhappy Bride on her wedding day, saying, "Tell me, what have I ever been to you? Look back and refresh your memory! Two oxen and a tumbledown hut are almost nothing. That's what hurts" (46). But the Bride avoids discussing the matter. She instead starts asking him why he came to the ceremony as she does not want to assume the responsibility of denying Leonardo's proposal. The discrimination he faces leads to his extreme frustration and lust, which seem to be one cause of the death of both the Bridegroom, the wealthy landowner, and Leonardo Felix, the penniless farmhand.

One can see examples of violence at the beginning of the play. For instance, in Act One, Scene One, verbal violence is manifested in the Bridegroom's Mother's extreme hatred of the Felix family, because the Bridegroom's father and elder brother were killed by the Felixes when Leonardo Felix was eight years old. Even though her neighbor reminds her that she should not perceive Leonardo Felix as an enemy since "[he] was eight years old when it happened" and too young to remember and participate in the murders (15). However, the Bridegroom's Mother says, "Hearing "Felix" is like having my mouth fill up with slime! (*She spits*) And I have to spit! I have to spit, so I won't kill!" (16). The Mother's line here indicates her uncontrollable hatred toward the Felix family. The Mother says the word "Felix!" (*under her breath),* which implies that she is afraid of speaking the name out loud. The simile "like having my mouth fill up with slime!" indicates that the mother finds the entire Felix family so disgusting, she must spit. The

repetition of the word "spit" demonstrates the Mother's extreme hatred of the family. She is still unable to forgive the Felixes for killing members of her family.

In *Blood Wedding*, violence is inherited just as "bad blood" is (60). One can see this in Act Two, Scene Two, at the wedding reception when the Father of the Bride says that Leonardo Felix is a man who "looks for trouble" and has "bad blood" (60). The Mother of the Bridegroom asks, "What else could [Leonardo] have?" She blames the murder of her husband and her eldest son on the "bad blood" of Leonardo's "whole family, beginning with his great-grandfather, who started the killing, and on through the whole evil clan! Men who use knives! People with fake smiles!" (60). The repetition of the phrase "bad blood" foreshadows the double tragedy that is going to take place.

In *Blood Wedding,* death is personified, appearing as a beggar woman. Likewise, the moon is personified and appears as an agent of death, leading the Bridegroom to Leonardo Felix and his runaway Bride. In Act Three, Scene One, as two violins play in the background, three Woodcutters chop down trees with their axes and debate whether Leonardo Felix will be punished for running away with the Bride. The deaths of Leonardo Felix and the Bridegroom occur offstage while the woodcutters are cutting down the trees, which allude to the death of the two men. The two violins not only anticipate the double killing but also act as a homoerotic symbol because the swift movements of the bow on the violin strings echo the rapid piercing of the knives, with which the two men kill each other. Furthermore, even though their deaths occur offstage, the way in which García Lorca represents their deaths, accompanied by music, gestures, and loud noises coming from the axes, is a prime example of Artaud's theater of cruelty. By removing the barrier between the audience (who cannot stop the deaths of Leonardo or the Bridegroom) and actors, the members of the audience have become witnesses to the crime.

García Lorca overwhelms his audience and they have no choice but to confront the horrible reality of the men's deaths.

Moreover, the theme of death also appears in the trope of the flower. For example, the Bridegroom, the Mother's only surviving son, is referred to as a "rose" (2). The Bridegroom's life is like that of a vulnerable rose, which one can quickly snip and kill; it might easily be cut short. Similarly, the Mother-in-Law and the Wife of Leonardo Felix repeatedly refer to him as "my flower" and "my rose" in Act One, Scene Two, as they rock the baby boy to sleep, foreshadowing Leonardo's death (17, 20).

Flowers are not the only thing that foreshadows death in Act One, Scene Two. The lullaby that the Wife of Leonardo Felix sings to her baby also foreshadows someone's death. In this dark lullaby, the water is "deep and black," and the "wounded" giant horse that does not want the water goes down to the river with his rider as well, a river in which "blood was flowing/Stronger than water" (17-18). Death is manifested in the metaphor of blood, which is also the first word in the play's title, foretelling the double killing of the Bridegroom and Leonardo Felix, who lusts for the Bride, although he is married to her cousin because she accepted his modest wedding proposal. Blood is a motif associated with contradictory meanings, especially in poetry and poetic texts. In addition to death, blood is also associated with virginity and giving birth. In Southern Spain, as in traditional Mediterranean societies, the wedding was and still is, associated with a woman losing her virginity, which results in the flow of blood.

In addition to using the imagery of blood, García Lorca also foreshadows the death of the two men using the trope of the Last Supper. By setting his wedding on Thursday, the Bridegroom, like Christ, has his last supper with his guests, during which plenty of wine and food are served. The Bridegroom generously orders his Bride's Maid to give the Wife of

Leonardo Felix three dozen "wine biscuits" (65). Like Christ, the Bridegroom gives away his body and blood as he gives these "wine biscuits," but unlike Christ, he does not know he is going to die. He looks forward to consummating his marriage, but that hope is cut short after the Wife of Leonardo Felix reports that she has seen Felix and the Bride run away on the horse "in each other's arms" (76).

Violence, in *Blood Wedding*, is manifested in the repeated presence of knives and daggers. In Act One, Scene One, after the Bridegroom orders his Mother to give him the knife before he leaves for his vineyard, she curses all of the knives and "the monster who invented them!" referring to the knife as a "serpent" that she must not allow "inside the cupboard!" (6). The word "knife" is also repeated seven times in the final scene as the Mother of the Bridegroom and the Bride describe how two men "are left dead,/ With their lips turning yellow" after these two men "killed each other over love/With a knife, with a little knife/That scarcely fits the hand" (105). The yellow color of the men's lips is undoubtedly the color of death. Likewise, the repeated presence of daggers hints at the presence of violence and foreshadows the death of the Bridegroom. At the end of Act Two, Scene One, after she has made it clear to him that she will not go to a wedding without him, the exasperated Wife asks an infuriated Leonardo, "Why do you look at me like that? There's a dagger in each eye!" (56-7). The daggers, a homoerotic symbol, suggest the Wife's extreme fear and foreshadow the double tragedy that is about to happen.

Sonata al Junun

In *Sonata al-Junun*, the death of the two sisters is foreshadowed because of their names as they have symbolic meanings. Wasila, which is a feminine Arabic name that stems from the triliteral

root w-s-l- that means being the way that brings one close to God or others. According to the Holy Qur'an, Surah al-Ma'idah 5:35, those who believe should fear God and "seek the means [of nearness] to Him and strive in His cause that [they] may succeed." Wasila uses violence as a means to force her sister to remain loyal to the Master. Dalila is a feminine Arabic name that stems from the triliteral root d-l-l- and has two meanings, either to guide or to play the coquette. She tries to guide Wasila on the path of freedom but fails, and that leads to her downfall.

In *Sonata al-Junun*, violence and death are caused by a dictator Master, who, for the sake of securing his exclusive power, kills his own people and his own family members as well. The Master's violence begets the two sister's abuse of him and each other. This cruel Master is an allegorical reference to Saddam Hussein, who brutalized his people to stay in power. Michael J. Kelly states in his book, *Ghosts of Halabja: Saddam Hussein and the Kurdish Genocide*, Saddam Hussein came from a Sunni minority, which constituted twenty percent of the total Iraqi population before the recent Iraq War (3-4). Hussein's paranoia, Kelly writes, came from "surviving the struggle to the top," and his cruelty was the "proven means to get there" (7). In addition, Saddam Hussein's "impunity and lack of accountability," constituted "a classic formula for atrocities on a mass scale that played out in Iraq just as in other contexts like Stalin's Russia, Hitler's Germany, Pol Pot's Cambodia, or Ceausescu's Romania" (Kelly 7). In addition, Kanan Makiya, in his book, *Republic of Fear*, initially published in 1989 under the pseudonym Samir Khalil, discusses how the Ba'athists legitimized their rule. He writes, "The Ba'th elevated the politics of fear into an art form, one that ultimately served the purpose of legitimizing their rule by making large numbers of people complicit in the violence of the regime" (xi). Thus, the violence within the play is symbolic of the hideous crimes of the Saddam Hussein regime.

The Master, like Saddam Hussein, engaged in theatricality with very real consequences. Dalila tells her sister the story of the time their Master ordered an army battalion to force the audience to stop laughing at his failed speech. Although he is in front of an audience, the Master loses the speech he is going to give to them. So, he seeks his wife Nafisa's help, but she is terrified and answers his question from her room. With her help, the Master finally finds the misplaced speech in between his socks and shoes; however, the audience laughs at him, and the Master feels humiliated. He then orders his guards to kill them in an attempt to establish order. As a result, "thirty young men and women were killed or injured" (16). The Master also immediately divorces his wife and exiles her. In this moment, theater has become all-encompassing as the officers, who constitute a part of the audience, are now implicated in and are victims of the Master's massacre. Like the deaths in the final moment of García Lorca's *Blood Wedding*, here, there is no division between the spectator and the spectacle, and as a result, the action shocks the audience watching *Sonata al-Junun* and forces them to think about the Master's ruthless actions and Saddam Hussein's brutality (Artaud 96).

Shooting the audience is no more absurd than some of the acts in which Saddam Hussein actually engaged. Dalila's narration refers to Saddam Hussein's purge of 1979, which he used to consolidate his power. At that time, one hundred high-rank Ba'athist officers and politicians were sitting and laughing in a large conference room while Saddam Hussein presided over them as he smoked his cigar. A Ba'athist man who had been tortured by his investigator started, slowly and randomly, reading out the names of half of the audience who were accused of being traitors. While the so-called traitors were forced out of the room by the guards, the unselected men were terrified and started praising Saddam Hussein. In this "most extraordinary live show for a political purge," the other half of the surviving men were given guns and forced to shoot at

the convicted ("Iraq's 1979 Fascist Coup" 2010). [27] Therefore, Dalila's story provides a clear example of how the Master's character is an allegory for Saddam Hussein and his brutality that is reflected in al-Assadi's theater.

Another example of Saddam Hussein/the Master's real theater of cruelty and terror also occurs in Dalila's second story when the Master kills the fish in the aquarium. In the play, Dalila, who still fears for her life, attempts to expose her Master's cruelty and express her hatred for him by employing the allegory of the aquarium as she tells the Shadow of her Master the dream she had about him. Repeatedly and manipulatively, Dalila calls him "my Master" (سيّدي) while recalling that she saw him sitting on a huge chair made of mirrors as he looked at a fishbowl that held various types of savage, peaceful, and treacherous fish. The Master succeeds in capturing and gutting all the fish, except one. He could not catch the "angelic, defying" one, which stuck out her tongue at him (20). He then gave orders to drain all of the water from the aquarium, so that [he] could catch the rebellious fish. However, after the water dried, the fish escaped, and the Master was left only with his hook.[28] Dalila's retelling of the dream is her way of rebelling against the Master. She does not flatter the Shadow of her Master as she finishes narrating her dream, which shows that she is less afraid of him and more determined to challenge his brutality.

Furthermore, Dalila's stories are not the only allusions to Saddam Hussein's violence. The killing of the two sisters can be read as an allusion to Saddam Hussein's execution of his sons-in-law, Hussein Kamel al-Majid and Saddam Kamel al-Majid, who were also his second cousins. The two brothers were Saddam's top generals, but they defected to Jordan. They were

[27] For more on this, see Kanan Makiya's *Republic of Fear*, 1998, pp. 292-6.

[28] دليلة:.... طلبْتَ بعد ذلك أن يسحبوا كلّ الماء من حوض السباحة لكي يتسنّى لك أن تمسك السمكة ولكن بعد ان نشّف الماء زاغ السمك ولم يبق سواك, أنت والصنارة فقط.

persuaded to return to Iraq, and the moment they did, they were ordered to divorce their wives, Rana and Raghad Hussein, because they were considered traitors. Less than a day later, they were killed in a gun battle at the hands of their cousins, who made sure to wipe out their entire line of male descendants. No funeral was held for the traitors, but Saddam Hussein did attend the grand funeral of those who killed them ("The Final Straw" 1996). The Master, like Saddam Hussein, rids his household of all the so-called traitors who dare stop loving him.

The allusion to Saddam Hussein as a ruthless leader also appears in al-Assadi's other plays, notably, *Forget Hamlet/Ophelia's Window.* One can see him in the character of the brutal king Claudius, who kills those who oppose him and shows them no mercy.[29] Neither Hamlet, the prince, nor Hamlet, the old king, are included in the cast list of *Forget Hamlet*, which makes Claudius' character even more prominent. Furthermore, Ophelia and her blind brother, Laertes, refer to Claudius as a "butcher," "barbarian," "bull," "dinosaur," and "wild buffalo" (Litvin "Forget Hamlet" 230). These epithets, which describe him as savage and inhuman, further expose how diabolical Saddam Hussein was.

The theme of violence appears not only in relation to the characterization of the Master, but also is manifested in Dalila and Wasila's actions against him. For example, in the bloody scene when Dalila and Wasila help the Shadow of their Master take his bath, they violently scratch the Shadow of their Master's back so that it bleeds, avenging themselves upon him. The two sisters hate the Master so much that they both wish to kill him. Even the flattering Wasila confesses to her sister that she wants to "thrust this dagger in his belt," and end his life (34). Here, Wasila expresses desires similar to the Bridegroom's Mother, who hates the Felixes to

[29] Al-Assadi, *Forget Hamlet*, translated by Margaret Litvin.

such a degree that she "could kill" (García Lorca 16). Like Wasila, Dalila says ironically, "I love him to such a degree that I hate him, or I hate him out of love (Al-Assadi 7-8). Furthermore, the frustrated Dalila repeatedly justifies her hatred for her Master, who has caused her to lose her freedom of speech and her family. She says:

> I hate him. I hate him. He slaughtered me when I was born, he put the knife on my neck and the locks in my mouth. He is the one who stoned my femininity and imprisoned my virginity. He is the one who butchered my children, shed my husband's blood, caused my father to be lost, and drowned my mother. (59) [30]

Here, Dalila appears to symbolize the nation of Iraq, which was devastated by the Leader's crimes and genocides as he "stoned her femininity" and "butchered [her] children." Dalila has been dead since she was born because of the Master's violence. In her anger, she wants to rebel against the Leader/Master by repeatedly saying that she hates him, and her words lead to her death.

As a result of the vicious Master's actions, and because she is afraid for both her and the sister's lives, Wasila becomes very violent at the end of the play. Towards the end of the play, she pursues Dalila, pulls her by her hair, takes off her clothes, and then repeatedly flogs her, attempting to force Dalila to serve their Master. After failing to subdue her sister, Wasila, posing as a judge in the final scene, accuses Dalila of being an atheist and reminds her that "the punishment for atheism is death" (59). Dismissing Wasila's accusations and threats, Dalila orders her sister to let her leave the house. And, before Wasila reads the fake court sentence, Dalila says, "Hurry up, give me a rope; I want to ascend to the mountaintop so that I'm free to die" (59). Dalila, here, is brave and speaks with authority. She embraces the idea of death,

[30] دليلة: أكرهه. أكرهه. لقد ذبحني منذ ولادتي, وضع السكين على رقبتي والأقفال في فمي, هو الذي رجم أنوثتي وسجن عذريتي. هو الذي نحر أولادي, هو الذي سفك دماء زوجي, هو الذي أضاع أبي, هو الذي أغرق أمي.

implying that it is better than living a life of imprisonment and servitude to her Master. Dalila is willing to die for what she believes in, echoing Adela in García Lorca's *The House of Bernarda Alba*. Dismissing her sister, Wasila justifies her death sentence because she "has rebelled against his Kingdom," and because "his image has rotted in [her] head" (59). Wasila claims that Dalila is guilty because she has ceased to love the Beloved, and her use of the plural pronoun "we" indicates her authority.[31] She then chops Dalila's head off with a guillotine. As soon as Dalila dies at the hands of her sister, a Voice reads out Dalila and Wasila's death sentences because of their destruction of the portrait. Their deaths send a very clear message: even the Leader's defenders, like Wasila, are not safe.

Convergences in the Themes of Exile and Suffering

The theme of exile, which is manifested in these two texts, alludes, among other things, to the exile in which both García Lorca and al-Assadi lived. While García Lorca's homosexuality was one aspect of what can be described as a kind of exile in his own country, al-Assadi's almost thirty-year exile from Iraq was related to the fact that he was Shi'a, a sect that became a minority after the Sunni Saddam Hussein became the president of Iraq. Exile is manifested in *Blood Wedding* and *Sonata al-Junun* in the extended metaphors of the house-prison in both texts. Confinement to a home and exile from one's country are not the same because someone can be constrained in their own country; they do not have to be outside of it. However, they are similar to one another in that exile is a form of punishment that traps the person in a particular space when barring them from visiting their homeland. When discussing the theme of exile in both

[31] وسيلة: نتلو تلاوتنا بحق المواطنة دليلة: نظراً لاصرارك على المضيّ في الاشراك في صورة المعبود. ولأنك قد طردت حبّه من بين جوانحك. ولأنك خرجت عن ملكوته. ولأن صورته اهترأت في رأسك.. لهذا فان القضاء يقدّمك الى المقصلة.

plays, I will be comparing how the restriction of the female characters from leaving the house is a type of exile from the public sphere. I also argue that while the female characters in *Blood Wedding* exercise some freedom and live their lives, in *Sonata al-Junun,* Wasila and Dalila have no freedom, and this sets the sisters against each other and leads to their demise.

Blood Wedding

In *Blood Wedding,* exile is manifested in the confinement of the women in their homes. In Act One, Scene One, the Mother of the Bridegroom implies that, as a married woman, she is imprisoned although she claims that she enjoyed having a husband for "only three short years" (6). She tells her neighbor, "It's been twenty years since I've been up to the top of the road" (12). Even though the Mother exaggerates and does not elaborate on the reasons behind her twenty-year exile, the audience may easily relate her exile to her very long period of mourning or to the fact that she is a married woman. In Act One, Scene Three, on her first visit to the Bride, the Mother reminds the Bride what marriage is for a woman: "One man, some children- and a wall six feet thick, to shut out everything else" (33). This exile of married women is gender-specific because while marriage in Spain does not take mobility away from married men nor their right to live outside the home, married women are imprisoned within four walls. Consequently, the marriage vows "weigh heavily" on women "like lead" (63).

One example of female confinement occurs not only during marriage but also during widowhood. In Act Three, Scene Two, after Leonardo's death, his Mother hands his Wife a life sentence without parole as she says:

> You: go to your house
> Brave and alone in your house,
> You will grow old and you will weep

> Always, the door will be closed.
> Never. Living or dead.
> We'll nail down the window forever. (97)

The Wife is utterly alone in her widowhood, and her house is sealed as if it were a coffin, which highlights how extreme her confinement is. When Leonardo's Wife asks what has happened to cause this drastic life change, her Mother-in-Law dismisses her and says:

> Cover your face with a veil
> Your children are children of yours,
> Nothing else matters to you.
> You must place a cross made of ashes
> On the bed where his pillow has been." (97)

She orders the Wife to mourn her husband and gives her strict instructions on how to do so without confirming if her son is dead. This moment echoes masochism that is also present in the relationship between the two sisters in *Sonata al-Junun,* when Wasila forbids Dalila from leaving their home because she fears for her life, saying, "How can you believe that leaving would be so easy? You will never cross the doorstep unless you're dead" (Al-Assadi 53). Here, Wasila limits her sister's ability to decide her fate.

The state of being confined to a house appears again in Act Two, Scene One, when Leonardo visits the Bride on the day of her wedding. When he confronts her about rejecting him because of his poverty, she tries to change the subject back to her upcoming marriage, saying, "I will shut myself up with my husband, whom I must love more than anything!" (47). Once again, marriage is linked to confinement, something the Bride was wary of earlier in the scene when conversing with her maid about her parent's marriage and how her mother "wasted away" on her father's land (39). Leonardo cautions her about marriage, admitting to her that his lust for her has not faded, saying, "You may believe that time can heal and walls can hide—but it's not true. It's

not true! When things reach deep inside you, nothing can pull them out!" (47). In this scene, confinement is not related to mourning, but to lust and passion. Containing passion within four walls does not remove one's desires. Here, it heightens them, making the desire more intense, and that leads to Leonardo's downfall.

Sonata al-Junun

As in *Blood Wedding*, exile is manifested in *Sonata al-Junun* implicitly in the extended metaphor of the house/prison, especially for women. As is the case of the Bridegroom's Mother and eventually the Bride herself in *Blood Wedding*, Dalila and Wasila are imprisoned, which is a kind of exile from one's self. These two marginalized sisters live under constant surveillance as they occupy one of the corners of their Master's house, furnished only with two beds (13). However, unlike in *Blood Wedding*, they do not leave their room, nor do they receive visitors. They are cut off the outside world and seem to be imprisoned for life. Their confinement (and suffering) at the hands of their wealthy paternal cousin is ironic because, in the Arab culture, it is the man's duty to look after the wellbeing of their female relatives. It is in part through the irony of cousin as an oppressor that al-Assadi criticizes Saddam Hussein's oppressive regime. By foregrounding the melancholy and suffering of these two imprisoned sisters, al-Assadi depicts his own crippling sorrow as an exile. When defining the term in the opening paragraph of his essay "Reflections on Exile," Edward Said says,

> Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted. And while it is true that literature and history contain heroic, romantic, glorious, even triumphant episodes in an exile's life, these are no more than efforts meant to overcome the crippling sorrow of estrangement. The achievements of exile are permanently undermined by the loss of something left behind forever. (137)

The ‘unhealable’ forced rift between al-Assadi and his native land, Iraq, his “true” home, is manifested in the uncertainty and melancholy that Dalila expresses in the opening scene when she says, “Is it our same house? The beds and the color white look the same” (13). Immediately, after Wasila reassures Dalila that they are still in their Master’s presence, Dalila asks her sister, “What has changed within us? I am like a woman coming out of death” (13). Dalila is aware that she has lost her joy because of her imprisonment and servitude to her Master, like al-Assadi, who, as he has stated in interviews, was often crippled with sorrow in his exile.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have looked at how the three themes of mourning, violence, and exile overlap in García Lorca’s and al-Assadi’s work. I have shown how mourning is manifested as female characters mourn the loss of beloved family members in both *Sonata al-Junun* and *Blood Wedding.* I have also demonstrated how the theme of violence that is common in both plays is more gruesome in *Sonata al-Junun*, where violence can be read as an allusion to that of Saddam Hussein’s real theater of cruelty. Lastly, I have shown how the theme of exile is manifested in both plays in the metaphors of the house-prison.

Moreover, the dark atmosphere of *Blood Wedding* is present in *Sonata al-Junun*. Still, al-Assadi intensifies the themes of mourning, violence, and exile to the extent the audience may quickly forget the one entertaining moment in his play: the mock wedding scene. This dark mood in al-Assadi’s play echoes Ashoura and Karbala as much as *Blood Wedding* echoes the somber rituals of Holy Week in Granada. The bleak and dismal atmosphere of *Sonata al-Junun* is also similar to the mood at the end of García Lorca’s play. Finally, the themes of mourning, violence,

and exile present in García Lorca and al-Assadi's plays correspond "to the agitation and unrest characteristic of [their] epoch" (Artaud 122).

IV.CONCLUSION

While reading al-Assadi's play *Nisaa al-Harb (Woman of War)*, I noticed that al-Assadi had read García Lorca's tragedy, *The House of Bernarda Alba (La Casa de Bernarda Alba)*, since Fatima, the protagonist of al-Assadi's play says that she acted in a production of *The House of Bernarda Alba* before she left Iraq. Likewise, as I was reading al-Assadi's *Sonata al-Junun* (*Sonata of Madness*), I noticed that the breaking of the established order, in part, causes the death of the two female protagonists. During the mock wedding ceremony, Wasila and Dalila accidently break a portrait of their Master. In García Lorca's *Blood Wedding (Bodas de Sangre)*, the Bride and Leonardo Felix run away during the Bride's wedding reception, causing the death of Leonardo Felix and the Bridegroom who wanted to restore his honor. The parallels between García Lorca and al-Assadi's theater made me want to look further into the link between them. As I started researching this link, I found that the themes of mourning and exile are common to their work. The intercultural link between Spain and the Arab world is difficult to ignore. Spanish writers are still influencing Arab writers, and vice versa, five hundred years after the fall of al-Andalus. When one author relates to another in different time and space, we see that the themes and issues that they are writing about are universal and still need to be resolved.

In this thesis, I argue that there is a direct, clear influence of García Lorca in the works of al-Assadi. I elaborate on this impact by examining the themes of mourning, violence, death, and exile in García Lorca and al-Assadi's theater by looking at García Lorca's *Blood Wedding* and *The House of Bernarda Alba* and al-Assadi's *Hammam Baghdadi (Baghdadi Bath), Nisaa al-Harb, Nisaa al-Saxophone (Saxophone Women), and Sonata al-Junun*. My study is original and important because I critically assess the plays of a well-known Iraqi playwright and director

whose work is still understudied in the Arab world and the West. My study is also important because I compare al-Assadi's work to García Lorca's. My comparative approach is new in that while several reviews and interviews mention the influence of García Lorca on al-Assadi, they do not elaborate on how this influence is manifested in his theater.

While conducting my study, I found that the cruelty as manifested in Jawad al-Assadi's theater is more graphic than that of García Lorca's. For example, al-Assadi's *Hammam Baghdadi*, *Nisaa al-Harb*, and *Sonata al-Junun* depict bloody, diabolical scenes that allude to real cruelties in Iraq. This brutality reflects that of the tyrannical regime of Saddam Hussein and the consequences of the U.S.-led invasion and occupation of Iraq. For instance, in *Hammam Baghdadi*, Hamid is traumatized after witnessing Saddam Hussein's colonel massacre forty prisoners. Hamid's brokenness appears in his extreme fear, terse speech, and restless body movements. Likewise, Mariam and Fatima, two protagonists of *Nisaa al-Harb*, retell traumatizing events they experienced in their homeland. In Syria, Mariam was raped on Friday by ten men for ten uninterrupted days. In Iraq, Fatima was imprisoned, tortured, and then thrown on the street because she spoke out against Saddam Hussein's regime. Finally, in *Sonata al-Junun*, Wasila and Dalila's Master, who is an allegory for Saddam Hussein, shoots his audience after they humiliate him. The murder of the audience and the forty young men allude to Saddam Hussein's purge in 1979. The tactics of imprisonment and rape also refer to the ruthlessness of Saddam Hussein's regime and to the destruction of Iraq after the US-led invasion and occupation of the country. Other than his play *Sonata al-Junun*, al-Assadi adds a glimmer of hope to most of his plays that end with the protagonists supporting one another.

While examining their plays, I also found that the theme of exile is manifested in both playwrights' work through the metaphor of the house as a prison for the female protagonists. In both García Lorca and al-Assadi's dramas, the female protagonists complain of wasting away because they are restricted to their houses. In contrast to García Lorca, al-Assadi's protagonists break free from their prison though the audience does not know their destination, with the exception of *Sonata al-Junun* whose female characters die.

I also found that both playwrights give voice to marginalized people by giving them main roles and highlighting their suffering under repression. By doing so, both playwrights express their own marginalization and the oppression that exists in their societies. For instance, in *Blood Wedding*, Leonardo Felix, a poor farmhand, not the wealthy Bridegroom, catalyzes the plot as the playwright gives him a name, and numerous, long speeches. Furthermore, the theme of mourning manifests itself as an influence of the religious context in which the playwrights grew up. Granada's Holy Week rituals of mourning which include: wearing black, weeping, and lamentation, impacted García Lorca's *Blood Wedding* and *The House of Bernarda Alba*, two plays that revolve around death and mourning. In the opening scene of *Blood Wedding*, the Mother of the Bridegroom mourns the death of her husband and her older son, and she repeatedly laments the death of the Bridegroom, her only living son in the final scene. *The House of Bernarda Alba* also opens with a death knell and ends with Bernarda Alba ordering that the church bell knells the following morning to mourn Adela's death. Also, Karbala's Ashoura rituals affected al-Assadi's plays. In Ashoura, the houses are covered in black and people wear black as they mourn the death of Imam al-Hussein while participating in elaborate mourning spectacles, which sometimes may involve blood and extensive wailing. In *Nisaa al-Harb*,

Mariam cries over her brother's death, Adele grieves about the death of her young daughter, and Fatima praises the funeral rituals in Iraq while comparing them to the monotonous funeral rites in the West. Also, in *Sonata al-Junun*, Dalila eulogizes her son Faras and mourns other family members that were killed by her Master.

As for the limitations of my research, I had difficulty finding sources about al-Assadi's plays. I found many interviews, but most of them focus on al-Assadi's discussion of the influence of Karbala, Ashoura, the death of his brothers and the exile on him and his work. Other than Sahar Assaf's thesis about Jawad al-Assadi and exile, Margaret Litvin's book which discussed al-Assadi's play *Forget Hamlet* (*Insu Hamlet*), and Robert Myers and Nada Saab's book about the political theater in the Levant, little scholarly work has been done on the Iraqi playwright, especially when comparing his work to that of García Lorca's. I did find many reviews of al-Assadi's plays. One review, by Arwa Itani, mentions that al-Assadi "always" takes his audience to the world of García Lorca, but the author does not explain what the world of García Lorca consists of. Itani's vagueness encouraged me to compare al-Assadi's theater to García Lorca's and find out what his world means.

My study opens up new directions of inquiry regarding al-Assadi's, García Lorca's, or even contemporary Iraqi theater, more broadly. One possible avenue that one could focus on would be to compare the performances of both García Lorca and al-Assadi's plays, instead of focusing solely on the written texts. Because the play was written to be staged, what one reads and what one watches on stage might be different. How an actor portrays the character onstage can add another dimension to the character on the page. Furthermore, like Litvin, who studied the reception of Shakespeare in the Arab world, focusing on Arab *Hamlet* plays, one may study

the reception and adaptations of García Lorca's plays in the Middle East, posing questions such as how, what, and why the adaptations changed from the original text.

García Lorca's *Blood Wedding* has been the most researched and adapted play. *The House of Bernarda Alba* has also been the subject of articles and adaptations. Recently, on February 19, 2016, García Lorca's *The House of Bernarda Alba* was presented at Hagop Der Melkonian Theater Hall in Beirut. Robert Arakelian directed it and it was presented by the seniors of the Hamazkayin "Arek" Theater Troupe. Arakelian reduced the three-act play to two acts, and one might wonder how that impacted the plot of the play. Does the change affect the characters? What happens to the dialogue between them? Does the audience still get to see Adela and Martirio's jealousy?

There have been a few adaptations of *Yerma* in the Arab world. In addition to al-Assadi's 1985 staging of *Yerma*, an Arabic adaptation was staged in Egypt in 1998. In 2009, Lina Abyad's students staged a play called "Saffron Postcards" at the Lebanese American University (LAU). It was an adaptation of multiple texts: García Lorca's *Yerma* and the poems of contemporary Iranian authors, Shahnaz A'lami and Mahmud Kianush. The student theater production, directed and adapted by Yasmine Agha, transformed the campus into an Andalusian village and included Farsi songs in the production (Al-Masri). I did not find much information about adaptations of *Yerma*, which suggests that it is understudied in the Arab world despite it dealing with a very important theme in Arab society: motherhood and childbearing.

García Lorca's plays are popular not just in the Arab world, but in Iran as well. On January 23, 2019, Ali Rafiei staged his Farsi interpretation of *The House of Bernarda Alba* at Vahdat Hall in Tehran. And, in June 2019, another Persian version with English subtitles of *The*

House of Bernarda Alba that featured all-female cast was presented at Vancouver's Firehall Arts Center in Canada. Aesthetically, one can compare the two Iranian adaptations of *The House of Bernarda Alba* with regards to Persian Folkloric songs and classic dances, since director Toufan Mherdadian added them to his Farsi adaptation.

Furthermore, al-Assadi's rewriting of his own work is an important aspect of his aesthetic. It was outside the scope of my research, but it is interesting to look at what al-Assadi changed in the process of rewriting his plays. One can examine how the different versions of al-Assadi's plays like *Hammam Baghdadi* and *Nisaa al-Harb* are similar to or different from one another. Did the place of production change? Does the audience affect his artistic choices? One play that he reimagined was *Nisaa al-Harb.* It was first published in 2003 as *Nisaa fi al-Harb (Women in War)*. In 2005, al-Assadi produced it in Iraq. In 2015, after four years of war in Syria, he presented the play, changing its title to *Women without God (Nisaa Bila Rabb).* In 2017, in Cairo, the Syrian director Noor Ghanim produced *Women without God* under the name *Women Without Tomorrow (Nisaa bila Ghad*)" (Abdelraheem 2). She made some directorial changes to the play without changing the original text. It is rare to see both a woman and a man directing the same play. So, one can look at how al-Assadi and Ghanim directed the plays to see if and how gender plays a role in the aesthetic of the director.

Likewise, one can look at different performances of al-Assadi's *Hammam Baghdadi*, which he staged first in June 2006 at the Marignan Theater in Beirut, then at Babel Theater in Beirut in 2007, and later in Damascus, Cairo, and Amman. In 2009, al-Assadi restaged *Hammam Baghdadi* at Babel Theater. The play was not only staged in various Arab countries, but it was also staged in the U.S.A. From 12 to 15 March 2009, Zishan Ugurlu directed *Hammam*

Baghdadi (translated from Arabic by Robert Myers) at La Mama Theater in New York. One can look at how the play was presented to an American audience and what changes if any were added to the original play. I hope the future research on al-Assadi's work will introduce him to a broader audience on a global scale like the Syrian playwright Saadallah Wannous and Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish.

APPENDIX

I.LIST OF PLAYS AND THEIR RECEPTION/PERFORMANCE HISTORY IN THE ARAB WORLD

Federico García Lorca's Plays

Blood Wedding (Bodas de Sangre)

In 1958, ten years after the Palestinian Nakba[32], García Lorca's *Blood Wedding*, the first part of his triology, was translated into Modern Standard Arabic, known as fusha, by Hussayn Mu'nis under the title *al-Zifaf al-Dami*. In November 2011, *Blood Wedding* (*Al-Zifaf al-Dami*) was presented at al-Gomhouria Theater in Cairo under the auspices of the Spanish embassy and 6th October University. In 2018, Sahar Assaf adapted *Blood Wedding* (*Urs al-Dam*) and wrote it in ammiya or colloquial Lebanese relying on Mu'nis' translation. The Theater Initiative at the American University of Beirut and the Hammana Artist House presented Assaf's *Urs al Dam* at the Hammana Artist House.[33] The production incorporated Arabic and Spanish music, and it took place in private houses, theatre, church, and streets of the small Hammana Village. Theater artist and scholar Ashley Marinaccio describes the set-up of the play in her article "Theatre

[32] Al-Nakba, which translates to catastrophe, refers to the establishment of the state of Israel in May 1948 that prompted the exodus of 750,000 Arab Palestinians into neighboring Arab countries. For more on this, refer to https://www.euronews.com/2018/05/14/what-is-the-palestinian-nakba-and-why-is-it-important-

[33] The production was directed by Nada Assaf and produced by Robert Myers of AUB as an original promenade performance that started and concluded at the Hammana Art House.

Everywhere: How a Small Lebanese Village Transformed for *Blood Wedding*." She writes, the audience members "were divided into two groups and brought to separate locations for the first two scenes, and finally reunited at the end of Act One to experience the conclusion of the performance together" (1). The production of *Blood Wedding* at the Hammana Artist House is "a dynamic example of how theater can happen anywhere and be inclusive to those who may not have previously had access to the arts" (5). Assaf, the director, argues that the performance is an attempt to decentralize theater from Beirut to remote parts of Lebanon just as García Lorca used to decentralize theater from Madrid to remote parts of Spain to which he toured with his La Barraca troupe (qtd in Marinaccio 5).

Yerma

This play is the second part of the trilogy, which García Lorca wrote and later staged in 1934. In 1985, al-Assadi staged *Yerma* at the Working Class Theater (Al-Masrah al-Ummali) in Homs, Syria. Then, in 1998, the play was adapted into Arabic in Egypt. In Lebanon, in the spring of 2009, Yasmine Agha directed a student theater production, "Saffron Postcards," an outdoor promenade play at the Lebanese American University (LAU). The production was adapted from García Lorca's *Yerma* as well as contemporary Iranian authors Shahnaz A'lami and Mahmud Kianush's poems: "Magic in a Suitcase" and "Traveler in Soul" (Al-Masri).

The House of Bernarda Alba (La Casa de Bernarda Alba):

The House of Bernarda Alba is García Lorca's most frequently staged play. It is the third part of the rural trilogy and features an all-female cast. Although he completed it in June 1936 during increasing political unrest in Madrid, it was performed in 1945, and is the only play that was

performed after García Lorca's death. In 2009, this play was translated into colloquial Arabic from Spanish by director Lina Abyad, Associate Professor of Theater at the Lebanese American University (LAU), and Lebanese novelist Rachid al-Daif. She "redesigned scenes and dialogue to adapt to the play's unique audience" at LAU's Irwin Theater, Beirut Campus ("Arabic Translation of Spanish Play Tests Cultural Taboos at Beirut Theater" 2009). Furthermore, Abyad added an additional scene after that of Bernarda Alba's youngest daughter, Adela's, suicide "to demonstrate the existence of hope-embodied by uninhibited, ageless desire" also adding a spark of optimism to García Lorca's play (2009).

Jawad al-Assadi's Plays

Sonata al-Junun (Sonata of Madness)

Sonata al-Junun was published in 1999 in Modern Standard Arabic, and unlike most of al-Assadi's work, he has not staged it yet. In 2000, LAU students staged the play on campus under the direction of Missaa al-Adem. The play served as a model of rebellious and revolutionary Arab theater. According to "Theatre *Sonata al-Jounoun* de Jawad al-Assadi," an article written by an author known simply as D.E., the presentation was set in a "miserable and foul-smelling chamber where two servants have a dream charged with the bitterness of a failed life because of their service to their master".

In 2018, the Syrian director Isma'il Khalaf adapted and presented *Sonata al-Junun* in a number of theaters in Hama, al-Raqqa, and al-Hasaka in Syria ("Jamaliyya Raqiya min Masrah al-Monodrama al-Mughamir Sonata al-Junun"). Khalaf's adaptation is a monodrama and begins with Hayat (a variation of Wasila's character whose name means life) rising from her tomb and recalling her experiences with the man who was simultaneously her lover and master. After

Hayat constantly seeks the approval of her lover/Master, the Mirror, Hayat's counterpart, shatters the picture of the Master, prompting Hayat to dance, beseech the Master's forgiveness, and kill the Mirror. In Khalaf's adaptation Hayat, not the Mirror, prefers death to life and says Dalila's the famous last line, "Give me my scaffold, so I'm free to die" (Al-Assadi, Sonata al-Junun 59). In addition, Khalaf substitutes a Mannequin, a Mirror, and a Chair for the original three characters: Dalila, the Religious Man, and the Master, which he eliminates.

Nisaa al-Harb (Women of War)

This play examines the dilemma of three Arab female refugees in Germany. In her article "Jawad al-Assadi's *Women in War*: Troubling, Troubled and Troublesome Female Refugees," Hadeel Abdelraheem, Iraqi Honorary Associate Professor at School of Humanities and Social Sciences at La Trobe University, states that *Women of War* depicts "the dynamics of war and how established identities can change according to the circumstances of the female victims of war" (1). The play was first published in 2003 as *Nisaa fi al-Harb (Women in War)*. In 2005, al-Assadi produced it in Iraq. In 2015, after four years of war in Syria, al-Assadi presented the play, changing its title into *Women without God (Nisaa Bila Rabb)*. In 2017, in Cairo, Syrian director Noor Ghanim directed and produced the play under the name *Women Without Tomorrow (Nisaa bila Ghad*)" while also changing the stories of female refugees (Abdelraheem 2).

Hammam Baghdadi (Baghdadi Bath)

The play presents the dilemma of two middle-aged Iraqi brothers, Majid and Hamid, who are bus drivers on a very perilous route between Baghdad and Damascus. As it has been their ritual for years, they stop in a Baghdadi public bath and reflect on their lives before and after the U.S.- led

invasion and occupation of Iraq. In 2005, al-Assadi wrote *Hammam Baghdadi* one year after he returned to Iraq from his almost twenty-eight year exile, recording his first encounter with Baghdad, an encounter that "shattered the idea of home he retained in his imagination during the years of exile" (Assaf 49). In 2005, *Hammam Baghdadi* was first performed at Babel Theater in Beirut, and then in Damascus, Cairo, and Amman. In 2009, al-Assadi restaged *Hammam Baghdadi* at Babel Theater (Assaf 55).

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